

**RELATIONSHIP PARADIGMS AND PARENTAL DIVORCE:
INVESTIGATING THE EXPERIENCES OF ADULT CHILDREN FROM
DIVORCED FAMILIES**

By

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Abstract

This study addresses the intimate relationships of college students whose parents are divorced. Twenty-one students completed in-depth interviews and written surveys regarding their relationships with their parents, their parents' marriages, their own intimate relationships, and relationships in general. The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences of these students, and note if any connections can be made between the divorce of their parents and their own relationships, or their feelings about relationships in general. The experiences of the students were quite diverse, but with some common threads. The amount of conflict witnessed, and how the divorce was discussed, seemed to have greater impact on this study's participants than the divorce itself did. A number of students were actually in favor of the divorce due to the high level of conflict between their parents. In their relationships, most study participants avoided conflict. There seemed to be some lack of faith in love and marriage, although most students voiced a desire for both. The divorce seemed to have greater impact on the father-child relationship more so than the mother-child relationship. There needs to be further examination of the intimate relationships of adults with parents who are divorced through a comparison to a control group to determine if the experiences described here are specific to those persons with divorced parents. There also needs to be an examination of a more diverse sample, i.e. greater variance in age, economic status and race.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

As the divorce rate has leveled off in the past decade, there continues to be an interest in the effects of parental divorce on the children. Specifically, in recent years there have been two primary concerns regarding children from divorced families (Kitson, 1992). The first concern centers around whether children actually suffer psychologically as a result of divorce, and if so, are the effects of divorce immediate or do they manifest in later years. Wallerstein and Blakeslee's (1989) research on the "sleeper effect," i.e. the propensity of children of divorce to display problems in establishing intimate relationships in early adulthood is an example of a long term effect.

The second concern regarding children from divorced families is whether children will continue the cycle of "intergenerational transmissions of divorce and why such a transmission occurs (Kitson, 1992). The concept of intergenerational transmission of divorce involves the increase in probability that a child from a divorced parent is more likely to divorce in adulthood than a child from a non-divorced family (Greenberg & Nay, 1982). Both of these concerns, the psychological effects of divorce and the increased probability of divorce in later generations, reflect in part a presumption that divorce is a purely detrimental experience for children from divorced families. While it is not within the scope of this study to assess the level of psychological suffering that may or may not be incurred by children during their parents' divorce, this study does attempt to

understand the implications parental divorce may have for young adults' experiences in intimate relationships. Such an examination will address the concerns of intergenerational transmission of divorce through a more open lens.

The preoccupation with intergenerational transmission of divorce is presumably rooted in a social emphasis on the institution of marriage as opposed to other types of relationships. Marriage is seen as intrinsically different from other intimate relationships (and therefore studied as such) and the dissolution of a marriage is somehow a statement of the "moral weakness" of the individuals (Scanzoni, Polonko, Teachman & Thompson, 1989).

Previous research examining the transmission of divorce has drawn a variety of conclusions. Some studies emphasize the role of economic disadvantage and lack of parental control as contributors to poor mate selection (Mueller & Pope, 1977; Pope & Mueller, 1976; Keith & Finlay, 1988; Booth, Brinkerhoff & White, 1984). Other researchers presume that positive attitudes toward divorce and negative attitudes against marriage are socially transmitted from parents to children. These attitudes are then seen as the foundation on which adult children of divorce base their reasoning for "escaping from a marriage perceived as unhappy (Coleman & Ganong, 1984; Amato, 1988; Marlar & Jacob, 1992; Tasker, 1992). What has been largely ignored has been the experience young adults have with intimacy as a whole. Difficulty with intimacy may be the basis for marital instability rather than one's marriage/divorce belief system.

Rather than simply examining structural indications of marital instability (i.e. divorce), this study considers the nature of young adults' intimate relationships prior to marriage. It is believed that focusing on the experience of intimacy will provide a more meaningful context, rather than attitudes towards marriage, to make connections between parental divorce and child outcomes. Intimate relationships are defined as romantic relationships, heterosexual or homosexual, described by the participant as a romantic intimate relationship. In addition to describing past experiences with intimacy, the study participants discussed their relationships with their parents, their observations of their parents relationship and any previous or present intimate romantic relationship. Such an examination allows for a study of the underlying process of intimacy and its development through a person's life.

Guiding this study was the work of Marks (1989) and Wallerstein and her colleagues (Kelly, 1981; Wallerstein, 1987; Wallerstein and Blakeslee, 1989). Marks created the term "marital paradigms" to describe the set of beliefs a person has addressing marriage and appropriate behaviors in it. For the purposes of this study the term relationship paradigms was used instead to emphasize beliefs outside of the traditional prevailing paradigm of marriage. Wallerstein discussed the concept of sleeper effect and other long term effects she found in children from divorced families. The sleeper effect is the long term effects of divorce that do not manifest until early adulthood. Both of these concepts were used as backdrop to the questions asked in this study.

Purpose of this Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the intimate relationships of young adults from divorced families. Past research has been largely quantitative and compares these adults with those from non-divorced families, treating the latter as the ideal norm. The present study attempts to explore how young adults' experiences with parental divorce may influence their intimate relationships. This study overcomes several limitations of previous research in this area. Previous studies have been based on preconceived operationalizations of intimacy. Prior to these studies, the researchers chose factors that they considered to be aspects of intimacy such as sexual behavior (Booth, et al, 1984); attitudes towards marriage and divorce (Coleman & Ganong, 1984; Amato, 1988; Marlar & Jacobs, 1992) and dating partners (Hepworth, Ryder & Dreyer, 1984). While these factors capture certain aspects of intimate behavior, there is a lack of consideration for process, and how each individual defines intimacy. Intimacy is multifaceted and can be explained in a variety of ways. One person may feel that sexual relations are a sign of intimacy while another sees increased mutual self-disclosure as a higher level of intimacy. Therefore to create an accurate description of the experiences of children from divorced families, we must consider the children's definitions of intimacy and their experiences.

This study also allows the participants to create their own definitions for intimacy. The boundaries of the concept of intimacy, therefore, are self-created, rather than researcher-restricted. By eliminating the previous confines of

researcher directed definitions of intimacy, this study allowed the participants to use their own voices to describe their experiences. By not imposing a researcher bias of set definitions of intimacy, a greater depth in understanding was attained. Previous studies did not allow the participants to go beyond the quantitative questions to describe their own feelings, perhaps causing the researchers to miss the underlying common issues involved.

Research Questions Guiding This Study

This research is based in grounded theory and addresses two research question (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). First, how do aspects of parental divorce affect adult children's experiences with intimate relationships? More specifically, what similarities exist between perceptions of a parental relationship and perceptions of one's own relationship? Second, how are the relationship paradigms of children from divorced families developed? What similarities and differences occur across this sample? By asking these broad questions this study will attempt to be descriptive of the experiences of young adults from divorced families. There may be creation of new theories, or expansion upon existing ones, surrounding the experience of divorce and its long-term effects on intimacy.

Operational Definitions of Terms

Economic rationale - theory that the poor economic conditions in a post-divorce family creating fewer possibilities for educational or personal advancement

Intergenerational transmission of divorce - the increased chance that adult children of divorced families will also divorce

Intimate relationships - relationships described by the participant that are not within the family nor strictly friendship; emphasis will be on the romantic component in order to delineate from other relationships

Marital paradigms - one's beliefs surrounding marital relationships, roles and conflict

Marriage role expectations - expectations for marital relationships and roles; in research often based on the prevailing paradigm

Mate selection rationale - lack of social control and economic insecurity creating an environment which facilitates poor mate selection

Prevailing paradigm - marriage is a sexually exclusive legal relationship between a bread-winning male and a caretaking woman who does not work

Relationship paradigms - one's beliefs surrounding marital relationships, roles and conflict

Role model theory - theory that in order to be a successful marriage partner one must have had good parental role models

Sleeper effect - having difficulties with forming intimate relationships in young adulthood; there are no prior indications of problems

Social control hypothesis - theory that the lack of discipline by a divorced parent creates less supervision of children's behavior

Transmission of attitudes - passing of attitudes from one generation to the next

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

The Sleeper Effect and Marital Paradigms

There has been a variety of research pertaining to the study of the long-term effects of a parental divorce. Central concepts guiding this study of intimate relationships were drawn from the work of Wallerstein and her colleagues (Kelly, 1981; Wallerstein, 1987; Wallerstein and Blakeslee, 1989) and Marks (1989). Wallerstein's team conducted one of the best known longitudinal studies of the effects of divorce on children. Her study has many implications for the study of intimate relationships. Wallerstein identified the concept of the "Sleeper effect" which represents the latent effect divorce has on children once they reach adulthood. Marks' research investigates the implications of marital paradigms which are the belief systems that a person has regarding marriage and divorce. This study connects these two literature sources and examines the adult intimate relationships of students raised with divorced parents.

The following literature review begins with a summary of Wallerstein's longitudinal study. Marks' research will follow as a reason for the sleeper effect manifesting itself during the search for marriage in young adulthood. Marks' research provides the basis for a more inclusive view of relationships hence creating the concept of "relationship paradigms." Relationship paradigms are the belief systems surrounding the entire search for intimacy, not just marriage itself.

The Sleeper Effect and Related Conclusions

The Sleeper effect" was a concept put forth by Wallerstein which proposed that while children and adolescents may show little reaction to a divorce while younger, upon reaching young adulthood they often have difficulty in establishing intimate relationships (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). Therefore the effects of parental divorce may be "sleeping" during childhood (allowing the child to seem otherwise unaffected and healthy); during adolescence there may be an (undetected) pattern of a fear to commit in relationships (Kelly, 1981); upon adulthood these people may fear that if they do marry, the marriages will fail (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989; Wallerstein, 1987).

Wallerstein and her colleagues were one of the few groups of researchers to study the experiences of the children from divorced families without a control group of "intact" family members, focusing more on within group variation rather than between group comparisons. This approach is controversial because a control group has been seen as necessary given the interest in identifying the differences in experiences between those from divorced and nondivorced families. Utilizing longitudinal research over fifteen years these researchers attempted to describe the experience of divorce through the developmental stages of the participants' lives.

The sample for this study was taken from a suburban northern California county, the number ranging from the original sample in 1971 of 131 children to 113 at the 10 year mark. All of these children were from a non-clinical sample,

referred to the researchers by attorneys and schools. The families had no severe social pathology or criminality, yet depression, alcoholism, domestic violence and unemployment were issues some families were grappling with. Analysis through the five year mark of the study was done by analyses of variance, factor analysis, and other correlations. These correlations were based on the coded data collected from in-depth interviews and assessments. Since at the ten year mark the data were subsumed into categories, chi-squares were used to obtain the following findings.

It should be emphasized that these results were descriptive, and were not intended to form the basis of generalized conclusions. Wallerstein attested that her research, rather than being conclusive, was to be utilized for hypothesis generation. She initially wanted to explore and track the perceptions and experiences of the individual family members, particularly the children, following divorce (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). Taken as such, the statements she made regarding her findings were largely descriptive and tentative in nature. Unfortunately causal inferences have been made regarding her findings distorting the original purpose of the study.

There was a diversity of experience among the children and adolescents Wallerstein studied over a ten year period. Many of the children reported having healthy love affairs and marriages upon adulthood. Some of the factors that seemed to facilitate this process were supportive relationships within and outside

of the family; consciously deciding not to make their parents' mistake, or close relationships with both parents post divorce.

Over half of the children of this study entered adulthood with low self-esteem and anger due to triangulation (the child is trapped between the two parents), feelings of deprivation of parents' love and attention and not getting help when they needed it. Although generally the males had more difficulties along the way (-with aggression, school, peer relationships) the disparity between the sexes in overall adjustment eventually dissolved (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). Those who entered their adolescence in the midst of a parental divorce suffered a particularly difficult period. They felt as if the family structure, protection and moral guidelines they craved were not available to them. This feeling of abandonment caused them to have inner doubts and uncertainties about the future. They were tempted by alcohol, drugs and crime (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989).

Wallerstein felt the most powerful findings dealt with the difficulties the men and women in her study had in dealing with intimacy. She believed they lacked a model for a loving, enduring, moral relationship between a man and a woman. Wallerstein believed that the fears and anxieties that haunted the children in her study while coping with a parental divorce came to hinder them when attempting to form relationships of their own. Those adolescents who were otherwise psychologically healthy had a fear of commitment and any relationships they did have were short-lived and terminated by them rather than

their partners (Kelly, 1981). While these anxieties did not completely keep them from eventually being in happy, healthy relationships and marriages, the developmental period was a critical experience for them. Perhaps their own experiences with intimacy in dating relationships helped overcome their anxieties towards marriage (Tasker, 1992).

Marital Paradigms

According to Marks, marital paradigms included one's perceptions of the expected problems within a marriage and their typical solutions (Marks, 1986). Paradigms are models based on examples that people base their beliefs on. These paradigms are not only developed by viewing the parents' relationship, but are also created within the relationship between parent and child (Marks, 1986). Children learn how to "work" within a relationship through the interpersonal relations between parent and child, while watching the processes between the parents to gain more insight. Similarly, Coleman and Ganong (1984) discuss how the observance of a parental marriage or remarriage in addition to one's own relationship with parents will affect one's own attitudes towards marriage.

Marital paradigms are related to the role model theory in that traditional gender roles are emphasized. For example, a woman is expected to take care of the household and children and the man is expected to be the breadwinner. Marks' paradigm is structurally based in that it talks of marriage rather than a more generic discussion of relationships or intimacy. Marital paradigms may

encourage certain stereotypical roles for the husband and wife while a more flexible paradigm of relationships allows for more individual freedom.

There are a variety of other influences that should be included in the discussion of development of a marital paradigm. Interpersonal relationships within the family and the level of family integration, may be as influential on one's attitudes towards marriage (and perhaps intimacy as well) as family structure itself (Coleman & Ganong, 1984). Family integration is defined as one's closeness to parents. This may include the level of understanding that exists, the amount of effective communication, and the expectations for the relationship (Coleman & Ganong, 1984). In their study of high school and college students from a variety of family structures Coleman and Ganong (1984) found the level of family integration to be the only indicator of the young adults and adolescents' attitudes towards marriage. Therefore, regardless of the structure of the family (married, divorced) the relationships within the family group are what affects later images of marriage.

Besides the family itself, there may be outside factors influencing the content of marital paradigms. Similar to role model theory, children who are predominantly living in single-parent homes may look for other models of appropriate marital role behaviors and marital relationships. Examples include those of the absent parent's gender such as a relative, parent's lover or neighbor, (Coleman & Ganong, 1984). Children may also look to social culture or the media as a whole for information about intimate relationships (Amato, 1991;

Coleman & Ganong, 1984). In spite of outside factors, though, the strongest influences still seem to come from within one's own family (Marks, 1986).

Relationship Paradigms

The present study extends Marks' conceptual framework regarding marital paradigms, described above, and applies the framework to nonmarital relationships as well. The present study emphasizes the development of feelings towards intimacy and relationships. The paradigms are created based on observations of parental marriages and the conflict or cohesion within them or the experience related to parental divorce should it occur. They are also built on the relationships of others that are close to the person; the over-arching culture's and consequently, the media's, examples of relationships; and one's own personal experience with intimate relationships such as with friends, parents or dating partners (Amato, 1988; Amato, 1991; Coleman & Ganong, 1984).

As with the marital paradigms, all of these observations and experiences come together in the form of expectations for intimacy and relationships. If one has witnessed a conflicted parental marriage, was not close to either parent and had few friends, it is likely that the person would have difficulties with intimacy and be confused as to what to expect in a healthy relationship. By not basing the paradigm strictly within the confines of marriage, relationship paradigms can be applied to any intimate situation. For example, Scanzoni, Polonko, Teachman and Thompson (1989) have advanced the notion of the sexually-based primary relationship (SBPR) as a more inclusive way to conceptualize intimate

relationships than simply focusing on legal marriage. The SBPR is a construct describing close relationships that are the primary relationship of a person's life, and that while sex may not be involved, it is understood that sexual relations are usually within the relationship (Scanzoni, et al., 1989). This construct allows for movement in and out of relationships and more freedom within the relationships with regard to acceptable behavior. Consequently to broaden the concept of marital paradigms, the label of relationship paradigms will be utilized.

A relationship paradigm is based on all of the same things marital paradigms are except it takes into account that relationships are guided by similar instincts as marriage (desire for intimacy and happiness, permanence-pragmatism, rewards:cost ratio, etc.). Relationship paradigms include how to deal with conflict, expectations for relationships, sexuality. It allows for the people or couples who are not striving for marriage.

Of particular relevance for children experiencing parental divorce are two types of marital paradigms that Marks (1986) identifies: the "Hedged Bet" and the "Avoiding the Demon" paradigms. While he discusses them in terms of marriage, they can also be applied to relationships as a whole. The Hedged Bet paradigm is one in which there are feelings of doubt towards the workability of marriage so the individual keeps an emotional distance from the marriage or relationship (Marks, 1986). These people have a "hedge," be it a lifestyle or a frame of mind, that allows them to feel less vulnerable should the marriage or relationship end. Most of the people Marks (1986) found to have this paradigm

gained negative views of their parents' marriage while being raised. This could include experiencing a divorce in which a child saw the vulnerable parent being hurt by the other person. Hence the child develops a "hedged bet" in an attempt to deter the same fate for him/herself.

The other paradigm that could be seen in those with divorced parents Marks named "Avoiding a Demon." For children from divorced homes, a demon to be avoided could be divorce. Marriage is seen as a way to be attached, loved and wanted; all of which are feelings that eluded the person during childhood (Marks, 1986). The finding discussed earlier (Hepworth et al., 1987) of adolescents from divorced homes having accelerated dating patterns may be explained by this search for intimacy. This paradigm often causes people to be rigid in their mate selection in that there are certain traits in a partner that are deemed as totally unacceptable, such as those that were tied to the divorce (infidelity, drinking, confrontational behavior) or anything they feel may later lead to a divorce (Marks, 1986). Often these individuals will go to any lengths to avoid conflict for fear of losing their partner. With a controlling partner this could cause the individual to relinquish personal rights to keep the permanence of marriage. These paradigms may be related to the sleeper effect in young adulthood. If there is a fear of marriage (Hedged Bet) or a fear of certain characteristics (Avoiding the Demon) intimate relationships may be more difficult to form.

Attribution Theory

Attribution theory is particularly useful in explaining how relationship paradigms are constructed from one's family. Attributions are characteristics or definitions that an observer applies or associates with a certain object, person, or concept. The attributions that children form in relationships with their parents may be related to the attributions formed during their own intimate relationships (Benson, Arditto, Reguero de Attest & Smith, 1992). The definitions and characteristics of a happy, healthy relationship are created by children's observance of other relationships (e.g. parents) and then are recreated in their own intimate relationships in adulthood. The attributions which create relationship paradigms may be a mechanism more subtle than modeling. This would explain how the scripts for intimacy that are written during childhood become activated later, once the individual is married (Benson, et al., 1992). Such an explanation could be applied to the concept of the sleeper effect. While a child is younger, and uninterested in forming intimate relationships, such attributions are unimportant and unapplied, yet upon reaching young adulthood, these attributions become relevant.

Past Theories of the Long Term Effects of Parental Divorce

A variety of theories have been applied to determine the long-term effects of divorce on children and more specifically on the transmission of divorce. Past theories fail to acknowledge the wide variations in families' experiences with divorce. Some studies have found serious short and long term effects of divorce

while others have examined the positive aspects of the experience (Demo & Ganong, 1994). In the context of this study several predominant theories will be discussed and how each may be validated or contradicted.

Role Model Theory

Role model theory is based on two presumptions: that in divorced homes, marriage related attitudes transmitted to children do not coincide with successful marriages, and that children are more likely to be exposed to dysfunctional styles of marital interaction (based on their divorcing parents' models) (Greenberg & Nay, 1982).

Thus role model theory assumes that in order to be a competent marriage partner, one must have had parents who modeled appropriate gender and marital roles from which to learn (Mueller & Pope, 1977). A divorce causes a break in the modeling process and does not allow for a constant dual gender socialization for the child. The children are unable to use their parents as effective sex-role or marital role models. Consequently, when trying to form a working marital relationship, the adult does not have strong role models on which to base behaviors. Sex role modeling is important for those persons following the traditional model of marriage where each person's role is determined by their gender.

Complementary to the emphasis on same-sex modeling, role model theory also contends that the adult from the divorced family must be aware of the "normal" structure in a marital relationship in order to have a successful marriage

(Pope & Mueller, 1976). The normal structure is based on predetermined traditional roles that should exist in a marriage. A traditional marriage/normal structure is defined as male head of the household as sole provider with a wife who stays at home and cares for the children. The normal structure has become the prevailing paradigm of the traditional marriage.

Attitude Transmission

Role model theory underlies much of the literature dealing with the transmission of attitudes, especially those of gender and marriage role expectations (e.g. Amato & Booth, 1991; Coleman & Ganong, 1984; Kiecolt & Acock, 1988; Marlar & Jacobs, 1992). The following section will cover the attitudes that are said to be transmitted, with a discussion of how these theories' link to the role model theory.

Role Expectations. If there are gender role differences between those from divorced and nondivorced families, they may also be linked to differences in marriage role expectations. Those persons with differing gender role beliefs from the traditional gender roles may be more accepting of nontraditional relationships. A study of 2,544 men and women aged 18-34 found that adult children from divorced families had less idealized views of marriage and were more accepting of non-traditional family structures (Amato, 1988a). When studying differences of marriage role expectations, Marlar and Jacobs (1992) found gender and family structure to be significant variables. Of the 100 college students surveyed, males from divorced families had more traditional

expectations than their counterparts from non-divorced families; females from divorced families had more companionship (egalitarian) role expectations than females from other families. This finding contradicts the role model theory. The females may have had a stronger desire to attain the more egalitarian roles they witnessed by the divorce of their parents (i.e. mothers went to work, fathers cooked and cleaned). While the males may not have realized the benefits of such an arrangement. Another study of college and high school students failed to find differences in marriage role expectations across family structure (Coleman & Ganong, 1984). Again if adults with greater acceptance of nontraditional relationships are examined through the lens of the prevailing paradigm, they would be considered as failures by not getting or staying married.

The inconclusive or contradictory results of gender and marriage role expectation transmission in divorced families shows a weakness in role model theory and method of measurement. The theory itself is based on the prevailing paradigm of marriage as the goal for relationships. The studies relied on concepts (such as attitudes towards marriage and divorce) that could be quantitatively measured but may not adequately address processes related to intimacy outcomes.

Attitudes towards Marriage and Divorce. The body of literature that deals with the transmission of attitudes about divorce and marriage from parents to children is based on the presumption that children with divorced parents will have more positive attitudes about divorce and negative attitudes towards

marriage (Coleman & Ganong, 1984; Amato, 1988; Keith & Finlay, 1988; Marlar & Jacob, 1992; Tasker, 1992). The results have been inconclusive. A study of 2,544 men and women between the ages of 18 and 34 found no significant differences in attitudes between those from non-divorced and divorced families towards the advantages of marriage and divorce (Amato, 1988a). Another study of 867 participants aged 15 to 22 from a variety of family structures found no significant differences in marriage attitudes based on family structure; however, significant differences were found in attitudes based on the reported integration levels of the families (Coleman & Ganong, 1984). Integration includes time spent together as a family and feelings of intimacy within the family. The higher the level of integration, regardless of family structure, the more positive the participants were towards marriage. This finding suggests of intimacy within the family and process variables when considering outcomes related to family structure.

While Amato (1988a) and Coleman and Ganong (1984) found no differences between the beliefs of children from different family structures, other research has found differences between family structures in the transmission of marriage/divorce attitudes. Tasker (1992) studied 306 white adolescents aged 17-18 and found that teenagers from divorced backgrounds were less likely to want to marry than those from non-divorced families. Positive feelings towards divorce among those from divorced homes were found in studies based on college students (Coleman & Ganong, - 1984; Greenberg & Nay, 1982). Amato &

Booth (1991) found more positive attitudes toward divorce in those participants who had experienced a parental divorce, based on a sample of 1,331 individuals below 55 years of age.

Inconsistent results could be due to the methods of sampling, or how the attitudes were operationalized. An examination of the detrimental effects of divorce often resulted in a search for the reason for intergenerational transmission of divorce. Divorce may be a result of difficulties with intimacy or a desire for self-fulfillment, both of which were not considered in these studies.

For example, in their introduction of their study of the differences in marriage role expectations of 100 college students from divorced and non-divorced families, Marlar & Jacob (1992) attested that "the fact that these children from divorced parents are more likely to divorce indicates that their attitudes of marriage are somewhat different from those of children from intact families. This conclusion may be overstated given that the study failed to incorporate other factors such as infidelity, or irreconcilable differences contributing to the termination of these marriages besides more liberal attitudes towards marriage and divorce. Could it not also be that besides the progressive attitudes the children may have, these adult children may also have had difficulty with the roles a marriage requires, as earlier suggested, or the intimacy issues that arise in such a relationship?

What is not entirely clear though, is how the experience of parental divorce affects attitudes and subsequent behavior. While some studies (e.g.

Greenberg & Nay, 1982; Coleman & Ganong, 1984; Amato, 1988) suggest children of divorce have more accepting attitudes about divorce and are subsequently more "divorce prone," others suggest the experience of parental divorce makes children "divorce avoidant" as adults, supporting the possibility of "avoiding the demon." For example, Wallerstein comments that an adult who has experienced a parental divorce may not want to go through one firsthand, nor inflict the any negative aspects on his/her own children (Wallerstein, 1988). This may result in avoiding or delaying marriage due to a fear of what may happen or staying in an unsatisfactory marriage.

The research of such attitudes should not be dismissed, though. How one views marriage and divorce can be one indicator, of many, of how one feels about intimacy. Not viewing marriage as a positive option could be caused by a fear of intimacy or a fear of having a marriage that ends in divorce. The concept of a pragmatic or permanent view of marriage is further discussed in the discussion of process versus structure. The error of past researchers has been to put too much emphasis on attitudes toward marriage and too little emphasis on the examination of people's beliefs about intimacy and close relationships. The emphasis has been on viewing marriage as the ultimate success in a relationship, which is the cultural bias that past research has been working under.

Economic Disadvantage, Social Control and Mate Selection Theories

Mate selection theory connects the issue of economic disadvantage and inadequate social control with divorce. While many studies seem to be based on the mate selection hypothesis, few actually refer to this theory by name in their published works. Mueller & Pope (1977) were the first researchers to explicitly state this rationale. They hypothesized that when both poor economic conditions and less social control by the family are linked in an adolescent's life (due to a parental divorce) there is a greater chance of the chosen mate to have less desirable qualities, allowing for a greater chance for divorce. For example, from this perspective one could speculate that a woman whose parents divorced by the time she was sixteen would be more apt to marry at a younger age, be less-educated, have a husband with a low-income job, be pregnant at the time of marriage and have first husbands who were previously divorced (Booth, Brinkerhoff & White, 1984). All of these variables have been found to be tied to less marital stability. Daughters from divorced families have been particularly apt to be in situations that promote early marriage such as leaving school, leaving home and/or forming serious relationships (Tasker, 1992). Yet the mate selection rationale does not explain the higher-educated, later-marrying, childless population of adults from divorced families that may get divorced.

The social control hypothesis is founded on the premise that one's family forms a discipline network for the offspring (Mueller & Pope, 1977). Within the realm of discipline, is control of the adolescent's dating behaviors, mate

selection, and support of marriage choice. If the family does not provide the necessary discipline and support, the adolescents are left to rely on self-discipline with regard to academic performance, postponing deep intimate relationships and delaying marriage until schooling has been completed (Mueller & Pope, 1977). Without such guidance, the adolescents may rush into intimate, sexual relationships or not finish school.

It has been found that when a divorce occurs, the standard of living for the children fails to meet the pre-divorce standard. This is based on lack of economic support from the non-custodial parent and the fact that the children predominantly live with the mother after a divorce. Female-headed households are at an economic disadvantage due to less education, lower wages and fewer job possibilities. This economic rationale is grounded in the idea that with less financial support, the children are given fewer possibilities for higher education attainment, and enter early into adult roles such as marriage or full-time employment (Pope & Mueller, 1976; Keith & Finlay, 1988). The lack of social control linked with less economic wealth may create a context for poor mate selection by children from these families. For example, Hetherington (1972) found that women from divorced families were more likely to marry early and their mates were of lower educational status.

Previous Operationalizations of Intimacy

Previous operationalizations of intimacy have generally encompassed the dating patterns and sexual behaviors of the adolescents. Booth, Brinkerhoff, &

White's (1984) study was one of the first pieces of literature that began to examine the dating processes of adolescents from divorced families emphasizing the formation of intimate heterosexual relationships rather than the desire for/or dismissal of a future marital partner. The 365 college students (of 2,538) from divorced families were asked about the amount of parental conflict during & after the divorce, the quality of parent-child relations, and parents' remarriage.

The researchers found that parental divorce was related to increases in dating activity, especially if there was conflict before/after the divorce, the parent-child relationship deteriorated and there was no remarriage of the custodial parent. The increase in dating activity was determined by number of relationships, age of first relationship, number of sexual partners, etc. There was a deleterious effect on the perceived quality of courtship only if there was post-divorce conflict and a decline in parent-child relations. Generally, there were no differences in effects for gender or age. Due to the quasi-experimental design of the study, Booth, Brinkerhoff & White (1984) were unable to discuss causal mechanisms at work.

In one of the few studies that attempted to look at intimacy itself, interesting findings dealing with sexual behavior were discussed (Gabardi & Rosen, 1992). This study examined 300 college students, and addressed a variety of questions dealing with sexual behavior, intimacy, attitudes towards marriage and relationship beliefs. Intimacy included level of communication,

satisfaction, stability and positive affect in the relationship. It was found that those students from divorced families had significantly more sexual partners than their peers. Also, while involved in a steady relationship, students from divorced families desired more sexual involvement (more partners, more types of sexual behaviors with each partner) than their counterparts, though they generally did not receive it.

Similar findings were discussed by Kelly (1981) who analyzed data from Wallerstein's five year longitudinal study of the effects of divorce. She found that the adolescents who had serious psychological difficulties rushed into heterosexual activity clinging to any relationships they could form. Those from divorced families without such difficulties avoided intimacy. This division into two camps was also found by Hepworth, Ryder and Dreyer (1984), though they found more adolescents from divorced families to be in accelerated dating patterns when compared to participants who had lost a parent to death. This may mean that these young adults equate sexual involvement with greater intimacy and are attempting to fill a void they are experiencing (Gabardi & Rosen, 1992). Not receiving the sexual involvement that they desire may cause them to continue to experience a "lack of intimacy" and dissatisfaction in their lives.

It is not entirely clear why some children from divorced homes have difficulty establishing satisfactory intimate relationships. Some theorists speculate that parents' emotional preoccupation during and after the divorce

draws their attention from the children and that this negatively impacts them (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). After the divorce the parents are attempting to rebuild their own lives, including rebuilding self-esteem, dating and dealing with a new financial situation. This is not to say that prior to the divorce parents have no preoccupations, but the preoccupations tend to be greater post-divorce. Mothers are especially prone to all of these changes in their lives as they often receive custody of the children, have more financial difficulties, and are forced to take on more responsibilities (Demo & Ganong, 1994; Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991). As parents spend more time with their personal issues they have less time to devote to their children. Consequently the children may suffer, not feeling they are receiving the same intimacy they had received prior to the divorce. In an effort to fill that void they begin to search elsewhere (i.e. sexual and/or romantic relationships). Their search may be somewhat desperate causing them to turn to less desirable places or people.

When these intimacy issues are looked at within the context of Erikson's intimacy crises, Nelson, Allison and Sundre (1992) were unable to find significant differences among young adolescents from differing family structures. They examined the effects of family status (intact, divorced) and family functioning (adaptation and cohesion) on personality scales. Their lack of findings caused them to surmise that the lack of extensive literature dealing with parental divorce's effects on adolescent intimate relationships may be due to inconclusive findings by other researchers (Nelson et al., 1992).

Process vs. Structure

The studies of long-term effects of parental divorce have concentrated on whether children of divorced families are more prone to divorce compared to children from intact families. The research already discussed examined events and attitudes based on static conceptualizations of divorce and marriage (e.g. Mueller & Pope, 1977; Greenberg & Nay, 1982; Kiecolt & Acock, 1988). The past theories presented, Role Model Theory, Mate Selection Theory and Attitude Transmission are based on the prevailing paradigm of marriage. Such theories and findings (i.e. living up to the expectations of a role model, staying within the confines of social control, delaying/rushing into/avoiding marriage) do not address an underlying desire (or fear) of intimacy that may exist in children with divorced parents. The role model theory is based on the "appropriate" roles founded in the prevailing paradigm set by a patriarchal society and fails to acknowledge the positive aspects of nontraditional families. Role model theory fails to acknowledge that divorce may even be seen as a "safety valve" for dysfunctional families (Demo & Ganong, 1994).

The social control/economic/mate selection hypotheses again emphasize the structure of marriage itself, as do studies of marriage and divorce attitudes. While the social and economic factors are definitely important is the discussion of long-term effects of divorce; why not also look beyond what control the divorced parent has, the economic situation the child is placed in to see what interpersonal factors are present that may affect the child? Parents are the

primary identification figures, as is their relationship, for the child or adolescent (Marks, 1986; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). Consequently the intimate experiences children share with their parents, witness between parents, or see with a dating or remarried parent are going to be the experiences on which they base their own striving for intimacy (Marks, 1989).

Process, rather than structure, is a key element missing from most studies examining the impact of divorce on children's later intimate relationships. Divorce is not a static legal event as much as it is a process from predivorce conflict, separation, the legal process and post-divorce adjustment (Demo and Acock, 1994). Experiences at various points throughout the divorce may be related to different developmental outcomes in children and have different implications for intimacy as well. The influences of divorce appear to change with offspring's relationships with parents and others (Gabardi & Rosen, 1992). The relationship with one's parents affects, in part, the ability to develop attachment and independence. Once issues of intimacy develop, the relationship with the parents, the relationship with peers and the individual's perceptions of both are important. With each stage of development different environmental factors become important. Consequently the influence of the divorce experience on children depends on what point in the developmental process the parental divorce occurs.

The concept of permanence-pragmatism in close relationships provides much needed insight regarding process oriented aspects of intimacy and moves

beyond structural indicators (Morgan & Scanzoni, 1987). Permanence is defined as the belief that marriage is to be maintained for its own intrinsic sake; such beliefs are usually tied with commitment to group (i.e. family) interests, traditional gender roles, and greater religiosity. In contrast, pragmatism is the belief that marriage should meet the needs of the individual, and is linked to opposing views such as interest in personal growth, egalitarianism, and less devoutness (Morgan & Scanzoni, 1987). These belief systems are theorized to exist on a continuum with permanence on one pole and pragmatism on the other.

Those adolescents who mature in a divorced home may lean more towards a pragmatic orientation. Some evidence suggests that being raised in a mother-headed household for a period of time provides a more egalitarian environment for children. Having viewed their parents' decision to meet their own needs rather than maintain an unhappy, deteriorating marriage, these adolescents are given a paradigm of pursuing self-interests. Subsequently, intimacy itself may not be the basis for young adults' difficulties with relationships and/or marriage (if difficulties are defined as lack of permanence) as much by their *orientation* toward how permanent marriage is as an institution. People who are more permanence-bound are likely to be more tolerant of fewer rewards and higher costs in their relationships while pragmatists expect higher rewards and fewer costs (Morgan & Scanzoni, 1987). Therefore, based on this exchange framework, one could speculate if adolescents incorporate their parents' pragmatism into their marital or relationship paradigms they will, in turn, expect

more of their partners, and if they do not receive such they will likely terminate an unsatisfying marriage.

Intimacy Redefined

Variations in how individuals define intimacy is an important issue generally not addressed by previous research. Studies in which researchers utilized attitudinal measures (e.g. Greenberg & Nay, 1982; Amato & Booth; Marlar & Jacobs, 1992) designed to measure certain aspects of intimacy and relationships may not adequately capture the full range of experiences (e.g. through attitudinal measures). Symbolic interactionism gives theoretical credence to the concept of varying definitions of intimacy. By utilizing predetermined definitions of intimacy, such as the level of sexual involvement or attitudes towards marriage, (both in viewing it and measuring it within own relationships), past studies have ignored *personal constructions* of intimacy. In order to truly define the experiences of adult children from divorced families, their own words and definitions must be used. Researchers need to allow for each person's own definitions and perceptions of intimacy in order to determine the lens through which the study participants examines relationships.

Each person constructs a meaning for intimacy. its worth, and how it is measured. Symbolic interactionism explains the importance of these constructions as well as providing a framework for the researchers to take an "insider's" perspective. This perspective allows the researcher to better understand the viewpoint of the participant.

Limitations of Previous Work

Narrow conceptualizations of intimacy, methodologies unresponsive to process, and a lack of agreement amongst researchers on what constitutes intimacy are all basic limitations to the study of the effects of parental divorce and later life intimate relationships. A deficit approach has dominated research examining the effects of divorce on children. In general, such an approach involves comparing adolescents from "disrupted" families to those from "intact" families (e.g. Kulka & Weingarten, 1979; Mueller & Pope, 1977; Greenberg & Nay, 1982; Amato & Booth, 1991). Such a comparison implies that one is inherently superior to another (Kitson, 1992). The amount of conflict and communication can vary between and within married and divorced families. Therefore to compare the two family types as if there are some other inherent differences (besides the structural), appears to be based on the presumption that the "intact" family is intrinsically better.

The prevailing paradigm of a heterosexual, sexually exclusive, permanent marriage as the most ideal situation is a harmful and unsubstantiated standard to place on individuals today. To stay in a relationship that is unhealthy in order to maintain the permanence of the marriage does not allow for individual growth but expects personal sacrifice (Scanzoni, et al, 1989). There has been a greater acceptance in society for self-fulfillment (Demo & Ganong, 1994), yet the consequences that may come from such individualism, such as leaving an unhappy marriage, are not as accepted.

Conclusion

The present study examined the responses of young adult students from divorced homes, and examined their relationship paradigms within the context of the experience of parental divorce. Rather than concentrating on attitudes towards divorce and marriage, this study will examine intimacy. Intimacy was defined by the students and was traced throughout their dating experiences. By utilizing qualitative methods this study was not be hindered by a set agenda but instead allowed the participants to tell their own story. These accounts were analyzed to determine the underlying relationship paradigms. The emphasis was on how the divorce was perceived and how the participants feel the divorce has/has not affected their intimate relationships.

CHAPTER THREE

Method

Design

This research examined the development of intimate relationships of young adults from divorced families. The data were collected from 21 college students from divorced families. These 21 participants were drawn from a larger project that had 58 participants; the 21 were from the first group of participants interviewed.

Qualitative methods were used to collect the data. Audiotaped interviews were conducted with each student. These tapes were then transcribed and analyzed. The analysis was largely content oriented, although descriptive analysis was used to underscore findings of the content analysis. Content analysis is the qualitative examination of participants responses to determine what themes, similarities and differences emerge (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Sample and Procedure

The sample consisted of 21 undergraduates whose parents have divorced and who attended a large Southeastern State University . This is a subsample of the first stage of data collection from a larger project interviewing 58 students. To recruit the necessary number of students, purposive sampling was used; the researcher posted announcements throughout the university and made announcements in classrooms. The colleges of Human Resources and Engineering were especially targeted to obtain a relatively equal balance of male

and female participants because more women were enrolled in Human Resources and more men in Engineering classes.

To be eligible to participate in the project, participants had to have divorced parents. The posted announcements gave a brief explanation of the study and a contact person. A Project Coordinator was hired to coordinate the scheduling of interviews and help with interviewing for the larger project. The Project Coordinator was listed as the contact person for the study. Her name and phone number were listed on the posted announcements. This allowed potential participants to call the Coordinator to schedule an interview or ask questions. To encourage participation, the macro and micro benefits of the research were stressed. For example, the necessity of the research to shed light on the topic of divorce and its long-term effects on issues such as intimacy in young adulthood was explained as a macro benefit. Micro benefits for the individuals were the opportunity to tell their story, have access to a list of support services and receive a copy of the results. Through the announcements to classes and the posted flyers the required number of participants were recruited.

The students either scheduled an interview after class or called the Project Coordinator to do so. At that time any questions were answered, and the participant was told when, where and how long the interview would be (e.g. 30 minutes to 1 hour). At the designated time the participant met with the interviewer in a private room. Each participant was given an informed consent form to read and sign. The informed consent form included a brief explanation of

the study, how confidentiality was maintained and the benefits and risks of participation (see Appendix A). Upon signing the consent form the participants were given the demographic survey to complete (Appendix C). After completing the surveys the participants were reminded that the interview would be audiotaped and were asked for any final questions. At this time the sixteen question interview was conducted (see Appendix B for questions).

Once the interview was completed the participant signed a reimbursement form to receive their monetary acknowledgment of completion. A list of support services with referrals to local agencies that offer counseling or hotlines was offered. All interviews were conducted by this researcher or the Project Coordinator in a private office or conference room. The interview and survey lasted between 20 minutes to one hour. The audiotapes and surveys were then labeled with code numbers and placed in sealed envelopes until transported to the transcriber.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

The informed consent form was the only page with the participant's name on it, and was separated from the interview materials. Each interview was given a code number to be used as a reference during analysis. The audiotapes were transcribed by a paid staff person who did not have access to the participants' names thus preserving the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants. After transcription, the tapes were erased. The researcher and her thesis advisor were the only ones able to view the documents. Any references to specific participants

in the discussion of results were done anonymously. No distinguishing characteristics of the participants were linked to any quotes that were used. The participants were aware of all of the above by means of the informed consent form they signed.

Instrumentation

The questions utilized in this interview were taken from a variety of sources. The preliminary questions were standard demographic questions used for sample description. To determine the permanence-pragmatism level of the participants' relationships, questions were adapted from a study of the effects of parental loss on intimate relationships formation (Hepworth, Ryder and Dreyer, 1984). That study suggested that young adults from divorced families have an accelerated dating pattern moving in and out of relationships searching for a way to diminish the value of intimate relationships and the pain caused by loss. Such a conclusion lead, in part, to the questions regarding dating history and the description of a significant relationship.

Marks' (1986) research on marital paradigms was the basis for questions addressing the parents' (of the participants) relationship, the participants' intimate relationships and their attitudes about relationships in general. Marital paradigms are individuals' belief systems surrounding marriage. Recall that for the purposes of this study, marital paradigms were expanded to include relationships in general. The more comprehensive paradigm was renamed a relationship paradigm. These paradigms include how relationships develop, how

conflict is handled, and what expectations exist for relationships. The answers to the relationship-related questions were used by the researcher to explore each participant's relationship paradigm and to examine themes emerging from study participants' responses to questions.

Questions were developed which addressed the nature of the parent-child relationship and any changes that occurred within them as a result of the divorce. It has been theorized that the level of attachment and intimacy between parent and child can affect the marital paradigm (Marks, 1986), and the extent of impact divorce has on the children (Coleman & Ganong, 1984).

The goal of this study is not to provide causal statements about the effects of divorce. The researcher is attempting to understand and describe the connections adult children, themselves, make about the experience of divorce and their present intimate relationships. Therefore the results and discussion sections are framed around the emerging themes and the relationship paradigms of the study participants.

Analysis

A qualitative content analysis was completed on 21 interviews of college students. Content analysis involves examining the provided text, dividing the text into segments and sorting the segments into groups (Tesch, 1990). In order to complete this process a technique called "open coding" is utilized. Strauss and Corbin (1990) describe a series of steps involved in open coding. Initially, the data are read to get an overall sense of its content. Certain categories are found

in the data and labeled. Tesch (1990) suggests listing the topics found in each data set and comparing sets of topics for similarities and differences. Once a list of topics is generated from all the data these topics are categorized (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Data organization, the fleshing out of topics and grouping them into categories, is the preparation for data interpretation. These categories may then be used to describe and/or to analyze the data (Tesch, 1990). Open coding involves categorizing the data by similar properties to be used for description of the data which is consistent with the descriptive nature of the present study. Qualitative methodology is an important technique utilized to capture process and diversity of experiences. This study used qualitative measures due to the somewhat exploratory nature of the study. The intent of this research is to describe the processes and diversity of experiences in the intimate relationships of children from divorced families.

Present Analysis

This study builds on the work of Wallerstein (1987), Marks (1986) and Hepworth, et al. (1984), and utilizes qualitative methodology to create a more descriptive study of intimacy. Open-ended questions were utilized to allow for an unlimited range of responses. Closed-ended questions were utilized for demographic (descriptive) purposes and to gather specific information regarding the participants' dating histories that may not be easily determined from the open-ended questions.

The researcher examined the transcribed data for emerging themes. As suggested, the coding process did not begin until all responses had been read a minimum of three times in order for the researcher to be thoroughly familiar with the narrative data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The approach utilized was similar to the process described by Marshall & Rossman (1989). This strategy involves identifying certain objectives or theoretical concepts based on participants responses and the research questions, that will then guide the content analysis. These categories were: effects of divorce, relationship with mother, relationship with father, participants' significant relationship, perceptions' of parents' relationship, relationship paradigm (including expectations for future relationships) and participants' personality. Personality included any self-descriptions the participants made regarding their temperament, feelings, actions or behaviors. Each category was then examined for similarities among participants' responses. Similar responses were grouped together within each category. At this point emerging themes and affect were noted and labeled.

To facilitate the analysis, a chart was created was summarizing demographic information and certain responses, as listed below, of each of the study participants. This chart was for organizational purposes only, and is not included in the thesis. The chart was the researcher's method of tracking the relationships between themes. The information included on the chart was the code number, race, age at the time of divorce, gender, family issues (conflict, alcohol use, infidelity, prolonged absences), whether the student knew about the

divorce ahead of time, presence of positiveness towards the divorce, whether independence was perceived as an effect of the divorce, if the student stated there was no effect, support systems, relationship with mother, relationship with father, if presently in a relationship, relationship paradigm, and experiences in intimate relationships.

It had been independently found by Arditti (1996) who completed a computer aided analysis on the complete sample of 58 participants that similarities and differences were found between paradigms and real-life experiences of the students participating. By not using a computer program to analyze the data, this researcher had difficulty coding the data to find these similarities and differences between the paradigms and experiences of the students. The computer program, NUD-IST found themes of qualities found in an "ideal" relationship, process, and endings within the relationship paradigm category; and process, strengths, problems, endings, and self (how student is perceived in relationship) within lived relationships. These issues will be discussed throughout the results section. Discrepancies between the lived (i.e. participants' actual experiences) and the "ideal" will also be explored.

In presenting the data, the themes are presented with examples of findings in participants' own words. The researcher then describes similarity and diversity of experiences among participants in each domain and subcategory.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability. To maintain and test reliability, the following questions were asked and responded to as discussed by Miles and Huberman (1994). *Was data collected across the full range of appropriate settings, times, respondents, and so on suggested by the research questions?* The research question looked for description of the experiences of children of divorced families in their adulthood. By interviewing only young adults from divorced families and utilizing broad open-ended questions, this was accomplished. It was not possible to perform a longitudinal study, as could be argued, due to time and funding constraints. *Do findings show meaningful parallelism across data sources (informants, contexts, times)?* Regardless of the interviewer, place or time of interview there was a similarity of responses across participants. *In utilizing two interviewers, did they have comparable data collection protocols?* The interviewers for this study had communicated throughout the duration of the study; They discussed anything relevant to data collection such as wording of questions, difficulties encountered and interview procedures. There were two changes made during the course of the study. To make the reading of the relationship questions easier, each student was asked if he/she was presently in a relationship (otherwise questions had to be asked in the present and past tense). The second change was the addition of the last question asking "Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experience with divorce or your relationship?" This question was added because

often once the tape recorder was fumed off the students shared more information. This final question was added after the fifth interview.

Both participants were white female graduate students, one was 24, the other was 35. Both were married at the time of the interviews. The participants were randomly assigned to the interviewers. The participants chose the time of the interview based on their schedules. Two rooms were used for interviews, based on availability at the time of the interview.

Internal Validity. Internal validity was tested by considering certain issues, as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994). *Do the accounts "ring true, make sense and seem convincing or plausible? Also, are the presented data well-linked to the categories of prior theory?* The accounts not only make sense but there are similarities across accounts and with prior theories. The participants interpretation of events and perceptions make inherent sense when considering their experiences.

Was negative evidence found or were any predictions made found to be accurate? Negative evidence was found that contradicted previous theory. An example is the positive feelings towards the divorce that the participants discussed. This data is examined and described within the results and discussion sections of this paper. Negative evidence (evidence that contradicts existing theory) is important to the integrity of the research in that it validates the lack of bias by the researcher. There were examples of previous theory found in the data, such as the social control theory and Hedged Bet paradigm (see

Discussion). Thus predictions of relationship paradigms and divorce effects were found.

External Validity. External validity and transferability was tested by asking suggested questions (Miles and Huberman, 1994). *Are the characteristics of the original sample of persons, settings, processes (etc.) fully described so that the study may be replicated and/or compared to similar studies?* There is a complete description of the methodology and sample utilized in this study so that replication would be possible. Comparisons with other samples would be adequate as there is a complete demographic description of the population included.

Does the report examine possible threats to generalizability? Does the report discuss settings/populations that may be used to create a more generalizable database? As the sample was taken from college students in a southern state, there are certain limitations to generalizability. There would need to be further research on non-college students, and of greater age and racial diversity in order to create generalizable conclusions. The goal of this study, however, is not to make generalized statements, but to explore and describe the experiences of this particular sample of students.

It should be noted that Miles and Huberman (1994) did not use the generally accepted definitions for internal and external validity. Their definition of Internal validity is based on the comparison of one's findings with other theories. The generally used definition of Internal validity is the determination of whether

you are testing what you intended to test. By comparing findings to other theories and finding similarities, it could be argued that Internal validity has been proven. External validity generally emphasizes generalizability and whether or not the research is useful. Miles and Huberman (1994) concentrated on the generalizability aspect when creating questions to determine external validity.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Description of Sample

The final sample on which analyses were performed consisted of 21 students (Table 1). Their ages ranged from 21 to 23 with an average age of 20.9 years. The average age of the participants at the time of the divorce was 9 years 8 months with a range from 2 to 20 years of age. While only two of the students' mothers had remarried, over half of the fathers (N=11) had. Fourteen of the students lived in single-parent households with their mothers. There were 8 males and 13 females in the group. Overwhelmingly the interviewees identified themselves as Caucasian (N=16, or 76%); three identified themselves as African American and one each as Asian and Hispanic.

The majority of the students were single and not cohabiting (N=17). Of the remaining four, three were cohabiting and one was married. At the time of the study, 13 students were in relationships with an average length of 1.6 years. The average age students began dating was 14.8 years. The mode dating age was 14.0 years with a range of 11 to 19 years of age.

The dating patterns of participants varied. Almost half of the students interviewed (N=10) indicated they had casually dated a few people; 14 participants also reported dating a few people exclusively. Eight students had both few casual relationships and few exclusive relationships. Three students,

Table 1
Subjects' Demographics

"Name"	Age	Age at Divorce	Gender	Race*	Marital Status**	In Relationship?	Length of Relationship***
Abby	21.8	13	F	AA	S	Y	1.20
Barb	22.1	7	F	C	M	Y	(blank)
George	22.1	9	M	C	S	N	0.00
Ron	21.2	14	M	H	S	Y	2.20
Cindy	22.1	13	F	C	L	Y	2.10
Sam	21.6	6	M	C	S	N	0.00
Deb	19.6	10	F	C	S	Y	0.60
Ellen	19.5	12	F	C	S	N	0.00
Fran	20.1	15	F	C	S	N	0.00
Helen	21.0	3	F	C	S	N	0.00
Jessica	19.6	4.5	F	C	S	Y	1.00
Ken	23.0	14	M	AA	S	Y	2.00
Linda	21.6	16	F	C	S	Y	6.00
Meg	20.9	16	F	C	S	Y	1.90
Nancy	20.2	12	F	C	S	N	0.00
Tony	19.2	5	M	C	S	N	0.00
Vincent	20.4	5	M	AS	S	Y	1.60
Walt	20.8	8	M	C	S	Y	0.50
Adam	20.2	2	M	C	S	Y	0.30
Ben	21.0	10	M	C	S	Y	1.20
Patty	20.9	3.5	F	C	S	Y	0.25

*AA=African American; C=Caucasian; H=Hispanic; AS=Asian

**S=Single; M=Married; L=Living together

*** In years

two females and one male, indicated they had dated very little. Excluding the married participant, four others were or had been engaged and three others had cohabited with their partners. Table 1 summarizes demographic information of the participants with their corresponding pseudonyms.

The total number of transcribed lines for the 21 participants was 2,689 lines. Males overall gave more narrative than females did. Female students averaged 111.38 lines while male students averaged 155.125. The lowest number of lines was 67 (by a female) and the highest was 331 (by a male). Since 331 was significantly higher than the remaining males' numbers, thus skewing the results, the mean was also computed for the males excluding the 331. The resulting mean of 130 was still higher than the females. Of the women, 53.8 % provided more than 100 lines of transcription while 75 % of males did so. This difference in the amount of text provided by students created a greater depth in responses from male participants. This gender difference may be attributed to several explanations. It is possible since both interviewers were female, the male participants may have felt more comfortable in disclosing, perhaps even doing so to receive the approval of the interviewers or the interviewers may have acted differently with male participants providing them with more prompts to continue talking or respond in greater depth. Also, stereotypically, women are more likely to self-disclose in their relationships with others, so the female participants may have previously fulfilled their need to discuss the divorce. The male participants

may not have had such an opportunity and therefore had more to say at the time of interview.

Content Analysis

Based upon the students' responses and the study's central focus on how parental divorce may influence adult intimate relationships, three research domains were created. These domains were: Parents, the Experience of the Divorce, and Relationships. Within the domain of Parents, the relationship with the mother, the relationship with the father, and the relationship between parents were all emerging themes. When discussing the Experience of the Divorce, the students discussed conflict, awareness of the divorce, outside support and influences, and the effects of the divorce. Expectations, alcohol and drug use, need for trust and fidelity, and feelings towards love and marriage were all emerging themes in the Relationships domain.

Parents

According to many participant participants, their parents played an integral part in the development of the students' relationship paradigms and how the divorce affected them. Study participants discussed the relationship they had with each parent and the relationship between their parents. The experience and effects of the divorce will be discussed in full detail in another section. This first section will concentrate on the domain of parents.

Relationship with Mother

Most of the students had experienced a close friendship-like relationship with their mothers. Of the 21 students interviewed, 13 had good relationships with their mothers. These mothers provided most of the security, stability and "homemaking" while the children were growing up. As Cindy whose parents divorced when she was 13, said:

[my mother and I were] very close. Of course I was entering that teenage stage when everybody hates their parents, but up until that, very, very, close. My mom was the center of my life.

Ellen was 12 and Deb was 10 when their respective parents divorced. These women had similar experiences with their mothers. Ellen states:

she basically did everything... we spent most of our time together because she was the one I always talked to and she was always there.

Deb agrees:

I guess we were really close as mother and daughter. It's more like we're friends. It's not really like she's my mother... I guess I'm at an age now that it's easier for her to be a friend than a mother...

This closeness existed before and after the divorce with little change in most cases. Walt, whose parents divorced when he was 8 said:

The relationship hasn't changed I don't think. On thing that I really respect her a lot for was that she didn't try to pull me away from my dad when they divorced.

Another student, Ben, stated:

My relationship with my mother has always been really good. She's always been a confidant for me...and it really hasn't changed about the

divorce. If anything, its...strengthened our relationship because she's needed someone to lean on.

There were problems in the mother-child relationships. Perhaps due to the current age of the interviewees, mothers were perceived as giving too much advice. The participants felt they couldn't share everything with their mothers but they seemed to think that they should be able to. This may have been fostered by the friendship-type relationship so many had with their mothers. Two men, Vincent, who is now 20 and Sam, who is 21, said, respectively:

We meet and she's not afraid to tell me things. Sometimes I don't [tell her things] because she'll just end up giving too much advice.

...sometimes I feel like I can tell her things and sometime ...I don't want to tell her things because she feels like she has to get in my business all the time.

Some students saw their mothers were seen as strong women who handled the divorce and family matters well. As Ken, an African-American whose parents divorced when he was 14 reflected:

She basically just supported us in everything...so she was basically doing everything before the divorce. Now a load has been taken off her. She's basically the primary caregiver. She takes care of us, she supports us financially... she's always available.

Yet others viewed their mothers as victims. These women were abused or manipulated by their husbands in a way that caused the children to lose respect for them. These mothers were seen as tweaks for tolerating their husband's behavior. Meg talks of this weakness:

I think my mom kept it going longer than it should have been kept

going. I view my mother as very weak because she took a lot of stuff that she didn't have to take.

Gender role attitudes, as they relate to mothers' behavior and position in participants' lives varied. Some mothers were portrayed as stereotypical homemakers prior to the divorce. The changes that took place in the homemaking activities post-divorce affected the children. Meg continued to describe her mother as the "stereotypical mom who liked cooking and taking care of things." Yet, "she always used to be on top of... stuff like that [bills, laundry and grocery shopping]. She let a lot go... sometimes that's frustrating because I want someone to cook dinner when I come home." Sam, a 21 year old male, said "My mom's a working mother and I think that's great." What's interesting about these particular examples is the female misses the homemaking mother while the male respects the working mother. A particularly interesting point to make is that the male student went to an all male high school because his mother wanted to give him a male perspective, which he did not have at home. Of all the male students, this man was the most vocal of egalitarian views.

There were three situations out of 21 where a poor relationship existed between mother and child. Two students were male, Adam and Tony; the third was Meg who has already been cited as viewing her mother as weak. The similarity was the mothers' lack of control in their own lives. Adam and Tony reported that their mothers had substance abuse problems and Meg reported her mother was emotionally abused by her husband. There was a great deal of

conflict in all three of these marriages which the interviewees witnessed. Adam's parents divorced when he was two. He cannot remember his mother so he relies on other family members' recollections and her present behavior to describe her:

I can only say from hearsay. The weaknesses were my mom and the fact that she was drinking a lot. Me and my father talked and I talked to other family members and she was supposed to be having an extramarital relationship. Everyone I ever talked to told me that was a problem...she always used to blame my stepmother for the divorce and she always kept blaming somebody else.

Tony, while only five when his parents divorced, has much more vivid memories:

I was there a lot of times when they were fighting. My mom... would like to out with her friends and party and drink and stuff and she usually took me with her. I can remember when I was only five, sitting around in the house with a bunch of drunk people and with her. My father came and got me...I can remember one night my dad was throwing dishes and stuff and my grandparents came and got me.

Tony has lived with his grandparents ever since this incident. All three of these students have little to no contact with their mothers.

Relationship with Father

While mother-child relationships were overwhelmingly described as close, father-child relationships were described as much more distant. Of the 21 interviewees all but two cited distant relationships with their fathers either pre or post divorce. The two that were consistently close to their fathers were Tony and Adam, the two participants who reported having no contact with their mothers. Ron, a Hispanic student whose parents divorced when he was 14, succinctly described

the difference between his relationships with his parents: "It's that typical thing where my father and I have the report talks with each other, and my mother and I are more of the rapport."

The father-child relationship was changed significantly by the divorce for most participants. There was either a drastic improvement or decline in the quality of the relationship. Those relationships that improved were due to the fathers' concerted effort to spend time with their children as the non-custodial parent. These adult children actually felt closer to their fathers post-divorce since there was now a bond formed by emotional support and physical time together. Ellen's parents were divorced when she was twelve. Now at the age of 19 she discusses the differences in her relationship with her father pre- and post-divorce:

I don't really remember my father... I don't really remember him being there a lot... we never talked or anything... he basically was just there. He remembers stuff about me, so I know we were together a lot. We're really good friends, we're almost best friends because I live with him. He does everything for me. He's going through a divorce right now, so we're a lot closer and we talk almost every day. And he's there a lot more and he's reamed a lot more responsibility to do with the family.

Fran's parents were divorced five years ago when she was fifteen. She talks of her relationship with her father:

Because of the divorce I wound up getting a lot closer to my father, because everyone else turned their backs on him. Previously I pretty much hated him... Like the beginning of my freshman year, every time he would come home... he would do something or say something that would make me cry.

Fran talks of an incident when she went to visit her father and found out he was dating someone. He had told her they were just friends. Fran decided to confront her father:

I can't believe he would think I was so dumb, that I wouldn't know he was dating this woman and everything...So it took a lot of gut, but I confronted him with that...through that talk and that confrontation, it was really neat because we talked a lot about my growing up and I wound up forgiving him even though he didn't deserve it probably at all. We just talked it through so I wound up forgiving him for all the past, and just have started our relationship from there.

During the interview some students were visibly bothered by their poor relationships with their fathers, while others provided this information with little emotion. In a matter-of-fact fashion, two students, Ken and Linda, described the absence of their fathers in their lives. Ken was 14 when his parents divorced:

I don't stay in contact with him. Every maybe five, six, seven months out of the year I might hear from him or get in touch with him or give him a call... He's going from job to job and he's, like, busy"

Linda was 16 when her parents divorced. Now at 21 she has this to say about her father:

I was daddy's little girl [but] he really played me against my mom a lot... when they got their last divorce, there was no choice. I had to live with her...I do not see or talk to my father anymore.

Abby, clearly upset, discussed the pain her father caused her and how it affects her now. During her description of how her father affects her present relationship she began crying. She compared her boyfriend with her father. She was about fifteen minutes into the interview when she became visibly upset. Until that point Abby had discussed her father's absence in a bitter, tough manner:

Now we don't talk. I don't even associate him as being my father... we have...nothing to say to each other... I don't get anything from him, I support myself one hundred percent... if I got married my father would not walk me down the aisle.

Her father had been in the military and had been unfaithful to her mother. His infidelity, in connection with his long absences and the final divorce ruined any possibility for Abby to have a relationship with him.

Barb, whose parents divorced when she was 7, interpreted her father's behavior post-divorce as rejection. She talked of attempts to reconcile with her father, but seemed unable to forgive him. There had been a drastic change in the time spent with her father pre and post divorce. She discussed these differences:

When my mother worked on weekends...we (her father and her) did a lot of things together. And then after the divorce... he was completely out of the picture for two years and then he came back...for a few weekends...I'm still confused about my feelings for my father because of this rejection. I see everything that he's done...and I try to look past everything's he done, but its kind of hard.

Descriptions of fathers' relationships with their children before the divorce were more diverse than those of mothers' relationships. Descriptions ranged from some participants being Daddy's little girls or "baby to others who saw their fathers as "just there" or as disciplinarians. Descriptions of the father-child relationship post-divorce surrounded impersonal topics such as school or finances rather than emotional or personal issues. Again as Ron had described, "report" not "rapport." Meg says about her father "He actually asks how school is

going, whereas before I really don't think he knew what grade I was in." Other participants, Sam and Ben, shared similar views:

There's definitely a distance...There's like silence because we have nothing to say to each other sometimes.

It's kind of like a surface-type relationship where you just do things together and spend time together and stuff like that...kind of like what's going on around in the world, how are your classes going, that type of thing...

The most common memories of spending time with the father prior to the divorce were recollections of sports like such as fishing, swimming or little league. As Sam explained, all he remembered of his father were photograph-like images of specific events. The mothers' relationships were described as a variety of memories connoting a closeness, with fewer specific examples cited.

Overall, emotionally, the relationships with mothers appeared warmer and closer. Fathers were more distant before and after the divorce than mothers were, with the divorce causing more dramatic changes for father-child relationships, given the shift in living arrangements. Fourteen of the participants lived in single parent households with their mothers after the divorce.

Parents' Relationship

The prevailing theme of students' descriptions of the relationship between their parents was distance, either physical or emotional. Of the 21 students interviewed, 10 had parents who were *physically* separated for lengthy periods during the marriage due to the military or the father working overtime. Nineteen students reported experiences, which can be defined as *emotional* separation, of

violence and fighting between parents, alcohol or other drug abuse by at least one parent, and infidelity. These factors were also often cited by the children as the reasons for their parents' divorce. The impact of this emotional or physical separation of parents will be discussed further in the domain of the Experience of Divorce and Relationships.

The overwhelming presence of conflict was the most common characteristic among families. For 11 students the fighting seemed to be the most memorable aspect of their parents' marriage. Four students, Deb, Ben, Nancy and Sam, noted their parents tried to hide the fighting from them. For example, while Deb reported her parents attempt to hide the conflict from her, she was aware of the fighting and "listened to the fights through the air ducts. Nancy, age 12 at the time of her parents' divorce, explained a similar experience:

They would always wait until I went to bed or send me out to play with my friends if they were getting in a fight about something.

Fran's parents were apparently more successful at hiding any conflict that may have existed between them. She said her parents never fought; all she ever witnessed was loving interactions between her parents. Even since the divorce when she was 15 years old, her parents have remained friends:

[dad] comes up and stays in our house over Christmas...there's still a lot of family unity and bond.

Such an experience was rare. Most families continued to have dissension post-divorce or had no interaction at all. In the next section this conflict will be discussed in the context of the experience of the divorce as a whole.

The Experience of Divorce

Related to the experience of divorce and similar to descriptions of parents' predivorce relationships, conflict was the most predominant characteristic of the divorce experience. How the participants became aware of the divorce and the level of support they had in their lives seemed to affect their coping abilities. Two of the most common results from the divorce from students' perspectives, in terms of how they believed the divorce affected them was a greater level of independence and increased responsibility.

Conflict

Conflict was the most prominent factor of the experience of their parents relationship, as well as the divorce experience. The constant conflict, both pre and post divorce, appeared to affect the participants in many ways. Eleven of the students were glad their parents got divorced since there was constant fighting and tension in their homes. Two of these students, Cindy, age 12, and Ken, age 15, at the divorce, talked of their outlooks of the divorce in their lives. Cindy stated:

I wanted them to get a divorce. They were fighting so bad every night. The kitchen was right next to my bedroom and every night over and over. So, I was happy when they got a divorce.

Ken, a 23 year old African-American student said:

...I look at it from a positive standpoint. It was a relief to me because you didn't have to come home from school on the weekends and see your parents fuss and argue all the time. So it was kind of a relief. It was kind of like a load taken off me and my brothers and my sister. It was fine.

This is not to say the conflict ended when the parents separated. Deb, whose parents divorced when she was ten stated:

[the divorce was] horrible, but at the same time it was relief because they sort of stopped fighting for a while.

Another woman whose parents divorced when she was 7, Barb, talked about her parents relationship today, over 10 years later:

they do a lot of bickering and its just they're still fighting and they don't get along...my mother always says bad things about my dad and my dad always says bad things about my mom and [I'm] in between.

Awareness of Divorce

One issue that may have affected students' ability to cope is how they became aware of the impending divorce. Some participants were aware of the impending separation, while others were completely surprised. Of the participants who discussed how they were told of the divorce and whether they were prepared for it, four were shocked by the divorce; the other five had some idea the divorce was coming. The young woman who later cried in her interview, Abby, talked of her disgust of not being informed of her parents' problems or of the new relationship in her father's life:

...if you're going through a divorce I don't feel like you should have another person. You can have a friends, but to be having a relationship where that person is around all the time and that child has no clue as to what's going on... [my parents] did not communicate with us and I think its very important, if you have kids in that relationship, you need to communicate to let them understand... they may be young but as an adolescent you have some understanding as to what's going on.

Fran who was fifteen, only two years older than Abby, when her parents divorced had a very different experience:

It wasn't a very hard divorce for me personally, because I knew it was coming...! had been around them enough and could tell that it was about to be over. I think that kind of prepared me for it...if all the sudden out of the blue they were getting a divorce, I would have been really hurt by it...but they never fought in front of us...

She continued her thoughts, comparing her experience with her older sister's:

my older sister, it shocked her a lot because mom and dad had always promised that they would be together, and she was in college and had no clue that it was coming up.

Her sister continued to have problems dealing with the divorce, while the woman "[didn't] think there was anything that...affected [her]. It appears that knowing that divorce was coming because the child saw the fighting that precipitated the divorce, helps mitigate the shock of the divorce, and consequently the adjustment to divorce easier.

Outside Support and Influences

As Fran states above, siblings often have different experiences during a divorce. Several other interesting points can be made regarding the presence of sibling(s) in the students experience of the divorce. Over half the participants had younger siblings, and often found themselves serving as caretakers for their younger brothers and sisters (see section on Independence). Some students compared how they were affected by the divorce compared to how they saw their siblings affected. The students reported older siblings, in particular, seemed to be affected more by the divorce than their younger counterparts.

This may be due to increased responsibility created by having one custodial parent, being the support person for the custodial parent and younger siblings, and being more aware of all the nuances involved in a divorce. Older siblings seem to be more involved in the restructuring of the family (i.e. assisting the custodial parent, taking care of siblings) and therefore has less time and resources to cope with the divorce from their own perspective.

A woman, Linda, who is an older sibling, discussed why the divorce had affected her more than her younger sister. She was sixteen when her parents separated. She has no relationship with her "very corrupted, very manipulative" father anymore. Her younger sister is now sixteen and living with her mother.

About the differences in experience, Linda says:

...since [the divorce] my mom and I have developed a lot. [My sister] has really gotten to grow up by herself without my dad being there to correct anything. It took a long time for [me] to be able to succeed without [my father's] approval.

One woman, Jessica, saw gender as the reason for a stronger effect on her older brother, who was nine to her 4 1/2 years of age when their parents divorced:

I was just, like, okay, dad's out of the house. And then after a year or so, he moved to California, and I think that affected my brother more than me because I guess maybe the father-son bonding thing, I think he wanted to be with him.

Despite age differences and perceived differences in experiences, some participants saw their siblings as support systems. Walt's older sister, who was fourteen to his eight years of age at the time of the divorce, was a great influence

on him. During a time when he felt he could not rely on his parents, he turned to his sister for support:

I have an older sister who was kind of my, I don't want to say my guardian, but she was who I'd go to for advice when I had [personal] problems like that...my sister could always give me a good objective opinion and she guided...She's definitely my closest person in my family or family unit...If there's one person whose shaped me more than anyone I'd definitely say it was my sister.

Other support systems within the family were grandparents. Participants maintained good relationships with their grandparents after the divorce. Tony has lived with his fraternal grandparents since his parents' separation when he was five:

I consider my grandparents as my parents anyway...I think I would have been a lot different person if I hadn't been with them...because they're really two great people.

Even participants who did not live with their grandparents saw them as strong role models in their lives. Ron spent a great deal of time with his grandparents:

...we've always been around grandparents from one side or the other. Just as far as dealing with people in general, I was always given kind of an older view. I was kind of raised like my father...being a gentleman...! was, like, brought up in...a good way. They always took me to church [and]...have influenced me and the way I deal with people a lot.

In addition to family, religion and college were influential in students lives. Five of the students mentioned how their faith had helped them get through the divorce. Religion particularly affected how participants looked at relationships. One female student, Helen, believed religion holds people together and is a

common interest necessary in relationships. Another student, Ben, whose parents divorced ten years ago said:

[the divorce] has made me think a whole lot more about the whole institute of marriage and what it means to me. The way that I was brought up in a religious atmosphere that was just like marriage is a strong bond.

This same young man talked of his college classes and how they have affected his outlook on relationships:

I've taken marriage and family dynamic classes and things like that. That's influenced me a lot about how to look at relationships and stuff from more of an educational perspective...statistical stuff and opinions of everybody...what relationships are and how they work and stresses in relationship and how to work through them and what kind of things you can do.

Other students agreed. One female, Patty, saw her past relationships and a study she was working on for English to be the greatest influences on her relationships. College, in general, was helpful for one woman, Cindy, whose parents divorced when she was thirteen:

I think college has helped me out a lot. My roommates are both family, child development majors or whatever, so they have really changed my views on things. And I have seen more couples together that have made it...when I was in high school most of my friends' parents were divorced. So I've been seeing more people together and that's helped out a lot.

Overall, students seemed to appreciate the other views they got on relationships through their college experience, their friends or other family members.

Impact of Divorce

According to several interviewees, independence appeared to be fostered by the divorce experience. Over half the participants viewed their independence as a direct result of the divorce or discussed the increased responsibility that was placed on them. This occurred with both males and females. As alluded to previously, older siblings most often took the more independent role. According to many interviewees, eldest children were often given the responsibility of watching over younger siblings. Some eldest siblings saw the extra responsibility as beneficial, contributing to their ability to be independent, while others resented the extra responsibility. Abby, a 21 year old African American and Meg, a 20 year old Caucasian, were 13 and 16 respectively, when their parents divorced. They express two perspectives. Abby says:

I can do for myself...! like independence I expect [my partner] to accept me for who I am...I feel I'm going places and I have goals and I have dreams and I expect you to...and be determined to conquer those and go through with them.

While Meg states:

I'm in college, but it's like I have to do everything. Fill out all the papers and do all the leg work. Kind of like life was just thrown on me.

The eldest child was often relied on heavily by the custodial parent. Children in divorced homes may act as "replacement" partners for the custodial parent according to some participants. As Barb explained:

I had two younger siblings so I became kind of like the second mother. My mother relied on me a lot and I was almost designated as the other adult in the family.

Two males, Vincent a 20 year old Asian male, and Ben a 21 year old Caucasian male, talked of their mothers reliance on them. Their opinions differed as to how this affected them. While Vincent described positive feelings about the divorce, he also said:

a divorce is not always good because I was like a latch key kid living with my mother. I was like a substitute male companion for her.

Vincent was five when his parents were divorced and has a younger brother. In contrast, Ben talked of the strength of the relationship he had with his mother:

I could always talk to her about things and it really hasn't changed [since] the divorce. If anything, its like strengthened our relationship because she's needed someone to lean on...Our relationship's really good because she talks to me about the things she's going through now.

Relationships

This section will cover the experiences students described in their current, or most significant, intimate relationships. Students' experiences in their personal intimate relationships were varied. Overall, trust and fidelity were the most often discussed needs in relationships. Students talked of avoiding conflict in their relationships, and of their expectations for their relationships. Alcohol and other drug use was discussed by interviewees who had childhood experiences of witnessing drug abuse. There was no general consensus among students' views of love, marriage and divorce, and diverse views emerged. In some cases the relationship paradigms (i.e. ideas about what relationships should be like) and actual relationships of the participants were different. It was

often difficult to differentiate between what the students actually experienced and what they hoped for in their relationships. This section will explore the descriptions of students intimate relationships, and begin to make connections between those experiences and the experience of their parents' divorce.

Avoiding Conflict

Most students in the study agreed that their biggest goal was to be independent and not model after the parents. This included their not being like their parents as individuals and as a couple. This avoidance of modeling their parents may explain, in part, why the adult children avoided confrontation (similar to "Avoiding the Demon" concept of Marks) and often did anything they could to keep their partners happy. If the students were trying not to become their parents, they may have avoided all reminders of their parents' relationship, which would include conflict. A number of participants stated they tried to keep the relationship smooth while others described behaviors that implied the need for a conflict-free relationship.

Linda, now 21, was 16 when her parents divorced, and she has this to say regarding modeling her parents:

I tend to think that I take the good things from my parents or the things that happened to them in their relationship and try to build on those things. I've used theirs as a complete polar opposite of what I want my relationships to be like.

Three interviewees who had discussed their parents' conflict, talk of their desire to avoid conflict:

Jessica: I don't like a whole lot of fighting. I usually don't get in conflict much. I avoid that and everything.

Ron: I hate to argue about personal things like [my parents did]. You know I like to play and debate about things sometimes, but if it comes to arguing and hair-pulling and things like that, I don't like that.

Walt: I guess I have trouble confronting [my girlfriend] about the progress our relationship is making. I'm pretty laid back and non-confrontational. I don't like arguing with people, I like to get along with everybody.

In contrast, Nancy was able to accept conflict as a part of healthy relationships. Her parents were divorced when she was 12. Interestingly, her parents had never fought in front of her. When describing what always happens in relationships she said:

...in a healthy relationship, you're always going to fight about something. I think that's natural. That's our way of expressing things that make us unhappy. If you don't fight then you hold a little too much inside and it just builds up.

Nancy seems to be blaming the divorce on lack of conflict (letting frustrations "build up"), so she fears just the opposite of her counterparts, that is, she fears lack of conflict.

Trust and Fidelity

All but three interviewees talked specifically of the importance of trust and fidelity in relationships. Generally, trust was viewed as an extremely important relationship attribute. The fear that this trust was placed on a nondeserving partner caused some students to be self-identified as jealous partners. When Jessica, a 19 year old student, was asked what it is like to be in a relationship with her she had this to say:

It takes a while for people to...gain my trust with them, but once they do I put myself wholeheartedly...into the relationship...whatever I say to them, I'm not going to lie to them...I need a lot of attention...I need constant reminders that the relationship is still healthy and secure.

Ron, a 21 year old Hispanic student, was concerned he would be like his father who had been unfaithful to his mother:

I think I consider my actions a lot more. In relationships and stuff, I try to model things like, I try not to be like my dad...more deeply it has affected me than I can explain.

Similar to Ron, another young man, Ken, whose parents divorced when he was 14, talked of his desire avoid being jealous and possessive like his father.

Contrary to his intent, he still found himself acting out in jealousy. He continues to question why:

One of the weaknesses I have in a relationship which I'm trying to get away from is that sometimes I'll be jealous. Because I would see my father and how he would be sometimes...if my girl smiles at another guy, I'm thinking, like, there's nothing wrong with that but I'm thinking in the back of my mind what my father did. He got so upset so is that the way I'm supposed to act?

Another man, George who was 9 when the divorce occurred, saw jealousy and insecurity as "90% of the problem" in his relationship. He attributes his jealousy, in part, to the divorce:

...in terms of confidence in a committed relationship! have very little, if any. I've had a lot of problems with jealousy and I realize that it is due to the divorce.

Ellen went as far to say "I basically don't trust [men] and tend to think they're pretty evil." Sam, a 21 year old male student, agreed with her assessment:

I guess its important to be able to have...your partner to be really good friends with someone of the opposite sex and not be jealous. It seems like that was my problem the whole time, but I just don't trust guys in general.

Helen, whose parents have been divorced since she was three, had been greatly affected by her mother's attitude towards men after her mothers' two divorces:

My mom is now married for the third time. The second time was very difficult in terms of him being an alcoholic and it got kind of nasty a couple of times. Actually I kind of blame my mom for my whole life hearing "Guys are jerks. They never change. It's obvious you can't change them. They never grow up." Very, very negative things about them. So its hard for me to find someone with that in mind.

Alcohol and Other Drug Use

Alcohol was another "red flag" in partners for some students. Five students mentioned alcohol or other drug use in a description of a parent. Alcohol or other drug use by parents influenced feelings towards partners' substance use. For Meg alcohol use caused problems in her present relationship. When asked about the weaknesses in her relationship she said:

[my boyfriend] drinks, but its like college drinking...I have a big problem with that I guess because I don't drink myself. But now...we've just gone through cycle after cycle. He'll drink and be okay for a while, and then I'll get mad and he'll stop for like five months.

Others had similar sentiments. Ken says:

that's one of the reasons I don't drink because my father did and I saw how it really affected his life.

Adam and Patty, respectively, agree:

The weaknesses were my mom and the fact that she was drinking a lot...Not to say that I haven't had a drink or whatever, but the fact that she almost seems dependent on it. I hope that's like, absent from my marriage or relationship.

I know [my dad] drank a lot [I don't want] somebody who drinks a lot.

These students seem to be avoiding the demon of alcohol and other drug use that they saw as part of the reason the divorce occurred. They do not want their own actions, of the actions of their partners to reflect what they saw in their parents behavior.

Love, Marriage and Divorce

Of the nine study participants who were positive about their parents getting a divorce, five had relationship paradigms that included doubt in the existence of love or the existence of happy permanent relationships. Their actual relationships varied, but all five had doubts about their present relationships either due to high levels of jealousy or their partners "pressuring" them into long-term commitment. These students may have been "hedging their bets" by setting low expectations for the permanence of the relationship and having doubts about the existence of love at all.

For some students dating was seen as a means to an end. The goal was to find someone to marry (strive for permanence on the permanence-pragmatism continuum). The following two participants, one male and one female echoed similar opinions with regard to why they date and what they hoped to gain from their relationships. Ken discussed his expectations of his relationships:

If I'm going to be in a relationship with anyone my relationship is to have a strong friendship then to expand on that. To have a strong relationship boyfriend/girlfriend, then possibly marriage. I wouldn't just date somebody just to be dating or just to get something from them. I think that's a waste of time.

Linda, 21 year old, talks of her expectations five years after her parents' divorce:

Well, I guess I've always expected to get married, to tell you the truth. I didn't know when or what, but that was my ultimate goal. If I met somebody that I fell in love with I'd like to marry them and have a relationship that would hopefully last forever.

Perhaps due to fears of conflict and alcohol use, and overwhelming need for trust and faithfulness, some adult children seemed to doubt the existence of happy marriage or even love. Barb says:

that's one thing I learned from divorce, I didn't really place any expectations on anything.

This sentiment was shared by others. Ken mentions his concerns when asked about his expectations for relationships:

your parents fighting and fussing and arguing a lot...when my father would drink...make[s] you ...say I don't know if I want to be married if its going to be like this.

On the other hand, for Meg, her partner's family gave her hope that marriages could last:

The guy I'm with is really nice and his family is really secure...its nice to see that marriages can last like in his family and that a family can be nice and wholesome...! always call them the Beaver Cleaver family because they're just so perfect. I didn't think things like that existed and its kind of nice to know that it does.

Deb's partner even tried to influence her pessimism towards marriage:

He's made a very specific point, as soon as he found out my parents were divorced and that I get shuffled around every holiday, to bring me into his family. And he basically forces me to go to his family gatherings because he thinks it will be more stable for me and more comfortable and I'll get an idea of what a family is like.

Helen, whose parents divorced when she was three, and Tony, who experienced divorce at five, both questioned, respectively, what it would be like to have married parents:

When I look at people whose parents are happily married, I wonder what it would have been like. Its hard for me to even imagine.

I look at other kids and how their parents are together and I always wonder what it would be like for both of your parents to still be together.

Love is an issue that adult children from divorced families cannot agree upon. While some view love as an inherent, necessary part of a relationship, others doubt the existence and/or permanence of love. Deb talks about what needs to be in a good relationship:

...trust, communication and I guess you could say love. I still haven't been really convinced that there's one specific thing that you could call love, but its a whole bunch of things.

Ron, whose father was consistently unfaithful to his mother, had this cynical view of love and what happens in relationships:

I don't think there's really any set formula...you don't always have to have love. You don't always have to have all the other cliché things I guess love, sex or sometimes you don't even have to have respect, that happens. But not to be a total cynic. Sometimes you can have some each or all of them. I know you can find combinations in people and just hope for the best...Love is all right. If it happens it's cool.

It was not surprising to find many participants had strong widely varied views towards divorce. While some were totally against divorce, they understood why people do it. Others were not so forgiving and saw divorce as wrong. Still others were in favor of divorce when the reason is "acceptable." Some examples of these varying opinions are:

Jessica, now 19, parents divorced when she was 4: I'm going out with somebody now and its been like a year... Sometimes I think about if would marry him or whatever, but regardless I always know that when I do marry I don't want a divorce. Even my dad's told me that it's just too hard for me and if I have kids and stuff. It would just be an awful experience. I want to make sure that I find the right person because I don't want to go through something like that.

Tony, age 19, parents divorced 14 years ago: I really don't want to be that kind of person where I'm not sure what I want before I go and get married. I want to be sure about it because I don't want to be getting divorced two, three, or four times.

Linda, now 21, parents divorced when she was 16: My mom and dad were never friends. They didn't like each other. I don't understand why people who don't like each other stay married. It makes no sense to me whatsoever.

Vincent, 20 years old; parents divorced when he was 5: ...actually I know some other person whose parents stayed together and as a result it has been very unstable. They stayed together for the sake of the family, and I can see the contrast between my parents' divorce and their staying together. They should have divorced because they're not compatible and so on. Divorce is not a good thing, but I think if it happens, you should do it.

Adam, now 20 years old, 18 years since his parents divorced: I think there has to be an understanding of how you both feel, and if this is going to be long term or short term...I would hope to avoid a divorce altogether. I don't believe divorce is wrong, but when I do decide to marry someone I hope it is for good and that things work out.

These varied opinions offer the concept that each child's experience of a parental divorce is different and has a different impact on each person. The implications of these findings will be further discussed in the following section.

Relationship Paradigms Compared to Actual Relationships

Connections can be made for most students between what they witnessed in their parents' marriages, and the relationship they had with their parents, and what they are/were experiencing in their own relationships. In their descriptions of their relationship paradigms the students often provided what they saw as strengths and weaknesses in relationships. Some students' relationship paradigms included specific strengths that the students found important in good relationships, but these strengths were not present in their own relationships. Abby, for instance, saw trust as important in a relationship, possibly because both of her parents were unfaithful, and yet the men in her own relationships were unfaithful. Cindy also sees trust as important, yet her partner is very jealous. Ellen had the experience of a boyfriend who lied to her, yet she talked of honesty and communication being important in a good relationship.

A number of students' relationships reflected what they had witnessed in their parents' relationships, which may contradict the "avoiding the demon" theory. Barb's parents were divorced when she was 7, and they had "married young," and she is married while in college at the age of 22. Deb, who witnessed a marriage full of violence and manipulation for 10 years is now in a relationship with a partner who is controlling, and she questions what love is. Nancy had a

similar experience with an emotionally abusive father and in her past two relationships the first boy went to jail, the second was unfaithful.

Personal Reflections

My personal experiences throughout the life of my thesis have been varied and have impacted how I viewed my research. I tried to maintain an objective point of view, but considering my personal and professional life changes during my course of study, I know my results were affected. I was raised in a home with parents who should have been divorced. Consequently, I was interested in finding research that shows the benefits of divorce. I'm not sure I've done that, but as I write this section last, I will attempt to reflect my feelings and how I think they affected my research.

When I first began my thesis I was in a new relationship, and in fact was engaged. I was feeling positive towards marriage, though I always considered divorce to be a viable option if my marriage did not work. After working one year on my thesis, I was able to present my proposal. I was also now a married woman. Shortly after my proposal was accepted I moved to Richmond, VA and began working as a Domestic Violence Program Coordinator. I provided counseling to domestic violence victims and their children. I was still at this job when I conducted the interviews and coded the responses for this study. Consequently, I was much more cognizant of "power and control" issues in the descriptions of the parental relationships and the relationships of the students. I was uncomfortable with encouraging clients by day to get a divorce, and by night

coding the divorce experience as a negative one. The contradiction of these two actions caused much reflection and cognitive dissonance on my part. My husband and I were also having a number of problems and I was realizing that I may need to seriously consider divorce in my own life.

I completed the interviews in April. I coded them during that summer. I was separated Labor Day. Luckily it was an amicable separation, but it was difficult nonetheless. As time passed it became more and more difficult for me to complete my thesis. I had started a new job at the end of August. Both of the positions I acquired were based on the completion of my Master's coursework. There was no real impetus for my completing my thesis except for self-satisfaction. With an impending divorce my self-esteem was low, and I was having difficulty adjusting to my new job and the single life. While the pressure of direct service was difficult for me, especially with my own marriage being in a shamble, I missed the feeling of accomplishment that I had at the end of each day. Working for the state has been interesting, but it lacks that instant gratification that direct services offered.

Consequently, it took all the will power I could muster to complete this thesis. It no longer seemed important when my marriage was failing, I was trying to save women's lives from domestic violence, and I was administering grant money for violence against women programs. I think if I had finished my thesis prior to all these events it would have had a much different flavor. I would have been less apt to look for "power and control" issues in the students, and their

parents, relationships. I perhaps would have been more open to the possibility of negative effects of divorce, in addition to those listed here.

Making comparisons among childhood experiences (parental divorce), relationship paradigms and lived relationships hit a little too close to my own doubts for me to fully analyze the students' responses. Had I too created a marital paradigm based on my parents abusive marriage, only to then have an abusive marriage of my own? It was as if I was now blind to certain implications in the study so I would not have to face the same implications in my personal life. I hope that I have provided my committee, the university and myself with a quality thesis despite all that has happened.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

This study examines the accounts of 21 college students from divorced families to explore their perceived effects of their parents' divorce, relationship paradigm development and their relationships with their parents. The main research question guiding the study was how the experience of parental divorce during childhood may connect with the development of intimate relationships in young adulthood. Within the emerging research domains and themes, examples of past theory concepts and contradictory findings to prevalent present theories are made.

Overall Findings

Diversity

The findings of this study reflect the goal of presenting the diversity of experiences of children from divorced families. While similar post-divorce experiences were found among study participants, their pre-divorce experiences, in some cases, held little perceived similarities. It seems that a combination of factors is what precipitates certain post-divorce experiences, rather than one single variable. Gender, age, conflict and outside support may have contributed to the divorce experiences of these adult children. Consequently, when describing the findings within each domain, similarities that exist are provided, but there were not always similarities that presented themselves in the students' responses.

The entire divorce process may be the significant factor that causes certain patterns in the adult lives of these children. As Arditti (1995) summarizes, the divorce may include the interdependence among family members, quality of relationships, and complexity of relationships. This entire process could not be adequately described in the single thirty minute interview utilized by this study.

Relationship Paradigms

Throughout the discussion of the study's findings, references will be made to students' relationship paradigms. Rather than creating a separate research domain, relationship paradigms are used as the underlying construct of all three research domains. When discussing their relationships, study participants referred to the positive and negative aspects of their own intimate relationships, in addition to their expectations for the future. These expectations included feelings towards marriage and divorce, drug and alcohol use, requirements of a good relationship such as trust and fidelity, and what makes relationships end. It was found, as expected, that interviewees did not limit their discussion to marriage or marital roles, as would have been expected if this study had been limited to marital paradigms rather than relationship paradigms.

As expected, examples of two of Marks (1989) paradigms, "Hedged Bet" and "Avoiding the Demon" were found among the sample in this study. The Avoiding the Demon paradigm for the participants of this study included fears of divorce or behaviors an individual perceived as linked to divorce. The "demons" of this study's participants were infidelity, alcohol or other drug abuse, and/or

conflict. The fear of these demons may have caused some students to be overly protective of themselves and avoid persons who drink socially, or avoid conflict. This avoidance of conflict will be discussed further in the Relationship Domain. By avoiding persons or behaviors that seemed to be linked to divorce, students were attempting to *not* model their parents' behavior, which contradicts the role model or attitude transmission theories.

The "Hedged Bet" paradigm may be linked to the attitude transmission theory. Persons with this paradigm keep emotionally distant from relationships and marriage due to a doubt in the feasibility of marriage. This may explain why some participants doubted the existence of love, or talked of love and long-term relationships as difficult to attain. Other students noted that they had low expectations for their relationships and partners. By setting low expectations, the students are "hedging their bet;" they are creating a situation where if their partners hurt them in some way, they can say "well, I didn't have high expectations anyway" rather than being hurt, or acknowledging that they are hurt. The independence that students perceived as fostered by the divorce, may, in part, have been a defense mechanism to not get too close to anyone for fear of getting hurt.

Domain of Parents

Parents played a large part in the discussions of intimate relationships, and obviously, divorce. Many participants voiced a desire to be unlike their parents in their relationships. Some participants desired partners who were very

different from their parents in an effort to have relationships different from their parents' marriage. This contradicts the role model theory which states children attempt to model their parents' relationships. The need to create their relationship paradigms from other sources besides their parents is intensified for these individuals since a usual source of reference for relationships, their parents, is not acceptable to them. Other sources of influence cited by study participants were partners' parents, college coursework, grandparents, and the media.

The development of relationship paradigms from sources other than their parents also contradicts theories of attitude transmission. The research addressing attitude transmission (e.g. Amato & Booth, 1991; Coleman & Ganong, 1984; Kiecolt & Acock, 1988; Marlar & Jacobs, 1992) all depended rather strictly on parents to transmit attitudes on relationships and marriage to their children. There was little room for outside contributors such as other family members, the media, school, etc. in their discussion of how divorced parents transmitted their positive feelings about divorce to their children. The participants in this study openly state that there were other factors influencing their outlook on marriage and relationships. Students discussed school, grandparents, partner's parents, and friends as influencing how they viewed marriage. Some based their beliefs on their parents' beliefs, others developed their own ideas on relationships based on their experiences. In some cases students consciously chose not to base their personal beliefs on their parents'

attitudes in order to create relationship paradigms that were more acceptable to them.

By avoiding similar patterns of behavior, or partners with similar patterns of behavior that the students witnessed in their parents' relationships, they are "hedging their bet," (Marks, 1989). If a child witnesses a parent talking in a derogatory manner about the other parent's behavior, or blaming the divorce on an outside factor such as infidelity or drinking, these attitudes may be passed onto the child and incorporated in the relationship paradigm. Consequently, although the divorce itself was due to a variety of factors, the child perceives the cause to be one that makes sense to him/her based on what was witnessed or heard.

Another key finding in this study was the difference between study participants' relationships with their mothers and with their fathers. Overwhelmingly participants reported having close relationships with their mothers and less intimate relationships with their fathers. The divorce itself had the most significant impact on the father-child relationship. Some fathers were no longer present in their children's lives post-divorce. This seemed to be either due to the children's desire to end the relationship or the fathers' inability to maintain a relationship without the presence of a mother, who was often the primary caregiver. Previous studies have found the closeness of the noncustodial father-child relationship to be based on the nature and extent of visitation, which often was determined by the custodial parent or mother (Arditti, 1995). It has been

suggested that the younger the child, the more involved the mother is in determining visitation, which implies that younger children are less likely to have close relationships with their non-custodial fathers if the mother is nonsupportive of the father (Arditti, 1995). Such was not found to be true in this study; children with the closest relationships with their fathers were various ages at the time of divorce and the worst father-child relationships were found among the study participants who were oldest when the divorce occurred. There are a number of possibilities for this finding. It may be that older children witnessed more of the fighting, or understood that there had been infidelity so they had already “chosen sides” by the time the parents separated. In this study many of the participants were not close to their father before the separation, so there was no reason for the older child to choose to encourage a relationship now that the parents were divorced.

Other fathers increased their level of involvement in their children's lives after the divorce. Fathers who actively shared custody or had sole custody of their children seemed to develop stronger relationships with their children since they had to be primary caregivers during their visits. Students talked of increased communication and intimacy between themselves and their fathers. The improved relationship with their fathers was still often described as more distant than their relationships with their mothers. Marks (1986) referred to the parent-child relationship as an important factor in the development of marital paradigms. The improved relationship between father and child post-divorce may

positively affect the relationship paradigms of these children. Those students who had poor relationships with their fathers were generally less-trusting of their partners. This was especially true of the female students. The students who were able to maintain positive relationships with both parents post-divorce seemed to be better able to cope with conflict and change in their relationships.

Domain of Relationships

The most common characteristics that study participants cited as important in their relationships were trust, communication and fidelity. This makes sense since a number of study participants cited dishonesty, lack of communication and infidelity as the reasons their parents got divorced. While students did not explicitly define intimacy, they talked of trust, fidelity and communication as important factors in their intimate relationships. It should be acknowledged that while these were seen as important, most participants had been or still were with persons who were unfaithful to them, or had little faith in them. The students may have been resigned to this behavior by their partners, or willing to forgive their partners in the hopes that relationship could continue. Since there was no control group to compare to, it is impossible to determine this was due to developmental factors, the divorce or some other factor. It may be that despite their attempts to not model their parents, the attitudes and behaviors of their parents were transmitted into the students' relationship paradigms anyway. "Cheating" on one's partner may also simply be more common during college.

Having someone to talk to and be with was important to study participants. Students enjoyed "just having someone," some with no concerns of how long the relationship lasted. This may support the findings of Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) and Booth, Brinkerhoff and White (1984) who attest that children from divorced families strive for the intimacy that lacked in their own homes, although wanting to be in a relationship may just reflect a desire for companionship.

Conflict

Nine of the 21 participants explicitly stated positive feelings towards their parents' divorce. All of these students had witnessed conflict between their parents. There seems to be a direct relationship between the amount of witnessed conflict between parents and the positivity towards the divorce.

There seems to be a relationship between witnessed parental conflict and the desire to avoid conflict in one's own relationship. As discussed in the results section, many students who had witnessed a great deal of conflict now avoid conflict in their own relationships. This can be tied to Marks (1991) theory of marital paradigms. Within marital or relationship paradigms ideas about conflict resolution learned from parents and other sources are included. Children who witness poor conflict resolution may have no basis for dealing with conflict in their relationship paradigms. This difficulty coping with conflict may be what causes the adult children to avoid conflict altogether. As seen with some of this study's participants, the avoidance of conflict may cause the young adults to not

get their needs met and feel unfulfilled in their relationships. This lack of fulfillment may manifest itself as an inability to maintain happy, intimate relationships and/or marriages.

Relationship Paradigms Compared to Actual Lived Experiences

Similarities and differences emerged when comparing the relationship paradigms of the students with their actual relationships. There were students who listed strengths present in a good relationship who did not have these strengths in their own. For example, the paradigms of some students included expectations of trust, yet their own relationships were actually a reflection of their parents' relationships including mistrust. These expectations may have been a result of viewing the opposite in their parents' relationships and/or because these characteristics were missing in their own relationships.

There are three examples, Cindy, Patty and Vincent, of participants whose own relationships have reflected their parents, which has caused them to pick partners with whom they do not get their own needs met. Both Vincent and Cindy wanted stability and were willing to stay in difficult relationships to get it. This may be another example of why children from divorced homes are perceived to get more divorces. They are willing to sacrifice more to get to the "stability" of marriage, yet are unable or unwilling to continue to sacrifice their happiness once married, and consequently get divorced.

It seems that overall while students have high expectations for their partners and their relationships built into their paradigms, few are living the

"ideal" relationship they strive for. Without a control group, it is difficult to say whether this is a factor in general of all people's expectations versus their lived relationships, or tends to be more prevalent in children from divorced homes.

Domain of the Experience of Divorce

Age

Only two participants who were over the age of ten when the divorce occurred (n=11) were not positive about the divorce. Interestingly, neither of these two had witnessed conflict in their parents' relationship. Age seemed to have a positive relationship with positive attitudes towards divorce. Although, as discussed in the Results section, older children may be affected more by the divorce if there is an increase in responsibility at home, and/or they become a "substitute" partner of the custodial parent.

Hepworth et al. (1984) found persons from divorced families have relationships that are shorter in length, but have more of them. Of the 11 students whose parents divorced after they were ten, only three were not in relationships at the time of the interview; all but one of the participants who was over the age of ten when divorce occurred and were presently in a relationship (n=8) had relationships over one year in length. This contradicts the frantic search for intimacy described by Hepworth et al. (1984), Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) and Booth et al. (1984). If these adults are striving for intimacy, they are trying to attain it within a long-term relationship, perhaps working harder to get their needs met within that relationship.

Race

Only four, Abby, Ron, Ken and Vincent, of the study participants were non-Caucasian. Abby and Ken are African-American, Ron is Hispanic and Vincent is Asian-American. While this is representative of the college's population, it makes it difficult to draw any inferences regarding race. Three of the four, all but Abby, were positive about the divorce. These three accounted for one-third of the participants who were positive about the divorce.

Ken was the only one who specifically referred to his race when he discussed black role models in the media as an outside influence to his relationships. He was the only one of the four who did not talk of greater personal independence fostered by the divorce. The one common feature these four participants had was they were all in relationships that were over a year in length at the time of the interview. They accounted for four of the nine students who were in relationships over a year in length.

Permanence-Pragmatism Orientation

Permanence is the belief in marriage for its intrinsic worth, pragmatism is the belief in marriage for its worth to each individual in the relationship (Morgan & Scanzoni, 1987). In regards to the theory of a permanence-pragmatism continuum of beliefs towards marriage, the belief of this study's participants seemed to be a combination of permanence and pragmatism. Pragmatism was exhibited by the acknowledgment of some participants that if marriage is not healthy for one or both persons, it should be terminated. The marriage should

not be continued just for the sake of being married. The students who felt positive about their parents divorce since there was so much conflict, and/or one parent was unhappy, is another example of pragmatism.

The belief in the permanence of marriage is evident in participants' desire to avoid divorce and maintain their relationships. While many participants were in long-term (over a year in length) relationships, there were examples of high costs in these relationships. These costs included unwanted drinking by partners, infidelity, short-term termination of the relationship by the partner, lack of trust and feeling insignificant in their relationships. It appeared that the participants stayed in some of these relationships for the sake of the relationship, despite their unhappiness. This finding may also simply be tied to developmental factors, or the desire to be in a relationship during college.

Additional Findings

Independence

Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) talk of children from divorced families having uncertainties about the future and being tempted by alcohol, drugs and crime. This may have been due to the clinical population used in their study. Such was not the case in this study. In contrast, the participants in this study were given added responsibility and were more independent. Specifically related to drugs and alcohol, those who were negatively affected by alcohol and other drug abuse by parents were avoidant of substance use in themselves and their partners.

Some participants, particularly female participants, talked of the importance of attaining their goals and having partners who wanted to attain their own goals. Both male and female students talked of increased responsibility and independence that they experienced after the divorce. While some resented the extra responsibility, many viewed this independence as positive. They seemed to think that this independence made them stronger, more capable adults. There were others, though, who thought this extra responsibility hurt them by making them grow up too fast.

Buffers

There were a number of outside support systems and influences that were important to the students during the divorce. Some participants were close to other family members such as grandparents or older siblings; others relied on their religion for support.

Findings were inconclusive in this study whether outside support systems acted as buffers to the negative effects of the divorce. Some students who referred to potential buffers still had difficulty coping with divorce, or had negative affect towards the divorce. Generally, while support systems were perceived as helpful in coping with the divorce and loss of the non-custodial parent, the support did not seem to make the students completely resilient to the negative aspects of the experience.

One aspect of the divorce that did seem to act as a buffer was how the study participants were notified of the divorce. The children who knew of the

impending divorce and/or witnessed the conflict that led up to the divorce were better able to cope with the experience. Those children who did not have time to prepare themselves for the divorce had more negative effect and a more difficult time coping with the experience.

Study Qualifiers

Since the goal of this study is largely descriptive, findings may not be generalizable to other populations. All the participants are college-enrolled, predominantly Caucasian, and between the ages of 19 to 23 . There is no comparison group in this study. Therefore, the themes that are evident in this sample may be due to the divorce, developmental factors or some other intervening factors. Causality cannot be established by this study. The participants in this study were chosen by self-selection which may have biased the results. All findings of this study should be considered as descriptive of a small subset of persons: young adults who are in college and have divorced parents. Also, since there is no comparison group, the findings discussed here may not be exclusive to individuals from divorced families.

College students were one of the best populations to use for a study such as this. A younger age group would have had fewer experiences with intimate relationships. An older age group would have had such a diversity of experience, e.g. marriage, divorce, remarriage, widowhood, that comparisons would have been difficult. Most college students are also away from home, or at least are

establishing their independence. This makes it easier for them to determine what are their own relationship paradigms and what are those of their parents.

Interventions

Based on the findings of this study, several interventions for family practice can be suggested. These interventions can lessen the negative impact a divorce has on children and parents.

One of the major aspects of relationship paradigms involves how conflict is addressed in relationships. Most participants discussed the fighting they witnessed between their parents. As previously noted, some students avoided conflict altogether in their relationships. Based on these findings, conflict resolution workshops would be valuable for children from divorced families and other families with high levels of conflict. The training could provide participants with specific conflict resolution methods, such as using "I feel" statements, fogging, or avoidance. Using role-plays, the participants could practice their new skills and get more comfortable using them. This training would aid children from divorced families develop healthy conflict resolution skills in their relationship paradigms.

Interventions aimed at parents may include educational workshops. Topics for these workshops could include how to talk to your child about the impending divorce, how to start new romantic relationships, divorced family parenting skills, appropriate methods of communication and negotiation with ex-spouses, and financial management. The emphasis for the workshop should be

discussing the divorce with children, as how the children found out about the divorce in this study seemed to impact them a great deal. The more well prepared individuals and families as a whole are for the experience of divorce, the better able people will be to cope. Previous research on boundary ambiguity (Boss, Greenberg and McCall, 1990) has found when family roles are not clearly defined by all the individuals involved, there is a lower level of coping and a higher level of dysfunction in the family.

Any resources or training that can be developed to address role formation in divorced families and coping with the divorce would be beneficial to the persons involved. Resources could include pamphlets, workbooks, and handouts that mediators, attorneys, counselors, court intake workers and others could distribute. Specifically the role of the non-custodial parent should be developed. This would be different for each family, but counseling for the family members so that expectations, fears and conflict could be discussed in a safe environment. Divorcing families may assume that the new roles will create themselves, rather than specifically sitting down and discussing the new roles and what each family members expectations are. Joint counseling with fathers and their children during the divorce process may help develop and/or strengthen the bond post-divorce. This study found that fathers' relationships either drastically improved or disintegrated after the divorce. This disintegration seemed to be based in the small amount of time the fathers spent with their children during the divorce process and post-divorce. By encouraging fathers to spend more time

with their children, a positive relationship may develop. Of course, caution must be taken so that fathers and children are not feeling forced to participate in each other's lives, which could harm the relationship.

Implications for Future Research

As previously stated, this study is for descriptive purposes and addresses the experiences of young adults - predominantly Caucasian from a large rural college environment. Further research on various samples would diversify the description of divorce experiences of children. There needs to be additional study of non- college-enrolled samples. More ethnically diverse samples would offer greater validity to similar findings and/or show racial differences in the effects of divorce. Studies of persons in various developmental periods would offer greater depth to the study of long-term effects versus short-term effects of divorce.

Previous research on children's sexual behavior from divorced homes has generated interesting findings. Additional research on patterns of sexual behavior and how it links to the divorce experience would aid in the description of the intimate relationships of adult children from divorced families. This topic is often difficult to study in college populations due to standards of privacy used by college research review boards.

Conclusion

When considering the original research question of how divorce affects adult intimate relationships, certain points can be made. The divorce seemed to

have great impact on the father-child relationship which in turn impacts the development of healthy relationship paradigms. The amount of conflict witnessed, and how the divorce was discussed seemed to have greater impact on this study's participants than the divorce itself did. A number of students were actually in favor of their parents' divorce due to the high level of conflict between their parents.

In their relationships, most study participants avoided conflict. They desired a high level of attention, communication, trust and fidelity from their partners. There seemed to be some lack of faith in love and marriage, although most students voiced a desire for both. It may be these characteristics that strengthened the deficit model argument of the divorce experience. The lack of faith in love and marriage does not fit into the traditional paradigm which expects everyone to want to be married and in love and have faith in that institution (Scanzoni et al., 1989). Those researchers and practitioners who still believe in the traditional paradigm then attribute these "negative" beliefs to the "negative" influence of the divorce. Those persons that subscribe to an alternate paradigm, the sexually-based primary relationship paradigm of Scanzoni, et al. (1989) are able to view a lack of faith in love as a healthy protective measure.

Rather than modeling after their parents' behavior and attitudes, as previous research suggests (i.e. Mueller & Pope, 1977; Greenberg & Nay, 1982), these interviewees attempted to be unlike their parents. Some students recognized the similarities in their behavior and attitudes to that of one or both

parents, but seemed to fight this comparison. Several partners were compared to parents, sometimes to the point of causing problems in the relationship. Partners who were seen as similar as parents were avoided in most instances.

The length of most participants' relationships suggests an ability to maintain a relationship for a period of time. The negative points of these relationships suggest that while certain behaviors are considered unacceptable in their paradigms, they are in reality accepted in their relationships in order to maintain the permanence of the relationship. The desire for intimacy is strong among these adult children from divorce, but the same could be said for most people in the world today.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent

I. Purpose of This Research

You are invited to participate in a study of parental divorce and relationships. This study will help describe the experience of parental divorce for children and how it may affect these children once they reach adulthood.

II. Procedures

The study involves a one hour interview and the completion of two short scales. We will talk about your most significant intimate relationship, either past or present and the experience of your parents' divorce. This study involves approximately 50 participants including you. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential. You have the right to refuse to answer any question and to withdraw at any time. The interviews will be audio-taped and transcribed. The tapes will be labeled with only a code number so your identity will be protected. After the tape has been transcribed, it will be erased and used again.

III. Benefits/Risks of This Project

This study deals with young adults from divorced families. Many previous studies of this population have found the experience of divorce to be detrimental to the children involved. This study attempts to describe the experience with no preconceived notions of a detrimental or beneficial effect. You will be able to tell your story in your words. Your story will contribute to the research by providing a true account of your relationships and your parents' divorce. The only possible risk to you is the recollection

of unpleasant memories. If this occurs, you may discontinue the interview or refer to the list of support services.

No guarantee of benefits has been made to encourage you to participate. You may receive a synopsis or summary of this research when completed. To receive a summary please provide a self-addressed envelope.

IV. Approval of Research

This research project has been approved, as required, by the Institutional Review Board for projects involving human subjects at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

I have read and understand the consent form. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent for participation in this study.

Name: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Signature of participant: _____

Appendix B

Interview

Interviewer: I realize that often people do not get to talk about the experience of their parents divorce. Today you will be given the chance to tell your story. We will talk about what it is like to be from a divorced home. We are also going to talk about your most significant relationship. Do you have any questions?

1. Describe your parents' marriage. What were the strengths and weaknesses of their relationship?
2. What was your relationship with your mother like before the divorce and what is it like now?
3. What was your relationship with your father like before the divorce and what is it like now?
4. Describe the experience of your parents' divorce and how it has affected you.
5. What other influences have been in your life that have affected the way you look at relationships?

Interviewer: Now we are going to talk about your most significant relationship.

6. What are/were the good things about your relationship with your significant other? What do/did you like about the relationship?
7. What are/were the weaknesses in this relationship? What don't/didn't you like about the relationship?
8. Has this relationship ended, and if so, what were the reasons it broke up?
9. What do you think needs to be present in good relationships?
10. What do you think always happens in relationships?
11. What are the reasons a relationship may end or become weak?
12. When you meet a potential romantic partner, what are your expectations out of the relationship?

13. What is it like to be in a relationship with you?
14. What aspects of your parents relationship would you like in your own?
15. What aspects of your parents relationship would you not like in your own?
16. Is there anything else that you would like to say about your parents' divorce or anything else that we haven't talked about?

Interviewer: Thank you for your participation in this study. Again all your responses are confidential. your tape will be transcribed and then destroyed. Your code number will be the only way your responses will be distinguished. If you are interested in talking further about your experiences, please take this list of support services in the Blacksburg area. If you would like a copy of the results please put your name and address on this envelope and I will send the conclusions to you as soon as the project is finished. Any questions? Thank you again for your time and your story.

Appendix C
Demographics

Code # _____

Your Age _____ years _____ months

Major _____

Gender _____ male _____ female

Race _____

Are you: _____ Single

_____ Married

_____ Divorced

_____ Living together

Which of the following situations apply to you? (Answer all that apply)

_____ One or both of my parents are deceased

_____ Mother _____ Father

_____ I lived in a single parent household

_____ Mother _____ Father For how long? _____

_____ My parents were divorced At what age? _____

_____ My mother remarried

_____ My father remarried

_____ I lived in a stepfamily

_____ mother/stepfather

_____ father/stepmother

How long? _____

How long? _____

Are you exclusively going out with someone now?

If so, for how long? _____ months

How old were you when first began dating? _____

How many of the following apply to you? (Answer all that apply)

___ I have casually gone out with many people.

___ I have exclusively gone out with many people.

___ I have not dated much at all.

___ I have casually gone out with a few people.

___ I have exclusively gone out with a few people.

___ I have been engaged _____ time(s).

___ I have married ___ time(s).

___ I have lived with someone ___ time(s).

STACY M. RUBLE

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EDUCATION

M.S., Family Studies, Coursework completed May 1994, Thesis pending
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia

B.A., Psychology, Magna Cum Laude, December 1991
Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, Pennsylvania

EMPLOYMENT

Violence Against Women Analyst, August 1995 – December 1997
Department of Criminal Justice Services, Richmond, Virginia

- Review grant applications, determining which proposals merit V-STOP funding
- Monitor programmatic and fiscal compliance of 103 grant-funded programs
- Provide technical assistance and training to law enforcement, prosecution and victims services agencies on violence against women issues and V-STOP program management
- Coordinate and facilitate V-STOP State Planning Team meetings
- Collaborate with various state agencies and victim advocacy groups

Research Interviewer, June 1996 - April 1997

Department of Human Genetics, VCU, Richmond, Virginia

- Completed in-depth interviews with 8-17 year old twins and their parents
- Completed scoring on all personality and intelligence testing measures
- Prepared all materials for child and parent interviews

Domestic Violence Services Coordinator, August 1994 - August 1995
YWCA Women's Advocacy Program, Richmond, Virginia

- Designed, implemented and coordinated all non-shelter domestic violence programs and legal advocacy (both domestic violence and sexual assault) program
- Prepared and monitored grant materials and corresponding statistical reports
- Provided technical assistance and training to professionals and community
- Provided individual and group counseling to domestic violence victims
- Served as representative on local, regional and state committees

Graduate Teaching Assistant, August 1992 - May 1994

Virginia Tech Child Development Lab School, Blacksburg, Virginia

- Taught preschool classes of up to sixteen three to five year olds
- Supervised and evaluated fourteen undergraduate student teachers
- Prepared daily lesson plans and biannual child and student evaluations

Hotline Volunteer and Facilitator, February 1989 - July 1992

The Open Door Crisis Intervention Center, Indiana, Pennsylvania

- Trained volunteers in intervention techniques and agency procedures
- Assisted individuals utilizing the crisis, information and suicide hotlines
- Interviewed and prescreened potential volunteers

Night Manager and Hotline Volunteer, February 1991 - July 1992

Alice Paul House Rape and Domestic Violence Center, Indiana, Pennsylvania

- Completed intake and exit interviews of shelter residents
- Assisted domestic violence and sexual assault victims on crisis hotline
- Maintained and enforced shelter policies

HONORS

Undergraduate Psychology Honors Department

Dean's List, every semester

Nominated for Outstanding Student Women's Leader Award

Letter of Commendation from the Mayor of Indiana, Pennsylvania

Volunteer of the Year, The Open Door

REFERENCES Available upon request