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# The Impact of Parental Divorce on Orthodox Jewish Marital Relationships

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Abstract

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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## Abstract

While there is ample research showing that adult children of divorced parents have more positive attitudes toward divorce and lower marital commitment, there has been no such research focused specifically on the Orthodox Jewish (OJ) population, which tends to view divorce more negatively. Prior to this study, it was thus unclear if the findings of existing research on marital competence applied to OJ children of divorce. Driven by social exchange theory, this study was designed to discover (a) whether OJ adult children of divorce differ significantly from OJ adult children of intact marriages in their marital commitment and marital satisfaction; (b) whether gender moderates the relationships between parental divorce, marital satisfaction, and marital commitment; and (c) if attitudes toward divorce mediate those relationships. Data from 162 adult OJ participants living in the United States were collected using quantitative cross-sectional survey methodology, and were analyzed using 1-way multivariate analysis of covariance, hierarchical multiple regression, and conditional process analysis. Results indicated that there were no significant differences between OJ adult children of divorce and OJ adult children of intact marriages in their marital commitment or marital satisfaction. Further, gender did not moderate the relationships between parental divorce and marital satisfaction or marital commitment, nor did attitudes toward divorce mediate those relationships. OJ community leaders may use the results of this study to help implement community awareness programs designed to reduce the stigma of parental divorce and its impact on the marriage prospects of OJ children of divorce.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

# Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

## Introduction

In this study, I aimed to assess the effect parental divorce has on the marital relationships of adult children of divorce (ACOD) in the Orthodox Jewish (OJ) community. While the negative effects of divorce on children are well documented (Arkes 2013; Babalis, Tsoli, Nikolopoulos, & Maniatis, 2014; Bernardi & Radl, 2014; Uphold-Carrier & Utz, 2012; Mustonen, Huurre, Kiviruusu, Haukkala, & Aro, 2011), there is a paucity of research to date on the effects of divorce on OJ ACOD. Orthodox Jews, in general, have been largely ignored in the psychological literature (Pirutinsky, Rosen, Safran, & Rosmarin, 2010). Schnall (2006) reported that Orthodox Jews view the institution of marriage very differently than do those in the general population. While the general population considers marriage to be an extension of love and romance, Orthodox Jews consider raising a family to be the primary purpose of marriage, and view marriage as a permanent religious institution (Schnall, 2006). Lambert and Dollahite (2008) found that those with such views toward marriage tend to have more negative attitudes towards divorce. Further, individuals with religious parents tend to have more negative attitudes towards divorce (Kapinus & Pellerin, 2008), as do those who are less acculturated to the mainstream American lifestyle (Ellison, Wolfinger, & Ramos-Wada, 2013). Thus, Orthodox Jews may be affected by parental divorce differently than those in the general population. This study contributes significantly to the current knowledge base, and helps combat the stigma of parental divorce in the OJ community and its impact on the marriage prospects of OJ ACOD who often have trouble finding suitable marriage

partners due to their perceived lower chances of maintaining happy marriages. In this introductory chapter, I present the background, problem statement, purpose, research questions and hypotheses, theoretical foundation, nature of the study, and definitions for the study. Following are the assumptions, scope, and limitations of the study.

## Background

The impacts of parental divorce on children have long been a focus of research. More specifically, an increase in research on the topic of intergenerational transmission of divorce began in the late 1970s and early 1980s due to the rising divorce rates at that time (Amato, Booth, Johnson, & Rogers, 2007). Research on this topic, however, became much more robust and popular in consequence of a landmark 20-year longitudinal study by Booth, Amato, and Johnson (2001), which ran from 1980 through 2000. This large and comprehensive data set has been analyzed in many ways in subsequent studies throughout its six waves (e.g. Amato & DeBoer, 2001; Amato & Rogers, 1999; Amato & Sobolewski, 2001; Kawamura & Brown, 2010; Myers, 2004), providing much of the foundational data on the topic of intergenerational transmission of divorce.

Using Booth et al.'s longitudinal data, Amato and DeBoer (2001) found that parental divorce increased the likelihood that ACOD would get divorced, while parental marital conflict increased the likelihood of relationship issues and consideration of divorce in adult children's own marriages, even without an actual divorce ensuing. Attitudes towards divorce of ACOD were influenced by parental marital conflict and divorce, and as such impacted their marital satisfaction (Amato & DeBoer, 2001). Cui and Fincham (2010) found that when parents were divorced, adult children had a more

positive view of divorce, which negatively impacted their marital satisfaction and commitment. Attitudes toward divorce also mediated the effect that parental divorce had on the marital relationships of ACOD (Amato & DeBoer, 2001). When comparing genders, females had a more positive attitude towards divorce than males (Kapinus & Flowers, 2008), which in turn negatively affected their marital quality after experiencing parental divorce by lowering their marital commitment (Whitton, Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman, 2008). Miles and Servaty-Seib (2010) further found that single young ACOD had more positive attitudes towards divorce than did their counterparts from intact homes.

Marital commitment and attitudes towards divorce within the OJ population, however, have not yet been a focus of research. Schnall, Pelcovitz, and Fox (2013) found that the marriages of OJ couples differ from those in the general population in that they tend to be more happy and satisfying. Additionally, there is a significantly lower divorce rate within the OJ community, which is estimated to be around 30% (Salamon, 2008), compared to the approximately 50% in the general population (Copen, Daniels, Vespa, & Mosher, 2012). However, this divorce rate has spiked over the past decade (Salamon, 2008). Accordingly, it is yet to be researched how parental divorce impacts the marital relationships of ACOD within the OJ community. Thus, this study helps fill the aforementioned gap by focusing specifically on impact of parental divorce on the OJ adult children's own marital relationships. It also promotes positive social change by helping to combat the stigma of parental divorce in the OJ community, and its impact on the marriage prospects of OJ ACOD who are having trouble finding suitable marriage

partners due to their perceived lower chances of maintaining happy marriages. My findings that OJ ACOD maintain the same levels of marital satisfaction and marital commitment as adult children of intact marriages (ACIM) can help combat the aforementioned stigma and offer OJ ACOD improved marriage prospects.

## Statement of the Problem

According to data from the National Center for Health Statistics (Copen, Daniels, Vespa, & Mosher, 2012), approximately half of all marriages in the United States end in divorce. Accordingly, a large number of American children can expect to experience the many ill effects that parental divorce has been shown to cause. For example, children of divorce are at an increased risk of substance abuse (Arkes 2013), display poorer academic performance and behavior problems (Babalis, Tsoli, Nikolopoulos, & Maniatis, 2014), have more difficult relationships with their siblings (Poortman & Voorpostel,, 2009), and experience increased mental health problems (Ängarne-Lindberg & Wadsby, 2009). Many of these effects are long-lasting, affecting the children of divorce when they are adults (Ahrons, 2007; Ängarne-Lindberg & Wadsby, 2009; Bernardi & Radl, 2014; Uphold-Carrier & Utz, 2012). Further, parental divorce has been shown to negatively affect the adult children's own marriages by reducing their marital satisfaction (Mustonen, Huurre, Kiviruusu, Haukkala, & Aro, 2011), effecting a pro-divorce shift in their attitudes, and lowering their marital commitment (Miles & Servaty-Seib, 2010). These pro-divorce attitudes and lower marital commitment have further been found to increase the chances of the ACOD's own marriages ending in divorce (Whitton, Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman, 2008).

However, all extant research has been conducted in the general population. Schnall (2006) reported that Orthodox Jews view the institution of marriage very differently than do those in the general population. In particular, while the general population considers marriage to be an extension of love and romance, Orthodox Jews consider raising a family to be the primary purpose of marriage, and view marriage as a permanent religious institution (Schnall, 2006). Lambert and Dollahite (2008) found that those with such views toward marriage tend to have more negative attitudes towards divorce. Further, those with religious parents tend to have more negative attitudes towards divorce (Kapinus & Pellerin, 2008). Seminal research by Amato and deBoer (2001) has shown that attitudes towards divorce mediate the effect parental divorce has on the adult children's marital relationships. It remained unknown, therefore, if the aforementioned research in the general population applies to Orthodox Jews. In general, Orthodox Jews, as a cultural group, remain largely ignored in psychological literature (Pirutinsky et al., 2010). While a national survey by Schnall, Pelcovitz, and Fox (2013) showed that OJ marriages seem to be relatively happier when compared to those of the general population, with three out of four spouses saying they would marry the same individual if they were given a choice again, divorce within the community does exist and is becoming increasingly problematic. Although exact figures of the divorce rate among the OJ community are not currently available, it is estimated to be around 30%, up from roughly 20% in the past decade (Salamon, 2008). Though the relatively lower rate of divorce within the OJ community has historically kept the subject off the proverbial

discussion table, the sharp rise in OJ divorces in the past decade has prompted many to speak out about the topic and reach out to those affected by it.

Recently, an OJ non-profit organization serving the mental health needs of the community highlighted the importance of educating the community at large regarding the negative effects of divorce, and how Rabbis, community leaders, and educators play a crucial role in mitigating the negative effects and helping children of divorce successfully navigate the divorce experience (OHEL Children's Home and Family Services, n.d.). This need prompted the release of a film about OJ divorces entitled *Rising From Divorce* (Saker & Klein, 2015), for which screenings and panel discussions were held in many OJ synagogues and community centers nationally (Klein, 2015). Thus, the impact of parental divorce on OJ marital relationships is an important issue for the community.

The prearranged dating system in many Orthodox communities involves extensive research into a proposed date prior to meeting (Penkower, 2010). After a proposed match is suggested to both the man and woman, inquiries are made by each side to determine whether the proposed ideas sound suitable for a future marriage. As part of that research process, research is frequently conducted into the family of the proposed match to determine whether they would be a suitable marriage partner (Penkower, 2010). Although members of the community express satisfaction of the prearranged dating system, it comes along with a high level of stigma toward any issue that would render a potential partner as flawed (Milevsky, Niman, Raab, & Gross, 2011). Citing some of the aforementioned research in the general community, Gavant (2011) reported that people often feel that OJ ACOD have poorer chances of maintaining successful marriages and

have a harder time finding a mate. Thus, the results of this research can help combat the stigma associated with parental divorce, and may make it easier for those from divorced homes in the OJ community to find suitable marriage partners.

## Purpose of the Study

The intent of this quantitative research study was to fill the gap in scholarly research by focusing specifically on the impact of parental divorce on OJ ACOD's own marital relationships. Accordingly, the purpose of this study was to examine the effects of parental divorce on the marital satisfaction and commitment of ACOD within the OJ community. I also studied differences between male and female ACOD in their level of marital commitment and marital satisfaction. The independent variable was parental divorce/no parental divorce, while the dependent variables were marital commitment and marital satisfaction. One group was adult children of intact marriages (ACIM), while the other group was adults whose parents were divorced. Gender (as a moderator variable) and attitudes towards divorce (as a mediator variable) were also included in the analysis to test for mediation/moderation using conditional process analysis, and were also statistically controlled for as covariates in the MANCOVA. Prior research in the general population lent support for my inclusion, in this study of the OJ population, of gender as a moderator (Dennison, Koerner, & Segrin, 2014; Whitton, Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman, 2008), and attitudes toward divorce as a mediator (Amato & DeBoer, 2001; Cui & Fincham, 2010).

## Research Questions and Hypotheses

The following are the research questions that I developed for this study, along with their related hypotheses:

Research Question 1: Do OJ ACOD differ significantly from OJ ACIM in their levels of marital satisfaction, as measured by the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS; Hendrick, 1988), and marital commitment, as measured by Rusbult, Kumashiro, Kubacka, and Finkel's (2009) Commitment Scale, when controlling for gender and attitudes towards divorce, as measured by the Likelihood of Divorce Scale (Mulder & Gunnoe, 1999)?

$H_0$1: There will be no significant differences between the marital satisfaction and marital commitment of OJ ACOD and those of OJ ACIM when controlling for gender and attitudes towards divorce.

$H_1$1**:** There will be significant differences between the marital satisfaction and marital commitment of OJ ACOD and those of OJ ACIM when controlling for gender and attitudes towards divorce.

Research Question 2: Does gender significantly moderate the relationship between parental divorce and marital satisfaction of OJ ACOD, as measured by the RAS (Hendrick, 1988)?

$H_0$2: Gender will not significantly moderate the relationship between parental divorce and marital satisfaction of OJ ACOD.

$H_1$2: Gender will significantly moderate the relationship between parental divorce and marital satisfaction of OJ ACOD.

Research Question 3: Does gender significantly moderate the relationship between parental divorce and marital commitment of OJ ACOD, as measured by Rusbult, Kumashiro, Kubacka, and Finkel's (2009) Commitment Scale?

$H_0$3: Gender will not significantly moderate the relationship between parental divorce and marital commitment of OJ ACOD.

$H_1$3: Gender will significantly moderate the relationship between parental divorce and marital commitment of OJ ACOD.

Research Question 4: Does attitudes towards divorce, as measured by the Likelihood of Divorce Scale (Mulder & Gunnoe, 1999), significantly mediate the relationship between parental divorce and marital satisfaction of OJ ACOD, as measured by the RAS (Hendrick, 1988)?

$H_0$4: Attitudes towards divorce will not significantly mediate the relationship between parental divorce and marital satisfaction of OJ ACOD.

$H_1$4: Attitudes towards divorce will significantly mediate the relationship between parental divorce and marital satisfaction of OJ ACOD.

Research Question 5: Does attitudes towards divorce, as measured by the Likelihood of Divorce Scale (Mulder & Gunnoe, 1999), significantly mediate the relationship between parental divorce and marital commitment of OJ ACOD, as measured by Rusbult, Kumashiro, Kubacka, and Finkel's (2009) Commitment Scale?

$H_0$5: Attitudes towards divorce will not significantly mediate the relationship between parental divorce and marital commitment of OJ ACOD.

$H_0$5: Attitudes towards divorce will significantly mediate the relationship between parental divorce and marital commitment of OJ ACOD.

## Theoretical Foundation for the Study

The theoretical base that grounded this study is social exchange theory. Levinger (1976) provided a social–psychological view of divorce based on this theory. According to social exchange theory, people invest into relationships based on the outcomes they can expect to receive in return (Blau, 1964). Thus, according to social exchange theory, an individual who has a positive attitude towards divorce will invest fewer resources into the marriage, which in turn will erode the quality of the relationship (Levinger, 1976). This theory provides the basis for scholars' assertions that attitudes towards divorce mediate the effect parental divorce has on adult children's marital relationships (Amato & deBoer, 2001). In Chapter 2, I explain social exchange theory and its relationship to this study in further detail.

## Nature of the Study

My goal in this study was to determine if OJ ACOD differ from their counterparts from intact marriages in the marital satisfaction and marital commitment they experience in their own marriages. To achieve this goal, I used quantitative cross-sectional descriptive survey methodology. Aside from being the most common methodology used in earlier research of the same type (Vazire, 2010), the anonymous questionnaire format was especially appropriate because parental divorce and marital relationships are sensitive and emotionally-charged areas, especially in a tight-knit, high-stigmatization group like the OJ community (Pirutinsky et al., 2010). To that end, the anonymous

questionnaire format was an advantage in this study, given that it allowed the participants to respond more freely and accurately without fear of stigma, disapproval, or other negative effects (Fan & Yan, 2010).

Given that the target population consisted of Orthodox Jews, many of whom do not use the internet, I distributed and administered the surveys using both online and paper versions in order to obtain a representative sample of this population. The online version was created using the SurveyMonkey survey generation tool found at SurveyMonkey.com and was hosted there, with all data collected anonymously. The paper versions, along with sealable envelopes, were posted and collected anonymously using drop boxes placed in various synagogues and community centers frequented by Orthodox Jews. I recruited participants using flyers and advertisements in Jewish newspapers and popular OJ websites. The sampling frame was OJ adults 18 years of age or older who were currently married in their first marriage and residing in the United States. I excluded those who were under 18, living outside the United States, not currently married, or were previously married and divorced. Once data were collected, I analyzed them using a one-way multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) and mediation/moderation using conditional process analysis. The independent variable was parental divorce/no parental divorce, while the dependent variables were marital commitment and marital satisfaction. One group was ACOD, while the other group was ACIM. Gender (as a moderator variable) and attitudes towards divorce (as a mediator variable) were also included in the analysis to test for mediation/moderation using

conditional process analysis, and were also statistically controlled for as covariates in the MANCOVA. I explain the methodology for this study in further detail in Chapter 3.

## Definitions

*Adult children of divorce*: Adults who experienced parental divorce prior to their turning 18 years of age (Cooper Sumner, 2013).

*Adult children of intact marriages*: Adults who did not experience parental divorce prior to turning 18 years of age (Cooper Sumner, 2013).

*Attitudes towards divorce:* The degree to which one perceives divorce as being an acceptable resolution to marital discord. Those with positive attitudes towards divorce have more tolerant views of marital dissolution and see more situations as acceptable reasons to divorce. Conversely, those with negative attitudes towards divorce view marriage as a more permanent institution and believe people should remain in their marital relationships despite contending with marital difficulties (Whitton, Stanley, Markman, & Johnson, 2013).

*Marital commitment:* A personal dedication characterized by voluntary actions consistent with a pledge of one spouse to another in the continuation of an exclusive, lasting marital relationship. Those with high marital commitment are likely to ignore alternative partners and invest more of themselves and maintain their marital relationships by relinquishing personal comforts and preferences in the interest of pleasing their spouses and putting forth effort to work through problems (Whitton, Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman, 2008). This notion is perhaps summed up best during the

typical wedding ceremony with vows such as “until death do us part” and “to love and to cherish” (Larson, 1989).

*Marital satisfaction:* The degree to which people perceive their global satisfaction with their marital relationships (Jacquet & Surra, 2001).

*Orthodox Jews*: Members of religious sect of Judaism whose adherents believe in the divinity of the entire Torah (Hebrew Bible), both the written law and oral law (Talmud), as well as in its applicability in its entirety to modern times. Included in this definition is a wide range of adherents, ranging from Modern Orthodox to Ultra-orthodox (also known as Haredi) Jews (Dorff, 2008). In this study, I relied on participants’ self-identification with this sect of Judaism, and did not measure the participants’ adherence to Biblical and Talmudic law or level of religiosity.

## Assumptions

The study was based on several assumptions. First, I assumed that all participants had sufficient insight into their interpersonal relationships and completed the full surveys honestly and accurately to the best of their abilities. I also assumed that the survey instruments are valid and reliable measures of the constructs they are purported to measure. It was further assumed that Orthodox Jews have different attitudes towards divorce than those of the general population. This assumption was based on several characteristics of Orthodox Jews that have been shown to affect attitudes towards divorce in the general population. Schnall (2006), for instance, reported that OJ views on the institution of marriage are very different than popularly held views. In particular, while the general population considers marriage to be extension of love and romance, Orthodox

Jews consider raising a family to be the primary purpose of marriage, and view marriage as a permanent religious institution (Schnall, 2006). Lambert and Dollahite (2008) found that those with such views toward marriage tend to have more negative attitudes towards divorce. Further, those with religious parents tend to have more negative attitudes towards divorce (Kapinus & Pellerin, 2008), as do those who are less acculturated to the mainstream American lifestyle (Ellison, Wolfinger, & Ramos-Wada, 2013). However, while it is logical to assume that Orthodox Jews have more negative attitudes towards divorce, this has yet to be demonstrated in empirical studies. This assumption is important in that it was my underpinning rationale for studying the effects of parental divorce within the OJ community. Lastly, I assumed that the recruited sample was representative of the target population of Orthodox Jews.

I also made several assumptions pertaining to the statistical tests that were used in the study. In particular, The MANCOVA I used had an underlying assumption that there was a normal distribution of scores within the population from which the sample was drawn. It also had an underlying assumption that all observations made were independent of each other and that the variances and covariances were all homogeneous. Further, the multiple linear regression and condition process (mediation/moderation) analysis had an underlying assumption that there was  a linear relationship between the variables, the error distribution was normal, the errors in the linear regression analysis were statistically independent, and that the error terms along the regression were homoscedastic (Hayes, 2013).

## Scope and Delimitations

I emphasized in my problem statement that the research done regarding the transmission of divorce and attitudes towards divorce within the general population may not be applicable within the OJ community due to its divergent attitudes towards divorce. However, my goal in this study was to contrast ACOD and ACIM within the OJ community, and I did not directly compare Orthodox Jews to the general population.

Due to possible cultural difference between U.S. Orthodox Jews and their international counterparts, only married OJ adult participants residing in the United States were included in this study. Additionally, individuals who were in a second or subsequent marriage were not included in the sample because their attitudes towards divorce may have been impacted by their own personal experiences. Individuals not currently residing in the United States were not included in the data sample due to potential linguistic and cultural differences.

## Limitations

Anonymous research has an advantage in that it allows the participants to respond to sensitive and emotionally-charged topics more freely and accurately without fear of stigma, disapproval, or other negative effects (see Sellitz, Wrightsman, & Cook, 1976). It was particularly appropriate for this study in a tight-knit, high-stigmatization group like the OJ community. However, such research posed some limitations for this study, as well. For instance, it was not possible for me to ensure that none of the participants were spouses of other participants in the study and were thus referring to the same marriage in their responses. This event, while unlikely, may have confounded the data somewhat.

Another limitation that generally applies to anonymous research is that it was impossible to ensure that participants did not fill out the survey multiple times, thereby influencing the study outcomes (Duda & Nobile, 2010). This event, however, was unlikely in this study given that I offered no incentives for completing the surveys.

Another limitation to my study was that I included all Jews who identify themselves as Orthodox as participants. In reality, there are many different sects within the Orthodox community, ranging from Modern Orthodox to Ultra-Orthodox. Because each sect has different levels of acculturation and, by extension, different attitudes toward divorce, the results for each sect may, in fact, be somewhat different. In particular, those who are more acculturated to the mainstream lifestyle tend to have more permissive attitudes towards divorce, while less acculturated individuals generally view divorce more negatively (Ellison, Wolfinger, & Ramos-Wada, 2013). It would not have been feasible, however, for me to further narrow the scope by sect. Perhaps future research can focus on the various sects and their unique beliefs and attitudes about marriage and divorce.

Another limitation related to selection and sampling bias. While I made an effort to get as broad a range of participants as possible, the convenience sample that I used does somewhat limit the generalizability of the research. Although the ideal would have been to obtain a truly random sample, this was not feasible because of the large scope of the target population. To try to get as broad a range of participants as possible, both online and paper surveys were used and distributed in a wide range of synagogues and community centers.

A further limitation worth mentioning is that there are many other confounding factors that may have possibly influenced the participants' attitudes towards divorce, such as exposure to divorce of others besides the parents, such as siblings or friends, and exposure to portrayals of divorce attitudes in the media. The study design did not control for age of parental divorce, either. It was not feasible, however, to control for all possible confounders in the study. Perhaps further research can further focus on such variables.

Further, given that the study relied on self-report measures, there was the possibility of self-report and social desirability response biases. In general, depending on the individual circumstances of the participants, they may have exaggerated or underreported their issues in an effort to cause their issues to seem worse than they were or to minimize them. Participants may have also been motivated to respond in the most socially desirable way in order to make themselves look better. While these possible biases were unavoidable in the self-report survey methodology that I used in this study, they were minimized by the fact that the participants were made aware that the surveys were completely anonymous.

## Significance

The results of this study contribute to the current knowledge base and promote positive social change by helping combat the stigma of parental divorce in the OJ community, and its impact on the marriage prospects of OJ ACOD who often have trouble finding suitable marriage partners due to their perceived lower chances of maintaining happy marriages. In particular, the OJ community is experiencing what is often referred to as the "shidduch crisis," where singles of marriageable age are having

trouble finding suitable matches. This is particularly a troubling issue for OJ women, whom are often left without a marriage partner and remain single in a community that places a great emphasis on married family life. This often leaves the older singles with little social support, as most of their peers are married and busy with their families. This is a widespread problem that many in the OJ community are raising awareness of and attempting to alleviate. For example, a major rabbinical council group in the United States offered large monetary incentives for anyone who successfully matches older single women in the community in an attempt to alleviate the aforementioned "shidduch crisis" (Pensak, 2005). Similarly, a renowned OJ philanthropist offered a $10,000 incentive for anyone who matches a single male under 25 with a woman older than 25 (Eishes Lapidus, 2016; NASI Project, 2017).

While this significant issue applies to all singles, it is especially problematic for singles with any perceived flaw, such as those from divorced homes. The prearranged dating system in many Orthodox communities involves extensive research into a proposed date prior to meeting (Penkower, 2010). After a proposed match is suggested to both the man and woman, inquiries are made by each side to determine whether the proposed ideas sound suitable for a future marriage. As part of that research process, research is frequently conducted into the family of the proposed match to determine whether they would be a suitable marriage partner (Penkower, 2010). Although members of the community express satisfaction of the prearranged dating system, it comes with a high level of stigma toward any issue that would render a potential partner as flawed (Milevsky, Niman, Raab, & Gross, 2011). Citing known research in the general

community, Gavant (2011) reported that people often feel that OJ ACOD have poorer chances of maintaining successful marriages and have a harder time finding a mate. Thus, the results of this research may help ameliorate this issue, and the stigma associated with parental divorce in a potential marriage partner may be somewhat minimized. This may improve the marriage prospects of those from divorced homes in the OJ community.

## Summary

The purpose of this quantitative study was to assess the impact of parental divorce on adult children's marital satisfaction and commitment within the OJ community. This study helps fill a gap in the literature, which has largely ignored this understudied population. It also helps combat the stigma of parental divorce in the OJ community and its impact on the marriage prospects of OJ ACOD. Anonymous questionnaires were administered asking participants about their parents' marital status, the marital satisfaction and commitment they experienced in their own marriages, and their attitudes towards divorce.

In this introductory chapter, I provided a basic overview of the study. The following chapter includes a comprehensive review of the literature related to this study, which establishes the significance of and need for this study. In Chapter 3, I present the methodology of the data collection, participants, and statistical analyses that were used in the study design. Chapter 4 includes the results of the statistical analyses, while chapter 5 includes a discussion of the study results.

# Chapter 2: Literature Review

## Introduction

In this chapter, I provide a synopsis of the current literature related to the intergenerational impact of parental divorce, with a particular focus on how it relates to the OJ population. It commences with an overview of the theory that guided the study—social exchange theory—as it relates to marital relationships, followed by an examination of the current literature examining how parental divorce relates to the adult children's own marriages. Following that is a discussion of how the issue of parental divorce relates to the OJ population. Overall, in this literature review I clearly show a need for further research into the impact of parental divorce on the adult children's own marriages within the OJ community.

As I briefly pointed out in the previous chapter, there is a strong, consistent basis in the literature demonstrating the negative effects of divorce and its intergenerational transmission (Amato & Booth, 2001; Conway, Christensen, & Herlihy, 2003; Feng, Giarrusso, Bengtson, & Frye, 1999; Mullett & Stolberg, 2002). According to data from the National Center for Health Statistics (Copen, Daniels, Vespa, & Mosher, 2012), approximately half of all marriages in the United States end in divorce. Accordingly, approximately 50% of all Americans children can expect to experience the many ill effects that parental divorce has been shown to cause. For example, children of divorce are at an increased risk of substance abuse (Arkes 2013), display poorer academic performance and behavior problems (Babalis, Tsoli, Nikolopoulos, & Maniatis, 2014), have more difficult relationships with their siblings (Poortman & Voorpostel,, 2009), and

experience increased mental health problems (Ängarne-Lindberg & Wadsby, 2009). Many of these effects are long-lasting, affecting the children of divorce when they are adults (Ahrons, 2007; Ängarne-Lindberg & Wadsby, 2009; Bernardi & Radl, 2014; Uphold-Carrier & Utz, 2012). Further, parental divorce has been shown to negatively affect the adult children's own marriages by reducing their marital satisfaction (Mustonen, Huurre, Kiviruusu, Haukkala, & Aro, 2011), effecting a pro-divorce shift in their attitudes, and lowering their marital commitment (Miles & Servaty-Seib, 2010). These pro-divorce attitudes and lower marital commitment have further been found to increase the chances of ACOD's own marriages ending in divorce (Whitton, Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman, 2008).

All of this research, however, has been conducted in the general population. Given that Orthodox Jews' attitudes towards divorce tend to differ from those of the general population (Schnall, 2006), and seminal research by Amato and deBoer (2001) has shown that attitudes towards divorce mediate the effect parental divorce has on the adult children's marital relationships, it remained unknown if the aforementioned research in the general population applies to Orthodox Jews. In general, Orthodox Jews, as a cultural group, remain largely ignored in psychological literature (Pirutinsky et al., 2010). While a national survey by Schnall, Pelcovitz, and Fox (2013) showed that OJ marriages seem to be relatively happier when compared to those of the general population, with three out of four spouses saying they would marry the same individual if they were given a choice again, divorce within the community does exist and is becoming increasingly problematic. Although exact figures on the divorce rate among the OJ

community are not currently available, it is estimated to be around 30%, up from roughly 20% in the past decade (Salamon, 2008). Though the relatively lower rate of divorce within the OJ community has historically kept the subject off the proverbial discussion table, the alarming rise in OJ divorces in the past decade has prompted many to speak out about the topic and reach out to those affected by it.

Recently, an OJ non-profit organization serving the mental health needs of the community highlighted the importance of educating the community at large regarding the negative effects of divorce and how Rabbis, community leaders, and educators play a crucial role in mitigating the negative effects and helping children of divorce successfully navigate the divorce experience (OHEL Children's Home and Family Services, n.d.). This need prompted the release of a film about OJ divorces entitled *Rising From Divorce* (Saker & Klein, 2015), for which screenings and panel discussions were held in many OJ synagogues and community centers nationally (Klein, 2015). Thus, the impact of parental divorce on OJ marital relationships is an important issue for the OJ community. Further, Gavant (2011) reported that people often feel that OJ ACOD have poorer chances of maintaining successful marriages, and that they have a harder time finding a mate. This often leaves OJ ACOD without marriage partners, and they often remain single in a community that places a great emphasis on married family life. Thus, the results of this research can help combat the stigma associated with parental divorce and may make it easier for those from divorced homes in the OJ community to find suitable marriage partners.

## Literature Search Strategy

My primary means for searching the available literature was the Walden University online library. By means of several psychology-related databases such as PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES, SAGE psychology database, and SocIndex, as well as general scholarly databases such as Academic Search Premier and ProQuest, I reviewed many peer-reviewed journals in electronic format, including many prominent historical and seminal works. Journal articles or books that were not available from the Walden University library were purchased directly from the publisher. Aside for some seminal works and several key research articles I selected given the paucity of available research on Orthodox Jews, most of the works I reviewed were peer-reviewed and published within the past decade. Key search terms used included *marriage, divorce, parental divorce, marital dissolution, intergenerational transmission of divorce, children, adult children, offspring, marital relationships, intimate relationships, divorce attitudes, marital commitment, marital satisfaction, marital instability, social exchange theory, reciprocity, interdependence, religiosity,* and *Orthodox Jews*, as well as many combinations thereof. I also reviewed the reference lists of obtained works to identify additional literature.

## Theoretical Foundation

Social exchange theory (SET) is the theoretical basis that guided this study. American sociologist George Homans introduced the theory in 1958, although his ideas resemble those in early works by economic anthropologists such as Malinowski (1922) and Mauss (1925). Using some core concepts from Skinnerian behaviorism, Homans

(1958, 1961) proposed that human behavior within relationships is in essence an exchange of costs and rewards, both material and symbolic. In the context of exchanges, the rewards are the gratifying encounters people have and the possessions they acquire when they interact with others. Conversely, the costs in exchanges are the unpleasant experiences they endure within those interactions. In marital relationships, for example, people seek gratifying experiences such as acceptance and support from their partners and intimacy with them, as well as possible financial or social status the might obtain from the marriage. In exchange for these rewards, they may be willing to expend a certain degree of energy and money on the relationship, such as going out for dinner or other time spent with their spouse, as well as endure some psychological costs such as frustration over their spouse's flaws or regret over missed opportunities for freedom and enjoyment that they might have had were they single (Sedikides, Oliver, & Campbell, 1994). Thus, their relationship involves a constant appraisal of the rewards against the costs. This appraisal will determine the individual's willingness to work towards maintaining the relationship, as well as his or her determination regarding possible dissolution of the marriage (Levinger, 1976).

By adopting this somewhat economic view of social relationships, SET embraces several fundamental assumptions. First, Blau (1964) stressed that SET involves interdependent exchanges that are regulated by norms of reciprocity where the behavior of one party is contingent on the rewards anticipated from the conduct of the other party. In its emphasis on reciprocal interdependence, SET assumes that the behavior of one party inevitably elicits similar behavior from the other party in response (Gergen, 1969),

and that these reciprocal exchanges do not involve outright negotiation (Molm, 2000, 2003). In this way, SET assumes a certain degree of cogitation, with both parties actively assessing the costs and rewards associated with the exchange so that they maximize their profits and minimize their losses. Accordingly, each party actively chooses their social behavior and how much energy to expend on it based on this assessment (Emerson, 1976). The assumption underlying such an assessment, however, is further based on an assumption that humans are perceived as rational beings (Nye, 1982). Also, SET assumes the need for people to first face some costs (in this case the energy expended on their behaviors) and forego any rewards they might otherwise experience in order for them to achieve the rewards they anticipate from their behaviors (Nye, 1979).

In SET, the standard by which people decide if their outcomes meet their expectations is referred to as the comparison level (CL). The CL constantly evolves and is based upon individuals' idiosyncratic perceptions of their prior experiences, or by what they believe they deserve according to outcomes they observed other people having achieved in their own exchanges (Nakonezny & Denton, 2008). Accordingly, those with divorced parents are likely to have low CLs and low expectations for the outcomes in their own marriages. While this would seem to make them happier with the outcomes they achieve in their own marriages, it also means that they may invest less energy and fewer resources into their marriages based on their lower anticipated rewards, which in turn may erode the quality of their reciprocal relationships in due course (Whitton, Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman, 2008). Further, those with divorced parents may have different comparison level of alternatives ($CL_{alt}$), which is the standard by which people

decide if the outcomes of their exchanges are better than their other alternatives. By having less faith in marriage as an institution because of their parents' failed marriages, ACOD may have lower $CL_{alt}$s in their prospects for other marital relationships, but higher $CL_{alt}$s in their willingness to get divorced and remain that way (Whitton, Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman, 2008).

While SET includes all social exchanges, and does not specifically address marital relationships, many researchers have applied SET to intimate exchanges as well. For example, Bippus, Boren, and Worsham (2008) surveyed 466 individuals involved in romantic relationships and found that more individuals had an overbenefitted exchange orientation (OEO) compared to those with an underbenefitted exchange orientation (UEO). This means that more people were concerned with what they would get out of the relationship than with how much they would invest and control within the relationship. Results also indicated that conflict behaviors within a romantic relationship were predicted by their exchange orientation (OEO or UEO). UEO's were associated with engaging in criticism, expressing anger towards a partner, and denying or avoiding conflict. Thus, those concerned with underbenefitting either avoided conflicts or approached conflicts aggressively.

Dew, Britt, and Huston (2012) evaluated the possibility of SET variables such as marital satisfaction mediating the association between financial disagreements and divorce. SET may explain this relationship because when financial disagreements are present in a relationship, expectations of one or both spouses may not be met, which in turn may create dissatisfaction in the relationship (Dew & Dakin, 2011). Dew, Britt, and

Huston (2012) used interview data from the National Survey of Families and Households conducted in two shifts, one in 1987-1988, and the second in 1992-1994. The study sample consisted of 4,574 participants who were married during the first shift and included both spouses during both the first and second shift. The data was therefore analyzed on a couple, rather than individual level. Results of Dew, Britt, and Huston's (2012) study indicated that marital satisfaction was, in fact, a strong mediating factor between financial conflict and divorce.

Dillow, Malachowski, Brann, and Weber (2011) collected data from 215 participants involved in exclusive romantic relationships. Each participant rated their investment, alternatives, satisfaction, and commitment in their current relationship. They then read one of five scenarios regarding infidelity for the purpose of communicating a message to one's partner, referred to as communication infidelity (CI), and were required to find the motive for the CI from a choice of five options. Respondents then rated the motive in terms of how acceptable or justifiable they considered the motive to be, and then postulated the expected outcome had the infidelity scenario been played out by their actual partner. Dillow et al. selected the investment model as the theoretical basis of their study because of the strong connection that satisfaction and commitment have on decisions and behaviors of romantic partners after a transgression is committed. The investment model, developed by Rusbult (1980, 1983), is a variation of SET that emphasizes three factors that keep people committed to their relationships: high satisfaction, low quality of alternatives, and high investments (Agnew, Van Lange, Rusbult, & Langston, 1998). Additionally, when one's alternatives to their current

relationship are low quality, one's commitment to the relationship is stronger (Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998). The greater one's intrinsic and extrinsic investments in a relationship (which are lost if the relationship ends), the greater one's commitment to the relationship (Agnew et al., 1998; Rusbult, 1980, 1983). Results of Dillow et al.'s study indicated that participants who were very satisfied and committed to their relationship and viewed their partner as unique were less likely to allow their relationship to end after discovering infidelity with a communicative intent, and were more likely to engage in responses that were intended to continue their relationship, such as discussing the transgression as part of the forgiveness process (Dillow, Malachowski, Brann, & Weber, 2011).

Equity theory, another variation of exchange theory, refers to feelings of distress that are caused when there is inequality in the amount of cost and reward distributed within a relationship. This theory was originally studied in non-marital relationships such as employee-employer relationships (Adams, 1965; Hatfield, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978), but has also been applied to marital relationships. For example, researchers have focused on determining whether or not equity influences marriage satisfaction (Gager & Sanchez, 2003), or whether marital distress comes before one of the spouses perceives that there actually is inequity in the relationship (Grote & Clark, 2001). Similarly, DeMaris (2007), Frisco and Williams (2003), and Joyner (2009) found that couples do focus on the balance of exchange within their relationship and are aware of inequity, which in turn can lead to marital distress, dissatisfaction, and ultimately divorce.

There are other factors that may buffer or exacerbate issues of distress caused by inequity, such as gender, where women have been found to be more affected by inequity issues in lowering their satisfaction level than men (Grote & Clarke, 2001; Sprecher, 2001), those with low exchange orientations (Buunk & Van Yperen, 1991), or if one of the partners has a debilitating or terminal illness (Kuijer, Buunk, & Ybema, 2001). Similarly, DeMaris, Mahoney, and Pargament (2010) studied whether religiosity or sanctification of marriage moderate the effects of inequity in marriage. This would be expected because those with sanctification of marriage use more collaborative forms of communication to deal with conflict (Mahoney, Pargament, Murray-Swank, and & Murray-Swank., 2003; Pargament & Mahoney, 2005; Wilcox, 2004) and issues of inequity are not as important and therefore less noticeable to those who view marriage as a holy, divinely orchestrated union (Mohaney et al., 1999). In the study conducted by DeMaris et al. (2010) the authors examined couples who were expecting their first child, because that is a time when equity considerations should have the least importance since it is usually a happy time in marriage. They found that couples who had high sanctification of marriage, and considered their marriages to be divine in nature, showed fewer negative effects in the areas of marriage satisfaction, marital conflict, and anxiety to perceptions of inequality in marriage. General religiousness without specific beliefs of sanctification of marriage only moderated effects of anxiety within marriage. DeMaris et al.'s (2010) findings were consistent with findings by Mahoney et al. (2003), who found that people are more open to sacrificing for something they believe is connected to God or full of sacred qualities.

Wilcox (2004) argued that those with religious beliefs of sacred marriages often invest a great deal for the good of the marriage and are very committed to making the marriage work. The buffering of feelings of injustice based on high sanctification of marriage can have a positive and a negative side. A positive result of sanctification of marriage is that couples may be prevented from having negative feelings towards each other over issues of equality, while a negative result may be that one spouse may get exploited more easily when there is no focus on fairness and equality in marriage (Hochschild & Machung, 2012).

As demonstrated by the literature above, SET provides the basis for scholars' assertions that attitudes towards divorce mediate the effect parental divorce has on adult children's marital relationships (Amato & deBoer, 2001), and was therefore chosen as the theoretical basis for my study. Further, my study was on the marriages of Orthodox Jews, who are generally highly religious, have a high sanctification of marriage, and consider their marriages to be divine in nature. As demonstrated earlier by DeMaris et al. (2010), this may make them less susceptible to the negative marital effects of parental divorce.

## Review of the Literature

### How Parental Divorce Relates to Adult Children's Own Marriages

Diekmann and Schmidheiny (2013) analyzed data from the Fertility and Family Survey (FFS) to study the intergenerational transmission of divorce in 15 countries including Canada, United States, and 13 European countries. In all of the data, intergenerational transmission of divorce was found to be statistically significant. This study indicates that intergenerational transmission of divorce is not a phenomenon that is

only observed in the United States, but is a phenomenon that is widespread internationally, across many countries that each have different cultures, religious beliefs, and attitudes towards divorce. In fact, there was no exception found regarding the transmission of divorce in each country studied, including those in communist Eastern Europe, Southern (Catholic) Europe, Western Europe, and North America (Diekmann & Schmidheiny, 2013). The authors also found substantial variation in the magnitude of the divorce transmission effect, ranging from 0.38 in Hungary to 1.34 in Italy. The transmission effect was highly negatively correlated with the divorce rates of the parent population in their study, which shows that the detrimental effects of divorce on children are stronger in societies where divorce is rare and therefore likely to be stigmatized. Interestingly, gender was not analyzed in their study, as only female participants were included.

A similar study conducted by Feldhaus and Heintz-Martin (2015) focused on the effects of parental separation in early childhood based on the German pairfam data. The results of their study confirmed that individuals who experienced parental separation in their youth have a lower likelihood of staying married, and the chances of one's own divorce was correlated with a younger age when experiencing a parental divorce (Feldhaus & Heintz-Martin, 2015). Similarly, Mustonen, Huurre, Kiviruusu, Haukkala, and Aro (2011) conducted a 16-year prospective study on 1471 individuals, providing them with questionnaires when they were 16 years old and then again when they turned 32 years old. In their study, both male and female ACOD were found to have a greater

likelihood of divorce in their own marriages by the time they turned 32 compared to their counterparts within the study from intact marriages.

These recent studies confirm many of the findings of early, seminal research conducted in the United States. For example, in a longitudinal study of 2,033 married individuals, Feng, Giarrusso, Bengtson, and Frye (1999) found that while parental divorce did not appear to influence the quality of marriage of male or female offspring, it did increase the likelihood for female offspring to divorce. They also found that early marriage age and low education levels among offspring of divorce mediated effects of divorce, with low marriage age being the primary mediator (Feng, Giarrusso, Bengtson, & Frye, 1999). Similarly, Amato (1996) studied the impact of parental divorce on the adult children's relationships and likelihood of divorcing by looking at what both partners bring to the relationship instead of each individually. Using results from the same 17-year longitudinal study of marital instability over the life course (Booth, Amato, Johnson, & Edwards, 1998), Amato (1996) found that in married couples where only the male partner experienced his parents' divorce, the couple was no more likely to divorce than if both partners' parents remained married. If only the female partner experienced her parents' divorce, the couple was 87% more likely to divorce than if both partners had parents who remained together. In contrast, the couple is 620% more likely to divorce if both partners experienced their parents' divorce than if both had parents that remained married (Amato, 1996). Although this research also points to the wife as having a greater impact on the likelihood of divorce when her parents were divorced when compared to the husband, the combination of both spouses coming from divorced households significantly increases

the likelihood of divorce. This indicates that the husband being a child of divorce does contribute to increased divorce rates in certain circumstances.

Amato (1996) explains the intergeneration transmission of divorce as the result of exposure to problematic behaviors such as anger, jealousy, hurt, communication problems, and infidelity. Children of divorce often do not learn proper skills to facilitate and support successful functioning within a marriage and adoption of proper marriage roles. Based on this explanation, marriages with both spouses from divorced families are most significantly affected. When both spouses have exposure to problematic behaviors and poor interrelationships skills, the marriage is at greater risk of failing. When one spouse has had appropriate models and has the skills and commitment for a good marriage, the marriage can still be viable to some extent (Amato, 1996).

Conversely, however, Crowell, Treboux, and Brockmeyer (2009) found that ACOD were not more likely to divorce within the first 6 years of their marriage, but those who had less secure attachments were. Results of this study did show a correlation between age at the time of parental divorce and one's adult attachment style, which is significant in that the attachment style can influence one's likelihood to divorce (Crowell, Treboux, & Brockmeyer, 2009).

**Intergenerational Transmission of Divorce in the Context of Marital Conflict**

Parental marital conflict has been the focus of research as well- given that parental conflict, in and of itself, has negative impacts on children even when a divorce does not follow. Gager, Yabiku, and Linver (2015) conducted a study using three-wave longitudinal data to determine whether it is the divorce itself that leads to the increased

risk of divorce among ACOD or if it is the conflict that typically precedes divorce. Results of their study indicated that parental conflicts had greater negative impacts on children and form an increased chance for their own romantic relationships to dissolve than did the divorce itself. In fact, they found that when parents had high conflict, separating or divorcing reduced the long-term adverse effects on the children. The authors suggested that when parents get divorced, children have less exposure to parental conflict, which in turn gives them less opportunity of poor role modeling. The inability to work through conflicts by making compromises and resolutions may lead to difficult and unsuccessful marital relationships. These findings disaffirm the common notion of "Let's stay together for the sake of the children" when there are very high levels of parental conflict. Overall, this study demonstrated that children growing up in single-parent homes fare better than those growing up with high conflict intact families because of the lower levels of conflict to which they are exposed (Gager, Yabiku, & Linver, 2015).

In a similar study, Musick and Meier (2010) also found that children from high-conflict married homes did worse than their counterparts from low-conflict divorced parents in many areas, including risk for their own marital dissolution. Therefore, the authors concluded that not all children growing up in two-parent intact households share the same advantages. Rather, it depends on whether or not there are high levels of conflict present in the home (Musick & Meier, 2010).

Amato and Afifi (2006) stated that exposure to chronic marital conflict and divorce is associated with reduced quality in the relationships of young adults and their parents. This can result from children feeling caught between their parents' arguments

and a general decrease in their own well-being. Yu et al. (2010) also attributed poor quality in the parent-adult child relationship to both marital conflict and the divorce, but found that divorce moderated the effect of the marital conflict on the parent-adult child relationships. These studies emphasize that marital conflict does impact relationships between parents and adult children, although that impact is greater when there is a resulting parental divorce. Riggio (2004) found that parental divorce provided more negative effects on the parent-child relationship than did interparental conflict, although interparental conflict was also found to negatively impact relationships between adult children and their parents. In terms of divorce without the effects of conflict examined, however, Heifetz, Connolly, Pepler, and Craig (2010) studied 1,765 young adults and found that young adult children of divorce did not differ significantly from their counterparts from intact families in terms of the quality of their romantic relationships.

Parental conflict can also impact the development of pro-divorce attitudes in adult children. In a study of Malaysian young adults, Kwan, Mellor, Rizzuto, Kolar, and Bt. Mamat (2013) found that there was a positive relationship between the children's perceptions of the intensity and frequency of their parents' conflicts and the development of their own positive attitudes towards divorce. It is noteworthy that Kwan et al.'s study was conducted in Malaysia. Given that Malaysia is predominantly a collectivistic culture, the children of divorce are often affected differently than their counterparts in individualistic cultures. For example, in addition to the problems young adults from divorced homes generally report in individualistic cultures, Korean children of divorce reported feelings of confusion regarding their parents' divorce in general, as well as

decreased respect for their elders, which goes against the traditional concept of filial piety pervasive in their culture. Additionally, the children viewed themselves as damaged as a result (Kim & Tasker, 2013).

Another relevant negative impact of parental marital conflict, even without a divorce following, is on the quality of adult children's romantic and marital relationships. Cui and Fincham (2010) found that parental marital conflict was positively related to young adults' conflict behavior with their romantic partner, which was further linked to lower relationship quality. Their study emphasized the transmission of conflictual marriage and romantic relationships from parents to adult children without focusing on the intergenerational transmission of divorce, per se. Amato and DeBoer (2001) had similar findings in that adult children who experienced parental conflict also experienced conflict in their own marital relationships and often considered divorcing, although they did not necessarily follow through with a divorce.

After noting the many negative impacts of parental conflict above, it would seem that the intergenerational transmission of divorce is the direct result of the pre-divorce conflict. However, Amato and DeBoer (2001) ruled out this notion by reviewing longitudinal data to determine whether the intergenerational transmission of divorce is the result of weak commitment to marriage or poor models of interpersonal relationships skills. After controlling for many factors, such as age, gender, racial background, and the duration of the marriage, Amato and DeBoer's (2001) results attributed transmission of divorce to weak commitment to marriage, and showed that when low levels of marital distress preceded divorce, children's commitment to marriage was more negatively

affected than when high levels of marital distress preceded divorce. In cases where high levels of conflict were present with no divorce following, offspring contemplated divorce in their own relationships but were not as likely to actually follow through with a divorce. This indicates that it is the divorce itself that weakens the commitment to marriage and increases likelihood of divorce rather than the conflict within the marriage. Additionally, their results indicate that marital conflict in parental marriage increases relationship problems in the marriage of offspring as well as thoughts of divorce, but not necessarily divorce itself (Amato & DeBoer, 2001). The authors also found that divorce, in itself, was the highest indicator of decreased marital commitment in offspring, especially when preceded by lower levels of marital conflict. Thus, although offspring who grow up with a great deal of parental conflict that is not followed by a divorce will contemplate divorce in their own marriages, they are less likely to translate these thoughts into actions when there is no parental divorce to emulate (Amato & DeBoer, 2001).

Furthermore, Cui, Fincham, and Durtschi (2011) found that parental divorce impacted adult children's attitude toward divorce, created a more positive association with divorce, lowered commitment levels, even in early romantic relationships, and increased chances of dissolution of those relationships. The findings of their study are consistent with Amato and DeBoer (2001) in that attitudes towards divorce are impacted by parental divorce, but results differ in that those young adults who perceived low parental conflict prior to divorce still held optimistic views regarding marriage and had better relationship stability and were less likely to dissolve their own romantic relationships. Cui, Fincham, and Durtschi (2011) added to Amato and DeBoer's (2001)

findings, however, by showing the impact of these attitudes on early romantic relationships and not just the marriages of ACOD (Cui et al., 2011).

Further support for this notion can be found in a study by Amato, Kane, and James (2011) in which they compared divorce among three groups of ACOD; (a) those from a divorce where both parents parented their children cooperatively even though they were divorced, (b) those from a divorce where both parents parented their children separately and did not cooperate with one-another, and (c) those from single-parent homes where only one parent was involved in the parenting. The authors found that although children from divorces in which both parents were parenting the children cooperatively had the strongest relationships with their parents and lowest levels of behavior problems, they were still at risk for their own marriages ending in divorce (Amato, Kane, & James, 2011).

**Attitudes toward Divorce**

Attitudes toward divorce are an important factor that affects one's marriage. They are especially pertinent to ACOD whose attitudes are shaped by their own experiences as a child of divorce, their perceptions of their parents' marriage and divorce, as well as the transmission of the parents' own attitudes towards divorce. Several seminal studies indicated the importance of attitudes towards divorce in regards to its impact on one's propensity to divorce. Based on a longitudinal study, Amato and Booth (1991) found that people developed a more favorable and positive view of divorce following parental divorce. Similarly, Amato (1988) found that ACOD had a more positive attitude toward divorce than those whose parents remained married. This may explain Amato's (1996)

conclusion that those who have a more positive view of divorce have an increased likelihood of actually getting divorced than those who have a more negative view of divorce. These results were more recently substantiated by Cui and Fincham (2010), who tested how parental divorce influence their offspring's marital relationships and found that parental divorce was related to less positive attitudes toward marriage, which was also related to weaker commitment to their romantic relationship and lower relationship quality.

Overall, these studies indicate that experiences and attitudes of parents are transmitted to their children and when adult children adopt the pro-divorce attitudes, they themselves are more likely to divorce than their peers from non-divorced homes. Interestingly, Willoughby, Carroll, Vitas, and Hill (2012) found that while the marital attitudes of parents were related to marital attitudes of their children, they discovered that it was not the marital quality itself that affected the attitudes towards marriage given over to their children, but rather that attitudes towards marriage were given over more strongly when parents experienced better relationships quality.

As mentioned earlier, Cui et al. (2011) found that ACOD had more favorable attitudes toward divorce than ACIM, specifically when high levels of parental conflict preceded the parental divorce. Positive association with divorce was associated with lower commitment to romantic relationships, which impacted its dissolution (Cui, Fincham, & Durtschi, 2011). These findings are consistent with results from seminal research such as Amato (1996), Amato and Booth (1997), and Pope and Mueller (1976). Cui et al's study merely adds that the impact is not only on adult children's divorce, but

also dissolution of young adult romantic relationships. This is important because one's behavior during romantic relationships is often a predictor of behavior and attitudes in marriage (Fincham & Cui, 2011). Although the findings of Cui et al. (2011) and Amato and DeBoer (2001) are inconsistent, as mentioned above, they both highlight that parental divorce does not have a uniform effect on adult children's attitude toward divorce, but rather depends on the perceived frequency and intensity of the marital conflict prior to parental divorce.

Miles and Servaty-Seib (2010) found that single young adult children of divorce had more positive views toward divorce than those from families with non-divorced parents. Those with parental divorce reported lower levels of marital commitment and more pro-divorce attitudes, indicating that attitudes towards marriage and divorce are beliefs that are partially created even before young adults enter into relationships. It should also be noted that the authors found that single ACOD had more pro-divorce attitudes than those that were married. Therefore, these pro-divorce attitudes should not be attributed to characteristics of the spouses or problems they were having in their marital relationships at the time. Sieben and Verbakel (2013) also found that experiencing parental divorce prior to adulthood created more permissive attitudes toward divorce in the adult children.

Kapinus (2004) contrasted the impact of fathers' and mothers' attitudes toward divorce on those of their sons and daughters. Results indicated that the gender of the parent did not affect the influence level on daughters, while fathers had a greater influence on their sons than their mothers did. In a situation of divorce where there is

limited contact with the father, a son will have less influence from his father, but may view the limited contact as a negative outcome of divorce, and will therefore try to avoid a divorce of his own (Kapinus, 2004).

Qualitatively, Lambert South (2013) found that while ACOD generally reported a loss of belief in marriage, many of them still did not want to get divorced so that their children would not share their negative childhood experiences. In another qualitative study of professional women in Turkey, Kavas and Gunduz-Hosgor (2011) found that parental divorce negatively affected the adult children's marital commitment and caused them to have more permissive attitudes towards divorce. The women reported views that marriages can be broken easily when they are no longer functioning optimally, which is contrary to the Turkish societal values of being patient and self-sacrificing in marriage.

**Gender Differences**

While the transmission of marriage ideals to offspring is well documented, as shown earlier, research findings have been somewhat inconsistent in regard to gender differences. In a longitudinal study following a group of children from birth through age 30, for example, Fergusson, McLeod, and Horwood (2014) found a significant association between parental separation or divorce during one's childhood and the number of cohabitation/marriage partners, negative partner relations, extent of partner adjustment/conduct problems, and perpetration of partner violence. In their study, however, results were not different when comparing one gender to another, showing results of parental separation/divorce to be the same for male and female children.

In contrast, previous seminal research does show some gender differences. For example Mullett and Stolberg (2002) found that in couples in which the female partners were children of parental divorce, marriages were significantly more negatively affected based on reports of lower levels of intimacy and mutually constructive communication levels. In addition, women who experienced parental divorce demonstrated increased levels of demand-withdrawal and mutual avoidance of conflict. These findings, however, are inconsistent with those of Mulder and Gunnoe (1999), who indicated that when presented with hypothetical scenarios, men reported greater likelihood of divorce than women. When comparing the questionnaire responses of the men and women in the study, men and women found themselves likely to divorce as a result of different scenarios. Males were more likely to divorce if they felt they lost the magic in the relationship, which indicates a loss of interest, while women were likely to divorce as a result of physical abuse. Additionally, males growing up in a home with negative conflict resolution were more afraid of verbal conflict in their own intimate relationships than males who experienced positive conflict resolution (i.e. compromising), as well as females who experienced either positive or negative conflict resolution.

A seminal study conducted by Amato (1996) indicated that males who experienced parental divorce are less likely than females of parental divorce to engage in emotional intimacy and instead often demonstrate distancing behaviors and are often less likely than females to marry. Additionally, female children of divorce lose contact with their fathers more easily than male children of divorce, which often leads women to form insecure attachments in their intimate relationships (Amato & Booth, 1991). When

comparing both male and female offspring of parental divorce who were involved in intimate relationships, Mullet and Stolberg (2002) found that females responded to feelings of insecurity by demanding more from their partner while males responded by avoiding intimacy.

Furthermore, Feng, Giarrusso, Bengtson, and Frye (1999) found that daughters of divorced parents were more likely to have difficulty with emotional intimacy and have greater chances of getting divorced compared to sons of parental divorce. This may have been impacted by mediating factors such as low education levels and early age of marriage, which mediated the effects of parental divorce on daughters (Feng, Giarrusso, Bengtson, & Frye, 1999). This study is also consistent with current findings that women have a more positive view of divorce than men (Kapinus and Flowers, 2008) and those with a more positive view of divorce are more prone to divorce (Whitton, Stanley, Markman, & Johnson, 2013).

Whitton, Rhoades, Stanley, and Markman (2008) found that parental divorce was associated with lower relationship commitment and lower relationship confidence in female children, but not in male children. The results of their study suggested that women whose parents were divorced come to marriage with a lower commitment to marriage and decreased confidence in their own marriages, which may potentially increase the risk of getting divorced (Whitton et al., 2008). Dennison, Koerner, and Segrin (2014) also found that parental divorce was associated with lower marital satisfaction in newlywed wives, but not significantly so for newlywed husbands (Dennison, Koerner, & Segrin, 2014). This contrasts with the seminal research of Mulder and Gunnoe (1999), who found that

males who experienced negative conflict resolution in their parents' marriage were more likely to anticipate divorce in specific situations than females who experienced negative conflict resolution in their parents' marriage, as well as males who experienced positive conflict resolution. These results conflict with the negative impact parental conflict has on female children that Feng, Giarrusso, Bengtson, and Frye (1999) found, and may indicate that male children are more significantly impacted by parental conflict, while female children are impacted more by divorce itself by developing pro-divorce attitudes that increase their likelihood of getting divorced.

Kapinus (2004) found that mothers had less influence on their son's views of divorce than fathers did. This study is significant in its findings because most other studies only assessed attitudes of mothers being transmitted and did not assess the attitudes of both parents, while Kapinus (2004) found that attitudes of mothers and fathers have different levels of influence on their sons. This study may also explain why female children of divorce were found to have lower relationship commitment and confidence (Whitton et al., 2008), and therefore increases their likelihood of getting divorced (Cui et al., 2011). Male offspring are not as influenced as females by their mother's attitudes (Kapinus, 2004), and after living in a single parent home with their mothers, daughters will therefore carry a more positive view of divorce than sons, which can impact their attitudes toward their own marriages.

Kapinus (2004) also found that female children developed a positive attitude toward divorce when their parents get divorced, regardless of what their parents' own attitudes toward divorce were. When there was diminished paternal contact and post-

divorce conflict, sons were less likely to have pro-divorce attitudes, possibly due to observing the negative consequences of divorce. Alternatively, daughters did not necessarily develop negative attitudes toward divorce when there was diminished relationship with their father and post-divorce conflict, indicating that they believed that divorce is a viable option when a relationship can no longer be sustained (Kapinus, 2004). Further, the author found that children were most susceptible to influence during their late teen years, which is also the time that they begin dating and forming their ideas about marriage and family life.

Mustonen, Huurre, Kiviruusu, Haukkala, and Aro (2011) found that although children of divorce were more likely to be divorced by the time they turned 32 years old, only women who experienced parental divorce reported poorer intimate relationship quality. Mother-daughter relationships, self-esteem, and satisfaction with social support are mediating variables that explained how parental divorce had a greater impact on daughters' intimate relationships than sons. The mother-daughter relationship during adolescence was found to be the most important factor that impacted the development of psychosocial resources later in life, which in turn impacted intimate relationships.

**Positive Effects of Divorce**

It should be noted that although divorce has been shown to have significant and long-lasting detrimental effects on children (Arkes 2013; Babalis, Tsoli, Nikolopoulos, & Maniatis, 2014; Bernardi & Radl, 2014; Uphold-Carrier & Utz, 2012; Mustonen, Huurre, Kiviruusu, Haukkala, & Aro, 2011), there are some positive effects that have been found, as well. For example, Halligan, Chang, and Knox (2014) conducted a survey on

undergraduate students to determine if there are any positive impacts of parental divorce on ACOD. They noted some positive effects, such as having happier parents, having less parental conflict, and having closer relationships with siblings. Additionally, in a survey of university students, Bernstein, Keltner, and Laurent (2012) found some positive effects of parental divorce on ACOD's character development, including being more compassionate and enthusiastic, as well as having better perspective-taking abilities.

**The Role of Religion**

Various studies have shown that religious beliefs and practices impact a couple's attitude towards marriage and divorce as well as their children's ability to cope with the divorce. Lambert and Dollahite (2008) found that religiosity increased commitment between marriage partners. In a study of 57 highly religious middle aged couples, the authors found that religious couples included God as a third partner in their marriages, found more meaning in marriage, and viewed marriage as an enduring religious institution. Marital commitment of religious couples was found to be increased as a result of including God in their relationship (Lambert & Dollahite, 2008). Dollahite (2006) found that religious beliefs contributed to a couple's longing for permanence in their relationship, which improved their conflict resolutions. Alternatively, viewing marriage as sacred was found to make it harder for children of divorce to cope following the divorce, although spiritual coping increased their personal and spiritual growth (Warner, Mahoney, & Krumrei, 2009). Furthermore, Dollahite and Lambert (2007) found that religious beliefs across various faiths increased morals and values, which positively impacted marriage by reducing infidelity.

**Marital Attitudes in the Orthodox Community**

While there is an abundance of literature regarding marital attitudes in the general population, even among those who are religious, the attitudes towards marriage and divorce of orthodox Jews, which differ in many respects, is an area with little to no research. Schnall (2006) defined Orthodox Jews as those who believe that the Torah, also referred to as the Hebrew Bible, was given by God to the Jewish people at Mount Sinai, along with divine instructions on how Torah laws can be correctly interpreted. The Torah laws apply to all matters of life, including family life, business interactions, as well as laws of prayer and service of God. Orthodox Jews differ from other groups of Jews (such as Reform or Conservative Jews) in that they strictly observe all of the Torah laws, including all of the rabbinic interpretation of the law, which applies to all areas of one's life. Examples of these laws include eating only kosher food, observing the Sabbath and its restrictions, as well following the laws of family purity. The laws of family purity impact the marital relationship by directing a couple regarding when physical and sexual contact is permissible and when it is forbidden, revolving around a woman's menstrual cycle (Schnall, Pelcovitz, & Fox, 2013). There are several sources that are used by Orthodox Jews to guide their day-to-day life, which include the Torah, the Mishnah, the Midrash, and other books of legal codifications providing rabbinic legal rulings (Dorff, 2008).

The goal of marriage according to the OJ view is for a husband and wife to unite, meet each other's needs, and build a family that will be educated according to Torah values and laws, rather than for self-fulfillment or sexual motives. An individual's life is

considered incomplete when not revolved around getting married and building a family, since these are basic tenets of Orthodox Judaism (Dorff, 2008). There are religious practices regarding finding a mate, as well as in the dating process. Dating among Orthodox Jews is for the single-minded purpose of deciding whether or not to marry. The dating process is short and formal, with dates being arranged by a matchmaker. Premarital sexual relationships, and even physical touch, are forbidden as well as until after marriage (Milevsky, Niman, Raab, & Gross, 2011).

A search of the available literature regarding marriage attitudes within the Orthodox community yielded very limited results. This is attributable to a paucity of research regarding Jews in general, and particularly regarding the OJ Community. Schnall (2006) stated that lack of research on OJ community stems from the lack of recognition of Jew as a culturally distinct group. In fact, Weinrach (2002) found that literature regarding cultural diversity did not recognize Jews in general as a culturally distinct group. Langman (1999) also noted that there is little reference to Jews in books, journals, classes, and conferences that discuss topics such as counseling and psychology. The few studies done on OJ marriages, however, do suggest that they differ from those within the general population in their longevity and in that spouses generally report higher levels of satisfaction and marital happiness (Olson & Olson-Sigg, 2000; Olson, Olson-Sigg, & Larson, 2008; Popenoe, Whitehead, & Kirby, 2009; Schnall, Pelcovitz, & Fox, 2013; Shai, 2002; Waite; 2002).

Schnall, Pelcovitz, and Fox (2013) conducted a study of 3,002 married OJ individuals through an internet survey to determine levels of marital satisfaction and

sources of stress. They found that approximately 74% of participants were either mostly or extremely satisfied with their marriage, and that 77% reported that their spouse met their marital expectations, while only 16.4% stated that their spouse did not meet their marital expectation. Another 73.8% reported that if they could change back the clock, they would choose to marry the person to whom they originally married, while only 11.7% reported that they would not. Levels of marital satisfaction also appeared to decrease with increased years of marriage, with the exception of those married for more than 30 years, who reported greater marriage satisfaction than those married between 20 and 30 years. The authors compared these results to the general population based on the 2004-2006 General Social Survey of the National Opinion Research Center (Popenoe, Whitehead, & Kirby, 2009), which questioned a similar size sample of American adults and found that approximately 63% of men and 60% of women were very happy with their marriages. Although exact comparisons cannot be made because of the differences in research design, the findings nonetheless suggest that a greater majority of OJ individuals have happy and satisfying marriages (Schnall, Pelcovitz, & Fox, 2013).

There are various possible explanations as to the lower divorce rates within the OJ community, as well as why marriages may be more satisfying. While it may seem logical to attribute the lower divorce rates within the Orthodox community to the general discouraging of divorce among religious leaders (Mullins, Brackett, McKenzie, & Djamba, 2012), this would not explain why OJ married individuals reported higher marital satisfaction (Schnall, Pelcovitz, & Fox, 2013). There are multiple studies, however, that suggest that those who participate in religious services and activities often

have greater marital satisfaction and may even have a decreased risk of divorce compared to others who do not participate in religious activities (e.g. Curtis & Ellison, 2002; Wolfinger & Wilcox, 2008). Furthermore, Beach et al. (2011) found that prayer in itself may enhance the marital relationship, and is even recommended as a marital therapy intervention (Beach, Fincham, Hurt, McNair, & Stanley, 2008). These studies are applicable to Orthodox Jews who steadily participate in religious services and attend synagogue three times daily for prayer (Milevsky & Eisenberg, 2012).

Another possible cause for higher levels of marriage satisfaction may be related to the unique laws of family purity that guide OJ marriages. These laws are adhered to very strictly by Orthodox Jews, and may act as protection to the marriage. The laws of family purity require a husband and wife to abstain from physical contact and sexual relations for approximately 2 weeks during the wife's menstrual cycle, which often happens as frequently as once per month. While sexual abstinence may seem challenging and stressful to some, it is beneficial to marriage in several ways. Firstly, the husband and wife develop other ways of interacting, such as improved communication, when they refrain from physical interaction. Additionally, there is ongoing renewal and rejuvenation within the physical and sexual relationship each time they are permitted to each other after a period of abstinence (Schnall, Pelcovitz, & Fox, 2013).

**Orthodox Jewish Adult Children of Divorce (OJ ACOD)**

While the aforementioned studies highlight differences between the marriages of Orthodox Jews and the general population, a search of the available literature did not yield any results on the marriage attitudes of ACOD within the OJ community. Divorce

in the OJ community, although lower in percentage than the general community (Shai, 2002), is permitted by Jewish law (Karo, 1565/2004) and does exist.

Unlike Catholicism, Jewish law does not have strict guideline for conditions under which divorce is permitted, and one may get divorced under Jewish law without punity and without having to justify one's desire to do so. Under rabbinic law, divorce requires the consent of both parties. Besides for a civil divorce, OJ couples are required to get a religious divorce (or "Get") in a Jewish court of law (or "Beis Din"). While either party may initiate the divorce, Jewish law requires that the divorce document be given by the husband to the wife, either by hand or through an agent. Due to this requirement, there are times when Jewish husbands withhold divorce from their wives, even when mandated by the Jewish courts to divorce. In these instances, the wives are considered Agunot, or chained women. Recalcitrant husbands can be imposed sanctions by the Jewish courts and are usually ostracized by their community and forbidden in places of worship. In fact, most prolonged instances of Agunot are a result of the husbands leaving the OJ community, in which case the women have no recourse. Those that do get a divorce in the OJ community also experience difficulty. In her doctoral dissertation, Rush (2010) documented the experiences of female OJ divorcees and asserted that women have a greater difficulty adjusting to divorce than men do, and often experience shame and rejection as a result of their status of divorcee. Overall, divorced couples are a minority in the OJ community and a stigma towards divorce is maintained. Interestingly, however, while it would seem logical to assume that unhappy couples may be hesitant to divorce due to this social pressure, this notion does not seem to be supported by a recent study by

Schnall et al. (2013). In particular, of the 3002 married individuals surveyed anonymously about their marriages, less than 5% reported feeling extremely dissatisfied in their marital relationships (Schnall et al., 2013).

The experiences and attitudes of OJ ACOD may also be affected differently by parental divorce than those of ACOD in the general population, for various reasons. Firstly, children of divorce within the OJ community have great difficulty because they are growing up against the cultural norms that revolve heavily around marriage and family life (Dorff, 2008). Similarly, they also are much more of a minority among their Orthodox peers percentage-wise because divorce in the OJ community occurs significantly less than in the general population. As mentioned earlier, Diekmann and Schmidheiny (2013) found that the detrimental effects of divorce on children were stronger in societies where divorce is rare and therefore likely to be stigmatized. Furthermore, as Orthodox Jews' attitudes towards divorce tend to differ from those of the general population (Schnall, 2006), and attitudes towards divorce has been shown to mediate the effect parental divorce has on the adult children's marital relationships (Amato & deBoer, 2001), it follows that results of prior research in the general population may not be applicable to Orthodox Jews. Consequently, studying these attitudes in OJ ACOD indicated how their attitudes regarding divorce may have been influenced by their parents' divorce and may have impacted their own marital relationships.

## Methodology

The vast majority of the research studies mentioned earlier have utilized quantitative cross-sectional descriptive survey methodology to collect their data. For example, Sieben and Verbakel (2013) utilized cross-sectional descriptive surveys that assessed basic human values from random samples across 47 countries to assess permissive attitudes towards divorce. Diekmann and Schmidheiny (2013) also utilized data that was collected from the Fertility and Family Survey (FSS) across 21 countries using quantitative cross-sectional descriptive survey methodology to assess intergenerational transmission of divorce. Similarly, Uphold-Carrier and Utz (2012) based their study on the National Survey of Midlife Development in the United States (MIDUS), which surveyed more than 7,000 Americans cross-sectionally to assess mental health and solidarity among children of divorce. Bhattacherjee (2012) indicated that cross-sectional descriptive survey research is the recommended method of collecting a comprehensive summary of the attitudes, beliefs, or opinions of a specific population. In fact, such survey research methodology accounts for approximately 70% of studies in the social sciences field (Bhattacherjee, 2012). In line with the above, the methodology for this study, which I will discuss in more detail in the following chapter, utilized quantitative cross-sectional descriptive survey methodology.

## Summary and Conclusions

There is a consistent theme within the literature regarding showing effects of parental divorce on the marital relationships of adult children. Amato and DeBoer (2001) found that high levels of parental marital conflict increased relationship issues and

consideration of divorce in adult children's marriages but not actually following through with divorce, while the parental divorce increases the risk of children following through with divorce, especially when parents displayed low levels of conflict prior to divorcing. Attitudes towards divorce, which are affected by parental divorce, are an important factor impacting marital satisfaction in adult children's relationships. Cui and Fincham (2010) found that parental divorce was correlated with adult children's reduced levels of positive attitudes toward marriage, which reduced their marital satisfaction and commitment to marriage. Further, Amato and DeBoer (2001) demonstrated that attitudes to divorce mediated the effect that parental divorce had on adult children's marital relationships. Females had a more positive attitude towards divorce than males did (Kapinus & Flowers, 2008), which in turn negatively affected their marital quality after experiencing parental divorce more so than their male counterparts. Miles and Servaty-Seib (2010) also found that single young adult children of divorce had more positive views toward divorce than those from families with non-divorced parents.

Although religiosity in general has been found to increase commitment between marriage partners (Lambert & Dollahite, 2008), marital commitment and attitudes towards divorce within the OJ population have not been a focus of research as of yet. Schnall et al. (2013) found that OJ couples experienced significantly more happy and satisfying marriages than those of the general population. Additionally, there is a significantly lower divorce rate within the OJ community, which is estimated to be around 30 percent (Salamon, 2008) compared to the approximately 50 percent in the general population (Copen, Daniels, Vespa, & Mosher, 2012). Accordingly, it was yet to

be researched how parental divorce impacts the marital relationships of ACOD within the OJ community, who have significantly different attitudes towards divorce (Schnall, 2006).

In the following chapter, I will delineate the methodology that I used in the study, including participants, data collection, and statistical analyses. I will present the results of the study in Chapter 4, followed by a discussion of the results in Chapter 5.

# Chapter 3: Research Method

## Introduction

As delineated in the previous chapter, the literature clearly shows the negative effect of parental divorce on adult children's own marriages, such as reduced marital satisfaction (Mustonen et al., 2011), effecting a pro-divorce shift in their attitudes, and lowering their marital commitment (Miles & Servaty-Seib, 2010). These pro-divorce attitudes and lower marital commitment have further been found to increase the chances of ACOD own marriages ending in divorce (Whitton et al., 2008). However, research in this area was necessary within the OJ population because of its divergent attitudes towards divorce. Thus, the purpose of this study was to fill this gap by focusing specifically on the effects of parental divorce on the marital satisfaction and commitment of ACOD within the OJ community. In this chapter, I present and justify the research design of this study, and offer detailed descriptions of the study population, sampling method, and sample size. Likewise, I describe the key instruments I used to measure the variables, along with supplemental items regarding demographic variables.

## Research Design and Rationale

I used quantitative cross-sectional descriptive survey methodology to gather information from the participants regarding their parental marital status during their childhoods, and their attitudes towards divorce and the level of marital satisfaction and commitment in their own marriages. Overall, surveys were the most common data collection instruments used in earlier research of the same type (Vazire, 2010) and offered the best choice given the circumstances of this study. Further, the anonymous

questionnaire format I used was especially appropriate given that parental divorce and marital relationships are such sensitive and emotionally-charged areas, especially in a tight-knit, high-stigmatization group like the OJ community. To that end, an anonymous questionnaire format was an advantage in that it allowed the participants to respond more freely and accurately without fear of stigma, disapproval, or other negative effects (see Fan & Yan, 2010).

In this study, the independent variable was parental divorce/no parental divorce, while the dependent variables were marital commitment and marital satisfaction. Gender (as a moderator variable) and attitudes towards divorce (as a mediator variable) were also included in the analysis to test for mediation/moderation using conditional process analysis, and were also statistically controlled for as covariates in the MANCOVA.

## Research Questions and Hypotheses

The following are the research questions that I designed for this study, along with their related hypotheses:

Research Question 1: Do OJ ACOD differ significantly from OJ ACIM in their levels of marital satisfaction, as measured by the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS; Hendrick, 1988), and marital commitment, as measured by Rusbult, Kumashiro, Kubacka, and Finkel's (2009) Commitment Scale, when controlling for gender and attitudes towards divorce, as measured by the Likelihood of Divorce Scale (Mulder & Gunnoe, 1999)?

$H_0$1: There will be no significant differences between the marital satisfaction and marital commitment of OJ ACOD and those of OJ ACIM when controlling for gender and attitudes towards divorce.

$H_1$1: There will be significant differences between the marital satisfaction and marital commitment of OJ ACOD and those of OJ ACIM when controlling for gender and attitudes towards divorce.

Research Question 2: Does gender significantly moderate the relationship between parental divorce and marital satisfaction of OJ ACOD, as measured by the RAS (Hendrick, 1988)?

$H_0$2: Gender will not significantly moderate the relationship between parental divorce and marital satisfaction of OJ ACOD.

$H_1$2: Gender will significantly moderate the relationship between parental divorce and marital satisfaction of OJ ACOD.

Research Question 3: Does gender significantly moderate the relationship between parental divorce and marital commitment of OJ ACOD, as measured by Rusbult, Kumashiro, Kubacka, and Finkel's (2009) Commitment Scale?

$H_0$3: Gender will not significantly moderate the relationship between parental divorce and marital commitment of OJ ACOD.

$H_1$3: Gender will significantly moderate the relationship between parental divorce and marital commitment of OJ ACOD.

Research Question 4: Does attitudes towards divorce, as measured by the Likelihood of Divorce Scale (Mulder & Gunnoe, 1999), significantly mediate the

relationship between parental divorce and marital satisfaction of OJ ACOD, as measured by the RAS (Hendrick, 1988)?

$H_0$4: Attitudes towards divorce will not significantly mediate the relationship between parental divorce and marital satisfaction of OJ ACOD.

$H_1$4: Attitudes towards divorce will significantly mediate the relationship between parental divorce and marital satisfaction of OJ ACOD.

Research Question 5: Does attitudes towards divorce, as measured by the Likelihood of Divorce Scale (Mulder & Gunnoe, 1999), significantly mediate the relationship between parental divorce and marital commitment of OJ ACOD, as measured by Rusbult, Kumashiro, Kubacka, and Finkel's (2009) Commitment Scale?

$H_0$5: Attitudes towards divorce will not significantly mediate the relationship between parental divorce and marital commitment of OJ ACOD.

$H_1$5: Attitudes towards divorce will significantly mediate the relationship between parental divorce and marital commitment of OJ ACOD.

## Methodology

### Population and Sampling Procedures

The target population consisted of married Orthodox Jews residing in the United States. According to the 2000-01 National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS; Ament, 2005), there are 529,000 Orthodox Jews residing in the United States, which accounts for approximately 10% of the population of 5.2 million Jews residing in the United States. The OJ community is made up of many subgroups ranging from Modern Orthodox to Ultra-Orthodox, all of whom were included in the sample frame. In the more extreme

Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox communities, many adherents do not have internet access for religious reasons. Therefore, while I used a convenience sample, the surveys were distributed and administered using both online and paper versions in order to obtain a sample that was as representative as possible of the OJ community. The online version was created using the SurveyMonkey survey generation tool found at SurveyMonkey.com, and was hosted there, with all data collected anonymously. The paper versions, along with sealable envelopes, were placed in drop boxes in various synagogues and community centers frequented by Orthodox Jews and collected anonymously with no identifiers. Participants were recruited using flyers posted near the drop boxes, and with advertisements in OJ newspapers and popular OJ websites such as The Jewish Press, thejewishpress.com, and yidtown.com.

The sampling frame was OJ adults 18 years of age or older who were in their first marriage. I excluded those who were not Orthodox Jews, were under 18 years of age, were living outside of the United States, were not currently married, or were previously married and divorced. The sample included a balanced number of participants who were ACOD and their counterparts from intact marriages. To ensure a balanced number of participants, the survey was closed to participants from one group once the required number was reached. Those participants whose parental divorce occurred after they turned 18 years of age were excluded from the sample. Additionally, participants who did not reside in the United States were excluded due to possible cultural differences.

To determine the size of the participant pool needed for this study, I used G*Power v3.1 (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007) to conduct an a priori power

analysis. Due to the paucity of prior research in the OJ population in regards to parental divorce, an expected effect size was difficult to determine. As a result, I selected a conservative, medium effect size of .25, an alpha level of .05, and power level of .95. Results of this power analysis showed that the appropriate sample size for this study would be at least 107 participants. To account for possible missing data and to keep an even number of participants for splitting in two groups, at least 120 participants were to be selected.

### Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Signed informed consent forms were obtained from all of the participants prior to filling out the questionnaires. They were advised that their participation was completely voluntary and that they would not receive any remuneration, monetary or otherwise, for their participation. They were further advised that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and that participation in the study was completely anonymous. Anonymity was ensured by coding the sets of assessment tools with matching random numbers instead of using the participants' names. There were not expected to be any significant risks associated with participation in the study. Participants were told that they could obtain results of the study as they become available, and were given an address to which they could send such requests for information.

## Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs

### Demographic Questionnaire

The survey began with various demographic questions that are critical to the sampling criteria such as the participants' age, gender, marital status, country of

residence, whether or not parents were divorced, age at parental divorce, and levels of parental marital conflict.

**Marital Satisfaction**

To measure marital satisfaction, I used the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS; Hendrick, 1988). This scale was tested for reliability and validity, and has a Cronbach's alpha of .86 with a mean inter-item correlation of .49 (Hendrick, 1988). This scale was originally administered as a questionnaire battery to 57 dating couples at a large southwestern university. There are 7 items included in this scale, with each one rated on a 5-point Likert scale. It includes items such as "in general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?" and "to what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?"

**Marital Commitment**

To measure marital commitment, I used Rusbult, Kumashiro, Kubacka, and Finkel's (2009) 15-item Commitment Scale. This scale is an expanded version of the commitment measure used by Rusbult, Martz, and Agnew (1998), with reported reliability estimates ranging from alpha = .91-.95. The Commitment Scale was originally used in a study consisting of 415 college students (243 females, 172 males) at the University of North Carolina. Each item is rated on an 8-point Likert scale ranging from "do not agree at all" to "agree completely" with items such as "I will do everything I can to make our relationship last for the rest of our lives."

**Attitudes towards Divorce**

To measure attitudes towards divorce, I used the Likelihood of Divorce Scale (Mulder & Gunnoe, 1999). The original study conducted by Mulder and Gunnoe (1999)

utilizing the Likelihood of Divorce Scale consisted of 150 college students in the Midwest who were predominantly non-Hispanic whites with a mean age of 18. This scale was tested for reliability and validity and has a Cronbach's alpha of .83 (Mulder & Gunnoe, 1999). The measure uses a 5-point Likert scale with answer choices ranging from “very unlikely” to “very likely.” Respondents were asked to indicate how likely they would be to divorce in each of the following seven situations: “you and your spouse did not love each other anymore,” “your spouse physically abused you,” “your spouse did not turn out to be the person you thought he/she was (e.g., was irresponsible, dishonest, etc.),” “all the magic was gone from you and your spouse’s relationship,” “if there was no romance left,” “your spouse was verbally abusive (e.g., continually belittled you, insulted you, etc.),” “your spouse had an affair,” and “you and your spouse were always arguing, at least several times a day.”

**Operationalization**

For the purpose of this study, I defined parental divorce as whether or not the participants’ parents were divorced prior to the participants turning 18 years of age. I defined marital satisfaction as the degree to which people perceive their global satisfaction with their marital relationship, and measured it using the RAS (Hendrick, 1988). I defined marital commitment as the desire and intent to maintain one’s marriage for the long-term. This notion is perhaps summed up best during the typical wedding ceremony with vows such as “until death do us part” and “to love and to cherish,” and was measured here using Rusbult, Kumashiro, Kubacka, and Finkel’s (2009) 15-item Commitment Scale. Attitudes toward divorce was defined here as the degree to which

one perceives divorce as being an acceptable resolution to marital discord, and was measured using The Likelihood of Divorce Scale (Mulder & Gunnoe, 1999).

## Data Analysis Plan

I conducted the data analyses for this study using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. I cleaned and screened the data for data integrity using several methods. Given that I did not collect the data from secondary sources, spurious integrity was possible to ensure by careful entry of data. Integrity constraints were also placed by the software, which performed data type checks, placed limits on numeric values, and prevented any references to nonexistent data. Further, I searched for and reported outlier data, and coded the categorical data as numerical values to ensure consistency of the data.

To test the first hypothesis stated above (for Research Question 1), I analyzed the data were using a one-way MANCOVA. This design allowed for an analysis one independent variable along with multiple dependent variables, while controlling for one or more covariates (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). More specifically, because it is designed to analyze multiple dependent variables and covariates simultaneously, it was able to answer if OJ ACOD had significantly different levels of marital commitment and marital satisfaction than do OJ ACIM, while controlling for both covariates- gender and attitudes towards divorce. This MANCOVA allowed statistical analysis between the variables while controlling for the influence of the other independent variables. According to Johnson and Christensen (2004), this method of correlational analysis is the

most suitable for determining how multiple independent variables may or may not be associated with the dependent variables.

To test the hypotheses for Research Questions 2 and 3, in which I sought to discover if gender moderates the relationship between parental divorce and the marital satisfaction and marital commitment of OJ ACOD, I conducted a hierarchical multiple regression using the procedures recommended by Baron and Kenny (1986).

To test the hypotheses for Research Questions 4 and 5, in which I sought to discover if attitudes towards divorce mediate the relationship between parental divorce and marital satisfaction and marital commitment of OJ ACOD, I conducted conditional process analysis (Hayes, 2013), which is a simple ordinary least squares path analysis. I did this using SPSS with Hayes (2013) PROCESS macro using model 4 by estimating attitudes towards divorce from parental divorce as well as marital satisfaction and marital commitment from both parental divorce and attitudes towards divorce. Conditional process analysis, as detailed methodically by Hayes (2013), uses multiple regression analyses to test for mediation and moderation, as well as interactions between the two, such as testing for mediated moderation and moderated mediation. This type of analysis is recommended by Edwards and Lambert (2007), Muller, Judd, and Yzerbyt (2005), and Preacher, Rucker and Hayes (2007) as the preferred method for testing for mediation effects. For all study analyses, a value of $p < 0.05$ was set as the threshold for statistical significance.

## Protection of Participants' Rights

### Privacy and Confidentiality

This study followed the highest ethical standards set forth in the APA ethics code (APA, 2002), which not only dictates non-malfeasance and integrity in conducting research, but also directs those conducting research to protect the privacy and confidentiality of their participants. Accordingly, I only collected non-identifiable raw data and all surveys were filled out anonymously. I obtained approval for the research design and ethical practices of this study from the Walden University IRB prior to initiating data collection (approval # 05-25-16-0260221).

### Informed Consent

Prior to participating in the study, all participants indicated agreement with an Informed Consent Form. This form provided practical and easy-to-understand information regarding the study purpose and procedures and stressed the safe-guards in place protecting their confidentiality. It also provided information on the voluntary nature of the study and stressed that they could withdraw at any point without negative repercussions of any kind. Instructions were included regarding how they can anonymously obtain a brief review of the study results if they desire.

### Risk to Participants

While I did not anticipate significant harm as a result of participating in the study, it was possible that participants might have experienced some discomfort or unease when answering survey questions, particularly if they might have been experiencing marital distress at the time of participation. Included with the informed consent form was my

contact information and that of my committee chairperson should any questions or concerns develop during or after participation. These were available for use if debriefing would have been needed. Participants were informed of this risk and recommended to stop participation at any time if they experience any significant level of distress. I also provided them with information regarding free or low-cost professional counseling services they could utilize if needed.

**Treatment of Data**

As I collected the paper version of the surveys, I stored them securely in a locked cabinet in my home and only I had access to the data. I also stored the electronic data from the online version on a password-protected flash drive and locked them away in the same cabinet. Following completion of data analysis, I stored all data in a bank safety deposit box for a period of 5 years, after which I will destroy them securely.

## Summary

This quantitative research project examined how parental divorce affects marital satisfaction and commitment in the OJ community, and if gender moderated and/or attitudes toward divorce mediated such an effect. I collected a convenience sample using cross-sectional survey methodology with online and paper versions, both of which I collected anonymously. I obtained IRB approval before I collected any data. A one-way MANCOVA and tests of mediation/moderation using conditional process analysis were the primary methods by which I analyzed the collected data. The independent variable was parental divorce/no parental divorce, while the dependent variables were marital commitment and marital satisfaction. I also included Gender (as a moderator variable)

and attitudes towards divorce (as a mediator variable) in the analysis to test for mediation/moderation using conditional process analysis. I also statistically controlled for them as covariates in the MANCOVA. For compiling the required data for analyzing these factors, I used demographic information along with three scales, the RAS (Hendrick, 1988) measuring marital satisfaction, Rusbult, Kumashiro, Kubacka, and Finkel's (2009) Commitment Scale measuring marital commitment, and the Likelihood of Divorce Scale (Mulder & Gunnoe, 1999) measuring attitudes towards divorce. My study helps to extend prior research related to the effects of parental divorce and promotes positive social change by helping to combat the stigma of parental divorce in the OJ community and its impact on the marriage prospects of OJ ACOD. In the following chapter, I will present the results of the data analysis. Chapter 5 then follows, in which I will present discussions and conclusions for the study.

# Chapter 4: Results

## Introduction

As I have outlined in the previous chapters, the purpose of this quantitative cross-sectional study was to examine the effects of parental divorce on the marital satisfaction and commitment of ACOD within the OJ community. I studied gender differences in levels of marital commitment, marital satisfaction, and attitudes towards divorce. Accordingly, I sought to determine (a) whether OJ ACOD differ significantly from OJ ACIM in their levels of marital satisfaction and marital commitment (controlling for gender and attitudes towards divorce), (b) whether gender significantly moderates the relationships between parental divorce and marital satisfaction and/or marital commitment, and (c) whether attitudes towards divorce significantly mediate those same relationships. The study's hypotheses stated (a) that there would be significant differences between OJ ACOD and OJ ACIM in their marital satisfaction and marital commitment when controlling for gender and attitudes towards divorce, (b) that gender will significantly moderate those relationships, and (c) that attitudes towards divorce will significantly mediate those relationships. In this chapter, I present the results of the study. The chapter commences with a description of the data collection procedures, followed by a detailed report of the findings of the statistical analyses as they pertain to the research questions and hypotheses, including tables and figures for further clarification of the results.

## Data Collection

I collected the data over a period of 11 weeks from May 25, 2016 through August 9, 2016. In accordance with the recruitment and data collection procedures I explain in Chapter 3, the surveys were distributed and administered using both online and paper forms. Participants were recruited using posted flyers and advertisements in OJ newspapers and popular OJ websites such as The Jewish Press, thejewishpress.com, and yidtown.com. Data from the online version were collected anonymously from a form hosted on surveymonkey.com, while data from the paper versions were collected anonymously from drop boxes placed in various Orthodox Jewish synagogues and community centers. While both versions were posted concurrently, the vast majority (94%) of the responses were collected from the online version. Only 6% of the valid responses were collected from the drop boxes, despite them being posted completely anonymously.

### Descriptive Statistics

Several descriptive statistics were generated using SPSS, including frequencies and percentages along with means and standard deviations for continuous variables. Of the study participants ($N$ = 162), 43% were males and 57% were females. Ages of the participants ranged from 21 to 65, with a mean age of 36.67. There were 61% of the participants who were ACIM, and 39% who were ACOD. This is consistent with the reported divorce rate of approximately 30% in the OJ community (Salamon, 2008), and is thus fairly representative of the population of interest. The sample consisted of many different sects within the OJ community, ranging from Modern Orthodox to Ultra-

Orthodox. Table 1 below summarizes the collected demographic data and provides a more specific breakdown of the different religious sects of the participants, Table 2 provides the crosstabulation of gender and parental divorce status, Table 3 provides the crosstabulation of sect of Orthodox Judaism and parental divorce status, and Table 4 provides the crosstabulation of sect of Orthodox Judaism and gender.

Table 1

*Demographic Characteristics (*N*=162)*

| | *N* | % |
|---|---|---|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 69 | 43% |
| Female | 93 | 57% |
| Parental divorce | | |
| ACIM | 99 | 61% |
| ACOD | 63 | 39% |
| Religious sect | | |
| Modern Orthodox | 4 | 3% |
| Yeshivish/Litvish | 84 | 52% |
| Chassidish | 41 | 25% |
| Chabad | 3 | 2% |
| Sephardic | 6 | 4% |
| Other | 12 | 7% |
| I prefer not to answer | 12 | 7% |
| Age | *M* = 36.67, *SD* = 7.67, Range: 21 - 65 | |

Table 2

*Crosstabulation of Gender and Parental Divorce*

| Gender | Parental Divorce | | | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ACIM | | ACOD | | | |
| | *N* | % | *N* | % | *N* | % |
| Female | 61 | 37.65 | 32 | 19.75 | 93 | 57.41 |
| Male | 38 | 23.46 | 31 | 19.14 | 69 | 42.59 |
| Total | 99 | 61.11 | 63 | 38.89 | 162 | 100 |

Table 3

*Crosstabulation of Sect of Orthodox Judaism and Parental Divorce*

| | Parental Divorce | | | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ACIM | | ACOD | | | |
| Sect of Orthodox Judaism | *N* | % | *N* | % | *N* | % |
| Modern Orthodox | 1 | .62 | 3 | 1.85 | 4 | 2.47 |
| Yeshivish/Litvish | 58 | 35.80 | 26 | 16.05 | 84 | 51.85 |
| Chassidish | 28 | 17.28 | 13 | 8.02 | 41 | 25.31 |
| Chabad | 1 | .62 | 2 | 1.23 | 3 | 1.85 |
| Sephardic | 1 | .62 | 5 | 3.09 | 6 | 3.70 |
| Other | 8 | 4.94 | 4 | 2.47 | 12 | 7.41 |
| Sect of Orthodox Judaism | 2 | 1.23 | 10 | 6.17 | 12 | 7.41 |
| Total | 99 | 61.11 | 63 | 38.89 | 162 | 100 |

Table 4

*Crosstabulation of Sect of Orthodox Judaism and Gender*

| | Gender | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Male | | Female | | Total | |
| Sect of Orthodox Judaism | *N* | % | *N* | % | *N* | % |
| Modern Orthodox | 1 | .62 | 3 | 1.85 | 4 | 2.47 |
| Yeshivish/Litvish | 59 | 36.42 | 25 | 15.43 | 84 | 51.85 |
| Chassidish | 17 | 10.49 | 24 | 14.81 | 41 | 25.31 |
| Chabad | 1 | .62 | 2 | 1.23 | 3 | 1.85 |
| Sephardic | 1 | .62 | 5 | 3.08 | 6 | 3.70 |
| Other | 6 | 3.70 | 6 | 3.70 | 12 | 7.41 |
| Sect of Orthodox Judaism | 8 | 4.94 | 4 | 2.47 | 12 | 7.41 |
| Total | 93 | 57.41 | 69 | 42.58 | 162 | 100 |

**Data Screening**

According to the power analysis I conducted, the appropriate sample size for this study needed to consist of at least 107 participants. However, when collecting the data, there was a large imbalance between groups (ACOD and ACIM) and not enough participants in the ACOD group. In order to have enough participants in the ACOD group, I extended the data collection process. Consequently, 193 surveys were collected. Of those responses, 29 were disqualified because they did not meet the inclusion criteria. Thus, I collected and analyzed a total of 164 valid surveys.

**Missing data.** Out of the 164 collected surveys, 20 of the online participants left some items blank. Those missing data were only a small percentage of the items and appeared to be due to random error. Those missing data were imputed using the Expectation – Maximization (EM) algorithm, and the imputed values were included in all data analyses.

**Outlier Data.** I screened the data for univariate and multivariate outliers. Univariate outliers were determined by transforming the raw scores for all ordinal variables to *z*-scores. There were two cases with *z*-scores higher than 3.29, the critical value recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), and were thus identified as univariate outliers. Multivariate outliers were determined by calculating the Mahalanobis distance for all ordinal variables using SPSS. Significance was determined by cumulative distribution function for the chi-square distribution of the variables tested. The same two cases were identified as multivariate outliers using the probability threshold value of $p < .001$, as recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013). I excluded these two cases from the sample, leaving a final sample of $N = 162$ participants.

## Results

### Mean Differences Between Study Variables

I ran preliminary analyses using separate ANOVAs to test for mean differences between the study variables. The results indicated that there were no significant differences on marital commitment between ACIM ($M = 104.56$, $SD = 12.89$) and ACOD ($M = 101.75$, $SD = 14.56$), $F(1,161) = 1.66$, $p = .20$. There were also no significant differences on marital satisfaction between ACIM ($M = 30.82$, $SD = 5.13$) and ACOD ($M = 30.12$, $SD = 4.64$), $F(1,161) = .77$, $p = .38$. Similarly, there were no significant differences on attitudes towards divorce between ACIM ($M = 22.81$, $SD = 5.11$) and ACOD ($M = 21.73$, $SD = 5.75$), $F(1,161) = 1.56$, $p = .21$. Table 5 below shows mean differences in the study variables, separated by parental divorce status.

Table 5

*Mean Differences in Study Variables by Parental Divorce Status*

| | ACIM | | ACOD | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *F* | *p* |
| Marital Commitment | 104.56 | 12.89 | 101.75 | 14.56 | 1.66 | .20 |
| Attitude Towards Divorce | 22.81 | 5.11 | 21.73 | 5.75 | 1.56 | .21 |
| Marital Satisfaction | 30.82 | 5.13 | 30.12 | 4.64 | .77 | .38 |

When comparing genders, females had significantly higher marital commitment ($M$ = 106.92, $SD$ = 10.84) than males did ($M$ = 98.82, $SD$ = 15.49), $F(1,161) = 15.35$, $p < .001$, as well as significantly more permissive attitudes towards divorce ($M$ = 23.32, $SD$ = 5.16) than those of males ($M$ = 21.14, $SD$ = 5.44), $F(1,161) = 6.72$, $p = .01$. However, there were no significant differences in marital satisfaction between males ($M$ = 30.11, $SD$ = 5.15) and females ($M$ = 30.87, $SD$ = 4.79), $F(1,161) = .94$, $p = .33$. Table 6 below shows mean differences in the study variables separated by gender.

Table 6

*Mean Differences in Study Variables by Gender*

| | Males | | Females | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *F* | *p* |
| Marital commitment | 98.82 | 15.49 | 106.92 | 10.84 | 15.35 | <.001 |
| Attitude towards divorce | 21.14 | 5.44 | 23.32 | 5.16 | 6.72 | .01 |
| Marital satisfaction | 30.11 | 5.15 | 30.87 | 4.79 | .94 | .33 |

**Correlations Between Study Variables**

I also ran preliminary analyses testing the correlations between study variables using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (Pearson's *r*). When examining all groups together, results found that gender was significantly correlated with marital commitment, $r(162) = -.30$, $p < .001$ and attitudes towards divorce, $r(162) = -.20$, $p = .01$, and marital commitment was significantly correlated with marital satisfaction, $r(162) = .55$, $p < .001$. Table 7 shows correlations when examining all groups together.

Table 7

*Correlations Between Study Variables (N=162)*

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 Parental Divorce | - | | | | |
| 2 Gender | .11 | - | | | |
| 3 Marital Commitment | -.10 | -.30** | - | | |
| 4 Attitudes Towards Divorce | -.10 | -.20* | .05 | - | |
| 5 Marital Satisfaction | -.07 | -.08 | .55** | -.03 | - |

*Note*. * $p < .01$ (2-tailed), ** $p < .001$ (2-tailed).

When separating correlations by parental divorce, results showed that gender was significantly correlated with marital commitment, $r(162) = -.34$, $p = .001$, for the ACIM group only, and that marital commitment was significantly correlated with marital satisfaction for both the ACIM group, $r(162) = .61$, $p < .001$, and the ACOD group, $r(162) = .46$, $p < .001$. Table 8 below shows correlations for ACIM, and Table 9 shows correlations for ACOD.

Table 8

*Correlations Between Study Variables for ACIM*

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 Gender | - | | | |
| 2 Marital commitment | -.34* | - | | |
| 3 Attitudes towards divorce | -.20 | .05 | - | |
| 4 Marital satisfaction | -.12 | .61** | .04 | - |

*Note*. * $p < .01$ (2-tailed), ** $p < .001$ (2-tailed).

Table 9

*Correlations Between Study Variables for ACOD*

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 Gender | - | | | |
| 2 Marital Commitment | -.22 | - | | |
| 3 Attitudes Towards Divorce | -.19 | .03 | - | |
| 4 Marital Satisfaction | .01 | .46** | -.17 | - |

*Note*. * $p < .01$ (2-tailed), ** $p < .001$ (2-tailed).

When separating correlations by gender, results showed that marital commitment was significantly correlated with marital satisfaction for both the female group, $r(162) = .65$, $p < .001$, and the male group, $r(162) = .48$, $p < .001$. Table 10 shows correlations between study variables for males, and Table 11 shows correlations between study variables for females.

Table 10

*Correlations Between Study Variables for Males*

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 Parental divorce | - | | | |
| 2 Marital commitment | -.02 | - | | |
| 3 Attitudes towards divorce | -.08 | .05 | - | |
| 4 Marital satisfaction | .01 | .48* | -.11 | - |

*Note*. * $p < .001$ (2-tailed).

Table 11

*Correlations Between Study Variables for Females*

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 Parental divorce | - | | | |
| 2 Marital commitment | -.14 | - | | |
| 3 Attitudes towards divorce | -.08 | -.07 | - | |
| 4 Marital satisfaction | -.12 | .65* | .01 | - |

*Note*. * $p < .001$ (2-tailed).

**Reliability of Study Scales**

I ran Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficients to test the internal reliability of the study scales. Results yielded a Chronbach's alpha of .88 for the RAS, a Chronbach's alpha of .81 for the Commitment scale, and a Chronbach's alpha of .79 for the Likelihood of Divorce Scale. These results are comparable to the reliability coefficients reported by the scale authors (RAS Cronbach's alpha = .86; Hendrick, 1988; Commitment Scale

Cronbach's alpha = .91 - .95; Rusbult, Kumashiro, Kubacka, & Finkel, 2009; Likelihood of Divorce Scale Cronbach's alpha = .83; Mulder & Gunnoe, 1999). This is considered to be good reliability according to commonly accepted thresholds (DeVellis, 2012).

**Evaluation of Basic Parametric Assumptions**

**Normality.** I first tested the data for normal distributions of scores using the Shapiro-Wilk test. Results were significant at a < .001 level for marital satisfaction and marital commitment. A further examination of the histograms showed that the data were skewed negatively. These results indicated that the data did not meet the assumption of normality. However, Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) contend that GLM analyses such as MANCOVA and linear regression are robust for violations of normality, especially with sample sizes over 100 participants. Thus, I analyzed the data using these tests despite the violation of normality.

**Homogeneity of variances**. I conducted Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variance to test if the error variance of marital commitment and marital satisfaction were equal across levels of the independent variables, parental divorce, gender, and attitudes towards divorce. Results indicated that both marital commitment ($F$ = .90, $p$ = .35) and marital satisfaction ($F$ = .50, $p$ = .48) met the assumption of homogeneity of variances and no heteroscedasticity was present.

**Homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices**. I conducted Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices to test if the observed covariance matrices of marital commitment and marital satisfaction were equal across levels of parental divorce, gender, and attitudes towards divorce. This test uses a $p$ > .001 threshold for significance. Results

indicated that the Box's *M* value of 4.90 was associated with a *p* value of .19, and was thus not significant at that threshold, indicating that the assumption of homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices was met.

**Linearity. I tested** linearity among dependent variables using Pearson's correlation coefficients. Huberty and Olejnik (2006) recommended that the dependent variables be correlated within the range of .3 and .8 when conducting a MANCOVA. As mentioned above, marital commitment was significantly correlated with marital satisfaction, $r(162) = .61$, $p < .001$. Thus, the assumption of linearity was met.

**Absence of multicollinearity.** I tested multicollinearity by measuring the tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF) statistics. The tolerance statistic values were higher than .1 and variance inflation factor (VIF) statistic values were between 1 and 10. These thresholds indicated that the assumption regarding absence of multicollinearity was met (Mertler & Reinhart, 2017).

## Examination of Research Questions and Related Hypotheses

**Research Question 1.** The first research question for the study asked if OJ ACOD differ significantly from OJ ACIM in their levels of marital satisfaction and marital commitment when controlling for gender and attitudes towards divorce. The hypothesis stated that there will be significant differences between the marital satisfaction and marital commitment of OJ ACOD and those of OJ ACIM when controlling for gender and attitudes towards divorce.

To test this hypothesis, I conducted a MANCOVA testing for differences between ACOD and ACIM on marital satisfaction and marital commitment while controlling for

gender and attitudes towards divorce, as well as the interaction between gender and parental divorce. Results indicated that attitudes towards divorce (Wilks' Lambda = 1.00, $F(2,156) = .27$, $p = .77$) and parental divorce (Wilks' Lambda = 1.00, $F(2,156) = .43$, $p = .66$) were not significantly different between the two groups. On the other hand, gender (Wilks' Lambda = .92, $F(2,156) = 7.21$, $p = .001$) was significant. Post-hoc univariate tests indicated that gender was related to marital commitment, $F(1,158) = 12.65$, $p < .001$, but not marital satisfaction, $F(1,158) = .67$, $p = .42$, which is consistent with the ANOVA reported above (see Table 5). This demonstrates that female participants had significantly higher marital commitment than their male counterparts. As parental divorce was not found to be significant, however, there is no evidence to reject the first null hypothesis ($H_0 1$). Table 12 below shows the results of the multivariate tests, as well as post-hoc univariate tests.

Table 12

*Summary of Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) and Post-hoc Univariate Tests (ANCOVA)*

| | Multivariate Tests | | | Univariate Tests | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Marital Commitment | | Marital Satisfaction | |
| | Wilks' Lambda | *F* | *p* | *F* | *p* | *F* | *p* |
| Attitudes towards divorce | 1.00 | .27 | .77 | .03 | .86 | .47 | .49 |
| Parental divorce | 1.00 | .43 | .66 | .76 | .39 | .55 | .46 |
| Gender | .92 | 7.21 | .001 | 12.65 | < .001 | .67 | .42 |
| Interaction of parental divorce and gender | 1.00 | .35 | .70 | .33 | .57 | .69 | .41 |

*Note*. The *df* for all multivariate statistical tests were 2, 156.

**Research Question 2.** The second research question for the study asked if gender significantly moderates the relationship between parental divorce and marital satisfaction of OJ ACOD. The hypothesis stated that gender will significantly moderate the relationship between parental divorce and marital satisfaction of OJ ACOD.

To test this hypothesis, I conducted a hierarchical multiple regression examining gender as a moderator of the relationship between parental divorce and marital satisfaction of OJ ACOD using the procedures recommended by Baron and Kenny (1986). Model 1 included only parental divorce as an independent variable for the first step in the regression analysis. Model 2 added gender as an independent variable for the second step in the regression analysis, while Model 3 added the moderation effect, the

interaction between gender and parental divorce, as an independent variable for the final step in the regression analysis. Results indicated that no model was significant, nor were any individual coefficients significant (see table 13). Thus, I found no significant moderation effect and there is therefore no evidence to reject the second null hypothesis ($H_0 2$).

Table 13

*Moderation Results with Gender Moderating Parental Divorce and Marital Satisfaction*

| Model 1<br>$\Delta R^2$ (1, 160) = .005, $p$ = .38 | *B* | *SE* | *β* | *t* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Parental divorce | -.70 | .80 | -.07 | -.88 | .38 |
| Model 2<br>$\Delta R^2$ (1, 159) = .005, $p$ = .38 | | | | | |
| Parental divorce | -.62 | .80 | -.06 | -.78 | .44 |
| Gender | -.70 | .79 | -.07 | -.88 | .38 |
| Model 3<br>$\Delta R^2$ (1, 158) = .004, $p$ = .40 | | | | | |
| Parental divorce | -1.23 | 1.08 | -.12 | -1.14 | .26 |
| Gender | -1.24 | 1.03 | -.12 | -1.21 | .23 |
| Gender X parental divorce | 1.35 | 1.62 | .11 | .84 | .40 |

**Research Question 3.** The third research question for the study asked if gender significantly moderates the relationship between parental divorce and marital commitment of OJ ACOD. The hypothesis stated that gender will significantly moderate the relationship between parental divorce and marital commitment of OJ ACOD.

To test this hypothesis, I conducted a hierarchical multiple regression examining gender as a moderator of the relationship between parental divorce and marital

satisfaction of OJ ACOD. Model 1 included only parental divorce as an independent variable for the first step in the regression analysis. Model 2 added gender as an independent variable for the second step in the regression analysis, while Model 3 added the moderation effect, the interaction between gender and parental divorce, as an independent variable for the final step in the regression analysis. Results indicated that only model 2, which added gender as an independent variable, was significant ($\Delta R^2$ (1, 159) = .08, $p < .001$; see table 14). Examination of the coefficients indicated that, consistent with the earlier analyses, females had higher marital commitment than males ($B$ = -7.90, $SE$ = 2.08, $t$ = -3.79, $p < .001$). Nonetheless, as only model 2 was significant, there was no significant moderation effect found. Thus, there is no evidence to reject the third null hypothesis ($H_0$3).

Table 14

*Moderation Results with Gender Moderating Parental Divorce and Marital Commitment*

| Model 1<br>$\Delta R^2$ (1, 160) = .001, $p$ = .20 | *B* | *SE* | *β* | *t* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Parental divorce | -2.82 | 2.19 | -.10 | -1.29 | .20 |
| Model 2<br>$\Delta R^2$ (1, 159) = .08, $p$ < .001 | | | | | |
| Parental divorce | -1.96 | 2.11 | -.07 | -.93 | .35 |
| Gender | -7.90 | 2.08 | -.29 | -3.79 | <.001 |
| Model 3<br>$\Delta R^2$ (1, 158) = .002, $p$ = .56 | | | | | |
| Parental divorce | -3.06 | 2.85 | -.11 | -1.08 | .28 |
| Gender | -8.89 | 2.70 | -.32 | -3.29 | .001 |
| Gender X parental divorce | 2.46 | 4.25 | .07 | .58 | .56 |

**Research Question 4.** The fourth research question for the study asked if attitudes towards divorce significantly mediate the relationship between parental divorce and marital satisfaction of OJ ACOD. The hypothesis stated that attitudes towards divorce will significantly mediate the relationship between parental divorce and marital satisfaction of OJ ACOD.

To test this hypothesis, I conducted a simple ordinary least squares path analysis using SPSS with Hayes (2013) PROCESS macro using model 4 by estimating attitudes towards divorce from parental divorce as well as marital satisfaction from both parental divorce and attitudes towards divorce. As can be seen in Figure 1 and Table 15, results indicated that parental divorce did not influence marital satisfaction through its effect on attitudes towards divorce. More particularly, parental divorce was not significantly

related to attitudes towards divorce ($B$ = -1.08, $p$ = .23), nor did attitudes towards divorce predict marital satisfaction while controlling for parental divorce ($B$ = -.04, $p$ = .58). A bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effect of parental divorce ($B$ = .04) using 5,000 bootstrap samples was not entirely above zero (-.08 to .36). Thus, there was no evidence of an indirect effect of parental divorce on marital satisfaction through attitudes towards divorce, nor was the direct effect of parental divorce on marital satisfaction statistically significant ($B$ = -.74, $p$ = .36). Thus, there is no evidence to reject the fourth null hypothesis ($H_0$4).

Table 15

*Mediation Results with Attitudes Towards Divorce Mediating Parental Divorce and Marital Satisfaction.*

| Effect | *B* | *SE* | 95% LLCI | 95% ULCI | *t* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total effect | -.70 | .79 | -2.25 | .85 | -.89 | .37 |
| Direct effect | -.74 | .80 | -2.32 | .84 | -.92 | .36 |
| Indirect effect | .04 | .10 | -.08 | .36 | - | - |
| Effect on mediator | -1.08 | .89 | -2.85 | .68 | -1.21 | .23 |
| Effect of mediator on outcome | -.04 | .07 | -.17 | .10 | -.55 | .58 |

*Note*. Indirect effects were estimated using bootstrapping (5000 samples). Therefore, normal theory test statistics are not available.

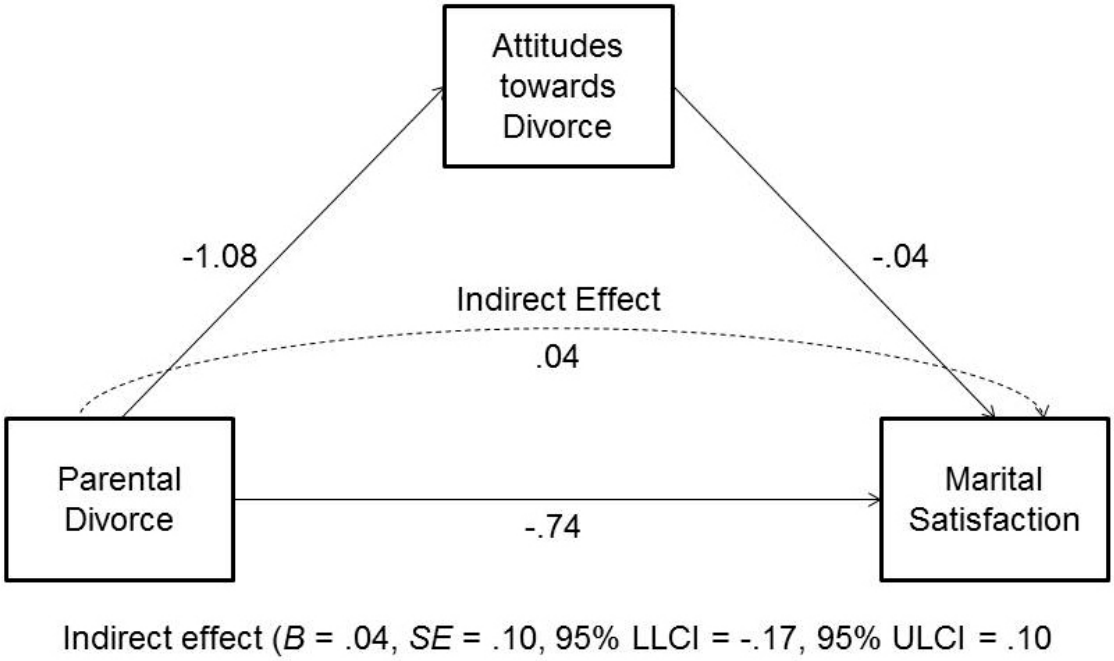


*Figure 1.* Path model of the mediating effect of attitudes towards divorce between parental divorce and marital satisfaction.

**Research Question 5.** The fifth research question for the study asked if attitudes towards divorce significantly mediate the relationship between parental divorce and marital commitment of OJ ACOD. The hypothesis stated that attitudes towards divorce will significantly the relationship between parental divorce and marital commitment of OJ ACOD.

To test this hypothesis, I conducted a simple ordinary least squares path analysis using SPSS with Hayes (2013) PROCESS macro using model 4 by estimating attitudes towards divorce from parental divorce as well as marital commitment from both parental divorce and attitudes towards divorce. As can be seen in Figure 2 and Table 16, results indicated that parental divorce did not influence marital commitment through its effect on attitudes towards divorce. More particularly, parental divorce was not significantly

related to attitudes towards divorce ($B$ = -1.08, $p$ = .23), nor did attitudes towards divorce predict commitment while controlling for parental divorce ($B$ = .11, $p$ = .59). A bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effect of parental divorce ($B$ = -.10) using 5,000 bootstrap samples was not entirely above zero (-1.23 to .25). Thus, there was no evidence of an indirect effect of parental divorce on marital commitment through attitudes towards divorce, nor was the direct effect of parental divorce on marital commitment statistically significant ($B$ = -2.70, $p$ = .25). Thus, there is no evidence to reject the fifth null hypothesis ($H_0$5).

Table 16

*Mediation Results with Attitudes Towards Divorce Mediating Parental Divorce and Marital Commitment.*

| Effect | *B* | *SE* | 95% LLCI | 95% ULCI | *t* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total effect | -2.82 | 2.26 | -7.28 | 1.65 | -1.25 | .21 |
| Direct effect | -2.70 | 2.33 | -7.31 | 1.91 | -1.16 | .25 |
| Indirect effect | -.16 | .31 | -1.23 | .25 | - | - |
| Effect on mediator | -1.08 | .89 | -2.85 | .68 | -1.21 | .23 |
| Effect of mediator on outcome | .11 | .20 | -.29 | .50 | .54 | .59 |

*Note*. Indirect effects were estimated using bootstrapping (5000 samples). Therefore, normal theory test statistics are not available.

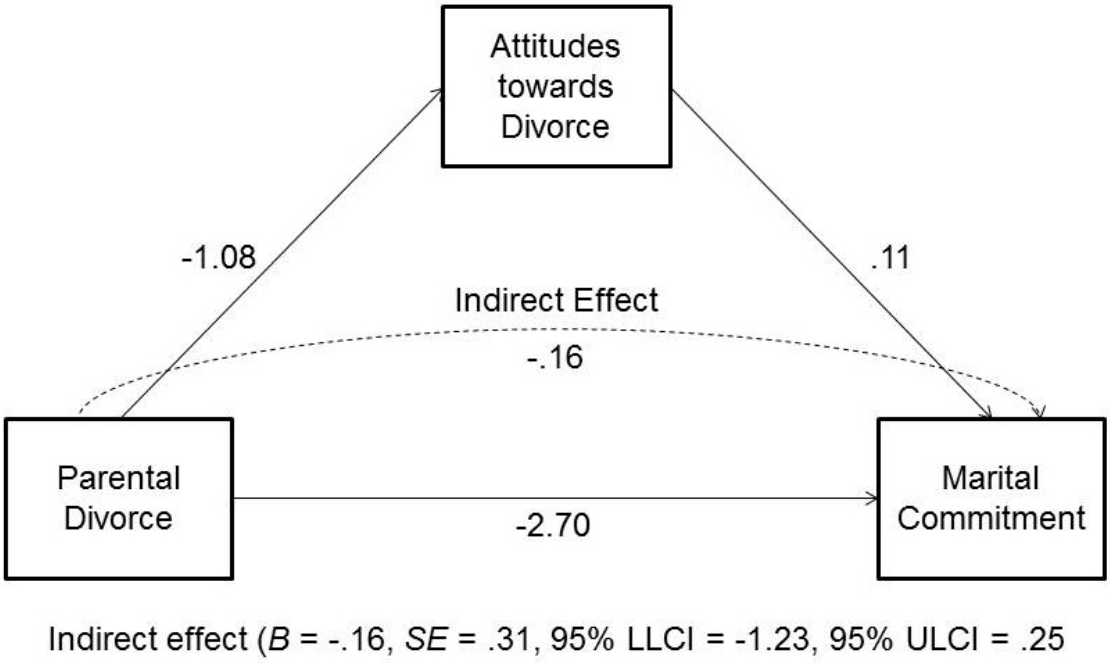


*Figure 2.* Path model of the mediating effect of attitudes towards divorce between parental divorce and marital commitment.

**Summary**

I found none of the data analyses directly related to the research questions to be significant. As a result, none of the null hypotheses were rejected. Thus, I found no significant differences between the marital satisfaction and marital commitment of OJ ACOD and those of OJ ACIM when controlling for gender and attitudes towards divorce. While I did find a significant difference between males and females in their levels of marital commitment, with females having higher marital commitment, that difference was shared equally by ACOD and ACIM. I also did not find gender to significantly moderate the relationships between parental divorce and marital satisfaction or marital commitment, nor did attitudes towards divorce significantly mediate those same relationships. In the following chapter, I will present a discussion of these findings and

their implications, both for the research community and for social change. The sections I will cover are: Introduction, Interpretation of Findings, Limitations, Recommendations, Implications, and Conclusions.

# Chapter 5: Discussion

## Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative cross-sectional study was to find out whether OJ ACOD differed significantly from OJ ACIM in their levels of marital satisfaction and marital commitment when controlling for gender and attitudes towards divorce. I also aimed to examine whether gender significantly moderated any such relationships between parental divorce and marital satisfaction and/or marital commitment, and whether the participants' attitudes towards divorce significantly mediated those same relationships. While much research has been conducted showing that ACOD have more positive attitudes toward divorce and lower marital commitment, there has been no such research to date on the OJ population specifically, who tend to view divorce more negatively. It was therefore unclear if the prior research applied to OJ ACOD.

As I discussed in Chapter 4, none of the data analyses directly related to the research questions were found to be significant. In particular, I found no significant differences between OJ ACOD and ACIM in their levels of marital satisfaction and marital commitment, nor did gender significantly moderate the relationships between parental divorce and marital satisfaction or marital commitment. I also found that attitudes towards divorce did not significantly mediate those relationships. While there was a significant difference found between males and females in their levels of marital commitment, with females having higher marital commitment, that difference was shared equally by ACOD and ACIM.

## Interpretation of the Findings

In Chapter 2, I discussed many studies of the general population that showed significant differences between female ACOD and ACIM in their levels of marital satisfaction and marital commitment. For example, Dennison, Koerner, and Segrin (2014) found that parental divorce was associated with lower marital satisfaction in newlywed females. Whitton et al. (2008) also found that women whose parents were divorced come to marriage with a lower commitment to marriage and decreased confidence in their own marriages, which may potentially increase the risk of getting divorced (Whitton et al., 2008). Mustonen et al. (2011) similarly found that female ACOD reported lower marital satisfaction than their ACIM counterparts. However, in this study of Orthodox Jews, I found no significant differences between ACOD and ACIM in their levels of marital satisfaction and marital commitment. While there was a significant difference found between males and females in their levels of marital commitment, that difference was shared equally by ACOD and ACIM.

According to SET, the theoretical base grounding this study, people invest in relationships based on the outcomes they can expect to receive in return (Blau, 1964). In the context of marital relationships, therefore, an individual who has a positive attitude towards divorce will invest fewer resources into the marriage, which in turn will erode the quality of the relationship (Levinger, 1976). Thus, the theory would support the assertion that more positive attitudes towards divorce would explain the effect parental divorce has on the adult children's marital relationships (Whitton et al., 2013). Miles and Servaty-Seib (2010), in fact, found that ACOD had more positive views toward divorce

and, in turn, lower marital commitment than those from families with non-divorced parents. Sieben and Verbakel (2013) also found that parental divorce created more permissive attitudes toward divorce in the adult children.

The results of my study, however, did not show that OJ ACOD had any significant differences in their attitudes towards divorce, marital satisfaction, or commitment when compared to OJ ACIM, as hypothesized in the first hypothesis. This can possibly be partially explained by SET. In particular, if OJ ACOD feel equally committed to their marriages as OJ ACIM and have negative attitudes toward divorce despite experiencing parental divorce, they are likely to invest in their marriage as a long-term proposition and therefore experience the same levels of marital satisfaction as their ACIM counterparts.

The failure to find any mediation effect of attitudes towards divorce, as hypothesized in the fourth and fifth hypotheses, may also be explained by religious values and attitudes towards marriage being so strong in the OJ community (Schnall, 2006; Schnall et al., 2013) that they may act as a buffer against the negative influence of parental divorce, so much so that no significant differences between OJ ACOD and OJ ACIM exist, even after having gone through parental divorce. Further, the failure to find a significant moderation effect of gender, as hypothesized in the second and third hypotheses, can possibly be explained by healthy marital ideals and values being an integral part of the curriculum in OJ high schools, as well as post high school seminaries (Levin & Davies, 2016), especially for females. Thus, the fact that females are usually more affected by the divorce of their parents (Kapinus &Flowers, 2008; Whitton et al.,

2008; Whitton et al., 2013) may be offset by these healthy marital ideals and values. This might also explain the study findings that females had higher commitment than males, regardless of their parental divorce status. With few exceptions, OJ children generally attend private OJ schools and do not make use of the public school system. Further, most prospective brides and grooms attend premarital counseling that focus on positive marital relationships and communication skills. Thus, aside for fewer media influences and exposure to mainstream societal values due to the more sheltered upbringing, OJ children of divorce have a great deal of exposure to positive marital attitudes and values to act as a buffer against their personal negative experiences (Levin & Davies, 2016). Further, as divorce rates are relatively low in the OJ community (Salamon, 2008) and marriages are relatively happier (Schnall et al., 2013), children of divorce are more likely to consider their personal experiences the exception to the norm and will still expect to experience healthy marriages.

Alternatively, in light of divorce and marital discord being so stigmatized in the OJ community, there is a possibility that the participants may have reported inaccurately in these sensitive topics in an effort to present themselves in a more positive light. While the surveys were completely anonymous, the possibility still exists of self-deceptive social desirability bias among the participants (see Lelkes, Krosnick, Marx, Judd, & Park, 2012). I will further address this possibility in the next section.

## Limitations of the Study

As I noted in the previous section, there was a possibility for self-report and social desirability response biases due to the reliance on self-report measures. In general,

depending on the individual circumstances of the participants, they may have exaggerated or underreported their issues in the most socially desirable way in an effort to cause their issues to seem worse than they were or to minimize them. This possibility was somewhat diminished by making sure the participants were aware that the surveys were completely anonymous. Doing so mitigated the concerns of the participants attempting to look good in others' eyes. However, it is still possible that self-deception existed among the participants, and that they responded in a socially desirable way because of this self-bias (Lelkes, Krosnick, Marx, Judd, & Park, 2012).

Because I used anonymous data collection to allow the participants to respond to sensitive and emotionally-charged topics more freely and accurately without fear of stigma, disapproval, or other negative effects (see Sellitz, Wrightsman, & Cook, 1976), it was not possible to ensure that the data were not confounded by any of the participants being spouses of other participants in the study, thereby referring to the same marriage in their responses. Also, the anonymous data collection process did not allow for a screening process for possible learning disabilities that may have affected any of the participants' ability to comprehend the instructions and respond accurately. It is therefore also possible that some of the participants had difficulty remembering past life events accurately. Further, the anonymous research made it impossible to ensure that participants did not fill out the survey multiple times and influence the study outcomes (see Duda & Nobile, 2010). To mitigate this possibility, I set the study up online in a way that participants were not permitted to enter the survey more than once from the same IP address. While it is still possible that a participant may have used more than one location

to fill out the survey multiple times, this event was not likely given that no incentives were offered for completing the surveys.

Another limitation to the study is that it was not feasible to narrow the scope sect-by-sect amongst Orthodox Jews. Rather, any Jews who identify themselves as Orthodox were included as participants. In reality, however, there are many different sects within the Orthodox community, ranging from Modern Orthodox to Ultra-Orthodox. Because each sect has different levels of acculturation and, by extension, different attitudes toward divorce, the results for each sect may, in fact, be somewhat different. In particular, those who are more acculturated to the mainstream lifestyle tend to have more permissive attitudes towards divorce, while less acculturated individuals generally view divorce more negatively (Ellison, Wolfinger, & Ramos-Wada, 2013).

A further limitation worth mentioning relates to confounding factors that may have possibly influenced the participants' attitudes towards divorce, such as exposure to divorce in others besides the parents, such as siblings or friends who got divorced, as well as exposure to portrayals of divorce attitudes in the media. Further, factors such as life stress and illness may have possibly influenced the participants' attitudes. As I mentioned in the previous section, marital ideals and values are an integral part of the curriculum in OJ high schools, post high school seminaries, and premarital counseling programs.

There was also a limitation that relates to selection and sampling bias. While I made an effort to get as broad a range of participants as possible, the self-selected convenience sample that I used does limit the generalizability of the research somewhat, as it may not be representative of the target population from which it was drawn.

Although the ideal would have been to obtain a truly random sample, this was not feasible for this study. To try to get as broad a range of participants as possible, both online and paper surveys were used, and the paper versions were distributed in a wide range of synagogues and community centers. However, the data from the online surveys predominated the dataset.

## Recommendations

Because of the possibility of self-report and social desirability response biases, future researchers on the topic may wish to include a social desirability scale as part of a study regarding sensitive topics. The scale used should optimally include a sub-scale that measures self-deceptive enhancement. Utilizing such a scale would enable future researchers to measure individuals' likelihood to exaggerate or underreport their issues in a socially desirable way, and would thereby enhance the validity of the study results.

As I have noted, it was not feasible to narrow the scope sect-by-sect amongst Orthodox Jews, and I included any Jews who identified themselves as Orthodox. In reality, however, there are many different sects within the Orthodox community, ranging from Modern Orthodox to Ultra-Orthodox, each with different levels of acculturation. Thus, future researchers may wish to directly assess any differences by sect to discover if the different levels of acculturation affect their attitudes toward divorce and by extension, their marital satisfaction and commitment. While Orthodox Jews share basic values and attitudes, different sects have their own subcultures, dating and matchmaking processes, and different levels of acculturation that likely impact their attitudes towards divorce.

One the same note, my study only examined Orthodox Jews. Researchers may also wish to compare Orthodox Jews to those in more acculturated Jewish communities such as Conservative or Reform Jews, as well as those from other religious groups such as Muslims, Catholics, Protestants, and other religions. Future researchers can further enhance my study findings by controlling for factors besides parental divorce that may have possibly influenced the participants' attitudes towards divorce. Further, future researchers may wish to collect qualitative data to better understand the lived experience of OJ ACOD.

## Implications

In the US, Orthodox Jews are experiencing what is often referred to as the "shidduch crisis," where singles of marriageable age are having trouble finding suitable matches. While there are several factors that contributed to the problem, the main cause is the combination of the explosive growth in the OJ population and the age gap in OJ dating patterns ("NASI Project", 2017). More specifically, OJ males tend to enter the dating scene at approximately age 23, while females do so at approximately age 19. Consequently, there are more females seeking a prospective match at any given time ("NASI Project," 2017). This is particularly a troubling issue for OJ women, whom are often left without a marriage partner and remain single in a community that places a great emphasis on married family life. This often leaves the older singles with little social support, as most of their peers are married and busy with their families. This is a widespread problem about which many in the OJ community are raising awareness and attempting to alleviate the problem. For example, a major rabbinical council group in the

US offered large monetary incentives for anyone who successfully matches older single women in the community in an attempt to alleviate the aforementioned “shidduch crisis” (Pensak, 2005). Similarly, a renowned OJ philanthropist offered a $10,000 incentive for anyone who matches a single male under 25 with a woman older than 25 (Eishes Lapidus, 2016; "NASI Project", 2017).

While this significant issue applies to all singles, it is especially problematic for singles with any perceived flaw, such as those from divorced homes. The prearranged dating system in many Orthodox communities involves extensive research into a proposed date prior to meeting (Penkower, 2010). After a proposed match is suggested to both the man and woman, inquiries are made by each side to determine whether the proposed ideas sound suitable for a future marriage. As part of that research process, research is frequently conducted into the family of the proposed match to determine whether they would be a suitable marriage partner (Penkower, 2010). Although members of the community express satisfaction of the prearranged dating system, it comes along with a high level of stigma toward any issue that would render a potential partner as flawed (Milevsky, Niman, Raab, & Gross, 2011). Citing known research in the general community, Gavant (2011) reported that people often feel that OJ ACOD have poorer chances of maintaining successful marriages and have a harder time finding a mate. Publicizing the results of this research may help ameliorate this issue, and the stigma associated with parental divorce in a potential marriage partner may be somewhat minimized and may make it easier for those from divorced homes in the OJ community to be chosen as suitable matches. More specifically, the results of my study can effect

positive social change on a societal level by giving OJ community leaders data that may help them implement community awareness programs to reduce the stigma of parental divorce in the OJ community and its impact on the marriage prospects of OJ ACOD, who often have trouble finding marriage partners due to their erroneously perceived poorer chances of maintaining happy marriages.

Further, according to SET, people invest into relationships based on the outcomes they can expect to receive in return (Blau, 1964). Accordingly, SET proposes that an individual who has a positive attitude towards divorce will invest fewer resources into the marriage, which in turn will erode the quality of the relationship (Levinger, 1976). Conversely, one who believes they have better chances of maintaining a successful and rewarding marriage will invest more resources into the marriage, which in turn will lead to a better relationship quality (Levinger, 1976). Thus, my study has important positive social change implications on an individual level in that when OJ ACOD learn that their chances of maintaining successful marriages are not necessarily hampered by their experiences with parental divorce, they may invest more resources into their marriages, and in turn experience improved relationships.

## Conclusion

My intention in this quantitative cross-sectional study was to examine the effects of parental divorce on the marital satisfaction and commitment of ACOD within the OJ community. Unlike previous research in the general population (e.g. Whitton et al., 2008; Dennison et al., 2014; Mustonen et al., 2011), I found no significant differences between OJ ACOD and ACIM in their levels of marital satisfaction and marital commitment.

Further, I did not find parental divorce to significantly affect the attitudes towards divorce of OJ ACOD, nor were there any differences among genders. Both of those findings are quite divergent from the research in the general population (e.g. Miles & Servaty-Seib, 2010; Cui & Fincham, 2010; Dennison et al., 2014; Whitton et al., 2013; Amato & DeBoer, 2001). As noted earlier, these findings have important implications, both for the research community and for promoting positive social change. Hopefully, OJ community leaders will use the data that emerged from my study to implement community awareness programs to reduce the stigma of parental divorce in the OJ community. More specifically, many people erroneously perceive OJ ACOD as having poorer chances of maintaining happy marriages (Gavant, 2011), and they have a harder time finding a mate as a result. My study will hopefully may help ameliorate this issue and improve the marriage prospects of OJ ACOD.

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Appendix A: Survey Questions

**Demographic Questionnaire**

**1) What is your age?**

_____

**2) What is your gender?**

*Male* *Female*

**3) What is your current marital status?**

*Single* *married* *divorced* *widowed*

**4) If you answered married above, is this your first marriage?**

*Yes* *No*

**5) Do you consider yourself an Orthodox Jew?**

*Yes* *No*

**6) If so, with which particular sect of Orthodox Judaism do you identify most?**

*Modern Orthodox* *Yeshivish/Litvish* *Chassidish* *Chabad* *Other (please specify)*_____

**7) In which country do you currently reside?**

*United States* *Other*_____

**8) Growing up (before you turned 18), did your parents divorce?**

*Yes* *No*

**9) If you answered yes above, how old were you when they divorced?**

_____

**Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS):**

**Now, please answer a few questions regarding the quality of your own marriage:**
*Please circle the number that most accurately describes your marriage, on a scale ranging from 1 (low) to 5 (high).*

**10) How well does your partner meet your needs?**

*1 2 3 4 5*

*(Low) (High)*

**11) In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?**

*1 2 3 4 5*

*(Low) (High)*

**12) How good is your relationship compared to most?**

*1 2 3 4 5*

*(Low) (High)*

**13) How often do you wish you hadn't gotten into this relationship?**

*1 2 3 4 5*

*(Low) (High)*

**14) To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?**

*1 2 3 4 5*

*(Low) (High)*

**15) How much do you love your partner?**

*1 2 3 4 5*

*(Low) (High)*

**16) How many problems are there in your relationship?**

*1 2 3 4 5*

*(Low) (High)*

**Commitment Scale**

**Now, please answer a few questions regarding your goals for the future of your marriage: To what extent does each of the following statements describe your feelings regarding your marriage?** *Please circle the number that most accurately describes your feelings, on a scale ranging from 0 (do not agree at all) to 8 (agree completely).*

**17) I will do everything I can to make our marriage last for the rest of our lives.**

*0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8*

*(Do Not Agree At All) (Agree Somewhat) (Agree Completely)*

**18) I feel completely attached to my partner and our marriage.**

*0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8*

*(Do Not Agree At All) (Agree Somewhat) (Agree Completely)*

**19) I often talk to my partner about what things will be like when we are very old.**

*0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8*

*(Do Not Agree At All) (Agree Somewhat) (Agree Completely)*

**20) I feel really awful when things are not going well in our marriage.**

*0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8*

*(Do Not Agree At All) (Agree Somewhat) (Agree Completely)*

**21) I am completely committed to maintaining our marriage.**

*0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8*

*(Do Not Agree At All) (Agree Somewhat) (Agree Completely)*

**22) I frequently imagine life with my partner in the distant future.**

*0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8*

*(Do Not Agree At All) (Agree Somewhat) (Agree Completely)*

**23) When I make plans about future events in life, I carefully consider the impact of my decisions on our marriage.**

*0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8*

*(Do Not Agree At All) (Agree Somewhat) (Agree Completely)*

**24) I spend a lot of time thinking about the future of our marriage.**

*0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8*

*(Do Not Agree At All) (Agree Somewhat) (Agree Completely)*

**25) I feel really terrible when things are not going well for my partner.**

*0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8*

*(Do Not Agree At All) (Agree Somewhat) (Agree Completely)*

**26) I want our marriage to last forever.**

*0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8*

*(Do Not Agree At All) (Agree Somewhat) (Agree Completely)*

**27) There is no chance at all that I would ever become romantically involved with another person.**

*0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8*

*(Do Not Agree At All) (Agree Somewhat) (Agree Completely)*

**28) I am oriented toward the long-term future of our marriage (for example, I imagine life with my partner decades from now).**

*0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8*

*(Do Not Agree At All) (Agree Somewhat) (Agree Completely)*

**29) My partner is more important to me than anyone else in life – more important than my parents, friends, etc.**

*0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8*

*(Do Not Agree At All) (Agree Somewhat) (Agree Completely)*

**30) I intend to do everything humanly possible to make our marriage persist.**

*0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8*

*(Do Not Agree At All) (Agree Somewhat) (Agree Completely)*

**31) If our marriage were ever to end, I would feel that my life was destroyed.**

*0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8*

*(Do Not Agree At All) (Agree Somewhat) (Agree Completely)*

## Likelihood of Divorce Scale

**Now, please answer a few questions regarding your feelings regarding divorce. For each of the following situations, assume you have been married for a couple of years and have no children. Please indicate how likely you would be to get a divorce in each situation.** *Please circle the number that most accurately describes your feelings, on a scale ranging from 1 (very unlikely) to 5 (very likely).*

**How likely would you be to get a divorce if:**

**32) You and your spouse did not love each other anymore?**

*1 2 3 4 5*

*(very unlikely) (somewhat unlikely) (not sure) (somewhat likely) (very likely)*

**33) Your spouse physically abused you?**

| *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* | *5* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *(very unlikely)* | *(somewhat unlikely)* | *(not sure)* | *(somewhat likely)* | *(very likely)* |

**34) Your spouse did not turn out to be the person you thought he/she was (e.g., was irresponsible, dishonest, etc.)?**

| *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* | *5* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *(very unlikely)* | *(somewhat unlikely)* | *(not sure)* | *(somewhat likely)* | *(very likely)* |

**35) All the magic was gone from your and your spouse's relationship, if there was no romance left?**

| *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* | *5* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *(very unlikely)* | *(somewhat unlikely)* | *(not sure)* | *(somewhat likely)* | *(very likely)* |

**36) Your spouse was verbally abusive (e.g., continually belittled you, insulted you, etc.)?**

| *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* | *5* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *(very unlikely)* | *(somewhat unlikely)* | *(not sure)* | *(somewhat likely)* | *(very likely)* |

**37) Your spouse had an affair?**

| *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* | *5* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *(very unlikely)* | *(somewhat unlikely)* | *(not sure)* | *(somewhat likely)* | *(very likely)* |

**38) You and your spouse were always arguing, at least several times a day?**

| *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* | *5* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *(very unlikely)* | *(somewhat unlikely)* | *(not sure)* | *(somewhat likely)* | *(very likely)* |