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THE EFFECTS OF PARENTAL DIVORCE ON MARITAL OPTIMISM AND
ATTACHMENT STYLE IN YOUNG ADULTHOOD:
A PATH ANALYTIC MODEL

by

Susan S. Roberts

M.A., University of Montana, 1999

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Montana

October 2002

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The Effects of Parental Divorce on Marital Optimism and Attachment Style in Young Adulthood: A Path Analytic Model

Chairperson: Jennifer Waltz, Ph.D. *gw*

The current study investigated the effects of parental divorce and two divorce-related variables, inter-parental conflict and parent-child relations, on relational functioning in young adulthood. Indicators of relational functioning were marital optimism and two components of adult attachment, relationship avoidance and relationship anxiety. A path analytic model was proposed in which parent-child relations mediated the effect of inter-parental conflict on indicators of adult relational functioning among individuals who experienced parental divorce. Data was collected from individuals from intact families as well, in order to investigate differences between these two groups.

Usable data was collected from 594 introductory psychology students from two state universities. Of these 594 participants, 181 were from divorced families and 413 were from intact families. Those from divorced families reported significantly more inter-parental conflict, more negativity in parent-child relations (both mother-child and father-child relations), and lower marital optimism than those from intact families. For both divorced-family and intact-family groups, inter-parental conflict was a significant predictor of lower marital optimism, higher relationship avoidance, and higher relationship anxiety. For both groups, inter-parental conflict was also a significant predictor of negativity in both mother-child and father-child relations. For both groups, negativity in mother-child relations was a significant predictor of all three relational outcome variables. Father-child relations was a significant predictor of all three relational outcome variables in the intact-family group; however, in the divorced-family group, father-child relations was a significant predictor of only one outcome variable, relationship anxiety. Results of path analyses, as well as model fit statistics, supported the hypothesis that parent-child relations mediates the association between inter-parental conflict and later relational functioning, in individuals from both divorced and intact families. Several qualifications to this general pattern of findings, including between-group differences in inter-parental conflict and the importance of father-child relations, are discussed.

Implications for therapists include the importance of educating parents on the effect that the quality (or lack thereof) of the inter-parental relationship has on ongoing parent-child relations, as well as on children's well-being long-term. Therapists working with young adults should assess for history of parental divorce and focus on ameliorating fears and/or pessimism about marriage.

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Introduction

Almost one half of marriages in the United States end in divorce, and each year one million children experience their parents' divorce (Cherlin, 1992; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990). Some research has suggested that children who experience parental divorce are at a significant disadvantage compared to children from intact homes with respect to outcomes such as school achievement, economic well-being, self-esteem, psychological well-being, social adjustment, and relational functioning (Amato & Keith, 1991a). Moreover, research on young adults from divorced families suggests that such differences in functioning may persist long-term (Amato & Keith, 1991b; Kulka & Weingarten, 1979; McLanahan & Bumpass, 1988; Wallerstein, 1987; Zill, Morrison, & Coiro, 1993). It is important to note, however, that although differences between these groups of children are often statistically significant, effect sizes are usually small, and the total amount of variance accounted for is often minimal (Amato & Keith, 1991a; Kulka & Weingarten, 1979). Furthermore, some research has documented positive outcomes in children of divorce, such as increased maturity and empathy (Gately & Schwebel, 1992), and higher educational and occupational aspirations among girls (Barber & Eccles, 1992).

One way in which children may be affected long-term by parental divorce is in the formation of their own intimate relationships as young adults. Some research has suggested that experiencing parental divorce in childhood leads to a heightened sense of insecurity and difficulties with trust and commitment when contemplating marriage (Wallerstein, 1987; Wallerstein & Lewis, 1998). Other researchers have looked at the possibility that parental divorce increases the chance for disruption and divorce in one's own relationships as an adult (Amato, 1996; 1999). Again, there is much heterogeneity

in outcome among studies of the relational effects of divorce, with some studies finding detrimental consequences of parental divorce (e.g. Wallerstein, 1987), and some finding very few significant differences between young adults from divorced and intact families (e.g. Sinclair & Nelson, 1998) .

Given the inconsistency in findings, an important goal for researchers in this area is to identify the variables that account for differences in outcome among children who experience parental divorce. Previous research on the impact of divorce on individual outcomes such as self esteem, academic functioning, and delinquency suggests that several variables are likely to be important predictors, including the level of conflict between parents before and after the divorce, the quality of the ongoing relationships between the child and each of their parents, the continued access to financial resources after the divorce, and demographic variables such as gender and the age of the child at the time of marital dissolution. The current study extends this work to address relational outcomes, and tests a model that attempts to account for the variability in long-term relational outcomes among children who experience parental divorce, using these variables. Specifically, it is hypothesized that the level of parental conflict affects the quality of ongoing parent-child relations, which in turn affects adult relationship variables such as marital optimism.

General Effects of Parental Divorce: Short and Long-Term

According to Demo and Acock (1988), many experts in human development have long considered the two-parent family the optimal unit for normal child development. Freud (1925; 1961), for example, assumed that the presence of two parents (a male and a female) was a necessary condition for appropriate sex-type identification. In a similar way, social learning theorists have emphasized the importance of parental role models as

the primary reinforcers of child behavior, and have assumed that the presence of the same-sexed parent is crucial for the child to develop “normal” sex-typed behaviors (Bandura & Walters, 1963). These models seem to suggest that departures from the two-parent, nuclear family model are problematic for children. What evidence is there that parental divorce does, in fact, lead to difficulties for children?

Short-term effects of parental divorce. Currently there exists an extensive literature looking at the short-term effects of divorce, much of which is cross-sectional in nature. Findings of such studies have been contradictory, with some researchers suggesting more detrimental consequences and some concluding that most negative effects are largely diminished over time. According to Emery (1988, p. 48), cross-sectional studies of the effects of divorce on children are problematic in that they treat divorce as a “unitary event,” and fail to take into account variables present before and after the divorce, such as individual differences in family process and children’s accommodation of change. Nevertheless, reviewing the results of such “snapshot” investigations “is of value in planning broad policies, in justifying research on family process, and in specifying the conditions under which a relation between divorce and adjustment problems must hold” (p. 69).

In his own qualitative review of findings in this area, Emery (1988) concludes that there are clear associations between divorce and some specific problems, including increased utilization of mental health services, more conduct problems, and less success in school. In other areas, such as internalizing problems, sex-role behavior, and social competence, the evidence is more contradictory. In his concluding remarks, he emphasizes that there is no one-to-one relation between divorce and problems in any domain. In other words, even though children from divorced and single-parent families

are over-represented among those with problems, it is not necessarily the case that a majority of children from divorced families experience significant problems. His recommendations include studying the family processes in place before and after divorce, and suggests that these types of variables may predict individual differences in outcome more reliably than divorce alone.

The currently available body of literature on the short-term effects of divorce on children is marked by a number of other problematic issues. Demo and Acock (1988) note that there are consistent differences found between children from divorced and intact families in the areas of antisocial behaviors and scholastic functioning, however, outcomes such as interpersonal functioning and self-esteem are less clear. These authors comment at length on the limitations inherent in drawing conclusions from prior investigations because of tendencies to 1) rely on simplistic classifications of family structure, 2) overlook potentially confounding factors such as income and social class, 3) use non-representative samples, 4) examine limited dimensions of functioning, 5) fail to assess possible beneficial effects deriving from different family structures, and 6) rely on non-longitudinal designs to detect developmental processes. In addition to addressing such methodological limitations, Demo and Acock (1988) recommend exploring factors mediating the association between parental divorce and children's well-being, including social class, marital quality, and parent-child relations.

To date, there exists only one quantitative review of the effects of parental divorce on children. This work was carried out by Amato and Keith (1991a), in a meta-analysis of 92 studies comparing children living in continuously intact families to children living in divorced single-parent families. Outcome measures were divided into the following eight categories, reflecting the most commonly studied variables in relation to parental

divorce: 1) academic achievement, 2) conduct, 3) psychological adjustment, 4) self-concept, 5) social adjustment, 6) mother-child relations, 7) father-child relations, and 8) other.

Approximately two-thirds of the overall effect sizes calculated were negative, indicating that, in general, children with divorced parents had lower levels of well-being than children from intact homes. The largest overall effect sizes were found in father-child relations, conduct, and mother-child relations (effect sizes $-.26$, $-.23$, and $-.19$, respectively). However, the authors noted that effect sizes were small, and that studies which included control variables, such as social class, found the smallest effect sizes. Similar to other investigators who have reviewed this literature, Amato and Keith (1991a) emphasize the complexity of findings in this area, but in general note that parental divorce has a weak but consistent association with lowered well-being in children. In addition, they recommend more attention be paid to mediating factors, such as parental conflict and socio-economic disadvantage.

Long-term effects of parental divorce. Research investigating the long-term effects of parental divorce has generally found wide-ranging negative consequences of this experience. Amato and Keith (1991b) looked at a variety of outcomes in a meta-analysis summarizing 37 studies on long-term consequences of parental divorce. The authors included only studies using subjects over the age of 18, and excluded studies which were based entirely on college students. Significant and negative effect sizes were found for all outcomes studied when those from intact and divorced families were compared. The strongest effect sizes occurred in the areas of psychological adjustment, relationship instability, behavior/conduct (criminal behavior, teen marriage and pregnancy, alcoholism), and educational attainment (effect sizes $-.32$, $-.36$, $-.28$, and $-.28$,

respectively), with those from divorced families experiencing more negative outcomes than those from intact families.

Results of other retrospective studies have been consistent with these findings. For example, McLanahan and Bumpass (1988) found that young women who spent part of their childhoods in one-parent families were more likely than those from intact families to marry and have children early, to have children before marriage, and to experience the break-up of their own marriages. Similarly, Krein and Beller (1988) found that living in a single-parent family was negatively related to educational attainment, and this effect increased with the number of years spent in this type of family.

Another investigation of long-term effects of parental divorce is noteworthy for its longitudinal design. Zill, Morrison, and Coiro (1993) looked at children's (n = 1,147) post-divorce functioning at three points, when children were ages 7 to 11 (first wave), 12 to 16 (second wave), and 18 to 22 (third wave), respectively. This study is of particular interest because it included data on parent-child relations, as well as more commonly studied variables such as behavior problems, depression, delinquency, academic standing, and psychological help-seeking.

The study found that as young adults, those who experienced parental divorce as children were twice as likely as those from intact families to have poor relationships with parents, to show high levels of emotional distress, to have received psychological help, and to have dropped out of high school at some point. Furthermore, these differences were significant even after controlling for parental education, race, and socioeconomic differences. For most measures, problems were at least as evident in adulthood as in adolescence. For one variable, mother-child relations, a significant effect was found in adulthood and not in adolescence, suggesting that many subjects reported new problems

arising in the mother-child relationship during adulthood that had not been present in adolescence.

Results from this study suggested that effects of divorce may not be ameliorated over time, and in some cases, children's difficulties may grow worse as they enter adulthood. However, it is important to note that despite the higher incidence of problems in adult children from divorced families, most of them were still in the normal range on the majority of indicators of well-being used. Furthermore, coefficients relating parental divorce to well-being were relatively modest in magnitude (standardized regression coefficients ranged from .10 to .30), accounting for only a small proportion of variance.

In contrast to the research findings described above, some authors have begun to look at the possibility of favorable outcomes as a result of parental divorce. For example, Gately and Schwebel (1992) in a review of literature investigating post-divorce outcomes in children, found some children to exhibit enhanced maturity, self-esteem, empathy, and gender-role flexibility. Similarly, Barber and Eccles (1992), note evidence that girls from single-parent households may hold less traditional gender-role attitudes and higher educational and occupational aspirations.

Long-term Effects of Parental Divorce on Relationships

One specific way in which experiencing parental divorce may have long-term effects is in the area of intimate relationships. It seems likely that living through the break-up of one's parent's marriage would have diverse consequences for thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in one's own intimate relationships in adulthood. Wallerstein (1991, p.354) highlights this idea in her statement that "the long-term psychological consequences [of parental divorce] emerge developmentally on center stage when the

young adult is at the threshold of adulthood and contemplates the major decisions of love, commitment, and marriage.”

Why might the experience of parental divorce lead to problems specifically in the area of intimate relationships? Summers et al. (1998) suggest that parental divorce is a symbol that relationships are not always secure, and that this experience provides a template for an adolescent, resulting in decreased security and satisfaction in his or her own relationships. In other words, since the parental relationship is a central example of committed couples relationships, ruptures in this bond are likely to alter one’s schema about couples relationships in general. In young adulthood, as individuals contemplate their own intimate relationships, the parental schema may be brought to mind, possibly activating feelings of insecurity and anxiety. As a result, some who have experienced parental divorce may be more likely to exhibit pessimism and avoidance with regard to relationships, while others may enter into serious relationships early in an attempt to disconfirm their fears. Still others may be able to make relatively specific attributions about the break-up of the parental relationship, and thus be able to remain hopeful about relationships and have healthy ideas, expectations, and behaviors.

From a slightly different perspective, Hepworth, Ryder, and Dreyer (1984, p. 73) argue that “parental divorce equals parental loss from a child’s perspective. It is a great disruption of one of the most significant relationships in a person’s life, and therefore is presumed to have some effect on the formation of later relationships.” Research consistently shows a sharp decline in the amount of contact between fathers and their children after a divorce (Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1982; Seltzer, 1991). In addition, longitudinal research on mother-child interactions post-divorce suggests that there may also be a deterioration in relations between children and custodial parents (Hetherington,

Cox, & Cox, 1982). Given the significance of parent-child relations for healthy child development, divorce and resulting parental loss would be likely to initiate changes in one's basic ideas and feelings about relationships. In young adulthood, trust and security in intimate relationships would likely be central issues related to earlier divorce and the disruption of parent-child relations.

Franklin, Janoff-Bulman, and Roberts (1990) suggest that we can understand the long-term effects of parental divorce within a framework used to understand other stressful life events. Specifically, we can look at the impact of such an event on a person's assumptions about the world. In general, it is suggested that we operate according to certain assumptions which form the core of our belief systems. Such assumptions include ideas about the benevolence of the world, principles of deservingness, justice, and control, and beliefs about the worthiness of the self. One common result of experiencing an upsetting or traumatic event is that these basic assumptions about the world, self, and others are brought into question and altered. Such changes in beliefs may persist for many years after the traumatic event occurs (Janoff-Bulman & Frieze, 1983; Janoff-Bulman, 1989).

Franklin, Janoff-Bulman, and Roberts (1990) emphasize the primacy of the parental relationship for the development of children's beliefs about other people and about relationships in general. They suggest that because children of divorce directly experience the break-up of a relationship that they depended on, in addition to possibly enduring an abandonment from one parent, it would make sense that their basic assumptions about others and about relationships would be altered. These effects may persist long-term, especially into young adulthood when choices about long-term, committed relationships become more salient.

Empirical investigations looking at the effects of parental divorce on relationships has focused mainly on the following areas: amount and timing of courtship behavior and sexual involvement, adult attachment style, relationship beliefs and optimism, and relationship quality and stability. Findings in each of these areas will be reviewed.

Sexual behavior, courtship and dating. One way in which parental divorce may affect children's relationships is in the area of dating behavior and sexual activity. Such outcomes are important to investigate in part because they may affect the age at which an individual will enter into marriage and/or become a parent. In turn, these events are likely to contribute to educational attainment, occupational functioning, and overall quality of life. Newcomer and Udry (1987) outline several ways in which parental divorce may affect dating and sexual behaviors in children. In particular, the presence of only one parent may mean that there is less control and supervision of children's social behaviors and interactions with peers. The absence of one parent may be compounded by emotional and financial turmoil on the part of the custodial parent, further detracting from the time and attention that children receive. Adolescent children may seek out needed nurturance and companionship through dating and sexual relationships.

Other explanations for effects on dating and sexual behavior include a modeling effect, such that children are modeling parents' newly increased interest in partner relationships (Booth, Brinkerhoff, & White, 1984). Finally, in a study by Hepworth, Ryder, and Dreyer (1984), many teens from divorced families reported that forming a sexual relationship provided a needed escape from ongoing family turmoil initiated by a divorce.

With regard to courtship patterns, several studies have looked at the timing and pace of entering into dating relationships among young adults from intact and divorced

families. These studies have in general found accelerated courtship patterns among children from divorced families. As young adults, individuals who experience parental divorce are likely to begin dating earlier and to date more frequently than young adults from intact families (Booth, Brinkerhoff, & White, 1984; Hepworth, Ryder, & Dreyer, 1984).

Alternatively, children of divorce may exhibit a pattern of avoidance of romantic relationships altogether. Hepworth, Ryder and Dreyer (1984) found that children of divorced parents either experienced accelerated and more frequent dating, or avoided contact with possible dating partners. These authors reasoned that from a family systems perspective, both behaviors make sense. In particular, one coping strategy for dealing with a loss of a family member may be to attempt to fill that loss as quickly as possible through finding another meaningful relationship. Alternatively, one may cope with parental loss through downplaying and discrediting the importance of the lost member, and denying strong feelings for any possible love object.

Several studies have found significant group differences based on parental marital status in the area of sexual behavior. Newcomer and Udry (1987) looked at rates of initiation of sexual activity among adolescents who were interviewed on two separate occasions, two years apart. Data were collected on sexual activity as well as other behaviors such as smoking and drinking, and subjects were classified according to whether they lived in continuously intact families, or experienced a transition to a single-parent or blended family during the two year period.

Results indicated that a higher percentage of adolescents who transitioned to single-parent families reported the initiation of sexual activity during the two year period studied compared to those from continuously intact families. However, the authors also

reported that adolescents from single-parent families were more likely to report initiating other behaviors such as smoking, drinking, cheating on a test, and driving a car without permission. As such, it may be that the difficulties surrounding marital dissolution make all types of “acting out” behaviors more likely, instead of specifically affecting dating and sexual behavior among teens.

Kinnaird and Gerrard (1986) looked at dating and sexual behavior among college women (mean age 18.5 years) from divorced, intact, and reconstituted (mother remarried) families. They found that a higher percentage of those from divorced and reconstituted families reported being sexually active (53% from intact families vs. 70% and 80% from divorced and reconstituted families, respectively), and that a significantly greater proportion of women from the divorced and reconstituted groups reported having their first sexual experience before the age of 16. Other research has confirmed this pattern of findings. In general, young adults from divorced families report significantly more sexual experience and a higher number of sexual partners than individuals from intact families (Booth, Brinkerhoff, & White, 1984; Gabardi & Rosen, 1992); however, it is unclear whether this effect is specific to sexual behavior, or whether it reflects a larger pattern of “acting out” behavior.

Adult Attachment style. Another way in which parental divorce may have long-term effects on relationships is in the area of adult attachment style. Hazan and Shaver (1987, p. 511) have suggested adult romantic love can be conceptualized as an attachment process, or “a biosocial process by which affectional bonds are formed between adult lovers, just as affectional bonds are formed earlier in life between human infants and their parents.” In support of this theory, initial research carried out with adults found that subjects classified themselves as “secure,” “avoidant,” and “anxious-

ambivalent” in approximately the same proportions as previous research had found in infant-parent attachments.

How might parental divorce be related to attachment style in adulthood? Emery (1994) suggests that parental divorce can be thought of as a separation from an attachment figure, and that attachment theory predicts that children’s separations from attachment figures can cause short-term distress and also lead to an increased risk for problems in later interpersonal relationships (Bowlby, 1973). Research on the immediate consequences of separation from an attachment figure identify a three stage process after the separation or loss: an acute distress syndrome (protest), followed by apathy or depression (despair), and subsequent loss of interest (detachment; Bowlby, 1973). It is unclear, however, whether such interpersonal detachment persists long-term or generalizes to other relationships.

An alternative explanation for a possible association between parental divorce and adult attachment style has to do with pre-existing characteristics of parents and the interparental relationship. For example, it may be that parents who later divorce are more likely to exhibit problems which affect the initial attachment process, such as depression, antisocial characteristics, or substance abuse. Also, because it is likely that levels of interparental conflict are higher in relationships which eventually break up, it could be that such conflict detracts from the time and energy that care-givers are able to give to their infant. In turn, an insecure attachment in infancy may contribute to insecurity and ambivalence in later relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

In light of such ideas, it seems logical that parental divorce would be related to adult attachment style; however, findings in this area have been inconsistent. Hazan and Shaver (1987) found no differences in attachment style based on parental marital status

alone. However, adults who reported that their parents had a happy and affectionate relationship were more likely to classify themselves as secure than insecure. More recently, several studies have found group differences in attachment style based on parental marital status. Summers, Forehand, Armistead, and Tannenbaum (1998) found that young adults from intact families reported more secure romantic attachments than those who had experienced divorce. Similarly, Evans and Bloom (1996) and Sprecher, Cate, and Levin (1998) found among women participants only that a significantly higher proportion of young adults from intact families classified themselves as secure, while a higher proportion of those from divorced families classified themselves as avoidant. In light of such findings, it seems that parental divorce may be related to later attachment in romantic relationships, however, more research is needed to clarify the nature and underpinnings of this association.

Relationship beliefs and attitudes. Some researchers have suggested that experiencing the marital problems and divorce of one's parents might "sensitize" a person to both the positive and negative aspects of long-term relationships in general, and in this way might change the quality and complexity of ideas and beliefs that an individual holds about relationships (Kulka & Weingarten, 1979). Others have proposed that the effects of parental divorce in this area can be understood according to a framework applied to the effects of other stressful life events (Franklin, Janoff-Bulman, & Roberts, 1990). Specifically, these authors suggest that most people have a core belief system made up of broad ideas about the benevolence of the world and of others, principles of deservingness, justice, and control, and beliefs about the worthiness of the self. In the event of something sufficiently upsetting or traumatic, such core beliefs may be shattered or called into question.

According to this perspective, parent-child relationships as well as interparental relationships are of primary importance for the development of basic beliefs about relationships and other people. Children of divorce experience the rupture of a relationship on which they depended, and as such, it seems likely that beliefs and assumptions about relationships would be questioned and altered. Such altered beliefs may become especially salient in young adulthood when issues around serious relationships and commitment are more central.

Several studies to date have looked at the way in which parental divorce affects one's thoughts, beliefs, and expectations about romantic relationships in adulthood. In a qualitative, longitudinal study of 60 children experiencing parental divorce, Wallerstein (1991) described that one of the most important areas in which the divorce had had an effect was in subjects' expectations about their own romantic relationships. In particular, she reported that although most participants voiced great hopes and desires for lasting, committed relationships, a high percentage stated that they felt a great deal of anxiety in this same area. Problems commonly reported included fears of abandonment, difficulties with trust and intimacy, and avoidance of romantic relationships altogether.

In an empirical investigation, Franklin, Janoff-Bulman, and Roberts (1990) also found differences in the area of trust and optimism between individuals from divorced and intact families. Participants were 568 college students who responded to questionnaires assessing 1) parental marital status, 2) general assumptions about the benevolence of the world and people, and 3) optimism about their own future romantic relationships. Respondents from divorced and intact families did not differ in terms of generalized optimism and trust in the world and others. However, significant group

differences were found in the area of marital optimism, in that participants from divorced families reported that they would be less likely to have long and successful marriages.

In a subsequent study described in the same publication (Franklin, Janoff-Bulman, & Roberts, 1990), the authors looked at trust in relationships and differentiated between trust in a dating relationship and trust in a long-term, committed relationship.

Interestingly, respondents from divorced families did not differ from those from intact families in terms of how much they trusted their present dating partner; they differed only in how much they believed they would trust a future spouse. The authors concluded that parental divorce seems to have a very specific impact long-term on relationship beliefs, and stated that “by not overgeneralizing their experience, but rather narrowly confining its impact to beliefs about the most relevant life event-marriage-these individuals minimize the overall impact of the negative divorce experience” (Franklin, Janoff-Bulman, & Roberts, 1990, p. 753).

A related area of research consists of studies investigating the effects of parental divorce on attitudes toward marriage and divorce. Studies have looked at such attitudes in terms of optimism about future marriage or long term commitment, as well as in terms of “traditionalism,” or ideas that people hold about the legitimacy of alternatives to marriage and the acceptability of divorce.

Of particular interest are several studies which have explored relationship attitudes in terms of whether young adults desire to marry and their expectations regarding married life. In general, mixed results have been found in this area. Tasker (1992) interviewed teenagers age 17 to 18 from divorced and intact backgrounds, asking whether they wanted to marry in the future. Participants from divorced families were less likely to report wanting to marry in the future.

Three other studies using the same instrument to measure attitudes toward marriage have resulted in conflicting findings (Coleman & Ganong, 1984; Greenberg & Nay, 1982; Kinnaird & Gerrard, 1986). The Attitudes Toward Marriage Scale (Wallin, 1954) is a 14-item measure tapping respondents' expectations and desires regarding future marriage. Topic areas include the extent to which the subject anticipates marital happiness, anticipated difficulty in adjusting to married life, feeling burdened by the responsibility of marriage, and missing life as a single person. Of the three studies, only one found differences between young adults from intact and divorced families on this measure, with those from intact families reporting more positive expectations about marriage than those from divorced backgrounds (Kinnaird & Gerrard, 1986). However, this difference was only marginally significant. Furthermore, the authors noted that the overwhelming majority of all participants reported wanting to be married.

Although it is unclear whether parental divorce has a negative effect on marital optimism and desire to marry, it appears to be the case that young adults from divorced families have a less traditional attitude about divorce and alternatives to marriage, such as cohabitation. In particular, it has been found that individuals from divorced families rate divorce more favorably on questionnaires assessing opinions on the viability of divorce as a solution to an unhappy marriage, the obligation of partners to remain married, and the effects of divorce on children (Coleman & Ganong, 1984; Greenberg & Nay, 1982; Kinnaird & Gerrard, 1986; and more recently Amato, 1996). Individuals from divorced households also more often report being in a cohabiting relationship without marriage (Southworth & Schwartz, 1987), or planning to cohabit before marriage (Booth, Brinkerhoff, & White, 1984).

Amato (1988) offered a possible interpretation of this relatively complex pattern of findings. In his own research, he looked at attitudes concerning the advantages and disadvantages of marriage, singlehood, and living together relationships among 2,544 Australians age 18 to 34. Overall, he found no significant differences between groups based on parental marital status after controlling for demographic variables such as gender, parental education, and religious affiliation. However, the pattern of differences on individual items was informative.

No group differences were found on items such as “Most important relationships are found within the home” and “Marriage is for life.” In contrast, individuals from divorced homes were more likely to endorse items such as “It is all right to have children without being married,” “It is okay to live together without being married,” and “There are few happy marriages these days.” Amato (1988) interpreted these results as an indication that individuals from divorced families are not necessarily pro-divorce or anti-marriage, but that they may be less idealistic about long-term commitment. He states, “these trends suggest that divorced respondents hold a relatively complex view about marriage: they value marriage but at the same time are aware of its limitations and tolerant of its alternatives” (Amato, 1988, p. 460).

Relationship quality and stability. A final way in which parental divorce may affect individuals long-term is in the satisfaction and stability that they find in their own intimate relationships as adults. Why might parental divorce lead to decreased satisfaction and stability in relationships? One possible explanation is that children of divorce enter into marriage and parenthood earlier than children from intact families (Tasker & Richards, 1994). Early marriage and parenthood may result in decreased marital quality because such individuals at the time of marriage have not had the

opportunity to fully formulate relationship standards or to explore a wide variety of choices for marital partners. Entering into parenthood may further decrease relationship quality because of the reduction in time available to work on relationship issues and to explore other life goals. As a result of decreased marital quality, divorce is more likely.

Another possible explanation for the link between parental divorce and subsequent decreased quality and stability in relationships is that people from divorced families are less likely to have had effective conflict resolutions skills modeled to them in childhood by parents (Amato, 1996). In turn, such individuals may lack the problem-solving skills necessary for fulfilling and intimate relationships, and may be more likely to divorce. In support of this hypothesis, Caspi and Elder (1988) found that parental conflict (which is related to parental divorce) was associated with behavior problems in children, and that later, as adults, these children were likely to exhibit problematic interpersonal behaviors which negatively affected their marital quality.

Finally, with regard to effects on relationship stability only, it may be that parental divorce leads to a greater acceptance of divorce in later relationships. As mentioned above, there is consistent evidence that children of divorce hold more favorable attitudes towards divorce (Amato, 1996; Kinnaird & Gerrard, 1986). As such, there may be a higher divorce rate among this group not because they are more often unhappy in their relationships, but because they are more likely to view divorce as an acceptable alternative to living in a problematic relationship.

Amato and Booth (1991) looked at marital quality in relation to parental marital status in a longitudinal study of 2,000 married adults, interviewed first in 1980 and again in 1983, 1988, and 1992. Participants answered questions regarding their own marital quality as well as the marital status and marital quality of their parents. Ratings of their

own marital quality fell into three categories: 1) reported level of happiness in their current marriage, 2) reported level of conflict, and 3) reported thoughts of divorce or separation. Participants were divided into three groups for statistical comparisons, based on parental marital status and quality: 1) those from intact, happy families, 2) those from intact, unhappy families, and 3) those from divorced families. Findings indicated that participants from happy, intact families were significantly more likely to rate their own marriages as happy compared to individuals from intact unhappy and divorced families. Nevertheless, group differences between intact unhappy and divorced families were also significant, suggesting that parental marital status may be more important than marital quality per se.

In other studies, it has been found that parental divorce is also associated with a greater likelihood of experiencing divorce in one's own marriage, a phenomenon sometimes termed "the intergenerational transmission of divorce" (e.g. Amato, 1996). Specifically, results of one study indicated that when neither the husband's nor the wife's parents divorced, the percentage of couples who divorced was relatively low (10%). When one spouse's parents were divorced, the divorce rate was somewhat higher. However, when both the husband and the wife experienced a parental divorce, the divorce rate was the highest (almost 30%). Other studies have also documented this phenomenon (Bumpass, Martin, & Sweet, 1991; Glenn & Kramer, 1987; and Pope & Mueller, 1976).

Theoretical Perspectives on the Long-Term Effects of Divorce

As is evident from the research reviewed thus far, the effects of parental divorce on children are complex and often unclear, in part due to the methodological limitations of investigations. However, most investigators agree that a major influence on the

diversity in findings is the fact that there are enormous individual differences among children in their adjustment to divorce and continued functioning long-term. Although some children suffer a decline in various areas of well-being, many children are able to adjust to the transition and continue functioning at pre-divorce levels. Furthermore, some studies report the possibility of increased maturity, empathy, and gender role flexibility as a result of parental divorce. Currently there exists a growing literature aimed at specifying the mechanisms through which parental divorce has its effect, and these mechanisms may provide important clues to understanding differences in functioning among children of divorce, both short- and long-term.

According to Hetherington, Bridges, and Insabella (1998), there are five main theoretical perspectives which have been proposed to explain the links between divorce and children's adjustment. These include 1) individual risk and vulnerability, 2) family composition, 3) stress and socioeconomic disadvantage, 4) parental distress, and 5) family process. A brief summary of each perspective will be provided, followed by a discussion of evidence pertaining to several specific proposed mediating variables which are suggested by these perspectives.

The individual risk and vulnerability perspective suggests that some characteristics of children and parents present before the divorce make both divorce and subsequent problems more likely to occur. For example, adults with psychological problems such as depression or antisocial behavior may more often select partners with psychological difficulties, making relationship problems and divorce more likely (Merikangas, Prusoff, & Weissman, 1988). Children of such partnerships may be more likely to have emotional and behavioral difficulties, and these difficulties may in turn place them at greater risk for being negatively affected by parental divorce.

According to a family composition perspective, it is assumed that two biological parents provide the optimal rearing environment for children, and that deviations from this mold are inherently problematic for children. As mentioned above, some Freudian and social learning theories are consistent with this perspective, in that they propose that the presence of both the same- and opposite-sexed parent is necessary for the development and reinforcement of appropriate sex-typed behavior (Freud, 1961; Bandura & Walters, 1963). Hetherington, Bridges, and Insabella (1998) note that much early theorizing about divorce and family structure focused on father absence.

The stress and socio-economic disadvantage perspective suggests that divorce sets in motion a series of detrimental social and financial changes and stresses, which in turn interfere with the well-being of parents and children. For example, research indicates that mothers and children, on average, experience a significant decline in income and living conditions, and this experience is associated with many difficulties in raising children (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994).

The parental distress perspective is based in the assumption that divorce and its associated economic decline and adaptive challenges put parents at greater risk for physical and psychological problems such as depression, anxiety, irritability, and health problems. In turn, these types of problems in functioning may compromise the quality of parenting, putting children at greater risk for adjustment problems.

Finally, the family process perspective suggests that intact and divorced families differ with respect to important relational variables such as conflict, including interparental and parent-child conflict, expression of positive and negative affect, and problem-solving skills. As such, divorce per se may not be the decisive factor in children's well-being. Instead, children's response to divorce may vary depending on the

level of conflict present between parents before and after the divorce, on the quality of parent-child interactions before the divorce, and on the extent to which parents are able to form and/or maintain positive and supportive relationships with their children post-divorce.

In keeping with theories which attempt to explain the diversity in children's responses to divorce, there is growing empirical evidence which sheds light on the relative importance of specific variables which fall under each of these theoretical categories. Following is a discussion of some of the available research findings on possible mediating variables.

Pre-divorce functioning of parents. It may be that some problems in children which are attributed to divorce and the associated life changes are in part related to characteristics of parents present before the parental relationship is disrupted. Some studies find, for example, that parents who later divorce are more likely to be depressed, antisocial, alcoholic, or to have economic problems (Amato, 1993). In addition, in their marital relationships, they are more likely to exhibit poor problem-solving and conflict resolution skills (e.g. Bradbury & Fincham, 1990). Parents who later divorce have also been found to be more erratic, irritable, and non-authoritative in their relationships with their children as much as 8 to 12 years prior to the divorce (Amato & Booth, 1996). These types of factors would be expected to contribute to children's adjustment problems in all types of families.

Pre-divorce functioning of the child. There is some evidence that children whose parents later divorce exhibit significantly more problems in functioning before the break-up. For example, it is often the case that when antecedent levels of behavior problems are controlled, differences in behaviors between children from divorced and intact

families are greatly reduced (Cherlin et al., 1991; Guidubaldi, Perry, & Nastasi, 1987).

As such, it may be that poor parenting and marital dysfunction have had an effect on children before the divorce ever occurs. Alternatively, it could be that divorce is in part a result of having to deal with a difficult child.

Personality and temperament of the child may also play an important role in the quality of post-divorce adjustment. For example, children who have good social skills, are intelligent, and are responsible may be more likely to cope positively with the rupture of the parental relationship. In contrast, the process of divorce may exacerbate already existing problems for children with behavioral or emotional difficulties. Hetherington (1989) found, for example, that children with social skills, attractive personalities, and a sense of humor were more likely to evoke positive responses and support in order to help them with stressful life experiences such as divorce.

Age and gender of the child. Past findings regarding the age and gender of the child in relation to the effects of divorce have been inconsistent. Some research has suggested that younger children are especially vulnerable to the negative effects of divorce (Zill, Morrison, & Coiro, 1993). However, a more recent metaanalysis of 92 studies suggested that primary and high school-age children experience greater declines in functioning than preschoolers (Amato & Keith, 1991a).

With respect to gender, early research suggested that boys fared worse following divorce than girls, especially in the area of externalizing problems (Rickard, Forehand, & Atkeson, 1982; Emery 1982). In contrast, a review by Zaslow (1988) found that in 40% of the studies, no gender differences emerged, or girls fared worse than boys. Amato and Keith (1991a), in their meta-analysis found few differences in functioning between boys and girls from divorced families.

A few studies have looked at how gender and age at the time of parental divorce may affect long-term relational functioning. For instance, Hetherington (1972) found that girls under age 5 at the time of the divorce were more likely than other age groups to be sexually active in adolescence. Evans and Bloom (1996) found significant gender differences in the effects of parental divorce on several variables in adulthood. For men, there were significant differences based on parental marital status on sex-role orientation, locus of control, and ego-identity. For women, however, significant differences emerged in the areas of self-esteem and attachment style, with those from divorced families more often reporting low self-esteem and an insecure attachment style.

Changes in socioeconomic status. Divorce typically leads to a decline in the standard of living of children in terms of financial resources (e.g. McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). Recently, it has been speculated that custodial mothers and their children no longer experience significant economic decline because of increased enforcement of child support payments and changes in the labor force for women. However, a recent review concluded that custodial mothers still experience a loss of one quarter to one half of their pre-divorce income, in comparison to only 10 percent by custodial fathers after divorce (Bianchi, Subaiya, & Kahn, as cited in Hetherington, Bridges, & Insabella, 1998). Decline in socioeconomic status post-divorce is subsequently related to offspring well-being long-term, such as in the areas of educational and occupational attainment (Amato & Keith, 1991a). Various life events may mediate this association, such as relocation to a bad neighborhood or school, or decline in nutrition or health standards.

One important way in which the decline in standard of living brought on by divorce may affect later relationships is through changes in parent-child relations.

Reduced income following the departure of one parent is likely to result in an increase in the time and energy that the custodial parent expends outside the home, and a decrease in time and attention directed toward children. This decrease in time and attention may depend in part on other variables, such as the dependability of financial support from the non-custodial parent, and the total number of children in the family.

Inter-parental conflict. Although some form of parental conflict obviously precedes divorce, it is uncertain whether the dissolution of a marriage leads to a significant decline in the amount of fighting between parents. In general, studies suggest that, at least in the period immediately following divorce, a high level of parental conflict is still present. For example, Forehand et al. (1990) found no difference in the level of fighting in front of children at six months post-divorce. Maccoby and Mnookin (1992) reported that in a majority of cases studied, conflict significant enough to produce a child custody dispute was present.

Parental conflict is one of the most consistent correlates of child behavior and emotional adjustment, both short and long-term (Emery 1982; Forsstrom-Cohen & Rosenbaum, 1985; Grych & Fincham, 1990; Henning et al., 1996). It therefore seems likely that the level of discord between parents would affect children's adjustment to divorce. For example, one would expect improved functioning post-divorce when a significant decline in conflict is experienced. However, for children whose parents were not overtly hostile, experiencing this type of disruption would likely be more confusing and troubling, and might lead to more difficulties long-term.

Amato and Keith (1991a) found evidence supporting this position in that children from high conflict intact families scored significantly lower than children from divorced families on measures of overall psychological adjustment (mean effect size $-.31$) and of

self-esteem (mean effect size $-.35$). A study of well-being in early adulthood revealed a similar pattern of findings (Amato, Loomis, & Booth, 1995). Specifically, a significant interaction between parental conflict and parental marital status was found in relation to several adult well-being variables, including psychological distress, overall happiness, marital happiness, and social resources. In families where parental conflict was high, offspring reported higher levels of well-being if parents divorced than if they stayed together. In contrast, in cases where parental conflict was low, children reported higher levels of well-being if parents stayed together.

Several studies suggest that level of ongoing parental conflict is important to consider when looking at long-term relational effects of parental divorce. With respect to interpersonal relationships in general, Franklin, Janoff-Bulman, and Roberts (1990) found that of students whose parents divorced, those who experienced continued high conflict after the divorce reported less generalized trust in others and perceived others as less benevolent than students who experienced a decline in conflict post-divorce.

Regarding intimate relationships in adulthood, Booth, Brinkerhoff, and White (1984) found that among college students whose parents divorced, high conflict during the divorce was associated with a higher frequency of dating and a larger number of partners. High post-divorce conflict was associated with reporting less satisfaction overall in dating relationships. Similarly, high post-divorce conflict has also been positively associated with number of sexual partners in young adulthood (Gabardi & Rosen, 1992).

Sprecher, Cate, and Levin (1998) looked at attachment style and romanticism (e.g. “There will be only one real love for me,” and “If I love someone, I know I can make the relationship work, despite all obstacles”) among college students from divorced

and intact families. Participants also rated the happiness of their parents' marriages. Students from intact happy families were significantly more likely than those from divorced and intact unhappy families to report secure attachment styles. A similar pattern of differences was found for romanticism, with those from intact happy families reporting a higher level of idealization of romantic relationships than those from divorced and unhappy intact families.

To summarize, it appears that the effects of divorce depend in part on the level of parental conflict present before, during, and after the divorce. When a divorce ends a period of exposure to frequent and intense conflict, children's adjustment is likely to improve (e.g. Amato, Loomis, & Booth, 1995). However, continuing conflict during and after a divorce, which may be present in a high number of cases, seems to be especially damaging. In the area of relationships, for example, continuing exposure to parental conflict may result in early sexual involvement, feelings of insecurity and satisfaction, and less idealistic beliefs.

Parent-child relations. Studies suggest that parental divorce is associated with a decline in the quantity and quality of contact between parents and their children after the marital disruption (e.g. Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1982; Seltzer, 1991). Such changes have been documented for both custodial and noncustodial parents. Research consistently shows a sharp decline in the amount of father-child contact after a divorce (Furstenberg & Nord, 1985; Seltzer, 1991). Seltzer (1991) found that approximately one-third of children saw their fathers a few times a year or less, while only a quarter saw them weekly or more. Moreover, this study revealed that contact between children and their fathers declined substantially as time passed after the divorce.

Longitudinal research of mother-child interactions (in mother custody families) suggests that there is also a deterioration of relations between children and their custodial parent after divorce. Hetherington, Cox, & Cox (1982) collected detailed information on 72 preschool children in mother-custody, divorced families, as well as on 72 children from intact families matched on child and parent characteristics. Dependent variables included parent interviews, parent-child laboratory interactions, checklists of child behavior, school observations, and parent diaries of daily interactions. Data was collected at baseline and two-year follow-up.

Results indicated that divorced mothers were less affectionate, communicated less well, were more inconsistent, and were less effective at controlling their children when compared with mothers who remained married. Parenting difficulties seemed to increase during the year following the divorce, however, at two-year follow-up, divorced mothers were more nurturing, consistent, and more in control of their children than they had been previously. Still, significant differences remained in several areas of parenting between married and divorced mothers.

These differences in parent-child relations are also reflected in children's own reports as young adults. As part of a longitudinal study of the long-term effects of parental divorce, 471 young adults (age 19 to 40) were interviewed in 1992 regarding affection for their parents, including questions about trust, respect, fairness, understanding, and feelings of closeness (Amato, Rezac, & Booth, 1995; Booth & Amato, 1994). Participants were placed into one of three groups: 1) those from happy intact families, 2) those from unhappy intact families, and 3) those from divorced families. Ratings of parental marital happiness were drawn from parent's responses to

questions first asked in 1980 regarding overall happiness, conflict, and problems in their relationship.

Adult offspring of the original study sample reported the most affection for and feelings of closeness with parents when their parents' marriages were happy and intact. Offspring from the unhappy intact group reported less affection and closeness, and those from divorced families reported the least affection for parents. Although these findings were significant for both parents, differences were greater for fathers than for mothers. This study suggested that parental divorce leads to deterioration in parent-child relationships, over and above that associated with marital discord.

It seems likely that one way in which parental divorce has long-term effects is through its effect on the quality of ongoing family process variables. For instance, Holdnack (1992) studied self-concept in 147 college students in relation to parental marital status and "family environment" (reflecting cohesion, expressiveness, conflict, and achievement orientation among family members). Data indicated that students who experienced parental divorce saw their families as less cohesive, close, and organized than students from intact families. Furthermore, there was a positive correlation between family closeness and adult self-esteem, suggesting that parental divorce affects self-concept indirectly through the quality of ongoing family relationships.

Other studies have found family process variables, particularly parent-child relations, to be important in predicting outcomes in adult relational functioning. For example, security of adult attachment has been found to be significantly associated with feeling accepted and understood by parents in childhood (Hayashi & Strickland, 1998), and with lower levels of parent-child conflict (Summers, Forehand, Armistead, & Tannenbaum, 1998). Sinclair and Nelson (1998) found among college students that

reports of intimacy experienced in dating relationships, as well as holding more realistic beliefs about relationships, were related to ratings of closeness with fathers in childhood.

Among adult children of divorce in particular, research suggests that parent-child relations is an important factor in determining later relational functioning. Kinnaird and Gerrard (1986) found among college women from divorced families that the amount of contact with non-custodial fathers predicted reported length of dating relationships. Booth, Brinkerhoff, & White (1984) found that for both men and women from divorced families, deterioration of parent-child relations (decreased feelings of closeness, increased feelings of rejection) after their parents' divorce predicted decreased satisfaction in current dating relationships, in addition to an increased likelihood of being in a cohabiting relationship.

Parent-child relations as a mediator of divorce-related variables. Many researchers now believe that the effects of divorce-related variables, such as the individual attributes of children and parents, financial and economic strain, and ongoing interparental conflict, are mediated by the more proximal mechanism of parent-child relations (Hetherington, Bridges, & Insabella, 1998; Kline, Johnston, & Tschann, 1991; Simons & Associates, 1996). For example, ongoing parental conflict and a decline in income after a divorce are likely to increase the level of stress that the custodial parent experiences, which may lead to a decrease in the ability to give time, attention, and support to children. Individual characteristics of the child, such as gender, may also affect parent-child dynamics after a divorce. For example, past research indicates that boys are more likely than girls to engage in mutually coercive relationships with their mothers (Block et al., 1988).

Two recent studies using path analyses have helped bring to light the patterns of inter-relationships among the many divorce-related variables, and have suggested that many of the risk factors are mediated through disruptions in parent-child relationships. Kline, Johnston, and Tschann (1991) looked at the interrelationships among child age and gender, socioeconomic status, parental conflict, and mother-child relations in affecting children's (age 2-18) post-divorce behavioral and emotional well-being. A model emphasizing the central importance of the mother-child relationship in mediating the effects of socioeconomic status, child characteristics, and parental conflict was tested. Results largely confirmed their predictions. Specifically, it was found that for the outcome variable of children's emotional adjustment, a warm and consistent mother-child relationship mediated the effects of decline in socioeconomic status, parental conflict, and gender. For children's behavior problems, the mother-child relationship was found to mediate the effects of parental conflict.

A similar model was proposed and tested by Simons and associates (1996), who looked at divorce, a variety of related variables, and indicators of adjustment in adolescent children. These authors suggested a "ripple effect," whereby divorce lowers parental well-being and the quality of parenting, leading to negative developmental outcomes for children. Results of a series of data analyses by this research group supported their predictions. For example, it was found that compared to married women, divorced women in their study reported more economic hardship and negative life events (Simons, Johnson, & Lorenz, 1996), and also scored higher on a depression index (Lorenz, Simons, & Chao, 1996). Also, more than twice the number of divorced women reported relational difficulties with children, including inadequate discipline and control (Simons & Johnson, 1996). Furthermore, the quality of mothers' parenting was found to

mediate the association between parental divorce on the one hand, and adolescent outcomes such as sibling conflict (Conger & Conger, 1996), associations with deviant peers and involvement in delinquent activity (Simons & Chao, 1996), and early sexual behavior (Whitbeck, Simons, & Goldberg, 1996) on the other.

Conclusions based on path analyses of this data were that “in large measure, the relationship between parental divorce and adolescent problems is explained by the following causal sequence: marital disruption increases the probability that a woman will experience economic pressures, negative life events, and psychological depression. This strain and emotional distress tend to reduce the quality of her parenting. Reductions in quality of parenting, in turn, increase a child’s risk for emotional and behavioral problems” (Simons, 1996, p.210).

The Current Proposed Model

As outlined above, past research suggests that parent-child relationships are important mediators of the effects of many divorce related variables (child characteristics, parental conflict, economic strain) on children’s behavioral and emotional functioning. However, to date, path analytic models have been limited to studying the effects on young children and adolescents, and have focused mainly on behavioral and emotional outcomes such as conduct problems, delinquency, and emotional distress. The current study proposed to extend such findings by applying a similar model to the investigation of the effects of divorce and related variables on aspects of relational functioning in young adulthood. The outcome variables under investigation in the current study were two dimensions of adult attachment style (relationship avoidance and relationship anxiety) and marital optimism.

How might adult attachment style and marital optimism be affected by parental divorce? As described above, previously published work in this area has suggested that the effects of parental divorce can be understood within a framework used to look at other stressful life events (Franklin, Janoff-Bulman, & Roberts, 1990). According to this perspective, one common result of a stressful or traumatic event is that one's basic assumptions about the world, the self, and others are brought into question and altered. For example, one might start out with the basic belief that the world is safe, others can be trusted, and relationships are secure. However, these ideas may change after parental divorce, such that relationships seem more frightening and uncertain. There is evidence that such changes in beliefs may persist for years after the traumatic event occurs (Janoff-Bulman & Frieze, 1983; Janoff-Bulman, 1985; 1989). In young adulthood, it seems likely that security of adult attachments, as well as optimism about future marriage, would be particularly affected.

Marital optimism and adult attachment style are important variables to consider in that each may affect a person's chances of finding and maintaining a happy relationship. With regard to marital optimism, it seems likely that one's expectations regarding the likelihood of finding satisfaction in a romantic relationship may influence the way one behaves with a potential partner, and in turn affect relationship quality and stability. For example, pessimism about romantic relationships may make it more likely that one might "settle" for a less than ideal relationship, because of the idea that something better does not exist. On the other hand, one might also be quick to leave an otherwise good relationship when problems arise because of a lack of optimism that conflicts can be worked out. Past research has looked at the ways in which feelings of optimism affect relationship outcomes. For example, in married couples, partners' expectations about

being able to improve the relationship are related to later ratings of satisfaction in that relationship (Pretzer, Epstein, & Fleming, 1991).

Security of adult attachment style is also likely to affect one's capacity for finding satisfaction in a romantic relationship. For example, an individual with an avoidant attachment style is likely to be uncomfortable with emotional closeness and unable to experience a high level of intimacy in relationships. An anxiously-attached individual may find that intense fears of abandonment interfere with his or her full enjoyment of relationships. Research data supports these ideas. Collins and Read (1990) found that anxiously-attached women reported lower general satisfaction with their relationship, and indicated feeling less close to their partners. Mikulincer and Erev (1991) found that individuals with an avoidant attachment style reported feeling less intimacy in their relationships than securely attached individuals.

As reviewed above, several studies to date have looked at the effects of parental divorce on marital optimism, with mixed results. Some have found that young adults from divorced families are less optimistic about romantic relationships than those from intact families (Franklin, Janoff-Bulman, & Roberts, 1990; Kinnaird & Gerrard, 1986; Tasker, 1992), while others have found no differences in marital optimism between these two groups (Coleman & Ganong, 1984; Greenberg & Nay, 1982). Similarly, research investigating the influence of parental divorce on attachment style is contradictory. Hazan and Shaver (1987) found no differences in security of attachment style based on parental marital status. Three more recent studies, however, reported that individuals from divorced families were more likely to be classified as insecurely attached than those from intact families (Evans & Bloom, 1996; Sprecher, Cate, & Levin, 1998; Summers, Forehand, Armistead, & Tannenbaum, 1998).

One reason for these conflicting findings might be that the association between parental divorce and adult relationship functioning is affected by other, divorce-related variables. Variables likely to affect a child's general long-term functioning after a divorce, reviewed earlier, include the child's predivorce functioning, the parents' predivorce functioning, the age and gender of the child, changes in socio-economic status, inter-parental conflict, and the quality of parent-child relationships. Of these variables, those that seem most salient to adult relational functioning in particular are inter-parental conflict and parent-child relationships. In past research, relationship functioning has been found to be related to both parental conflict (Booth, Brinkerhoff, & White, 1984; Franklin, Janoff-Bulman, & Roberts, 1990; Gabardi & Rosen, 1992; Sprecher, Cate, & Levin, 1998) and to parent-child relations (Booth, Brinkerhoff, & White, 1984; Kinnaird & Gerrard, 1986) among young adults from divorced families.

Drawing on past research which highlights the importance of the parent-child relationship for mediating the effects of divorce in other areas, as well as on findings suggesting the importance of parent-child relations in general for adult relational functioning, the following model (see Figure 1, p. 37) was proposed. Specifically, it was hypothesized that in young adult children of divorce, parent-child relations mediates the relationship between parental conflict on the one hand, and adult attachment style and marital optimism on the other. Based on these predictions, one would expect, for example, that in divorced families where there is a high level of inter-parental conflict, parent-child relations would also suffer, because parents have less time and attention to give to children. As adults, children from such families may be less securely attached and feel less optimistic in relationships. Because previous research has suggested that the effects of parental divorce on adult relationships are different for men and women (Evans

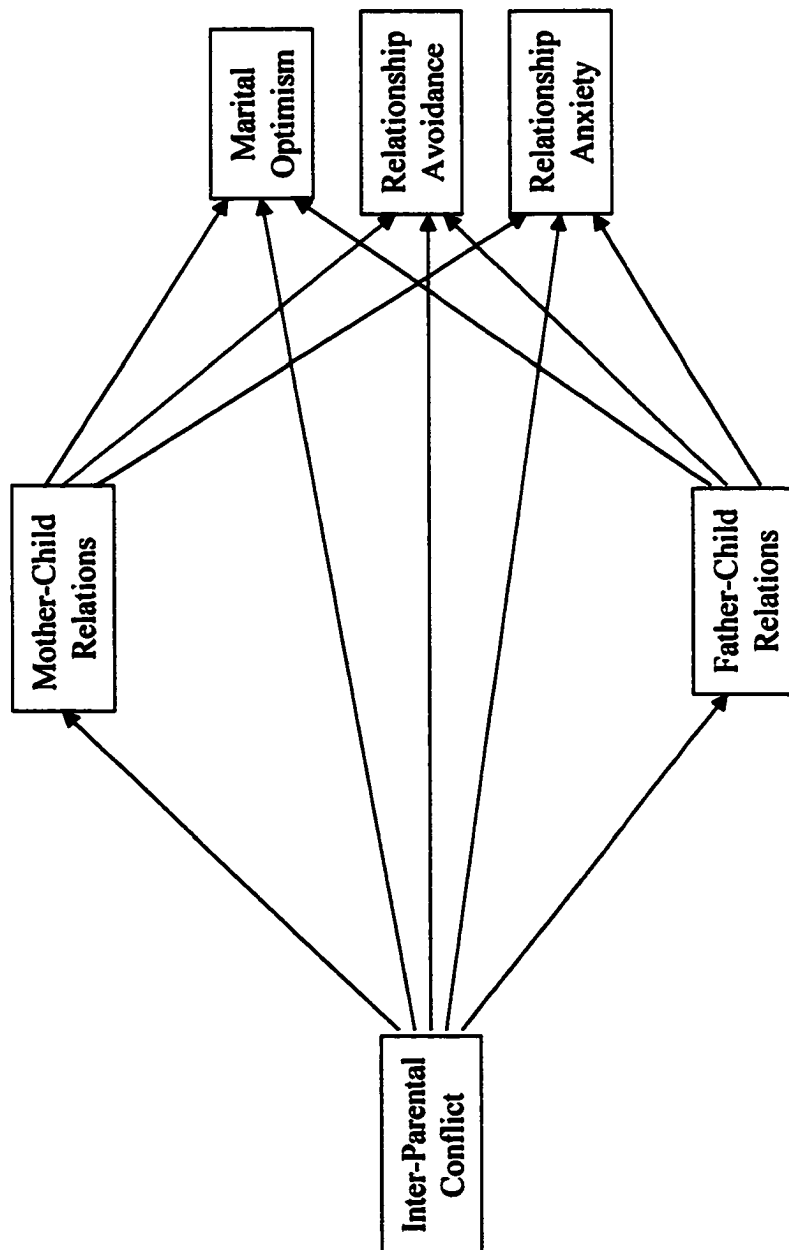


Figure 1. Hypothesized Path Model

& Bloom, 1996), gender differences in outcome variables were also studied.

It is also possible that parent-child relations functions as a moderator, rather than a mediator, with respect to inter-parental conflict (predictor variable) and marital optimism and adult attachment style (outcome variables). In contrast to a mediator, or a variable which accounts for the relationship between the predictor and criterion variables, a moderator variable “affects the direction and/or strength of the relation between and independent or predictor variable and a dependent or criterion variable” (Baron & Kenny, 1986, p. 1174). In the current study, this would mean that when parent-child relations are poor, inter-parental conflict would adversely affect marital optimism and adult attachment style. In contrast, when parent-child relations are good, this adverse effect might be reduced. It was decided that if the mediational model in Figure 1 did not provide a good fit for the data collected, a moderational hypothesis would then be tested.

Proposed Research Goals and Hypotheses

The proposed research was intended to investigate the inter-relationships among inter-parental conflict, parent-child relations, and the long-term relational functioning of young adult children of divorce. Such variables were studied within a path-analytic framework in order to establish the direction of the effects of the variables. The model shown in Figure 1 was expected to provide the best fit of the data. The model, based on past research, reflects the following proposed hypotheses regarding the central importance of parent-child relations in mediating the effects of divorce and related variables on later functioning in adult couples relationships.

First, it was hypothesized that inter-parental conflict would be significantly associated with reports of marital optimism and with scores on the two dimensions of adult attachment style, relationship avoidance and relationship anxiety. It was expected,

based on prior findings, that higher levels of inter-parental conflict would be associated with lower levels of marital optimism, higher levels of relationship avoidance, and higher levels of relationship anxiety. Second, it was hypothesized that parent-child relations would be significantly associated with both inter-parental conflict and with all three outcome variables (marital optimism, relationship avoidance, and relationship anxiety). In particular, it was expected that higher levels of inter-parental conflict would be associated with a higher level of negativity in the parent-child relationship. In turn, a higher level of negativity in parent-child relations was expected to be associated with lower levels of marital optimism and higher levels of relationship avoidance and relationship anxiety. Finally, it was hypothesized that parent-child relations would mediate the relationship between inter-parental conflict and the three indicators of adult relational functioning. If this mediational hypothesis were correct, we would expect to find the first two hypotheses outlined above to be supported. In addition, we would expect that when the proposed mediator, parent-child relations, was included, the relationships between inter-parental conflict and the three outcome variables would be substantially reduced. This last hypothesis, namely that parent-child relations is a mediator between inter-parental conflict and indicators of adult relational functioning, was tested using path analysis.

Method

Participants

Participants were 616 university students enrolled in undergraduate psychology courses. A total of 419 participants were from the University of Montana, and the remaining 197 were from the University of California at Davis. Of this original 616 participants, 594 were included in the final data analyses. Responses from 22

participants were not used for the following reasons: ten participants failed to respond to the question corresponding to the main study variable, parental divorce; two participants reported that their parents had never been married; two participants reported that one of their parents had died during their childhood; one participant was below the cut-off age of 18; and 7 participants were missing large portions of one or more measures. All participants received credit towards their course grade as compensation for their participation.

Of the 594 participants included in the data analyses, 181 (30.5%) were from divorced families, and 413 (69.5%) were from intact families (see Table 1, p. 41), for more complete demographic information). A total of 184 men (31%) and 410 women (69%) participated in the study. Mean age of participants was 20.2 years. With regard to education, most participants reported that they had some college (50.2%) or a high school diploma, GED, or less (38.2%). Most participants were Caucasian (71.5%), single (85.2%), and had no children (93.8%). A total of 169 participants (28.5% of the entire sample) reported a Non-Caucasian ethnicity. Of these 169 individuals, 70 were Asian-American, 23 were Hispanic, 10 were African-American, 10 were Native-American, and 56 marked "Other."

Chi-square analyses were performed to determine whether there were significant differences between the divorced- and intact-family groups with regard to gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, or marital status. There was no significant difference between groups on the proportion of male to female participants ($\chi^2 = .0423$, $df=1$, $p=.8370$). In both groups, approximately 30% of participants were male and approximately 70% of participants were female.

Table 1.

Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants by Parental Marital Status

	Divorced (n=181)	Intact (n=413)
Age		
Mean	20.10 (SD = 3.37)	20.25 (SD = 3.19)
Range	17-43	18-46
Gender		
Male	55 (30.4%)	129 (31.2%)
Female	126 (69.6%)	284 (68.8%)
Ethnicity		
African American	4 (2.2%)	6 (1.5%)
Caucasian	151 (83.4%)	273 (66.3%)
Hispanic	5 (2.8%)	18 (4.4%)
Native American	6 (3.3%)	4 (1.0%)
Asian American	5 (2.8%)	65 (15.8%)
Other	10 (5.5%)	46 (11.2%)
Did not respond	0	1
Education		
High school or less	81 (45.0%)	145 (35.2%)
Some College	84 (46.7%)	213 (51.7%)
2-year College	11 (6.1%)	41 (10.0%)
Bachelor's Degree	4 (2.2%)	13 (3.2%)
Advanced Degree	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Did not respond	1	1
Individual Income		
\$0 to 10,000 per year	158 (87.3%)	361 (89.4%)
\$10 to 20,000 per year	19 (10.5%)	36 (8.9%)
\$20 to 30,000 per year	1 (0.6%)	6 (1.5%)
\$30 to 40,000 per year	3 (1.7%)	1 (0.3%)
Did not respond	0	9
Household Income		
\$0 to 10,000 per year	63 (36.2%)	105 (26.5%)
\$10 to 20,000 per year	23 (13.2%)	41 (10.3%)
\$20 to 30,000 per year	17 (9.8%)	27 (6.8%)
\$30 to 40,000 per year	4 (2.3%)	21 (5.3%)
\$40 to 50,000 per year	15 (8.6%)	29 (7.3%)
\$50 to 60,000 per year	16 (9.2%)	30 (7.6%)
\$60 to 70,000 per year	14 (8.1%)	36 (9.1%)
\$70 to 80,000 per year	4 (2.3%)	29 (7.3%)
Over \$80,000 per year	18 (10.3%)	79 (19.9%)
Did not respond	7	16

Table 1 (continued).

	Divorced (n=181)	Intact (n=413)
Marital Status		
Single	145 (80.1%)	361 (87.4%)
Married	4 (2.2%)	16 (3.9%)
Living Together	30 (16.6%)	28 (6.8%)
Separated	0 (0.0%)	3 (0.7%)
Divorced	2 (1.1%)	5 (1.2%)
Number of Children		
0	164 (90.6%)	393 (95.2%)
1	9 (5.0%)	10 (2.4%)
2	5 (2.8%)	7 (1.7%)
3	2 (1.1%)	2 (0.5%)
4	1 (0.6%)	0 (0.0%)
5	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.2%)

In order to investigate ethnic differences between study groups, it was necessary to combine categories so that there were adequate numbers of participants in each cell. Participants comprising “Caucasian” and “Asian-American” designations were numerous enough to be maintained as separate groups. All other designations (African-American, Hispanic, Native American, and Other) were combined into one group. The chi-square test revealed that there were, in fact, significant differences between groups with regard to ethnicity ($\chi^2=24.5210$, $df=2$, $p<.0001$). Of the intact-family group participants, 66.3% were Caucasian, 15.8% were Asian-American, and 18.1% were of another ethnic background. Of the divorced-family group, 83.4% were Caucasian, only 2.8% were Asian-American, while 13.8% were from another ethnic background. As such, Caucasian participants were over-represented in the divorced-family group, while Asian-American individuals were over-represented in the intact-family group.

Socio-economic status was measured by two questions on the demographic form, one pertaining to personal income (“What is your individual yearly income after taxes?”) and one pertaining to household or family income (“What is your yearly household income after taxes?”) Group differences on individual yearly income were not significant ($\chi^2=4.9374$, $df=3$, $p=.1764$). However, there was a significant difference between the divorced- and intact-family study groups on household income ($\chi^2=21.2393$, $df=8$, $p<.01$), with those from divorced-families more likely to place themselves in the lower household income categories. For example, 36.2% of those from divorced families placed themselves in the lowest household income category, \$0-10,000 per year, versus 26.5% of those from intact families. In contrast, 10.3% of those from divorced families placed themselves in the highest household income bracket, \$80,000 per year or more, versus 19.9% of those from intact families. This is consistent with research suggesting

that one detrimental effect of divorce is reduced socio-economic status (e.g. McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994).

In order to investigate between-group differences on marital status, the “separated” and “divorced” categories were combined. Chi-square for group differences on marital status was significant ($\chi^2=14.7049$, $df=3$, $p<.01$). In both the divorced- and intact-family study groups, the majority of participants were single (80.1% and 87.4 %, respectively). In both divorced- and intact-family groups, a very small number of participants reported that they were married (2.2% and 3.9%, respectively) or separated/divorced (1.1% and 1.9%, respectively). However, 16.6% of those from divorced families placed themselves in the “living together” category, versus 6.8% from intact families.

Measures

Inter-parental Conflict. Level of inter-parental conflict was assessed using the Children’s Perception of Interparental Conflict Scale (CPIC; Grych, Seid, & Fincham, 1992). The CPIC is a 49-item self-report scale designed to measure various aspects of interparental conflict from the child’s perspective (see Appendix B, p. 110). Respondents are asked to mark as “true,” “sort of true,” or “false” statements concerning parental conflict. Items fall into nine subscales, each of which pertains to a different aspect of conflict or its effect on the child. Specifically, subscales measure the following properties of parental conflict: frequency, intensity, degree of resolution, degree to which the content of arguing concerns the child, perceived threat to the child, degree of coping efficacy, degree of self-blame, degree of triangulation, and the perceived stability of the parent’s marriage.

In this study, items on the Frequency, Intensity, and Resolution subscales were used to compute the scores entered into the data analyses. These three subscales were found to load highly on the same factor (termed the “Conflict Properties” factor) in the original factor analysis performed by the authors. In addition, items on these three subscales seemed to best reflect the variable of interest in the present study. High scores on this measure represent frequent, intense, and poorly resolved inter-parental conflict witnessed by the participant. Items were reworded in the past tense, so that respondents could report on the degree of parental conflict they witnessed growing up.

Psychometric properties of this instrument have been found to be adequate (Grych, Seid, & Fincham, 1992). Two separate samples were used for the validation study. The first sample was made up of 222 fourth- and fifth-grade children (124 boys, 98 girls, mean age 129 months), and the second sample contained 114 fifth-grade children (52 boys, 62 girls, mean age 131 months). Together, the two samples represented all fourth- and fifth-grade students in three schools who had parental permission to participate in the study. Children in both samples were predominantly Caucasian. The average household income of for all participants was \$35,000 to \$40,000 per year. For the two samples described, alpha coefficients for the Frequency subscale were .70 and .68, respectively. For the Intensity subscale, alpha coefficients were .82 and .80. Finally, on the Resolution subscale, alpha coefficients were reported as .83 and .82, respectively. With respect to validity of this measure, the authors report moderate correlations between the CPIC’s Conflict Properties factor (made up of Frequency, Intensity, and Resolution subscales) and scores on the O’Leary Porter Scale (Porter & O’Leary, 1980) and the Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1979), both parent-report measures of marital conflict (correlations .30 and .39, respectively).

As mentioned above, items on the CPIC were worded in the past tense so that they could be used with an adult population. Given this change, and also that the measure was originally designed for use with children, the reliability of this instrument when used with an adult population is of interest. In the present study, alpha coefficients for each of the three subscales (Frequency, Intensity, and Resolution) were as follows: .85, .89, and .90, respectively.

Parent-child relations. Parent-child relations was assessed using the 20-item, child-report version of the Conflict Behavior Questionnaire (CBQ; Prinz, Foster, Kent, & O'Leary, 1979). This instrument was designed to give a general estimate of how much conflict and negative communication are experienced between parents and children. Items also reflect more general issues related to the quality of parent-child relations, such as feelings of closeness and understanding (see Appendix C, p. 112). Both parent-report and child-report forms are available. The original long form of the CBQ consists of 75 dichotomous (yes/no) items by which family members appraise the nature of the mother-child or father-child relationship (e.g. "My mother/father doesn't understand me" "When I state my opinion, he/she gets upset"). Higher scores represent a more negative perception of the parent-child relationship.

Internal consistency (alpha coefficient) reported by the authors was .88 (Prinz, Foster, Kent, & O'Leary, 1979). The 20-item short form correlates .96 with the long-form, and takes about five minutes to complete (Robin & Foster, 1989). In this study, participants completed this measure twice, once to report on the relationship with their father, and once to report on the relationship with their mother. Both scores were entered into the final analyses. Items were reworded in the past tense in order to reflect participants' feelings about relationships with parents while growing up. In the present

study, alpha coefficients for this measure were .93 (mother-child relations) and .93 (father-child relations).

Marital Optimism. Marital optimism was assessed using the Marital Attitude Scale. The Marital Attitude Scale (MAS; Braaten & Rosen, 1998) is a 23-item, self-report measure which asks respondents to rate on a four-point scale how strongly they agree with statements about marriage (see Appendix D, p. 113). Six items ask respondents to rate their feelings regarding their own present or future marriage (e.g. “I have little confidence that my marriage will be a success”), while the remaining items deal with more general concepts regarding marriage (e.g. “Most marriages are unhappy situations”). Scores can range from 23 to 92, with higher scores indicating a more positive attitude toward marriage.

In a validation study performed by the authors with 499 undergraduate students, coefficient alpha was found to be .82, indicating good internal consistency. The MAS was found to correlate highly with the original marital attitude measure on which it was based ($r=.77$). In addition, moderate negative correlations were found in relation to a measure of dysfunctional relationship beliefs (e.g. the belief that disagreement is always destructive, $r= -.11$; the belief that partners cannot change, $r= -.24$). In this same study, students from divorced homes reported significantly more negative ideas about marriage than students from intact homes (Braaten & Rosen, 1998). In the current study, coefficient alpha for this measure was .85.

Adult Attachment Style. Adult attachment style was assessed using the Adult Attachment Scale. The Adult Attachment Scale (AAS; Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998) is a 36-item, self-report measure which asks respondents to rate on a 7-point scale how strongly they agree with statements regarding relationships (see Appendix E, p. 114).

Currently, there exist numerous measures of adult attachment style. The AAS was developed through a large- sample study utilizing items from most of the adult attachment measures currently available. After eliminating redundant items from an original pool of 482 items, the authors computed 60 subscale scores from the remaining 323 items. These 60 subscales were factor-analyzed, producing two independent factors which the authors termed "Avoidance" and "Anxiety." Items were then chosen to create two internally consistent subscales of these dimensions, resulting in the 36-item scale described above. Items on the Avoidance subscale reflect feelings of discomfort with closeness in romantic relationships (e.g. "Just when my partner gets close to me, I find myself pulling away.") Content of Anxiety items is associated with fear of abandonment in relationships and wanting excessive closeness with a partner ("My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away.")

Two scores, one for each dimension, were tallied for each participant's responses, with higher scores indicating more avoidance or more anxiety. The authors of the scale report an alpha coefficient of .94 for the Avoidance subscale, and an alpha coefficient of .91 for the Anxiety scale. In the current study, the two subscales were also found to have a high degree of internal consistency. Alpha coefficients for the Avoidance and Anxiety subscales were .94 and .91, respectively.

Procedures

In order to recruit participants for the current study, announcements and sign-up sheets were placed at locations designated by each department for students to sign up for research opportunities. No significant risks to participants were anticipated. Individuals were informed that their participation in the study was completely voluntary, and that they could withdraw without penalty at any time. In light of the fact that they were asked

to think about potentially upsetting experiences such as parental conflict and divorce, it seemed possible that negative feelings might be brought up for some individuals. In such cases, participants had the opportunity to discuss any unsettling feelings with the project director or with one of two trained research assistants, all advanced graduate students in clinical psychology. In addition, participants were informed that they could be given a list of referrals for further counseling. No participant at either location asked for such referrals.

Participants completed questionnaires in groups of approximately 15 to 25 people. Following obtaining informed consent, measures assessing parental conflict, parent-child relations, marital optimism, and adult attachment style were distributed. Participants were administered measures by the project director or by one of the two research assistants. Total time to complete the measures for most participants was 20 to 30 minutes. After completing the questionnaires, participants were debriefed about the purpose of the study. Finally, they were thanked for their participation and given the appropriate documentation for experimental credit.

Results

Differences on All Measures by Parental Marital Status

As stated above, usable data was collected from a total of 594 participants. Of these participants, 181 (30.5%) were from divorced families-of-origin, and 413 (69.5%) were from intact families-of-origin. Means and standard deviations for all measures by parental marital status are listed in Table 2 (p. 50). Means were calculated by totaling scores on all items of each scale, and calculating the average total score across subjects.

T-tests were performed to determine whether there were any meaningful differences among participants on any of the study variables as a function of parental

Table 2.

Descriptive Statistics of All Study Variables by Parental Marital Status

	<u>Divorced (n=181)</u>	<u>Intact (n=413)</u>	
	<u>M (Std. Dev.) (α)</u>	<u>M (Std. Dev.) (α)</u>	<u>t-value</u>
CPIC	22.652 (10.495) (.937)	14.272 (10.359) (.947)	-9.04****
CBQ-A	5.535 (6.199) (.946)	3.875 (4.973) (.921)	-3.18**
CBQ-B	5.745 (5.888) (.929)	4.069 (5.049) (.924)	-3.33**
MAS	45.838 (8.638) (.838)	48.381 (8.664) (.855)	3.29**
AAS-AV	55.233 (20.767) (.934)	52.621 (19.565) (.936)	-1.47 ^{ns}
AAS-AN	73.086 (20.538) (.917)	70.803 (19.002) (.906)	-1.31 ^{ns}

CPIC = Children's Perception of Inter-parental Conflict Scale; CBQ-A = Conflict Behavior Questionnaire, mother version; CBQ-B = Conflict Behavior Questionnaire, father version; MAS = Marital Attitude Survey; AAS-AV = Adult Attachment Scale, avoidance subscale; AAS-AN = Adult Attachment Scale, anxiety subscale. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. **** $p < .0001$.

marital status. Significant differences were found between individuals from divorced families and individuals from intact families on several measures. Participants from divorced families reported experiencing a higher level of frequent, intense, and unresolved conflict between their parents growing up than those from intact families ($t = -9.04, p < .0001, df = 592$). Those from divorced families viewed their own relationships with their parents more negatively than those from intact families, and this was true for both mother-child ($t = -3.18, p = .0016, df = 286$) and father-child relationships ($t = -3.33, p = .001, df = 301$). Finally, divorced-family participants were significantly less optimistic about marriage than intact-family participants ($t = 3.29, p = .001, df = 592$). No significant differences were found between participants on either of the adult attachment dimensions based on parental marital status (Avoidance $t = -1.47, ns$; Anxiety $t = -1.31, ns$).

Gender Differences

Another set of t-tests was performed to determine whether there were significant gender differences on any of the study variables. Differences were found between men and women on inter-parental conflict, mother-child relationships, and father-child relationships. Specifically, women reported experiencing significantly more inter-parental conflict than men ($t = -2.30, p = .0215, df = 592$). In addition, women viewed their relationships with their mothers ($t = -2.92, p = .0037, df = 447$) more negatively than men. The difference between male and female participants on father-child relations was marginally significant ($t = -1.93, p = .0542, df = 592$), again with women reporting more negative views of the father-child relationship than men. Means and standard deviations of all study variables by gender are listed in Table 3 (p. 52).

Table 3.

Descriptive Statistics of All Study Variables by Gender

	Male (n=184)	Female (n=410)	
	<u>M (Std. Dev.)</u>	<u>M (Std. Dev.)</u>	<u>t-value</u>
CPIC	15.266 (10.175)	17.525 (11.413)	-2.30*
CBQ-A	3.504 (4.472)	4.774 (5.764)	-2.92**
CBQ-B	3.947 (4.932)	4.864 (5.536)	-1.93+
MAS	47.205 (8.494)	47.786 (8.835)	-0.75 ^{ns}
AAS-AV	52.705 (18.346)	53.737 (20.654)	-0.58 ^{ns}
AAS-AN	71.471 (19.182)	71.511 (19.655)	-0.02 ^{ns}

CPIC = Children's Perception of Inter-parental Conflict Scale; CBQ-A = Conflict Behavior Questionnaire, mother version; CBQ-B = Conflict Behavior Questionnaire, father version; MAS = Marital Attitude Survey; AAS-AV = Adult Attachment Scale, avoidance subscale; AAS-AN = Adult Attachment Scale, anxiety subscale. + $p = .0542$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. **** $p < .0001$.

Correlations Among Study Variables

Correlations between all possible pairs of study variables for the entire sample combined are shown on Table 4 (p. 54). All three dimensions of inter-parental conflict (frequency, intensity, and resolution) were significantly correlated with parent-child relationships, as well as with marital optimism and with both dimensions of adult attachment. Specifically, higher levels of inter-parental conflict were associated with a more negative view of both mother-child and father-child relationships, lower levels of marital optimism, and higher levels of relationship avoidance and anxiety. Both mother-child and father-child relationships were also significantly related to marital optimism and both dimensions of adult attachment. More negative views of parent-child relationships were associated with lower levels of marital optimism and higher levels of avoidance and anxiety in adult relationships.

Path Analysis: Parent-Child Relations as a Mediator

As outlined in the introduction above, the main purpose of the study was to investigate the inter-relationships among inter-parental conflict, parent-child relations, and long-term relational functioning in adult children of divorce. These variables were investigated using path analysis. It was expected that the model in Figure 1 would provide the best fit of the data collected. This model reflects the idea that parent-child relations functions as a mediator between inter-parental conflict on the one hand, and indicators of adult relational functioning on the other. In order for parent-child relations to be viewed as a mediator between inter-parental conflict and adult relational functioning, the following set of statements must be true: 1) inter-parental conflict must be significantly related to adult relational functioning (e.g., marital optimism, relationship avoidance, relationship anxiety), 2) parent-child relations must be significantly related to

Table 4.

Correlations Among Study Variables (n = 594)

	CPIC	CBQ-A	CBQ-B	MAS	AAS-AV	AAS-AN
CPIC	.949	.375	.455	-.264	.215	.289
CBQ-A		.932	.178	-.304	.222	.175
CBQ-B			.926	-.266	.240	.239
MAS				.852	-.429	-.139
AAS-AV					.936	.200
AAS-AN						.910

α Reliabilities, Total Sample

All correlations are significant at the .0001 alpha level.

CPIC = Children's Perception of Inter-parental Conflict Scale; CBQ-A = Conflict Behavior Questionnaire, mother version; CBQ-B = Conflict Behavior Questionnaire, father version; MAS = Marital Attitude Survey; AAS-AV = Adult Attachment Scale, avoidance subscale; AAS-AN = Adult Attachment Scale, anxiety subscale.

both inter-parental conflict and adult relational functioning, and 3) when parent-child relations, the proposed mediator, is accounted for, the relationship between inter-parental conflict and adult relational functioning must be substantially reduced.

In order to investigate these ideas, a path analysis was performed in four steps. All path coefficients were computed using regression analysis. For each step, the regression analysis was completed three separate times, once for the entire sample as a whole ($n=594$), and once for each of the two study groups separately ($n=181$ and $n=413$, respectively). Results of these regression analyses are found in Tables 5 through 8 (pp. 56-59). Both raw and standardized regression coefficients are listed.

In Step 1, marital optimism (MAS), relationship avoidance (AAS-AV), and relationship anxiety (AAS-AN) were predicted from inter-parental conflict (CPIC). For the entire sample as a whole, as well as for both the divorced-family and intact-family groups separately, inter-parental conflict was found to be a significant predictor of all three outcome variables. All of these relationships were in the expected direction (e.g., a higher level of inter-parental conflict predicted a lower level of marital optimism, and higher levels of relationship avoidance and anxiety). Regression coefficients for Step 1 are listed in Table 5 (p. 56).

In Step 2, parent-child relations, the proposed mediator, was predicted from inter-parental conflict. Parent-child relations was broken into mother-child relations (CBQ-A) and father-child relations (CBQ-B). For the entire sample as a whole, as well as for both the divorced-family and intact-family groups separately, inter-parental conflict was found to be a significant predictor of both mother-child (CBQ-A) and father-child (CBQ-B) relations. Higher levels of inter-parental conflict were associated with more negativity in parent-child relationships. Regression coefficients for Step 2 are listed in Table 6 (p. 57).

Table 5.

Step 1: Predicting Relationship Outcomes from Inter-parental Conflict

<u>Dependent Variable</u>	<u>Regression weight</u>	
	<u>Raw</u>	<u>Standardized</u>
Entire sample (n=594)		
MAS	-0.208****	-0.264****
AAS-AV	0.386****	0.214****
AAS-AN	0.508****	0.289****
Divorced-family (n=181)		
MAS	-0.133*	-0.162*
AAS-AV	0.462**	0.233**
AAS-AN	0.501***	0.256***
Intact-family		
MAS	-0.222****	-0.265****
AAS-AV	0.367****	0.194****
AAS-AN	0.559****	0.305****

MAS=Marital Attitude Survey; AAS-AV=Adult Attachment Scales, Avoidance subscale; AAS-AN=Adult Attachment Scales, Anxiety subscale. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. **** $p < .0001$.

Table 6.

Step 2: Predicting Parent-Child Relations from Inter-parental Conflict

<u>Dependent variable</u>	<u>Regression weight</u>	
	<u>Raw</u>	<u>Standardized</u>
Entire sample (n=594)		
CBQ-A	0.184****	0.376****
CBQ-B	0.220****	0.454****
Divorced-family (n=181)		
CBQ-A	0.217****	0.367****
CBQ-B	0.156***	0.278***
Intact-family (n=413)		
CBQ-A	0.166****	0.346****
CBQ-B	0.253****	0.519****

CBQ-A = Conflict Behavior Questionnaire, mother version; CBQ-B = Conflict Behavior Questionnaire, father version. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. **** $p < .0001$.

Table 7.

Step 3: Predicting Relationship Outcomes from Parent-Child Relations

Mother-child Relations as a predictor		
Dependent Variable	<u>Regression weight</u>	
	Raw	Standardized
Entire sample (n=594)		
MAS	-0.426****	-0.265****
AAS-AV	0.681****	0.185****
AAS-AN	0.492***	0.137***
Divorced-family (n=181)		
MAS	-0.407****	-0.292****
AAS-AV	1.096****	0.327****
AAS-AN	0.567*	0.171*
Intact-family (n=413)		
MAS	-0.405****	-0.232****
AAS-AV	0.356+	0.090+
AAS-AN	0.422*	0.110*
Father-child Relations as a predictor		
Dependent Variable	<u>Regression weight</u>	
	Raw	Standardized
Entire sample (n=594)		
MAS	-0.356****	-0.219****
AAS-AV	0.771****	0.207****
AAS-AN	0.779****	0.215****
Divorced-family (n=181)		
MAS	-0.164 ^{ns}	-0.112 ^{ns}
AAS-AV	0.238 ^{ns}	0.067 ^{ns}
AAS-AN	0.546*	0.157*
Intact-family (n=413)		
MAS	-0.450****	-0.262****
AAS-AV	1.124****	0.290****
AAS-AN	0.924****	0.246****

MAS=Marital Attitude Survey; AAS-AV=Adult Attachment Scales, Avoidance subscale; AAS-AN=Adult Attachment Scales, Anxiety subscale. + $p = .0592$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. **** $p < .0001$.

Table 8.

Step 4: Predicting Outcomes from Inter-parental Conflict and Parent-Child Relations

Outcome	Predictor	Regression weight	
		Raw	Standardized
Entire sample (n=594)			
MAS	CPIC	-0.073*	-0.093*
	CBQ-A	-0.380****	-0.236****
	CBQ-B	-0.296****	-0.182****
AAS-AV	CPIC	0.130 ^{ns}	0.072 ^{ns}
	CBQ-A	0.601***	0.163***
	CBQ-B	0.663****	0.178****
AAS-AN	CPIC	0.350****	0.199****
	CBQ-A	0.274+	0.076+
	CBQ-B	0.490**	0.135**
Divorced-family (n=181)			
MAS	CPIC	-0.024 ^{ns}	-0.029 ^{ns}
	CBQ-A	-0.392***	-0.281***
	CBQ-B	-0.153 ^{ns}	-0.104 ^{ns}
AAS-AV	CPIC	0.233 ^{ns}	0.118 ^{ns}
	CBQ-A	0.961***	0.287***
	CBQ-B	0.137 ^{ns}	0.039 ^{ns}
AAS-AN	CPIC	0.364*	0.186*
	CBQ-A	0.355 ^{ns}	0.107 ^{ns}
	CBQ-B	0.387 ^{ns}	0.111 ^{ns}
Intact-family (n=413)			
MAS	CPIC	-0.061 ^{ns}	-0.073 ^{ns}
	CBQ-A	-0.373****	-0.214****
	CBQ-B	-0.391****	-0.228****
AAS-AV	CPIC	0.035 ^{ns}	0.019 ^{ns}
	CBQ-A	0.337++	0.086++
	CBQ-B	1.090****	0.281****
AAS-AN	CPIC	0.380***	0.207***
	CBQ-A	0.224 ^{ns}	0.059 ^{ns}
	CBQ-B	0.559**	0.149**

CPIC=Children's Perception of Interparental Conflict Scale; CBQ-A=Conflict Behavior Questionnaire, mother version; CBQ-B=Conflict Behavior Questionnaire, father version; MAS=Marital Attitude Survey; AAS-AV=Adult Attachment Scales, Avoidance subscale; AAS-AN=Adult Attachment Scales, Anxiety subscale. + p = .0699. ++ p = .0867. * p < .05. ** p < .01. *** p < .001. **** p < .0001.

In Step 3, all three relationship outcome variables (MAS, AAS-AV, and AAS-AN) were predicted from the proposed mediator, parent-child relations. Parent-child relations consisted of both mother-child (CBQ-A) and father-child (CBQ-B) relations. For the entire sample as a whole, as well as for the divorced-family group, mother-child relations was a significant predictor of all three outcome variables, in the expected direction. That is, more negativity in the mother-child relationship was associated with less marital optimism, more relationship avoidance, and more relationship anxiety. For the intact-family group, mother-child relations was a significant predictor of both marital optimism and relationship anxiety. For this group, mother-child relations was also a marginally significant predictor of relationship avoidance ($p = .0592$).

When father-child relations was used to predict the three relationship outcome variables, a different pattern of findings emerged. For the entire sample as a whole, as well as for the intact-family group, father child relations was a significant predictor of all three outcome variables, in the expected direction (e.g., more negativity in the father-child relationship predicted less marital optimism, more relationship avoidance, and more relationship anxiety). However, for the divorced-family group, father-child relations was a significant predictor of only one of the three outcome variables, relationship anxiety. Regression coefficients for Step 3 can be found in Table 7 (p. 58).

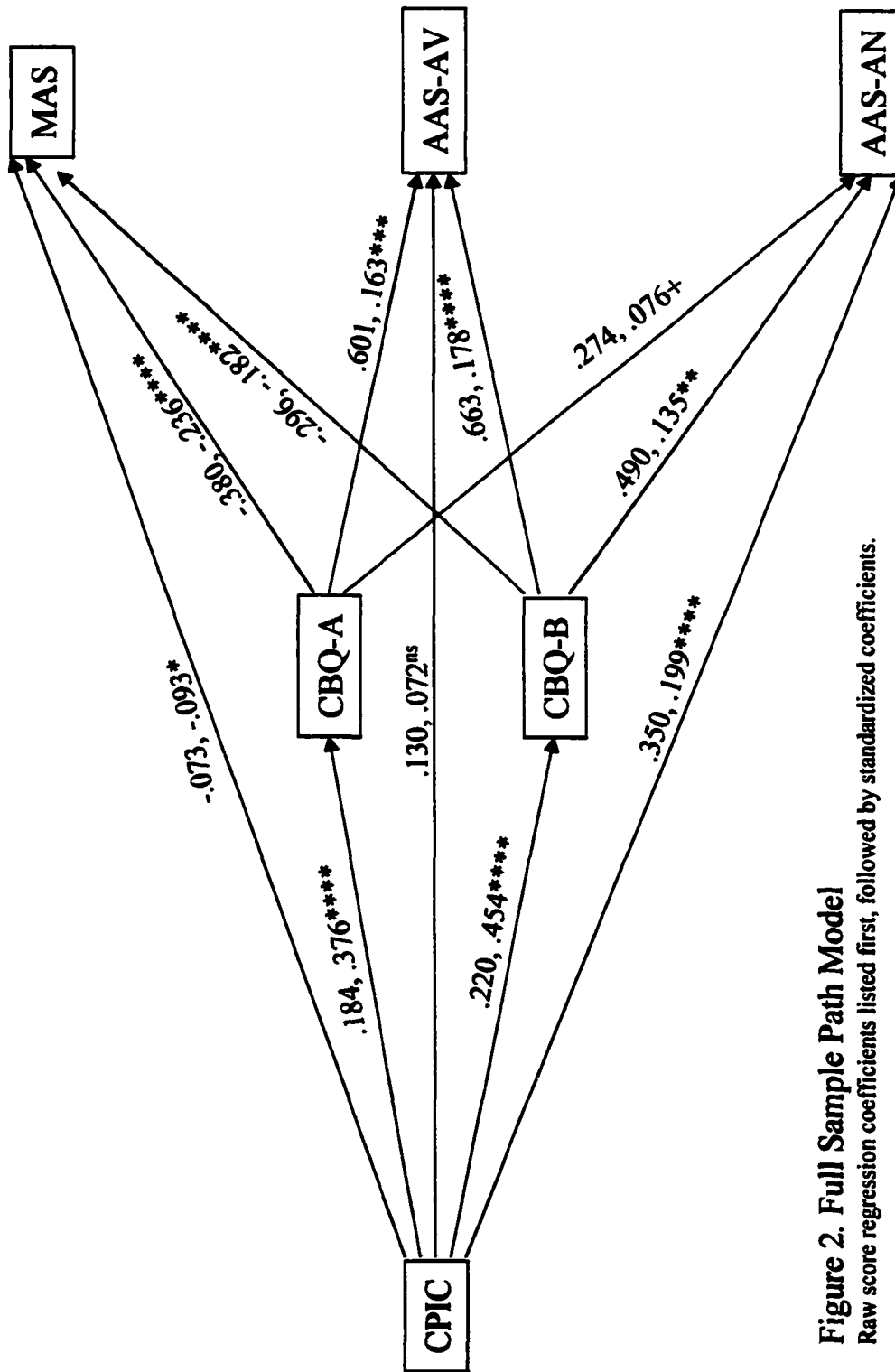
In Step 4, all three outcome variables (MAS, AAS-AV, and AAS-AN) were predicted from inter-parental conflict (CPIC) and parent-child relations (CBQ-A and CBQ-B). In general, evidence was found to support the main hypothesis of the study, namely, that parent-child relations mediates the association between inter-parental conflict and adult relational functioning, at least in part. For both the divorced-family and intact-family groups, the association between parental conflict and marital optimism

was reduced to non-significance after accounting for parent-child relations. For the entire sample as a whole, this association remained significant, but was reduced in strength to about one-third its original magnitude. For the entire sample as a whole, as well as for both the divorced-family and intact-family groups separately, the association between inter-parental conflict and relationship avoidance was reduced to non-significance after the addition of parent-child relations. Finally, for all three groupings, the association between inter-parental conflict and relationship anxiety remained significant after the addition of parent-child relations, however, the association was reduced in strength. Regression coefficients for Step 4 are listed in Table 8 (p. 59).

The results of the regression analyses described above were used to construct the path diagrams represented in Figures 2 through 4 (pp. 62-64). The path diagram in Figure 2 pertains to the entire sample as a whole ($n= 594$). Figures 3 and 4 are the path diagrams for the divorced-family group and the intact-family group, respectively. All three diagrams are labeled with both raw and standardized regression coefficients. For each path, the raw score regression coefficient is listed first, followed by the corresponding standardized regression coefficient.

Indirect Effects

The following information on evaluating indirect effects, including calculations of test statistics and probability levels, was taken from Preacher and Leonardelli (2001). Preacher and Leonardelli (2001) write that in general, mediation can be assessed according to the following conditions: 1) the independent variable (IV) has a significant effect on the mediator, 2) the IV significantly affects the dependent variable (DV) in the absence of the mediator, 3) the mediator has a significant unique effect on the DV, and 4) the effect of the IV on the DV shrinks upon the addition of the mediator to the model.



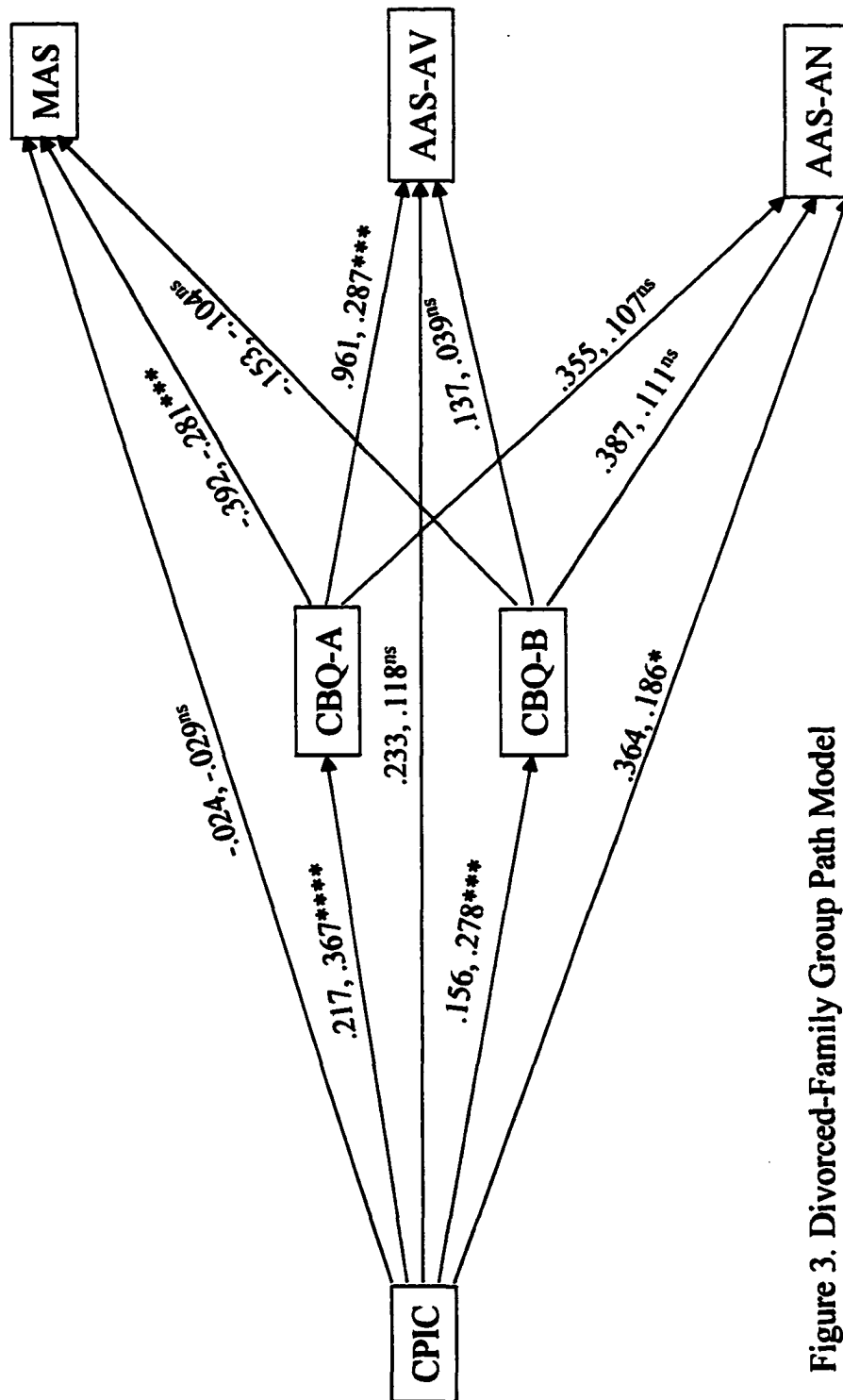


Figure 3. Divorced-Family Group Path Model
Raw score regression coefficients listed first, followed by standardized coefficients.

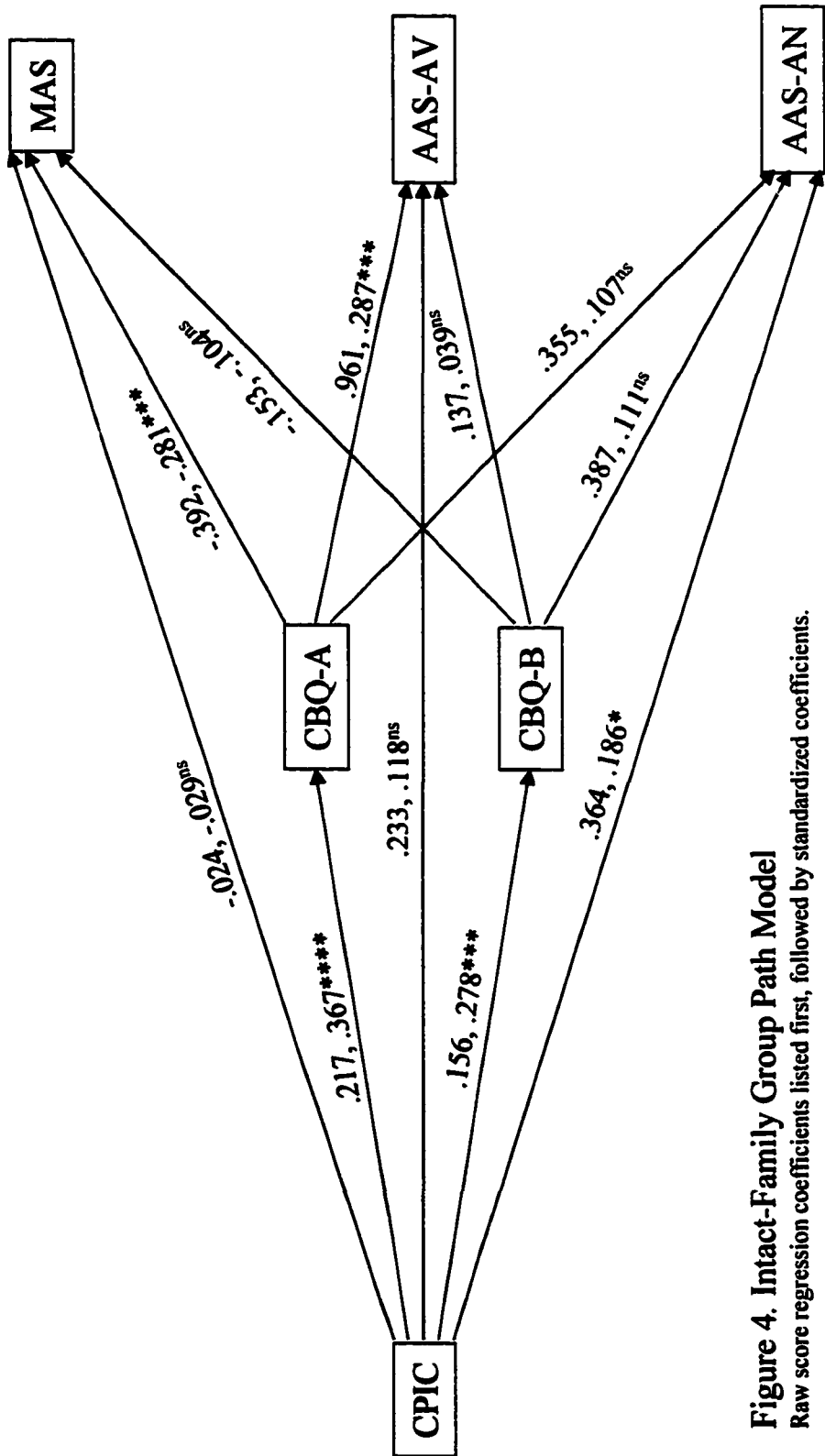


Figure 4. Intact-Family Group Path Model
Raw score regression coefficients listed first, followed by standardized coefficients.

More recently, statistically-based methods for formally assessing mediation have been proposed. One such method, the Sobel test, described in Preacher and Leonardelli (2001), was used in the present study to determine whether parent-child relations mediates the effect of inter-parental conflict on specific relationship outcomes, namely, marital optimism, relationship avoidance, and relationship anxiety. For each outcome, the indirect effect of inter-parental conflict through both mother-child and father-child relations was assessed. As recommended by Preacher and Leonardelli (2001) the Goodman (I) version of the Sobel test, described in Baron and Kenny (1986), was used. Test statistics and probability levels are listed in Table 9 (p. 66).

For the entire sample as a whole, the indirect effects of inter-parental conflict on both marital optimism and relationship avoidance were found to be significant . This was true using both mother-child relations and father-child relations as the mediator. The indirect effect of inter-parental conflict on relationship anxiety was significant when father-child relations was the mediator, but was only marginally significant with mother-child relations as the mediator ($p = .0740$).

For the divorced-family group separately, there were significant indirect effects of inter-parental conflict on both marital optimism and relationship avoidance, but only when mother-child relations was the mediator. For relationship anxiety, indirect effects were not statistically significant using either mother-child or father-child relations as the mediator.

For the intact-family group separately, there were significant indirect effects of inter-parental conflict on marital optimism, using both mother-child and father-child relations as the mediator. The indirect effect of inter-parental conflict on relationship avoidance was significant when father-child relations was the mediator, and was

Table 9.

Indirect Effects of Inter-parental Conflict on Marital Optimism and Adult Attachment

Mother-child relations as mediator		
Dependent variable	z-value	p level
Entire sample, n=594		
MAS	-4.9498	<.0001
AAS-AV	3.5820	<.001
AAS-AN	1.7779	.0754
Divorced-family group, n=181		
MAS	-2.9885	<.01
AAS-AV	3.0457	<.01
AAS-AN	1.3213	ns
Intact-family group, n=413		
MAS	-3.7745	<.001
AAS-AV	1.6593	.0971
AAS-AN	1.1537	ns
Father-child relations as mediator		
Dependent variable	z-value	p level
Entire sample, n=594		
MAS	-4.0129	<.0001
AAS-AV	3.8468	<.001
AAS-AN	2.9829	<.01
Divorced-family group, n=181		
MAS	-1.2891	ns
AAS-AV	0.5092	ns
AAS-AN	1.3471	ns
Intact-family group, n=413		
MAS	-4.0312	<.0001
AAS-AV	4.7254	<.0001
AAS-AN	2.6503	<.01

MAS=Marital Attitude Survey; AAS-AV=Adult Attachment Scales, Avoidance subscale; AAS-AN=Adult Attachment Scales, Anxiety subscale.

marginally significant with mother-child relations as the mediator ($p = .0943$). For relationship anxiety, the indirect effect of inter-parental conflict was significant only when father-child relations was the mediator.

Model Fit

Klem (1995) explains that every model implies a correlation between every pair of variables in that model. In addition to this set of implied correlations, there also exists a set of actual, or observed, correlations between each pair of study variables. Measures of model fit involve comparing all of the implied correlations to all of the observed correlations. For example, the average of the absolute values of all of the differences between the implied and observed correlations is one measure of model fit.

In the current study, tests of model fit were performed using LISREL 8.51. Indicators of model fit supplied by LISREL are listed in Table 10 (p. 68). They include the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), the Bentler-Bonnett non-normed fit index (NNFI), and the comparative fit index (CFI).

The RMSEA is a measure of model adequacy, based on the population discrepancy function, which compensates for the effects of model complexity. According to Browne and Cudeck (1993), an RMSEA of .05 or less indicates close fit, while a value of .08 indicates reasonable fit, and anything over .10 is unacceptable. The p value listed with the RMSEA results from the test of the null hypothesis that the given RMSEA is no greater than .05. The non-significant p values listed therefore indicate that for each model, the RMSEA value listed was not significantly greater than .05. The NNFI (also known as the Tucker-Lewis coefficient or TLI) compares the model under investigation to a very poorly fitting hypothesized model to see how large the discrepancy function becomes. Values for this index range from zero to one, with values

Table 10.

Model Descriptions and Fit Indices

Model	Chi-squared (df)	RMSEA/p	NNFI	CFI
Model 1: All paths estimated, no cross-group constraints	44.957 (22)	.058/.689	.965	.986
Model 2: All paths estimated, λ invariant across groups	46.322 (24)	.055/.752	.969	.987
Model 3: All paths estimated, λ invariant and τ partially invariant	46.454 (25)	.053/.773	.971	.987
Model 4: All paths estimated, λ invariant, τ partially invariant, θ_e invariant	52.175 (28)	.054/.784	.971	.986
Model 5: Same as Model 4 except drop direct paths from Inter-Parental Conflict to Marital Optimism and Relationship Avoidance	55.703 (32)	.050/.863	.975	.986
Model 6: Same as Model 5, β and α invariant	81.352 (46)	.051/.893	.974	.979

close to one indicating good fit. The CFI is based on a ratio of the sum of the squared discrepancies between the observed and implied covariance matrices. Again, values close to one indicate good fit.

Using the data from 594 participants, we fit six nested models. For each model, we divided study participants by group. In Model 1, all paths were estimated from the data and no constraints were placed across groups. In each successive model, progressively more constraints were placed across groups and change in model fit was assessed. No significant worsening in model fit with increasing cross-group constraints is a rough indicator of group equivalence.

Although all six models are described here, only Models 1 and 6 were diagrammed graphically because they are the models that correspond most directly to the substantive questions of the study. Model 1 addresses the basic fit of the proposed model in Figure 1, while Model 6 addresses the question of group equivalence (β invariant), and includes another test of mediation (2 of 3 direct paths from inter-parental conflict were dropped). Model 1 is represented in Figures 5 (divorced-family group, p. 70) and 6 (intact-family group, p. 71). Model 6 is represented in Figure 7 (here, only one figure is needed because α and β are invariant across groups, see p. 72). Measurement model estimates (τ_y , λ , θ_ϵ) for Models 1 and 6 are listed in Tables 11 and 12, respectively (see pp. 73-74). LISREL variance/covariance matrices for Models 1 and 6 are listed in Tables 13 and 14, respectively (see pp. 75-76).

As mentioned above in the Methods section of this paper, inter-parental conflict was measured using the CPIC. The CPIC is made up of nine subscales, three of which were used in the present study. In fitting Models 1 through 6, these three subscales,

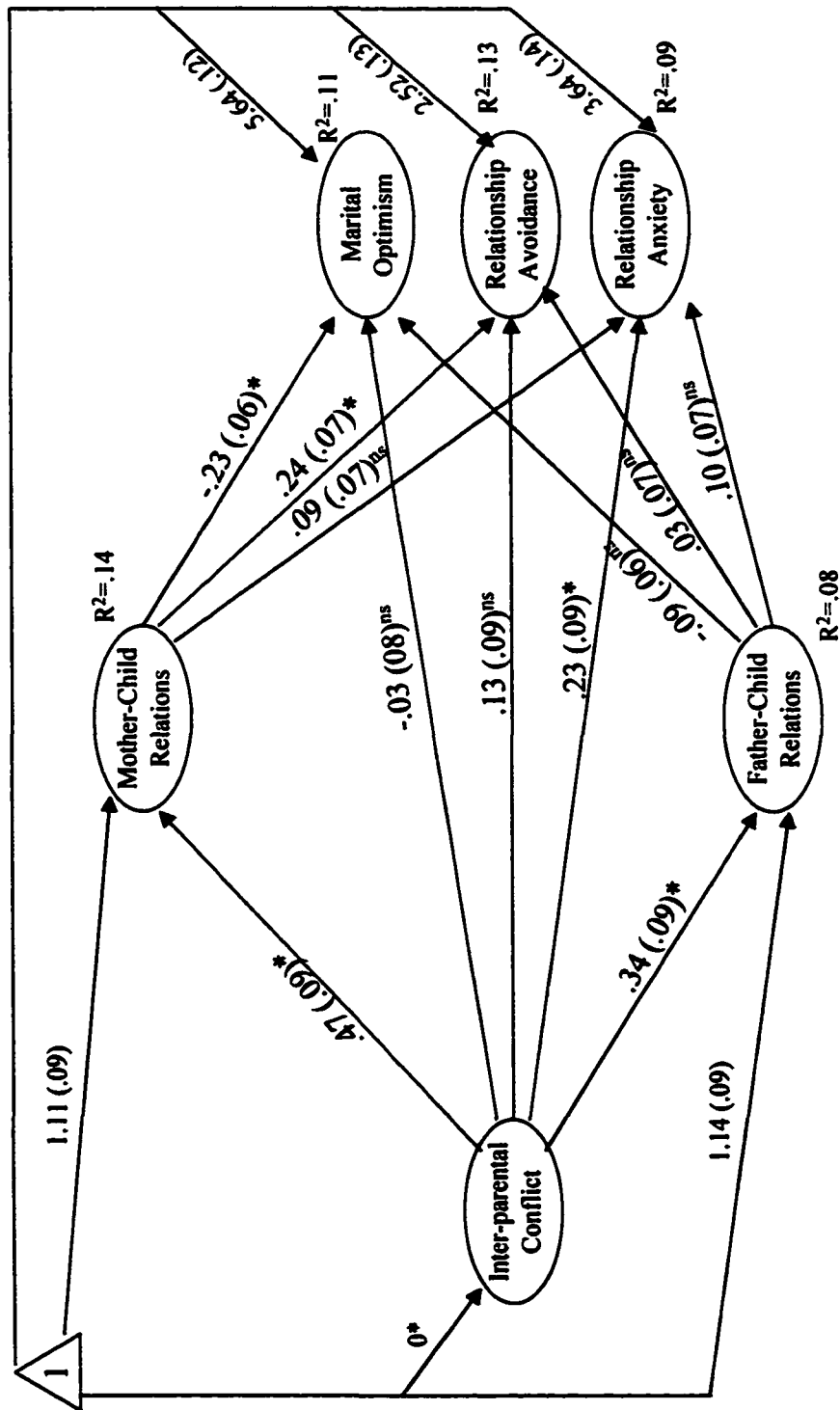


Figure 5. Model 1: Divorced-Family Group: All paths estimated, no cross-group constraints. α and β are followed by (SE).

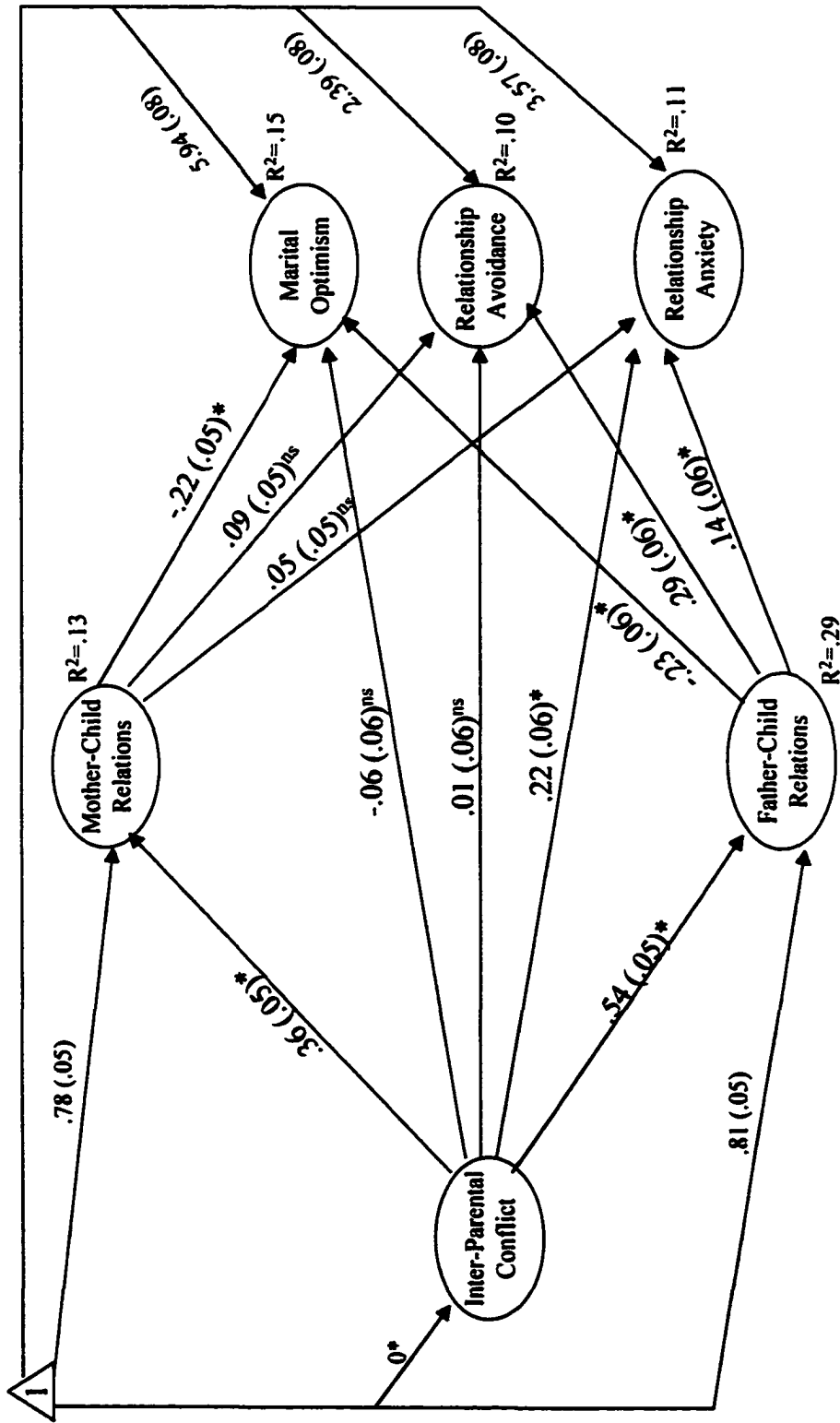


Figure 6. Model 1: Intact-Family Group: All paths estimated, no cross group constraints. α and β are followed by (SE).

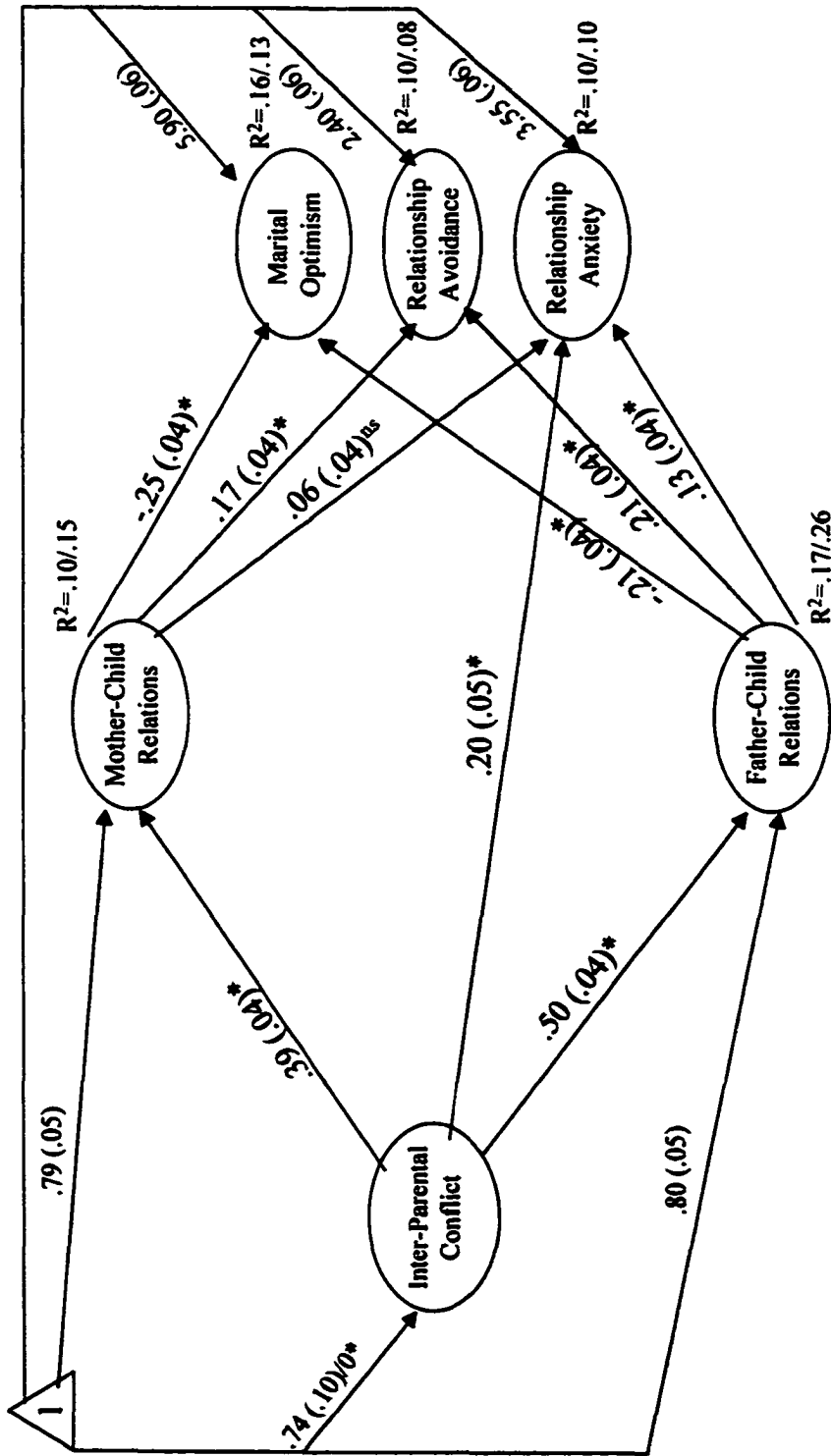


Figure 7. Model 6: α and β invariant across groups.

α and β are followed by respective (SE).

When both intact and divorced statistics are given (e.g. for R²), format is divorced/intact.

Table 11.

Model 1: Measurement Model Estimates

	τ_{γ} : Intercepts		λ : Factor Loadings		θ_{ϵ} : Unique Variances	
	<u>Divorced</u>	<u>Intact</u>	<u>Divorced</u>	<u>Intact</u>	<u>Divorced</u>	<u>Intact</u>
CPIC-FREQ	7.51(.27)	5.20(.17)	3.12(.22)	3.19(.14)	2.89(.53)	1.92(.27)
CPIC-INT	8.44(.34)	5.62(.21)	3.90(.28)	3.68(.18)	5.07(.86)	5.02(.31)
CPIC-RES	6.70(.26)	3.45(.17)	2.90(.22)	3.00(.14)	3.90(.56)	3.19(.31)
Mother-Child Relations	0*	0*	4.97*	4.97*	0*	0*
Father-Child Relations	0*	0*	5.05*	5.05*	0*	0*
Marital Optimism	0*	0*	8.66*	8.66*	0*	0*
Relationship Avoidance	0*	0*	19.57*	19.57*	0*	0*
Relationship Anxiety	0*	0*	19.00*	19.00*	0*	0*

CPIC = Children's Perception of Inter-parental Conflict Scale (FREQ = Frequency Subscale; INT = Intensity Subscale; RES = Resolution Subscale)

Table 12.

Model 6: Measurement Model Estimates

	τ_{γ} : Intercepts	λ : Factor Loadings	θ_{ϵ} : Unique Variances
CPIC-FREQ	5.19(.17)	3.17(.13)	2.18(.24)
CPIC-INT	5.64(.21)	3.75(.17)	5.06(.42)
CPIC-RES	4.52(.23)/3.45(.17)+	2.96(.13)	3.43(.27)
Mother-Child Relations	0*	4.97*	0*
Father-Child Relations	0*	5.05*	0*
Marital Optimism	0*	8.66*	0*
Relationship Avoidance	0*	19.57*	0*
Relationship Anxiety	0*	19.00*	0*

CPIC = Children's Perception of Inter-parental Conflict Scale (FREQ = Frequency Subscale; INT = Intensity Subscale; RES = Resolution Subscale)

+Divorced/Intact

Table 13.

Model 1: Divorced-Family Group: LISREL Variance/Covariance Matrix

	CPIC	CBQ-A	CBQ-B	MAS	AAS-AV	AAS-AN
CPIC	1.00					
CBQ-A		1.33(.14)				
CBQ-B			1.25(.13)			
MAS				.89(.09)		
AAS-AV				-.31(.07)	.98(.10)	
AAS-AN				-.06(.07)	.20(.08)	1.06(.11)

Model 1: Intact-Family Group: LISREL Variance/Covariance Matrix

	CPIC	CBQ-A	CBQ-B	MAS	AAS-AV	AAS-AN
CPIC	1.00					
CBQ-A		.87(.06)				
CBQ-B			.71(.05)			
MAS				.85(.06)		
AAS-AV				-.32(.05)	.90(.06)	
AAS-AN				-.02(.04)	.07(.04)	.89(.06)

CPIC = Children's Perception of Inter-parental Conflict Scale; CBQ-A = Conflict Behavior Questionnaire, mother version; CBQ-B = Conflict Behavior Questionnaire, father version; MAS = Marital Attitude Survey; AAS-AV = Adult Attachment Scale, avoidance subscale; AAS-AN = Adult Attachment Scale, anxiety subscale.

Table 14.

Model 6: Divorced-Family Group: LISREL Variance/Covariance Matrix

	CPIC	CBQ-A	CBQ-B	MAS	AAS-AV	AAS-AN
CPIC	1.01(.14)					
CBQ-A		1.36(.14)				
CBQ-B			1.26(.14)			
MAS				.92(.10)		
AAS-AV				-.33(.08)	1.04(.11)	
AAS-AN				-.06(.07)	.22(.08)	1.07(.11)

Model 6: Intact-Family Group: LISREL Variance/Covariance Matrix

	CPIC	CBQ-A	CBQ-B	MAS	AAS-AV	AAS-AN
CPIC	1.00					
CBQ-A		.87(.06)				
CBQ-B			.71(.05)			
MAS				.85(.06)		
AAS-AV				-.33(.05)	.91(.06)	
AAS-AN				-.02(.04)	.07(.04)	.89(.06)

CPIC = Children's Perception of Inter-parental Conflict Scale; CBQ-A = Conflict Behavior Questionnaire, mother version; CBQ-B = Conflict Behavior Questionnaire, father version; MAS = Marital Attitude Survey; AAS-AV = Adult Attachment Scale, avoidance subscale; AAS-AN = Adult Attachment Scale, anxiety subscale.

Frequency (FREQ), Intensity (INT), and Resolution (RES), were considered the manifest (or observed) indicators of the latent variable, inter-parental conflict. In Models 2 through 4, we placed consecutive cross-group constraints on the matrices pertaining to the three manifest indicators of inter-parental conflict. Models 2, 3 and 4 therefore tested the assumption that the underlying composition of this latent variable was the same across groups.

In Model 2, all paths were estimated, and λ (lambda) was forced to be invariant across groups. λ represents the factor loadings of FREQ, INT, and RES onto the latent variable inter-parental conflict. When λ was forced to be equal across groups, χ^2 became 46.322, an increase of 1.365 from the previous model. With an increase of 2 degrees of freedom, this is a non-significant change in χ^2 , meaning that there was not a significant worsening in fit.

In Model 3, τ_y (tau-y) was made partially invariant across groups. τ_y represents the intercepts of the three manifest indicators of inter-parental conflict. τ_y was partially invariant because only two of the three intercepts were forced to be invariant across groups. With τ_y partially invariant across groups, χ^2 became 46.454 with an increase of 1 degree of freedom. Again, this was a non-significant change, indicating no significant worsening in model fit. Model 4 forced θ_ϵ (theta epsilon) to be equal across groups. θ_ϵ represents the unique factor variances of the manifest indicators of inter-parental conflict. With this step, χ^2 became 52.175, with an increase of three degrees of freedom, which represents a non-significant worsening of model fit.

In Model 5, we first dropped all three direct paths from inter-parental conflict to the outcome variables. When all three direct paths were dropped, the model would not

converge. When the path from inter-parental conflict to relationship anxiety was retained, the fit statistics listed in Table 10 were obtained. As indicated, χ^2 became 55.703, with an increase of 4 degrees of freedom, a non-significant change. Thus, for at least two of the three outcome variables (marital optimism and relationship avoidance), the mediational hypothesis was supported.

Model 6 was identical to Model 5, except that we forced β (beta), or the path coefficients, as well as α (alpha), the latent variable intercepts, to be invariant across groups. With this step, χ^2 became 81.352, which represents an increase in χ^2 of 25.649. With an increase of 14 degrees of freedom from the previous model, this represents a significant change in χ^2 . However, when Model 6 is compared to Model 1, the change in χ^2 (36.395) does not exceed the critical value for significance at 24 degrees of freedom (that is, the change in degrees of freedom from Model 1 to Model 6). In addition, other indicators of model fit were good.

Discussion

Review of Rationale and Hypotheses

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of two divorce-related variables, inter-parental conflict and parent-child relations, on adult children of divorce, specifically in the area of relational functioning. Previous studies have found that inter-parental conflict and parent-child relations are two important divorce-related variables and that each has a significant effect on children's functioning after a divorce (Booth, Brinkerhoff, & White, 1984; Franklin, Janoff-Bulman, & Roberts, 1990). Past research also suggests that parent-child relations may mediate the effect of certain other variables (inter-parental conflict, economic decline) on children after a divorce (Kline, Johnston, &

Tschann, 1991). The current study expanded on such findings by investigating whether this pattern might also apply to children of divorce when they reach adulthood, specifically in the area of their own relational functioning. This study examined the impacts of divorce, inter-parental conflict, and parent-child relations on marital optimism and two dimensions of adult attachment style, relationship avoidance and relationship anxiety.

Specifically, three hypotheses were put forth. First, it was hypothesized that inter-parental conflict would be associated with decreased marital optimism, increased relationship avoidance, and increased relationship anxiety. Second, it was hypothesized that parent-child relations would be associated both with inter-parental conflict and with each of the three outcome variables. It was predicted that increased negativity in parent-child relations would be associated with increased inter-parental conflict, decreased marital optimism, increased relationship avoidance, and increased relationship anxiety. Third, it was hypothesized that parent-child relations would mediate the association between inter-parental conflict and the three indicators of relational functioning, such that the following sequence was proposed: Frequent, intense inter-parental conflict has a derogatory effect on parent-child relationships; in turn, negativity in parent-child relationships contributes to problematic relational functioning in children as they reach adulthood. Data were also collected from individuals from intact families in order to determine whether this pattern of findings was unique to children of divorce.

General Discussion of Findings

The first hypothesis was fully supported; for both the intact-family and divorced-family groups, high levels of inter-parental conflict were associated with decreased marital optimism, and increased relationship avoidance and relationship anxiety. The

second hypothesis was fully supported for the intact-family group, and partially supported for the divorced-family group. For both groups, inter-parental conflict was a significant predictor of negativity in parent-child relations, and for both groups, negativity in mother-child relations predicted problems in adult relational functioning. Father-child relations was a significant predictor of all three outcome variables in the intact-family group; however, it was a significant predictor of only one of three outcome variables, relationship anxiety, in the divorced-family group. The third and final hypothesis of the study, namely that parent-child relations mediates the association between inter-parental conflict and adult relational functioning, was generally supported by the present findings, with some important qualifications, to be discussed further below.

In general, the current study found that inter-parental conflict exerts much of its negative influence on later adult relationships through its effect on parent-child relations. In other words, inter-parental conflict has a damaging effect on relationships between children and their parents, and this damage to parent-child relations is related to problems in adult relational functioning. There are several plausible explanations for this pattern of findings.

Parents who are in frequent, intense conflict with one another are likely to experience negative mood changes, and may be prone to periods of depression, anger, and anxiety. They are likely to be drained and preoccupied, and to have less time and energy to work on developing positive relationships with their children. Several CBQ items tapped the individual's perception of how much positive time and attention was given by parents ("My father/mother was a good friend to me" or "I enjoyed spending time with my father/mother.") It seems logical that when ongoing strife and disagreement

between parents takes center stage in family life, there is less room for each parent to have constructive, enjoyable time with children.

Another possible reason for the association between inter-parental conflict and negativity in parent-child relations is that children may develop more negative views of their parents as they observe them arguing. They may dislike the negativity that parents aim at one another, and this may lead ultimately to decreased respect and liking for one or both parents on the part of the child. As a child's feelings of warmth and respect for his or her parents diminishes, parent-child relationships are likely to be affected in a negative way.

It may also be that children learn negative interaction behaviors through the modeling of their parents' interactions with one another. Children are likely to observe and remember negative parental behaviors and, they may, through a social learning process, then interact more negatively with their parents themselves. As children imitate parents' negative behaviors toward one another in their own interactions with their parents, parent-child conflict is likely to increase and relationships are likely to deteriorate. In an early study, Steinmetz (1977) found evidence that children do, in fact, seem to imitate behaviors present in the inter-parental relationship in their own interactions with their parents. She found that in families where parents used a high number of physically or verbally aggressive behaviors with one another, children were more likely to use these types of behaviors in interactions with each of their parents, as well as in interactions with siblings.

Yet another explanation might be that some parents have a general disposition towards negative interpersonal behavior and therefore have difficult relationships with most important people in their lives. It is logical to expect that such people would

experience a higher level of conflict in most family relationships as well, particularly in relationships with spouses and children. Hetherington, Bridges, and Insabella (1998, p. 170) state that, "Some adults have attributes that increase their probability not only of having dysfunctional marital relationships but also for having other problematic social relationships within and outside of the family." The authors cite evidence that individuals who have problematic marital relationships and later divorce are more likely preceding the divorce to be neurotic, depressed, antisocial, or alcoholic (e.g. Amato, 1993). They are also more likely to exhibit poor conflict resolution skills in marital interactions, and are more likely to be irritable, erratic, and nonauthoritative in interactions with their children (e.g. Amato & Booth, 1996). This type of stable disposition towards relational difficulties might in part explain the association between inter-parental conflict and negativity in parent-child relations.

Although inter-parental conflict itself exerts some independent, direct influence on adult relational functioning, the current analysis suggests that the more proximal mechanism through which the conflict has its effect is the parent-child relationship, at least for two of the three outcome variables studied (marital optimism and relationship avoidance; for relationship anxiety, there was a greater direct effect of inter-parental conflict). Why might this be? According to attachment theory, the relationship that a child has with his or her parent or primary care giver in the first stages of life is a template for thoughts and behaviors in relationships throughout life (Bowlby, 1973). Further evidence of the primacy of the parent-child relationship was provided by Hazan and Shaver (1987), who found that patterns of attachment for young adults in romantic relationships were similar to patterns of attachment with parents in childhood.

In their relationships with parents, children form thoughts and ideas about relationships more generally. In particular, based on interactions with parents, children may learn either that relationships are safe or that relationships cause pain. They may learn whether relationships are secure and lasting, or whether relationships can end abruptly and without warning. It seems logical that as they mature and branch out into other important relationships in life, children carry with them thoughts, feelings, and patterns established in their relationships with parents. To summarize, the current study suggests the following sequence with respect to the variables under consideration: High levels of inter-parental conflict work to increase the level of negativity present in relationships between parents and children; in turn, this increased negativity in parent-child relations is a risk factor for problematic patterns in romantic relationships as children reach young adulthood.

Qualifications to General Findings

As mentioned above, it is important to note that there are some qualifications to the general pattern of findings just discussed. First, although the mediational model was a reasonably good fit for both the divorced- and intact-family groups, the divorced-family group reported significantly more inter-parental conflict than the intact-family group. In fact, the effect size of the difference between the divorced- and intact-family groups on inter-parental conflict was .74 of a standard deviation (see intercepts for Inter-Parental Conflict in Figure 7). The current study predicted that inter-parental conflict would be related, directly or indirectly, to all other factors included in the model. As such, the model would suggest that because individuals from divorced families experience more inter-parental conflict, they also would experience more negativity in parent-child relations. In turn, they would be expected to be lower on marital optimism, and higher on

relationship avoidance and anxiety. It was found that those from divorced families were in fact lower in marital optimism than those from intact families, however, the difference between divorced-family and intact-family participants was not significant for relationship avoidance and anxiety.

Although there are other, outside factors which account for the fact that there is more negativity in parent-child relations in divorced families than in intact families, this model supports the idea that higher inter-parental conflict is one important reason for this increased negativity. In turn, this negativity in parent-child relations carries into at least one area of adult relational functioning, marital optimism, to a significant degree. For relationship avoidance and relationship anxiety, there are apparently enough sources of variation not accounted for by the model to make the differences in these variables non-significant across the divorced-and intact-family groups.

Of the three outcome variables studied, why was marital optimism the only one on which there was a significant difference between the divorced- and intact-family groups? Why are individuals from divorced families more likely to endorse negativity and pessimism in this area in particular? The measure used to assess this construct (MAS) includes questions regarding optimism about one's own future marriage, optimism about the institution of marriage in general, traditionalism in ideas about marriage, and acceptance of alternatives to marriage (e.g. cohabitation, divorce).

It is possible that the difference between individuals from divorced and intact families on marital optimism reflects a difference between these two groups of people on traditional vs. non-traditional outlooks on marriage. In past research, it is a fairly well-established finding that people from divorced families are less traditional in their ideas about marriage and more favorable towards marriage-alternatives such as cohabitation

and divorce (e.g. Amato, 1996; Coleman & Ganong, 1984; Kinnaird & Gerrard, 1986). In the current study, a higher percentage of participants from divorced families reported their relationship status as “living together” (16.6% vs. 6.8% from intact families), whereas the proportion that reported that they were single or married was similar across groups.

It is also possible that the difference between study groups on marital optimism reflects a more general pessimism about the institution of marriage, or a specific feeling of hopelessness about one’s own chances of success in marriage. Both of these ideas make sense. For individuals from divorced families, the lack of a successful model for marriage would be likely to contribute to greater skepticism about the value of marriage in general, or the chances of any one marriage succeeding. Perhaps the break-up of the parental relationship leads to both cynicism about marriage in general, and pessimism about one’s chances of success in marriage more specifically. These attitudes could lead to delaying or avoiding marriage altogether, manifested in a greater likelihood of choosing cohabitation without marriage. In addition, such attitudes may increase one’s chances of divorce, in that they may be connected to a self-fulfilling prophecy about the inevitable difficulty and failure of marriage. Also, people from divorced families experience a significantly higher level of inter-parental conflict, and report more conflict with parents themselves. These forces are likely to work together to contribute to increased hopelessness and negativity about relationships in general, and about marital relationships more specifically.

Another qualification with regard to the general applicability of the model was the differential effect of father-child relations on the relationship outcome variables between the two study groups. Among the intact-family participants, both mother-child and

father-child relations were significant predictors of all three relationship outcome variables. In the divorced-family group, mother-child relations remained a significant predictor of all three outcomes, while father-child relations was significantly associated with only one of the three, relationship anxiety.

One obvious interpretation of this finding is that individuals from divorced families are less likely to live and spend time with fathers. Hetherington and Kelly (2002) recently summarized findings from a 20-year longitudinal study of divorced families, begun in the 1970's. They note that, although the situation has begun to change in the last decade as a result of joint-custody arrangements, the majority of children they studied were raised in mother-custody families. For most children in their study, contact with fathers decreased dramatically following the divorce. Initially, fathers in Hetherington's study maintained as much contact with children as they had before the divorce. However, by the end of the second year after the divorce, this level of contact had dropped, on average, to biweekly or monthly visitation. Only one quarter of the fathers in her study still saw their children once a week or more. Furthermore, at six years post-divorce, a quarter of children saw their fathers once a year or less.

Given that the mean age of participants in the current study was 22.5, it is likely that most of these individuals experienced their parents split during the era in which mother-custody was the more common arrangement. Under the assumption that the father-visitation patterns described by Hetherington and Kelly (2002) largely hold true for the current study participants from divorced families, it seems logical that because they spent less time with fathers in general, this relationship became less salient in day-to-day life. Whether they rated their relationships with fathers as poor or good, daily

father-child interaction was lacking, and thus would be less of a factor in shaping a child's interaction patterns in other relationships.

Mother-child relationships, on the other hand, seem to be vitally important in shaping a child's adjustment after a divorce. Hetherington and Kelly (2002, p. 126) state that, "even six years after a divorce, when our ten-year-olds were beginning to have access to other potential buffering factors outside the family, we found that a custodial parent-which in most cases meant a mother- remained the first line of defense against the stresses of postnuclear family life." The results of the current study support and add to this statement. In particular, in young adulthood, the quality of the mother-child relationship was a significant predictor of all three areas of relational functioning among participants from divorced families, as stated above. Those who reported a positive relationship with their mothers were more likely to maintain optimism about marriage, and to have a lower level of relationship avoidance and anxiety.

Another important qualification to note is that there was a stronger direct association between inter-parental conflict and relationship anxiety than between inter-parental conflict and either marital optimism or relationship avoidance. As described above, it was largely found that marital optimism and relationship avoidance were associated with inter-parental conflict in an indirect way, with parent-child relationships playing an important mediating role. This was not true to the same degree for relationship anxiety. Instead, relationship anxiety seemed to have a stronger direct connection to the level of conflict in the inter-parental relationship.

This pattern of findings is difficult to explain. In general, relationship anxiety as measured in the current study represents an attachment style in which one is fearful of abandonment and experiences a desire for more closeness than they perceive is

comfortable for their partner. It seems possible that growing up in a family atmosphere marked by frequent, intense parental disputes, perhaps with threats on the part of one or both parents to leave, would lead to children's anxiety that conflict in one's own relationships will lead to abandonment. Or, it may be that experiencing high levels of parental conflict encourages children to seek comfort in other, more peaceful, relationships. Perhaps as such children reach adulthood, this comfort-seeking becomes a pattern in relating to potential romantic partners, and more closeness and comfort is expected from a romantic partner than one would normally desire.

Parental Divorce vs. Inter-parental Conflict

One statement that can be made with confidence in light of the present findings is that young adults from divorced families report experiencing more inter-parental conflict than those from intact families. Unfortunately, the results of this study cannot sort out other issues of interest, such as the relative importance of inter-parental conflict and the effect of divorce in and of itself in impacting the relationships of children as they reach adulthood. In addition, it is not possible to determine the causal ordering of these two variables in particular. For instance, it could be that in families where there is a high level of inter-parental conflict to start with, divorce is the more likely outcome. Alternatively, it could be that the process of divorce causes such an upheaval in the family structure that a higher level of inter-parental conflict is a result. Still another plausible explanation is that there are other factors, such as socio-economic status or parental characteristics, which make both inter-parental conflict and divorce more likely to occur.

The relative influence of parental divorce and inter-parental conflict and to what degree children are affected by each is an extremely difficult issue to untangle. And why

is this question so important? Many people may divorce under the assumption that the divorce will end intense inter-parental strife and conflict, and that children will be better off for this hypothesized reduction in fighting, despite the stress of living in a divided household. Wallerstein, Lewis, and Blakeslee (2000) address this issue in the introduction to their book detailing the results of their 25-year follow-up study of children whose parents divorced in the early 1970's. They propose that our current attitudes toward divorce rest on two faulty assumptions. The first says that "if parents are happier, children will be happier, too" (Wallerstein, Lewis, & Blakeslee, 2000, p. xxiii). The second holds that "divorce is a temporary crisis which exerts most of its harmful effects on parents and children at the time of the break-up" (p. xxiv). In other words, many people are of the opinion that of parental divorce and parental conflict, divorce represents the lesser of two evils.

For at least two reasons, it is unlikely that the issue is this simple. First, there is evidence that contrary to what one might hope, inter-parental conflict does not decrease significantly after a divorce, either in the immediate aftermath, or in the years to come. Forehand et al. (1990) found in divorced families that there was no difference in the level of parental conflict played out in front of children at the six-month post-divorce mark compared to before the divorce. Wallerstein, Lewis, and Blakeslee (2000) found in their study that "a third of couples were fighting at the same high pitch ten years after their divorce was final" (p. 5). In addition, these authors observed that conflicts between parents were often fueled by new and different complaints after divorce, such as the burden of (or lack of) child support, scheduling child visitation, or jealousy of one or both parents over new partners. In other words, there is evidence that parents in conflict

before divorce will continue to be in conflict after divorce, though the sources of friction may change.

A second reason that the relative importance of parental conflict and parental divorce is difficult to sort out is that even if there is a significant decline in fighting between parents after a divorce, this reduction may be counteracted by the other negative effects of divorce, such as deterioration in parent-child relationships and adjusting to living in two different households. Despite the fact that (as supported by this study) inter-parental conflict is one important cause of negativity in parent-child relations, there are other divorce-related factors which contribute to this deterioration as well. For example, it is well-documented that after divorce, contact between fathers and children declines sharply (e.g., Seltzer, 1991). Past research also shows that mother-child relationships deteriorate after a divorce as well (Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1982). Though mothers often retain physical custody of children and thus may spend more time with children post-divorce, the strain of single-parenting and increased role demands may make it difficult to give children the time and attention that they need.

Another factor which may offset any reduction in inter-parental conflict after a divorce is the strain that children experience in being divided between two households. Wallerstein, Lewis, and Blakeslee (2000) illustrate this factor in their observation that “the children in this study whose lives were governed by court orders or mediated parental agreements all told me that they felt like second-class citizens who had lost the freedoms their peers took for granted” (p. 181). Children of parents who share custody are likely to have less control over how they spend weekends and summers. In addition, they must adjust at regular intervals to changes in household rules, emotional climates, and communities as they travel between parents. Most of the adult children she

interviewed at follow-up expressed this division between households as a major reason for having difficulty with or being angry with one or both parents.

Summary

As mentioned above, the current study suggests that a high level of inter-parental conflict leads to increased negativity in parent-child relations, which in turn is associated with problematic ways of thinking about and behaving in one's own relationships as an adult. This sequence was largely applicable to participants from both divorced and intact families, although several important qualifications to this statement were discussed.

Why, in general, is this sequence or inter-play of variables important to specify?

First, it can be argued that for parents, just knowing that inter-parental conflict has a derogatory effect on parent-child relations is important in and of itself. Many parents may believe that the relationship they have with one another is completely separate from the relationships that they have with their children, and therefore underestimate the influence of the quality of the inter-parental relationship. In fact, the current study suggests that through several possible vehicles, the quality of the inter-parental relationship, whether parents are married or divorced, has a significant impact on how well parents and children will be able to get along. Knowing this may be one more way to motivate parents to continue to work on their relationship with one another, whether they live together or separately. Just being able to specify one factor which contributes significantly to the erosion of parent-child relationships may be an important first step in finding a way to ameliorate problems.

The current study is also important for the fact that it specifies one possible pathway through which discordant relationships are transmitted from one generation to the next. In other words, it seems that parents are important agents through which marital

conflict leads to problems in children's relational functioning as they reach adulthood. As such, the inter-generational transmission of problematic relational functioning is not as straightforward as one might initially think. For example, upon first consideration, the most likely explanation for an individual's avoidance of marriage might be that the individual is fearful of repeating the conflictual, painful interactions witnessed between his or her parents. Or, it seems logical that a pessimistic, cynical attitude toward marriage stems simply from generalizing the failures of one's parents to all marital relationships (e.g. "If that's what marriage is like, I never want to get married!"). However, the current study suggests that the development of such patterns is more complex, in that a child's relationship with his or her parents plays an important intermediary role.

Given the general pattern of results in the current study, it seems possible that the parent-child relationship has the potential for playing a protective role in the formation of a child's relational functioning. This statement should be made with caution, however, because this hypothesis was not directly tested in the current study. Nevertheless, parents may be able to ameliorate the derogatory influence of inter-parental conflict, at least to some degree, if they are able to maintain positive relationships with their children. The results of this study suggest, however, that maintaining good parent-child relationships in the face of frequent conflict between parents is difficult, and that deliberate, consistent interventions would have to be aimed at building the types of relationships which would have a protective influence.

On average, family relationships are more difficult in divorced families than in intact families. Inter-parental conflict is more frequent and intense, and more negativity exists between parents and children. Divorce leads to increased stress on primary

custodial parents and increased distance from non-custodial parents. In turn, in divorced families, it is likely to be much more difficult maintain the types of parent-child relationships that lead to healthy relational functioning in children as they reach adulthood. This study suggests that one resulting difference between young adults from divorced families and those from intact families is in the area of marital optimism. Namely, young adults from divorced families are more likely to develop pessimism about marriage in general and hopelessness about their own prospects in marriage.

Implications for Clinical Intervention and Prevention

Parents who are seeking help for marital conflict, whether they are contemplating divorce or not, should be educated about the influence that the inter-parental relationship has on their relationships with children. As mentioned above, just knowing that such an association exists would be likely to motivate many parents to work on more positive conflict resolution skills. The awareness that improvements in parents' relationships with one another will have a positive effect on their relationships with children, and thus on their child's relational functioning long-term, is likely to be a great encouragement towards improving parental relations. Such education should be presented carefully to parents, in a supportive, non-blaming way. Many parents are likely to be very aware of the impact that their conflicts have on their children, and to feel guilty and worried about their children's well-being. Therapists should gently assess the level of awareness that parents already have about this issue, and should use their assessment as a guide to how strongly to relay their suggestions. In addition to education about the impact of inter-parental conflict, many parents may also need specific guidelines and coaching on handling conflict when it arises.

Parents who decide to divorce are especially in need of supports and intervention. Recently, in the state of Montana, a law has been passed which requires divorcing parents of minor children to participate in a one-time class on managing their post-divorce relationship. Parents in such classes should be educated on the importance of their continuing relationship with one another for their children's well-being, both short and long-term. In addition, parents should be given practical suggestions for limiting disputes in front of children (e.g., not discussing financial struggles while picking children up from the other parent's home), knowing that this will have a positive effect on how parents and children will be able to relate as the divorce proceeds.

Finally, this study holds implications for individuals who come from divorced families. In particular, such individuals are more likely to hold pessimistic attitudes about marriage in general, and to be more doubtful about their own chances at succeeding in marriage. Therapists working with young adults should be aware of this possibility, and to assess accordingly, even if it is not the presenting complaint. Interventions for those desiring help should be aimed at helping to uncover unrealistic fears and at building a sense of control over being able to find and maintain a meaningful relationship. For example, it might be beneficial to explore that although there is a greater chance of divorce among those from divorced families, many such people are happy and successful in marriage. Discussing the types of characteristics that make satisfaction in marriage more likely might also give a sense of hope that one can have control, at least to some degree over the quality of the relationship that they choose to enter.

Future Research

In general, the importance of parent-child relations in mediating the effects of inter-parental conflict on children leads to the question of whether interventions in this

area would lead to improvement in children's relational functioning. One could also argue that the inter-parental relationship, whether divorced or intact, is the more important place to intervene, given its position in the current study as the initiator of negativity in family relations. Future research could look at whether either type of intervention is associated with significant improvement in children's relational functioning, and could investigate the relative effectiveness of interventions aimed at these two areas.

As landmark longitudinal studies of the long-term effects of divorce on children are published (e.g. Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Wallerstein, Lewis, & Blakeslee, 2000), another question stemming from these as well as the current study is whether the increasing popularity of court-ordered mediation between parents will have a positive effect on family relations after a divorce. It is possible that as issues such as custody arrangements, visitation, and child support are more formalized by the court system, improvements in inter-parental relationships can be made which will carry over into more positive relationships between parents and their children. As children from families in which newer mediation procedures have been implemented emerge into adulthood, research aimed at investigating the long-term effects of mediation on relational functioning would be of interest.

Relatedly, research should be carried out to determine the effects of the increasing trend toward father-custody and joint-custody arrangements. Specifically, do these changes in the structure of the divorced family have a significant positive influence on father-child relations? If so, does the improvement of father-child relationships after divorce have any beneficial effect on children's relational functioning long-term? One might hope that increased contact with fathers would improve children's functioning

overall, and particularly in the area of relationships. However, increased contact with fathers might be overshadowed by the increased stress for children of moving more frequently between households and having less choice over their own schedules.

Finally, future research should continue to look at the respective effects of inter-parental conflict and parental divorce on children's development. Both variables have been found to have a significant negative influence on children in a wide variety of areas. There are indications that children who move from a high-conflict intact family to a low-conflict single-parent family are better off in some respects (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). However, other data indicate that this type of positive change in inter-parental relationships after divorce is a rarity (Wallerstein, Lewis, & Blakeslee, 2000). In order to continue to unravel this difficult question, more research should be aimed at studying the long-term differences between individuals from families representing various conflict-levels and parental configurations.

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Appendix A

Demographic Information Form

These questions are intended to obtain some general information about you:

1. Are you male _____ or female _____?

2. What is your age? _____

3. What is the highest grade in school that you have finished?

_____ Didn't finish high school _____ high school _____ GED
_____ Some college _____ 2-year college _____ bachelor's degree
_____ Advanced degree

4. What is your occupation? _____

5. If you do not currently have an occupation, what was your most recent occupation? _____

6. What is your racial/ethnic background? (Please check all that apply.):

African American _____ White/Caucasian _____
Hispanic _____ Native American _____
Asian American _____ Other (please specify) _____

7. What best describes the area you grew up in?

Rural _____ Small town (less than 2,000) _____ Town (2,000-40,000) _____
Small city (40,000-100,000) _____ Metropolitan area (larger than 100,000) _____

8. What is your individual yearly income after taxes?

0-10,000 _____ 10-20,000 _____ 20-30,000 _____ 30-40,000 _____
40-50,000 _____ 50-60,000 _____ 60-70,000 _____ 70-80,000 _____
80,000+ _____

9. What is your yearly household income after taxes?

0-10,000 _____ 10-20,000 _____ 20-30,000 _____ 30-40,000 _____
40-50,000 _____ 50-60,000 _____ 60-70,000 _____ 70-80,000 _____
80,000+ _____

10. What best describes your relationship status?

Single _____ Married _____ Living together _____ Separated _____ Divorced _____

11. If you have been married, how many times have you been married? _____

12. Do you have any biological or adopted children? _____ Yes _____ No
13. If yes, how many? _____
14. Did you experience the divorce of your parents before you turned 15? (If you did not grow up with your parents, please answer this question with reference to your primary care givers): Yes _____ No _____

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