

DIFFERENCES IN QUALITY OF ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS IN COLLEGE  
FEMALES BASED ON FAMILY STATUS: DIVORCED OR INTACT

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Candace, as a teacher, you have always exaggerated my strengths and made light of my weaknesses. For the sake of the children I encounter, I hope they always see a little bit of you, in me.

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## ABSTRACT

### DIFFERENCES IN QUALITY OF ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS IN COLLEGE FEMALES BASED ON FAMILY STATUS: DIVORCED OR INTACT

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The purpose of this study was to examine differences in quality of romantic relationships in college females based on parents' marital status. Many studies have investigated various effects of divorce on children, but less research has investigated the long-term effects of parental divorce on variables such as quality of romantic relationships. Participants included 101 female undergraduate students from both divorced and intact families, all in a current romantic relationship. Participants were group administered four questionnaires: a demographics form, *the Parent Bonding Instrument* (Parker, Tupling, & Brown, 1979) the *Children's Perceptions of Interparental Conflict Scale* (Grych & Fincham, 1990) and the *Perceived Relationship Quality Components* scale (Fletcher, Simpson & Thomas, 2002). A One-Way MANCOVA was used to examine differences in quality of romantic relationships between females from divorced families and females from intact families while controlling for parental conflict. It was hypothesized that females from divorced families would report lower levels of trust, commitment, intimacy, and love than females from intact families. It was further hypothesized that females from divorced families would report higher levels of passion than females from intact families. Results indicated no differences between groups on

any measures of quality of romantic relationships. Implications and recommendations for future research will be discussed.

## INTRODUCTION

Between 1920 and 1990, the marriage rates in the United States decreased by 20% while the divorce rates increased by 300% (Ham, 2003). Although the divorce rates have finally begun to stabilize since the early 1980s (Goldstein, 1999), divorce continues to affect over 1 million children in the United States each year (Greene, Anderson, Doyle & Riedelbach, 2006). Statistical estimates propose that 40% of America's youth will experience parental divorce by the time they are 18 years old. Since divorce is life altering event that occurs in nearly half of all families with children in the United States, (Greene, et al.) it is important to consider the ramifications that divorce has on children. The next sections will review the current divorce research, including the short and long-term outcomes for children.

### *Reasons for Divorce*

Some couples pursue divorce for a number of reasons. This section will not provide an exhaustive list, but instead highlights some of the recent findings in the literature. Divorce rates have increased since the 1970s due to various social and economic changes (Guttman, 1993). One of the reasons for the increase in divorce rates since the 1970s can be attributed to the no-fault divorce law. With the previous fault-based divorce law, couples were only granted divorce if an offense such as infidelity, a harmful act or abandonment occurred by one of the partners. Under the more recent no-fault laws, individuals are granted the right to divorce if the marriage has "irretrievably broken down" (Wright & Stetson, 1978, p. 575), but the law no longer requires an "innocent" spouse and a "guilty" spouse. According to Guttman, divorce rates have

increased due to changing economic conditions such as the advancement of females's rights. Due to these advancements, more females entered the work force and they also began to experience a greater sense of independence that allowed them socially to voice their discontent within marriage.

Information was collected from a nationally representative sample of married individuals in a longitudinal study, which allowed researchers to use problems that occurred during marriages as predictors of divorce over a 12-year span (Amato & Rogers, 1997). This longitudinal approach allowed the researchers to avoid reliance on retrospective reports of individuals who have already been divorced. This study also examined how husbands and wives view marital conflict differently and to what extent these differences predict divorce. Based on the results, the researchers concluded several differences in perception between males and females. First, females acknowledged a higher level of spousal discord during marriage than males. The researchers suggested that one possible reason for this inconsistency is the tendency for males to fault their wives to a lesser extent than females fault their husbands, especially when it comes down to emotionally constituted problems like anger, sensitivity and frequent mood changes. Some similarities between males and females were identified as well. Wives and husbands alike admit that certain husband behaviors (no specific examples were given by the researchers) during the marriage were associated with eventual divorce. Although females and males report some different problems in their marriages, the differences based on sex were equally predictive of divorce. Despite the sex of the reporter, some problems that increased the likelihood of divorce included: infidelity, jealousy, substance abuse, mood swings, lack of communication between partners, financial disagreements

and anger. Of these problems, infidelity was ranked as the number one reason for divorce by both males and females.

Another study, which consisted of 248 previously married Catholic adults, reported similar sex trends (Eells & O'Flaherty, 1996). The main purpose of the study was to update previous research that focused on reasons for marital disruption. Females found fault in their husbands more often than themselves and also, reported more marital problems overall than males. Inconsistent with the previous study, the authors proposed that regardless of sex, communication problems are identified as the primary reason that individuals get divorced.

Reasons for divorce were the main focus of another study, which consisted of 275 females and 336 males (Cleek & Pearson, 1985). Researchers gathered information from individuals who were attending divorce counseling in Wisconsin during 1980 and 1981. Clinicians accumulated a list of 18 reasons for divorce based on responses from all 611 participants. The sex differences were similar to the two previously cited studies (Amato & Rogers, 1997; Eells & O'Flaherty, 1996)—females reported more problems than males in their marriages. Although unexpected by researchers in this study, their results were consistent with the two previous studies—the number one cause for divorce was communication problems for both males and females. Females reported “basic unhappiness, incompatibility, emotional abuse, alcohol abuse—spouse, infidelity—spouse and physical abuse” (Cleek & Pearson, 1985, p. 180) significantly more often than males. Both husbands and wives ranked “basic unhappiness and incompatibility” (p. 180) as the number two and number three reasons why couples divorced. Individuals were least likely to report “drug abuse—self and spouse, infidelity—self, mental illness

and religious differences” (p. 180) as leading causes of divorce. Although these infidelity results appear to contradict the findings in the Amato and Rogers (1997), we cannot make direct comparison between the two studies because the current study differentiated between infidelity by self and infidelity by spouse, whereas Amato and Rogers combined the two types of infidelity into one concept.

Studies show that in addition to the previous mentioned divorce trends, marital dissolution is repeated generation after generation (Wolfinger, 2000; Hetherington 2003). One study utilized data from the National Survey of Families and Households (Wolfinger, 2000). Participants included 13,008 adults who were at least 19 years old and lived in the United States. Results showed that individuals who experience parental divorce (especially more than once) as children often divorce multiple times as adults. The rationale was that children who view their parents’ relationships as fleeting are more likely to avoid long-term commitment in their own relationships. This suggests that there may be a modeling component that contributes to divorce.

#### *Constellations of Divorced Families*

Child custody arrangements following divorce typically include sole mother custody, sole father custody or joint custody, where the child spends at least 25% of his or her time with each parent (Buchanan & Williams, 2006). Joint custody can be associated with joint physical or joint legal custody. In joint physical custody, the child spends approximately equal amounts of time in each parent’s home. Joint legal custody implies that the child will spend most of the time in one of his or her parent’s homes but the parents practice joint decision-making and both parents are involved in the child’s life (Bauserman, 2002). High rates of marital divorce indicate that about half of all children

will reside with only one parent at some point in their lives (Amato, 2000). In most situations following a divorce, the child(ren) will reside with the mother (Popenoe, 1996; Wallerstein & Lewis, 2004).

In a study that included 244 participants whose parents divorced before they were 18 years old, all individuals ended up living with their mothers following the divorce (Duran-Aydintug, 1997). In the case of these children, the mother had sole custody and the fathers had visitation rights. Eight of the individuals reported little or no contact with their fathers within the past twelve months.

Although sole custody by the mother is the general rule, in rare cases children live with their fathers. Following parental divorce, approximately 12% of children under the age of 16 reside with their fathers (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). Sole custody by fathers, though, has become more popular since the late 1980s. Laws in the United States no longer show preference to females as primary caregivers, which is one reason for the shift in parental custody (Cancian & Meyers, 1998).

In order to examine custody arrangements of children from divorced homes, data was collected on over 4,000 Wisconsin court cases that occurred between 1986 and 1994 (Aquilino, 1994). Results show numerous trends in custody arrangements. When fathers are the only parent to hold a job, custody is more likely to be granted to the mother. Custody was less likely to be granted to a parent who has been married more than once or when a parent has children from an earlier relationship. Furthermore, long-term marriages are more likely to lead to father-custody than short-term marriages. Sex and age of the child were also factors that predicted custody. In this study, father custody was more likely to occur with older, male children.

Researchers continue to debate whether children benefit from joint custody due to the ongoing relationship with both parents or children suffer from joint custody because of ongoing conflict among parents (Bauserman, 2002). In order to test this argument, a meta-analysis of 33 studies conducted from 1982 to 1999 was performed to determine which type of custody, sole or joint, was more beneficial for children's adjustment on several domains. The domains examined included: general well-being, emotional and behavioral adjustment, self-esteem, family relations, academic performance and divorce-specific domains, such as parental conflict. Across the studies reviewed in the meta-analysis, 1,846 were from sole-custody arrangements and 814 were from joint custody arrangements. Results supported the hypothesis that joint custody children fare better in adjustment than children from sole custody arrangements. Researchers found no significant difference in adjustment in children at any age from joint custody versus intact homes. This study also showed that nonresidential father involvement was positively related to children's behavioral and emotional adjustment and school achievement. Furthermore, although only 19 of the studies reported conflict data, it was found that children from joint custody arrangements experienced less current and past parental conflict than children living with only one parent. However, this difference in conflict level did not affect child adjustment. Researchers attributed this surprising finding to the small sample size and little variance between groups on the conflict measure.

Children who live under sole or joint custody arrangements may also live with stepmothers or stepfathers and stepsiblings as well. Six out of ten school aged children live in a single or step family living arrangements (Carlson & Trapani, 2006). Children who live in stepfamily situations may have to contend with several challenges such as

unstable living situations, ethnic diversity within their families, economic strain and negative stereotyping. Although considerable research has been conducted on children in blended families, these results are beyond the scope of this study and therefore will not be reviewed.

Given the prevalence rate of divorce and the research that suggests it may have an impact on children, it is an important topic for social scientists, teachers, administrators, parents and anyone else who is interested or involved with child welfare. The following sections will focus on the relevant literature that pertains to factors that impact divorce, parent-child relationships, general implications of divorce for children, and finally, the differences in romantic relationships for college females from divorced and intact families.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Factors that Impact Effects of Divorce*

Although research suggests that divorce can have negative implications for children (e.g. Amato, 2000; Duran-Aydintug, 1997; Hetherington, 2003), several factors related to a parental divorce can also negatively impact children. These factors include both internal variables (such as resiliency, age at time of divorce) and external variables (such as amount of contact with non-custodial parent, parental conflict). Discussion of all the factors that influence the impact of divorce are beyond the scope of this paper. The factors that will be discussed here include ones that are the most relevant for comparisons on quality of romantic relationship. The specific factors that will be discussed are age of child at the time of divorce, parent-child relationships, sex of child, and parental conflict.

*Age at time of divorce.* Research has suggested that the age of a child at the time of divorce can have a significant impact on short-term and long-term outcomes (Krohn & Bogan, 2001). Some research has found that younger children are more affected by parental divorce because they are less capable of consoling themselves and self-regulating their emotions than older children (Hetherington, 1972; Wallerstein & Lewis, 2004). More specifically, research on preschool age children whose parents divorce suggests that children at this age may blame themselves for the divorce, feel confused or angry and express negative responses such as anxiety, sleeping disturbances and eating concerns, disbelief and bed wetting (Knoff & Bishop, 1997) because they do not mentally conceptualize the separation.

The research on school age children whose parents divorce suggests that children may emotionally withdraw, feel rejected, have unrealistic expectations for their parents to get back together and experience anger, loyalty issues, depression, grief, apprehension and decreased academic performance (Knoff & Bishop, 1997). Burns and Dunlop's (2003) findings suggest that children of parental divorce under the age of 13 are more likely to experience an eventual divorce of their own later in life.

A meta-analysis of 92 studies examined differences between children from intact versus divorced families across six domains of well-being--academic achievement, conduct, psychological adjustment, self-esteem, social skills and parent-child relationships (Amato & Keith, 1991). Results from the meta-analysis concluded that divorce has the largest effect on both children in primary school and in high school.

Another study included 241 college students: 170 from intact families and 71 from divorced families with an average age of 22.6 years old (Duran-Aydintug, 1997). The goal of the study was to assess retrospective reports of the effects that divorce had on ideas about marriage, dating tendencies and trust and commitment in their romantic relationships based on in depth interviews and questionnaires. The majority of the students experienced parental divorce between the ages of 6 and 11. During the individual interviews, students who were 12 or younger at the time of the parental divorce recounted that their parents hid information, did not tell the entire truth, talked poorly to one another and did not adequately address their children's needs. These children recounted feeling misled and confused. The children from this study who were older than 12 claimed to have a better understanding of their parents' divorce and also

agreed that their parents communicated more effectively and assisted in their adjustment to the divorce.

Conversely, other research has proposed that parental divorce during adolescence ultimately has a greater negative impact on children. Although both young children and young adults may express anger or frustration due to parental divorce, the consequences of adolescent anger have considerably greater real world ramifications such as sexual promiscuity without appropriate birth control and a decline in school performance (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). The research on adolescents whose parents divorce suggests that young adults at this age may struggle in areas of relationships, autonomy and identity (Knoff & Bishopp, 2006, p. 595). Although adolescents can cognitively understand why their parents divorced, oftentimes, these are also the children that have been exposed to parental conflict for a longer period of time than preschool children. Additionally, divorce during adolescence can have implications for shifts in responsibility and interact with identity development that occurs during this developmental period.

A previously mentioned longitudinal study found that compared to their intact family peers, divorce for adolescents meant more responsibilities, fewer and less frequently enforced rules, more behavior problems, lower educational attainment, and greater sexual activity (Wallerstein & Lewis, 2004).

*Parental conflict.* Children who experience high levels of parental conflict in both intact and divorced families have more problems than children from low conflict families. High conflict was described in one study as ongoing disagreements and conflict

among parents (Mechanic & Hansell, 1989). Depending on the level of conflict and the time period in which conflict occurs, children adjust differently over time.

A study comprised of 217 adolescents (94 males and 123 females) from intact and divorced families assessed the effects of ongoing parental conflict on adolescent self-concept and adjustment (Slater & Haber, 1984). Sixty-five of the adolescents rated their families in the high conflict range and 85 of the adolescents rated their families in the low conflict range. Individuals who rated themselves in the middle were not included in the study. Of the remaining 150 participants, 50 came from divorced family backgrounds. In the divorced group, the majority of participants experienced their parent's divorce over one year prior to the study. Independent of sex or family structure (divorced or intact), results concluded that adolescents from high conflict families experienced lower self-esteem, higher anxiety levels and less internal control. Since most of the individuals from the divorced group experienced parental divorce over a year ago, researchers proposed that the results are long-term effects of high conflict rather than an immediate adjustment issue. They suggested that continuous high conflict in intact or divorced homes produced the most negative adjustment outcomes. Results further revealed that individuals from low conflict homes did not differ in their levels of adjustment even when parental divorce occurred.

Similar results were found in a longitudinal study, which sought to determine the effect of divorce and conflict on 1,067 adolescents (54% male, 46% female) on measures of well-being that included self-esteem, anxiety, physical symptoms and depressed mood (Mechanic & Hansell, 1989). Adolescents from divorced and intact homes were assessed once a year for three years. These researchers suggested that parental conflict may cause

negative outcomes because parents involved in high conflict relationships tend to neglect their children and use harsh punishment. Results from this study found that more adolescents who experience parental conflict are from divorced homes. Individuals who experienced high parental conflict reported higher levels of depressed mood, anxiety and physical symptoms over the three-year time period than those did not report high parental conflict. Divorce alone was not a significant factor in lower levels of well-being. This finding supported their hypothesis that family conflict has a stronger impact on well-being than divorce, separation or death of a parent. Results also indicated a sex difference in well-being associated with parental conflict. Longitudinally, females reported increased levels of stress, anxiety and physical symptoms and lower self-esteem than males. In addition, over time, anxiety was higher for older participants. In summary, results showed that adolescents who reported high conflict at each time interval, also reported lower levels of well-being. This suggests once again, that continual parental conflict decreases well-being over time.

A meta-analysis of 92 studies (13,000 children) highlighted several debated differences in literature between children from divorced and intact families across six domains of well-being--academic achievement, conduct, psychological adjustment, self-esteem, social skills and parent-child relationships (Amato & Keith 1991). Many studies from the meta-analysis focused on conflict in divorced and intact families as a factor of well-being based on these six domains. The researchers concluded that conflict that occurs before and after parental divorce creates difficulties for children because of the hostile living environment. They highlighted that this perspective assumes that children suffer because of the maladjustment that conflict creates, not because of the altered

family structure that divorce creates. Overall, children's well-being in high conflict, intact families was lower than children in low conflict, intact families. When comparing intact to divorced families, the well-being of children from low conflict, divorced families was inferior to the well-being of children from low conflict intact families. Several of the studies in the meta-analysis indicated that children of divorce are at more of an advantage for increased well-being when there is limited or no post-divorce conflict among parents. Taken as a whole, results from the meta-analysis concluded that children are more likely to adjust and have fewer problems related to divorce when the parents cooperate and get along with one another after their divorce.

Another longitudinal study was conducted that compared the well-being of children based on pre-divorce conflict and post-divorce conflict (Amato, Loomis & Booth, 1995). Well-being in this study was defined by psychological distress, overall life happiness, and quality of romantic, family and friend relationships. Participants included 2,033 married individuals who were interviewed four times over a 12-year period. In the fourth wave of interviews, a random sample of children born to the married couples was also interviewed. These researchers suggested that the long-term negative outcomes associated with divorce are dependent on pre-divorce marital conflict. Results indicated that adolescents from high conflict families had higher levels of well-being when their parents divorced rather than if they stayed together. In this case, although resources may decrease due to divorce, children are able to escape an aggressive, intimidating environment, which outweighs any other negative outcomes related to divorce. This supports the hypothesis that children from high conflict divorce families are better off than children from high conflict intact families. Unexpected results also showed that

those children from divorced parents who were exposed to less conflict reported lower levels of well-being during adolescence than their peers who were exposed to higher levels of conflict. Their explanation for this finding was that children who experience lower levels of parental conflict fail to expect their parents to get divorced. When the divorce does occur, children were unable to comprehend why the divorce happened and have a more difficult time adjusting than individuals who expect a divorce to occur and can mentally prepare themselves. Under these circumstances, not only does the child lose resources, but they also lack any beneficial gains and their overall well-being suffers.

A more recent study found a number of contributing factors that can account for a child's ability to overcome the initial disappointments of divorce (Wallerstein & Lewis, 2004). Researchers agree that children are more likely to fully recover from the upheaval of divorce if there is no ongoing spousal conflict and children have continued, fulfilling relationships with both parents.

*Sex of child.* Sex is also a variable in divorce research that varies from study to study. For this reason, meta-analyses are useful sources of information because they summarize wide-ranging results across studies on the same subject matter. Amato and Keith's (1991) meta-analysis described earlier, pooled results from almost one hundred studies conducted between 1960 and 1990. After examining the studies, the researchers concluded that regardless of sex, children from divorced families are worse off than children from intact families in areas of academics, conduct, psychological health, self-esteem and relationships. Social adjustment was the only domain in which divorce affected boys and girls differently. Studies showed that boys were more affected in the social arena than girls.

Amato (2001) later combined results of sixty seven studies carried out during the 1990s in a follow-up meta-analysis to emphasize the role divorce plays in children's lives. Amato concluded that individuals react differently to divorce—sometimes the negative effects are temporary and sometimes an individual never fully recovers from the experience of their parent's divorce. The varying levels in adjustment, however, are not due to sex differences. Again, Amato found that more often than not, females and males react similarly to the effects of divorce. This time, he found that males and females were affected similarly except in the domain of conduct, where males showed more conduct problems than girls following divorce.

Another study utilized longitudinal data from the National Survey of Children to explore the effects of marital dissolution on children in areas of conduct behavior, psychological problems and academics (Allison & Furstenberg, 1989). The data consisted of information on 1,197 children who were between 7 and 11 years old at the beginning of the data collection period from both intact and disrupted families. Variables other than sex were controlled for to determine the effects of parental divorce on female versus male children. In contrast to the previously mentioned meta-analysis findings, this study found that girls were more adversely affected by divorce on three out of nineteen domains. These domains included teacher perception of behavior problems, self-reports of dissatisfaction, and self-reports of distress.

Additionally, when daughters lose their fathers due to divorce as a young child, they may become excessively engrossed in particular aspects of life such as family or specific types of relationships and as a result, neglect other important age appropriate areas of influence such as school (Krohn and Bogan, 2001).

### *Parent-Child Relationships*

Some researchers contend that early parent-child relationships can have a long-term impact on psychological well-being of children into adulthood (Videon, 2005). Attachment theory suggests that children develop one of three main attachment patterns with their parents based on the availability and support provided by the parent(s) (Goldberg, 1991). Secure infants confidently rely on their parents who are available, supportive and responsive and therefore these infants feel free to explore their environments. Insecure avoidant and insecure ambivalent children, on the other hand cannot always trust their caregivers because the parents provide inconsistent support to their children. Parents of insecure infants are preoccupied and do not appropriately tend to their children's needs, which can lead to feelings of fear, confusion and rejection in the child. Over time, these attachment patterns eventually become integrated into the child's perception of oneself and influences the way individuals view and responds to others. Childhood attachment patterns with parents can become generalized to other relationships and thus, influence future romantic relationship functioning.

In regard to divorce, it has been noted that parent-child relationships decline after parental divorce (Amato & Booth, 1996). Many of the current divorce studies emphasize the diminished parent-child relationship of the distant parent (usually the father) as having a negative impact on the child after divorce (Amato, 2000; Popenoe, 1996). The following section will discuss how divorce affects parent-child relationships.

*Post-divorce mother-child relationships.* Research indicates that parental divorce generally does not affect the quality of mother-child relationships even independent of the custody arrangements (Aquilino, 1994; Cooney, 1994). One study examined parent-

child relationships and levels of parent-child contact following a recent parental divorce (Cooney, 1994). The study included 485 Caucasian adults who ranged in age from 18 to 23. Of all the participants, 257 of them had parents who divorced within 15 months prior to the study. Results showed that the quality of the mother-child relationship was not affected by divorce, even when the child resided with the father. Although the contact between mothers and children decreased as a result of father custody, no child reported less than monthly contact with his or her mother. This is in comparison to the one out of seven children who lived with their mothers and reported less than monthly contact with their father.

In addition to a stable mother-child relationship following divorce, some research also shows that children are more likely to remain closer to their mothers following divorce than to their fathers. Consistent findings were reported in a study examining the effects of divorce in young adults (Duran-Aydintug, 1997). Results indicated that most children under the age of five at parental divorce failed to remember the details of the divorce or time prior to the divorce. Individuals older than five years of age at the time of divorce recalled well-maintained childhood memories about the divorce. At the time of divorce, these children all claimed that they sided with one parent—usually the mother (all but eight). Of particular interest, the children who sided with one parent or the other, reported conflict between their parents before and after divorce and also reported a decreased level of quality or absent relationship to the inferior parent. Overall, children reported a closer relationship with their mother following divorce.

*Post-divorce father-child relationships.* Several studies acknowledge the correlation between parenting and children's well being, but minimal research to this

point has been conducted that assesses child outcomes based on reports of mother versus father parenting separately. A study that focused on father-child relationships exclusively, attempted to determine how this specific relationship effects child development in general (Videon, 2005). Information was obtained from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, which was created to track factors associated with adolescent health over time. All participants (N=7,143) lived with biological parents at the beginning of the study. Results indicated that girls and boys who reported higher levels of relationship quality with their fathers also reported fewer depressive symptoms. Furthermore, as the relationship between father and child changed overtime from either more positive to more negative or vice versa, the children's well-being fluctuated accordingly. Overall, this study concluded that fathers impact young adults' psychological health independently from the influence of mothers.

It is possible for a father to remain present in his child's life after divorce, but whether or not a father-child relationship can be sustained and maintained after a divorce depends on several factors including: the amount and type of father involvement during the marriage, the spousal relationship climate, the child's post divorce living arrangements, sex, age, birth order and whether the father pays child support, just to name a few (Ahrons & Tanner, 2003). Researchers interested on the impact of divorce on children often focus on the impaired quality of the father-child relationship as a primary factor (Blankenhorn 1995, Krohn et al., 2001, Popenoe, 1996). With regard to daughters, it is stressed that when separated from their fathers due to divorce, the daughters lose an indispensable role model and also lack the beneficial father contributions which include the potential to provide security, stability, protection,

nurturance, economic security and to instill competence and values in children (Blankenhorn, 1995; Krohn, 2001). Popenoe (1996) argues that fathers provide a role model for male behavior—what males like, how they act, how they differ from females and how they should treat females. Females also learn skills from their fathers such as independence and assertiveness, which help them achieve success in a male dominated society. Finally, he argues that fathers offer parenting techniques that differ from that of a mother. For instance, fathers have been known to play differently with their children than mothers. Fathers incorporate more physical activity into play that teaches children boundaries for emotional and aggressive regulation.

Fewer studies have examined the relationship between father-child relationship and divorce. According to one longitudinal study of 4,516 adults ages 19 to 34, divorce, does indeed have long-term implications for diminished father-child relationships (Aquilino, 1994). This data was collected from the National Survey of Families and Households that began in 1988. Results indicated that the relationship between children and fathers in intact families did not significantly differ from that of the relationship between fathers and children from father custody families. However, when divorce occurred and the father became the non-custodial parent, the father-child relationship suffered. Children reported lower father-child relationship quality, less contact with the father and an increased geographic distance from the father than when the family was intact or children resided with their father after divorce.

More recently, a research design comprised of 330 college students examined the effects of parenting styles (retrospective reports) on intimate college relationships (Dalton, Frick-Horbury & Kitzmann, 2004). This study compared childhood

recollections of young adults whose parents were separated/divorced to recollections of young adults whose parents were still married. Findings concluded that in general, after divorce, the mother-daughter relationship was damaged, although not as drastically as the father-daughter relationship. In addition, the authors also concluded that children who remembered positive early relationships with their parents reported greater relationship quality in their current romantic relationships than those children who lacked memories of a positive relationship with their parents.

In another study, researchers aimed to measure the quality of father-child relationships based on the residential status of the father (Munsch, Woodward & Darling, 1995). Participants included 471 seventh and eighth grade students from rural and urban cities in New York. Approximately half of the individuals lived with their fathers and approximately half reported that they did not live with their fathers. Of the children who did not reside with their fathers, about half reported ongoing contact with their fathers and the other half reported no contact with their fathers. Results showed that children who did not live with their father were significantly more likely to name their biological father as the most important male figure in their lives than those who did live with their father. Although this was true, the quality of the father-child relationship was not dependent on residential status. Both groups of children reported similar levels of quality in their relationships with their fathers. Interestingly, children who lived apart from their fathers claimed that their fathers played the role of teacher, supporter and challenger more often than children who live with their fathers.

While most research recognizes a diminished bond between father and child after divorce, there is some research that contradicts these findings (Ahrons & Tanner, 2003).

They collected data from the Binuclear Family Study, a longitudinal study that has followed divorced families for 20 years. They intended to determine if father-daughter relationships change over time after a divorce occurs. Results showed that within 20 years of the parental divorce, most children experience an improved parent-child relationship. Father-child relationships improved mostly in children who witnessed a decrease in parental conflict after divorce. Although divorce may present complications for some children, this study implies that an improved relationship with parents over time can moderate the long-term effects of divorce.

Sometimes, children rate their relationship with one parent based on how close they feel to the other parent or on the closeness of the parent-child relationship at an earlier age (Flouri & Buchanan, 2002). One particular study utilized data from the National Child Development Study to gather information about how father-daughter and mother-daughter involvement at age seven effects parent-child closeness at age 16 and furthermore, to determine how the level of closeness at age 16 relates to the quality of romantic relationships at age 33. NCDS is a longitudinal study that continues to study 17,000 children from England, Scotland and Wales via interviews and parent, teacher and self-reports. The main goal of the NCDS is to gain a better understanding of factors that affect children into adulthood. Information was obtained from 11, 363 respondents at age 33. Results indicated that when children at age 16 had a better relationship with their mothers, they also had better relationships with their fathers. At age 33, more adult female children reported that marital satisfaction was greater when there was a good relationship with the father and mother. As it appears from this study, optimal

development is more likely when there is a well-established relationship with both parents.

### *Short and Long Term Implications of Divorce for Children*

Divorce does not affect all children in the same way. While research has found that in some instances, children benefit from divorce (Morrison & Coiro, 1999), considerably more research has found that divorce has negative implications for children's psychological and/or social development (e.g., Amato, 2000; Duran-Aydintug, 1997; Hetherington, 2003). Still again, some research indicates that divorce creates temporary stress, but after the initial trauma has faded, some children adapt to their circumstances and are able to persevere without detrimental outcomes (Amato, 2000; Hetherington, 2003).

Conversely, others argue that not only does divorce cause short-term complications for a child but its effects are evident in long-term difficulties during adulthood as well (Wallerstein & Lewis, 2004). Their study compared individuals from intact versus divorced families. Researchers argued that even when children of parental divorce grew up with no post-divorce parental conflict and ongoing contact with both parents, their development was perpetually stunted. They contended that these children suffered long-term because they forever lacked an appropriate image of the successful union between their parents. Even with joint custody, children failed to learn the basic principles related to adult intimacy, reciprocation, conflict management, or how to deal with familial crises. Additionally, ongoing economic hardships, parental conflict and numerous life transitions contributed to the long-term implications of divorce (Greene, Anderson, Doyle & Riedelbach, 1996).

Longitudinal data gathered from the National Survey of Children was utilized to determine whether parental divorce causes long-term effects for children into adulthood (Zill, Morrison, & Coiro, 1993). The study included three waves of interviews and surveys of children and their parents between 1965 and 1987. Results supported the hypothesis that children do experience long-term effects of parental divorce into adulthood. During the final wave of the study, adult children between the ages of 18 and 22 were two times more likely to experience poorer relationships with their parents, exhibit higher levels of emotional distress or conduct issues, seek counseling and drop out of high school than their peers from intact families. Sex differences were evident in this study. Females from divorced families (29%) were significantly more likely to develop poor relationships with their mothers over time than males (19%) from divorced families. Researchers were careful to clarify that these results were not necessarily solely due to the event of divorce itself, but may be linked to parental conflict, remarriage and age and sex of the child.

The research on the implications of divorce has yielded inconsistent findings. Some short and long-term implications with regard to academic and psychological functioning will be discussed briefly in the next section. The research on long-term implications related to romantic relationships will be discussed in more detail in a separate section as these findings are the most pertinent to the current study.

*Academic and psychological implications of divorce.* A number of social implications were mentioned in the introduction but children from divorced families may experience impairments in academic and/or psychological functioning as well. In a study that examined the association between divorce and the academic achievement of high

school students, researchers hypothesized that children from divorced families would have lower grade point averages and they would have a higher drop out rate than their peers from intact families (Ham, 2003). Participants included 265 first semester seniors who were enrolled in between three and five core classes. Individuals came from intact, divorced or deceased parent families. Overall, females had significantly higher grades than males. Both males and females from intact families had significantly higher GPAs and higher attendance rates than adolescents from divorced families. Of particular interest, the absentee rate for adolescents from divorced families was 60% higher than that of adolescents from intact families. Males from divorced families, however, outperformed females from divorced families on both GPA and attendance. Analyses were also conducted to determine if the age at the time of divorce had an effect on academic achievement but no significant differences were found.

Another study compared 95 children from intact families to 94 children from divorced families in areas of academic, emotional, and social functioning (Guttman & Rosenberg, 2003). Study contingencies required mother participation. To be included in the study, mothers could not have been remarried and the mothers in the divorced group had to be the sole custody parent. The children ranged in age from 8 to 18 years old. Results showed significant variability between intact and divorced families on all areas of academic performance under investigation. Children from divorced homes reported lower grades in English and Mathematics as well as lower overall performance in school than children from intact homes. Older children reported lower grades in both subjects as well as overall school performance.

In addition to academic interference, divorce can also create problems with psychological functioning (Cherlin, Chase-Landsdale, & Kiernan, 1995). Long-term effects of divorce on adolescent mental health were examined using data gathered from the National Child Development Study (NCDS)—a longitudinal study of 17,414 infants born in Great Britain in 1958. Researchers found that divorce resulted in negative mental health outcomes for children. Specifically, children of divorce were 39% more likely to suffer from psychopathology in adulthood. It is important to note however, that by the time children reached adulthood, the majority of them had escaped any long-term negative mental health effects related to divorce.

Another study examined the potential long-term mental health effects of divorce on children (McCabe, 1997). Specifically, this study addressed relationship difficulties and depression as related to parental divorce. Participants included 33 males and 38 females from divorced and intact families ranging in age between 18 and 22 years old. All participants from the divorced family group were between 6 and 14 years old at the time of their parent's divorce (10.1 on average). Forty lived with their mothers and eight of the children's parents had joint custody. T-tests showed that females from divorced parent families reported higher levels of depression and more relationship difficulties than their intact family counterparts. Differences in males on depression and relationship difficulties from divorced versus intact families were not found. Age at divorce did not significantly affect levels of depression or difficulties in romantic relationships.

### *Romantic Relationships*

Countless variables contribute to the optimal development of a person but romantic love is one of the most important components for young adulthood

(Hetherington, 2003). Dating is part of a normative developmental process that provides the potential for individuals to become confident, caring adults. Interaction with a romantic partner guides the exploration of empathy, dedication, effective communication with the opposite sex and reciprocal sexual relationships. As children mature into adolescents, a major developmental process begins to occur. During this period of social development, peer relations, friendships and romantic relationships become increasingly more important (Paul & White, 1990). As adolescents transition into young adulthood, independence from one's family becomes another important developmental milestone and individuals become increasingly more reliant on social relationships for support (Dalton, Frick-Horbury, & Kitzmann, 2006). Of these social supports, the focus here will be on romantic relationships. Romantic love describes most adolescent love and is also very important for college students (Santrock, 2008). Romantic love, also called "passionate love or eros...has strong sexual and infatuation components" (p. 343).

Previous discussion underlines divorce as a possible hindrance to development—sometimes even into adulthood. Because romantic relationships become extensively more important into early adulthood, it is important to determine if individuals from disrupted families experience restrictions in their ability to develop healthy romantic relationships when compared with individuals from intact families. Subsequent sections will provide a general overview of romantic relationships in college females followed by a more specific section that will focus on the impacts of divorce on females's romantic relationships as adults.

Research on parental divorce from the past decade has focused primarily on younger children and even less research concentrates on the effect of marital status on

children's adult romantic relationships (Westervelt & Vandenberg, 1997; Clark & Kanoy, 1998). Although results are often conflicting and inconsistent, recent research on the impact of divorce in adulthood suggests that in addition to damaged parent-child relationships and impairment to appropriate childhood development, divorce also influences children's interpersonal relationships into adulthood (Duran-Aydintug, 1997; Shulman, 2001).

*Relationship differences in females from divorced/intact families.* Relationship preferences vary between sexes and also between females from intact versus divorced families. In Knox et al.'s (2004) previously mentioned research, over three hundred college students participated in a study that sought to determine how divorce affects parent-child relationships and romantic relationships. Although the study consisted of males and females, no sex differences were reported. Individuals in the study who came from divorced families reported an avoidance of short-term relationships. Generally, students with divorced parents reported that their longest relationship lasted more than one year. It appears that individuals from divorced families tend to stay in romantic relationships longer than their peers whose parents were still married. Researchers suggest that the traumatic nature of the parental divorce persuaded these young adults to make a committed effort to remain in long-term relationships.

Compared to children from intact families, adult children of parental divorce have an increased difficulty dealing with conflict in relationships because they lacked a suitable model for appropriate conflict solving, communication, cooperation and compromise that is modeled by two people in love (Wallerstein & Lewis, 2004). Participants from this study came from divorced families indicated that they felt

unprepared for marriage, which hindered the quality of their current relationships. In addition, the estrangement felt by these females who grew up in divorced homes often made impulsive, unsafe decisions; took advantage of their significant others; participated in sexually deviant acts; had low standards for themselves; and often looked for love in atypical places. Another common theme was to jump head first, without thinking rationally about the pros and cons, into a relationship that may not be mutually beneficial.

As previously mentioned, when girls become young adults, romantic love becomes a central focal point in their lives. Children of divorce, however, may enter into this prominent stage with fears and unresolved feelings that can hinder favorable development and lead to relationship quality that is disproportionate to that of females from intact families (Wallerstein & Lewis, 2004). One model used to analyze the quality of romantic relationships is derived from Fletcher, Simpson and Thomas's (2000) *Perceived Relationship Quality Components* questionnaire. This questionnaire measures the quality of one's romantic relationship based on six domains: trust, commitment, satisfaction, intimacy, love and passion. Research examining the relationship between divorce and these domains for assessing quality of romantic relationship will be discussed. Specific attention is focused on research that examines differences in college-aged females from intact versus divorced families on each domain.

*Trust.* Fletcher, Simpson and Thomas (2000) describe trust in romantic relationships as a function of dependability. In other words, one can count on a trustworthy partner. In line with attachment theory research, one study analyzed data from 1,200 individuals who participated in a "love quiz" posted in a local newspaper (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). They wanted to determine whether attachment styles in children

remained constant over time and also whether this residual attachment style related to their adult romantic relationship functioning. Their findings suggest that attachment styles do, in fact, remain stable over time and that the frequencies of each type of attachment style in adulthood resemble childhood attachment frequencies. Of even more importance here, the individuals who reported a secure attachment to their parents as adults had more trusting intimate relationships as opposed to insecure individuals who were not as likely to trust their lovers.

More recently a study was conducted where 205 predominately Caucasian undergraduate college students recalled their childhood experiences with their parents (Black & Shuette, 2006). The researchers compared the recollections of participant's relationships with their parents to their feelings and functioning in their adult romantic relationships. Results signified that females who reported a more loving, positive relationship with their mothers also reported higher levels of trust with their romantic partners. Females who reported a similar relationship with their fathers felt more secure and relied on their significant other to a greater degree than those females who had low loving/positive ratings toward their fathers.

In another trust-related study, researchers asked 104 female college students from both divorced and intact (52 females in each group) families about their expectations of males, work and marriage (Southworth & Schwarz, 1987). The research also included an examination of father-daughter relationship. Inclusion criteria required females to have been between six and nine years old at the time of their parent's divorce and to have lived with their mother after the divorce. Ages ranged from 17 to 20 years old. Results confirmed that trust was significantly correlated with the father's past acceptance

behaviors and the consistency of the father's love. Less consistency in father-daughter relationships resulted in less trust among females and future romantic partners.

Memory related to the details of a parental divorce was found to be an influence on trust in a study of 51 Israeli college students (Shulman, 2000). The researchers hypothesized that children of divorce who were able to mentally resolve their feelings towards their parents' divorce would experience healthier romantic relationships as adults. All participants were from divorced families and were involved in their current relationship for at least three months prior to the beginning of the study. Participants answered questions regarding their romantic relationships and parental conflict during and after divorce. Results revealed that individuals experienced less trust in their romantic relationships when they could not remember the details of their parents' divorce. These results support the researchers' hypothesis and imply that the children of divorce who could not remember the details of their parents' divorce were not able to adequately deal with and recover from the divorce and therefore, experienced more problems in their own romantic relationships.

Out of the 244 participants in Duran-Aydintug's (1997) previously discussed study, 170 came from divorced parent families. 82% of these children reported that they did not completely trust their current romantic partner. All but one of the individuals whose parents divorced before the age of 18 had a difficult time trusting others in general.

Trust was also a matter of interest in Sprague and Kinney's (1997) aforementioned study that investigated the relationship between family environments and adult romance. Adult children from divorced parent families acknowledged lower levels

of trust as well as increased sexual activity in their romantic relationships compared to their peers from intact families.

Contradictory to these findings, one study again, explored father-daughter relationships in females from divorced and intact families (Clark & Kanoy, 1998). The main purpose was to determine if father-daughter intimacy levels had an effect on female's dating satisfaction, trust and anxiety. Ninety-six females participated in this study—66 from intact and 25 from divorced families. Researchers hypothesized that females from divorced families would score lower on father-daughter intimacy, dating trust and satisfaction and higher on dating anxiety than females from intact families. Results suggested that while parental divorce did negatively affect father-daughter intimacy, parent's marital status did not have an effect on trust, satisfaction or anxiety in romantic relationships.

*Commitment.* Commitment means an individual is dedicated and devoted to his or her romantic partner (Fletcher, Simpson & Thomas, 2000). Several studies reported the effects of parental divorce on commitment in females's romantic relationships. As previously mentioned, Wallerstein and Lewis (2004) conducted a longitudinal study of children who were between 3 and 18 years old when their parents divorced. Some of the females in this study were very drastic in their romantic pursuits—they pursued many relationships simultaneously with intentions of breaking off the relationships soon after they had begun. Oftentimes, the anger felt towards their fathers drove their sexual promiscuity. Even the comparison group that was raised in dysfunctional, yet intact families had less anxiety and high hopes for an eventual, successful relationship. In the comparison group, it was suggested that the negativity these children experienced

growing up generated a longing for a better life for themselves and their children. This study also focused on father-child relationships. Twenty-five years after the initial interview, one third of the participants from divorced families reported weekly visits with their fathers during childhood and somewhat consistent contact into adulthood. This group differed significantly from the non-divorced group who reported being closer to their fathers into adulthood. Unfortunately, those children from divorced families who managed to remain in close contact with their fathers into adulthood were just as likely to have anxiety related to love and commitment as those children who had less contact with their fathers through the years. These findings signify that even a healthy post divorce father-child relationship failed to compensate for the negative impacts of divorce for these children in the area of commitment.

Hetherington (2003) conducted a well known longitudinal study called the Virginia Longitudinal Study of Divorce and Remarriage. She followed 144 families (half of whom were divorced and the other half intact) for over twenty years. Their purpose was to explore adjustment patterns and outcomes in both parents and children (four years of age at the beginning of the study) at various points in their lives after divorce. The adult female children from divorced families, who were 24 years of age at end of the study, revealed pessimistic attitudes toward marriage in general. They were more likely to view marriage as unpromising. Some of the females viewed divorce as a suitable answer to an imperfect relationship while some felt compelled to deal with their disappointing arrangement because they were worried about ensuing economic hardships as well as judgments from loved ones.

In Duran-Aydintug's (1997) previously mentioned study, researchers sought to measure adult children's perceptions about divorce, marriage, trust and commitment in dating relationships. Similar to earlier findings, this study concluded that the majority of the college students from divorced families feared commitment in their relationships and feared that their relationship would come to an end. Even though they were afraid that their relationships would end, which implied that they did not want to relationship to end, they actually acted in a way that would bring an eventual end to their relationships. Children who experienced parental discord as children later experienced anxiety and fear towards the idea of a successful marriage as adults. These children from conflict-ridden families were less likely to have contact with the absent parent (usually the father) and "viewed divorce as a relief" (p. 78). Conversely, children from low conflict backgrounds viewed divorce as "an easy way out" (p. 78). In this study, age at time of divorce was not a significant factor, however, the amount of discord and level of stability in their parents' current relationships did have a significant impact on children's views about commitment.

Shulman's (2000) previously mentioned study, which investigated Israeli adults' perception of their romantic relationships and the memory of their parents' divorce showed that 82% of the individuals reported that they did not completely trust their significant others and as a result were not able to fully commit to their relationship partners.

*Satisfaction.* Satisfaction can be described as feelings of contentment and happiness in a romantic relationship. (Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000). An

aforementioned longitudinal study carried out by Burns and Dunlop (2003) attempted to detect relationship differences in children of divorced and intact families. In this study, children from divorced families reported a higher satisfaction rating in their romantic relationships when, according to the child, their fathers were more caring, than the reported satisfaction rating from children in the intact family group.

Other than the study mentioned above, there is little evidence that children from divorced families experience a declined level of satisfaction in adult romantic relationships compared to individuals from intact families. One study examined the outcomes of various custody circumstances after divorce on romantic relationship satisfaction of children as adults (Olivas & Stoltenberg, 1997). Seventy-two college age students with a mean age of 20.03 years old participated. Students were either from father custody, mother custody or intact families. Although it was hypothesized that children from divorced families would experience less relationship satisfaction as adults, this was not the case. No significant differences in relationship satisfaction were found between the divorced and intact groups or the divorced groups who resided with either the father or the mother. Results signify that children who undergo parental divorce do not experience less satisfaction in their adult relationships than individuals from intact family structures. Furthermore, according to this study, custody arrangements do not influence relationship satisfaction for adults who experience parental divorce either.

As previously mentioned, the Clark and Kanoy (1998) study intended to compare father-daughter relationships and compare the relationship quality to trust, satisfaction and anxiety in romantic relationships. The main results confirmed their hypothesis that females from divorced homes experience less intimacy with their partners than those

females from intact families. Based on parental marital status, this study did not, however, find differences in dating trust, anxiety or satisfaction.

*Intimacy.* A couple that is intimate is also close and connected. (Fletcher, Simpson & Thomas, 2000). The main conclusion of the study conducted by Wallerstein and Lewis (2004) was that children from divorced families struggle to establish reciprocal, long lasting relationships. Even though children are sometimes considered “protected” from divorce when, as noted earlier, mother and father do not fight and there is an ongoing relationship with both parents, children who entered adolescence and adulthood still worried that their intimate relationships would not last. According to these researchers, not only do children require the mental picture of their parents’ lasting relationship to develop their own healthy, lasting romantic relationships, this necessity of an intact model of togetherness only grows stronger into adulthood. When the mental picture is shattered, children of divorce can no longer see marriage in the same light. With no model of a union between two people in love, children of divorce as adults have few spousal or familial conflict resolution skills and do not feel confident in their ability to establish intimacy.

The study cited earlier by Westervelt and Vanderberg (1997) aimed to examine intimacy levels in romantic relationships of children from divorced and intact families. Participants consisted of 91 male and 133 female undergraduates with an average age of 20 years. Approximately half of the students came from divorced families whose parents separated prior to their senior year in high school and half came from intact families. The purpose of this study was to assess levels of adult relationship intimacy based on parental divorce, family conflict, sex and age at time of divorce. Although there were no

significant results in intimacy levels based on parent's marital status, results did indicate that females from low-conflict families experience higher levels of intimacy in their romantic relationships than females from high-conflict families. Results also indicated differences in adult intimacy based on age at time of parental divorce. Children who are older at the time of parental divorce from low conflict families experience higher levels of intimacy than older females from high conflict families. Interestingly though, children who are younger at the time of parental divorce from low conflict families experience less intimacy in adult romantic relationships than younger children from with high-conflict environments. The authors did not speculate on the reason for these differences.

Building upon Westervelt and Vanderberg's research (1997), Morris and West (2001) studied the role of post-divorce conflict in their children's adult romantic relationships. Study contingencies required all participants to be between ages 18 and 24 years old at the time of the study, at least six years old at the time of their parent's separation and the parents could only have divorced once. Study findings showed that females who experienced moderate levels of post-divorce conflict at a young age viewed emotional intimacy as a risk in their romantic relationships.

The results of Shulman's (2000) previously described study examined how a child's ability to resolve his or her feelings towards his or her parent's divorce as well as parental conflict during the divorce affected romantic relationships in young adults from divorced families. Results showed that higher levels of conflict during parental divorce correlated with higher levels of intimacy in the participant's romantic relationships, meaning as conflict increased, so did intimacy in romantic relationships. The researchers acknowledge that this finding is contrary to intuition. They suggest that individuals from

high conflict families were motivated to break away from their previous lifestyle and make a better life for themselves.

*Love.* Love can also mean to adore and to cherish (Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000). A study of 737 college aged students (18-25 years) from middle class families analyzed student's perception of how familial conflict, cohesion and expressiveness eventually affected their current romantic behavior and level of trust in their romantic relationships as adults. Seventy percent of the participants were female and 20% of the participants' parents were divorced. Respondents from intact families experienced less familial conflict and more cohesion as children compared to individuals from divorced parent families. In the divorced group, familial conflict experienced as children resulted in less altruistic love in romantic relationships. No other studies that focused on the variable of love were found in the review of relevant literature.

*Passion.* Fletcher, Simpson and Thomas (2000) describe a passionate person as also being lustful and sexually intense. Shulman's (2000) study on Israeli adults also showed that passion was greater for individuals who witnessed more conflict during their parent's divorce than those adults who did not report high conflict parental divorce.

Another study looked at the affect of parental divorce on romantic relationships of young adults (Jacquet & Surra, 2001). Researchers recruited participants through random phone dialing. Individuals were invited to participate if they had never been married, were between 19 and 35 years old, had a current romantic partner of the opposite sex and agreed to interview over the next nine months. Of the 232 couples that met the criteria and agreed to participate, 162 were from divorced families and 242 were from intact families. Researchers found that for casual (as opposed to long-term) dating, females

from divorced families reported more passionate love at a significant level than their intact family peers.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

While recent research suggests that the divorce rate has begun to level off since the 1980s (Goldstein, 1999), it still continues to affect over 1 million children in the United States each year (Greene, Anderson, Doyle, & Riedelbach, 2006). Some research indicates that children are affected by divorce for a short period of time but are able to resume their lives without suffering any long-term detrimental outcomes associated with divorce (Amato, 2000; Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 1999). Other research contends that divorce can cause on-going social (e.g., Wallerstein & Lewis, 2004), psychological (e.g., Cherlin, Chase-Landsdale & Kiernan, 1995) and academic (e.g., Ham, 2003) problems for children, as well as diminished parent-child relationships (e.g., Amato & Booth, 1996).

Much research is available regarding short and long-term outcomes of divorce on children. Less research targets the long-term impact of divorce on the quality of romantic relationships into adulthood (Westervelt & Vandenberg, 1997; Clark & Kanoy, 1998). Romantic relationships become increasingly more important during young adulthood (Paul & White, 1990) therefore, it is important to study how children's previous experiences with parental divorce affect developmental progress as they reach the dating stage. The available research that does address the impact of divorce on romantic relationships only addresses some elements of quality, such as trust and commitment or love and passion for example, but few take into account the six elements that define a "quality" relationship according to the *Perceived Relationship Quality Components* instrument (PRQC; Fletcher, Simpson & Thomas, 2000). This study makes a novel contribution to current divorce research in that it provides an additional perspective on

the long-term effects of parental divorce as it relates to a comprehensive view of the quality of romantic relationships as identified by the PRQC (Fletcher, Simpson & Thomas) questionnaire, while taking into account key factors from the literature that can impact the outcomes of parental divorce. This project attempted to examine the differences in the quality of romantic relationships (based on the domains of the PRQC) in female college students from divorced versus intact families.

As previously stated, available research identifies multiple factors that may complicate the effects of divorce on eventual outcomes but many inconsistencies have been reported. The literature review indicated certain factors related to divorce that more consistently result in similar outcomes across research such as parental conflict and parent-child relationships. Specifically, research suggests that father-child relationships may differ between children from divorced and children from intact families (e.g., Blankenhorn 1995; Clark & Kanoy, 1998; Krohn, 2001; Popenoe, 1996). With regard to conflict, research has suggested that divorced families often evidence higher levels of conflict relationship (Mechanic & Hansell, 1989), and that high levels of conflict relate to negative outcome relationships (e.g., Amato & Keith 1991; Amato, Loomis & Booth, 1995; Mechanic & Hansell, 1989; Slater & Haber, 1984; Wallerstein & Lewis, 2004).

The variables of mother-child relationship, father-child relationship, and conflict were all considered prior to examination of differences. Conflict was the only variable included in the analyses as a covariate (as will be discussed in the results section).

The following hypotheses were tested in this project:

*Hypothesis 1*

Females from divorced families will report lower levels of trust than females from intact families when controlling for level of conflict.

*Hypothesis 2*

Females from divorced families will report lower levels of commitment than females from intact families when controlling for level of conflict.

*Hypothesis 3*

Females from divorced families will report lower levels of intimacy than females from intact families when controlling for level of conflict.

*Hypothesis 4*

Females from divorced families will report lower levels of love than females from intact families when controlling for level of conflict.

*Hypothesis 5*

Females from divorced families will report higher levels of passion in their romantic relationships than females from intact families when controlling for level of conflict.

## METHOD

### *Participants*

Originally, 194 Western Carolina University students completed the surveys for this study. Only female participants who were in an ongoing heterosexual relationship (lasting at least one month) were included in the study. For inclusion into the intact family group, the participants were from families with two parents that had not been divorced. For inclusion into the divorced family group, the participants were from a home in which their parents had been divorced. Participants in both groups were required to have been in a current heterosexual relationship for at least one month. Participants who did not meet these criteria were excluded from the study.

Of the total original sample, 101 female participants had been in a relationship for at least one month [a criteria for using the *Perceived Relationship Quality Components* scale (Fletcher, Simpson & Thomas, 2002) described above]. There were 35 females from a divorced family and 66 females from an intact family. There were no significant differences between the groups with regard to age ( $F(1,100)=.13, p=.72$ ), The mean age of participants was 19.76 (SD=3.00). The sample included 38.9% freshman, 15.9% sophomores, 24.8% juniors, 10.6% seniors and 9.7% graduate students. There was not a statistically significant difference ( $\chi^2 = 6.36, p=.18$ ) between the groups with regard to year in school. The sample was predominately White (83.2%), with 11.5% African American, 2.7% Asian American 1.8% Native American and .9% in the “other” category. There was not a statistically significant difference ( $\chi^2 = 3.36, p=.50$ ) between the groups with regard to ethnicity.

With regard to the divorce group, additional demographic information was gathered on grade at time of divorce, custody and living arrangements and amount of contact with the noncustodial parent. 42% of the participants' parents were divorced between first and eighth grade, 33% after eighth grade and 25% before first grade. After the parental divorce, 46% of the participant's parents had joint custody, 25% had mother-only custody, 13% father-only custody and 17% indicated "other." With regard to living arrangements, 58% of the females lived with her mother, 33% with her father, 4% lived with both her mother and father and 4% lived with grandparents. Amount of contact with the noncustodial parent also varied. 21% of the females had daily contact, 33% reported weekly contact, 13% reported monthly contact, 4% reported yearly contact and 8% of the females reported no contact with the noncustodial parent.

### *Measures*

*Demographics form.* Each participant completed a demographics form. The Demographics form was used to gather information about participant's age, sex, ethnicity, family structure, and other variables that were used to either describe the two groups or to help select participants that met inclusion criteria described above. See Appendix A for a copy of the Demographics Form.

*Parent Bonding Instrument.* The Parent Bonding Instrument (PBI; Parker, Tupling & Brown, 1979) measures parenting styles based on children's retrospective memory of their parents during the first 16 years of life. The instrument measures two variables of parenting styles—Care and Overprotection. The presence or absence of "care" is defined by affection, emotional warmth, empathy, closeness, emotional coldness, indifference and neglect. "Overprotection" is defined by control,

overprotection, intrusion, excessive contact, infantilization, prevention of independent behavior and allowance of independence or autonomy. Although the items are the same on both forms, mothers and father forms are separate. The instrument consists of 25 items on the mother form and 25 items on the father form. Items are scored on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very like) to 4 (very unlike) with 12 items on the care factor and 13 items on the overprotection factor. Items are summed allowing for total possible “care” score of 48 and a possible total “overprotection” score of 52. These scores can be combined to form a total parent-bonding score.

To test for reliability, two identical items were included in the original 48-item questionnaire and produced a Pearson *r* correlation coefficient of .704 (Parker, Tupling & Brown, 1979). Seventeen individuals from the original sample completed the questionnaire twice within three weeks in order to measure test-retest reliability. A Pearson *r* correlation coefficient of .761 was obtained for the “care” scale and .628 for the “overprotection” scale. A split-half reliability measure was also performed. A Pearson *r* correlation coefficient of .879 was obtained for the “care” scale and .739 for the “overprotection” scale. An inter-rater reliability coefficient on the care dimension was .851 and .688 on the “overprotection” dimension. Concurrent validity was established correlating the scores of trained raters that interviewed participants in the sample with scores obtained by having the participants complete the scale themselves. The Pearson *r* correlation coefficients for raters on the Care domain were .772 and .778 respectively. The Pearson *r* correlation coefficients for raters on the Overprotection domain were .478 and .505 respectively. In the current study, Cronbach alphas yielded acceptable internal consistency values for all scales (ranging from  $\alpha=.82$  for mother Overprotection to

$\alpha=.91$  for father Care). Specifically, the Cronbach alpha level for the father Care scale was .84 and the father Overprotection scale was .91. The total father scale yielded an internal consistency level of .70. The Cronbach alpha level for the mother Care scale was .87 and the mother Overprotection alpha level was .82. Internal consistency for the overall mother scale yielded an alpha level of .65. The high internal consistency scores on all the scales within the Parent Bonding Instrument from this sample indicated that this instrument measured unidimensional constructs of “care” and “overprotection.” See Appendix B for a copy of this instrument.

*Children’s Perceptions of Interparental Conflict Scale.* The Children’s Perceptions of Interparental Conflict Scale (CPIC; Grych & Fincham, 1990) measures children’s perceptions of parental conflict. The scale consists of 49 items that assess 9 dimensions of parental conflict—frequency, intensity, content, resolution, threat, coping efficacy, triangulation, stability, and self blame. The scale utilizes a multiple-choice format with three possible responses—true, short of true and false. The items are scored from 1 to 3 with 3 being indicative of more negative forms of conflict. Factor analysis resulted in three reliable subscales—Conflict Properties (frequency, intensity and resolution), Threat (threat and coping efficacy), and Self-Blame (content and self-blame). The Conflict Properties provides total scores ranging from 13 to 39, the Threat subscale provides total scores ranging from 12 to 36 and the Self-Blame provides total scores ranging from 9 to 27. The Conflict Properties and Threat scales can be combined into a Total Conflict Score. Individuals from intact homes are instructed to respond to the questionnaire in regard to conflict between their biological parents. Individuals from

divorced families are instructed to respond to the questionnaire in regard to conflict between their biological parents before their parents divorced.

The PICS scale was initially developed for use with children ages 10 through 12. A follow-up study was conducted to determine whether the original *CPIC* could be extended to use with late adolescents between the ages of 17 to 23 (Bickham & Fiese, 1997). Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the three subscales were calculated to ensure internal consistency of the overall scale for the late adolescent group (N=215). Good internal consistency was represented by a Cronbach's alpha of .95 for Conflict Properties, .88 for Perceived Threat and .85 for Self Blame. Good test-retest reliability over two weeks was represented by a Pearson *r* correlation coefficient of .95 for the Conflict Properties Scale, .86 for the Perceived Threat Scale and .81 for the Self-Blame scale. The Self-Blame scale had problems with a floor effect and is not recommended for use with the adolescent population. The subscale scores and the three outcome variables (identity integration, competence, and global self-esteem) were examined to assess the external validity of the CPIC for late adolescents. The Conflict Properties scale was related only to competence ( $r = -.24, p < .10$ ). Perceived Threat was significantly correlated with all three outcome variables: self-esteem ( $r = -.50, p < .001$ ), competence ( $r = -.38, p < .01$ ), and identity integration ( $r = -.37, p < .01$ ). In the current study, the Cronbach alpha coefficient for Total Conflict was .82. See Appendix C for a copy of the items included on this scale.

*Perceived Relationship Quality Components.* The *Perceived Relationship Quality Components* instrument (PRQC; Fletcher, Simpson & Thomas, 2000) measures the quality of romantic relationships based on six domains—trust, commitment, satisfaction,

intimacy, love and passion. Each of the six perceived relationship quality components is assessed by three questions. Participants rank each question on a five-point scale from 1 (Not at All) to 7 (Extremely). Scores on each domain range from 3 to 21. High scores indicate high levels of relationships quality on a domain, while low scores indicate low levels of relationship quality on a domain.

The psychometric properties of the instrument are well-established (Fletcher, Simpson & Thomas, 2000). The authors conducted a series of studies designed to demonstrate the reliability and validity of the instrument. Confirmatory factor analysis revealed that as expected, the model in which there were six first-order factors (each domain) and one second-order factor (global perceived relationship quality) a comparative fit index (CFI) coefficient of above .90. A second confirmatory factor analysis demonstrated that this model generalized to a sample of individuals in the very early stages of heterosexual relationships (4 weeks or less). Across both studies, results also revealed good internal reliability coefficients (ranging from .78 on Trust to .96 on Commitment). In the current study, the overall Cronbach alpha coefficient was .97 (ranging from sat .87 on intimacy and passion to .97 on commitment). See Appendix D for a copy of this instrument.

### *Procedure*

The Institutional Review Board at Western Carolina University approved this study. Participants who participated in person signed an informed consent form and those who participated online indicated consent by checking an agreement statement that acknowledged the purpose of the study, maintenance of confidentiality, and the nature of voluntary participation (See Appendix E). All participants were administered four

questionnaires in one of three manners—in person at a University classroom location or online via either the Ultimate Survey or Qualtrics data collection and analysis programs. The hard copy questionnaires were presented in random order to control for order effects. Due to limitations with the online survey format, control for order effects could not be established. Once the questionnaires were completed, the participants placed them in an envelope at the front of the classroom or submitted them online. Participants received either a hard copy or electronic debriefing form, which informed participants of the general purpose of the study. Participants had the option to include their email addresses if they wanted to be contacted with more information on the study's purpose and results once the study was completed. Participant data was placed in two groups following completion of the questionnaires: a group for students from divorced families (meeting inclusion criteria described above) and a group for students from intact families (meeting inclusion criteria described above).

#### *Data Analysis*

A Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) was used to examine differences in quality of romantic relationships between females from divorced families and females from intact families while controlling for level of conflict. The independent variable in the study was family structure (divorced or intact). The dependent variables were Passion, Love, Intimacy, Commitment, and Trust (as measured by the Perceived Relationship Quality Components scale described above). Level of conflict from the CPIC was entered as a covariate.

## RESULTS

### *Preliminary Analyses*

Preliminary analyses were conducted to examine differences in reported level of conflict, mother-daughter relationship, and father-daughter relationship based on group. There was no significant difference [ $F(1,108)=1.13, p=.29$ ] between females from divorced families and females from intact families with regard to mother-daughter relationship. There was also not a statistically significant difference [ $F(1, 108)=1.93, p=.17$ ] between females from divorced families and females from intact families with regard to father-daughter relationship. There was a statistically significant difference [ $F(1, 108)=7.24, p=.008, \eta^2=.073$ ] between females from divorced families and females from intact families with regard to total conflict. The females in the divorced families group scored significantly lower ( $M=69.82, SD=7.56$ ) than the females from the intact families group ( $M=73.25, SD=5.64$ ) on level of conflict.

### *Hypothesis Testing*

Hypotheses one through four predicted that females from divorced families would report lower levels of trust, commitment, love, and intimacy respectively, than females from intact families when controlling for level of conflict. The last hypothesis predicted that passion, on the other hand, would be rated higher for females in the divorced group than the intact group. A MANCOVA was used to examine differences on relationship domains based on family group (divorced/intact) while controlling for total conflict. Box's Test for homogeneity was not significant (.21). The results of the MANCOVA revealed no significant factor-covariate interaction [ $F(6,93)=1.22, p=.30, \eta^2=.12$ ]. MANCOVA results revealed no significant differences [ $F(6,93)=.72, p=.63, \eta^2=.045$ ]

on the measures of relationship quality based on family group. The Table below presents mean scores and standard deviations for each domain of relationship quality by group.

Table 1: Descriptive information for Relationship Quality

Relationship Quality	N	<i>X</i>	<i>SD</i>
<b>Commitment</b>			
Divorced	35	18.51	3.543
Intact	66	18.71	3.906
Total	101	18.64	3.767
<b>Satisfaction</b>			
Divorced	35	17.71	3.839
Intact	66	17.95	3.944
Total	101	17.87	3.890
<b>Intimacy</b>			
Divorced	35	18.20	3.521
Intact	66	18.08	3.588
Total	101	18.12	3.548
<b>Trust</b>			
Divorced	35	18.14	3.379
Intact	66	18.11	4.133
Total	101	18.12	3.871
<b>Passion</b>			
Divorced	35	17.09	4.140
Intact	66	16.20	4.178
Total	101	16.50	4.166
<b>Love</b>			
Divorced	35	18.80	3.359
Intact	66	18.23	4.154
Total	101	18.43	3.889

### *Exploratory Analyses*

Exploratory analyses were conducted to examine differences in the specific domains of the Parent Bonding Instrument. MANOVA results revealed no significant difference  $F(2,99)=.69, p=.50$ ) between females from divorced families and females from

intact families on either the Care or the Overprotection scale for mother-daughter relationship. MANOVA results revealed no significant difference  $F(2,99)=1.07, p=.35$ ) between females from divorced families and females from intact families on either the Care or the Overprotection scale for father-daughter relationship. (See Table 2 for mean scores and standard deviations for each domain of parent-child relationship).

Table 2: Descriptive Information for Care and Overprotection Scales

Scale	N	<i>X</i>	<i>SD</i>
Care (Mother-Daughter)			
Divorced	35	31.54	5.86
Intact	66	32.97	6.07
Total	101	32.49	6.02
Overprotection (Mother-Daughter)			
Divorced	35	30.14	4.37
Intact	66	30.27	3.03
Total	101	30.23	3.52
Care (Father-Daughter)			
Divorced	35	33.92	7.79
Intact	66	32.79	4.79
Total	101	33.18	5.99
Overprotection (Father-Daughter)			
Divorced	35	34.92	5.79
Intact	66	33.73	3.59
Total	101	34.15	4.49

## DISCUSSION

Parental divorce has the potential to negatively impact children in a variety of ways (e.g., Amato, 2000; Hetherington, 2003; Duran-Aydintug, 1997). For example, some studies concluded that children from divorced homes experience more frequent moves, a decline in resources, a decline in parental support and fail to learn the basic principles related to adult intimacy, reciprocation, conflict management, or how to deal with familial crises (Wallerstein & Lewis, 2004). Children from divorced homes also suffer in the areas of academic achievement and the ability to obtain and sustain jobs as adults (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). Additional research concludes that some children experience anger, self-blame, anxiety, sleep disturbances and concerns related to autonomy and self-identity as a result of parental divorce (Knoff & Bishop, 1997). It is important to note that research has also found quality of parent-child relationships (e.g., Amato & Booth, 1996, Aquilino, 1994; Blankenhorn 1995; Cooney, 1994; Duran-Aydintug, 1997; Krohn et al., 2001, Popenoe & Videon, 2005 ) and level of conflict (e.g., Amato & Keith 1991, Amato, Loomis & Booth, 1995, Mechanic & Hansell, 1989 & Slater & Haber, 1984) to be important considerations in research comparing children from divorced with children from intact families.

Fewer studies have examined quality of romantic relationship in females from divorced versus intact families. Some of the research that has been conducted on this topic indicates that children from intact families compared to children from divorced families have shorter relationships (Knox et al., 2004) however; they are also more effective at dealing with conflict and reported overall higher levels of quality in their

romantic relationships than children from divorced families. Furthermore, individuals from intact families do not have to contend with fears and unresolved feelings of parental divorce that can hinder favorable development (Wallerstein & Lewis, 2004). Trust, satisfaction, commitment, intimacy, love and passion are all domains of quality of romantic relationships that have been studied between divorced and intact families. Some research has suggested that children from divorced families score lower on levels of trust (eg., Duran-Aydintug, 1997, Shulman, 2000; Sprague & Kinney, 1997), commitment (Duran-Aydintugs, 1997; Shulman, 2000; Wallerstein & Lewis, 2004), love (Fletcher, Simpson & Thomas, 2000) and intimacy (Wallerstein & Lewis, 2004) than children from intact families. Other researchers have found no differences on trust (Clark & Kanoy, 1998), satisfaction (Clark & Kanoy, 1998; Olivas & Stoltenberg, 1997) or intimacy (Westervelt & Vanderberg, 1997) between children from divorced families and children from intact families. Research suggested passion was higher for children from divorced families than intact families (Jacquet & Surra, 2001).

While previous research limited analysis of romantic relationships to one or two domains, such as love or trust, this study attempted to expand the definition of romantic relationship to incorporate several domains. First, the study used the PRQC questionnaire (Fletcher, Simpson & Thomas, 2000), which allowed for an exploration of many domains and how they are affected by divorce at once. Second, this study examined mother-child relationship and father-child relationship to determine if these variables differed between groups, and needed to be considered as covariates. Finally, level of conflict has been widely documented as a variable that moderates the effect of divorce on outcome

variables. Because there was a significant difference in groups based on conflict, it was included in the current study as a covariate.

### *Preliminary Analyses*

According to research, father-daughter relationships affect aspects of a female's life into adulthood (e.g., Blankenhorn, 1995; Krohn, 2001; Popenoe, 1996). Of relevance to children from divorced families, these children tend to remain closer to their mothers than their fathers after divorce (Duran-Aydintug, 1997). In this study, a difference in parent-child relationships between divorced and intact families was expected; however, results indicated no differences in mother-daughter or father-daughter relationship between divorced or intact groups.

Previous research has suggested that children from high conflict homes experienced more difficulties than children who come from low conflict homes and more adolescents who experienced parental conflict are from divorced homes (Mechanic & Hansell, 1989). In the current study, level of conflict was significantly different between children from divorced and intact family homes. Unexpectedly, the analyses from this study showed that females from divorced groups reported lower levels of conflict in their homes than females from intact family homes. While the difference in level of conflict was not expected in this direction, it was still viewed as a covariate that warranted consideration in the current study. Additionally, it should be noted that conflict scores were not particularly high for either group relative to the range of possible scores.

### *Hypotheses*

According to previously conducted research, we would expect that several domains of quality in romantic relationships (trust, commitment, love, intimacy) would be higher in the intact family group (eg., Duran- Aydintug, 1997; Fletcher, Simpson & Thomas, 2000; Shulman, 2000; Sprague & Kinney, 1997; Wallerstein & Lewis, 2004) than the divorce family group. On the other hand, we would expect the domain of passion to be rated higher in the divorced family group (Clark & Kanoy, 1998; Olivas & Stoltenberg, 1997; Westervelt & Vanderberg, 1997) than in the intact family group. Even when conflict was entered as a covariate to isolate the affects of family structure on the dependent variables, results indicated that family structure (divorce/intact) had no significant impact on the quality of romantic relationships for the college females in this study. Despite the host of research that implicates negative associations between parental divorce and the wellbeing of children, there is still other research that supports the idea that after the temporary stress created by parental divorce has faded, some children can adapt and progress through life unscathed (Amato, 2000; Hetherington, 2003).

### *Limitations*

Due to the limited number of available participants, the size of each group (divorce/intact) was less than initially designed. Furthermore, the divorced group contained fewer participants than the intact family group. A larger sample may have resulted in a broader range of individuals that could be considered more representative of the normal population. Another limitation to this study may have been the restricted demographic sample resulting from recruitment of participants on a college campus. The

student population is not representative of the general population and therefore may not provide an accurate reflection of the impact of parental divorce.

Due to the nature of online survey programs, (such as Ultimate Survey and Qualtrics that were used in this project) all surveys are presented to participants in the same order. Ideally, all surveys would have been presented randomly to each participant to control for order effects. For online participants, the conflict scale was completed lastly and therefore may not have received the same level of effort, attention or enthusiasm as the preceding surveys. Additionally, it is possible the answers given on subsequent surveys may have been biased due to subjective interpretations of previous surveys.

Another limitation to this study was the unpredicted outcome of conflict between the divorced and intact groups. Contradictory to research, the intact group reported higher levels of parental conflict than the divorced group. The scores on conflict were not particularly high for either group. It is possible that conflict was low in this relatively small sample and not typical for families that experience divorce.

For the purpose of this study, romantic relationships were defined as any heterosexual romantic relationship lasting at least one month. Domains of quality in romantic relationships, (i.e. trust, commitment, intimacy and love) naturally take time to develop. A low rating on commitment within a new relationship, for example, may not offer an accurate representation of an individual's typical commitment pattern across past or future romantic encounters. Thus, outcomes associated with "romantic relationships," some of which have only lasted one month, may not provide an accurate reflection of the

true impact of parental divorce into adulthood. Future studies may benefit from a larger and more diverse sample population. When investigating romantic relationships, future researchers should consider recruiting participants who have been romantically involved for longer than one month to ensure an accurate representation of outcome patterns.

Additionally, it may be useful to incorporate past relationship patterns instead of focusing solely on current romantic relationships.

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## Appendix A

## Demographics Form

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TO THE BEST OF YOUR KNOWLEDGE.

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Sex: (circle one)      Female Male

Ethnicity: (circle one)

- 1) Caucasian          2) African American    3) Native American  
 4) Hispanic/Latino    5) Asian American      6) Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Year in School: (circle one)

- 1) Freshman    2) Sophomore    3) Junior    4) Senior    5) Graduate

Are your parents divorced? (circle one)    YES    NO

***\*If NO, you may stop here. If YES, please continue\****

What grade were you in when your parents divorced? \_\_\_\_\_

How many years have your parents been divorced? \_\_\_\_\_

Who did you live with after the divorce? (circle one)

- 1) Mother    2) Father    3) Grandparents    4) Other

Which parent had custody: (circle one)

- 1) Joint Custody    2) Mother    3) Father    4) Other

How often did you have contact with the parent that you DID NOT live with before you started attending college? (circle one)

- 1) Daily  
 2) Weekly  
 3) Monthly

4) Yearly

5) Less than yearly

6) Never

Are you currently in a romantic relationship? (circle one) YES NO

Is this a heterosexual relationship? (circle one) YES NO

How long have you been in this relationship? Years \_\_\_\_\_ Months \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B: Parent Bonding Instrument

## Mother Form

This questionnaire lists various attitudes and behaviors of parents. As you remember you MOTHER in your first 16 years would you place a tick in the most appropriate box next to each question.

	Very like	Moderately like	Moderately unlike	Very unlike
1. Spoke to me in a warm and friendly voice				
2. Did not help me as much as I needed				
3. Let me do those things I liked doing				
4. Seemed emotionally cold to me				
5. Appeared to understand my problems and worries				
6. Was affectionate to me				
7. Liked me to make my own decisions				
8. Did not want me to grow up				
9. Tried to control everything I did				
10. Invaded my privacy				
11. Enjoyed talking things over with me				
12. Frequently smiled at me				
13. Tended to baby me				
14. Did not seem to understand what I needed or wanted				
15. Let me decide things for myself				
16. Made me feel I wasn't wanted				
17. Could make me feel better when I was upset				
18. Did not talk with me very much				

19. Tried to make me feel dependent on her/him				
20. Felt I could not look after myself unless she/he was around				
21. Gave me as much freedom as I wanted				
22. Let me go out as often as I wanted				
23. Was overprotective of me				
24. Did not praise me				
25. Let me dress in any way I please				

### Father Form

This questionnaire lists various attitudes and behaviors of parents. As you remember you FATHER in your first 16 years would you place a tick in the most appropriate box next to each question.

	Very like	Moderately like	Moderately unlike	Very unlike
1. Spoke to me in a warm and friendly voice				
2. Did not help me as much as I needed				
3. Let me do those things I liked doing				
4. Seemed emotionally cold to me				
5. Appeared to understand my problems and worries				
6. Was affectionate to me				
7. Liked me to make my own decisions				
8. Did not want me to grow up				
9. Tried to control everything I did				
10. Invaded my privacy				
11. Enjoyed talking things over with me				
12. Frequently smiled at me				

13. Tended to baby me				
14. Did not seem to understand what I needed or wanted				
15. Let me decide things for myself				
16. Made me feel I wasn't wanted				
17. Could make me feel better when I was upset				
18. Did not talk with me very much				
19. Tried to make me feel dependent on her/him				
20. Felt I could not look after myself unless she/he was around				
21. Gave me as much freedom as I wanted				
22. Let me go out as often as I wanted				
23. Was overprotective of me				
24. Did not praise me				
25. Let me dress in any way I please				

## Appendix C: Perception of Interparental Conflict Scale

### Family Disagreements

I live with \_\_\_ both my mom and my dad  
 \_\_\_ only one of my parents  
 \_\_\_ another relative (e.g., grandmother, aunt)

In every family there are times when the parents don't get along. When their parents argue or disagree, kids can feel a lot of different ways. We would like to know what kinds of feelings *you* have when *your* parents have arguments or disagreements.

If your parents don't live together in the same house with you, think about times that they are together when they don't agree or about times when both of your parents lived in the same house, when you answer these questions.

T=True  
 ST=Sort of True  
 F=False

### Frequency

- 1. \*I never see my parents arguing or disagreeing
- 10. They may not think I know it, but my parents argue or disagree a lot
- 16. My parents are often mean to each other even when I'm around
- 20. I often see my parents arguing
- 29. \*My parents hardly ever argue
- 37. My parents often nag and complain about each other around the house

### Intensity

- 5. My parents get really mad when they argue
- 14. \*When my parents have a disagreement they discuss it quietly
- 24. When my parents have an argument they say mean things to each other
- 33. When my parents have an argument they yell a lot
- 38. \*My parents hardly ever yell when they have a disagreement
- 40. My parents have broken or thrown things during an argument
- 45. My parents have pushed or shoved each other during an argument

### Resolution

- 2. \*When my parents have an argument they usually work it out
- 11. Even after my parents stop arguing they stay mad at each other
- 21. \*When my parents disagree about something, they usually come up with a solution
- 30. \*When my parents argue they usually make up right away
- 41. \*After my parents stop arguing, they are friendly toward each other
- 48. My parents still act mean after they have had an argument

### Content

- 3. My parents often get into arguments about things I do at school
- 22. My parents' arguments are usually about something I did
- 31. My parents usually argue or disagree because of things that I do
- 39. My parents often get into arguments when I do something wrong

### Perceived Threat

- 7. I get scared when my parents argue
- 17. When my parents argue I worry about what will happen to me
- 26. When my parents argue I'm afraid that something bad will happen
- 35. When my parents argue I worry that one of them will get hurt.
- 42. When my parents argue I'm afraid they will yell at me too
- 47. When my parents argue I worry that they might get divorced

### Coping Efficacy

- 6. \*When my parents argue I can do something to make myself feel better
- 15. I don't know what to do when my parents have arguments
- 25. \*When my parents argue or disagree I can usually help make things better
- 34. When my parents argue there's nothing I can do to stop them
- 46. When my parents argue or disagree there's nothing I can do to make myself feel better
- 51. When my parents argue they don't listen to anything I say

### Self-Blame

- 9. \*It's usually my fault when my parents argue
- 28. Even if they don't say it, I know I'm to blame when my parents argue
- 43. My parents blame me when they have arguments
- 50. \*Usually it's not my fault when my parents have arguments

### Triangulation

- 8. I feel caught in the middle when my parents argue
- 18. \*I don't feel like I have to take sides when my parents have a disagreement
- 27. My mom wants me to be on her side when she and my dad argue
- 36. I feel like I have to take sides when my parents have a disagreement
- 44. My dad wants me to be on his side when he and my mom argue

### Stability

- 13. My parents have arguments because they are not happy together
- 23. The reasons my parents argue never change
- 32. My parents argue because they don't really love each other
- 49. My parents have arguments because they don't know how to get along

## Appendix D: Perceived Relationship Quality Components

### Relationship Satisfaction

1. How satisfied are you with your relationship?
2. How content are you with your relationship?
3. How happy are you with your relationship?

### Commitment

4. How committed are you to your relationship?
5. How dedicated are you to your relationship?
6. How devoted are you to your relationship?

### Intimacy

7. How intimate is your relationship?
8. How close is your relationship?
9. How connected are you to your relationship?

### Trust

10. How much do you trust your partner?
11. How much can you count on your partner?
12. How dependable is your partner?

### Passion

13. How passionate is your relationship?
14. How lustful is your relationship?
15. How sexually intense is your relationship?

### Love

16. How much do you love your partner?
17. How much do you adore your partner?
18. How much do you cherish your partner?

## Appendix E: Consent Form

### **Informed Consent Form** Romantic Relationships in College Females

#### **What is the purpose of this research?**

Divorce affects many children and adults in a variety of ways. This information will help determine some of the long-term affects of parental divorce. Specifically, we are studying the impact of divorce on college female's romantic relationships.

#### **What will be expected of me?**

You will be asked to complete four surveys--A demographics questionnaire, which will provide us with some background information, a questionnaire related to parental conflict, a questionnaire related to the quality of past or current romantic relationships and one is related to parent-child relationships.

#### **How long with the research take?**

It will take about one hour or less to complete the surveys.

#### **Will my answers be anonymous?**

Yes. Your name will not be used at all in this research. You will not put your name on the data sheets, and the researchers will not know how you answered the questions. Your data will be coded using an anonymous number (e.g., S34)

#### **Can I withdraw from the study if I decide to?**

Absolutely. You can withdraw from the research at any time, without penalty, and you may ask that your answers not be used for any reason.

#### **Is there any harm that I might experience from taking part in the study?**

No. There is no foreseeable harm to participants by filling out the surveys.

#### **How will I benefit from taking part in the research?**

You will obtain the satisfaction of knowing that you participated in a study that will shed light on how divorce affects individuals into adulthood and receive class credit for your participation. In addition, if you are interested, we will send you a copy of the results.

#### **Who should I contact if I have questions or concerns about the research?**

If you have any concerns about how you were treated during the experiment, you may contact the office of the IRB, a committee that oversees the ethical dimensions of the research process. The IRB office can be contacted at 227-3177. This research project has been approved by the IRB.

Participant Name \_\_\_\_\_

Participant is 18 or age or older    Yes\_\_\_\_\_    No\_\_\_\_\_

**(You must be at least 18 years old to participate)**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Signature\_\_\_\_\_

Researcher Signature \_\_\_\_\_

If you would like to receive a summary of the results, once the study has been completed, please write your email address (as legibly as possible) here:

\_\_\_\_\_