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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTAL ATTITUDES AND  
BEHAVIORS AND THEIR ADULT CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES  
TOWARD MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, AND MARITAL  
COUNSELING

by

Shawnery L. Mathis

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Family, Consumer, and Human Development

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY  
Logan, Utah

2005

## ABSTRACT

The Relationship Between Parental Attitudes and Behaviors  
and Their Adult Children's Attitudes Toward Marriage,  
Divorce, and Marital Counseling

by

Shawnerly L. Mathis, Master of Science

Utah State University, 2005

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Department: Family, Consumer, and Human Development

This research study consisted of eighty-six pairs (young adult and his or her parent) of participants recruited from freshman and sophomore classes in two Northern Utah Universities. The parents ages ranged from 36-80 and the young adult children's ages ranged from 16-25. This research project examined the participants' demographics, marital satisfaction (of the parents), attitudes toward marriage, attitudes toward divorce, and attitudes toward marital counseling.

Three paired *t* tests were used to determine whether attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and marital counseling were the same for young adult children and their parents. Multiple regression equations were used to determine what effects multiple variables (parental divorce rate and attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and marital counseling, young adult children's age, gender, and willingness to attend marital counseling in the

future) have on young adult children's attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and marital counseling.

(85 pages)



## CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT .....	ii
LIST OF TABLES .....	vi
CHAPTER	
I    INTRODUCTION .....	1
Previous Research .....	1
Social Learning Theory .....	2
Purpose of the Study .....	3
II   REVIEW OF LITERATURE .....	4
Attitudes Toward Marriage Divorce, and Marital Counseling .....	4
History of Research on Attitudes Toward Marriage and Divorce .....	4
Recent Studies on Parents' Marital Satisfaction And Marital Status .....	6
History of Research on Help Seeking Behaviors Such as Seeking Marital Counseling .....	10
Gender Differences in Attitudes Toward Marriage, Divorce, and Marital Counseling .....	12
Conclusion and Hypotheses .....	15
III  METHODS .....	18
Design .....	18
Sample .....	18
Data Collection Procedures .....	22
Measures .....	23
Demographics .....	24
Marital Satisfaction .....	24
Attitudes Toward Marriage .....	25
Attitudes Toward Divorce .....	25
Attitudes Toward Marital Counseling .....	26

IV	RESULTS	27
	Analysis of the Data	27
	Reliability of the Scales	28
	Research Question One	29
	Research Question Two	29
	Research Question Three	30
	Research Question Four Through Six, Review and Changes	31
	Research Question Four Results	35
	Research Question Five Results	36
	Research Question Six Results	38
	Systematic Patterns for Nonresponse	40
V	SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION	41
	Research Question One	41
	Research Question Two	43
	Research Question Three	44
	Research Question Four	45
	Research Question Five	47
	Research Question Six	50
	Age in Research Questions One Through Six	51
	Implications	52
	Limitations and Recommendations	54
	REFERENCES	58
	APPENDICES	63
	Appendix A. Letters of Consent	64
	Appendix B. Questionnaires	67
	Appendix C. IRB Approval Letters	76

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1 Demographics of Participants .....	20
2 Cronbach Alpha Scores for Scales .....	28
3 Paired Samples Statistics for Parental and Young Adult Children's Attitudes Toward Marriage, Divorce, and Marital Counseling .....	30
4 Summary of Correlation Matrix for Variables in the First and Second Multiple Regression Equations .....	33
5 Summary of Correlation Matrix for Variables in the Third Multiple Regression Equation .....	34
6 Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Young Adults' Attitudes Toward Marriage .....	36
7 Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Young Adults' Attitudes Tow .....	37
8 Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Variable Predicting Young Adults' Attitudes Toward Marital Counseling .....	39

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In the past, research about attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and marital counseling has focused mainly on parental behavior in predicting children's attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and marital counseling. Researchers have yet to examine how children's attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and counseling are correlated with their parent's attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and counseling. This chapter reviews previous research; describes how social learning theory will be used as a framework in the proposed study; and concludes with a section describing the purpose of the proposed study.

#### Previous Research

Most research done on attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and counseling does not take into account the influence parental attitudes may have on young adults' attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and counseling. For instance, some studies (Amato & Booth, 1991; Jennings, Salts, & Smith, 1991) found that there was a statistically significant difference in attitudes toward divorce and marriage between children from divorced or step-families when compared to children from intact families, while other studies (Gabardi & Rosén, 1992; Landis-Kleine, Foley, Nall, Padgett, & Walters-Palmer, 1995) did not. The reason for this difference may be due to differences in parental attitudes or parental marital satisfaction rather than just parental marital status. Researchers have also found that most college age students, especially males, do not usually look toward a

professional counselor for help with their relationship issues (Komiya, Good, & Sherrod, 2000; Mau & Jepsen, 1990; Tishby et al., 2001), this may also be due, in part, to parental attitudes toward counseling.

Few recorded studies have examined attitudes toward marital counseling, and no research has been done that ties children's attitudes toward marital counseling to their parent's attitudes toward marital counseling. Furthermore, no research has been conducted that ties attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and marital counseling together. This research study examined the relationship between young adults' attitudes toward marital counseling, marriage, and divorce and their parent's attitudes and behaviors toward these topics. These issues were studied from the perspective of social learning theory.

### Social Learning Theory

According to social learning theory (Bandura, 1977; Cowdery & Trucks, 1994; Hogben & Byrne, 1998) children learn things more quickly and keep this knowledge longer by observing, imitating, and creating meaning from the verbal and non-verbal instructions of people in their social system. Observation of behaviors allows children to learn from the outcomes of other people's behaviors. Learning can also come in the form of verbal instruction from parents, such as when parents talk to their children about the importance of marriage or the helpfulness of marital counseling. According to Bandura, there are steps that occur before and after this learning process that are important in creating a long-lasting attitude or knowledge about a subject.

Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977; Foshee, Bauman, & Linder, 1999) states that children need to view a model as important to them in order to pay attention to, and learn from, that model. Parents are very important in a young child's life, and can continue to be important to children as they become adolescents and adults. However, one parent may be more influential to the child than the other parent. For this reason, the proposed study will examine the attitudes and behaviors of the parent that the young adult participant feels had the most influence on the his/her attitudes and behaviors throughout life.

Children gain knowledge and beliefs about the world around them through vicarious reinforcement. A child can determine whether their parents actions, such as staying married, getting divorced, or going to marital counseling seem to have more benefits or more consequences (Bandura, 1977; Cowdery & Trucks, 1994; Foshee et al., 1999; Hogben & Byrne, 1998).

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between young adults' attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and marital counseling and parental factors, such as: their parent's attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and marital counseling, and their parent's marital satisfaction, marital status, and behaviors (e.g., going to marital counseling). The analysis will also examine gender and age differences in the patterns of prediction.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this chapter, the research on the following topics will be presented: attitudes toward marriage and divorce; parent's marital satisfaction and status; help seeking behaviors such as seeking marital counseling, and gender differences in attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and marital counseling. The chapter concludes with the research questions of this research study.

#### Attitudes Toward Marriage, Divorce, and Marital Counseling

##### *History of the Research on Attitudes Toward Marriage and Divorce*

Studies on the effect of parent's divorce on their children's attitudes toward marriage and divorce began in the early 1980s. Kinnaird and Gerrard (1986) examined the relationship between mothers' marital status and their daughters' attitudes about marriage, divorce, and premarital sexual activity. Eight hundred and seventy-five females who were enrolled in an introductory psychology class filled out a packet with questions about their family background. The measures in the packet included the Family Atmosphere Questionnaire, the Attitudes Toward Marriage Scale, the Dating and Sexual Activity Questionnaire, and the Attitudes Toward Divorce Scale. The women in the study were separated into Three groups: women with intact families of origin, women with divorced parents, and women from step-families. The mean age in each of these groups was just over 18. The results of their analyses were that the women from the intact

group had more positive attitudes toward marriage than those from divorced and step-families. They also found that females from step-, but not divorced, families had significantly higher accepting attitudes toward divorce than women from intact families.

Similar findings were reported by Long (1987). Her study involved 134 college females examined once in their freshman year and again 18 months later. The hypothesis of the study was that parental divorce and discord would have negative effects on college-age-daughters' attitudes toward marriage and courtship progress. She found that women whose parents had divorced had higher negative attitudes toward marriage than those women whose parents had not divorced.

Ganong, Coleman, and Brown (1981) found different results from the two studies discussed above. Their study included both males and females. The purpose of their study was to determine the effects of disparate family structures on adolescents' marital socialization. The participants consisted of 321 (127 male and 194 female) high school students between the ages of 15 and 18. The subjects were divided into three groups based on the makeup of their family of origin: teenagers from intact families, teenagers from single-parent families, and teenagers from step-families. The instruments Ganong et al. used were the Attitudes Toward Divorce Scale, the Marriage Role Expectations Scale, and the Attitudes Toward Marriage Scale. In their research, they found that teens from step-families had higher positive attitudes toward divorce than teens from single-parent and intact families.

Comparable results to Ganong and colleagues' (1981) research were found in a nationwide study done in Australia by Amato (1988) in which he interviewed 2,544 men



and women between the ages of 18 and 34. The respondents were separated into three familial categories: parents still married; parents separated or divorced; and one or both parents deceased. No significant difference was found between children from divorced and those from intact families with regard to attitudes toward marriage. Children of divorce also were found to be no more likely than other respondents to have positive attitudes about divorce.

It is difficult to come to a clear conclusion about the differences between the research findings described above; however, it is evident that Amato's 1988 study included much older participants (ages 18 to 34 instead of an average age of 18), and this age difference may account for the disparity in attitudes toward marriage and divorce found in these studies. However, Kinnaird and Gerrard (1986) did not find age to be a factor in their study, so the age difference in the above studies may not be the factor that explains the discrepancy in the findings.

None of the studies described above involved the parents of the children. Unless parental attitudes are also measured it is unclear whether the children's attitudes toward marriage and divorce were more highly influenced by parental attitudes rather than the parent's behaviors such as getting a divorce.

#### *Recent Studies on Parent's Marital Satisfaction and Marital Status*

According to social learning theory, children determine which behaviors they will engage in when they observe the effects of the behaviors of important others who serve as models (Bandura, 1977; Cowdery & Trucks, 1994; Hogben & Byrne, 1998). If children

feel that their parents are not benefitting from marriage, and their parents are constantly fighting and are seemingly unhappy, then the children may acquire negative attitudes toward marriage, regardless of the fact that their parents state that marriage is an important part of life. If, on the other hand, children see that their socio-economic status lowers considerably when their parents divorce and their mother has to work long hours but is still unable to buy enough food to eat, the children may have negative attitudes toward divorce, even if their mother states that getting divorced was better than staying married. This section will discuss the effect parental marital status and satisfaction have on children's attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and marital counseling.

Amato and Booth (1991) examined the effect of divorce on attitudes toward divorce and gender roles. Respondents, based on a phone solicited interview, were divided into four categories of family makeup: very happy intact, somewhat happy intact, unhappy intact, and divorced. They found that adult children who felt that their parents had low marital satisfaction had higher positive attitudes toward divorce. In addition, (Long, 1987), found that women who perceived that their parents had low marital satisfaction generally reported higher negative attitudes toward marriage than women who perceived that their parents had higher marital satisfaction.

Similar results were reported by Jennings et al. (1991) in which parent's marital satisfaction (as evidenced by children's reports of the amount of parental conflict) and their children's attitudes about marriage were assessed. Their study consisted of 387 freshman participants from a large southern university. Jennings et al. found that women whose parent's marital satisfaction was average to low had the least favorable attitudes

toward marriage when compared to other participants in the study. In addition, they found that men, whose parents who had the highest marital satisfaction scores, tended to have the highest positive attitudes toward marriage.

A study was done by Landis-Kleine and her colleagues in 1995 to assess parental marital status and their children's attitude toward marriage. Their sample consisted of 188 students, with 104 females and 84 males, with a mean age of 23 for all participants. The participants read a randomly assigned scenario, taken from eight possible scenarios, and answered whether the couple should divorce or stay in the marriage and, if so, which of the four possible solutions for the future of the couple best fit with the scenario (all questions used a 6-point Likert scale). The accompanying survey asked for demographic information such as their marital status, in addition to questions about the participants' marriage (if they were married), their parent's marriage, and the participants' attitudes toward marriage and divorce. They found no significant differences between the answers of the participants from intact families and those from divorced families about attitudes toward marriage and divorce.

In addition, Larson, Benson, Wilson, and Medora (1998) performed a study to investigate the relationship between late adolescent (ages 17 to 21) attitudes toward, and readiness for marriage and certain family-of-origin processes. Nine hundred and seventy-seven single individuals participated in this study, 433 of which were males and 544 were females. Measures used in this study included the Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire, the revised Marital Attitudes Scale, a four-item Likert scale assessing feelings about marriage, and the readiness for marriage subscale of the

Preparation for Marriage questionnaire. They also did not find parent's marital status to have a significant relationship with any attitudes about marriage that were examined.

Gabardi and Rosén (1992) conducted research with similar results to the studies described above. Their study was designed to investigate the difference in various measures of personal relationships between college students from intact and divorced families. The participants included 300 students, between the ages of 18 and 25, taking introductory psychology classes at Colorado State University. The students were given several measures, including a demographic data sheet, the parental conflict scale, the sexuality inventory, the depth of sexual involvement scale, the attitudes toward marriage scale, the relationship belief inventory, the adult self-perception profile, the Rosenberg self-esteem scale, and the Miller Social Intimacy scale. The researchers found no significant differences in attitudes toward marriage between young adults from divorced and those from intact families.

In summary, previous research showed varying results about the effects that parental divorce had on their young adult children's attitudes toward marriage and divorce. This previous research failed to examine the parental attitudes toward marriage and divorce and this may be the cause of the inconsistent findings. Information about whether young adult's attitudes toward marriage and divorce are influenced by their parent's attitudes or behaviors can be better acquired if the parent's attitudes are measured, in addition to the young adult participants. It may be that some of the variation in the studies can be explained by variations in the attitudes that the parents had toward marriage and divorce.

*History of Research on Help Seeking Behaviors,  
Such as Seeking Marital Counseling*

Marital or relationship counseling is important because it can help partners accept each other's differences and understand each other better, enabling them to have a stronger relationship and remain married rather than getting divorced (Pinsof & Wynne, 1995). According to social learning theory, if children see that something positive happens to their parents due to certain behaviors, the children will be more likely to participate in those behaviors in the future. For example, if their parent's marital relationship improved after going to counseling, the children will probably be more likely to attend marital counseling themselves in the future. Similarly, if parents express positive attitudes toward marital counseling to their children, the children will likely develop positive attitudes toward marital counseling themselves (Bandura, 1977; Cowdery & Trucks, 1994; Foshee et al., 1999; Hogben & Byrne, 1998).

Few studies have examined attitudes toward marital counseling. However, research has been done that focuses on help seeking behaviors in general. Therefore help seeking behavior, particularly in the form of seeking counseling for relationship difficulties, is the focus of this section.

It should be stated that none of the following studies attempted to explain where attitudes toward help-seeking stem from. That is, none of the following studies measured the attitudes of the parents or of society in general to examine whether the children's help-seeking behaviors might be linked to these attitudes. This research project attempted to add an important element to the previous research by attempting to determine where these

help-seeking behaviors and attitudes toward getting help from mental health professionals might stem from.

Mau and Jepsen (1990) compared the perceptions of American and Chinese graduate students concerning different problem areas, and described their preferences for people they would go to for help when needed. The sample contained 148 American (80 men and 68 women) and 102 Chinese (62 men and 40 women) graduate students between the ages of 22 and 32, with a mean age of 28.99. They were given a four-page questionnaire that consisted of items designed to determine help-seeking perceptions and behaviors (with three sections including perceptions of problems, ideal helpers for problems, and helper sought for problems) and attitudes toward counselors and counseling processes (this part was not used in the statistical information given in Mau and Jepsen's 1990 article). A counselor was frequently not considered to be a source of help by both Chinese and American graduate students, unless there were major psychological problems, but even then, only American students would choose to get professional assistance.

Similar information was obtained in a study by Tishby et al. (2001), which examined adolescents' willingness to seek help. A sample of 1,415 Israeli adolescents in 7th through 12th grade, was separated into three groups: grades 7-8, grades 9-10, and grades 11-12. The researchers found that the Israeli adolescents had low attitudes toward seeking help from professional counselors.

In summary, both studies found that adolescents had low positive attitudes toward gaining assistance from counselors. Americans only had positive attitudes toward

seeking help from counselors if they had serious mental health issues. Because these Americans were in graduate school, their attitudes toward counseling may not be as heavily influenced by parental attitudes and behaviors as unmarried, younger adults who have lived with their parents in the past year. Thus, in order to determine if attitudes toward counseling are influenced by parent's attitudes, younger adults who have recently lived with their parents will be examined in the proposed study.

*Gender Differences in Attitudes Toward Marriage, Divorce, and Marital Counseling*

Gender roles are socialized in children from a very young age, according to Bandura and Walters (1963). Social learning theorists argue that girls are encouraged, or reinforced, to increase their "feminine" traits and boys to develop their "masculine" traits. These traits may include what attitudes are acceptable for males and females to have. If the findings of Bandura and Walters are correct, there may be gender differences in attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and marital counseling.

Jennings et al. (1991) examined the effects of gender, family structure, and parental conflict on young adults' attitudes toward marriage. The study consisted of 340 single college freshmen between the ages of 18 and 22. One hundred and forty-nine of the participants were males and 191 were females. The students were separated into two groups: those from intact families and those from non-intact families. The participants were given the following measures: a demographic questionnaire, the Hill Favorableness of Attitudes Toward Marriage Scale, and a measure of the students' perceptions of their

natural parent's conflict levels. The study showed that females had higher positive attitudes toward marriage than males did.

Gender differences were found in a study that explored the influence of parental background, childhood living arrangement and individual characteristics on adults' attitudes toward divorce, marriage, and non-marital childbearing (Trent & South, 1992). Trent and South used data from the National Survey of Families and Households, in which 11,192 adults were interviewed between March 1987 and May 1988. The measures included 5 questions that gauged the respondents' attitude toward marriage, divorce, and unmarried motherhood. They also asked questions to determine current sociodemographic status, parental background, and childhood family structure. They found that women have more positive attitudes toward divorce than men.

In contrast to the two studies above, Larson et al. (1998) examining the relationship between late adolescents' attitudes toward, and readiness for, marriage did not find any differences between males and females with regards to attitudes about marriage.

Tishby and colleagues' (2001) study, designed to determine whether adolescents' behaviors and attitudes were correlated with one another, found gender to be a factor in the help-seeking behaviors of Israeli adolescents. Females had more positive attitudes toward seeking help than males. Similarly, Komiya et al. (2000) examined factors correlated with attitudes toward seeking counseling services. Their study consisted of 311 undergraduate students (60% females and 40% males) who were enrolled in an



introductory psychology course in a university in the midwestern United States. They found that males had higher negative attitudes toward seeking help than females.

In addition to these findings, Bringle and Byers (1997) carried out a study in which 222 married volunteers with ages ranging from 18 to 59 were given a questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of the Marital Locus of Control Scale (MLOC) and questions about the likelihood of seeking marital counseling for multiple reasons. They found that women had higher positive attitudes toward counseling than men.

In contrast to the studies about help-seeking behavior described above, Fallon and Bowles (2001) did not find any association between gender and attitudes toward seeking help in their study, which consisted of 196 adolescents (103 girls and 93 boys) that were living with both a male and a female parent and had at least one sibling.

It is unclear as to why Fallon and Bowles (2001) and Larson et al. (1998) did not find gender effects. The participants in the studies conducted by Jennings et al. (1991) and Trent and South (1992) were older than those in the study conducted by Larson et al. This difference in age may have created a divergence in the findings of the studies because it is believed that as people mature and achieve more life experiences (such as meeting new people, moving out on their own, getting married, and getting careers) they may acquire different attitudes than when they were younger (Bandura & Walters, 1963).

Among the studies on attitudes toward seeking help, only one of them (Tishby et al., 2001) consisted of adolescent participants, and this study was performed in a different country, which may create a difference in results due to cultural differences concerning

help seeking behavior. Another reason why Fallon and Bowles' (2001) study may have differed from the studies conducted by Tishby et al. and Komiya et al. (2000) concerns the extremely long questionnaires given to their participants, which may create frustration and lack of accurate responses. Further information about the discrepancy in the findings can be found when the content areas of the questionnaires are examined. The Fallon and Bowles' study asks about general problems, while the studies done by Komiya et al. and Bringle and Byers (1997) focused more on marital and relational problems and the stigma of going to counseling and its effect on attitudes toward seeking help. Further, Trent and South (1992) had very few questions (only five) that were designed to determine not only attitudes toward marriage and divorce, but also attitudes toward unmarried motherhood. These five questions may have been too few to get an adequate picture, especially when looking at three different categories.

#### Conclusion and Research Questions

Differing results are found in the research described above when the relationships among gender, parental status, parental marital satisfaction and attitudes about marriage, counseling, and divorce are taken into account. Some of these differences may be due to differences in research procedures, although the precise reasons are unclear.

Most of the studies conducted in this area did not measure parental attitudes. According to social learning theory, one way children develop attitudes while growing up is through discussions in which the parents teach their children about their attitudes toward various things (Bandura, 1977). For this reason, it will be important to examine

the interaction between young adults' attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and marital counseling and not only their parent's behaviors, but also their parent's attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and marital counseling. Because children are also socialized into different gender roles (Bandura & Walters, 1963), looking at the impact of gender on attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and marital counseling is important.

This study will contribute to the literature because of methodological augmentation. One important difference is the addition of the most influential parent (in each individual young adult participant's life) as a source of information. Also, this will be one of the few studies that will correlate parental attitudes toward marriage, counseling, and divorce with their children's attitudes toward marriage, counseling, and divorce rather than just looking at a single individual's attitudes toward marriage, counseling, and divorce .

According to Stanley and Markman (2003), it is important for couples to have resources, such as marital counselors, to go to so that they can increase their chances of maintaining a healthy marriage. However, if marital counseling is not seen as a viable alternative for young adults to attend when their marriage needs strengthening, then young couples will possibly not get the help they need in order to maintain a healthy, happy marriage. Through determining the attitudes about marital counseling of parents and their young adult children, clinicians can gain a better understanding of the amount of education that may be needed to inform parents and their adult children of the benefits of attending marital counseling. When education is provided about the potential role of marital counseling in maintaining healthy marriages, parents and their children can access

additional resources for creating a thriving relationship with a spouse. In addition, when knowledge is gained about the efficacy of marital counseling, more couples are likely to attend marital counseling when they are struggling, possibly decreasing the rates of divorces.

The following research questions will be examined in this research project:

1. Are young adults' attitudes toward marriage the same as their parent's attitudes toward marriage?
2. Are young adults' attitudes toward divorce the same as their parent's attitudes toward divorce?
3. Are young adults' attitudes toward marital counseling the same as their parent's attitudes toward marital counseling?
4. Are parental attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and marital counseling; parental marital status; gender and age of the young adults; and parental marital satisfaction related to young adults' attitudes toward marriage?
5. Are parental attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and marital counseling; parental marital status; gender and age of the young adults; and parental marital satisfaction related to young adults' attitudes toward divorce?
6. Are parental attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and marital counseling; parental marital status; parental marital satisfaction; gender and age of the young adults; young adults' willingness to attend counseling; and parental use of counseling related to young adults' attitudes toward marital counseling?

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS

This study will be conducted using a survey methodology to determine the relationship between adult children's attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and counseling and their parent's attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and counseling. This chapter will describe the research study's design, sample, data collection procedures, and measures.

#### Design

This research is based on a cross-sectional, correlational research design method (Bohrnstedt & Knoke, 1994). Data were collected cross-sectionally rather than longitudinally because the desire was to determine current attitudes from young adults and their parents, rather than how young adult and parental attitudes change over time. Because quantitative data is more amenable to cross sectional correlational studies, the goal of this research study, quantitative data was used in this study rather than qualitative. Because this research is based on a correlational design, no inferences can be made as to cause and effect (Dooley, 2001).

#### Sample

Students in classes at Utah State University and Weber State University were recruited to be a part of this study. Following a brief class presentation, 400 pairs of surveys (one survey per young adult child and his/her parent) were distributed in

freshman and sophomore general education classes. Of the 400 pairs of surveys returned, 86 pairs met the inclusion criteria (i.e., lived at home 3 months in the past year and never married). Thirty-two pairs of surveys were returned in which the young adult did not meet the inclusion criteria and 26 individual surveys were returned. These thirty-two pairs and 26 individual surveys were not used in this research study. The response rate for the surveys received that were usable was 21.5%.

The parents ranged in age from 36 to 80, with an average age of 48. Approximately 82% of the parents were female and 18% were male. Most of the parents had an annual income of over \$60,000 and had attended at least some college. 64% of the parents stated that they had been divorced before and approximately 69% of the parents were currently married. About 97% of the participants in both the young adult children and parental categories were Caucasian.

The young adult children ranged in age from 16-25, with an average age of about 20 years old. Approximately 74% of the young adult children were female and 26% were male. The annual income for most of the young adult children was under 10,000 with 81% of the participants having a 2-year degree or less. While none of the participants were married, approximately 2% of them were living with a partner. For more detailed information about the parents and young adult children participants, see Table 1.

Table 1

*Demographics of Participants*

Variables	Parents		Children	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Gender				
Female	70	82.40	64	74.40
Male	15	17.60	22	25.60
Annual Income				
Under 10,000	1	1.20	68	79.10
10,000-19,999	3	3.60	15	17.40
20,000-29,999	7	8.30	2	2.30
30,000-39,999	4	4.80	1	1.20
40,000-49,999	12	14.30	--	--
50,000-59,999	15	19.90	--	--
Over 60,000	42	50.00	--	--
Ever been divorced			--	--
Yes	27	36.00	--	--
No	48	64.00	--	--

(table continues)

Variables	Parents		Children	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Marital status				
Married	59	69.40	--	--
Divorced	11	12.90	--	--
Remarried	11	12.90	--	--
Live-in partner	1	1.20	2	2.30
Widowed	1	1.20	--	--
Separated	2	2.40	--	--
Level of education				
Less than high school	1	1.20	4	4.70
High school/ ged	12	14.10	9	10.50
Some college	33	38.80	65	75.60
2-year degree	10	11.80	7	8.10
4-year degree	26	30.60	1	1.20
Master's degree	3	3.50	--	--
Ethnic background				
Hispanic/latino	1	1.20	1	1.20
Caucasian/white	82	96.50	83	96.50
Other	2	2.40	2	2.30



### Data Collection Procedures

Based on information from social learning theory (Bandura, 1977; Cowdery & Trucks, 1994; Foshee et al., 1999; Hogben & Byrne, 1998), it is believed that young adults who have lived with their parents for at least three months within the past year will have been strongly influenced by their parent's attitudes and actions because they have been in the same household. By going into general education classes, it was anticipated that participants who meet the criteria could be found. A second reason for using the general education classes is that all campus majors were represented in an attempt to avoid possible biases from using only social science majors.

With professors' permission, the researcher went into classes, described the research project, and handed out surveys to students willing to participate. Participants were also told that they had the opportunity to be entered into a drawing for a fifty dollar gift certificate at a local bookstore if both surveys were received/post-marked no later than 2 weeks after the survey was handed out in class.

Each participant was given a packet that included an information sheet (see Appendix A), survey (see Appendix B), entry form, and envelope for the young adult and an information sheet, survey, and self-addressed, stamped envelope for one parent. The young adult children were instructed to give a survey to the biological, step-, foster, or adoptive parent who they felt was most influential in their life.

To preserve confidentiality, the parents sent their survey, without their names written on them, to the investigator in the attached self-addressed, stamped envelope.

The son/daughter brought to class the young adult survey, without a name written on it, and an entry form (if they wished to be included in the drawing) in the enclosed envelope 2 weeks after the date the survey packets had been handed out in class. All entry forms were placed in a locked filing cabinet in a locked room to ensure confidentiality.

Three or 4 days before the researcher came back to collect the completed surveys, the instructors were asked to remind their students to bring their surveys to class. After the researcher came to the classrooms, the instructors were e-mailed and encouraged to let the students know that they could give their surveys to the instructors, who would give the surveys to the researcher when she stopped by the teacher's office the following week. Following the completion of the study, the researcher took all of the entry forms and put them in a box. An entry form was randomly drawn out of this box and the certificate to the bookstore, along with a thank you card, was sent to the name and address on the entry form.

The project was reviewed, and accepted, by the Utah State University and Weber State University IRB boards (see Appendix C for a copy of the IRB approval letters). The surveys were approved given that the study posed no more than minimal risk to the subjects. Also, the surveys were anonymous, which ensured confidentiality.

### Measures

Two questionnaires were used for this project, one for young adult children and one for the parents. Along with general demographic information, three measures were used in the young adult questionnaire: the Marital Attitude Scale, the Attitudes Toward

Divorce Scale, and the Attitudes Toward Marital Counseling Scale. The parent's questionnaire was virtually identical to the young adult's questionnaire except that the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale had been added. Full copies of the questionnaires can be found in Appendix A.

### *Demographics*

The demographic questions for the young adult questionnaire inquired about the person's age, sex, current employment status, current annual income, education level, current parental marital status, young adult's current marital status, ethnic background, and current living situation. For the parent questionnaire the demographic questions asked were: age, sex, race, current employment status, current household annual income, education level, and current marital status.

### *Marital Satisfaction*

The Kansas Marital Satisfaction scale (KMS) (Schumm, Jurich, & Bollman, 1990) is frequently used to assess marital satisfaction. The scale is short, consisting of only three questions based on a 7-point Likert scale, but has established validity and reliability scores, thus making it a quick, reliable source of information for clinicians.

Schumm et al. (1986) assessed the concurrent validity of the KMS against the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) and the Quality Marriage Index (QMI). Both the DAS and QMI have established validity and reliability scores. The KMS had high validity rates when compared to the QMI and the DAS (.91 and .83, respectively). Internal reliability

for the study conducted by Schumm et al. was high for the KMS as well, receiving an alpha score of .93.

#### *Attitudes Toward Marriage*

Braaten and Rosén developed the Marital Attitudes Scale (MAS) in 1998. This measure consisted of 23 four-point Likert type scale questions designed to determine attitudes toward marriage. Participants with higher scores were assumed to have more positive attitudes toward marriage.

The coefficient alpha for internal reliability of the MAS was determined by Braaten and Rosén (1998) to be .82. Test-retest reliability was conducted by Bassett, Braaten and Rosén in 1999. They gave the measure to 206 participants (77 male and 129 female) twice, with a 6-week interval between testing. Test-retest correlation for the entire sample was .85. When the participants were divided by gender, test-retest reliability for females was .87 and for males was .81. When the MAS was correlated with the Attitudes Toward Marriage Scale (ATM) by Braaten and Rosén in 1998 the MAS was found to be highly correlated with the ATM with an  $r$  of .77, providing concurrent validity.

#### *Attitudes Toward Divorce*

The Attitudes Toward Divorce scale was developed by Kinnaird and Gerrard in 1986. The scale consisted of 12 five-point Likert scale questions. After the negatively worded items were reversed, higher scores indicated more positive attitudes toward divorce.

Kinnaird and Gerrard (1986) established internal consistency of the Attitudes Toward Divorce scale with a Cronbach alpha of .77 and test-retest reliability, with a 2-week interval between testing, produced a Pearson correlation of .86. No reports of validity were found.

#### *Attitudes Toward Marital Counseling*

The questions for the young adult and parental questionnaires were developed by the author for this study to determine the attitudes toward marital counseling of parents and their young adult children. The six questions were based on a 4-point Likert scale and included the following questions: (1) "People should be able to handle their personal or relationship problems without the help of a counselor," (2) "Counseling is an effective way to learn skills needed to deal with personal or relationship problems," (3) "People who attend counseling are weak," (4) "I would not attend counseling for marital problems," (5) "If people are unhappy in their marriage, they should get help from a professional counselor," and (6) "Getting help from a counselor when I have marital difficulties will result in long-term positive changes in my marital relationship." After reverse coding, higher scores represented positive attitudes toward counseling. In addition, both the parents and the young adults' were asked if they had ever attended professional counseling and, if so, whether or not they had a positive experience. They were also asked whether they would attend professional counseling in the future.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

This chapter presents how the data were analyzed and reports the reliability of the measures used in this study. In addition, the findings of the study are presented.

#### Analysis of the Data

Most of the data consisted of nominal variables except for the questions where participants were asked such things as age, number of sessions attended, etc., which were interval/ratio data. Further, while ordered discrete variables, such as 5- or 7-point Likert scale questions, are technically ordinal variables, common practice treats these as interval variables, which could be used in more powerful statistical analyses such as multiple regression (Bohrnstedt & Knoke, 1994).

After the data were entered, reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha for each scale. Questions did not need to be deleted to make the survey more reliable, as the reliability scores were relatively high. Any missing data were eliminated listwise. The scales that were used included: the Parental Marital Satisfaction Scale (PMSS), the Attitudes Toward Divorce Scale (ATDS), the Attitudes Toward Marriage Scale (ATMS), and the Attitudes Toward Marital Counseling Scale (ATMCS). Reliability coefficients are provided for all scales that were used in this research project.

## Reliability of the Scales

According to Bohrnstedt and Knoke (1994), a measure with an alpha score of .70 or higher is considered to have acceptable internal reliability. As can be seen in Table 2, all of the reliability scores for the five measures used in this research project are above the required acceptability level.

The Attitudes Toward Marriage Scale (for both parent and young adult children), Attitudes Toward Divorce Scale (for both parent and young adult children), and Parental Marital Satisfaction Scale all had higher Chronbach's alpha scores in this research study

Table 2

*Cronbach's Alpha for Scales (N = 85 unless otherwise specified)*

Scale	Parents	Young Adult Children
Attitudes Toward Marriage Scale (ATMS)	.85 <sup>a</sup>	.83 <sup>b</sup>
Attitudes Toward Divorce Scale (ATDS)	.82	.82
Attitudes Toward Marital Counseling Scale (ATMCS)	.77	.74 <sup>c</sup>
Parental Marital Satisfaction Scale (PMSS)	.97 <sup>d</sup>	

*Note.* Listwise deletion based on all variables in each scale.  $N^a = 75$ ;  $N^b = 81$ ;  $N^c = 84$ ;  $N^d = 66$  (number of participants who were married and able to answer the questions).

than had been found in previous research studies. The attitudes toward marital counseling scale was created for this research project and received alpha scores of .77 (parents) and .74 (young adult children). While these alpha scores are lower than the other scales, they are still within acceptable internal reliability levels.

#### Research Question One

Because paired data were obtained, young adults' attitudes were directly compared to their own parent's attitudes. Research question one took advantage of the paired data which was examined using a paired *t* test. This research question was tested using a two-tailed *t* test as the question does not have a specific direction.

Research question one: "Are young adults' attitudes toward marriage the same as their parent's attitudes toward marriage?" Young adult children's attitudes toward marriage (ATMS) were not the same as their parent's attitudes toward marriage (ATMS). In fact, when parental attitudes toward marriage were compared with their young adult children's attitudes toward marriage, the *t* test determined that the chance that they would have the same attitudes toward marriage is less than 1%. Young adult children's attitudes toward marriage were more positive than their parent's attitudes toward marriage.

#### Research Question Two

Paired data were also obtained for research question two, thus, a paired *t* test was used to examine research question number two.

Research question two: "Are young adults' attitudes toward divorce the same as



Table 3

*Paired Samples Statistics for Parental and Young Adult Children's Attitudes Toward Marriage, Divorce, and Marital Counseling (N = 86)*

Scale Name	Children		Parents		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Attitudes Toward Marriage Scale	42.61	7.60	40.26	6.81	2.61	.01
Attitudes Toward Divorce Scale	46.50	7.26	44.86	7.66	1.96	.05
Attitudes Toward Marital Counseling Scale	10.23	2.40	10.17	2.54	.172	.86

their parent's attitudes toward divorce?" Young adult children's attitudes toward divorce were also not the same as their parent's attitudes toward divorce (see table 3). The chance that young adults' attitudes toward divorce would be the same as their parents was, in fact, less than 5%. Young adult children had more positive attitudes toward divorce than their parents.

#### Research Question Three

A paired *t* test was also used with the paired data available for research question three. Research question three: "Are young adults' attitudes toward marital counseling the same as their parent's attitudes toward marital counseling?" was examined using both the parental and the young adult ATMCSs (see Table 3). Young adult children's attitudes toward marital counseling were the same as their parent's attitudes toward marital counseling.

#### Research Question Four Through Six Review and Changes

Research questions four through six were examined using stepwise multiple regression. Multiple regression was used because it could easily measure two subpopulations, such as parents and adult children, allowing for more clear interpretations of the results and statistical control of other variables.

According to Grimm and Yarnold (1995) in multiple regression the relationships between the predicting variables need to be linear and all relevant predictors needed to be included, and no irrelevant predictors should be included. All important variables needed to be included because leaving out important variables may have caused the resulting statistical information to be misleading. Adding irrelevant information, does not have much effect on statistical results (Grimm & Yarnold). All of the three requirements listed above were met, so multiple regressions were used for research questions four through six.

When a multiple regression analysis was carried out for research questions four and five the predictors for the equations accounted for 44.6% (a strong relationship) and 28.6% (a moderate relationship) of the variance in young adults' attitudes toward marriage (Bohnstedt & Knoke, 1994). Because of these moderate to strong relationships, a correlation matrix was created to determine if multicollinearity might have been a factor in the high  $R^2$  values for the regression formulas. According to Bohnstedt and Knoke, distortion in the correlation between the predictor and the dependent

variables can occur when the predictors are highly correlated, in other words, when multicollinearity occurs.

The intercorrelation of the predictor variables were examined using tolerance value. Tolerance is  $1-R^2$  for the regression of each independent variable on all other independent variables. In other words, the tolerance value is the proportion of what that independent variable explains that is not being explained by other independent variables in the model. If the tolerance of an independent variable is, for instance, less than .60 that means 40% of what that independent variable would explain has been explained by the other independent variables. This would indicate that you have multicollinearity problems. As a general rule, tolerance levels of below .20 are considered to have multicollinearity problems. It is preferred to have a level of at least .60 for multicollinearity to not be considered a problem. Through looking at the tolerance levels for multiple regression equations one and two, it appeared that the ATMS (attitudes toward marriage scale) tolerance level was close to falling below the acceptable range of .60 and above. After looking at the results for the regression equations, it was decided that since the relationship between young adult attitudes toward marriage and divorce were not correlated with parental attitudes toward marriage, the removal of the ATMS variable would not create a statistical problem in the multiple regression equations. See Table 4 for the tolerance levels before and after the corrections.

As with research questions four and five, there were concerns with the high  $R^2$  value of research question number six (41.6%, a strong relationship) (Bohrnstedt & Knoke, 1994). There were several variables that were below the accepted tolerance level:

Table 4

*Summary of Correlation Matrix for Variables in the First and Second Multiple**Regression Equations*

	Tolerance level colinearity statistics	
	Before	After
Parental Attitudes Toward Divorce Scale	.77	.89
Parental Marital Satisfaction Scale	.85	.94
Young adult gender	.92	.97
Parental Attitudes Toward Marriage Scale	.61	--
Parents have been divorced	.85	.88
Young adult age	.78	.82
Parental Attitudes Toward Counseling Scale	.82	.90

ATMS, whether the parents were ever divorced, and parental attendance in counseling. After taking out the variables ATMS and whether the parents were ever divorced, neither of which were shown in previous analyses to have an effect on young adults' attitudes toward counseling, all of the tolerance levels were in acceptable ranges. See Table 5 for the list of tolerance levels before and after the corrections.

The multiple equations were analyzed using multiple regressions with listwise elimination of variables; therefore if any participant did not complete the entire sequence of questions in each scale, that person's responses were deleted from the multiple regression equation entirely. This resulted in some rather low levels of respondents for

Table 5

*Summary of Correlation Matrix for Variables in the Third Multiple Regression Equation*

	Tolerance level colinearity statistics	
	Before	After
Young adults' willingness to attend counseling in the future	.75	.79
Parental attendance in counseling	.56	.74
Parental Attitudes Toward Divorce Scale	.74	--
Parental Marital Satisfaction Scale	.79	--
Young adult gender	.80	.84
Parental Attitudes Toward Marriage Scale	.59	.83
Parents have been divorced	.59	--
Young adult age	.75	.81
Parental Attitudes Toward Counseling Scale	.68	.70

the multiple regression equations which had 43 respondents for attitudes toward marriage and attitudes toward divorce. Because of this, the researcher took out variables, which did not have a significant relationship with the dependent variable in each equation, to increase the respondent total in each equation. In research question four and five, the researcher removed the parental marital satisfaction and parents have been divorced variables resulting in a final respondent level of 60 for each equation.

#### Research Question Four Results

Research question four: "Are parental attitudes toward marriage, divorce, marital counseling; parental marital status; parental marital satisfaction; gender and age of the young adults; and parental use of counseling related to young adults' attitudes toward marriage?" The independent variables included the parental scores on the ATDS, the ATMCS, and the young adult children's gender and age. The dependent variable was the young adults' scores on the ATMS.

Research question number four was answered using multiple regression (see Table 6). The predictors for the multiple regression equation used to answer question number four accounts for 23.5%, indicating a moderate relationship, of the variance in young adult children's attitudes toward marriage (Bohrnstedt, & Knoke, 1994). Other sources account for 76.5% of the remaining variance in young adult children's attitudes toward marriage.

Parental attitudes toward divorce is a more potent predictor for young adult attitudes toward marriage than the following predictors: parental attitudes toward counseling, young adult gender, and young adult age. For each standard deviation difference in parental attitudes toward divorce, controlling for the other variables listed above, we can expect an average of a  $-.47$  standard deviation change in young adult attitudes toward marriage. Based on this information the answer to research question number four is that only parental attitudes toward divorce is related to young adults' attitudes toward marriage. There is a negative relationship between these two variables.

Table 6

*Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Young Adult Attitudes Toward Marriage (N = 60)*

	B	SE B	$\beta$	Sig.
Parental Attitudes Toward Divorce Scale	-.40	.10	-.47	.00
Young adult gender	1.00	1.65	.07	.55
Parental Attitudes Toward Counseling Scale	.13	.32	.05	.68
Young adult age	-.11	.35	-.04	.76

Note.  $R^2 = .235$ . Standard Error of the Estimate = 5.711

This means that when parents have high positive attitudes toward divorce, their young adult children have low positive attitudes toward marriage.

#### Research Question Five Results

Multiple regression was also used to analyze the data for research question five: "Are parental attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and marital counseling; parental marital status; parental marital satisfaction; gender and age of the young adults; and parental use of counseling related to young adults' attitudes toward divorce?" The independent variables included the parental scores on the ATDS, the ATMCS, and the young adult children's gender and age. The dependent variable was the young adults' survey scores on the ATDS.

Table 7

*Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Young Adult Attitudes Toward Divorce (N = 60)*

	B	SE B	$\beta$	Sig.
Parental Attitudes Toward Divorce Scale	.46	.12	.469	.00
Young adult gender	1.02	1.98	.06	.61
Young adult age	.13	.41	.40	.76
Parental Attitudes Toward Counseling Scale	.01	.38	.00	.98

*Note.*  $R^2 = .219$ . Standard Error the Estimate = 6.849

The independent variables that were used in this equation explained 21.9% of the variance of young adult children's attitudes toward divorce (see Table 7; Bohmstedt & Knoke, 1994). Thus, other sources must account for 78.1% of the remaining variance in young adult children's attitudes toward divorce.

As with research question number four, parental attitudes toward divorce were a more potent predictor for young adult children's attitudes toward divorce than the following variables: parental attitudes toward counseling, the age of the young adult children, and the gender of the young adult children. For each standard deviation difference in parental attitudes toward divorce, controlling for the other variables listed above, we can expect an average of a .490 standard deviation change in young adult children's attitudes toward divorce. Therefore, the answer to research question number five is that parental attitudes toward divorce is the only factor related to young adult children's attitudes toward divorce.



### Research Question Six Results

Multiple regression was also be used to analyze the data for research question six: "Are parental attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and marital counseling; parental marital status; parental marital satisfaction; gender and age of the young adults; young adults' willingness to attend counseling; and parental use of counseling related to young adults' attitudes toward divorce?" The independent variables included the parental scores on the ATDS, the ATMCS, past parental attendance in counseling, the young adult children's willingness to attend counseling in the future, and the young adult children's gender and age. The dependent variable was the young adults' survey scores on the ATDS.

In this equation 25% of the variance of young adult children's attitudes toward marital counseling was accounted for by the independent variables that were used in this equation (see Table 8; Bohrnstedt & Knoke, 1994). Because of this, 75% of the remaining variance in young adult children's attitudes toward marital counseling can be explained by other variables.

In the multiple regression equation for this research question, the willingness of the young adult children to attend counseling in the future was more a potent predictor for young adult children's attitudes toward marital counseling than the following variables: parental attitudes toward counseling, the age of the young adult children, the gender of the young adult children, parental attitudes toward divorce, and the parental attendance in counseling (see Table 8). For each standard deviation difference in the young adult

Table 8

*Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Young Adult Attitudes Toward Marital Counseling (N = 59)*

	B	SE B	$\beta$	Sig.
Young adults' willingness to attend counseling in				
the future	-4.61	1.88	-.33	.02
Young adults' gender	.55	.72	.10	.45
Parental Attitudes Toward Divorce Scale	-.04	.05	-.11	.43
Parental Attitudes Toward Counseling Scale	.22	.15	.21	.16
Parental attendance in counseling	.75	.70	.15	.29
Young adults' age	-.09	.16	-.08	.57

Note.  $R^2 = .250$ . Standard Error of the Estimate = 2.320

children's willingness to attend counseling in the future, controlling for the other variables listed above, we can expect an average of a -.447 standard deviation change in young adult attitudes toward divorce. The only statistically significant relationship in this multiple regression is the relationship between the young adult attitudes toward marital counseling and their willingness to attend counseling in the future. There is a negative relationship between these two variables. Therefore, according to this study, the more willing a person is to say they will go to counseling, the higher their negative attitudes toward counseling are.

### Systematic Patterns for Non-Response

Because there was such a high rate of people who did not respond to the question of whether they had ever been divorced, an evaluation was done on whether there were patterns between people who did not answer the "Have you ever been divorced?" question and their response on other parts of the survey. The variables ATDS (attitudes toward divorce scale) and PMSS (parental marital satisfaction scale) were both significantly different. Those participants who skipped the "Have you ever been divorced?" question had higher scores on the ATDS and PMSS. This may indicate that there was some selection bias in the way the questions were answered. These participants may or may not have been divorced, but it seems that they had higher positive attitudes toward divorce, whether or not they have ever been divorced. The people who had high positive attitudes toward divorce may have been divorced and felt it was a positive experience because their current marital satisfaction is so high and they would not have married their current partner if they had not gotten a divorce. The participants who didn't answer the question about their divorce status may have felt that the question about divorce was too personal. They may also have rated their marital satisfaction high because they felt that they needed to show they had high marital satisfaction even though they felt positively about divorce. It may also mean that the people who did not answer the question of their divorce status were not ever divorced, and while they felt that divorce was a viable option in certain circumstances, they were happy with their spouse and were not planning on getting a divorce at this time.

CHAPTER V  
SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

While some of the findings in this study were predicted based on previous research, there were several unexpected and interesting results that resulted from this research. This chapter will summarize and discuss the results, comment on the limitations of this study, make recommendations for future studies, and state the possible implications these findings have for the mental health field.

Research Question One

No research has been done in the past comparing parent's attitude toward divorce, marital counseling, and marriage to their young adult children's attitudes toward divorce, marital counseling, and marriage. Through the research completed in this study, it was found that young adult children's attitudes toward marriage differed from their parent's attitudes toward marriage. If this difference is looked at through the perspective of social learning theory, it is possible that the people that the young adults in this study chose as role models were their peers, popular actors and actresses, or modern society as a whole, rather than their parents (Bandura, 1977; Cowdery & Trucks, 1994; Hogben & Byrne, 1998). These peers or people in the popular society may have different attitudes than the young adults' parents do, thus creating a divergence in parental and young adult children's attitudes. Young adults going to college might also be exposed to new ideas through school and their professors. Looking at young adult children's perceptions of the

attitudes toward marriage of society, their peers, their professors, and popular people in the media might help shed some light on whether young adults have chosen these subjects as role models from which they create their attitudes toward marriage.

It is possible to apply findings from a study on the development of ethnic identity to the findings regarding research questions one through three in this current study. Davey, Fish, Askew, and Robila (2003) examined how Jewish teenagers and young adults acquire their ethnic identity when taking into account their parent's attitudes toward the religious and cultural aspects of Jewish life and the influence that friendships can have on the young adults' and teenagers' attitudes toward the religious and cultural aspects of Jewish life.

According to Marcia (1966), everyone goes through some sort of identity development or ego identity development. Marcia coined four stages of ego identity development: achievement, moratorium, foreclosure, and diffusion. The achievement stage is reached when a person has actively explored the beliefs of family, friends, and society as a whole and has established commitments to their beliefs based on this exploration. The moratorium stage is defined as the active questioning and exploration of the beliefs of family and friends in an effort to determine for themselves what they believe. Foreclosed individuals have beliefs that are either gained from their friends or family members. These attitudes, however, seem to be accepted rather than evaluated by those individuals to determine if that is really how they feel. The diffusion stage is when people are not committed to any particular beliefs, but do not wish to explore their alternatives. These people might choose to express completely different beliefs from

their parents, but do not truly have these different beliefs and will not examine their own professed beliefs or their parent's professed beliefs to determine what they truly agree with.

Davey et al. (2003) found similar modes of identity development in their study on adolescents' beliefs about their ethnicity and religion. Davey et al. used different words to describe their identity development stages, but found that, while Marcia's (1966) research is rather old, the concepts and theory can still be applied to identity and belief development today.

It is possible that the differences in attitudes toward marriage between young adult children and their parents found in this study might be because the young adult children are in different stages of determining their beliefs. It would be interesting to add a component used to determine what stage of identity development the young adult children are currently going through into future studies determining the intergenerational transmission of attitudes. This might shed more light on where these attitudes come from.

#### Research Question Two

Research in this study determined that young adult attitudes toward divorce were not the same as their parent's attitudes toward divorce. Because no research has been done in which parents and their children's attitudes toward divorce have been compared, there is no research to base these conclusions on. The differences in attitudes, as noted in the section above, may be due to identity development, exposure to college, reaching the

age where people start taking relationships more seriously etc. (Bandura, 1977; Cowdery & Trucks, 1994; Davey et al., 2003; Hogben & Byrne, 1998; Marica, 1966). Again, knowing the stage of identity formation that these young adult children are in might be helpful in determining the reasons for the differences in attitudes toward divorce between the parents and their young adult children.

### Research Question Three

Young adults' attitudes toward marital counseling was found to be the same as their parent's attitudes toward counseling, according to the research done in this study. It is not clear why young adult children's attitudes toward counseling would be the same as their parent's attitudes toward counseling when young adult children's attitudes toward marriage and divorce are dissimilar. If the assumption is correct that, according to social learning theory, teenagers and young adults have models outside of their home in which to gain their attitudes and behaviors, then the young adult's attitudes toward counseling should also be divergent from their parent's attitudes. More research will need to be done to determine why the parent's and children's attitudes toward counseling are the same, while their attitudes toward marriage and divorce are divergent. It may be that this portion of a person's identity is less important, and therefore they are in the unexamined stage of identity development, just accepting their parent's attitudes toward counseling. However, they may also be in one of the other three stages of development. Perhaps there were not enough questions about attitudes toward counseling to fully assess the true attitudes of the participants toward marital counseling. It is also possible that help

seeking behaviors can be a trait which has some genetic ties and cannot be fully attributed to environmental effects.

#### Research Question Four

Parental attitudes toward divorce was the only predictor for young adult children's attitudes toward marriage. Apparently, the more positive the parent's attitudes were toward divorce, the more negative the young adult children's attitudes were toward marriage. No correlation was found between parental attitudes toward marriage or counseling and young adult children's attitudes toward marriage. There was no previous research done based on parental attitudes affecting their children's attitudes toward marriage, so there are no studies to compare these findings to.

Amato and Booth (1991), Jennings et al. (1991), and Long (1987) found that parental marital satisfaction (as determined by asking for the children's perceptions of their parent's marital satisfaction) was not related to the children's attitudes toward marriage. Based on the information from this research project, even when asking the parents for their own perceptions of their marital satisfaction, parental marital satisfaction did not affect their young adult children's attitudes toward marriage. Thus, the findings in this research project are consistent with the findings of Amato and Booth, Jennings et al., and Long.

Gender was not found to be related to young adult children's attitudes toward marriage in this study. These finding support Larson and colleagues (1998) findings who found no correlation between gender and attitudes toward marriage. However, they



contradict the findings of Jennings et al. (1991) who did find that gender accounted for differences in attitudes toward marriage. The differences in findings might be that Larson et al. and this study included younger ages of participants than the study done by Jennings et al. More studies will need to be conducted with a variety of samples to determine whether or not gender has an effect on attitudes toward marriage.

Amato (1988), Gabardi and Rosén (1992), Landis-Kleine et al. (1995), and Larson et al. (1998) did not find a difference between divorced and intact families in attitudes toward marriage. However, Kinnaird and Gerrard (1986) and Long (1987) did find a difference in attitudes toward marriage when participants from intact families were compared to divorced families. There are two main difference in the studies above that might have created the difference in findings. First, the studies that found differences in attitudes toward marriage between participants from intact families and those from divorced families are comprised of female participants only, the studies that did not find a difference in attitudes included both male and female participants. Second, the studies that found a difference in attitudes toward divorce were older studies done in the mid to late 80s, while the studies that did not find a difference in attitudes were done primarily in the 90s. During the four to 10 years between the studies described above, the media began to portray divorce as more acceptable. Cohabitation and pre-marital sex also became more acceptable during this time and were portrayed in television shows. Prenuptial agreements became more popular, indicating that marriage was to be thought of more as a temporary agreement, rather than a long-term commitment. In addition, women became more prolific in the work force, allowing them to leave unhappy

relationships, as they were no longer so dependent on their husband's income. All of these changes in society might have had an effect on the attitudes toward divorce in the respondents in the studies described above. As with the above studies which were done more recently and included both males and females in their research, this research study did not find a statistically significant difference in attitudes toward marriage between participants whose parents were divorced and those whose parents were not divorced supporting the first named studies above.

#### Research Question Five

This study found that when parental attitudes toward divorce is more positive, young adult attitudes toward divorce is also more positive. This is not to say that their attitudes are the same, however, as research questions number two determined that their attitudes are, in fact, not the same. Therefore, while parental attitudes toward divorce may affect their young adult children's attitudes toward divorce, there are obviously other factors involved in determining young adult's attitudes toward divorce.

Parental attitudes toward counseling did not predict young adults' attitudes toward divorce. No other research has been done comparing parental attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and counseling, and young adult children's attitudes toward divorce, so these findings cannot be compared with other research. Parental marital satisfaction (whether determined through children's or parent's accounts) has not been compared with young adult children's attitudes toward divorce either. In this research project, parental marital satisfaction was not correlated with young adult children's attitudes toward divorce.

The above findings might be better explained in future research by determining the current stage of identity development of the respondents (Davey et al., 2003; Marcia, 1966). Other information as to the possible other effects of young adult children's attitudes might be found by determining what the young adult children's perspectives are on the attitudes toward divorce of their peers and popular societal beliefs. This would help to determine if the young adults have chosen their friends and society as models of behavior rather than their parents, as is common among teenagers and young adults (Bandura, 1977; Cowdery & Trucks, 1994; Hogben & Byrne, 1998).

Trent and South (1992) found gender differences in attitudes toward divorce. This research project, however, did not find any gender differences in young adult children's attitudes toward divorce. This may be due to the differences in the way attitudes toward divorce were determined. Trent and South had a very large sample ( $N = 11,192$ ). According to Bohrnstedt and Knoke (1994, p. 23), "A variable whose relationship with another is weak may be statistically significant only because a large sample size enables us to detect this connection." This phenomenon may have occurred in the research conducted by Trent and South. This may especially be true considering that Trent and South had only five questions designed to examine three different attitudes (attitudes toward divorce, marriage, and non-marital childbearing). Five questions to determine three different attitudes is very low. One reason is that a factor analysis, a measure of how many different constructs are being measured in each survey, cannot be done. If three different factors, or constructs, cannot be statistically established because there are not enough questions to do a factor analysis, then the survey has potential

problems with construct validity (Dooley, 2001). Based on the concern that the study may not be valid and the fact that there was a high number of participants, which might find statistical significance in any survey given, it is difficult to determine whether the information found in the Trent and South study can be accepted as valid.

This research study had relatively few participants (86 pairs), eliminating the possibility that statistically significant findings can be determined based solely on size. This research project also used 12 questions from a measure with established reliability and validity. More research using the same questions used in this research project and a larger sample may be able to determine whether or not gender truly has an effect on attitudes toward divorce.

This research project supported the findings of Amato (1988) and Landis-Kleine et al. (1995) that there was no difference in attitudes toward divorce when compared to individuals from divorced and intact families. These findings differ from Kinnaird and Gerrard (1986) and Ganong et al. (1981) who did find a difference in attitudes toward divorce based on whether the participants' parents had divorced. The possible reason for the differences in attitudes is that the research projects, including this research project, who found no differences had tested older participants than the studies who found differences in attitudes toward divorce between participants from intact and divorced families.

### Research Question Six

Mau and Jepsen (1990) and Tishby et al. (2001) found that attitudes toward counseling were negative. This research project also found that attitudes toward counseling are generally negative (with an average score of 10 out of 24). However, this does not tell us what might affect attitudes toward counseling, the goal of this research project. According to this research project's findings, willingness to attend counseling in the future was the only correlate of young adult children's attitudes toward counseling. However, this correlation was negative, meaning that the more willing the participants said that they were to participate in counseling in the future, the more negative their attitudes toward counseling were. If this is the case, then studies which use people's reports of willingness to attend counseling as a way to determine attitudes toward counseling, may be getting skewed results. It is possible that the participants may have been answering the question about willingness to attend marital counseling in what they felt was a socially acceptable way and answered the questions about their attitudes toward marriage truthfully, or vice versa. If this is the case, future research will need to be careful that their questions to determine attitudes toward counseling are not worded in a way which might create the desire in participants to answer in a socially acceptable manner.

Gender was not found to make a difference in attitudes toward counseling in Fallon and Bowles' (2001) study; however, gender was found to be correlated with attitudes toward counseling by Bringle and Byers (1997) and Komiya et al. (2000). This

research study supports the findings of Fallon and Bowles, in that gender did not affect the young adults' attitudes toward counseling. The Bringle and Byers research project consisted of married individuals between the ages of 18-59, with a mean age of 32.2 years old while the Fallon and Bowles research study consisted of 246 adolescents with a mean age of 12.36 years and the Komiya et al. study consisted of 311 undergraduate students with a mean age of 18.4. In this study, only 86 young adult children participated with a mean age of 20. All of the studies had different ways of measuring attitudes toward counseling. It is unclear why there are discrepancies in the findings, as the Fallon and Bowles study is just as different from this study as Komiya et al. and the Bringle and Byers study. It seemed that the population of the Komiya et al. study was more similar to this study, however, Komiya et al. found that gender made a difference, while this study did not find gender to make a difference. Perhaps Komiya and others' higher number of participants was what helped create the gender difference. More research will need to be done to determine why these findings were so divergent.

#### Age in Research Questions One Through Six

A possibility brought up earlier in this research study was that age was what might have accounted for the difference in findings about attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and counseling. However, in this research study, there was no difference found in attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and counseling when age was taken into account.

### Implications

Obviously more research can be done on the effects of attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and counseling. Hopefully this research project can be helpful in creating further research so that mental health professionals and counselors can understand what avenues they can pursue to help decrease the amount of divorce in this country, possibly with the help of marital and family counseling.

Because parental attitudes toward divorce seems to have such an effect on their young adult children's attitudes toward marriage and divorce, education of the parental population, and society as a whole about divorce may have an effect on young adult children's attitudes toward divorce. While this might not have an effect on people's attitudes, it may help members of society to understand the impact of divorce. Future longitudinal research needs to be done on further effects of attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and counseling before definite educational programs can be created. It would be important to have a longitudinal study so that questions such as identity development and the influence of friends and society can be determined by looking at the change in the young adults' attitudes over time. This further research on the predictors of attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and counseling will help mental health professionals understand more precisely what their educational and research endeavors should be focused on.

Because divorce seems to be a popular topic in the mental health field (there is even an entire journal dedicated to divorce and remarriage), it is necessary to discuss

what implications this study might have in the progression of future studies about divorce.

One way that therapists can help to change the fact that parental attitudes toward divorce have such a strong impact on young adults' attitudes toward marriage and divorce, is to help the young adult children to differentiate from their family of origin. This is a concept derived from Bowenian therapy (Friedman, 1991; Kerr & Bowen, 1988; Nichols & Scharzt, 2001). Bowen believed that when a person can control their emotional responses to family members, and can reflect on what is happening and what they believe, rather than what their family believes, they are differentiated. Through helping clients to differentiate from their family of origin, and society's views as well, the client is better able to determine whether or not their attitudes toward marriage and divorce need to change (Friedman; Kerr & Bowen; Nichols & Scharzt). It would be helpful for a clinician working from a Bowenian perspective to test both the client's attitudes and their parent's attitudes. This would help the clinician gain a better understanding of whether there seems to be any intergenerational transmission of beliefs or if there is enough differentiation between the client and his or her family of origin for the client to have healthy relationships with the people in his or her life.

Another important subject to be understood by a future clinician is the concept of the family life cycle. Through an understanding of the family life cycle we can understand how the family affects the identity formation of young adults. According to Carter and McGoldrick (1999), young adulthood is the time when individuals are allowed to be more introspective and determine what their goals, ideals, beliefs, and so forth, will



be in their later lives. During this time of introspection, young adults tend to look toward peers and mentors, such as college professors, for additional thoughts and ideas with which to make better, more informed decisions. Often, however, many of the ideas that individuals learned growing up are the ideas that the individuals believe, or take to heart when they grow older. By better understanding the stage of the family life cycle that the clinician's clients are currently involved in, the clinician can better take into account the possible reasons for some of the responses of the clients when they are being administered tests or are being asked routine assessment questions. Thus, the clinicians will be better able to give the proper advice to, or execute the correct intervention for, their client(s).

This research study not only gives some information on the formation of young adult children's attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and counseling, but it also offers a stepping stone for future research. While future research may never be able to fully determine what affects attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and counseling, at least more information will be gleaned about this topic, allowing for the creation of more educational programs and increasingly better therapy techniques.

#### Limitations and Recommendations

There were several limitations in this study that could be remedied in future studies in order to gain a clearer picture of attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and counseling. First, the respondents of this research project had similar ethnic, educational, and socioeconomic backgrounds. All of the participants came from a relatively high

socioeconomic status household, which may have created bias in their answers to the survey questions. The population of this study was also primarily female, creating a nonrepresentative sample. Replicating this survey with people outside of a college setting would help to eliminate this limitation. In addition, there was a relatively low response rate in this research project and a large sample of the parents who responded had been divorce previously (64%), which might create skewed results, as the participants who responded might be similar in attitudes and behaviors. Having the extra data from the people who failed to turn in their surveys might have resulted in more diverse results to do having a more diverse population of participants. Different collection procedures might make a difference in this response rate for future studies.

The multiple regression analyses performed in this research project reported that 23.5%, 21.9%, and 25.0% of the variance in attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and counseling (respectively) were accounted for in the variables chosen for this research project, relatively high values for research done in the social science field.

One idea to account for more of the variance in this study is to have all parents of the young adult children (step-, biological, adoptive, foster) answer the questions in the survey. This would be an expensive, time consuming, and difficult endeavor, but it may prove quite useful in eliminating several of the questions that arose from the results of this study. In addition, because the state of Utah is primarily of one religion it might be helpful to have the research done in several states so that different religions are included in the research. Attitudes of the society toward marriage, divorce, and counseling may play a big part in young adult children's attitude toward marriage, divorce, and

counseling. Measuring the attitudes of society, or the participants' perceptions of the attitudes of society, toward these topics may account for a large part of the variance.

Another recommendation for future research studies is to include a more robust measure for attitudes toward counseling, as five questions may not have been enough to adequately measure the respondents' attitudes toward counseling. It would also be important in future studies to focus more on the relationship between counseling attitudes and behaviors. Understanding more about what behaviors and attitudes actually correlate to attitudes toward marital counseling might be better obtained if questions about their attitudes toward marital counseling were not paired with questions regarding attitudes toward other topics.

This study found that parental attitudes toward divorce affects their young adult children's attitudes toward divorce. It seems a logical step to next determine whether the attitudes that parents have toward divorce actually has an effect on whether their children get divorced later in life.

This research project can aid in the creation of new research on the effectiveness of marriage and family therapy. It might be helpful to determine whether efficacy of marriage and family therapy is correlated with the participants' attitudes toward therapy. Questions designed to determine attitudes toward counseling can be added to typical intake questions (which can be used as a starting point measure for attitudes toward counseling) used in efficacy designs. When the participants are tested later, the researcher can determine not only whether therapy seems to be helpful to the individual, couple, or family, but also whether their attitudes toward counseling has changed.

Alternatively, questions designed to determine the participants' attitudes toward counseling can be asked throughout the counseling process and the therapist can note times when it seems that the participants attitudes toward counseling might have changed. These times that the attitudes changed or altered, even slightly, could possibly be correlated to specific techniques that the therapist was using in therapy.

Other research that can be done is to test participants' attitudes toward counseling along with whether or not there is a common view of the "problem," by all participants. After therapy techniques are done to help the couple and/or family create a unified desired outcome, the therapist can give the participants another survey to determine whether their attitudes toward therapy have changed. This is a way to determine whether specific techniques in marriage and family therapy work to change attitudes toward counseling. This study may be tied to efficacy studies of different techniques in therapy theories.

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APPENDICES

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Appendix A. Letters of Consent

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USU IRB Approved

OCT 22 2003

Marriage and Family Therapy Program  
2700 Old Main Hill  
Logan UT 84322-2700

Date Created: October 19, 2003  
Page 1 of 1

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTAL ATTITUDES AND  
BEHAVIORS AND THEIR ADULT CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES  
TOWARD MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, AND MARITAL COUNSELING

Scot M. Allgood, Ph.D. and Shawnerly L. Mathis, B.S., in the Family, Consumer, and Human Development Department at Utah State University are conducting research to find out more about how parental attitudes and behaviors toward marriage, divorce, and marital counseling affect their adult children's attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and marital counseling. You have been asked to participate because you are a parent of a young adult who has never been married and has lived with you for at least three months in the past year. There will be approximately 150 participants in this study.

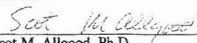
If you agree to be in this research, you will be asked to fill out the attached survey entitled "Parental Attitudes Toward Marriage, Divorce, and Marital Counseling," given to you by your son/daughter. This survey will ask you questions about your attitudes and behaviors toward marriage, divorce, and marital counseling. Please do not write your name on your survey. Because participation in this research is strictly voluntary, you may decide to complete the survey in part or in full, if you so desire. Some of the questions in the survey may create emotional discomfort. If you feel you need assistance due to these uncomfortable feelings, please call Scot M. Allgood at (435) 797-7433. Please send your completed survey to the investigators in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped, envelope. Your son/daughter will fill out a survey with similar questions and will give their survey directly to the student researcher. When your survey is received with a post-date on, or before \_\_\_\_\_ your son's/daughter's name will be entered in a \$50.00 drawing for a gift certificate at Hastings.

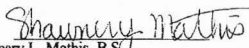
There may or may not be any direct benefit to you from this research. The researchers, however, may learn how parental attitudes and behaviors toward marriage, divorce, and marital counseling affect their son's/daughter's attitudes. Also, future researchers and clinicians may be able to create educational programs for members of your community based on the results of this research.

Shawnerly Mathis has explained this research to your son/daughter in class and has answered their questions. If you have questions or research-related problems that your son/daughter has not been able to answer, you may contact Professor Scot M. Allgood at (435) 797-7433.

All surveys will be kept confidential, consistent with federal and state regulations. Only the investigators will have access to the data. Your son/daughter will give their surveys directly to the student researcher who will put them in a locked file cabinet in a locked room. Your surveys will be kept for three months and then destroyed.

The institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human participants at USU has approved this research. If you have any concerns about this approval you may contact the IRB office at (435) 797-1821. Your return survey by mail implies that you understand, agree, and are willing to participate in this research.

  
Scot M. Allgood, Ph.D.  
Principal Investigator  
(435) 797-7433

  
Shawnerly L. Mathis, B.S.  
Student Researcher

Department of Family & Human Development • College of Family Life  
Telephone: (435) 797-7430 • Facsimile: (435) 797-7432





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Date Created: October 19, 2003

Page 1 of 1

The Relationship Between Parental Attitudes and  
Behaviors and Their Adult Children's Attitudes  
Toward Marriage, Divorce, and Marital Counseling


Scott M. Allgood, Ph.D. and Shawmery L. Mathis, B.S., in the Family, Consumer, and Human Development Department at Utah State University, are conducting research to find out more about how parental attitudes and behaviors toward marriage, divorce, and marital counseling affect their adult children's attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and marital counseling. You have been asked to participate because you are a young adult who has never been married, and you have lived with your parents for at least three months in the past year. There will be approximately 150 participants in this study.

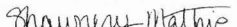
If you agree to be in this research, you will be asked to fill out the attached survey entitled "Young Adult Attitudes Toward Marriage, Divorce, and Marital Counseling." This survey consists of detailed questions about your attitudes and behaviors toward marriage, divorce, and marital counseling. Please do not write your name on your survey. Participation in this research is strictly voluntary and you may refuse to complete the survey in part or in full, if you so desire. Some of the questions in the survey may create emotional discomfort. Therefore, if you feel you need assistance due to these uncomfortable feelings, you may call Dr. Scott M. Allgood at (435) 797-7433.

You will also be asked to give the survey entitled "Parental Attitudes Toward Marriage, Divorce, and Marital Counseling," to your biological, step, foster or adoptive parent that you feel has had the most influence in your life over the years. Your parent will fill out and return the survey directly to the researchers using an attached self-addressed, stamped, envelope. Attached is an entry form for a \$50.00 gift certificate drawing to Hastings. If you would like to enter this drawing, please fill out the attached entry form. This information will be kept in a locked file cabinet in a locked room in order to maintain confidentiality. Please put your survey and the entry form in the attached envelope. Then deliver the envelope to the researcher on the date previously discussed in your class. When the researchers have received the completed surveys from you and your parent, they will put your name in the drawing. Your parent must complete the survey and have the envelope post-dated by the post office on or before \_\_\_\_\_ . All surveys will be kept for approximately three months and then destroyed.

There may or may not be any direct benefit to you from this research. The researchers, however, may learn how parental attitudes and behaviors may affect their adult children's attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and marital counseling. Also, future researchers and clinicians may be able to create educational programs for members of your community based on the results of this research.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human participants at USU has approved this research. If you have any concerns about this approval you may contact them at (435) 797-1821. Your return of the surveys implies that you understand the nature of this research and are willing to participate.

  
Scott M. Allgood, Ph.D.,  
Principal Investigator  
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Shawmery L. Mathis, B.S.  
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Appendix B. Questionnaires

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## Young Adult Attitudes Toward Marriage, Divorce, and Marital Counseling Survey

### About Marriage and Divorce.

We are interested in your general feelings about marriage and divorce. Please put a  in the box that best describes how much you agree with the following statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. People should marry.	SA	A	D	SD
2. I have little confidence that my marriage will be a success.	SA	A	D	SD
3. People should stay married to their spouses for the rest of their lives.	SA	A	D	SD
4. Most couples are either unhappy in their marriage or are divorced.	SA	A	D	SD
5. I will be satisfied when I get married.	SA	A	D	SD
6. I am fearful of marriage.	SA	A	D	SD
7. I have doubts about marriage.	SA	A	D	SD
8. People should only get married if they are sure that it will last forever.	SA	A	D	SD
9. People should feel very cautious about entering into a marriage.	SA	A	D	SD
10. Most marriages are unhappy situations.	SA	A	D	SD
11. Marriage is only a legal contract.	SA	A	D	SD
12. Marriage is a sacred act.	SA	A	D	SD
13. Most marriages aren't equal partnerships.	SA	A	D	SD
14. Most people have to sacrifice too much in marriage.	SA	A	D	SD
15. Because half of all marriages end in divorce, marriage seems futile.	SA	A	D	SD
16. If I divorce, I would probably remarry.	SA	A	D	SD
17. When people don't get along, I believe they should divorce.	SA	A	D	SD
18. I believe a relationship can be just as strong without having to go through the marriage ceremony.	SA	A	D	SD
19. My lifelong dream includes a happy marriage.	SA	A	D	SD

20.	There is not such a thing as a happy marriage.	SA	A	D	SD	
21.	Marriage restricts individuals from achieving their goals.	SA	A	D	SD	
22.	People weren't meant to stay in one relationship for their entire lives.	SA	A	D	SD	
23.	Marriage provides companionship that is missing from other types of relationships.	SA	A	D	SD	
		Strongly Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Neutral	Mildly Agree	Strongly Agree
24.	When people marry, they should be willing to stay together no matter what.	SD	MD	N	MA	SA
25.	If people are not happy in their marriage, they owe it to themselves to get a divorce and try to improve their lives.	SD	MD	N	MA	SA
26.	The marriage vow "til death do us part" represents a sacred commitment to another person and should not be taken lightly.	SD	MD	N	MA	SA
27.	The negative effects of divorce on children have been greatly exaggerated.	SD	MD	N	MA	SA
28.	In the long run, American society will be seriously harmed by the high divorce rate.	SD	MD	N	MA	SA
29.	Many people who get divorced are too weak to make personal sacrifices for the good of their families.	SD	MD	N	MA	SA
30.	People should feel no great obligation to remain married if they are not satisfied.	SD	MD	N	MA	SA
31.	Even if people are unhappy with their marriage, they should stay together and try to improve it.	SD	MD	N	MA	SA
32.	These days, the marriage vow "til death do us part" is just a formality. It doesn't really mean that people should stay in an unsatisfactory marriage.	SD	MD	N	MA	SA
33.	Most children of divorced parents experience negative effects of the divorce for the rest of their lives.	SD	MD	N	MA	SA
34.	The fact that most individuals no longer feel that they have to stay in unhappy marital relationships will benefit society as a whole.	SD	MD	N	MA	SA
35.	Most people who get divorced do so as a last resort - only after trying other solutions to the problems in their marriage.	SD	MD	N	MA	SA



About Marital Counseling . . .					
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
36.	People should be able to handle their personal or relationship problems without the help of a counselor.	SA	A	D	SD
37.	Counseling is an effective way to learn skills needed to deal with personal or relationship problems.	SA	A	D	SD
38.	People who attend counseling are weak.	SA	A	D	SD
39.	I would not attend counseling for marital problems.	SA	A	D	SD
40.	If people are unhappy in their marriage, they should get help from a professional counselor.	SA	A	D	SD
41.	Getting help from a counselor when I have marital difficulties will result in long-term positive changes in my marital relationship.	SA	A	D	SD

CONTINUE ON BACK . . .

## Background Information . . .

42. Gender  
 Female  
 Male
43. Age \_\_\_\_\_
44. What is your current annual income?  
 under 10,000  
 10,000 - 19,999  
 20,000 - 29,999  
 30,000 - 39,999  
 40,000 - 49,999  
 50,000 - 59,999  
 over 60,000
45. What is your current employment status?  
 Student  
 Unemployed  
 Part-time  
 Full-Time  
 Military  
 Other (Please Specify) \_\_\_\_\_
46. What is your current Marital Status?  
 (Please check all that apply)  
 Married  
 Divorced  
 Remarried  
 Live-in partner  
 Widowed  
 Other (Please Specify) \_\_\_\_\_
47. What is your mother's current Marital Status?  
 (Please check all that apply)  
 Married  
 Divorced  
 Remarried  
 Live-in partner  
 Widowed  
 Other (Please Specify) \_\_\_\_\_
48. What is your father's current Marital Status?  
 (Please check all that apply)  
 Married  
 Divorced  
 Remarried  
 Live-in partner  
 Widowed  
 Other (Please Specify) \_\_\_\_\_
49. Have you ever attended professional counseling?  
 Yes  
 No
- IF YES, was your experience positive?  
 Yes  
 No
50. Would you be willing to attend professional counseling in the future, if needed?  
 Yes  
 No
51. How long have you lived with your parents in the last 12 months? \_\_\_\_\_ Months
52. What is the highest level of education you have completed?  
 Less than high school  
 High school/GED  
 Some college, but no degree  
 2-year degree (community/technical college)  
 4-year degree (BA, BS)  
 Masters degree (MA, MS)  
 Doctorate or professional degree (PhD/MD)
53. How do you describe yourself?  
 (Please check all that apply)  
 African American/Black  
 Asian/Pacific Islander  
 Hispanic/Latino  
 Native American/Eskimo/Aleut  
 Caucasian/White  
 Other (Please Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!

**Parental Attitudes Toward Marriage, Divorce,  
 and Marital Counseling Survey**
**About Marriage and Divorce ...**

*We are interested in your general feelings about marriage and divorce. Please put a ✓ in the box that best describes how much you agree with the following statements.*

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	People should marry.	SA	A	D	SD
2.	I have little confidence that my marriage will be a success.	SA	A	D	SD
3.	People should stay married to their spouses for the rest of their lives	SA	A	D	SD
4.	Most couples are either unhappy in their marriage or are divorced.	SA	A	D	SD
5.	I will be satisfied when I get married.	SA	A	D	SD
6.	I am fearful of marriage.	SA	A	D	SD
7.	I have doubts about marriage.	SA	A	D	SD
8.	People should only get married if they are sure that it will last forever.	SA	A	D	SD
9.	People should feel very cautious about entering into a marriage.	SA	A	D	SD
10.	Most marriages are unhappy situations.	SA	A	D	SD
11.	Marriage is only a legal contract.	SA	A	D	SD
12.	Marriage is a sacred act.	SA	A	D	SD
13.	Most marriages aren't equal partnerships.	SA	A	D	SD
14.	Most people have to sacrifice too much in marriage.	SA	A	D	SD
15.	Because half of all marriages end in divorce, marriage seems futile.	SA	A	D	SD
16.	If I divorce, I would probably remarry.	SA	A	D	SD
17.	When people don't get along, I believe they should divorce.	SA	A	D	SD
18.	I believe a relationship can be just as strong without having to go through the marriage ceremony.	SA	A	D	SD
19.	My lifelong dream includes a happy marriage.	SA	A	D	SD

20.	There is not such a thing as a happy marriage.	SA	A	D	SD	
21.	Marriage restricts individuals from achieving their goals.	SA	A	D	SD	
22.	People weren't meant to stay in one relationship for their entire lives.	SA	A	D	SD	
23.	Marriage provides companionship that is missing from other types of relationships.	SA	A	D	SD	
		Strongly Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Neutral	Mildly Agree	Strongly Agree
24.	When people marry, they should be willing to stay together no matter what.	SD	MD	N	MA	SA
25.	If people are not happy in their marriage, they owe it to themselves to get a divorce and try to improve their lives.	SD	MD	N	MA	SA
26.	The marriage vow "til death do us part" represents a sacred commitment to another person and should not be taken lightly.	SD	MD	N	MA	SA
27.	The negative effects of divorce on children _ have been greatly exaggerated.	SD	MD	N	MA	SA
28.	In the long run, American society will be seriously harmed by the high divorce rate.	SD	MD	N	MA	SA
29.	Many people who get divorced are too weak to make personal sacrifices for the good of their families.	SD	MD	N	MA	SA
30.	People should feel no great obligation to remain married if they are not satisfied.	SD	MD	N	MA	SA
31.	Even if people are unhappy with their marriage, they should stay together and try to improve it.	SD	MD	N	MA	SA
32.	These days, the marriage vow "til death do us part" is just a formality. It doesn't really mean that people should stay in an unsatisfactory marriage.	SD	MD	N	MA	SA
33.	Most children of divorced parents experience negative effects of the divorce for the rest of their lives.	SD	MD	N	MA	SA
34.	The fact that most individuals no longer feel that they have to stay in unhappy marital relationships will benefit society as a whole.	SD	MD	N	MA	SA
35.	Most people who get divorced do so as a last resort - only after trying other solutions to the problems in their marriage.	SD	MD	N	MA	SA

About Marital Counseling . . .		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
36.	People should be able to handle their personal or relationship problems without the help of a counselor.	SA	A	D	SD
37.	Counseling is an effective way to learn skills needed to deal with personal or relationship problems.	SA	A	D	SD
38.	People who attend counseling are weak.	SA	A	D	SD
39.	I would not attend counseling for marital problems.	SA	A	D	SD
40.	If people are unhappy in their marriage, they should get help from a professional counselor.	SA	A	D	SD
41.	Getting help from a counselor when I have marital difficulties will result in long-term positive changes in my marital relationship.	SA	A	D	SD

About Marital Satisfaction . . .		Extremely Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Extremely Satisfied
<i>If you are currently married please complete the following questions. Please put a ✓ in the box that best describes how you feel about your marriage.</i>								
42.	How satisfied are you with your marriage?	ED	VD	SD	N	SS	VS	ES
43.	How satisfied are you with your wife or husband as a spouse?	ED	VD	SD	N	SS	VS	ES
44.	How satisfied are you with your relationship with your husband or wife?	ED	VD	SD	N	SS	VS	ES

CONTINUE ON BACK . . .

## Background Information . . .

45. Gender  
 Female  
 Male
46. Age \_\_\_\_\_
47. What is your current annual household (you and your spouse/partner) income?  
 under 10,000  
 10,000 - 19,999  
 20,000 - 29,999  
 30,000 - 39,999  
 40,000 - 49,999  
 50,000 - 59,999  
 over 60,000
48. What is your current employment status?  
 Student  
 Unemployed  
 Part-time  
 Full-Time  
 Military  
 Other (Please Specify) \_\_\_\_\_
49. What is your spouse/partner's current employment status?  
 Student  
 Unemployed  
 Part-time  
 Full-Time  
 Military  
 Other (Please Specify) \_\_\_\_\_
50. What is your current Marital Status?  
 (Please check all that apply)  
 Married  
 Divorced  
 Remarried  
 Live-in partner  
 Widowed  
 Other (Please Specify) \_\_\_\_\_
51. Have you ever been divorced?  
 Yes  
 No
52. Have you ever attended professional counseling?  
 Yes  
 No
- IF YES, was your experience positive?  
 Yes  
 No
53. Would you be willing to attend professional counseling in the future, if needed?  
 Yes  
 No
54. How long have you lived with your parents in the last 12 months? \_\_\_\_\_ Months
55. What is the highest level of education you have completed?  
 Less than high school  
 High school/GED  
 Some college, but no degree  
 2-year degree (community/technical college)  
 4-year degree (BA, BS)  
 Masters degree (MA, MS)  
 Doctorate or professional degree (PhD/MD)
56. How do you describe yourself?  
 (Please check all that apply)  
 African American/Black  
 Asian/Pacific Islander  
 Hispanic/Latino  
 Native American/Eskimo/Aleut  
 Caucasian/White  
 Other (Please Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!

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Appendix C. IRB Approval Letters

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USU Assurance: FWA#000330  
Protocol # 796


# Utah State UNIVERSITY

VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH OFFICE  
1450 Old Main Hill  
Logan UT 84322-1450  
Telephone: (435) 797-1180  
FAX: (435) 797-1367  
Email: vp\_research@usu.edu  
Website: <http://www.usu.edu/vpr>

10/23/2003

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Scot Allgood  
Shawner Mathis

FROM: True Rubal, IRB Administrator 

SUBJECT: The Relationship Between parental Attitudes and Behaviors and Their Adult Children's Attitudes Toward Marriage, Divorce, and Marital Counseling.

Your proposal has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board and is approved under expedite procedure #7.

- X There is no more than minimal risk to the subjects.  
There is greater than minimal risk to the subjects.

This approval applies only to the proposal currently on file for the period of one year. If your study extends beyond this approval period, you must contact this office to request an annual review of this research. Any change affecting human subjects must be approved by the Board prior to implementation. Injuries or any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board.

Prior to involving human subjects, properly executed informed consent must be obtained from each subject or from an authorized representative, and documentation of informed consent must be kept on file for at least three years after the project ends. Each subject must be furnished with a copy of the informed consent document for their personal records.

The research activities listed below are expedited from IRB review based on the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) regulations for the protection of human research subjects, 45 CFR Part 46, as amended to include provisions of the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, June 18, 1991.

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.





## Weber State University

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY  
& ANTHROPOLOGY  
1208 UNIVERSITY CIRCLE  
OGDEN, UT 84401-1208

PHONE: (801)626-6241  
FAX: (801)626-8979

November 19, 2003

Scot M. Allgood  
Department of Family & Human Development  
College of Family Life  
Utah State University

Dear Scott:

Your project entitled "The Relationship Between Parental Attitudes and Behaviors and Their Adult Children's Attitudes Toward Marriage, Divorce, and Marital Counseling" has received an exempt review and is approved. The Chair of the IRB has reviewed your proposal and has deemed that it presents no more than a minimal risk to the subjects. The Weber State University Institutional Review Board has a policy to approve proposals that have been IRB approved by other, reputable institutions.

We wish you good luck with your project and remind you that any anticipated changes to the project and approved procedures must be submitted to the IRB prior to implementation. Any unanticipated problems that arise during any stage of the project require a written report to the IRB and possible suspension of the project.

A final copy of your application will remain on file with the IRB records. If you need further assistance or have any questions, call me at x6238 or e-mail me at [mollilainen@weber.edu](mailto:mollilainen@weber.edu).

Sincerely,

Marjukka Ollilainen  
Chair  
Institutional Review Board

Title of Project: "The Relationship Between Parental Attitudes and Behaviors and Their Adult Children's Attitudes Toward Marriage, Divorce, and Marital Counseling"

Primary Investigator(s): Scot M. Allgood and Shawnergy L. Mathis

Reviewer: Marjukka Ollilainen  
Chair  
Institutional Review Board

Date: November 19, 2003

COMMITTEE ACTION

Your proposal (project) and consent documents have been received and classified by the Human Subjects in Research Committee

AS:

High Risk                       Moderate Risk                       Low Risk

BY THE FOLLOWING PROCESS:

Full board review                       Expedited review                       Exemption

The project has been:

Approved                       Not Approved

COMMENTS: See Attached Approval Letter

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
HUMAN-SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH CHAIR

11/19/03  
\_\_\_\_\_  
REVIEW DATE

INVESTIGATOR'S RESPONSIBILITY AFTER COMMITTEE ACTION

The federal regulations provide that after the committee has approved your study, you may not make any changes without prior committee approval except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Further, you must report to the committee any changes that you make and any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others that arise.