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## **Long-term effects of parental divorce on adult love relationships :: divorce as a disruption of attachment.**

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LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF PARENTAL DIVORCE ON  
ADULT LOVE RELATIONSHIPS:  
DIVORCE AS A DISRUPTION OF ATTACHMENT

A Thesis Presented

by

GINA M. HAYASHI

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment  
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Department of Psychology


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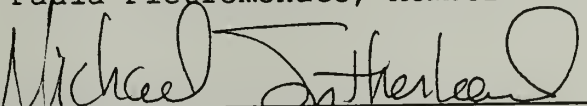
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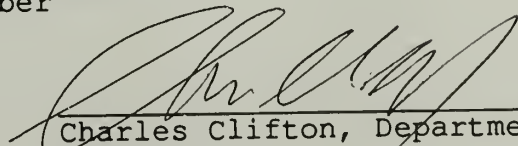
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ABSTRACT

LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF DIVORCE ON ADULT LOVE RELATIONSHIPS:  
DIVORCE AS A DISRUPTION OF ATTACHMENT

FEBRUARY 1993

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Past research has provided few clear answers about whether children of divorce are especially prone to experience problems in their adult love relationships. Studies have suggested that it may not be divorce *per se* causing long-term emotional problems for children of divorce, but more primary variables, in particular, the quality of their early parent-child relationships and the duration and intensity of their parents' conflict.

Attachment theory can provide a framework to understand these findings by conceptualizing divorce as a disruption of attachment for the child. If divorce is a disruption of attachment, then it is expected that a person's adult love relationships should be disrupted to the extent that his or her early parent-child relationships were disrupted. Further, it is expected that high levels of interparental conflict should be associated with troubled adult love relationships. These associations between parent-child relationships, interparental conflict, and adult love

relationships should persist regardless of whether a person's parents are married or divorced.

The scales used evaluated subjects' early parent-child relationships by assessing the extent to which parental figures were accepting versus rejecting, and independence-encouraging versus overprotecting. Subjects reported upon relationships with biological mothers and fathers, and (optionally) an additional person who was "like a mother or father" to them while growing up. Subjects' perceptions of their own parent's relationships was assessed by focusing on the extent to which parents argued, spent time together, and appeared to be close friends. Subjects also reported upon their current style of relating in adult love relationships.

The strongest findings of the present study centered upon the importance of the presence of a secure early parental relationship. Most subjects reporting the lack of a secure early relationship described themselves as anxiously attached in their adult love relationships. High levels of remembered interparental conflict were also associated with anxious love relationships. Third, relationship with biological parents, especially the mother, was strongly related to adult attachment style. As expected, the quality of parent-child relationships and the quality of parents' relationship with each other were more strongly related to adult love relationships than the mere occurrence of a parental divorce.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Effects of a Parental Divorce on Children

" 'I'm afraid to use the word love. Relationships are too uncertain. You can hope that a relationship is going to be permanent, but you can't expect it.' " said one young woman in an interview asking her about her parent's divorce (Wallerstein, 1985, p. 551). The "transmission of marital instability" (Guttman, 1989), the idea that children of divorce are more likely to experience divorce themselves, or to have problems in their adult love relationships, is a question of considerable research interest. Given the skyrocketing divorce rates, it is an especially sobering one. To what extent, however, are the uncertainties voiced by the above young woman universal? Problems in love relationships appear regardless of whether one's parents are married or divorced. The literature on the long-term effects of parental divorce for children provides few clear answers. Some studies report children of divorce are more likely to have difficulties in intimacy and love relationships, whereas others find no such effect. The following summarizes the early and recent literature on the long-term effects of parental divorce for children, including landmark contributions. Overall, the literature is characterized by a growing appreciation for the

intricacy of interlocking factors needed to understand the meaning of a divorce for a child.

### Early Studies

Research on divorce in the 1950s and 1960s focused upon the "single parent household," documenting the effect of the father's absence upon the child's psychological development. These studies were based on the assumption that boys need a strong, ongoing relationship with their fathers in order to develop normally and to internalize the appropriate sex role (Kalter, 1989). Divorce was conceptualized unidirectionally within a simple causal model, where the approach was to establish a causal link between growing up in a single parent household and a predetermined outcome, child pathology. Many researchers agreed this approach inhibited the search for multiple causes and outcomes and led to methodological difficulties, such as failure to use control groups for evaluating child adjustment after the divorce (Kelly, 1988; Levitin, 1979).

The heterogeneity of single parent households was often ignored. Some studies did not differentiate between the loss of a parent due to divorce versus some other reason, such as the death of a parent. Other factors, such as the presence of stepparents, differing custody arrangements, and the age and sex of the child at the time of the divorce were often ignored (Levitin, 1979).



Other studies used clinical populations in order to investigate the effects of parental divorce on children. Samples consisted of children and families who presented themselves as clients for therapy due to problems arising from the divorce. These studies shared many of the problems of the single parent household studies, because of the small, self-selected nature of their samples. They also encountered many of the problems present in all studies based on clinical populations. Although most clinicians were careful about generalizing their conclusions, many did not adequately describe the sample on which their conclusions were based. Clinicians relied more heavily on their clinical intuition and experience with the clients than on reliable and valid measures, producing data that was often poignant and astute, but difficult to generalize or compare across studies (Levitin, 1979).

These two major approaches within the early literature failed to account for the sheer variability of experience possible for a child growing up in a divorced household. Not surprisingly, several decades of research have yielded conflicting and confusing results about the short and long-term effects of a parental divorce for children. Some studies report no negative effects (Dancy & Handal, 1984; Guttman, 1989), yet others report drastic negative effects (Kalter, 1989; Wallerstein, 1985). Studies must account for the fact that divorce is an ongoing process that is

different for every family. Divorce is not a single discrete crisis, but a process that originates years before the divorce, and perpetuates long after it (Kurdek, 1981).

#### Short and Long-Term Effects

Although findings on the extent of negative effects a parental divorce has upon children have been contradictory, most researchers have reached consensus. Investigators generally agree that parental divorce leads to negative short-term consequences for most children, and to negative long-term consequences for at least some children (Kalter, 1989). Two landmark studies demonstrate the short and long-term effects of a parental divorce for children, one by Hetherington, Cox, M. and Cox, R. (1982), and another by Wallerstein and Kelly (1980).

The classic Hetherington et al. (1982) study documents the short-term effects a divorce has upon a child. They explored the impact of divorce on children at 2 months, 1 year and 2 years after the divorce. The final sample included 48 white middle-class mother-custody families whose children were of preschool age, and a matched sample of 48 intact families. This study used a multi-measure, multi-method approach. Measures included interviews, parents' diary records, observations of parent-child interactions, teacher, peer, and parent ratings, and a battery of personality, social and cognitive questionnaires for parents and children. Their most striking results

center around the troubled parent-child relationship, especially between divorced mothers and their sons. Hetherington et al. (1982) describe a "coercive cycle" in which the mother had difficulty following through with her disciplinary practices, and the child responded with an increase in <sup>ob</sup>noxious behaviors. This cycle was present as early as 2 months after the divorce.

\* Children from divorced families also displayed more negative behaviors in the home than children from intact families. These children were more likely to exhibit oppositional behaviors with their mothers than with their fathers, especially a year after the divorce: "Some divorced mothers described their relationship with their child one year after the divorce as..'the old Chinese water torture,' or 'like getting bitten to death by ducks.' " (Hetherington et al., 1982, p. 258).

One year after the divorce, boys were shown to be more oppositional, aggressive, impulsive and dependent than boys from matched intact families, and sustained these negative effects longer than girls. Girls one year after the divorce were found to be more withdrawn, "whiny and demanding."

In 1971, Wallerstein and Kelly began a 10-year study on the long-term effects of divorce for children. They began with 60 Northern California families, a total of 131 boys and girls from 2 to 18 years old. The children and parents

were interviewed immediately after their parents' separation, then 18 months, 2 years, 5 years, and 10 years later. This study has been criticized for basing its data primarily upon 2-hour long clinical interviews, for its predominantly white, middle-class sample, and for its lack of a control group of intact families. However, this study remains a landmark contribution in the literature for its longitudinal nature, and for the power of Wallerstein's astute, poignant account of the experiences of the young people she interviewed. Further, it remains the most well-documented account of how different cohorts of youngsters were differentially affected by their parents' divorce. Wallerstein summarizes her 10-year findings by comparing two groups of youngsters, ages 2 through 8 (who will be referred to as "preschoolers") and ages 9 through 18 (Wallerstein, 1984, 1985).

Immediately following their parents' divorce, the preschoolers showed a striking degree of severe distress, demonstrating their overwhelming sadness, bewilderment and fear in the play interviews. They showed varying degrees of separation anxiety and regression, such as lapses in toilet training. Many of these preschoolers became even more troubled 2 years later, especially the little boys, who were more troubled at the home, classroom and playground than girls (Wallerstein, 1984). By the 5-year mark, one-third of the remaining preschoolers were clinically



depressed, even though these children were not drawn from a clinical sample. The 9 to 18-year-olds were also acutely distressed in the initial period following the divorce. The preadolescent children in this age group demonstrated intense anger toward either one or both of their parents, whereas the adolescent group demonstrated more acting out behaviors, social withdrawal, and depression. A sex difference again emerged 18 months later, with boys having more trouble in school and at home than girls.

Therefore, \* during the first 5 years after the parental divorce, the preschoolers had an overall more difficult adjustment period than the 9 to 18-year-olds. However, an unexpected reversal occurred at the 10-year follow-up, where the former preschoolers fared better as adolescents than the 9 to 18-year-olds. These former preschoolers, now ranging in age from 12 to 18, remembered less of the actual painful feelings and events from the time of their parents' separation. Many had close relationships with their mothers. Relationships with the non-custodial father figure remained central, regardless of how often they had contact with him. Despite their sorrow and anger over the divorce, they were optimistic about their own chances for having meaningful adult love relationships.

In striking contrast to these younger children were the older sample of 9 to 18-year-olds. Ten years later, half of these young men and women were in school, but 30% of

them were unemployed, and most of the rest were employed in unskilled jobs, a distressing outcome considering the middle-class, well-educated nature of the sample.

Additionally, 68% of this group had engaged in some illegal activity while growing up, with males having more serious offenses than females. A third of the women in this sample had experienced a pregnancy outside of marriage. Young people of this sample vividly remembered their parents' separation and appeared to be overburdened by the clarity of their memories. Said one 19 year-old, " 'The hardest thing for me was my mother's pain. I remember the night when my dad left and how my mother sat up all night rocking and crying in the red rocking chair. I cried, too.' " (Wallerstein, 1985, p. 549). An especially dominant feeling was sorrow over the loss of the intact family, which often meant a lost source of nurturance and protection. This feeling of sadness and loss was virtually universal among respondents.

In contrast to the former preschoolers, these young adults also experienced anxiety over their ability to sustain lasting, meaningful love relationships. Two-thirds of the sample were moderately to severely fearful of marriage, despite their wish to be married: "In a profound way, they continued to see themselves as children of divorce as if this had become a fixed identity that would not change although they had shed their own childhood"

(Wallerstein, 1985, p. 551). Wallerstein coined the term "the sleeper effect" to describe how initially, some women appear to be functioning better than their male counterparts as preadolescents, but that real troubles do not surface till at least 10 years later (Wallerstein, 1989). In fact, 33% of the women in the sample appeared to be significantly troubled, unable to remain in a single job or relationship. Many of them appeared to be intensely afraid of betrayal or loss in a relationship. Said one woman, "'Divorce destroyed my fantasy of love and life.'" (Wallerstein, 1985, p. 552).

Along with the obvious amount of distress these individuals were facing, Wallerstein also described a subset of young men and women who appeared to be especially independent and mature as a result of the divorce. Many of them had taken on a large amount of responsibility early in adolescence in response to the family strife. As one individual put it, "'Divorce tore up my life, but I came out stronger.'" (Wallerstein, 1985, p. 552). Often accompanying their pride in their unusual maturity and inner strength, however, was a "bittersweet" sense of having to grow up too quickly, or of having been "pushed or exploited" by a parent out of childhood (Wallerstein, 1985, p. 552). The richness of Wallerstein's findings attests to the growing appreciation for the range of possible outcomes for children of divorce, from the minority of youngsters

who appear to be functioning pathologically, to those that have attained greater emotional maturity as a result of the divorce.

#### Physical vs. Psychological Wholeness

In recent years, investigators have explored how factors such as the age and sex of a child moderate the impact of a divorce on children. For example, Hetherington et al. (1982) and Wallerstein (1985) found a striking sex difference, as early as 18 months after the divorce, in which little boys demonstrated more acting-out behaviors in school and at home than little girls. Wallerstein noted how the developmental stage of children at the time of the parent's separation dictated the child's response to the separation, especially immediately following the divorce: "the child's dominant response to the departure of one parent were all governed during this early period primarily by factors of age and developmental maturity rather than individual family history or the specific dynamics of the family relationships." (Wallerstein, 1985, p.546).

The search for such moderating factors has proved profitable for many researchers. In fact, some researchers assert that such variables are more important to a child's psychological development than the parent's marital status. Researchers have therefore distinguished between the "physical wholeness" and "psychological wholeness" of a family (Dancy & Handal, 1984). "Physical wholeness" refers



merely to the parent's actual marital status, the presence or absence of a parental divorce in the family.

"Psychological wholeness" is a broad term referring to the psychological stability of the family, regardless of parent's marital status. In the last decade, researchers have questioned the importance of "physical wholeness" in understanding the effects of divorce on children (Coleman & Ganong, 1984; Dancy & Handal, 1984, Emery, 1982), wondering whether it is divorce *per se* causing psychological problems in children, or a more primary variables related to the family's "psychological wholeness," such as the quality of family relationships (Emery, 1982).

Research on "psychological wholeness" has focused upon two main variables, consistently found to be primary when considering the long-term effects of divorce for children: (1) the quality of the parent-child relationship and (2) the level of interparental conflict.

First, researchers have found that the quality of the parent-child relationship dilutes or intensifies the severe stress caused by the break-up of the parent's marriage. Hetherington et al. (1982) were among the first to view a good parent-child relationship as a "buffer" against the turmoil of a divorce. Hess and Camara (1979) expanded upon the latter's results by studying 32 divorced and intact families. They found that the damage a divorce could have upon the child's social and academic functioning was

diluted by strong relationships with both parents. Also, the father's relationship with the children was found to be as important as the child's relationship with the custodial mother. Kelly (1988) conducted an extensive review of the recent divorce literature, and found the quality of relationship between the non-custodial parent and the child often predicted the child's adjustment. Wallerstein (1984, 1985) also found a consistent relationship between the loss of emotional relationship with the non-custodial father and the child's academic, social and emotional functioning.

Researchers have also turned to the parent's relationship with each other in order to understand the psychological wholeness of a family. This research assumes that interparental hostility forces children into loyalty triangles between parents, and models aggression as a means to resolve discord. Therefore, the nature of the parent's divorce is a crucial consideration. For example, Franklin (1989) found that the joint effects of a parent's divorce coupled with perpetual intense interparental conflict was destructive to the child's long-term ability to form trust in intimate relationships, their parents, and the world overall.

Emery (1982) conducted an extensive literature review on marital discord and child behavior problems and concluded "current evidence suggests that interparental conflict, not separation, may be the principle explanation

for the association found between divorce and continuing childhood problems." (Emery, 1982, p. 313). He found that children whose parents divorced did better on child adjustment ratings than children from intact households whose parents were continually fighting. Hetherington et al. (1983) also concluded that interparental conflict is more associated with behavioral problems in preschoolers than the family's physical wholeness. These questions have direct implications for the choices parents make about their marriages, since "staying together for the children's sake" requires consideration of what is more damaging to a child: continued exposure to interparental hostility, or a divorce (Emery, 1982).

A major disadvantage for understanding the long-term effects of divorce within the psychological/physical wholeness dichotomy is that both psychological and physical wholeness are extremely heterogeneous. Psychological wholeness can range from all combinations of family members with each other, to the psychological well-being of each member, to the resources available to the family. Physical wholeness is similarly complex, especially when considering the presence of stepparents, and extent of contact with the non-custodial parent. Unifying principles across numerous possible combinations of psychological and physical wholeness are needed to generate hypotheses and make predictions.

In fact, a common criticism of the divorce literature is its lack of theoretical background (Franklin, 1989; Kelly, 1988). Studies using a single overriding variable such as conflict to predict child behavioral functioning essentially use a single variable, single outcome paradigm. In order to understand more fully the process of divorce, a theoretical framework, rather than a single variable or a dichotomy, could be useful.

Researchers have referred to attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) to provide a framework for understanding the meaning of a divorce for the child (Hess & Camara, 1979). Attachment theory is especially relevant because it encompasses the two primary variables the literature on "psychological wholeness" indicates are crucial in understanding the long-term effects of parental divorce for children: (1) the quality of the parent-child relationship and (2) the quality of the parent's relationship with each other, especially the intensity and duration of interparental conflict.

#### Attachment Theory

"No form of behavior is accompanied by stronger feelings than is attachment behavior." (Bowlby, 1969, p. 209)

Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980) wrote extensively upon the development of a strong, complex emotional bond between a mother and her infant, called attachment. He drew upon the work of ethologists such as Lorenz on imprinting to



postulate that human infants also have an instinctive need to be physically close with their mothers. Bowlby understood sucking, cooing and smiling as part of a system of "attachment behaviors" that is aimed at keeping the mother physically close. The development of attachment begins at about 4 months when the infant will smile, coo, and follow with its mother with its eyes. About a month later, the baby develops separation anxiety, crying and trying to follow if its mother leaves. Bowlby also stated that attachment is most likely to have long-term consequences from birth to age five, but the individual remains somewhat sensitive to the attachment figure well into adolescence.

Bowlby's three propositions on attachment are (1973):

- (1) Individuals are self-confident in adulthood only to the extent to which they were securely attached to a caregiver in infancy and childhood.
- (2) This security with a caregiver is formed slowly during infancy, childhood and adolescence. Whatever expectations that develop during those years persist unchanged for the rest of the person's life.
- (3) The role that actual experience plays is therefore crucial; during the early years of growing up, the feeling the individual has about the availability of attachment figures correspond more or less with what the person has actually experienced.

In the earliest months, the actual presence or absence of an attachment figure and the responsiveness of this figure is crucial to a person's self-confidence and self-esteem. Bowlby hypothesized that this occurs because the child is internalizing a permanent "internal working model" of whether or not the attachment figure is judged to be the sort of person who *in general* responds to calls for support and protection. Further, the child is developing a model of the self: whether the self is judged to be the *sort of person* to whom anyone could respond. Therefore, through these early attachments, the child formulates a "working model," of the self and the world, which will deeply affect all of his/her relationships to come.

One can re-examine Wallerstein's (1985) study of children's reactions of depression, panic, and even lapses in toilet training following their parent's separation in terms of attachment theory. Attachment theorists would conceptualize these reactions as the effects of a disruption in attachment. Further, attachment theorists would understand the association between longstanding interparental acrimony and negative psychological effects for children from within the context of Bowlby's "working model." The child formulates a working model of the world from his/her actual experiences, including the child's experience of his/her parent's relationship. Bowlby's three propositions indicate that the relationship between

parents a person perceived while growing up plays a crucial role in his/her expectations for relationships as an adult.

Ainsworth (1978) used something called the "Strange Situation" to systematically observe attachment behaviors in 1-year olds. In the "Strange Situation," the mother and her infant are placed in a laboratory filled with toys. An adult stranger is brought into the room while the mother is there, then the mother leaves her baby alone with the stranger. Observations are recorded of the baby's reaction on the mother's departure, and her return to the room a few minutes later. Ainsworth found that these infants reacted in three main ways, that have since then been replicated in hundreds of infants, in the U.S and in other countries:

(1) Securely Attached:

Although these infants made contact with the mother during the free play, they also explored the toys around the room. They sought out the mother after the separation and reunion.

(2) Anxious/Avoidant:

These infants played freely with the toys in the room but did not seek contact with the mother while doing so. When the stranger appeared, the child did not prefer the mother over the stranger, and showed little distress when she left. When she returned, the child did not seek her out, even rejecting her if she sought contact.

(3) Anxious/Ambivalent:

These 1-year-olds clung to their mothers during free play, cried when she left, didn't interact with strangers, and when reunited with her, acted ambivalently, holding her and pushing her away.

Bowlby and Ainsworth worked primarily with infants and children, but in recent years, researchers have applied their principles to adult love relationships. Weiss (1976) was the first to suggest that adult love was similar to the attachment Bowlby postulated was between a parent and infant. Many similarities exist between the love between a parent and child and the love between two adults. Shaver and Hazan (1987) suggest many parallels, from the infant's happiness in a secure relationship compared with an adult's happiness in love relationships, to the cooing, singing and "Motherese" that goes on between a parent and baby, and also between lovers.

Hazan and Shaver (1987) proposed that adult romantic love is an attachment process, a process that is deeply affected by one's earliest attachment with a caregiver. They composed three simple descriptions of styles of relating in love relationships that paralleled Ainsworth's three categories of attachment in infants with their mothers: secure, avoidant, and anxious/ambivalent. Hazan and Shaver asked subjects to check the one that best described them, expecting proportions of attachment styles

similar to proportions found in earlier studies of infants: 62% secure, 23% avoidant, and 15% anxious/ambivalent.

Hazan and Shaver found that 56% of 620 subjects characterized themselves as secure, 25% as avoidant, and 15% as anxious, which are close to the proportions of previous studies on infant's styles of relating to caregivers.

Hazan and Shaver (1987) also hypothesized that secure, avoidant and anxious subjects would differ in the way they experienced their most important love relationships. Their results confirmed their expectations, with self-categorized secure subjects describing their most important love relationship as happier, more trusting, and longer-lasting than insecure subjects. Avoidant subjects characterized their love relationships as involving jealousy, fear of intimacy, and emotional highs and lows. Anxious/ambivalent subjects also reported extreme highs and lows, extreme sexual attraction, and jealousy.

Third, Hazan and Shaver hypothesized that the three attachment styles would each have different "working models" of the world (Bowlby, 1969). They attempted to assess subjects' working models by asking them to indicate their agreement with seven statements on beliefs about love. Secure subjects tended to believe that "romantic feelings wax and wane over the course of a relationship, but at times they can be as intense as they were at the



start." Avoidant subjects believed that "it's rare to find someone you can really fall in love with" and that "the kind of head over heels romantic love depicted in novels and movies doesn't exist in real life." Anxious subjects agreed with the latter statement, and also that "intense romantic love is common at the beginning of a relationship, but it rarely lasts forever."

Many other researchers have used this framework or variants of it to understand adult romantic love as an attachment process. For example, Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) expanded upon Bowlby's ideas on internal working models by theorizing two internal working models: a model of the self, and a model of the other. Bartholomew and Horowitz dichotomized each of these models into positive and negative, yielding four theoretical adult attachment styles: secure, preoccupied, dismissing, and fearful. Their study used self-reports, interviews, and friend's ratings of subjects to validate the four attachment styles. They found that the group with a positive self-model differed on self-concept measures than those with a negative self-model. Likewise, the group with a positive model of others scored differently on sociability than those with a negative model of others.

#### The Present Study

The present study is an attempt to understand the long-term effects of parental divorce for children within the

framework of attachment theory. This exploratory study focuses upon one of many possible long-term effects: the person's style of relating in love relationships.

Previous research on the long-term effects of divorce for children has provided no clear answers on the "heritability of divorce" question, with some studies reporting children of divorce develop problems in adult love relationships (Wallerstein, 1984, 1985), others finding no such effects (Guttman, 1989). Recent literature indicates that it may not be divorce *per se* causing long-term problems to develop for children of divorce, but more primary variables related the the psychological functioning of the family (Franklin, 1989; Kelly, 1988). Two variables most consistently found to be crucial when considering long-term effects of divorce for children are: (1) the quality of the person's parent-child relationship while growing up (2) the level of interparental conflict to which the person was exposed while growing up.

Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980) may provide a framework to understand these findings, and to generate predictions about a person's style of relating in love relationships. Divorce can be conceptualized as a disruption of the attachment process. \*If divorce is a disruption of attachment for the child, then love relationships in adulthood should be disrupted to the extent that early parent-child relationships were

disrupted. This should be true regardless of the parent's marital status. Attachment theory would also predict that intense interparental conflict is associated with troubles in adult love relationships because the person incorporated hostile or aggressive models into his/her working model of the world. \* The association between high interparental conflict and insecure attachments in adulthood should exist regardless of the occurrence of a parental divorce.

Attachment theory therefore predicts that the association between insecure early childhood relationships, conflictual spousal relationships, and insecure adult love relationships occurs regardless of whether a person's parents are married or divorced. The present study attempts to assess these family/love relationship variables using a questionnaire for a sample of subjects with divorced parents, and a sample of subjects with married parents.

In summary, it is expected that the quality of a person's relationship with his/her parents and the person's perception of his/her parent's relationship (especially the intensity and duration of interparental conflict) are expected to be more strongly related to adult attachment style than the mere occurrence of a parental divorce.

## CHAPTER 2

### METHOD

#### Subjects

Respondents were 173 undergraduate college students, 78 who reported their parents were divorced, and 94 who had never experienced a parental divorce. Two-thirds (66.9%) of the sample was female and one-third (33.1%) male. Because the questions of the study focus upon disruption of attachment through parental divorce, subjects who experienced the loss of a parent due to death, physical or mental illness, or due to some other cause were excluded from the study.

#### Procedure

All data collection was done by two undergraduate research assistants, one male and one female. A one-page demographic survey was distributed within large introductory undergraduate psychology courses. Students were informed that their completion of the survey could facilitate their participation in a 45-minute study which involved answering a questionnaire on family relationships, for which they would receive one experimental credit.

Eligible subjects were then contacted by phone and scheduled for prearranged times. At the testing site, they were asked to respond as completely as possible to a

12-page questionnaire. Research assistants were present at all sessions to answer any questions the students had.

All items pertaining to a parental divorce were placed near the end of the questionnaire in order to keep the study's hypothesis unclear. The questionnaire was given in two forms, differing only in the order of scale presentation. Thus, roughly half the respondents answered questions about their current relationships first, then questions about their early parental relationships; the other half of respondents answered questions in the reverse order. After completing the questionnaire, students were given written feedback about the goals, rationale, and expected results of the study.

#### Measures

The questionnaire focused upon the following areas: early parent-child relationship, parent's relationship with each other, and present style of relating in romantic relationships. A demographic section was included at the end. The questionnaire included the following measures (see Appendix for complete copy of the questionnaire).

#### Parent-Child Relationship

Epstein's (1983) Mother-Father-Peer Scale assesses subjects' early relationships with their mother, father, and peers. This study used only the sections of the measure assessing respondents' relationships with their parents. Subjects were asked 37 questions about their



biological mother, and 37 identical questions about their biological father.<sup>1</sup> Especially because many children of divorce have other caregiving figures besides biological parents, all subjects were asked if they had any other person besides their biological parents who was "like a mother or father" to them. If the subject responded "yes," they were then asked the same 37 questions about this individual, termed their "caregiver." Additionally, they were asked to rate on a one to five scale the extent to which they considered this person to be a substitute for their original mother or father, and the extent to which they felt close to that person. Of subjects with divorced parents, over half (59.0%, n=46) reported having such a caregiver, usually a stepparent (50.0%). In comparison, about 20% of students from intact families reported having a significant other caregiver (n=18).

The Mother-Father-Peer Scale measures two constructs: the degree to which the caregiver was reported to have been independence encouraging versus overprotecting, and the degree to which the caregiver was reported to have been accepting versus rejecting. The test-retest reliability ranged from .88 to .93 for each subscale. Epstein also found significant correlations between the MFP and Epstein's Self-Esteem Inventory, Primary Emotions and Traits Inventory, Ego Strength Scale, Baron's Ego Strength Inventory and Guilford-Zimmerman Temperament Survey.

The Mother-Father-Peer Scale asks respondents to answer questions about how they related to their parents in childhood. Because of the variability in each subject's ability to remember their childhood relationships, a single item was included at the end of the Mother-Father -Peer Scale section asking respondents to rate their ability remember their early parental relationships. Subjects who reported themselves to be unable to remember their relationships with their parent/caregiver were excluded from the study (n=4).

#### Parent's Relationship with Each Other

Two measures assessed how subjects perceived their own parents' relationships. The first was a six-item scale designed by Belsky (1985) to evaluate the extent to which the person's parents argued, expressed positive affection for each other, appeared to be close friends, and spent time together. Subjects also evaluate the overall quality of their parents' marriage. Belsky intercorrelated responses across questions to reveal a unidimensional scale with internal consistencies of .90 on average.

Second, a portion of Peterson and Zill's (1986) National Survey of Children was used to evaluate the amount of perceived conflict between subjects' parents. The Peterson and Zill national survey included 1400 children ages 12 to 16. The present study included 11 items from the Peterson and Zill survey, asking about how often parents

argued about specific issues such as their children, chores and responsibilities, and money. Also included were questions about how often these arguments became physically violent.

In order to address the changing nature of the parent's relationship over time, subjects answered both the Belsky scale and the Peterson and Zill scale twice, once for how they remembered their parents' relationships to be while growing up (around age 12 and younger) and once for how they saw their parents' current relationships. Because acrimonious, drawn-out parental divorces are often linked with negative outcomes for the children involved, subjects from divorced households were asked to assess their biological parent's relationship, not the relationship between their custodial parent and stepparent (Franklin, 1989).

#### Adult Attachment Style

Hazan and Shaver's (1987) single-item adult attachment prototype scale was used to assess respondents' overall style of relating to romantic partners. This scale asks subjects to check one of three simple descriptions that best describes their style of relating in romantic relationships. The scale was based upon the idea that adult romantic love is an attachment process similar to the attachment process Bowlby postulates was between a mother and her infant. Further, this adult attachment should be

similar in quality to the three categories of attachment style between infants and their mothers, which Ainsworth and others have recorded in North America, and other continents: secure, avoidant, and anxious/ambivalent. Hazan and Shaver also hypothesized that there would be a direct parallel between early parent-child relationships and current adult relationships, since Bowlby postulated these early infant-parent attachments had permanent effects. To test this, they had respondents use adjective checklists to describe each parent, then performed a hierarchical discriminant function analysis upon the data to see if the parent-child relationship could be used to significantly discriminate subjects into their correct categories. The first function accounted for 69.87% of the variability and separated secure from two types of insecure subjects. The second function separated avoidant from anxious subjects and accounted for 30.13% of the variability. The functions considered together correctly classified 56% of avoidant subjects, 51% of anxious subjects, and 58% of secure subjects (Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

Also included, but not used in the analysis, was a 60-item measure that included six 10-item subscales: dissatisfaction with partner, proximity seeking, self-reliance, ambivalence, trust/confidence in others, and jealousy/fear of abandonment. Subjects' responses to this

scale were included in the data file, but saved for use in future analyses.

### Demographics

The last section asked for demographic information, and for information about subjects' past and present dating behaviors. These questions were used as additional data about the subject's style of relating in adult romantic relationships. Subjects whose reported dating behaviors were completely different from their self-categorized adult attachment style were excluded from the study (n=5). For example, subjects classifying themselves as securely attached but also reporting having had over twenty-five brief relationships (less than one week) were excluded from the sample.

### Scale Reliability

The present sample's scale reliabilities were checked. Good reliabilities were found for the Epstein's Mother-Father-Peer Scale. The Independence/Overprotection subscale and the Acceptance/Rejection subscale both had a Cronbach's alpha of .86. The reliability of each subscale, broken down by parent was also computed (Cronbach's alpha):

	<u>Independence</u>	<u>Overprotection</u>
Mother	.84	.86
Father	.79	.91
Caregiver	.86	.92



Reliability checks for the Peterson and Zill scales measuring students' perceptions of past and present interparental conflict yielded Cronbach's alphas of .79 and .69 (past and present interparental conflict respectively). The Belsky six-item scale rating the quality of parents' relationships had alphas of .91 and .90 for parent's past and present relationship respectively.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESULTS

#### Respondents

Of 173 subjects, 45% had parents who were divorced, and 55% had never experienced a parental divorce. Respondents' mean age was 19.6 years. The sample was primarily white (92%), heterosexual (97%) and single (100%). Socioeconomic status was predominately middle and upper middle class, with nearly half of subjects' mothers (48%) and fathers (58%) completing four-year college educations or beyond. Overall, 26.7% of subjects classified themselves as avoidantly attached in their adult love relationships, 36.0% as anxiously attached, and 37.2% as securely attached.

The mother was the custodial parent for most subjects with divorced parents (85%). The child's mean age of parental separation was 7.5 years. About three-quarters (77%) of subjects whose parents divorced reported that one or both of their parents had remarried.

The analysis of primary concern related parent's marital status with adult attachment style. Early parent-child relationship and the parent's relationship with each other were expected to be more strongly related to adult attachment style than the mere occurrence of a parental divorce. Data analysis proceeded in two main steps. Chi-square analyses were first used to clarify the relationship

between a given variable and adult attachment style. A stepwise polychotomous logistic regression was then used to uncover multivariate relationships in their association with attachment style.

#### Parent's Marital Status, Sex and Attachment Style

The relationship between parent's marital status and adult attachment style was not statistically significant. Since past literature indicates the sex and age of the person at the time of the parent's separation to be important modulators of the effects of divorce, these factors were each examined separately in their relationship to adult attachment style. No significant relationship was found between parent's marital status and attachment style when controlling for sex. Children of divorce were divided into two age groups: 0 to 7 at age of separation, and 8 and older. Parent's marital status was not significantly related to attachment style when controlling for age at the time of parent's separation.

Parent's marital status was important in relation to subject's sex. Clear sex differences emerged in attachment style ( $X(2)=8.29$ ,  $p < .05$ , see Table 1) . A disproportionate number of females (75.0%) versus males (25.0%) identified themselves as securely attached ("I am comfortable with closeness.."). The gender differences in attachment style were present in subjects with married parents, but not in students with divorced parents

(Table 2). Women with married parents tended to classify themselves as secure (45.2%) more often than men with married parents (28.1%). These women were also more likely to classify themselves as anxious than men with married parents (33.9% and 21.9% respectively). The pattern is quite different for children of divorce: both men and women tended to describe themselves as anxiously attached (see Table 2). Although this relationship was not statistically significant, it parallels a pattern of responses reported by subjects who rated their parenting as low, or highly conflictual. This pattern is a disproportion of anxiously attached subjects, combined with a scarcity of securely attached subjects.

#### Parent-Child Relationship

As shown in Table 3, subjects answered Epstein's Mother-Father-Peer scale at least twice, one for each biological parent, and possibly a third time (n=63, 36.4%) for someone they identified as "like a mother or father" to them ("caregiver"). Subjects also answered an open-ended question about their early childhood relationships. Some children of divorce wrote about their "caregiver," who was usually a stepparent. For example, one young woman wrote, "I hated my father when I was in my adolescent years, and I still hate him now..My stepfather has been emotionally and financially like a father to me, I am extremely lucky to have him..to take the place of my father." Another young

woman wrote, "The relationship with my stepfather often feels superficial. I suppose we like each other, but he never really shows his emotions towards me."

Subjects overall rated their early relationships with their parent's very positively. Children of divorce tended to rate their fathers more negatively ( $\bar{t}=3.90$ , 77 df,  $p < .001$ ) than their mothers; subjects from intact families rated their mothers and fathers equally positively. Because Hazan and Shaver (1987) found that subjects tended to rate their opposite-sex parent more favorably, this was checked in this sample, but not substantiated. Young women from both intact and divorced households rated their mothers more positively than their fathers ( $\bar{t}=3.08$ , 114 df,  $p < .01$ ), whereas young men tended to rate their mothers and fathers equally favorably.

#### Parent-Child Relationship and Attachment Style

Table 4 shows a statistically significant relationship between quality of relationship with biological parents and attachment style.<sup>2</sup> When considering each parent separately, relationship with mother alone was significantly related to current attachment style ( $X(2)=9.68$ ,  $p < .01$ ), but relationship with father was not. Subjects who rated their mother's parenting as low were more likely to describe themselves as anxiously attached (59.4%) than securely attached (18.8%).



Questions about the quality of parental relationships were not only investigated by categorizing the quality of relationship with parents as "low" or "high," but by asking about the mere *presence or absence* of a secure early parental relationship. Subjects were classified as having a secure early parental relationship if they reported having an accepting, independence encouraging relationship with some caregiving figure while growing up (n=100). Subjects were classified as lacking a secure early parental relationship if they rated their mother, father, and caregiver as both rejecting and overprotecting (n=70). These 70 subjects, (32.7% male, 67.1% female) came unequally from intact and divorced families (44.3% and 55.7% respectively).

Table 5 shows a highly statistically significant relationship between the presence or absence of a secure early parental relationship, and adult attachment style ( $X(2)=12.75, p < .01$ ). Half (51.4%) of all subjects who reported the lack of a secure early parental relationship described themselves as anxiously attached. Only one-fourth (24.3%) of these subjects classified themselves as securely attached, versus nearly half (46.0%) of the group that did have a secure relationship.

When considering gender effects (Table 5), over half (53.2%) of all young women who reported the lack of a secure early parental relationship were anxiously attached.

Young men reporting no early secure relationship were evenly divided between anxiously and avoidantly attached. These young men were also much less likely to be securely attached (8.7%) than young women (31.9%).

Parent's Relationship with Each Other  
and Attachment Style

Subjects with both married and divorced parents reported that their parent's relationships deteriorated over time ( $t=4.01, 160$  df,  $p < .001$ ). This was measured in terms of how much time they spent together, were close friends, and expressed affection for each other. However, students also remembered their parent's past relationship as more conflictual than their present one ( $t=7.77, 155$  df,  $p < .001$ ), measured in terms of how often parents argued verbally, and the extent to which arguments became physical.

Of primary interest was how the marital relationship dimension related to adult attachment style. Children of divorce were asked to report upon their biological parent's relationship, not stepparents, since past research indicates the nature of the divorce to be of paramount importance (Franklin, 1989). First, it was found that subjects' perceptions of the overall quality of their parents' relationship was not significantly related to adult attachment style, but that remembered interparental conflict was. Table 6 shows the disproportion (60.6%)

anxious subjects who reported growing up with high interparental conflict.

Sustained interparental conflict was investigated by comparing subjects who reported high interparental conflict in the past and present with subjects who reported low interparental conflict over time. Although cell frequencies are low, the pattern parallels earlier ones: a preponderance of anxiously attached subjects, and a scarcity of securely attached subjects. No individual who reported growing up with sustained interparental conflict was securely attached in adult love relationships. Although the result is statistically significant ( $X(2)=9.99, p < .01$ ), the relationship must be interpreted with caution due to low expected frequencies in half of the cells (see Table 6).

One in ten (10.4%) subjects said that their parent's arguments in the past became physical "sometimes" or "often." Further, 6.9% of these subjects reported one of their parents were badly cut or bruised as a result of an argument. Subjects were far less likely to report current interparental violence, with 2.3% of subjects saying arguments sometimes or often became physical, and 2.9% reporting one of their parents being "badly cut or bruised." Subjects were grouped according to occurrence of parental violence (Table 6). Group differences emerged; subjects who remembered past interparental violence were

twice as likely to be anxiously attached than those who did not report such violence ( $X(2)=9.64, p < .01$ ).

### Model of Multivariate Relationships

Though chi-square analyses helped to illuminate the strength of association between a given single variable and adult attachment style, questions about multivariate relationships remained. The study's hypothesis focused upon the comparative importance of parent's marital status versus family relationship variables in predicting adult attachment style. A stepwise polychotomous logistic regression was performed upon the data to explore these questions, using adult attachment style as the dependent variable. Regressor variables were added to the model on the basis of two main criteria: (1) if the variable in the chi-square analysis was statistically significant at the .05 level (2) if the variable was not statistically significant in the chi-square analysis, but central to the questions of this study, (i.e. parent's marital status). Table 7 summarizes the results of the stepwise regression. The regression tested the hypothesis that a given model of multivariate relationships fit the data.<sup>3</sup> Each step represents the addition of a new term (predictor variable) into the model. Low probability levels associated with the goodness-of-fit chi-square statistic indicate the rejection of the hypothesis. Thus, the high probability level

( $p = .247$ ) of step one indicates the presence/absence of a secure early parental relationship alone significantly lessens the difference between expected and observed values of the dependent variable. Each subsequent term has an improvement chi-square value, indicating that the new term significantly improves the fit of the model to the data. The results of the regression are overall quite similar to the earlier findings of the chi-square analyses; they underscore the importance of the presence of a secure early parental relationship. They also parallel earlier findings on past interparental conflict and its association with attachment style, and strongly suggest that parent's marital status does not predict attachment style when information about early family relationships is available.



TABLE 1  
 Cell Counts: Sex by Attachment Style &  
 Parents' Marital Status by Attachment Style\*

Sex	<u>Attachment Style</u>			
	Avoidant	Anxious	Secure	Total
Females	23 (20.0)	44 (38.2)	48 (41.7)	115 (66.9)
Males	23 (40.3)	18 (31.6)	16 (28.1)	57 (33.1)
Total	46 (26.7)	62 (30.0)	64 (37.2)	172
X(2)=8.29, p < .05				

Family Structure	Attachment Style			
	Avoidant	Anxious	Secure	Total
Intact	29 (30.9)	28 (29.8)	37 (39.4)	94 (54.7)
Divorced	17 (21.8)	34 (43.6)	27 (34.6)	78 (45.3)
Total	46 (26.7)	62 (36.0)	64 (37.2)	172
X(2)=3.82, not significant				

\*row percentages are in parentheses

TABLE 2  
 Cell Counts: Sex by Attachment Style  
 Controlling for Parent's Marital Status\*

	<u>Attachment Style</u>			
	Avoidant	Anxious	Secure	Total
Married				
Female	13 (24.0)	21 (33.9)	28 (45.0)	62 (66.0)
Male	16 (50.0)	7 (21.9)	9 (28.0)	32 (34.0)
Total	29 (30.9)	28 (29.8)	37 (39.4)	94
	X(2)=8.34 (2), p < .05			
Divorced				
	Avoidant	Anxious	Secure	Total
Female	10 (18.9)	23 (43.0)	20 (37.7)	53 (67.9)
Male	7 (28.0)	11 (44.0)	7 (28.0)	5 (32.1)
Total	17 (21.8)	34 (43.6)	27 (34.6)	78
	X(2)=1.12, not significant			

\*row percentages are in parentheses

TABLE 3  
Means for Mother-Father-Peer Scale

	<u>Acceptance/ Rejection</u>	<u>Indepedence/ Overprotection</u>
Mother		
Mean	43.4	49.0
SD	6.8	9.1
Father		
Mean	38.5	49.7
SD	9.5	8.5
Caregiver		
Mean	43.0	52.4
SD	8.0	8.1

TABLE 4  
 Cell Counts: Quality of Parenting  
 by Attachment Style\*

Parenting	<u>Attachment Style</u>			Total
	Avoidant	Anxious	Secure	
Low	7 (21.9)	18 (56.3)	7 (21.9)	32 (19.3)
High	38 (28.4)	43 (32.1)	53 (39.6)	134 (80.7)
Total	45 (27.1)	61 (36.7)	60 (36.7)	166

$X(2)=6.74, p < .05$

Mother's Parenting	<u>Attachment Style</u>			Total
	Avoidant	Anxious	Secure	
Low	7 (21.9)	19 (59.4)	6 (18.8)	32 (19.0)
High	38 (27.9)	42 (30.9)	56 (41.2)	136 (86.0)
Total	45 (26.8)	61 (36.3)	62 (36.9)	168

$X(2)=9.68, p < .01$

\*row percentages are in parentheses

TABLE 5

Cell Counts: Presence/Absence of Secure Early Relationship  
by Attachment Style\*

All Subjects	<u>Attachment Style</u>			Total
	Avoidant	Anxious	Secure	
none	17 (24.3)	36 (51.4)	17 (24.3)	70 (41.2)
present	28 (28.0)	26 (26.0)	46 (46.0)	100 (58.8)
Total	45 (26.5)	62 (36.5)	63 (37.1)	170
X(2)=12.75, p < .01				
Females	Avoidant	Anxious	Secure	Total
none	7 (14.9)	25 (53.2)	15 (31.9)	47 (41.6)
present	15 (22.7)	19 (28.8)	32 (48.5)	66 (58.4)
Total	22 (19.5)	44 (38.9)	47 (41.6)	113
X(2)=6.88, p < .05				
Males	Avoidant	Anxious	Secure	Total
none	10 (43.5)	11 (47.8)	2 (8.7)	23 (40.4)
present	13 (38.2)	7 (20.6)	14 (41.2)	34 (59.6)
Total	23 (40.4)	18 (31.6)	16 (28.1)	57
X(2)=8.47, p < .05				

\*row percentages are in parentheses



TABLE 6

Cell Counts: Parental Conflict by Attachment Style\*

## PAST PARENTAL CONFLICT

	Avoidant	Anxious	Secure	Total
low	40 (31.7)	36 (28.6)	50 (39.7)	126 (79.2)
high	5 (15.2)	20 (63.6)	8 (24.2)	33 (20.8)
Total	45 (28.3)	56 (35.2)	58 (36.5)	149

$X(2)=11.87, p < .01$

## SUSTAINED PARENTAL CONFLICT

	Avoidant	Anxious	Secure	Total
low	31 (30.4)	30 (29.4)	41 (40.2)	102 (90.3)
high	3 (27.3)	8 (72.3)	0	11 (9.7)
Total	34 (30.1)	38 (33.6)	41 (36.3)	113

$X(2) 9.99, p < .01^{**}$

## PAST PARENTAL VIOLENCE

	Avoidant	Anxious	Secure	Total
never	41 (29.7)	42 (30.4)	55 (39.9)	138 (82.1)
sometimes	4 (13.3)	18 (60.0)	8 (26.7)	30 (17.9)
Total	45 (26.8)	60 (35.7)	63 (37.5)	168

$X(2)=9.64, p < .01$

\*row percentages are in parentheses

\*\*expected frequency &lt; 5 in half the cells

TABLE 7

## Summary of Stepwise Regression Results

<u>Step#</u>	<u>Variable Name</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>Improvement Chi-Square</u>	<u>p</u>	<u>Goodness- of-Fit Chi-Square</u>	<u>p</u>
1	presence/ absence	2	20.7	.000	90.4	.247
2	past parental conflict	2	9.65	.008	80.7	.456
3	relationship with mother	2	5.78	.056	75.0	.577
4	sex	2	4.89	.087	70.1	.670

## CHAPTER 4

### DISCUSSION

Past research has provided few clear answers to the question of whether children of divorce are especially prone to experience problems in their adult love relationships. The present study attempted to assess the person's functioning in adult love relationships by investigating self-reported attachment style (anxious, avoidant or secure) in their romantic relationships. The study used Bowlby's attachment theory to generate predictions about the person's functioning in adult love relationships. The quality of a person's relationship with his/her parents, and a person's perception of his/her parent's relationship while growing up was expected to be more strongly related to adult love relationships than the mere occurrence of a parental divorce.

Overall, results suggest there is a strong relationship between the presence or absence of a secure early parental relationship and adult love relationships, as measured by self-reported attachment style. Second, results suggest that a person's perception of his/her parent's relationship while growing up is critical for the way he/she relates in adult love relationships. As predicted, these two family relationship variables seemed more important for attachment

style than the mere occurrence of a parental divorce in the person's history.

### Secure Early Parental Relationships

Two main findings emerged from the data about the quality of the parent-child relationship. The first was that students who rated their mothers as overprotecting and rejecting were twice as likely to be anxiously attached in adult love relationships than those who rated their parents more positively ("I worry that others won't care about me as much as I care about them.."). These findings are similar to past research documenting how secure parent-child relationships generally seem linked with secure adult love relationships (Fiala, 1989; Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

Second, the presence or absence of a secure early parental relationship was strongly related to attachment style, as attachment theory predicts. Students reporting the lack of a secure early parental relationship were twice as likely to be anxiously attached in their adult love relationships than those with such a relationship.

Past research has suggested that a strong, secure early parent-child relationship can "buffer" a child from the turbulence of a divorce. A secure relationship with the mother or father can mitigate possible negative long-term effects of a parental divorce (Hess & Camara, 1979;

Hetherington et al., 1982; Kelly, 1988; Wallerstein, 1984, 1985). This study seems to indicate that a secure early relationship with other parental figures besides mothers and fathers can be important "buffers" as well. Many children of divorce said that their secure early relationship was with someone other than their biological parents, termed "caregiver." The "caregiver" was usually a stepparent, but ranged to include grandparents, older siblings, teachers and neighbors.

These findings imply that it is not necessarily the target of the attachment (mothers, fathers, stepparents, etc.), but the quality of attachment, that may matter for adult functioning in love relationships. Although these findings are preliminary in nature, they seem to correspond with Bowlby's ideas about the nature of the attachment figure. He wrote that there was not just a primary attachment figure (usually the mother), but a spectrum of figures to whom the child could form attachments of differing strengths.

#### Parent's Relationship with Each Other

Emery (1982) discusses whether "staying together for the sake of the children" is better than a divorce, arguing that sustained exposure to parental conflict is at least as troublesome for some children than the actual separation.



Findings of this study were that young men and women who remembered frequent arguments and/or physical violence between their parents in the past primarily classified themselves as anxiously attached in adult love relationships. In terms of sustained conflict, only a small (n=11) number of students reported high levels of interparental conflict both in the past and present, but all 11 of these students reported being insecurely attached.

Assessing the the level of interparental conflict, however, may involve other issues. Hetherington et al. (1982) distinguished between "encapsulated" and "overt" conflict. "Encapsulated conflict" occurs when parents report extreme dissatisfaction with their marriage, but attempt to conceal their arguments from the children. "Overt" parental conflict occurs when parents do not attempt to conceal their hostility and arguments from the children. The measures of this study applied only to "overt" conflict. Further, some students with divorced parents reported no conflict between parents even when their answers to an open-ended question revealed intense and long-lasting interparental hostility. For example, one subject wrote, "They never see each other, my mother hates

my father." Questions about the effects of such "encapsulated" conflict remain unexplored.

#### Importance of Parent's Marital Status

Overall, the parent's marital status (married or divorced) did not seem to be related to adult attachment style. The findings of the logistic regression suggest that parent's marital status (married or divorced) is not as an important consideration for self-reported attachment style when information about the quality of parent-child relationships and parent's relationships with each other are at hand. However, parent's marital status did show an association with adult attachment style upon further analysis of gender differences.

Strong gender differences in attachment style were found in this sample; young women tended to be more securely attached, and more anxiously attached than young men, and young men were more likely to be avoidantly attached. These gender differences were only found in students from intact families, not those from divorced families.

Some of the discrepancy between the intact and divorced sample could be explained by the primarily mother-custody nature of the latter sample. Students from intact families were raised by both their biological mother and father,

whereas students from divorced families were raised primarily by their mothers, perhaps causing males and females to be more similar in their attachment style. However, because the study's findings are associative in nature, such causal explanations are necessarily speculative.

#### Limitations of the Study

The findings of this study should be interpreted remembering the specific sample on which it is based. This study's sample consisted of predominately white, middle to upper-middle class, and heterosexual college students.

Second, the study's findings that secure early parental relationships seem linked with secure adult love relationships can only be interpreted as an association. It does not necessarily mean that early parent-child relationships cause secure or insecure attachments in adulthood. Although Bowlby theorized that this would be the case, the present study does not attempt to show such causality, but to reveal associations and relationships.

Third, the study rests on the assumption that paper-and-pencil self-report retrospective instruments are powerful enough to assess the quality of early parent-child relationships. Subjects were asked to remember their relationships with parents while growing up, and to

accurately report what they perceived. Attachment theory predicts that it is the actual quality of the person's relationship with parents, rather than what was remembered or perceived, that is essential to development. Although most subjects reported being able to recall their early childhood relationships, the accuracy of their memories is affected by numerous influences, including the need to remember and report in the most socially desirable way. Perhaps it's easier to assess the presence or absence of a secure relationship, than the quality of particular relationships. This concern underscores the importance of using the most reliable and valid measures available.

Similarly, the adult attachment single-item prototype measure assumes that subjects have enough insight into their past history to make an accurate choice of three simple descriptions of styles of relating in romantic relationships. It also assumes subjects will report what they perceive, not just what is most socially desirable. Further, the attachment style paradigm is just one conceptualization of love relationships.

Fourth, although the assessment of interparental conflict did not require the evaluation of the parent's actual relationship, but the subject's perception of that relationship, the reports on conflict are also subject to

question. Many children of divorce reported remembering no interparental conflict while growing up, despite characterizing their parent's relationship as extremely acrimonious in an open-ended question about their parent's relationship. They said they reported no conflict because their parents "never talked to each other," and therefore never argued. These measures only assessed particular facets of a multi-dimensional relationship.

In summary, it was found that the presence/absence of a secure early parental relationship and high past interparental conflict were more strongly related to adult attachment style than was the mere occurrence of a parental divorce. Although it is not possible to conclude that these associations demonstrate the causal connections attachment theory predicts exist between early and adult relationships, it does provide promising groundwork for future research.



APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

For each of the following statements, please indicate whether you:

1. Strongly disagree
2. Somewhat disagree
3. Uncertain
4. Somewhat agree
5. Strongly agree

Please respond to each statement with what you feel is the most accurate choice. Mark your choice on the line to the left of each statement.

WHEN I WAS A CHILD, MY MOTHER (BIOLOGICAL mother, or for adopted subjects, first adoptive mother):

- \_\_\_ 1. was close to a perfect parent.
- \_\_\_ 2. encouraged me to make my own decisions.
- \_\_\_ 3. helped me learn to be independent.
- \_\_\_ 4. felt she had to fight my battles for me when I had a disagreement with a teacher or a friend.
- \_\_\_ 5. was overprotective of me.
- \_\_\_ 6. encouraged me to do things for myself.
- \_\_\_ 7. encouraged me to try things my own way.
- \_\_\_ 8. did not let me do things that other kids my age were allowed to do.
- \_\_\_ 9. would reassure me that I was right and the other person wrong whenever I disagreed with someone.
- \_\_\_ 10. sometimes disapproved of specific things I did, but never gave me the impression that she disliked me as a person.
- \_\_\_ 11. had not a single fault that I can think of.
- \_\_\_ 12. enjoyed being with me.
- \_\_\_ 13. tried to arrange my life so that I would experience as little discomfort as possible.
- \_\_\_ 14. was someone I found very difficult to please.

- \_\_\_15. was proud of me.
- \_\_\_16. usually supported me when I wanted to do new and exciting things.
- \_\_\_17. worried too much that I would hurt myself or get sick.
- \_\_\_18. was an ideal person in every way.
- \_\_\_19. sometimes said she wished I'd never been born.
- \_\_\_20. was never angry with me.
- \_\_\_21. was often rude to me.
- \_\_\_22. and I never disagreed.
- \_\_\_23. rarely did things with me.
- \_\_\_24. didn't like to have me around the house.
- \_\_\_25. didn't seem to like me very much.
- \_\_\_26. would often do things for me that I could do myself.
- \_\_\_27. was very patient with me.
- \_\_\_28. let me handle my own money.
- \_\_\_29. gave me the best upbringing anyone could ever have.
- \_\_\_30. could always be depended upon when I really needed her help and trust.
- \_\_\_31. did not want me to grow up.
- \_\_\_32. tried to make me feel better when I was unhappy.
- \_\_\_33. made me feel at ease when I talked with her.
- \_\_\_34. encouraged me to express my own opinions.
- \_\_\_35. made me feel that I was a burden to her.
- \_\_\_36. never disappointed me.
- \_\_\_37. gave me the feeling that she liked me as I was; she didn't feel she had to make me over into someone else.

For each of the following statements, please indicate whether you:

1. Strongly disagree
2. Somewhat disagree
3. Uncertain
4. Somewhat agree
5. Strongly agree

Please respond to each statement with what you feel is the most accurate choice. Mark your choice on the line to the left of each statement.

WHEN I WAS A CHILD, MY FATHER (BIOLOGICAL father, or for adopted subjects, first adoptive father)

- \_\_\_ 1. was close to a perfect parent.
- \_\_\_ 2. encouraged me to make my own decisions.
- \_\_\_ 3. helped me learn to be independent.
- \_\_\_ 4. felt he had to fight my battles for me when I had a disagreement with a teacher or friend.
- \_\_\_ 5. was overprotective of me.
- \_\_\_ 6. encouraged me to do things for myself.
- \_\_\_ 7. encouraged me to try things my own way.
- \_\_\_ 8. did not let me do things that other kids my age were allowed to do.
- \_\_\_ 9. would reassure me that I was right and the other person wrong whenever I disagreed with someone.
- \_\_\_ 10. sometimes disapproved of specific things I did, but never gave me the impression that he disliked me as a person.
- \_\_\_ 11. had not a single fault that I can think of.
- \_\_\_ 12. enjoyed being with me.
- \_\_\_ 13. tried to arrange my life so that I would experience as little discomfort as possible.
- \_\_\_ 14. was someone I found very difficult to please.
- \_\_\_ 15. was proud of me.

- \_\_\_ 16. usually supported me when I wanted to do new and exciting things.
- \_\_\_ 17. worried too much that I would get sick or hurt myself.
- \_\_\_ 18. was an ideal person in every way.
- \_\_\_ 19. sometimes said he wished I'd never been born.
- \_\_\_ 20. was never angry with me.
- \_\_\_ 21. was often rude to me.
- \_\_\_ 22. and I never disagreed.
- \_\_\_ 23. rarely did things with me.
- \_\_\_ 24. didn't like to have me around the house.
- \_\_\_ 25. didn't seem to like me very much.
- \_\_\_ 26. would often do things for me that I could do for myself.
- \_\_\_ 27. was very patient with me.
- \_\_\_ 28. let me handle my own money.
- \_\_\_ 29. gave me the best upbringing anyone could ever have.
- \_\_\_ 30. could always be depended upon when I really needed his help and trust.
- \_\_\_ 31. did not want me to grow up.
- \_\_\_ 32. tried to make me feel better when I was unhappy.
- \_\_\_ 33. made me feel at ease when I talked with him.
- \_\_\_ 34. encouraged me to express my own opinions.
- \_\_\_ 35. made me feel that I was a burden to him.
- \_\_\_ 36. never disappointed me.
- \_\_\_ 37. gave me the feeling that he liked me as I was; he didn't feel he had to make me over into someone else.

Please respond to the following questions:

1. How close did you feel towards your MOTHER while growing up? (biological mother, or for adopted subjects, first adoptive mother):

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
not at all          slightly          moderately          very          extremely

How close do you feel towards her now?

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
not at all          slightly          moderately          very          extremely

2. How close did you feel towards your FATHER while growing up? (biological father, or for adopted subjects, first adoptive father):

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
not at all          slightly          moderately          very          extremely

How close do you feel towards him now?

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
not at all          slightly          moderately          very          extremely

3. The previous two questions ask about your biological mother and father (or if you were adopted, your first adoptive parents). **While you were growing up, was there any other person besides them who was like a mother or father to you?** (for example, grandparent, older sibling, stepparent, teacher, priest or rabbi, etc.)

yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

If NO, please go on to page 4 BACK.

If YES, please state the nature of this person's relationship to you:

4. If yes, how close do you feel towards this person?

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
not at all          slightly          moderately          very          extremely

5. To what extent do you feel this person is a substitute for your original mother or father?

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
not at all          slightly          moderately          very          extremely

Please turn to the next page and answer the questions about this person (the instructions will refer to this person as your "CAREGIVER").

For each of the following statements, please indicate whether you:

1. Strongly disagree
2. Somewhat disagree
3. Uncertain
4. Somewhat agree
5. Strongly agree

Please respond to each statement with what you feel is the most accurate choice. Mark your choice on the line to the left of each statement.

WHEN I WAS A CHILD, MY CAREGIVER:

- \_\_\_ 1. was close to a perfect caregiver.
- \_\_\_ 2. encouraged me to make my own decisions.
- \_\_\_ 3. helped me learn to be independent.
- \_\_\_ 4. felt he/she had to fight my battles for me when I had a disagreement with a teacher or a friend.
- \_\_\_ 5. was overprotective of me.
- \_\_\_ 6. encouraged me to do things for myself.
- \_\_\_ 7. encouraged me to try things my own way.
- \_\_\_ 8. did not let me do things that other kids my age were allowed to do.
- \_\_\_ 9. would reassure me that I was right and the other person wrong whenever I disagreed with someone.
- \_\_\_ 10. sometimes disapproved of specific things I did, but never gave me the impression that he/she disliked me as a person.
- \_\_\_ 11. had not a single fault that I can think of.
- \_\_\_ 12. enjoyed being with me.
- \_\_\_ 13. tried to arrange my life so that I would experience as little discomfort as possible.
- \_\_\_ 14. was someone I found very difficult to please.
- \_\_\_ 15. was proud of me.



- \_\_\_ 16. usually supported me when I wanted to do new and exciting things.
- \_\_\_ 17. worried too much that I would hurt myself or get sick.
- \_\_\_ 18. was an ideal person in every way.
- \_\_\_ 19. sometimes said he/she wished I'd never been born.
- \_\_\_ 20. was never angry with me.
- \_\_\_ 21. was often rude to me.
- \_\_\_ 22. and I never disagreed.
- \_\_\_ 23. rarely did things with me.
- \_\_\_ 24. didn't like to have me around the house.
- \_\_\_ 25. didn't seem to like me very much.
- \_\_\_ 26. would often do things for me that I could do myself.
- \_\_\_ 27. was very patient with me.
- \_\_\_ 28. let me handle my own money.
- \_\_\_ 29. gave me the best upbringing anyone could ever have.
- \_\_\_ 30. could always be depended upon when I really needed his or her help and trust.
- \_\_\_ 31. did not want me to grow up.
- \_\_\_ 32. tried to make me feel better when I was unhappy.
- \_\_\_ 33. made me feel at ease when I talked with him/her.
- \_\_\_ 34. encouraged me to express my own opinions.
- \_\_\_ 35. made me feel that I was a burden to him/her.
- \_\_\_ 36. never disappointed me.
- \_\_\_ 37. gave me the feeling that he/she liked me as I was; he/she didn't feel he/she had to make me into someone else.



The following statements concern how you feel in romantic relationships. We are interested in how you **generally** experience relationships, not just in what is happening in a current relationship. This questionnaire is still in the development stage, so we have to ask some questions more than once in different ways. Please try to answer each one carefully despite the repetition. Respond to each statement by indicating how much you agree or disagree with it. Respond with the letter or letter-pair which best describes your feelings:

DS = disagree strongly  
D = disagree moderately  
d = disagree slightly  
m = mixed; not sure  
a = agree slightly  
A = agree moderately  
AS = agree strongly

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Sometimes when I get what I want in a relationship, I'm not sure I want it anymore.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. I'm not the jealous type.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. My romantic partners have usually been there when I needed them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. My romantic partners have often let me down.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I think most people are trustworthy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Often, just when you think you can depend on someone the person doesn't come through.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. I like to be as emotionally close as possible with my romantic partners.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. I often get frustrated because romantic partners don't understand my needs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I want attention and affection but sometimes feel uncomfortable when I get it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. It's easy for me to ask others for help.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. When something good happens, I can hardly wait to tell my partner.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. I often worry that my partner might leave me for someone else.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Sometimes I love my partner passionately, but at other times I feel myself pulling back.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. I don't often feel I have to keep track of my partner's whereabouts.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. I usually prefer to be alone rather than with others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. My romantic partners have often been inconsiderate.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. When my partner is out of sight, I worry that he or she might become interested in someone else.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. I sometimes get frustrated and angry because no one loves me the way I'd like to be loved.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. I'm often not sure how I feel about my partner.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. My romantic partners have generally been trustworthy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. When my partner pays attention to other people, I can't help feeling jealous.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. I like to share new ideas with my romantic partner.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. It's risky to open up to another person.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. When I am away from my romantic partner, I miss him or her a great deal.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 25. I rarely ask others for any kind of help.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 26. I miss my partner intensely when we're apart, but sometimes when we're together I feel like escaping.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 27. I'm in no hurry to get involved in a long-term, committed relationship.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 28. I'm not the kind of person who readily turns to others in times of need.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 29. My romantic partners haven't usually understood what I needed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 30. It helps to turn to my romantic partner in times of need.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 31. I often have trouble figuring out whether I'm truly in love with my partner or not.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 32. I get frustrated when my partner isn't around as much as I would like.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 33. I've generally been able to count on romantic partners for comfort and understanding.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 34. Even after a brief separation, I eagerly look forward to seeing partner.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 35. I sometimes feel that getting too close will cause trouble for me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 36. I rarely worry about my partner leaving me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 37. It's easy for me to trust romantic partners.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 38. Sometimes I feel certain I can trust my partner, but at other times I'm not so sure

- \_\_\_\_\_39. I seek comfort from others when I'm troubled or ill.
- \_\_\_\_\_40. I'm not very comfortable being away from my partner.
- \_\_\_\_\_41. I don't hesitate to ask help when I need it.
- \_\_\_\_\_42. It's best to be cautious in dealing with people.
- \_\_\_\_\_43. I haven't received enough appreciation for romantic partners.
- \_\_\_\_\_44. Most people are well-intentioned and good-hearted.
- \_\_\_\_\_45. I don't seek out my romantic partner when I am feeling bad.
- \_\_\_\_\_46. I don't mind asking others for comfort, advice or help.
- \_\_\_\_\_47. You can't trust most people.
- \_\_\_\_\_48. I enjoy talking to my romantic partner about almost anything.
- \_\_\_\_\_49. When I'm troubled or ill I prefer to be alone.
- \_\_\_\_\_50. I find it easy to trust others.
- \_\_\_\_\_51. I don't need much affection from a romantic partner.
- \_\_\_\_\_52. I find it difficult to depend on others.
- \_\_\_\_\_53. I like to tell my romantic partner all about my day.
- \_\_\_\_\_54. I feel comfortable depending on people.
- \_\_\_\_\_55. My romantic partner makes me doubt myself.
- \_\_\_\_\_56. I sometimes feel angry or annoyed at my partner without knowing why.
- \_\_\_\_\_57. I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me.
- \_\_\_\_\_58. I find it relatively easy to get close to others.
- \_\_\_\_\_59. My romantic partner doesn't take my concerns seriously.
- \_\_\_\_\_60. I don't often worry about being abandoned by a lover.

Following are descriptions of three typical patterns of feelings in close relationships. While no description fits anyone perfectly, please check the **one** that does the **best** job of describing the way **you** usually feel in close relationships.

- A. \_\_\_\_\_ I am comfortable without a lot of closeness. It is important to me to be independent and self-reliant. I'd rather not depend on others or have others depend on me.
- B. \_\_\_\_\_ I want closeness, but I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I worry that others won't care about me as much as I care about them.
- C. \_\_\_\_\_ I am comfortable with closeness, and find it relatively easy to trust and depend on others. I don't often worry about being hurt by others.

Please rate the extent to which each of the above is like you.

	not at all like me		somewhat like me			very much like me	
Pattern A.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pattern B.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pattern C.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



The following six questions apply for subjects WHOSE PARENTS ARE DIVORCED ONLY. Please respond with the answer you feel most accurately characterizes your ORIGINAL parents relationship around the time of the divorce.

1. Did your parents argue or fight with each other?
  1. yes, very often
  2. yes, often
  3. sometimes
  4. rarely
  5. never
  
2. Were your parents close friends with each other?
  1. yes, extremely close
  2. mostly close
  3. somewhat close and somewhat not close
  4. mostly not close
  5. not close friends at all
  
3. Did your parents confide in each other?
  5. confided everything
  4. confided about most things
  3. confided about some things
  2. confided a little
  1. confided not at all
  
4. Did your parents spend a lot of time together or did they always seem to be doing different and separate things?
  5. always together
  4. mostly together
  3. sometimes together, sometimes separate
  2. mostly separate
  1. always separate
  
5. Did your parents display positive affection to one another (for example, by kissing, hugging, or telling each other they loved the other)?
  5. very often
  4. often
  3. sometimes
  2. rarely
  1. never
  
6. Overall, how would you rate your parents' marriage during the time you were growing up and living at home?
  5. extremely positive
  4. mostly positive
  3. somewhat positive and somewhat negative
  2. mostly negative
  1. extremely negative

The following three questions are for subjects WHOSE PARENTS ARE DIVORCED ONLY. Please respond with the answer you feel best characterizes your ORIGINAL parent's relationship around the time of the divorce.

1. How often did your parents argue about the following:

	Never	Hardly Ever	Sometimes	Often
a. Chores and responsibilities	1	2	3	4
b. The child(ren)	1	2	3	4
c. Money	1	2	3	4
d. Showing affection to each other	1	2	3	4
e. Religion	1	2	3	4
f. Leisure time	1	2	3	4
g. Drinking or drug use (theirs)	1	2	3	4
h. Other men or women	1	2	3	4
i. In-laws	1	2	3	4

2. How often did these arguments become physical?

Never	Hardly Ever	Sometimes	Often
1	2	3	4

3. Were either of your parents ever badly cut or bruised as a result of a physical fight with each other?

yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

The following six questions apply for subjects WHOSE PARENTS ARE DIVORCED ONLY. Please respond with the answer you feel best characterizes your original parent's CURRENT relationship.

1. Do your parents argue or fight with each other?
  1. yes, very often
  2. yes, often
  3. sometimes
  4. rarely
  5. never
  
2. Are your parents close friends with each other?
  1. yes, extremely close
  2. mostly close
  3. somewhat close and somewhat not close
  4. mostly not close
  5. not close friends at all
  
3. Do your parents confide in each other?
  5. confide everything
  4. confide about most things
  3. confide about some things
  2. confide a little
  1. confide not at all
  
4. Do your parents spend a lot of time together or do they always seem to be doing different and separate things?
  5. always together
  4. mostly together
  3. sometimes together, sometimes separate
  2. mostly separate
  1. always separate
  
5. Do your parents display positive affection to one another (for example, by kissing, hugging, or telling each other they love the other)?
  5. very often
  4. often
  3. sometimes
  2. rarely
  1. never
  
6. Overall, how would you rate your parents' relationship as you see it now?
  5. extremely positive
  4. mostly positive
  3. somewhat positive and somewhat negative
  2. mostly negative
  1. extremely negative

The following three questions are for subjects WHOSE PARENTS ARE DIVORCED ONLY. Please respond with the answer you feel best characterizes your ORIGINAL parent's relationship as it is currently.

1. How often do your parents argue about the following:

	Never	Hardly Ever	Sometimes	Often
a. Chores and responsibilities	1	2	3	4
b. The child(ren)	1	2	3	4
c. Money	1	2	3	4
d. Showing affection to each other	1	2	3	4
e. Religion	1	2	3	4
f. Leisure time	1	2	3	4
g. Drinking or drug use (theirs)	1	2	3	4
h. Other men or women	1	2	3	4
i. In-laws	1	2	3	4

2. How often do these arguments become physical?

Never	Hardly Ever	Sometimes	Often
1	2	3	4

3. Are either of your parents ever badly cut or bruised as a result of a physical fight with each other?

yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

4. This questionnaire has asked you to describe your parent's marriage, as it was when you were a child as well as how it is now. Are there any other aspects to their marriage not adequately covered by the questionnaire which you feel are especially important? If so, please feel free to write them in the space below.

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The following six questions are for subjects WHOSE PARENTS ARE MARRIED (i.e. never experienced a divorce). Please respond with the answer you feel best characterizes your parent's marriage as it WAS when you were still a child (around age 12 and younger).

1. Did your parents argue or fight with each other?
  1. yes, very often
  2. yes, often
  3. sometimes
  4. rarely
  5. never
  
2. Were your parents close friends with each other?
  1. yes, extremely close
  2. mostly close
  3. somewhat close and somewhat not close
  4. mostly not close
  5. not close friends at all
  
3. Did your parents confide in each other?
  5. confided everything
  4. confided about most things
  3. confided about some things
  2. confided a little
  1. confided not at all
  
4. Did your parents spend a lot of time together or did they always seem to be doing different and separate things?
  5. always together
  4. mostly together
  3. sometimes together, sometimes separate
  2. mostly separate
  1. always separate
  
5. Did your parents display positive affection to one another (for example, by kissing, hugging, or telling each other they loved the other)?
  5. very often
  4. often
  3. sometimes
  2. rarely
  1. never
  
6. Overall, how would you rate your parents' marriage during the time you were growing up and living at home?
  5. extremely positive
  4. mostly positive
  3. somewhat positive and somewhat negative
  2. mostly negative
  1. extremely negative

The following three questions are for subjects WHOSE PARENTS ARE MARRIED ONLY. Please respond with the answer you feel best characterizes your parent's marriage as it WAS while you were still a child (around age 12 and under).

1. How often did your parents argue about the following:

	Never	Hardly Ever	Sometimes	Often
a. Chores and responsibilities	1	2	3	4
b. The child(ren)	1	2	3	4
c. Money	1	2	3	4
d. Showing affection to each other	1	2	3	4
e. Religion	1	2	3	4
f. Leisure time	1	2	3	4
g. Drinking or drug use (theirs)	1	2	3	4
h. Other men or women	1	2	3	4
i. In-laws	1	2	3	4

2. How often did these arguments become physical?

Never	Hardly Ever	Sometimes	Often
1	2	3	4

3. Were either of your parents ever badly cut or bruised as a result of a physical fight with each other?

yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_



The following six questions are for subjects WHOSE PARENTS ARE MARRIED. Please respond with the answer you feel best characterizes your parent's CURRENT marriage.

1. Do your parents argue or fight with each other?
  1. yes, very often
  2. yes, often
  3. sometimes
  4. rarely
  5. never
  
2. Are your parents close friends with each other?
  1. yes, extremely close
  2. mostly close
  3. somewhat close and somewhat not close
  4. mostly not close
  5. not close friends at all
  
3. Do your parents confide in each other?
  5. confided everything
  4. confided about most things
  3. confided about some things
  2. confided a little
  1. confided not at all
  
4. Do your parents spend a lot of time together or do they always seem to be doing different and separate things?
  5. always together
  4. mostly together
  3. sometimes together, sometimes separate
  2. mostly separate
  1. always separate
  
5. Do your parents display positive affection to one another (for example, by kissing, hugging, or telling each other they love the other)?
  5. very often
  4. often
  3. sometimes
  2. rarely
  1. never
  
6. Overall, how would you rate your parents' marriage as you see it now?
  5. extremely positive
  4. mostly positive
  3. somewhat positive and somewhat negative
  2. mostly negative
  1. extremely negative

The following three questions are for subjects WHOSE PARENTS ARE MARRIED ONLY. Please respond with the answer you feel best characterizes your parent's CURRENT marriage.

1. How often do your parents argue about the following:

	Never	Hardly Ever	Sometimes	Often
a. Chores and responsibilities	1	2	3	4
b. The child(ren)	1	2	3	4
c. Money	1	2	3	4
d. Showing affection to each other	1	2	3	4
e. Religion	1	2	3	4
f. Leisure time	1	2	3	4
g. Drinking or drug use (theirs)	1	2	3	4
h. Other men or women	1	2	3	4
i. In-laws	1	2	3	4

2. How often do these arguments become physical?

Never	Hardly Ever	Sometimes	Often
1	2	3	4

3. Are either of your parents ever badly cut or bruised as a result of a physical fight with each other?

yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

4. This questionnaire has asked you to describe your parent's marriage, as it was when you were a child as well as how it is now. Are there any other aspects to their marriage not adequately covered by the questionnaire which you feel are especially important? If so, please feel free to write them in the space below.

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**Background Information** (ALL SUBJECTS TO ANSWER)

1. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_ College graduation year? ('91-'94) \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your gender? female \_\_\_\_\_ male \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your cumulative GPA? \_\_\_\_\_ Major? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What college or university are you enrolled in? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What is your race or ethnic background? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What is your religion? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Do you have a strong religious affiliation? yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_
8. Where did you mostly live while growing up? (check one)  
rural area \_\_\_\_\_ small town \_\_\_\_\_ small city \_\_\_\_\_  
suburb \_\_\_\_\_ large city \_\_\_\_\_ other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
9. Before college, I mostly lived in: (check one)  
far west \_\_\_\_\_ west coast \_\_\_\_\_ mid west \_\_\_\_\_ east coast \_\_\_\_\_  
south \_\_\_\_\_ southwest \_\_\_\_\_ southeast \_\_\_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_
10. Have either of your parents (or stepparents) been hospitalized for a physical illness?  
yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_  
If so, what was the nature of the illness (if known)? \_\_\_\_\_  
If so, what age(s) were you at the time of the hospitalization? \_\_\_\_\_
11. Have either of your parents (or stepparents) been hospitalized for a psychiatric illness?  
yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_  
If so, what was the nature of the illness (if known)? \_\_\_\_\_  
If so, what age(s) were you at the time of the hospitalization? \_\_\_\_\_
12. Have you ever had a prolonged (greater than six month) separation from a parent/caregiver other than a parental divorce?  
yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_  
If so, from whom? \_\_\_\_\_  
At what age(s)? \_\_\_\_\_  
Please briefly state reason for separation \_\_\_\_\_
13. What is your marital status? (check one)  
single (never married) \_\_\_\_\_  
married \_\_\_\_\_  
married, but separated \_\_\_\_\_  
divorced \_\_\_\_\_  
widowed \_\_\_\_\_

14. Would you consider yourself primarily: (check one)  
heterosexual \_\_\_\_\_  
bisexual \_\_\_\_\_  
gay/lesbian \_\_\_\_\_

15. Are you currently dating someone? yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

16. Do you consider this to be a serious relationship? yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

If so, how long have you been dating this person? \_\_\_\_\_

17. How satisfied are you right now with this relationship? (circle one)

0                      1                      2                      3                      4  
not at all      slightly      moderately      very      extremely

18. How many romantic relationships have you had that lasted: (please list all relationships, dating/intimate/serious):

less than one week \_\_\_\_\_  
one week to one month \_\_\_\_\_  
one month to six months \_\_\_\_\_  
six months to one year \_\_\_\_\_  
one year to five years \_\_\_\_\_  
five years or longer \_\_\_\_\_

19. How many times have you had a serious love relationship? (include any current relationship) \_\_\_\_\_

20. How many of relationships have you had that ended:  
mutually \_\_\_\_\_ with your partner initiating the ending \_\_\_\_\_  
with yourself initiating the ending \_\_\_\_\_

21. How many times have you been in love without the other person feeling the same way about you? \_\_\_\_\_

22. Number of brothers: (give ages) \_\_\_\_\_  
Number of sisters: (give ages) \_\_\_\_\_

23. In my family, I am (circle one):      first-born      middle child      latest born

24. Please fill in the relevant information:

Relationship    Age (if living)    Present Occupation

Mother

Father

25. Which of the following best describes your parent's education? (check one each for mother and father)

	Mother	Father
some high school	_____	_____
completed high school	_____	_____
some college	_____	_____
completed college	_____	_____
some graduate school	_____	_____
completed grad school	_____	_____

26. Were you an adopted child? yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

If you are not an adopted child skip to question 30.

27. How old were you at the time of the adoption? \_\_\_\_\_

28. Is your adoptive mother alive today? \_\_\_\_\_  
If not, how old were you at the time of her death? \_\_\_\_\_ years

29. Is your adoptive father alive today?  
If not, how old were you at the time of his death? \_\_\_\_\_ years

30. Is your biological mother alive today? yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_  
If not, how old were you at the time of her death? \_\_\_\_\_ years

31. Is your biological father alive today? yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_  
If not, how old were you at the time of his death? \_\_\_\_\_ years

32. Are your parents (check one):  
married \_\_\_\_\_ separated, but married \_\_\_\_\_ divorced \_\_\_\_\_ widowed \_\_\_\_\_

33. Please respond to each statement with what you feel is the most accurate choice.

0. Never
1. Once or twice
2. Every few months
3. Monthly
4. Weekly
5. More than once a week

While growing up, my parent(s):

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Swore at me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Pinched or slapped me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Pushed, grabbed or shoved me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Spanked me with their hand.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Kicked, bit or hit me with a fist
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Hit or whipped me with something (other than their hand)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Threatened me with a knife or gun

If your parents are divorced, please answer the following questions. In all cases, the custodial



If your parents are divorced, please answer the following questions. In all cases, the custodial parent refers to the parent you have primarily lived with following the divorce, and the non-custodial parent refers to the parent you have primarily not lived with following the divorce.

34. How old were you when your parents separated? (lived in separate locations) \_\_\_\_\_

35. How old were you when your parents divorced? \_\_\_\_\_

36. Who obtained custody of you? mother \_\_\_\_\_ father \_\_\_\_\_ joint \_\_\_\_\_  
other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

37. Did you choose this custody arrangement? yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

38. How often did you get to **visit or see**  
your non-custodial parent after the divorce?

- \_\_\_\_\_ daily
- \_\_\_\_\_ two to three times a week
- \_\_\_\_\_ once a week
- \_\_\_\_\_ once every two weeks
- \_\_\_\_\_ once a month
- \_\_\_\_\_ once every two months
- \_\_\_\_\_ two to three times a year
- \_\_\_\_\_ once a year
- \_\_\_\_\_ less than once a year
- \_\_\_\_\_ never

39. How often were you in contact **other**  
**than in person** with your  
non-custodial parent?

- \_\_\_\_\_ daily
- \_\_\_\_\_ two to three times a week
- \_\_\_\_\_ once a week
- \_\_\_\_\_ once every two weeks
- \_\_\_\_\_ once a month
- \_\_\_\_\_ once every two months
- \_\_\_\_\_ two to three times a year
- \_\_\_\_\_ once a year
- \_\_\_\_\_ less than once a year
- \_\_\_\_\_ never

40. Did your custodial parent ever remarry? yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_  
If so, how old were you at the time? \_\_\_\_\_

41. Did your non-custodial parent ever remarry? yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_  
If so, how old were you at the time? \_\_\_\_\_

42. How close do you feel to your stepparent, if you have one? (If you have two, answer for the stepparent you have lived with)

- |            |          |            |      |           |
|------------|----------|------------|------|-----------|
| 1          | 2        | 3          | 4    | 5         |
| not at all | slightly | moderately | very | extremely |

43. To what extent do you consider this stepparent a substitute for your non-custodial parent?

- |            |          |            |      |           |
|------------|----------|------------|------|-----------|
| 1          | 2        | 3          | 4    | 5         |
| not at all | slightly | moderately | very | extremely |

44. How many step siblings do you have? \_\_\_\_\_  
How many stepsiblings did you live with while growing up? \_\_\_\_\_



## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>The following seven items from the Mother-Father-Peer Scale were dropped from the data analysis: 1, 11, 18, 20, 22, 29, 36. These items measure a construct called "parent idealization," separate from the acceptance/rejection and independence/overprotection constructs. The following 7 items were also dropped from the analysis: 9, 13, 15, 19, 25, 27, 33. Epstein (1983) dropped these items from later versions of the scale, deeming them unnecessary. All items dropped from the data analysis were entered in the data file, but saved for use in future analyses.

<sup>2</sup>Because most subjects rated their parents very positively, the "low parenting" category in Table 4 was formed by using the lowest scoring 20% of subjects (n=32). The "high parenting" category was formed using the highest scoring 80% of subjects (n=134).

<sup>3</sup>There are many different ways to assess the "fit" of a model to data. Polychotomous logistic regression computes the expected value of the observed versus expected difference of the dependent variable using a non-linear function. The function is solved using the log-likelihood ratio.

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