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The Impact of Parental Divorce on Children's Confidence Levels in Young Adulthood

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THE IMPACT OF PARENTAL DIVORCE ON CHILDREN'S CONFIDENCE LEVELS IN
YOUNG ADULTHOOD

By

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Bachelors of Science - Psychology
Xavier University of Louisiana
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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the

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Abstract

THE IMPACT OF PARENTAL DIVORCE ON CHILDREN'S CONFIDENCE LEVELS IN YOUNG ADULTHOOD

By

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Divorce continues to be a life transition that affects a substantial amount of adults and children each year. In addition to the impact that divorce can have on adults involved, the impact of divorce is amplified greatly when there are children involved. Divorce can have long-term effects and may influence children's relationship satisfaction, trust, commitment in intimate relationships, and optimism (Mustonen, Huurre, Haukkala, Kiviruusu, & Aro, 2011). The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between social support and confidence levels for those impacted by parental divorce. Social support includes guidance counseling, service support, or financial support (Kitson, Moir, & Mason, 1982). In this study, social support is defined as any type of support given to children by parents, family or friends. Confidence level is being defined in two ways: by career expectations and confidence in having long-term, successful romantic relationships in adulthood. Career expectations and potential for romantic relationships are two variables that help establish one's identity at the beginning of adulthood (Washington & Hans, 2013). Three hundred twelve participants between the ages of 18-25 participated in the study. A MANOVA and a Pearson 2- tailed correlation were performed to assess the variance between social support and confidence levels and the relationship between the amount of social support and confidence levels. The results indicate that the quality of social

support has a positive influence in terms of career expectations and relationship confidence and that there was a significant relationship between the amount of social support and confidence levels. The findings suggest the importance of the quality of relationship regarding social support is more significant than the quantity or amount of social support given by parents, family members, or friends.

Keywords: Parental Divorce; Social Support; Children of Divorce, Confidence Level

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Divorce continues to be a serious social issue, affecting significant numbers of adults and children each year. According to the Center for Disease Control's *National Health Statistics Report* of 2012, the crude rate of marriage was 6.8 marriages per every 1,000 persons in the United States and the unrefined rate of divorce was 3.8 per every 1,000 persons (CDC, 2012). Although this number might not seem alarming, these rates include ineligible participants such as children who are not eligible for marriage and adults who are not married. After controlling for these factors it is estimated that nearly half of first marriages end in divorce (CDC, 2012). Data collected over a 10-year period from the late 1980s and 1990s also showed that over one million children every year experienced parental divorce (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1999).

Many researchers have concluded that divorce rates have been on a slow decline since their peak in 1979 (Harvey & Fine, 2004). Nevertheless, divorce rates continue to be high. The perceived decline of divorce has caused some researchers to believe that research on the impact of divorce is no longer imperative. The alarmingly high number of parental divorce can be explained, in part, by the popularity or acceptance of divorce in the United States. Another factor can be the addition of no fault divorce in the majority of the states, which decreases the amount of effort needed to file and complete a divorce. The overall process of divorce has changed significantly and has allowed those with interest in filing a divorce to do so with greater ease than in the past (Kot & Shoemaker, 1999).

However, Kennedy and Ruggles (2014) reexamined the statistics surrounding divorce trends in the United States and found that the statistical analyses might be misleading. In their report, the researchers observed that a lack of funding may have contributed to the divorce statistics. The researchers suggested that the lack of funding may have cause a decrease in the

reliability of the Vital Statistics Report and the Census Bureau Statistics, which are the primary sources for divorce rate statistics (CDC, 2012). The researchers went on to criticize the generalization of divorce rate statistics that do not show the variability within the divorce rates dealing with parts of the population who might not apply to the statistics. For example, within different age groups divorce rates have increased since the early 90s. Since 2008, the divorce rates have doubled for the 35 and over population. Additionally, younger generations are waiting longer to get married than in the past, and over 40% of the under 30 population have never been married (Kennedy & Ruggles, 2014). This percentage is four times the amount calculated in 1980, a year after the highest divorce rate in the United States.

In addition to the effects that the dissolution of marriage has on adults, the impact of divorce is magnified when children are involved. Since the 1970s, a significant amount of research has focused on the impact of divorce on children. Research has shown that divorce can have both negative and long term effects for children (Amato, 2001; Jeynes, 2011). For example, research indicates that children of divorce struggle in areas related to school behavior, academic achievement, self-esteem, health, and interpersonal relationships (Amato, 1993; Gately & Schwebel, 1991). Unfortunately, the majority of this research is primarily centered on parents' and teachers' accounts of the functioning and adjustment of children after experiencing parental divorce (Menard, 1998). Without having more direct accounts from the children affected by divorce, the literature is deficient in understanding the impact of divorce on children. Parental divorce can also have long-term effects and may influence children's relationship satisfaction, trust, commitment in intimate relationships, and optimism (Mustonen, Huurre, Haukkala, Kiviruusu, & Aro, 2011). Although children do not have control over the divorce, parents may help to minimize the negative effects of divorce on children by facilitating healthy adjustment.

The purpose of this study is to determine if social support is a factor related to higher confidence levels for those affected by parental divorce. Social support can be defined as financial support, service support, or guidance counseling (Kitson, Moir, & Mason, 1982). Past research has indicated that both sibling and parental support by the way of financial, service, and guidance counseling promote post divorce adjustment (Jacobs & Sillars, 2012). Thus, in this study, social support is defined as any type of support given to children by parents, family or friends. Confidence level is being defined in two ways: by career expectations and confidence in having long-term, successful romantic relationships in adulthood. Career expectations and potential for romantic relationships are two variables that help establish one's identity at the beginning of adulthood (Washington & Hans, 2013). The results of the study will help increase the understanding of young adults who experienced parental divorce during their childhood or adolescence by exploring if social support impacted their self-confidence with regard to career expectations and romantic relationships.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Social and Emotional Effects of Parental Divorce

Societal trends and perceptions. Although positive outcomes result from divorce, the ending of a marriage has the potential to be a traumatic event for all members involved (Brown, 1982). The effects of divorce may be greatest on the immediate family involved; however, divorce can also affect friends of the family as well. Societal attitudes regarding divorce have changed from a view of disgrace to a more acceptable view than in the past (Hiller & Recoules, 2013). This has led to divorce being widely accepted as a norm in Western culture. With divorce being such a common occurrence, the societal perception and relative acceptance of divorce may create the delusion or belief that divorce is less impactful to those members involved.

Over the past few decades, rate of divorce has remained relatively unchanged in Western culture. Even though divorce has become more widely accepted in Western culture, the traditional ideas about family relationships and the significance of marriage have remained relatively stable (Kim & Tasker, 2013). The “American Dream” is still valued within the Western culture that believes marriage is essential and childbearing is best when parents are married. In some cases, family and friends may disapprove of the divorce or feel their own marriage is at risk due to the decision of others to get a divorce (Kitson et al., 1982; Riggio & Valenzuela, 2011). The outlook of the divorce by friends and family has been widely shaped by the Western societal view that divorce is generally a negative or destructive life event.

Persistent societal attitudes of divorce may influence individual perceptions as well. For example, researchers have found people tend to view individuals who are married as more stable, successful, and more favorable than individuals who have experienced divorce (Etaugh & Malstrom, 1981). Schultz and Leslie (2004) found that trainees in a master’s level therapy

program reported more negative characteristics for divorced mothers compared to characteristics for married mothers. Additionally, the findings of another study indicate the public tends to hold more negative stereotypes for children who have experienced parental divorce than those who have not (Amato, 1991). The strong perceptions of the public affect an individual's outlook on divorce, even before one personally experiences the impact of divorce. Such views can bring upon negative connotations about divorce for all individuals involved, even if the overall outcome of the divorce is positive for the family members.

Children of parental divorce tend to hold strong views about the impact that divorce can have on children's lives. Smith (2013) found adults who experienced divorce as children reported more negative attitudes about divorce than those whose parents did not divorce. The participants affected by the parental divorce from Smith's study had strong views about not wanting their future children to experience a divorce if they were to become married.

Certain views about the impact of divorce adults of parental divorce hold can influence their offspring's perceptions as well, potentially putting their children at risk for experiencing divorce. Amato and Deboer (2001) have suggested that parents' view of divorce being a viable option for marital dissatisfaction is passed down to their children and is a factor that contributes to the increased likelihood of children of divorce to experience divorce later on in life. The researchers concluded children of divorce, when compared to those from non-divorced families, hold weaker levels of commitment in regards to the notion of marriage being a lifelong commitment, which is due to their direct experience of parental divorce. Such perspectives held by children of parental divorce may provide some understanding why divorce has become more acceptable in society (Amato & Deboer, 2001). Although the view of divorce has become more accepted as a norm in society, the negative perceptions of divorce are still present within the

society.

Familial support for children. In many cases, parents or other family members are not able to be as supportive to their children during the stressful period surrounding divorce. One study by Amato (1993) noted that divorce is one of life's most stressful occurrences, and adults experience significant difficulty in their life adjustment after the divorce, which may impact their interactions with their children. Parents are less emotionally available during this time (Riggio & Valenzuela, 2011), and the help and support from family members that are also experiencing distress from these life-changing events is less likely to occur (Kitson et al., 1982). In addition, parents' stress surrounding the divorce is known to impair the quality of their childrearing skills during this time (Amato, 1993). While those surrounding the children are coping with the new life changing events themselves, the children may be left to learn how to cope with the divorce with limited support from parents, extended family, and friends.

The impact on children. Divorce affects many members of the family including children. Statistics show that annually more than one million children will go through the process of divorce within their family per year (Bing, Nelson & Wesolowski, 2009). Another study reported that 40% of all children will experience parental divorce during their lifetimes (Arkes, 2013). A significant amount of research has focused on the impact of divorce on children. This research illustrates that there are numerous consequences of parental divorce on children. When compared to children from non-divorce households, children from divorced families have more stressful relationships with other members in the family, poorer academic performance in school, and delayed psychological development (Cartwright, 2008; Kot & Shoemaker, 1999; Uphold-Carrier & Utz, 2012; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). Additional research found children from divorced households continually score lower than children from non-divorce families on

measures of academic achievement, psychological adjustment, social relationships, parental relationships, and self-concept (Amato, 2001). Research shows ‘survivors’ of parental divorce are less likely to complete formal education (Riggio & Valenzuela, 2011). Additionally, children of divorce have more anxious, sad, lonely, and angry feelings than children from non-divorce families (Storksen, Arstad-Thorsen, Overland, & Brown, 2012). Other studies have showed parental divorce has a lasting impact on children’s attitudes and behaviors about sex (Jeynes, 2011). Additional research has shown children who experienced parental divorce were 50% more likely to experience an increase in health problems than children from parents who were still together (Uphold-Carrier & Utz, 2012).

With the extensive research that compares non-divorce households to households that have experienced parental divorce, there is evidence divorce is generally damaging to the children involved (Jeynes, 2011). Children’s adjustment is one aspect that is impacted by parental divorce. In the past, adjustment concerns for children of divorce were thought to be present for only a few years; however, recent findings indicate the adjustment timetable for children of divorce is longer than previously noted (Jeynes, 2011). Adjustment for children of divorced parents has been found to be more challenging due to poor parent-child relations. One study concluded two parents provide better socialization and control for children than just a single parent (Arkes, 2013).

In high conflict marriages and divorce, children are more likely to exhibit symptoms of conduct disorders, antisocial behavior, difficulty relating to peers, difficulty with authority figures, and mental health problems (Bing et al., 2009). Additionally, there are studies that reported a link between divorce and depression in children (Vonsoura, Verdeli, Warner, Wickramaratne & Baily, 2012). One study found evidence that parental divorce increases the

risk of depression due to a decrease in their standard of living, the availability and activity of role models, as well as an increase in stressful living environments (Wauterickx, Gouwy, & Bracke, 2006).

Age-Related Impact of Parental Divorce

A child's age at the time of parental divorce is an additional factor that impacts the child's functioning. Research indicates that divorce presents a multitude of psychological challenges for children throughout the various stages of development (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). Age is related to developmental life stage, which can be a predictor of the divorce related consequences that children may face (Uphold-Carrier & Utz, 2012).

Grade school aged children. Researchers have studied the impact of divorce on younger children. One study on grade school aged children found the majority of young children who had feelings of dissatisfaction and disinterest in life had experienced parental divorce within the last 6 years (Allison & Furstenberg, 1989). Another study showed 12-year olds who experienced parental divorce showed more internalizing and externalizing problems than children with parents whom were still married (Robbers, Oort, Huizink, Verhulst, Beijsterveldt, Boomsma, & Bartels, 2012). Children who experienced parental divorce before age 12 have negative expectations about marriage, have more romantic partners, and are more likely to be involved in a romantic relationship than children from non-divorce households (En-Ling, 2014). Additional studies have stated that boys exhibit more externalizing problems than girls following a parental divorce (Storksens, Roysamb, Holmen, & Tambs, 2006). The previously stated study also reported that by age 15, both boys and girls expressed more externalizing and internalizing problems than children from non-divorce households.

Divorce adjustment research suggests that children of parental divorce often rely on

certain coping mechanisms to deal with the negative impact of their parents' divorce. Although the children are using coping tools by way of internalizing and externalizing behaviors to diminish their anxiety surrounding the divorce, it is not sufficient. Past research have found that children's maladaptive coping methods impact their schooling, social adjustment, and overall life in a negative manner (Allison & Furstenberg, 1989; Robbers et al., 2012; Storksen et al., 2006). One study correlated these changes to the efforts of the parents by stating that the mental state of the custodial parent is the determining factor to how significantly the child is affected by the parental divorce (Bulduc, Caron, & Logue, 2007). School age children are impacted by loss of friends and lost of the identity of family. The importance of creating a safe support system and allowing them be to sad at this time is important for their adjustment. At this step, children can learn to internalize their behaviors or create unhealthy coping strategies that can negatively influence the rest of their lives.

The effects on older children: late teenaged & young adults. The impact of parental divorce of children may be different in certain ways when the divorce occurs during the child's adolescent years. There is past evidence that substance abuse and use increases for teenaged children when their parent's divorce (Arkes, 2013). Arkes suggested the change in parental structure allows children to gain more freedom with the type of friends that surround them, leading to an increase exposure to friends that use drugs. Substance usage may be a coping mechanism to help adolescent deal with the new life transition of their parent's divorce. Adolescents may experience struggles with externalizing and internalizing problems and exhibit problems in social competence compared to non-divorced families (Storksen et al., 2006). The difficulties experienced by adolescent children of divorce may lead them to rely on unhealthy coping mechanism to alleviate pain from their parent's divorce, such as socializing with self-

destructing peers or utilizing self-harm methods as ways to cope with the new life transition. Teenage children will likely have a better understanding of the new life transition than younger children will. Although divorce may be an upheaval for adolescents, is important for parents to maintain structure and their parenting role. Adult privacy, or shielding children from topics that are beyond their level of maturity or responsibility, is key in helping children adjust to the new life transition. By maintain the parenting structure and adult privacy, children are able to continue having the structure that can help them move forward with healthy development and minimize the development of negative feelings about their parents regarding the divorce.

Late-age parental divorce. Late-age divorce refers to children whose parents divorced after age 18. Past research supports the idea that parental divorce affects some children into adulthood (Amato 1996; Hoffman & Ledford, 1996; Wallerstein, 1991, Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 2001). In children who have left the house, the effects of divorce are different compared to grade school aged children. There is not as much influence on their behaviors due to their developed maturation through different life stages, but there can still be consequences that older children face when dealing with divorce. For example, many adult children of divorce have reservations and fear surrounding marriage due to their parent's divorce (Cartwright, 2008). Many adult children of divorce experience a higher likelihood of having a divorce in the future within their own marriages (Amato, 1996).

Research indicates that couples that have been married over 25 years are getting divorced more frequently than ever before (Bulduc, Caron, & Logue, 2007). In these situations, divorce may occur because of new life transitions. Some unresolved conflicts that are strong predictors of divorce are now being handled between the parents due the kids being out of the house. In late-aged divorces, kids are often used as a scapegoat for the couple's problems, with the couple

focusing their attention on the kids instead of the issues that have been occurring in their relationship (Whitton, Stanley, Markman & Johnson, 2013). Parental divorce that occurs after the children have left the house can translate into a loss of stability within their family structure for the children (Uphold-Carrier & Utz, 2012). Divorce may have a detrimental impact due to the disintegration of the familial structure in which children have known all of their lives. Late-aged divorce can have a negative effect on children's attitudes towards marriage in addition to changing their outlook of family. Children who once thought marriage was long lasting might have new feelings of doubt about marriage and family stability. These doubts can affect their adult romantic relationships and weaken the level of marital commitment in their relationships.

Long-term Impact of Parental Divorce

Change in the existing relationships & structure. When children are exposed to divorce, there are many factors that can change in their lives. Relocation, new family structures, and change in income are some key factors that can change for children who are impacted by parental divorce (Bing et al., 2009). These factors can cause lasting serious effects on the children involved. This may be due to the low sense of self-control that is brought on by the environment of divorce to the children (Uphold-Carrier & Utz, 2012). These major changes that are brought upon the children from parental divorce can have an influence on the child's perception of divorce.

Some of these lasting effects include changes in their relationship with their parents. Children of divorce experience a disruption in the parental relationship during and after a divorce. Hoffman and Ledford (1996) found that children of divorce have impaired relationships with their parents both immediately following the divorce and for some time after. In some cases, children of divorce might experience a devastating loss of a relationship with a parent

entirely (Harvey & Fine, 2004). These major life changes from the child's previous norm within the parental structure can have a lasting traumatic effect on the child's life and can influence their perception of divorce.

Impact on potential romantic relationships. Parental divorce can have a significant impact on the adult romantic relationships of the children. Children of divorce have been found to be twice as likely to experience divorce than children from non-divorce families (Amato & Deboer, 2001). In some cases, parent's divorce can influence children's confidence in intimate relationships, making them less likely to marry or pursue long committed relationships in young adulthood. In other situations, those who come from parental divorce can be encouraged into early marriage by the perception that marriage is temporary and divorce is accessible. Even though marriage is still pursued, in these cases, lower expectations about marriages are maintained (Pao, 2014). One study stated that adult children of parental divorce felt unprepared for marriage and displayed intense fear of commitment even if they were involved in a loving relationship with a partner for a substantial number of years (Wallerstein & Lewis, 2004).

Adolescent children have reported that their experience with their parent's divorce has caused them to become more hesitant about entering into a romantic relationship and less confident in their ability to sustain romantic relationships (Cartwright, 2008). The participants from this study point to their parents as failing to provide a positive model for navigating through romantic relationships. One researcher stated that high conflict divorce can weaken the parent-child relationship, which can eventually lead to negative outlooks on marital commitment (Pao, 2014). The negative outlooks commonly lead to negative opinions on romantic relationships, which will then become another contributing factor for negative outlooks toward marriage (Kavas & Gunduz-Hosgor, 2011). Many of the participants from the Cartwright (2008) study

reported feelings that any romantic relationship they would enter would eventually end at some point in their lives. This negative outlook about romantic relationships children from parental divorce have on their future ability to sustain romantic relationships can impact their confidence levels when dealing with romantic relationships.

In some cases, there is one part of the family that helps increase children of divorce' adjustment with relationships. Studies have shown configuration and preservation of relationships are significant developmental tasks for youth as they move into adulthood (Ming, & Fincham, 2010). In some cases, preservation of a relationship might begin with a sibling. Jacob and Sillars (2012) research found that siblings often experience an increase in conflict after parental divorce, but also experience a greater sense of closeness. This can be a positive support system for siblings who have the opportunity to gain support from their brother or sister.

Family Life Cycle

Carter and McGoldrick (1989) created the family life cycle which described developmental stages or steps individuals should experience throughout their lifetime. The steps include leaving home and becoming a single adult and learning how to accept emotional and financial responsibility. The next step is marriage and learning how to create a new dyadic system. This step is followed by having children and creating a co-parenting system that integrates structural components from childhood. The steps following include learning how to balance structure and freedom for the children and sending them off to begin their own family life cycle. During the last two stages, the parent focus on reestablishing their system dyadic system and coping with lost (Ballard, 2012).

In the case of divorce, the family life cycle may be disrupted by this life transition. Family life cycles regarding divorce include mourning the lost of the relationship, attempting to

support each focal member, learning how to co-parent and accommodate each other, and continuing to work on the emotional impact of the divorce for both parents and children (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989). While these steps include necessary principles to facilitate adjustment from the divorce, there are additional steps that are emphasized after the divorce. In the case of joint custody and co-parenting, it is important to continue to keep the children's' needs and interest a priority in order to help them with the adjustment through this life transition. Other situations might include a non-custodial household. In these situations, it is important for the non-custodial parent to be willing to continue the co-parenting relationship with the other parent, but still maintain a healthy level of support and care as a parent (Ballard, 2012; Carter & McGoldrick, 1989).

Importance of Parental Support

There are many factors that can impact the psychosocial adjustment of children of divorce and studies indicate there are marked differences between the psychosocial adjustments of children of divorce compared to children of non-divorce families (Twaite, Silitsky, & Luchow, 1999). One of these factors is a disruption in the primary caregiver relationship. Research has found this disruption in the caregiving relationship has negatively impacted behavioral adjustment and development of social relationships throughout adolescence for children of parental divorce (Hoffman & Ledford, 1996). Another study by Amato (1993) concluded that both the mother and father are important resources for children due to each parent being a source of emotional support, guidance, supervision, practical assistance, and information. Amato stated that the presence of both parents in the household to serve as role models for the children could help them to learn social skills such as cooperation, compromise, and negotiation. When divorce occurs, there is a disruption to the level and consistency of parental support given

to children.

Sibling support. In addition to parental support, children of divorce may benefit from supportive relationships with their siblings. Children with supportive siblings are less likely to be depressed, lonely, and unhappy due to the parental divorce (Jacobs & Sillars, 2012). The support of siblings is related to better adjustments to family disharmony and better psychosocial behavior. This research is supported by the sibling's relationship being the least likely to change due to the parental divorce. Siblings have the ability to support each other through the process, understanding how their brother or sister could be dealing with the life transition.

Social support. Although research has shown that societal perceptions on divorce have changed to become more accepting over the years, negative connotations are still present. In fact, one research study looked at the macrosystem effect on individual's perceptions of divorce. Macrosystem is defined as societal, cultural beliefs, and attitudes dealing with family life (Gately, & Schwebel, 1991). Gately and Schwebel's research suggested that negative perceptions created by the macrosystem about parental divorce not only influenced individual's perceptions about divorce, but created a self-fulfilling prophecy that resulted in negative consequences for children of divorce. On the other hand, the researchers found that if the social support from the macrosystem was positive, then the perceptions of the children who were effected by parental divorce were positive. This shows how social support can be an important adjustment factor for children who have experienced parental divorce.

An important type of social support for children who have experienced parental divorce is parental support. Involvement with both parents after the divorce has been shown to be an important adjustment factor for children of parental divorce (Austin, Pruett, Kirkpatrick, Flens, & Gould, 2013). This type of involvement contributes to children's development of social

capital, which is the psychosocial resource that originates from the critical relationships in the child's life. Maintaining healthy and consistent parental support can influence the child's long-term development and adjustment in life, which can have a positive impact on their outlook for the future.

High Conflict Households

Researchers have found that high familial conflict in early childhood negatively influences the quality and quantity of friendship networks later on in life for children impacted by parental divorce (Jones, 1992). Some children may benefit from parental divorce if they were living in a hostile environment influenced by high conflict parents (Uphold-Carrier & Utz, 2012). High conflict behavior is not only a predictor of children's future romantic relationships, but it also can be a predictor of the type of parenting skills the children develop. For example, Riggio and Valenzuela (2011) found that marital conflict is associated with harsh and inconsistent parenting. Adolescent children exposed to poor parental models of social behavior may experience greater fear about participating in relationships and may have difficulty forming firm and fulfilling relationships (Riggio, 2004). This inconsistent parenting can explain some of the detrimental behaviors that children exhibit after enduring high conflict between their parents as well as the resulting divorce that followed. High parental conflict negatively affects children's attachment to parents, as well as later feelings of security in their future relationships (Riggio, 2004).

Impact on Educational and Occupational Confidence and Aspirations

Research indicates that the quality of parenting is related to adolescent's educational and occupational goals and aspirations (Sigal, Wolchik, Tein, & Sandler, 2012). Several studies have found that parental divorce in childhood is linked to negative outcomes dealing with educational

and occupational goals across the life span. One study stated that high school students with divorced parents were less likely to enter college (Wallerstein & Lewis, 2004). In that same study, the researchers found that those students of parental divorce who did enter college were less likely to finish with a four-year degree (Bulduc, Caron, & Logue, 2007; Wallerstein & Lewis, 2004). The impact that the divorce has on the confidence levels of students in young adulthood to pursue and complete a higher degree is significant.

Another study found that children whose parents divorce tend to have lower academic achievement (Bulduc et al., 2007). Additional past research supports the idea that parents who divorced before their children are 6 years old are more likely to display academic and behavioral problems in middle school and than those whose parents divorced during the child's primary grade years (Zill, Morrison, & Coiro, 1993). While their career aspirations can be negatively affected by divorce, so can children's perceptions of their abilities. Wauterickx, Gouwy, and Bracke (2006) stated that children of divorce tend to drop out of school earlier, believe that they are less educated, and believe that they do not have the abilities to be successful. Children's outlook on their abilities is a strong indicator of their expectation for success and confidence as they enter young adulthood.

Many households following parental divorce include only one parent, which is typically the mother. The economical flexibility of the family might have changed due to the divorce, causing mothers to relocate to a new neighborhood with new schools that have low educational standards. In the past, the lack of financial support from the household could lead to children dropping out of school to contribute to the household income, which decreases the amount of educational attainment (Amato, 1993). The impact a divorce has on children's outlook of their abilities and career attainment could hinder them from reaching their full potential.

Challenging Other Research Findings

Although much of the research on the effects of divorce paints a bleak picture for children and their future, some research has highlighted the resilience of children. There is evidence that divorce can be detrimental to young children and have a lasting negative impact (Wallerstein, Lewis, & Blakeslee, 2001). However, there is some research that has contradicted those findings. Some researchers felt that researchers such as Wallerstein exaggerated their findings to draw attention on the topic (Cherlin, 1999). Other researchers have challenged Wallerstein's findings and stated that the adaptability and flexibility that children of divorce develop gives children a brighter outlook on the experience than previously explained (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002).

Aims of the Study, Research Question, and Hypotheses

Although existing research has primarily focused on the negative impact of divorce on children, the research fails to recognize factors associated with children of divorce who have high educational/occupation aspirations and report a positive outlook on relationships. The aim of this study was to quantitatively examine adjustment factors that contribute to positive outlooks on career attainment, as well as positive outlooks on expectations for relationship success. This study focused on social support as a factor that influences the confidence levels of children who have experienced parental divorce. The researcher used surveys and demographic information to collect data from individuals whose parents divorced when they were children. The purpose is to understand whether social support is an important factor that relates to the impact of parental divorce on children's confidence as it pertains to career and relationship expectations.

Research Question & Hypotheses

In this study, I investigated the effect that social support has on the confidence levels of those who have experienced parental divorce as children. I am interested in assessing the impact that social support can have on relationship and career confidence. I began the study with the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Social support will have a positive impact on confidence levels in regards to success in career and romantic relationship expectations for those who have experienced parental divorce during their childhood.

Hypothesis 2: Participants who received greater social support will have higher confidence levels than those who received less social support.

Hypothesis 2a: More social support from additional family members will have a positive relationship with confidence levels regarding career expectations

Hypothesis 2b: More social support from additional family members will have a positive relationship with confidence levels regarding expectations for successful romantic relationships?

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to determine if social support is a factor related to higher confidence levels for those affected by parental divorce. In order to do this, hypotheses need to be tested. A cross-sectional quantitative survey design was used to collect data related to social support and confidence regarding career expectations and romantic relationships. Survey research is the best method for collecting original data for describing a population too large to observe directly (Babbie, 1995); specifically, this study will utilize an online survey. There are many reasons for using online surveys; primarily it offers flexibility and convenience for the participants. Online surveys are particularly attractive to young adults aged 18-25 and helpful at increasing response rates (Van Selm & Jankowski, 2006). Additionally, online surveys are appropriate when the population is distributed across a large geographic region. (Van Selm & Jankowski, 2006).

Instrumentation

The survey was developed using Qualtrics, a survey development software. The survey consisted of three independent scales, each ranging from 10-27 items assessing relationship confidence, career confidence, and social support systems. Demographic items were included as well.

Revised Social Support Questionnaire (SSQ)

The first questionnaire was the Social Support Questionnaire-Revised, (SSQ; Sarason, Levine, Basham, & Sarason, 1983) which was designed to measure the participants' perceptions of social support and satisfaction with that support during their childhood after the divorce (See Appendix B for SSQ). This questionnaire is a 27 item measure assessing the size and quality of

the social support network, expressed as the amount or group of people in which the participants could rely upon for support in different situations (SSQ-N), as well as the degree of satisfaction of that support (SSQ-S; 1= *very dissatisfied*, 6= *very satisfied*). The types of support explored are financial, service, and guidance counseling. (See Appendix B for complete scale). Cronbach's alphas for the two subscales were ($\alpha = .98$) for SSQ-N and ($\alpha = .96$) for SSQ-S (Sarason et al., 1983).

Revised Confidence Scale

To measure confidence in relationships, the participants completed a 10-item revised confidence scale (Stanley, Hoyer, & Trathen, 1994; Whitton et al., 2007), which measures the amount confidence the participants have toward their current and future romantic relationships. Items (e.g., "I feel good about our prospects to make this relationship work for a lifetime") are rated on a scale ranging from 1= *strongly disagree* to 7= *strongly agree*. (See Appendix C for complete scale). Scores reflect the mean response, with Cronbach's alpha for men ($\alpha = .77$) and Cronbach's alpha for women ($\alpha = .84$) (Stanley et al., 1994).

Generalized Expectancy for Success Scale-Revised (GESS-R)

In addition to the above scale, participants completed the 25-item Generalized Expectancy for Success Scale-Revised (GESS-R) (Hale, Fiedler, & Cochran, 1992), which is intended to measure optimism dealing with the participants' ability to achieve career goals/aspirations. The scale is broken into 6 sections: Career Optimism (1, 3, 4, 8, 16, 22, 24), Interpersonal Relationships (5, 21, 25), Life Outlook (11,12,18,19), Self Efficacy (2, 6, 14, 15), Pessimism (9,13,20,23), & Social Interaction (7 &10). Each item (e.g., "In the future, I expect that I will.") is rated on a scale ranging from 1= *highly improbable* to 5= *highly probable* (See Appendix D for complete scale). Scores reflect the mean response, with a Cronbach's alpha of

($\alpha = .92$). The GESS-R was used to measure the participant's confidence and optimism for achieving their career goals in the future. In the past, the scale has been used to measure optimism in comparison to self-esteem or neuroticism for specific items (Schutte, Valerio, & Carrillo, 1996).

Demographic Variables

In addition to the scales listed above, the survey will also include demographic items such as current age, age at the time of parental divorce, gender, living arrangements during their childhood after the divorce, current relationship status, number of siblings, race/ethnicity, current state, and employment status (See Appendix A for demographic questionnaire).

Sampling Techniques

The participants of the study were young adults between the ages of 18-25 who had experienced parental divorce between the ages of 2 and 17. A nonprobability purposive sampling technique was utilized to collect data from the participants. Participants for the study were recruited two ways. First, the survey link was sent to the faculty in the Marriage and Family Therapy program and were asked to forward the link to the students in their classes. Undergraduate students enrolled during the Fall 2015 semester were asked to complete the survey as long as they met the criteria. Second, the researchers recruited participants through social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Through the use of social media, participants were able to take the survey from anywhere in the United States. Washington and Hans (2013) reported that 74% of Americans use the Internet, and 69% of Internet users have an account on a social networking site. Additionally, approximately 77% of social network users are between the ages of 18-49. Based on these findings, social networking sites were likely to be effective in reaching the target population.

Procedure

An Institutional Review Board (IRB) application was submitted to the UNLV Office of Human Subjects. Upon receipt of approval, the researcher began the execution of the study.

Data Collection

The survey was distributed through hyperlinks within email messages and social media posts. The participants were also encouraged to share the survey with others who matched the criteria. Every participant consented by clicking the acknowledgment tab before beginning the survey (See Appendix E for Informed Consent). After consent, the participants were asked to complete three qualifying questions to ensure the data reflected the population the researcher was seeking for the study.

Analysis

To answer the research question and test the hypotheses, the researcher used a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) and 2-tailed correlation statistics. The researcher was interested in investigating if social support was associated with an increase in participants' confidence in regards to career expectations and positive romantic relationships. In order to conduct the analysis, the researcher needed to calculate the amount of social support reported by the participants for their responses on the SSQ. This was completed by a) adding the total number of groups that participants felt supported by throughout their childhood and b) calculating the mean satisfaction for that type of support. Then, the means for the two confidence scales measuring career expectations and romantic relationships were computed. Before conducting any statistical analysis, parametric statistics were performed to check the reliability of the scales and the distribution of the variables. After completing the parametric analysis, the researcher used a multivariate analysis (MANOVA) to measure the variance between the

independent variables relating to social support and the dependent variables related to confidence levels. The researcher sought to find whether there were differences in the confidence levels related to career expectations and romantic relationships in relation to the quantity or quality of social support received by individuals impacted by parental divorce.

The researcher then used a Pearson 2- tailed correlation to measure relationships between the quantity or amount of social support and the confidence levels in regards to career expectations and career aspirations. The researcher was interested in finding if there is a positive correlation between the amount of social support and confidence levels for those who have been impacted by parental divorce.

Chapter 4: Results

Descriptives For Participants

The participants for this study were young adults between the ages of 18-25 years old that experienced parental divorce between the ages of 2-17. The age group of the participants was selected because of the importance of building meaningful relationships and forming educational/career goals during the ages of 18-25 or young adulthood (Washington & Hans, 2013). That sample included participants who identified as male (n=67), female (n=244) and transgender (n=1) for a total of 312 participants. Out of the 312 total participants that completed the study, 24% of the participants were below the age of 21, (n=76); out of the remaining participants 54% were between the ages of 21-24 (n=166), and the largest individual age group was 25 years old with 22% of the participants (n=70).

A majority of the study's participants lived in the West region of the United States (n=183), while 32% of the participants were from the South (n=100). The remaining participants indicated that they lived in the North region (n=9), East region (n=7), Midwest region (n=12), or Pacific region (n=1). In regards to relationship status, 78% (n=244) identified as single, while 21% (n=64) identified as being married or partnered. Only 1% (n=4) identified as being divorced (see Table 1). The sample was 35% Caucasian (n=109), 33% African American (n=103), 16% Hispanic American (n=49), 4% Asian American (n=11), 2% Pacific Islander (n=5), and one participant that identified as Native American. 11% of the participants (n=34) identified as "multiracial" or another ethnicity not listed. Table 2 lists participant's ethnicity by gender.

Table 1: Relationship Status for Participants

Relationship Status	Male (<u>n</u> =67)	Female (<u>n</u> =244)	Transgender (<u>n</u> =1)
Single, not married	57	186	1
Married	5	25	0
Domestic Partnership/ Civil Union	5	29	0
Divorce/Separated	0	4	0

Table 2: Ethnicity of the Participants (N=312)

Race/Ethnicity	Male (<u>n</u> =67)	Female (<u>n</u> =244)	Transgender (<u>n</u> =1)
Caucasian	20	88	1
African American	27	76	0
Hispanic American	7	42	0
Asian American	1	10	0
Multiracial	9	25	0
Pacific Islander	3	2	0
Native American	0	1	0

Thirty-nine percent (n=122) of the respondents experienced parental divorce between the ages of 2 and 5, 26% (n=81) between the ages of 6 and 9, 15% (n=46) between the ages of 10 and 12, 11% (n=34) between 13 and 15, and 9% (n=29) between ages 16 and 17. Nineteen percent (n=59) of the participants reported having no siblings at the time of their parents' divorce. The majority of the participants reported having one or more siblings at the time of their parents' divorce: 38% (n=119) reported having 1 sibling, 24% (n=76) indicated that they had 2 siblings, 12% (n=37) reported having 3 siblings, and 7% (n=21) indicated having 4 or more siblings. (See Tables 3-5 for results)

Table 3: Age of Parental Divorce by Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	2-5	6-9	10-12	13-15	16-17
Caucasian	39	28	16	16	10
Asian American	4	5	0	0	2
Hispanic American	22	10	8	6	3
African American	36	28	17	11	11
Multiracial	18	10	3	1	2
Native American	0	0	1	0	0
Pacific Islander	3	0	1	0	1
Total (N=312)	122 (39%)	81 (26%)	46 (15%)	34 (11%)	29 (9%)

Table 4: Number of Siblings at the Time of Divorce by Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	None	1	2	3	4 or more
Caucasian	16	56	26	5	6
Asian American	2	4	2	2	1
Hispanic American	9	20	12	6	2
African American	21	30	24	17	11
Multiracial	11	6	9	7	1
Native American	0	1	0	0	0
Pacific Islander	0	2	3	0	0

Table 5: Number of Siblings at the Time of Parental Divorce

Age	Number of Siblings				
	None	1	2	3	4 or more
2-5	36	42	29	7	8
6-9	15	34	17	12	3
10-12	3	25	8	8	2
13-15	3	8	14	4	5
15-17	2	10	8	6	3
Total (N=312)	59 (19%)	119 (38%)	76 (24%)	37 (12%)	21 (7%)

Preliminary Statistics

During the preliminary stages of analyzing the data, parametric tests were performed to ensure reliability of the scales and the distribution of the variables. In respect to reliability for the measures, Cronbach's alphas were computed for each scale before any analysis was conducted in the study. The Cronbach's alpha for the revised Social Support Questionnaire for total amount of support (SSQ-N) was ($\alpha = .943$), and the satisfaction for that support (SSQ-S) was ($\alpha = .965$). The Cronbach's alpha for the revised Confidence scale was ($\alpha = .92$) and the revised GESS scale was ($\alpha = .907$).

A kurtosis test was performed to check the distribution of the dependent variables from the Confidence scale and the GESS scale. The kurtosis statistics were calculated by dividing kurtosis by the standard error, which yielded the Fisher coefficient for each scale. The Fisher coefficient needed to be between plus or minus 1.96 before normal distribution was assumed. The Confidence scale had a Fisher coefficient of a 1.895, therefore, normal distribution was assumed. The GESS scale fisher coefficient was -1.531, therefore, normal distribution was assumed (see Figures 1 and 2 for the distribution of the dependent variables). Figure 1 represents the average mean scores for the Confidence scale regarding perceived potential to have a success romantic relationships and figure 2 represents the average mean scores for the GESS scale regarding career expectations.

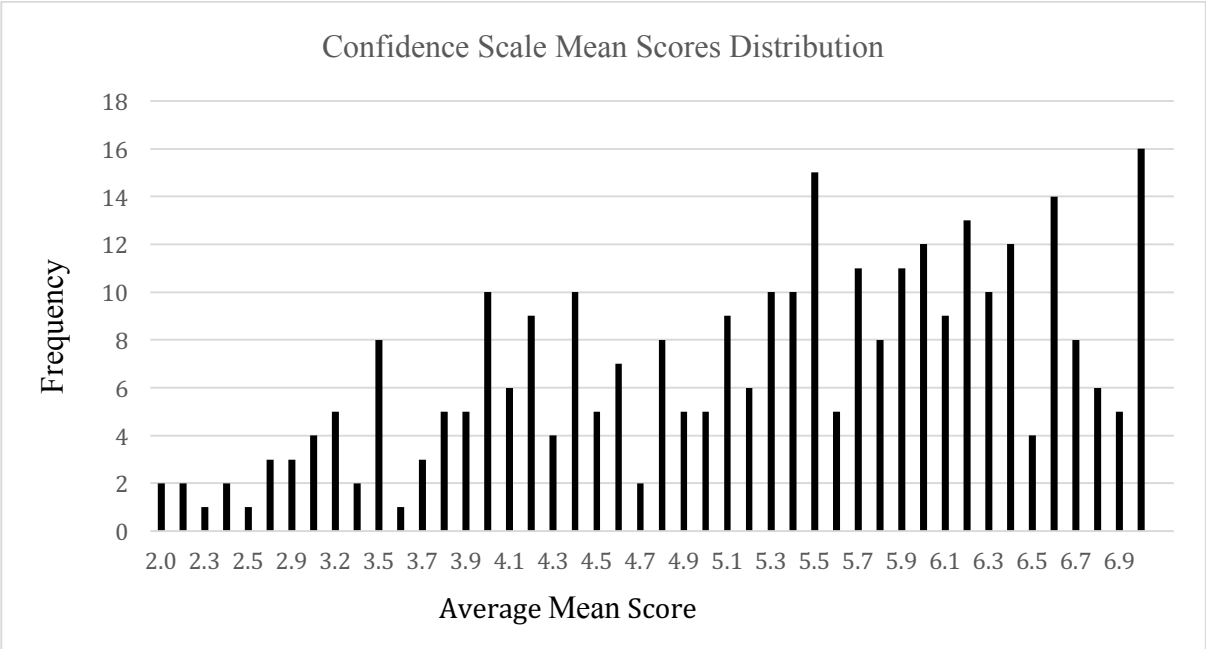


Figure 1. The Distribution for the Confidence Scale.

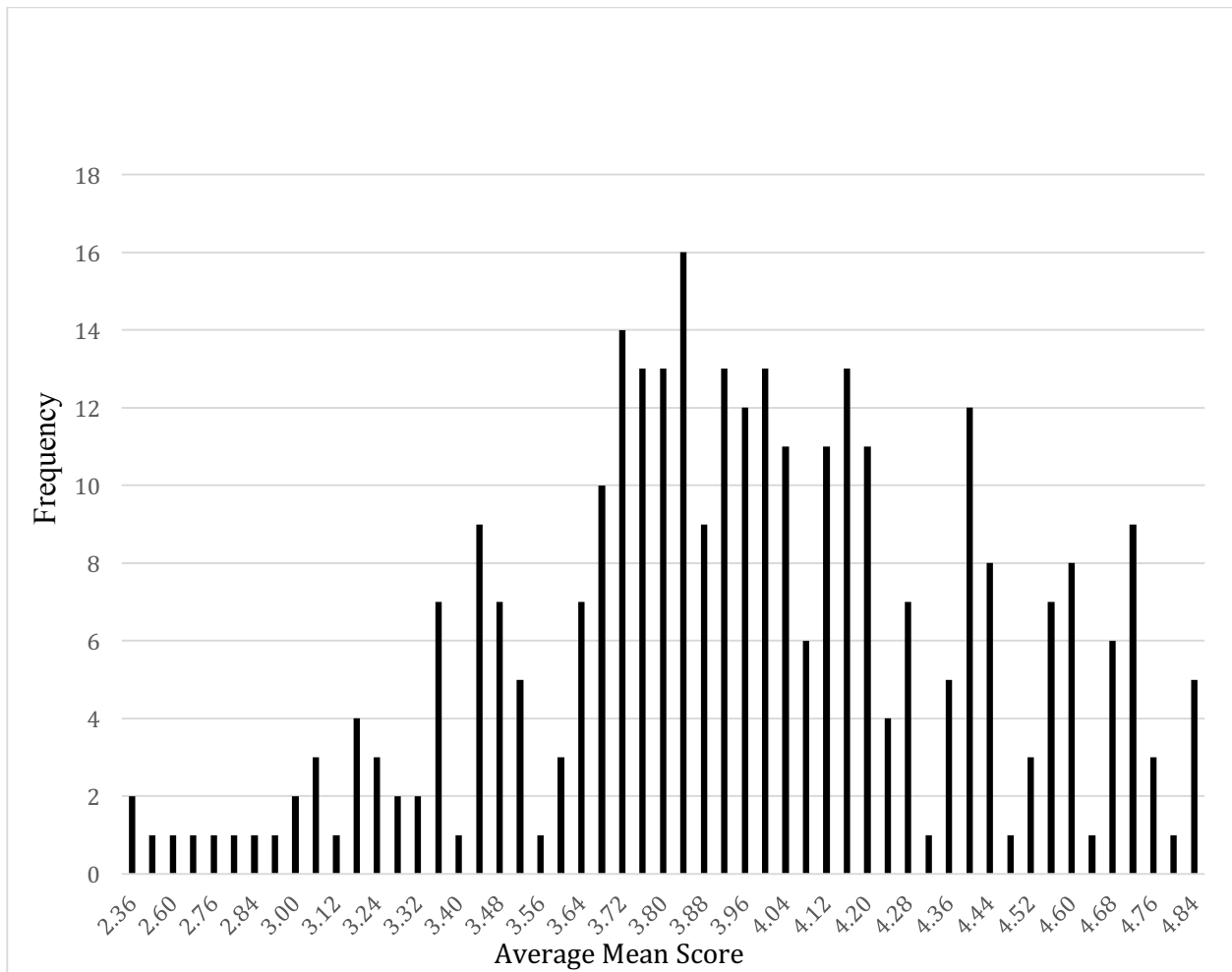


Figure 2. The Distribution for the GESS Scale.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Social support will have a positive impact on confidence levels in regards to success in career and romantic relationship expectations for those who have experienced parental divorce during their childhood.

After the completion of the parametric statistics, a one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to test the hypothesis that social support would have a positive impact on confidence levels. The hypothesis suggested that there would be a difference between one or more of the means between social support quality or perceived satisfaction (SSQ-S) (M=45.65, SD= 21.67), quantity or the amount of social support (SSQ-N) (M=59.95, SD= 23.86), and confidence levels in respect to career expectations (GESS) (M=3.95, SD=.4684) and romantic relationships (CS) (M=5.262, SD=1.206). The p value of .05 was further reduced to .025 to accommodate the two dependent variables associated with confidence levels. The findings suggest that social support has an important impact on confidence levels for those who have been impacted by parental divorce. The results showed a significant difference in the confidence levels regarding romantic relationships, $F(62,311) = 2.262, p = .010, p < .025$, and career expectations $F(62,311) = 2.040, p = .020, p < .025$ based on the perceived satisfaction of social support (SSQ-S). However, the findings showed no significant difference in the confidence levels regarding romantic relationships $F(87,311) = 1.385, p = .040$, and career expectations $F(87,311) = 1.591, p = .082$, in relation to the amount of social support (SSQ-N). The findings suggest that the quality or satisfaction of the perceived social support had a more significant impact on participants' career and relationship confidence than the quantity or amount of social support (see Table 6).

Table 6: Multivariate Analysis of Variance Between the Independent Variables and the Dependent Variables

IV Variables	DV Variables	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Social Support Satisfaction	Confidence Scale	62	a1.741	2.262	.010
	GESS Scale	62	b.266	2.040	.020
Amount of Social Support	Confidence Scale	87	1.385	1.798	.040
	GESS Scale	87	.208	1.591	.082
Social Support Satisfaction & Amount of Social Support	Confidence Scale	129	1.448	1.880	.027
	GESS Scale	129	.163	1.253	.248

Note: Findings that approach statistical significance depending on the p value: Significant at the $p < .025$ level.

- a. $R^2 = .952$ (Adjusted $R^2 = .470$)
- b. $R^2 = .946$ (Adjusted $R^2 = .405$)

Table 6 represents the findings that indicated the quality or participant's satisfaction with social support had a significant impact on confidence levels related to romantic relationships. Forty-seven percent of the variance in the dependent variable (relationship confidence) was accounted by the quality of social support (SSQ-S). The above findings also supported the quality or participants' satisfaction with social support had a significant impact on confidence levels regarding career aspirations/expectations. Forty percent of the variance in the dependent variable was accounted by the quality of social support (SSQ-S). There were no other significant findings, including the findings dealing with the quantity or amount of social support (SSQ-N). However, when satisfaction with social support was combined with amount of social support, the results approached significance for the Confidence scale, measuring confidence levels regarding romantic relationships, $p = .027$.

Hypothesis 2: Participants who received greater social support will have higher confidence

levels than those who received less social support.

The findings do not support the hypothesis. The findings from the MANOVA indicated the amount of social support (SSQ-N) did not have a significant effect on confidence regarding romantic relationships (Confidence scale) ($p = .040$) and confidence regarding career expectations (GESS scale) ($p = .082$) were not significant ($p > .025$). Instead, the findings suggest the quality or satisfaction of the perceived social support had a more significant impact on participants' career and relationship confidence than the quantity or amount of social support (See Table 6).

Hypothesis 2a: More social support from additional family members will have a positive relationship with confidence levels regarding career expectations.

Hypothesis 2b: More social support from additional family members will have a positive relationship with confidence levels regarding expectations for successful romantic relationships.

A Pearson 2-tailed correlation was conducted to measure the relationship between the quantity of social support (SSQ-N) and the confidence levels scales dealing with career expectation and romantic relationships. The findings indicated the amount of social support had a positive relationship with confidence levels regarding career expectations and expectations for romantic relationships. Confidence in romantic relationships was significantly related to the quantity or amount of social support, ($r = .258, p < .001$), and the quantity or amount of social support was significantly related to career expectations, ($r = .397, p < .001$), although, the relationship for both variables were relatively weak.

Chapter 5: Discussion & Implications

The purpose of this research was to assess the impact social support can have on relationship and career confidence. The results of this study measured not only the importance of the relationship children have with their parents following divorce, but also the influence of relationships with other family members and friends. The findings indicated the amount of social support alone was not significantly impactful on the participants' romance and career confidence. Rather, the quality or perceived satisfaction of social support had a greater impact on the confidence of the young adult participants than the quantity of social support. These findings are consistent with previous research suggesting the quality of parenting significantly impacts adolescent's occupational goals and aspirations (Sigal et al., 2012). Other studies suggested the importance of the primary caregiving relationship such as two parents provide better socialization and control for children than just a single parent (Arkes, 2013). The findings of this study support previous research which emphasized the importance of parents maintaining a strong caregiving relationship with children during and after the divorce process.

In addition to the strong results regarding the quality of social support, there was also a significant positive relationship between quantity or amount of social support and confidence levels with regard to career expectations and positive romantic relationships. Although significance was found with romantic relationships and career expectations, the relationship was fairly weak. The variability for this variable could be explained by a wide range of studies that show many different outlooks on the perceptions of marriage and romantic relationships after parental divorce. In one study, adult children of parental divorce felt unprepared for marriage and displayed intense fear of commitment even if they were involved in a loving relationship with a partner for a substantial number of years (Wallerstein & Lewis, 2004). In another study, the

researchers stated that early marriage could be encouraged by their parent's divorce (Pao, 2014).

The current findings of this study highlight the importance of the quality of support that one might receive during the parental divorce process. Previous research indicates the importance of showing support during this process and how conflict during this time is a maladjustment factor for children of parental divorce (Allison & Furstenberg, 1989; Robbers, Oort, Huizink, Verhulst, Beijsterveldt, Boomsma, & Bartels, 2012; Storksen, Roysamb, Holmen, & Tambs, 2006). The previous research indicated the quality of support given to children during the divorce process could help them adjust more efficiently (Bing et al., 2009). In addition, parents' stress surrounding the divorce is known to impair the quality of their childrearing skills during this time (Amato, 1993). Amato (1993) noted that divorce is one of life's most stressful occurrences, and adults experience significant difficulty in their life adjustment after divorce. Parents are less emotionally available for their children during this time (Riggio & Valenzuela, 2011) and help and support from family members that are also experiencing distress from these life-changing events is less likely to occur (Kitson et al., 1982). Given the results of the present study, it suggested that parents as well as extended family and friends take deliberate steps to maintain positive, supportive relationships with children during the upheaval that occurs during and after the process of divorce in order to minimize the negative impact that divorce may have in children's lives.

Clinical Implications

The results of the study support previous research indicating that involvement with both parents after the divorce is an important adjustment factor for children of parental divorce (Austin, Pruett, Kirkpatrick, Flens, & Gould, 2013). This type of involvement contributes to children's development of social capital, which is the psychosocial resource that originates from

the critical relationships in the child's life. Therefore, it is important for parents to maintain a healthy relationship with their children post-divorce. Previous research supports the idea of consistent parental support, which can influence the child's long-term development and adjustment in life. The findings from the study and previous research indicate the quality of parental support is related to adolescent's adjustment to divorce, specifically in terms of their career confidence and relationship confidence (Sigal, Wolchik, Tein, & Sandler, 2012). This information may be valuable for therapists and family life educators who are working with divorcing parents or teaching co-parenting classes. When discussing the well-being of children, clinicians may encourage parents to maintain a consistent relationship with their children and encourage healthy relationships with other supportive family members.

The results of the study may also have implications for therapists who are working with adult children of divorce. Because of experiencing their parents' divorce, these individuals may have developed negative schemas regarding marriage and divorce. Schemas are thought processes that one has on a specific position (Nichols, 2012). Schemas can shape how one views or sees different situations, and they can be problematic if they limit or constrain the options or possibilities one perceives. Social learning theory argues that we notice and learn attitudes and behaviors by watching others (Stuart & Jacobson, 1986). Through the constant subconscious awareness, one notices negative or positive behavior by experiencing interactions from their parents or others. Social learning theory suggests that experiencing parental divorce (i.e., observing parental attitudes and behaviors) is a strong predictor for future divorce (Voorpostel, Marieke, & Coffe', 2014). In these situations, the behavior that the parents have modeled have not only affected their children, but are shaping how their children interact with others, including romantic relationships. These experiences can be a contributing factor to a schema that one holds

(Yoosefi, Etemadi, Bahrami, Fatehizade & Ahmadi, 2010). In regards to divorce and marriage, schemas can be influenced by past family interactions or experiences surrounding divorce (Yoosefi et al., 2010). By developing certain schemas related to their parents' divorce, one might carry a negative outlook regarding marital commitment and/or divorce into their adult relationships. Schemas are relatively difficult to change when working with individuals since their foundation is rooted in the development of the person (Oura, 2014).

Cognitive-behavioral therapy is a type of therapy that is effective when working with individuals to help challenge their constraining schemas or cognitive distortions and recognize their role in their past behaviors (Yoosefi et al., 2010). Cognitive distortions are perceptions or outlooks that involve selective attention to unrealistic beliefs or thought processes (Nichols, 2012). Cognitive-behavioral therapy helps the client learn to recognize their perceptions on situations and helps them develop a different outlook on past or current problems. In regards to working with children of divorce, Cognitive-behavioral therapy can be used to challenge schemas about the outlook of marriage and divorce. In this study, the findings suggest the importance of the perceived satisfaction for the quality of social support. Using cognitive behavioral therapy to question the assumptions dealing with divorce could help children of divorce have a different outlook on their parents' divorce as well as their own romantic relationships. The results from the study show a significant relationship between the quality and amount of support regarding confidence levels. This can be used to help with challenging cognitive distortions regarding the support from family members. By helping children of divorce become aware of the type of support present, it can help increase the perception regarding social support quality, which has been shown to be an important factor regarding career and relationship confidence levels.

The results of this study can also be viewed in light of Bowenian family therapy, which emphasizes the influence of one's family of origin. Bowen's intergenerational transmission process suggests that interpersonal patterns as well as attitudes may be passed from generation to generation as children integrate the emotions, attitudes, and behaviors of their parents (Nichols, 2012). If children are born into a dysfunctional marital relationship and relationship patterns are passed down from generation to generation from divorce households, then these children may be at a higher risk of divorce (Keith & Finlay, 1988). This may explain, in part, why children of divorce are more likely to get a divorce themselves. The intergenerational transmission process passes down the behaviors that lead to divorce from generation to generation.

One particular dysfunctional relationship pattern is emphasized by Bowenian theory is triangulation. Triangulation occurs when the stress of a dyad relationship becomes too overwhelming for one of the members involved. The overwhelmed member brings a stress reliever into the relationship to decrease the anxiety of the situations between the two involved. The stress reliever can be another person, object, or an unhealthy act (Gehart & Tuttle, 2003; Nichols, 2012). In this case, the third object is the children. With the birth of a child, the marriage changes from a dyadic relationship to a triadic relationship, giving the chance for the child or children to be triangulated into the problems of the couple. For example, children can be placed in uncomfortable roles, such as the messenger between their parents. Children may also be triangulated as emotional confidants.

The results of this study reiterate the importance of social support quality. When children are placed in triangulation roles such as being the messenger between the parents, this can impact the quality of the perception of social support received. In addition, it can reinforce the negative intergeneration transmission process that has been passed down from generation to generation

that can impact the quality of the co-parent relationship. This can further put children of divorce at a higher risk for a divorce themselves by repeating these learned behaviors from their parents. A Bowenian therapist working with a client who experienced parental divorce in childhood may help the client increase awareness of ways in which they were (and perhaps still are) triangulated by their parents. Additionally, the therapist may discuss the intergenerational transmission process and help clients understand the risks as well as what they can do to reduce the chance of falling into the same relationship patterns as their parents. By eliminating the triangulation of the parents on the child, the therapist is helping to promote quality social support for the children, which is related to higher confidence levels. Therapist should focus on bringing awareness to the intergenerational process and triangulation that can be maladjustment factors for children of divorce. By helping eliminate maladjustment factors regarding the parental divorce, the hope is to increase the relationship quality of the parents with the children, which can further help bridge the gap between non-divorce and divorce households.

Parents can contribute to the healthy adjustment and development of children who experience parental divorce by being active in the children's life at the time of divorce. Additionally, it can be helpful to inform school teachers about the divorce, and encouraging age appropriate activities and behaviors. Parents should continue to be emotionally available for the children and create safe spaces to discuss the implications of the divorce. By keeping the opportunity open to discuss the divorce with their parents, the children are given the chance to openly express their emotions regarding the divorce, which can lead to healthy post divorce adjustment.

In regards to emotional regulation and social support, group therapy may be productive for school aged children who have been impacted by parental divorce. Group therapy is an

opportunity for children to be validated and empathized by their peers. It is a chance for them to be able to build a support system outside of the focal family. The findings suggest the importance of social support for post divorce adjustment. Group therapy can help create healthy post divorce adjustment for children who may have lost their sense of familial identity.

Limitations

There are numerous limitations that can explain the lack of significance regarding quantity of social support. The study was advertised on social media and in university settings. Students who are pursuing education may have higher confidence levels pertaining to career expectations. This could have skewed the data dealing with the quantity of social support, since students who are pursuing a degree might have higher confidence levels regardless of the amount of social support they had during the divorce process.

Another reason why the relationship between the amount of social support and confidence levels were not found to be significantly impactful with these findings could be difference in quality of the total number of support. The research assumed that all supporters (e.g., parents, siblings, extended family, friends) were giving an equal amount of support during this divorce process; however, there could have been different satisfaction with the supporters during this divorce process that could have explained the positive relationships, but not the strength of the relationship.

Another limitation could have been the number of single participants who responded to the survey. The Confidence scale measured current relationship success. Although it was revised to measure perceived and current relationship success, the number of single participants may have influenced this outcome since it may have been difficult for them to imagine how one's future relationships might turn out. One recommendation for future research on this subject

would be to specifically assess participants who are currently in an active relationship to gain a better understanding of their perceptions of relationship quality.

An additional limitation could have been this study being a quantitative study without any qualitative data collection. While the importance of the quality of social support was highlighted, the study could have benefited by having a section that explored and elaborated on the participant's perception of the satisfaction of social support that was received. Future research should include individual's reflections on the importance of social support on their lives in relation to their confidence levels in romantic relationships and career expectations.

Recommendations for Future Research

One area that would have been interesting to explore would have been the impact of ethnicity on perceived social support and confidence levels. The researcher highlighted in the literature review the difference in the attitudes regarding marriages and divorces based on different regional cultures. The Western culture has been more accepting of divorce, but has maintained its traditional ideas dealing with family relationships and values (Kim & Tasker, 2013). Given that there may be different cultural ideas regarding divorce and the values of family, it would have been interesting to measure the impact of ethnicity and cultural difference. By exploring the differences in perceived support and confidence within different cultures, the researcher could explore the impact of cultural background on adjustment for children who have been impacted by parental divorce. Future research could explore how cultural differences can impact the adjustment for children who are experiencing parental divorce.

Although sibling data regarding support were collected during this study, sibling support was not isolated and used in the analysis of these data to measure the impact of sibling support on confidence levels. Previous research showed the impact that sibling support could have on the

adjustment for children during parental divorce. The research highlights how the sibling relationship is the relationship that is likely to be least affected by the divorce process (Jacobs & Sillars, 2012). However, the research is missing how influential sibling support could be on having positive outlooks following divorce (Jacobs & Sillars, 2012). Another future study could measure separately the impact that sibling support has on confidence levels dealing with career expectations and career aspirations. Additional research could explore whether the satisfaction with sibling support is different than the satisfaction for parental support. Future studies could explore if one variable had more impact than the other in regards to having higher confidence levels.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to measure the impact that social support had on relationship and career confidence. Before completing the research study, the researcher reflected on the importance that social support had on confidence levels. Through their experiences, the researcher was able to pinpoint the importance of social support on confidence levels. The purpose of the study was to increase understanding of the impact of social support in regards to children's confidence levels for those who have been impacted by parental divorce. The researcher expected social support would have a positive relationship with higher confidence levels for those affected by parental divorce. However, the researcher did not anticipate how challenging it would be to measure social support (both quantity and quality). A support system does not get its importance from being a quantifiable variable, but by the investment that the support system is able to give to those involved.

The finding supported the importance of social support. The results confirmed that social support is a factor that has a positive impact on confidence levels. More importantly, it highlights

the positive impact individuals (parents, siblings, extended family, and friends) can make on children who have been impacted by parental divorce. Even though the results indicated the *amount* of social support is not related to higher confidence levels, the findings illustrated the importance of the *quality* of social support in the confidence of children who experienced parental divorce. As a mental health clinician and researcher, the biggest takeaway from this study is the importance of being present and active in other's lives. While parental support and family support has been emphasized in research, the quality of that support was found to be the most significant variable. This has led the researcher to conclude that social support quality is significant for the confidence levels of children who have been impacted by parental divorce. While it could be said social support in its entirety is important for post adjustment to divorce for children and their confidence levels, the quality of support is fundamental.

Appendices

Appendix A

Demographic Information Questionnaire

Current age: 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25

Gender: Male Female Transgender

Race/Ethnicity: Caucasian/ European American Asian American Hispanic or Latino/a
American African American Multiracial Native American Pacific Islander

Current region: North (*Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Maine, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania*)

East (*Maryland, Delaware, District of Columbia, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina*),

South (*Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky*),

West (*Washington, Oregon, California, Nevada, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico*)

Midwest (*North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, Missouri*)

Pacific (*Alaska, Hawaii*)

Employment Status: Part-time worker Full-time worker Part-time student Full-time student Unemployed

Current Relationship Status: Married Single Partner Divorced Widowed

Age when parents divorced: 2-5 5-8 8-11 11-14 14-17

Living arrangements during childhood: Lived w/ Mom Dad Grandparents Ext. Family
Friends On my own Both parents

Number of Siblings: 1 2 3 4 or more

Appendix B

Revised Social Support Questionnaire (SSQ)

Instructions:

For each question, identify the people in your life who provide you with help and/or support and indicate your level of satisfaction with that support. You can choose more than one category of support but you can only select one level to evaluate your overall satisfaction.

If you indicate "no one" for any of the questions, please ensure that you rate your satisfaction level for that question.

Example:

With whom can you count on for help and/or support? Check all that apply.

*** Extended Family means: grandparent/s, aunt/s, uncle/s, cousin/s, step-parent/s**

- | | | |
|-------------|--------------------|-----------|
| 1) Father | 4) Extended Family | 7) No One |
| 2) Mother | 5) Friends | |
| 3) Siblings | 6) Friends | |

How satisfied are you with the support they provide? Select from the drop down menu:

- | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 6-very
satisfied | 5-fairly
satisfied | 4-a little
satisfied | 3-a little
satisfied | 2-fairly
satisfied | 1-very
satisfied |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|

1. Whom can you really count on to listen to you when you need to talk? Check all that apply.

*** Extended Family means: grandparent/s, aunt/s, uncle/s, cousin/s, step-parent/s**

- | | | |
|-------------|--------------------|-----------|
| 1) Father | 4) Extended Family | 7) No One |
| 2) Mother | 5) Friends | |
| 3) Siblings | 6) Friends | |

How satisfied are you with the support they provide? Select from the drop down menu:

6-very satisfied	5-fairly satisfied	4-a little satisfied	3-a little satisfied	2-fairly satisfied	1-very satisfied
---------------------	-----------------------	-------------------------	-------------------------	-----------------------	---------------------

2. Whom could you really count on to help you if a person whom you thought was a good friend insulted you and told you that he/she didn't want to see you again? Check all that apply.

*** Extended Family means: grandparent/s, aunt/s, uncle/s, cousin/s, step-parent/s**

1) Father	4) Extended Family	7) No One
2) Mother	5) Friends	
3) Siblings	6) Friends	

How satisfied are you with the support they provide? Select from the drop down menu:

6-very satisfied	5-fairly satisfied	4-a little satisfied	3-a little satisfied	2-fairly satisfied	1-very satisfied
---------------------	-----------------------	-------------------------	-------------------------	-----------------------	---------------------

3. Whose lives do you feel that you are an important member or part of the family? Check all that apply.

*** Extended Family means: grandparent/s, aunt/s, uncle/s, cousin/s, step-parent/s**

1) Father	4) Extended Family	7) No One
2) Mother	5) Friends	
3) Siblings	6) Friends	

How satisfied are you with the support they provide? Select from the drop down menu:

6-very satisfied	5-fairly satisfied	4-a little satisfied	3-a little satisfied	2-fairly satisfied	1-very satisfied
---------------------	-----------------------	-------------------------	-------------------------	-----------------------	---------------------

4. Who would help you if you were married and had just separated from your spouse? Check all that apply.

*** Extended Family means: grandparent/s, aunt/s, uncle/s, cousin/s, step-parent/s**

- 1) Father
- 2) Mother
- 3) Siblings
- 4) Extended Family
- 5) Friends
- 6) Friends
- 7) No One

How satisfied are you with the support they provide? Select from the drop down menu:

- 6-very satisfied
- 5-fairly satisfied
- 4-a little satisfied
- 3-a little satisfied
- 2-fairly satisfied
- 1-very satisfied

5. Whom could you really count on to help you out in a crisis situation, even though they would have to go out of their way to do so? Check all that apply.

*** Extended Family means: grandparent/s, aunt/s, uncle/s, cousin/s, step-parent/s**

- 1) Father
- 2) Mother
- 3) Siblings
- 4) Extended Family
- 5) Friends
- 6) Friends
- 7) No One

How satisfied are you with the support they provide? Select from the drop down menu:

- 6-very satisfied
- 5-fairly satisfied
- 4-a little satisfied
- 3-a little satisfied
- 2-fairly satisfied
- 1-very satisfied

6. Whom can you talk with frankly, without having to watch what you say? Check all that apply.

*** Extended Family means: grandparent/s, aunt/s, uncle/s, cousin/s, step-parent/s**

- 1) Father
- 2) Mother
- 3) Siblings
- 4) Extended Family
- 5) Friends
- 6) Friends
- 7) No One

How satisfied are you with the support they provide? Select from the drop down menu:

- 6-very
- 5-fairly
- 4-a little
- 3-a little
- 2-fairly
- 1-very

satisfied satisfied satisfied satisfied satisfied satisfied

7. Who helps you feel that you truly have something positive to contribute to others? Check all that apply.

*** Extended Family means: grandparent/s, aunt/s, uncle/s, cousin/s, step-parent/s**

- | | | |
|-------------|--------------------|-----------|
| 1) Father | 4) Extended Family | 7) No One |
| 2) Mother | 5) Friends | |
| 3) Siblings | 6) Friends | |

How satisfied are you with the support they provide? Select from the drop down menu:

6-very	5-fairly	4-a little	3-a little	2-fairly	1-very
satisfied	satisfied	satisfied	satisfied	satisfied	satisfied

8. Whom can you really count on to distract you from your worries when you feel under stress?

Check all that apply.

*** Extended Family means: grandparent/s, aunt/s, uncle/s, cousin/s, step-parent/s**

- | | | |
|-------------|--------------------|-----------|
| 1) Father | 4) Extended Family | 7) No One |
| 2) Mother | 5) Friends | |
| 3) Siblings | 6) Friends | |

How satisfied are you with the support they provide? Select from the drop down menu:

6-very	5-fairly	4-a little	3-a little	2-fairly	1-very
satisfied	satisfied	satisfied	satisfied	satisfied	satisfied

9. Whom can you really count on to be dependable when you need help? Check all that apply.

*** Extended Family means: grandparent/s, aunt/s, uncle/s, cousin/s, step-parent/s**

- | | | |
|-----------|--------------------|-----------|
| 1) Father | 4) Extended Family | 7) No One |
| 2) Mother | 5) Friends | |

3) Siblings

6) Friends

How satisfied are you with the support they provide? Select from the drop down menu:

6-very

5-fairly

4-a little

3-a little

2-fairly

1-very

satisfied

satisfied

satisfied

satisfied

satisfied

satisfied

10. Whom could you really count on to help you out financially if you had just been fired from your job or expelled from school? Check all that apply.

*** Extended Family means: grandparent/s, aunt/s, uncle/s, cousin/s, step-parent/s**

1) Father

4) Extended Family

7) No One

2) Mother

5) Friends

3) Siblings

6) Friends

How satisfied are you with the support they provide? Select from the drop down menu:

6-very

5-fairly

4-a little

3-a little

2-fairly

1-very

satisfied

satisfied

satisfied

satisfied

satisfied

satisfied

11. With whom can you totally be yourself? Check all that apply.

*** Extended Family means: grandparent/s, aunt/s, uncle/s, cousin/s, step-parent/s**

1) Father

4) Extended Family

7) No One

2) Mother

5) Friends

3) Siblings

6) Friends

How satisfied are you with the support they provide? Select from the drop down menu:

6-very

5-fairly

4-a little

3-a little

2-fairly

1-very

satisfied

satisfied

satisfied

satisfied

satisfied

satisfied

12. Whom do you feel really appreciates you as a person? Check all that apply.

*** Extended Family means: grandparent/s, aunt/s, uncle/s, cousin/s, step-parent/s**

- 1) Father
- 2) Mother
- 3) Siblings
- 4) Extended Family
- 5) Friends
- 6) Friends
- 7) No One

How satisfied are you with the support they provide? Select from the drop down menu:

- 6-very satisfied
- 5-fairly satisfied
- 4-a little satisfied
- 3-a little satisfied
- 2-fairly satisfied
- 1-very satisfied

13. Who can you really count on to give you useful suggestions that help you to avoid making mistakes? Check all that apply.

*** Extended Family means: grandparent/s, aunt/s, uncle/s, cousin/s, step-parent/s**

- 1) Father
- 2) Mother
- 3) Siblings
- 4) Extended Family
- 5) Friends
- 6) Friends
- 7) No One

How satisfied are you with the support they provide? Select from the drop down menu:

- 6-very satisfied
- 5-fairly satisfied
- 4-a little satisfied
- 3-a little satisfied
- 2-fairly satisfied
- 1-very satisfied

14. Whom can you count on to listen openly and uncritically to your innermost feelings? Check all that apply.

*** Extended Family means: grandparent/s, aunt/s, uncle/s, cousin/s, step-parent/s**

- 1) Father
- 2) Mother
- 3) Siblings
- 4) Extended Family
- 5) Friends
- 6) Friends
- 7) No One

How satisfied are you with the support they provide? Select from the drop down menu:

- 6-very
- 5-fairly
- 4-a little
- 3-a little
- 2-fairly
- 1-very

satisfied satisfied satisfied satisfied satisfied satisfied

15. Who will comfort you when you need it by holding you in their arms? Check all that apply.

*** Extended Family means: grandparent/s, aunt/s, uncle/s, cousin/s, step-parent/s**

- 1) Father
- 2) Mother
- 3) Siblings
- 4) Extended Family
- 5) Friends
- 6) Friends
- 7) No One

How satisfied are you with the support they provide? Select from the drop down menu:

6-very 5-fairly 4-a little 3-a little 2-fairly 1-very
satisfied satisfied satisfied satisfied satisfied satisfied

16. Who do you feel would help if a good friend of yours had been in a car accident and was hospitalized in serious condition? Check all that apply.

*** Extended Family means: grandparent/s, aunt/s, uncle/s, cousin/s, step-parent/s**

- 1) Father
- 2) Mother
- 3) Siblings
- 4) Extended Family
- 5) Friends
- 6) Friends
- 7) No One

How satisfied are you with the support they provide? Select from the drop down menu:

6-very 5-fairly 4-a little 3-a little 2-fairly 1-very
satisfied satisfied satisfied satisfied satisfied satisfied

17. Whom can you really count on to help you feel more relaxed when you are under pressure or tense? Check all that apply.

*** Extended Family means: grandparent/s, aunt/s, uncle/s, cousin/s, step-parent/s**

- 1) Father
- 2) Mother
- 4) Extended Family
- 5) Friends
- 7) No One

3) Siblings

6) Friends

How satisfied are you with the support they provide? Select from the drop down menu:

6-very

5-fairly

4-a little

3-a little

2-fairly

1-very

satisfied

satisfied

satisfied

satisfied

satisfied

satisfied

18. Who do you feel would help if a family member very close to you died? Check all that apply.

*** Extended Family means: grandparent/s, aunt/s, uncle/s, cousin/s, step-parent/s**

1) Father

4) Extended Family

7) No One

2) Mother

5) Friends

3) Siblings

6) Friends

How satisfied are you with the support they provide? Select from the drop down menu:

6-very

5-fairly

4-a little

3-a little

2-fairly

1-very

satisfied

satisfied

satisfied

satisfied

satisfied

satisfied

19. Who accepts you totally, including both your worst and your best points? Check all that apply.

*** Extended Family means: grandparent/s, aunt/s, uncle/s, cousin/s, step-parent/s**

1) Father

4) Extended Family

7) No One

2) Mother

5) Friends

3) Siblings

6) Friends

How satisfied are you with the support they provide? Select from the drop down menu:

6-very

5-fairly

4-a little

3-a little

2-fairly

1-very

satisfied

satisfied

satisfied

satisfied

satisfied

satisfied

20. Whom can you really count on to care about you, regardless of what is happening to you?

Check all that apply.

*** Extended Family means: grandparent/s, aunt/s, uncle/s, cousin/s, step-parent/s**

- 1) Father
- 2) Mother
- 3) Siblings
- 4) Extended Family
- 5) Friends
- 6) Friends
- 7) No One

How satisfied are you with the support they provide? Select from the drop down menu:

- 6-very satisfied
- 5-fairly satisfied
- 4-a little satisfied
- 3-a little satisfied
- 2-fairly satisfied
- 1-very satisfied

21. Whom can you really count on to listen to you when you are very angry at someone else?

Check all that apply.

*** Extended Family means: grandparent/s, aunt/s, uncle/s, cousin/s, step-parent/s**

- 1) Father
- 2) Mother
- 3) Siblings
- 4) Extended Family
- 5) Friends
- 6) Friends
- 7) No One

How satisfied are you with the support they provide? Select from the drop down menu:

- 6-very satisfied
- 5-fairly satisfied
- 4-a little satisfied
- 3-a little satisfied
- 2-fairly satisfied
- 1-very satisfied

22. Whom can you really count on to tell you, in a thoughtful manner, when you need to improve

in some way? Check all that apply.

*** Extended Family means: grandparent/s, aunt/s, uncle/s, cousin/s, step-parent/s**

- 1) Father
- 2) Mother
- 3) Siblings
- 4) Extended Family
- 5) Friends
- 6) Friends
- 7) No One

How satisfied are you with the support they provide? Select from the drop down menu:

6-very satisfied	5-fairly satisfied	4-a little satisfied	3-a little satisfied	2-fairly satisfied	1-very satisfied
---------------------	-----------------------	-------------------------	-------------------------	-----------------------	---------------------

23. Whom can you really count on to help you feel better when you are feeling generally down-in-the-dumps? Check all that apply.

*** Extended Family means: grandparent/s, aunt/s, uncle/s, cousin/s, step-parent/s**

- | | | |
|-------------|--------------------|-----------|
| 1) Father | 4) Extended Family | 7) No One |
| 2) Mother | 5) Friends | |
| 3) Siblings | 6) Friends | |

How satisfied are you with the support they provide? Select from the drop down menu:

6-very satisfied	5-fairly satisfied	4-a little satisfied	3-a little satisfied	2-fairly satisfied	1-very satisfied
---------------------	-----------------------	-------------------------	-------------------------	-----------------------	---------------------

24. Who do you feel truly love you deeply? Check all that apply.

*** Extended Family means: grandparent/s, aunt/s, uncle/s, cousin/s, step-parent/s**

- | | | |
|-------------|--------------------|-----------|
| 1) Father | 4) Extended Family | 7) No One |
| 2) Mother | 5) Friends | |
| 3) Siblings | 6) Friends | |

How satisfied are you with the support they provide? Select from the drop down menu:

6-very satisfied	5-fairly satisfied	4-a little satisfied	3-a little satisfied	2-fairly satisfied	1-very satisfied
---------------------	-----------------------	-------------------------	-------------------------	-----------------------	---------------------

25. Whom can you count on to console you when you are very upset? Check all that apply.

*** Extended Family means: grandparent/s, aunt/s, uncle/s, cousin/s, step-parent/s**

- | | | |
|-----------|--------------------|-----------|
| 1) Father | 4) Extended Family | 7) No One |
|-----------|--------------------|-----------|

- 2) Mother
- 3) Siblings
- 5) Friends
- 6) Friends

How satisfied are you with the support they provide? Select from the drop down menu:

- 6-very satisfied
- 5-fairly satisfied
- 4-a little satisfied
- 3-a little satisfied
- 2-fairly satisfied
- 1-very satisfied

26. Whom can you really count on to support you in major decisions you make? Check all that apply.

*** Extended Family means: grandparent/s, aunt/s, uncle/s, cousin/s, step-parent/s**

- 1) Father
- 2) Mother
- 3) Siblings
- 4) Extended Family
- 5) Friends
- 6) Friends
- 7) No One

How satisfied are you with the support they provide? Select from the drop down menu:

- 6-very satisfied
- 5-fairly satisfied
- 4-a little satisfied
- 3-a little satisfied
- 2-fairly satisfied
- 1-very satisfied

27. Whom can you really count on to help you feel better when you are very irritable, ready to get angry at almost anything? Check all that apply.

*** Extended Family means: grandparent/s, aunt/s, uncle/s, cousin/s, step-parent/s**

- 1) Father
- 2) Mother
- 3) Siblings
- 4) Extended Family
- 5) Friends
- 6) Friends
- 7) No One

How satisfied are you with the support they provide? Select from the drop down menu:

- 6-very satisfied
- 5-fairly satisfied
- 4-a little satisfied
- 3-a little satisfied
- 2-fairly satisfied
- 1-very satisfied

Appendix C

Confidence Scale -Revised

Stanley, Hoyer, & Trathen 1994

Please respond to each statement related to your marriage/dating relationship or your future relationship indicating your level of agreement using the scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 7=Strongly Agree.

1 = Strongly Disagree

2

3

4 = Neither Agree Nor Disagree

5

6

7 = Strongly Agree

- 1) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 I believe we can handle whatever conflicts will arise in the future.
- 2) R 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 I don't have much confidence in the future of my relationship.
- 3) R 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 I am not at all sure that we can make this relationship work for the long haul.
- 4) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 I feel good about our prospects to make this relationship work for a lifetime.
- 5) R 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 We may not have what it takes to keep this relationship going.

- 6) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 We can handle just about anything that comes our way.
- 7) R 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 I am not sure that we can avoid divorce or breaking up in the future.
- 8) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 I am very confident when I think of our future together.
- 9) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 We have the skills a couple needs to make a marriage last.
- 10) R 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Our risk for divorce or breakup is probably greater than average.

Appendix D

Generalized Expectancy for Success Scale-Revised (GESS-R)

Please select the response which indicates the degree to which you believe each statement would apply to you personally.

1= Highly improbable

2= Improbable

3=Equally improbable and probable, not sure

4=Probable

5= Highly probable

In the future I expect that I will . . .

- | | | | | | |
|--|-----|---|---|---|---|
| 1. succeed at most things I try. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. be listened to when I speak. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. carry through my responsibilities successfully. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. get the promotions I deserve. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. have successful close personal relationships. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. handle unexpected problems successfully. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. make a good impression on people I meet for
the first time. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. attain the career goals I set for myself. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. experience many failures in my life. | R 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. have a positive influence on most of the people
with whom I interact. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. be able to solve my own problems. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

12. acquire most of the things that are important to me.		1	2	3	4	5
13. find that no matter how hard I try, things just don't turn out the way I would like.	R	1	2	3	4	5
14. be a good judge of what it takes to get ahead.		1	2	3	4	5
15. handle myself well in whatever situation I'm in.		1	2	3	4	5
16. reach my financial goals.		1	2	3	4	5
17. have problems working with others.		1	2	3	4	5
18. discover that the good in life outweighs the bad.		1	2	3	4	5
19. be successful in my endeavors in the long run.		1	2	3	4	5
20. be unable to accomplish my goals.	R	1	2	3	4	5
21. be very successful working out my personal life.		1	2	3	4	5
22. succeed in the projects I undertake.		1	2	3	4	5
23. discover that my plans don't work out too well.	R	1	2	3	4	5
24. achieve recognition in my profession.		1	2	3	4	5
25. have rewarding intimate relationships.		1	2	3	4	5

Appendix E

Informed Consent

INFORMED CONSENT

Marriage and Family Therapy Program

Greenspun College of Urban Affairs

TITLE OF STUDY: The Impact of Parental Divorce on Children's Confidence Levels

INVESTIGATOR(S): Dr. Stephen T. Fife, Ph.D.; Lawrence J. Jackson (Graduate Student)

For questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Dr. Stephen Fife at **702-895-3117**.

For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted you may contact **the UNLV Office of Research Integrity – Human Subjects at 702-895-2794, toll free at 877-895-2794, or via email at IRB@unlv.edu**.

Purpose of the Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to increase understanding dealing with the impact of social support in regards to children's confidence levels, whom have experience parental divorce.

Participants

The participants in the study are young adults between the ages of 18-25, who have experienced parental divorce within their childhood. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are 18 years of age or older and a young adult who has experienced parental divorce in your household between the ages of 2-17.

Procedures

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a series of surveys that measures your perception of social support, confidence dealing with romantic relationships, and career expectations. The surveys should take about 20 minutes to complete.

Benefits of Participation

Participation will provide you with the opportunity to reflect on the impact that social support has had on your outlook of career expectations and positive romantic relationships. You may benefit from the study by being asked to reflect upon the impact that social support has had on your success or limitations throughout your life. Additionally, results from this study may provide relevant information and insight for children who have experienced parental divorce and their parents as they find ways to help all parties heal from this life transition.

Risks of Participation

There are risks involved in all research studies. This study includes only minimal risks, such as the inconvenience and possible minor emotional distress associated with discussing your support or lack thereof from your family, friends, or siblings.

Cost /Compensation

There will not be financial cost to your participating in this study. The study will take about 20 minutes to complete in its entirety. You will be entered into a drawing by placing your email at the end of the survey for one of 10 \$25 gift cards.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without consequence to your relations with the university or the researchers involved. If you have any questions, please feel free to email the researchers.

Confidentiality

All information gathered in this study will be kept as confidential as possible within the research team. All identifying information will be removed from the data. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. All records will be stored in a locked facility at UNLV. Digital copies of the data received will be deleted after 10 years. Results of the study are available to participants upon request following the completion of the research.

Participant Consent:

I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study, and I agree to answer demographic information for the purpose of the study. I have been able to ask questions about the research study. I am at least 18 years of age.

Reference

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Curriculum Vitae

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EDUCATION

University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), Las Vegas, NV December 2015
M.S in Marriage & Family Therapy GPA: 4.0/4.0

Thesis: *The Impact of Parental Divorce On Children's
Confidence Levels In Adulthood*

Xavier University of Louisiana (XULA), New Orleans, LA May 2013
B.S. in Psychology-Pre-Med GPA: 3.14/4.0
Minor: Chemistry & Biology

WORK EXPERIENCE

UNLV, Las Vegas, NV

Business Operations Coordinator, Consolidated Students of UNLV **Fall 2015- Present**

- Prepare and manage an annual budget in the amount of 1.4 million dollars with a multiple line items and specific budget lines
- Manage all business operations of the UNLV student government including tracking revenues and expenditures, prepare and present weekly, monthly and quarterly budget reports, manage scholarships and fee waivers distribution, cash handling and deposits
- Responsible for purchasing procedures and actions, prepare and negotiate contracts of performers and vendors, responsible for accounts payable and payroll
- Prepare annual reports to Director, Associate Vice President and Vice President for student affairs including metrics, strategic plans and budget reports
- Prepare and manage specific individual budgets for the 75+ events put on by individual departments
- Develop all departmental processes, procedures and programs and assess these processes and make improvements when needed
- Develop strategic plans, goals, visions and work plans for student government
- Manage multiple complex projects at the same time, plan marketing for programs, complete assessments and compile and analyze ever changing data of an ever changing and evolving student population
- Main point of contact for all students in student government, and 300+ recognized student organizations to assist in trouble shooting their needs regarding programs, funding and advertising
- Work with a diverse group of students, faculty and staff on a daily basis

Graduate Assistant, Service Learning **Fall 2013- Spring 2015**

- Mediator between Faculty & Non-profit organizations including 20 different Non-Profits and 30 different faculty members

-
- Coordinate on average 200+ service learning opportunities for 7 different colleges within the university for a total of 1,500+ students per semester
 - Facilitate 20 presentations on service learning for a total of 600 students
 - Serve as small group facilitator for a global leadership retreat that included undergraduate and graduate level students who identify with different cultures and ethnicities
 - Created a Service Learning Assessment that was administered to 800 students to assess their understanding of the Service Learning Student Outcomes

UNLV, Las Vegas, NV

Graduate Assistant, New Student Orientation

Summer 2013

- Conducted seminars for over 1,000+ incoming students and parents of UNLV that included 1st generations students, veterans, and underrepresented students during the welcome ceremony
- Conducted on average three 50+ minute sessions per day during a 2-day work weekend for parents of the incoming students that highlighted ways for their students to get involved on campus
- Help facilitate and run tabling that informed students about different ways to get involved on campus during the new student orientation
- Participated in the planning and logistic for the Parent sessions and seminars
- Interviewed over 15 candidates for different positions within the office and cluster
- Sat on the search committee for a project coordinator position within the office

Supplemental Instruction Leader

Fall 2012-Spring 2013

- Attended all 50-minute class meetings of assigned course that took place 3 times per week (Statistics I)
- Conducted two to three 50-minute study sessions per week throughout the term
- Actively recruited SI participants through social media, tabling, and incentives
- Planned effective learning activities and provide handouts for use during SI sessions
- Collected and analyzed attendance data for every SI session conducted
- Students who attended my sessions completed the course with an A, B, or C

This statistic was compared to students who did not attend my sessions (*50% Pass Rate*)

Summers Arts & Athletic Camp, Dallas, TX

Lead Counselor

Summer 2010

Director

Summer 2011- Summer 2012

- Worked with children from 6th-10th Grade who belong to underrepresented populations
- Managed logistics of day to day operations including planning weekly field trips
- Handled Payroll for employees that included a staff of 8 counselors and 2 administrators
- Collected and analyze data from parental surveys
- Served as primary Liaison for all summer field trips and activities
- Gave scholarships to students to attend the camp
- Help advocate the cheapest childcare in Garland, Texas

CLINICAL EXPERIENCE

Las Vegas, NV

Co-Presenter, Family Solutions

Spring 2015- Present

- Co-presenter for the COPE mandated divorce seminar for 3 hours, 2-4 times a month for divorced families with children
- Educated 20-40 divorced families per class about the legal system dealing with divorce, the importance of self-care, and how to co-parent with their previous partner for their children

-
- Provide psychoeducation for co-parents going through diverse issues at the completion of the seminar

UNLV, Las Vegas, NV

Student-Therapist Intern, Counseling's & Psychological Services (CAPS)

Spring 2015- Fall 2015

- Provide psychotherapy to UNLV's Nationally Ranked Diverse Student Population (#6) using a brief therapy model for individual, couples, and groups
- UNLV CAPS services also include crisis intervention, medication evaluation and management, psychological assessment, drug and alcohol use assessment, educational workshops, presentations, consultation, and referrals to community to help the student population reach their goals
- Work along side a multidisciplinary staff, which includes licensed psychologists, psychiatrist, and other licensed counseling professionals
- Administer and evaluate psychological assessment such as BDI-II, PHQ-9, LFS, BSS to assess depression, suicidal ideation, and daily functioning
- Conduct in-take sessions for students interested in psychotherapy and psychiatric evaluation
- Efficient use in electronic medical record keeping software such as *Medicat*
- Participate in weekly supervision with CAPS supervisor
- Participate in weekly one-hour group supervision that include psychotherapy presentations and training seminars from UNLV's CAPS multidisciplinary staff
- Participate and conduct case conceptualization for clients during group supervision
- Participate in weekly Clinical Assessment Team (CAT) meetings

Therapist-In-Training, Center for Individual and Family Counseling

Summer 2014- Spring 2015

- Provide therapy at a low cost (*sliding scale*) to the Las Vegas Community using different
- therapy models to assist clients in reaching their goals in therapy
- Providing therapy addressing concerns such as depression, anxiety, adjustment, identity developments, career choice, communication, infidelity, and co-parenting
- Provided therapy for children, teenagers, adults, couples, and families
- Make diagnosis according to the criterion of the *DSM-V*
- Write accurate notes about my experiences with my clients in therapy
- Work with other co-therapist as a therapy team to strategically assist clients in achieving their goals
- Conduct in-take and assessment sessions
- Participate in practicum case presentations and formulations
- Participate in weekly supervision by practicum advisor
- Provide psycho-educational programing about communication, assertiveness, and co-parenting

FELLOWSHIPS, AWARDS, MEMBERSHIPS, PRESENTATIONS, & CAMPUS INVOLVEMENT

AAMFT Fellow-1 of 30 Fellows selected for the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy/Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration Now Is The Time: Minority Fellowship Program- Youth (2014-2015)

AAMFT Minority Scholarship Recipient-1 of 3 recipients for the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy Master's Minority Scholarship (2014)

Delta Kappa Member- Delta Kappa (MFT International Honor Society, UNLV Zeta Chapter) (2013)

Nominees for UNLV's Most Outstanding Graduate Student -1 of 7 out of 3,500+ Graduate Students (2013)

XULA Community Service Key Recipient- 1 of 13 students presented with the XULA Community Service Key out of the 2013 Graduating Class (2013)
Presenter-Students Helping Students: Facilitating Collaborative Learning Experiences (ACPA 2013)
Member –Psi Chi (National Honor Society of Psychology) (2012)
Student Director- XULA New Student Orientation that included 800 incoming freshman (2012)
Chief of Staff- 2012-2013 XULA Student Government Association (2012)
Pole March- 2012-2013 Beta Iota Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Incorporated (2012)
Event Chair- XULA Spring Fest Concert that included mainstream artist and over 2,000+ student participants (2010,2011)
Recipient- NAACP Image Award (2008,2007)
