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Marital Outcomes and Attachment in Children of Divorce Versus Children of Intact Families

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Walden University
2019

Abstract

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Julirae Gunter-Castleton

MA, Walden University, 2009

BS, Central Washington University, 2006

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

Previous studies have investigated many aspects of the lives of children of divorce, including delinquency, emotional aspects, and attachment; however, they have not investigated the patterns of marital partnership formation and persistence among children of divorce who were raised in long-term blended families versus children of other types of families. Based on attachment theory, this study compared adult children from 4 family types: children of divorce raised in (a) long-term blended families, (b) single parent families postdivorce, (c) serial matrimony families postdivorce, and (d) children raised in intact families. A quantitative, causal-comparative, ex post facto survey design was employed with a convenience sample of 674 adults 18 to 99 years of age. The family types were compared on attachment patterns using the Experiences in Close Relationships-Relationship Structures scale and on marital outcomes obtained using a demographic questionnaire. Results indicated that children of divorce raised in both serial matrimony and blended families are significantly more likely to be insecurely attached to their parents. Children of these 2 family types are also significantly more likely to divorce. The implications of these research findings may help educate parents and mental health practitioners regarding the different experiences that children of divorce experience in terms of attachment that can mitigate the effects of divorce and other difficulties that children of divorce may have in their later relationships.

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Dedication

I want to dedicate this work to all my daughters, but especially to Lyra and Dawniella. You most of all have been impacted by this journey. You have seen the work it takes to reach this level. You both have the drive and dream to get here as well. I love you and I cannot wait to see you fly.

Acknowledgments

I want to acknowledge the dedication, work, and belief in me so many have had to make this possible. Brandt, you have loved me, pushed me, and sometimes bullied me through this journey. You have believed in me even when I have not and could not believe in myself. Thank you for your love and support. I also want to thank Dr. Maxwell Rainforth for his help and patience throughout this process. Without you, this dissertation would not have happened. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. To the rest of my dissertation committee, thank you. Finally, to Dr. Philip G. Barnard, thank you for showing me that I can live my dream.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Divorce is a life-altering experience for many children in the United States, with estimates reaching as high as 1 million children per year being affected (Eldar-Avidan, Haj-Yahia, & Greenbaum, 2009; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Rootalu & Kasearu, 2016; Warner, Mahoney, & Krumrei, 2009). As divorce rates rose, the social perceptions and acceptance of divorce shifted, making what was once considered a stigmatizing event into a more normally acceptable circumstance (Miles & Servaty-Seib, 2010). Estimates have shown that nearly half of first marriages will end in divorce, now with even more older couples divorcing, often leaving young adult children facing the effects of divorce as they begin relationships themselves (Miles & Servaty-Seib, 2010).

As the popular perceptions and the level of acceptance of divorce has shifted, the research has also shifted to begin considering the consequences and effects of divorce on both the individuals involved and the children of those divorces. Research on the effects of divorce on children is especially prevalent, usually with mixed results showing that divorce is both detrimental and beneficial (see Brand, Moore, Song, & Xie, 2019; Rootalu & Kasearu, 2016; Schaan, Schulz, Schachinger, & Vogele, 2019; Shimkowski, Punyanunt-Carter, Colwell, & Norman, 2018). For example, from a socioeconomic standpoint, divorce is considered a detriment because it often means a loss or drop in the financial status of the child. At the same time, if the parent remarries or seeks better employment because of a divorce, the child’s financial status could improve (see Diamond, Brimhall, & Elliott, 2018; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Sutton, 2019). However, contradictory the research findings appeared, and two insights emerged. First, children of divorce continued to show that their later relationships were often similar to their parent's relationships and more often ended in divorce (Rootalu & Kasearu, 2016; Shimkowski et al., 2018; Sutton, 2019). Second, when researchers conducted studies, they included all children of divorce into one blanket category called "children of divorce" without examining the structure of the family after divorce; for example, questioning whether the child or children were raised by a single parent, if either parent remarried and stayed married, or if the parent(s) remarried multiple times (see Brand et al., 2019; Eldar-Avidan et al., 2009; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Rootalu & Kasearu, 2016; Schaan et al., 2019; Shimkowski et al., 2018; Sutton, 2019; Warner et al., 2009). These circumstances have made it difficult to find research that specifically considers the later relationships of children of divorce who have been raised in long-term blended families or otherwise. By examining how children of divorce are affected by the relationships they observe during childhood, it is possible that more can be done to strengthen and support these children's later relationship attachments and families.

The objective of this study was to investigate the differences between the attachments and marital status of adult children of divorce raised in long-term blended families, adult children of divorce raised in single parent families, adult children of divorce raised in serial matrimony families, and children from intact families. In this study, I used a quantitative, causal-comparative, ex post facto survey design to compare the attachment and marital outcomes of the participants. From the viewpoint of positive social change, the information obtained from this study regarding the importance of strengthening and supporting of the later relationships of children of divorce has the potential to strengthen their families which, in turn, generationally strengthens society.

Background of the Study

For children of divorce, the effects of parental divorce can include a multitude of factors. In addition to the social effects, the children of divorce are affected personally, financially, and legally (Brand et al., 2019; Eldar-Avidan et al., 2009; Jensen, Lombardi, & Larson, 2015). Furthermore, researchers have suggested that children of divorce have difficulties with relationship commitment and sexual intimacy (Planitz, Feeney, & Peterson, 2009). Mustonen, Huurre, Kiviruusu, Haukkala, and Aro (2011) found that children of divorce have additional risk factors in the areas of relationship satisfaction, trust, and commitment compared to children from intact families. Divorce also seems to remain a main contributing theme to the lives of children of divorce (see Anderson & Greene, 2011; Crowell, Treboux, & Brockmeyer, 2009; Diamond et al., 2018; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Faber & Wittenborn, 2010; Gierveld & Merz, 2013; Martin-Uzzi & Duval-Tsioles, 2013; Noel Miller, 2013; Nuru & Wang, 2014; Reynolds, Searight, & Ratwik, 2014; Rootalu & Kasearu, 2016; South, 2013; Sroufe & McIntosh, 2011; Sumner, 2013), as they deal with recurrent loss and separation themes (Miles & Servaty-Seib, 2010). However, children of divorce—especially those whose parents have remarried—enter adulthood with a different childhood experience than those raised in intact families (Wallerstein, 2005).

Binuclear or stepfamilies, defined for the purpose of this study as families in which one or both parents bring children from a previous relationship to the marriage (see

Anderson & Greene, 2011; Crowell et al., 2009; Faber & Wittenborn, 2010; Gierveld & Merz, 2013; Martin-Uzzi & Duval-Tsioles, 2013; Noel Miller, 2013; Nuru & Wang, 2014; Reynolds et al., 2014; South, 2013; Sroufe & McIntosh, 2011; Sumner, 2013), are becoming the most prevalent family type in industrialized nations (Planitz et al., 2009). With binuclear families, a new kind of family has emerged (Wallerstein, 2005). These families are not neat, tidy families with defined roles and relationships. Instead, they are families made up of many different relationships that are not clearly defined (see Ahrons, 2007; Anderson & Greene, 2011; Cartwright, 2012; Crowell et al., 2009; Faber & Wittenborn, 2010; Gierveld & Merz, 2013; Martin-Uzzi & Duval-Tsioles, 2013; Noel Miller, 2013; Nuru & Wang, 2014). While stepfamilies have their own unique factors and views that can play a role in children's lives, these families also offer a different view of relationships and marriage than the children of divorce saw in their parent's first marriage (see Baptist, Thompson, Norton, Hardy, & Link, 2012; Crowell et al., 2009; Diamond et al., 2018; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Hare, Miga, & Allen, 2009; Jarnecke & South, 2013; Rasmussen, et al., 2019).

Many researchers have cited earlier researchers who pointed to parental attitudes toward marriage as a contributing factor to attitudes toward divorce and marriage among adult children of divorce (see Baptist et al., 2012; Crowell et al., 2009; Hare et al., 2009; Jarnecke & South, 2013). Additionally, many of these researchers have postulated that as a child sees their parent having positive marital experiences, they form a more positive view of marital interaction, which can have a positive impact (see Baptist et al., 2012; Crowell et al., 2009; Hare et al., 2009; Jarnecke & South, 2013). Some researchers have suggested that the most positive developmental outcomes for children and the most functional families emerge from stable marriage relationships (Sassler, Cunningham, & Lichter, 2009). However, based on the existing research, it is difficult to assess the impact of stepfamily relationships—healthy or unhealthy—on children of divorce because previous researchers have grouped all these children into one overall category: namely, children of divorce (see Baptist et al., 2012; Crowell et al., 2009; Hare et al., 2009; Jarnecke & South, 2013). This designation is given regardless of whether the child's parent remains single after the divorce or remarries (see Baptist et al., 2012; Crowell et al., 2009; Hare et al., 2009; Jarnecke & South, 2013).

Problem Statement

There is a multitude of research of related to children of divorce, but a gap remains in the current literature in understanding the unique experiences and attachments of children of divorce who have been raised in long-term binuclear families. Researchers have suggested that children of divorce experience difficulties with relationship satisfaction, commitment, trust, and intimacy (see Jensen et al., 2015; Mustonen et al., 2011; Planitz et al., 2009; Rootalu & Kasearu, 2016; Shimkowski et al., 2018). Additionally, children of divorce continue to deal with issues of loss and separation due to the divorce throughout their lives as they form intimate adult relationships (Miles & Servaty-Seib, 2010; Miljkovitch, Danet, & Bernier, 2012). Researchers have also suggested that the most positive relationship outcomes for adults come from the stable, healthy parental marital relationships they witness during childhood (Sassler et al., 2009). Witnessing a parent's positive, stable marriage allows the child of divorce to form a more positive, hopeful view of marriage despite earlier failed marriages (see Baptist et al., 2012; Crowell et al., 2009; Hare et al., 2009; Jarnecke & South, 2013). However, in a review of the relevant literature, I found that studies that separate children of divorce raised in long-term blended families from children of divorce raised in other circumstances are missing from the research. This makes it difficult to judge how great an impact of a stable parental remarriage has on a child of divorce (see Baptist et al., 2012; Crowell et al., 2009; Hare et al., 2009; Jarnecke & South, 2013).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative study, which employed an ex post facto survey design, was to investigate the differences found in the attachment relationships and marital status of adult children of divorce who have been raised in blended families with a duration longer than 7 years, versus the attachment and marital status of adult children of divorce raised in single parent families, versus the attachment and marital status of adult children of divorce raised in serial matrimony families, versus the attachment relationships of adult children raised in intact families. For the purposes of this study, the intact family group was the reference group to which the outcomes for the other three groups were compared. The knowledge gained from this study may potentially help practitioners, educators, and others dealing with children of divorce identify ways in which they can encourage attachment security and foster more positive relationship outcomes. The increased awareness of the differences children of divorce raised in long-term blended families experience can help families and communities raise more positive and productive members of society creating social change through betterment of personal relationships.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

The following research questions and associated hypotheses guided this study:

Research Question 1: To what extent do significant differences exist on dimensions of adult attachment between children of divorce raised in long-term blended families with a duration longer than 7 years, adult children of divorce raised in single-parent families, adult children of divorce raised in serial matrimony families, and adult children raised in intact families?

Null hypothesis (H_01): Among the groups of adult children raised in intact families, those raised in single parent families after parental divorce, those raised in long-term blended families, and those raised in serial matrimony families, all pairs of groups will be equal in regard to mean attachment scores as measured by the Experiences in Close Relationships-Relationship Structures (ECR-RS).

Alternative hypothesis (H_a1): Among the groups of adult children raised in intact families, those raised in single parent families after parental divorce, those raised in long-term blended families, and those raised in serial matrimony families, not all pairs of groups will be equal in regard to mean attachment scores as measured by the ECR-RS.

Research Question 2: To what extent do significant differences exist on marital outcomes (ever marrying or ever getting divorced) between adult children of divorce raised in long-term blended families with a duration longer than 7 years, adult children of divorce raised in single parent families, adult children of divorce raised in serial matrimony families, and adult children raised in intact families?

Null hypothesis ($H_0 2$): Among the groups of adult children raised in intact families, those raised in single parent families after parental divorce, those raised in long-term blended families, and those raised in serial matrimony families, all pairs of groups will be equal in regard to the proportion of adult children who have married at least once.

Alternative hypothesis ($H_a 2$): Among the groups of adult children raised in intact families, those raised in single parent families after parental divorce, those raised in long-term blended families, and those raised in serial matrimony families, not all pairs of groups will be equal in regard to the proportion of adult children who have married at least once.

Null hypothesis ($H_0 3$): Among the groups of adult children raised in intact families and who married at least once, those raised in single parent families after parental divorce, those raised in long-term blended families, and those raised in serial matrimony families, after statistically controlling for age of respondents, all pairs of groups will be equal in regard to the proportion of respondents who are divorced.

Alternative hypothesis ($H_a 3$): Among the groups of adult children raised in intact families and who married at least once, those raised in single parent families after parental divorce, those raised in long-term blended families, and those raised in serial matrimony families, after statistically controlling for age or respondents not all pairs of groups will be equal in regard to the proportion of respondents who are divorced.

Theoretical Base

The conceptual framework for this study was the existing research literature on the effects of divorce on the marital outcomes of children of divorce (see Ahrons, 2007; Anderson & Greene, 2011; Baptist et al., 2012; Brand et al., 2019; Cartwright, 2012; Crowell et al., 2009; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Faber & Wittenborn, 2010; Gierveld & Merz, 2013; Hare et al., 2009; Jarnecke & South, 2013; Jensen et al., 2015; Martin-Uzzi & Duval-Tsioles, 2013; Noel Miller, 2013; Nuru & Wang, 2014; Rootalu & Kasearu, 2016; Schaan et al., 2019; Shimkowski et al., 2018; Sutton, 2019). The theoretical background for the previous research, as well as this dissertation study, was the theory of attachment. A basic description of attachment is the emotional need for physical and emotional connections with another individual. For infants, attachment comes when the adults who care for them respond in a sensitive and consistent manner to their social interactions (Lowenstein, 2010). It should be noted that the infant does not make any distinctions about who the caregiver is as long as they are sensitive and responsive to the child's needs; additionally, the infant can have attachments to multiple individuals, such as fathers, mothers, sisters, and brothers (Lowenstein, 2010). As the child grows, attachment can be associated with the ability to regulate and express emotion as well as the development of other relationship types (Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010). When everything is working perfectly, attachment can be seen as a dance between partners, where each partner works together to establish and maintain the relationship as they respond to the emotional cues the other provides (Goldsmith, 2010). Further, Pistole (2010) suggested that attachment happens throughout the life span of the individual and that in adult relationships, the partners share the roles caregiving and receiving care. Evidence has suggested that for the adult, attachment styles are relatively stable and can influence attitudes, emotions, and behavioral strategies (see Diamond et al., 2018; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010). However, researchers have also suggested that disruptions in the attachment bond can have long-term effects in the individual's life (see Bowlby, 1973, 1979, 1982; Faber & Wittenborn, 2010; Planitz et al., 2009; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010).

Researchers have also suggested that children will expect and act in the manners that they have experienced while growing up (see Crowell et al., 2009; Miles & Servaty-Seib, 2010; Riggio & Fite, 2006; Riggio & Weiser, 2008; Rootalu & Kasearu, 2016; Shimkowski et al., 2018; Yu, Pettit, Lansford, Dodge, & Bates, 2010). Riggio and Weiser (2008) postulated that children who have seen good outcomes within the family unit are more likely to expect good outcomes themselves in their relationships. At the same time, children who have been exposed to intense unresolved parental conflict will be at risk for continuing that behavior in their own intimate relationships (see Anderson & Greene, 2011; Cartwright, 2012; Crowell et al., 2009; Faber & Wittenborn, 2010; Gierveld & Merz, 2013; Martin-Uzzi & Duval-Tsioles, 2013; Noel Miller, 2013; Nuru & Wang, 2014; Schaan et al., 2019; Yu et al., 2010). In other words, a child will live what they have been taught over time, causing behaviors, attitudes, and mindsets to continue into the next generation (see Crowell et al., 2009; Miles & Servaty-Seib, 2010; Riggio & Fite, 2006; Riggio & Weiser, 2008; Schaan et al., 2019; Yu et al., 2010).

Attachment theory provided the theoretical groundwork for this study by considering the disruption of attachment and its transmission into the next generation as a societal problem that affects the future relationships of the adult children of divorce.

Nature of the Study

In this study, I explored whether there is a relationship between the make-up of the family in which a child is reared and their later relationship attachment and marital outcomes. A quantitative, casual-comparative, ex post facto survey design was used with a convenience sample of adults 25 to 99 years of age. Participants answered demographic survey questions about their current relationships, their childhoods, including their age at the time of parental divorce, and their parent's relationships. Additionally, they completed the ECR-RS questionnaire. The ECR-RS is a self-reported questionnaire used to assess attachment patterns in close relationships (Fairchild & Finney, 2006; Sibley, Fischer, & Liu, 2005). The scores on these surveys were subject to multiple regression analysis. Analysis procedures, as well as administration and scoring, are described in detail in Chapter 3.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions were used for the purpose of this research:

Blended family: A two-adult male-female marriage relationship in which one or both of the parents bring a child or children into the family from a previous relationship where there is a legal, customary, or emotional expectation of the child to maintain an established child-parent relationship with a third-party parent figure, in which marriage the child is exposed to a single stepparent relationship prior to the age of 18 years (Ahrons, 2007). These are also referred to as binuclear families or stepfamilies.

Intact family: A two-person, male-female relationship in which both the parents are biologically related to the children or both parents have adopted a child or children from a third party; the children of the marriage have never experienced divorce. This is also called a traditional family.

Nontraditional family: Those families who are made up of a combination other than just a male father and female mother figure and children.

Serial blended family: A two-adult male-female marriage relationship in which one or both of the parents bring a child or children into the family from a previous relationship where there is a legal, customary, or emotional expectation of the child to maintain an established child-parent relationship with a third party parent figure, where the biological or custodial parent has legally remarried more than once, in which marriages the child is exposed to multiple stepparent relationships prior to the age of 18 years. (see Ahrons, 2007; Wallerstein, 2005; Yu & Adler-Baeder, 2007). These are also referred to as serial binuclear families.

Traditional marriage: A legal marriage between an adult male and an adult female.

Assumptions

I assumed that divorce is a significant life changing experience for the child of divorce and plays a significant role in later relationship decisions the child will make (see Eldar-Avidan et al., 2009; Warner et al., 2009). Researchers have suggested that children of divorce are affected socially, personally, legally, and financially by parental divorce (Eldar-Avidan et al., 2009). Other researchers have shown that relationship satisfaction, trust, and commitment can be influenced by the parental divorce (Mustonen et al., 2011; Planitz et al., 2009). Finally, children of divorce deal with the life themes of recurrent loss and separation throughout their lives (Miles & Servaty-Seib, 2010). The second assumption was that while children of divorce come from differing cultural, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds, the effects of later life experiences, such as a parent's remarriage, are basically the same (see Wallerstein, 2005). Parental attitudes toward marriage and divorce are cited in the literature as playing a significant role in the attitudes found later in children of divorce (see Baptist et al., 2012; Brand et al., 2019; Crowell et al., 2009; Hare et al., 2009; Jarnecke & South, 2013; Rootalu & Kasearu, 2016). Further, researchers have suggested that the subsequent positive marital interactions of parents a child of divorce witnesses can at least in part counter the negative influences of the divorce itself (see Baptist et al., 2012; Crowell et al., 2009; Hare et al., 2009; Jarnecke & South, 2013; Rootalu & Kasearu, 2016; Sassler et al., 2009; Shimkowski et al., 2018).

Finally, for the statistical analysis based upon analysis of variance (ANOVA), the Kruskall-Wallis test, and the chi-square test for independence, I assumed that the responses of research participants would be independent of one another.

Delimitations

In this study, I intended to document the long-term effects of divorce upon the relationships of adult children of divorce within the United States of America who were part of attempts at traditional marriage. Therefore, I focused on adult children of divorce within the range of 25 to 99 years of age. By 25 years of age, the majority of children of divorce will have had their first serious romantic relationship and are more likely to have lived independently for a period of time. By the age of 65, the majority of individuals have had at least one, if not more, significant romantic relationship; however, by extending the age to 99 years later relationships are allowed for.

Adult children whose mothers were not previously married to the biological father of the child before the marriage were excluded from the study. The dynamics of the relationship between these parents may be different in part from those parents who have had not only to deal with the dynamics of the relationship ending but the legal system as well. As such, the children caught between these parents would have different life experiences than children from parents who have never been married.

The choice of an ex post facto design was based on a number of specific factors that were present in this particular study. First, ex post facto research is research that happens after the fact and involves the examination and/or observation of naturally occurring events. Additionally, it was not feasible to do a prospective longitudinal study due to the time factors involved, making an ex post facto design the best choice at this time. Further, there were several factors that could not be controlled in this study; for example, the life experiences of adult children of divorce, differences in the educational levels of the participants, and differences in the socioeconomic status of the participants.

Next, for the purposes of this study, children from same sex couples were also excluded. The legality of same sex marriages has only happened in the United States in the last year; therefore, the long-term outcomes for children of these relationships are difficult to evaluate at the present time. As such, literature related to same sex partnerships was also excluded from the literature review.

A final delimitation was that no attempt was made to distinguish if the long-term blended family is happier, more stable, or harmonious than the parent's previous marriage. This factor may or may not influence the child's perception of the marital relationship, ultimately affecting their later relationships. Much of attachment theory suggests that what the child learns and lives influences their later relationships. Thus, it is possible that a subsequent parental relationship that is negative could negatively influence the child's later relationships.

Limitations

Several limitations of the research design may restrict the level of confidence that can be placed upon the interpretation of the study findings. First were the inherent limitations to the nature of self-reported surveys and the individual's desire to appear acceptable. The individual subject's desire to appear in a positive light or to respond to questions in what they perceived as the most desirable manner could have influenced the outcome of the survey data. While the survey contained wording asking that the participant answered in a forthright and honest manner, that cannot be guaranteed.

A second limitation was the make-up of the sample of participants in this causal-comparative, ex post facto study. An ex post facto design considers information from an event or condition that has already happened, and therefore, the independent variable cannot be experimentally manipulated. In a causal-comparative study on intact groups, participants are not randomly assigned to one group or another. The inclusion of participants into different groups was based on the family make-up in which they were raised. This made it difficult to accurately balance the groups in many areas including, but not limited to, cultural, social, religious, and socioeconomic variations that may be a factor in the participant's life experiences. Hence, caution is needed in making inferences between casual relationships between the variables when using this type of design.

Significance of the Study

The goal of this study was to contribute to the knowledge of the relationship between relationship attachment and divorce, specifically focusing on the marital outcomes of children of divorce who have been raised in blended families. Divorce is a life changing experience, which impacts a very substantial number of children, since nearly half of first marriages end in divorce (see Eldar-Avidan et al., 2009; Miles & Servaty-Seib, 2010; Warner et al., 2009). For many of these children, the outcomes are considered significantly different than for those children raised in an intact family (see Eldar-Avidan et al., 2009; Mustonen et al., 2011; Planitz et al., 2009; Warner et al., 2009). It is important to note that there are differences between children of divorce and children of intact families, and these differences and difficulties can follow a child well into adulthood (see Eldar-Avidan et al., 2009; Warner et al., 2009). However, it is difficult to judge if later experiences, such as a parent's remarriage, can have a mediating effect on these differences and difficulties, especially in the area of relationship outcomes for these children, because all children of divorce have been lumped into one category (see Baptist et al., 2012; Crowell et al., 2009; Hare et al., 2009; Jarnecke & South, 2013). Given that some researchers have suggested that a parent's remarriage can significantly influence a child’s attitude toward marriage and divorce, it is important for parents, court personnel, and therapists to understand the significance of these life events in the lives of the adult children of divorce (see Baptist et al., 2012; Crowell et al., 2009; Hare et al., 2009; Jarnecke & South, 2013; Sassler et al., 2009; Wallerstein, 2005). By gaining a better understanding of the differences on relationship attachment and marital outcomes experienced by children of divorce raised in long-term blended families, I hope that family therapists and other professionals will be able to develop programs and procedures that will benefit all children of divorce in having better relationship attachment and marital outcomes. Attachment security is one of the significant factors in a child’s life, and the distribution of divorce can cause significant interference for the maintaining and development of those attachment bonds (Sassler et al., 2009; Wallerstein, 2005; Yu & Adler-Baeder, 2007).

Summary and Transition

The life changing experiences of divorce will affect an estimated 1 million children per year (Eldar-Avidan et al., 2009; Warner et al., 2009). An understanding of how attachment security affects these children’s later relationships is an important starting point of developing programs and procedures to counseling these children as adults.

Chapter 2 is a literature review that introduces the children of divorce, their families, and their parent’s remarriage. Attachment security and intergenerational transmission are also reviewed. Chapter 3 is a description of the methodology used to address the research questions posed in this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this study, I investigated the relationship between attachment relationships and the marital status of adult children of divorce raised in long-term blended families as compared to adult children of divorce raised in single parent families, adult children of divorce raised in serial matrimony families, and adult children raised in intact families. In this chapter, I review the literature regarding attachment relationships and children of divorce. Much of the current literature has shown that adult children of divorce have a higher tendency to experience relationship problems, are less likely to form stable relationships, and are more likely to divorce than children who have been raised in intact families (see Amato & DeBoer, 2011; Fackrell, Poulsen, Busby, & Dollahite, 2011; Shulman, Scharf, Lumer, & Maurer, 2001; Wallerstein, Lewis, & Blakeslee, 2000; Wolfinger, 2005). Researchers have also found that children of divorce used a more negative communication style, had more negative attitudes about marriage, and displayed less trust in other people (Knoke, Burau, & Roehrle, 2010; Mikulincer, Shaver, Bar-On, & Ein-Dor, 2010; Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wang, King, & Debernardi, 2012). Although there is a great deal of research concerning adult children of divorce, much of which focuses on the negative relationship outcomes for adult children of divorce, the research that addresses the differences in family structures that might contribute to the later adult relationships is limited. To date, research distinguishing between the different family types, specifically long term blended, single parent, and serial matrimony, has been limited to mentioning possible complications to already complicated relationships and the resulting positive and negative outcomes (Fraley, Roisman, Booth-LaForce, Owen, &

Holland, 2013; Gere, MacDonald, Joel, Spielman, & Impett, 2013; Russell, Baker, & McNulty, 2013).

I begin this chapter with an overview of divorce in general, including statistical, emotional, psychological, and socioeconomic components, followed by a closer look at divorce’s impact on the individual as they move past the divorce and into the formation of new relationship and stepfamilies. I then discuss attachment theory and the role it plays in adult attachment, followed by a summation of the relevant themes of the current literature and how they relate to each other in the lives of adult children of divorce. I concluded the chapter with a summary.

The current research is extensive when discussing divorce and the resulting consequences of divorce (see Cusimano & Riggs, 2013; Fraley et al., 2013; Haydon, Collins, Salvatore, Simpson, & Roisman, 2012; Shulman, Zlotnik, Shachar-Shapira, Connolly, & Bohr, 2012; Wallerstein, Lewis, & Rosenthal, 2013). However, much of this research has failed to take into account the different experiences that a child of divorce will have when raised in different family types after the divorce. While no research was found that directly compared long term blended families with other family types, a few studies were found that suggested that an individual is more likely to base their views of family and relationships on what they, themselves, experienced as children (see Cui, Fincham, & Durtschi, 2010; Cui, Fincham, & Pasley, 2008; Cusimano & Riggs, 2013; Haydon et al., 2012; Kindsvatter & Desmond, 2012; Lamb, 2012; Sen, & Kavlak, 2012). The present research was designed to address the gap in the literature relative to the differences that adult children of divorce experience in their attachment relationships and their marital status based on their family experiences as children.

Description of Literature Review

The Walden University Library was used in obtaining applicable articles and book chapters. Journal articles, dissertations, and related literature were found using Academic Search Premier, PsycARTICLES, PsycBOOKS, ProQUEST, SocINDEX, PsycINFO, and Psychology: A SAGE full-text collection. Additionally, websites related to divorce, marriage, remarriage, and children of divorce were used as were reference lists from relevant journal articles. Key search terms used included *attachment, divorce, marriage, children of divorce,* and *marital outcomes*.

The literature search covered a time period from January 2008 through September 2019, with a few significant studies from 1967 through 1991 that dealt specifically with works by Ainsworth and Bowlby in regard to attachment theory. One hundred thirty-seven articles out of the approximately 800 articles viewed were selected as sources for this study. Articles and book chapters not used were recorded and filed for later use if they met the criteria of including one of the key words used, fit within the topic guidelines, referred to the key concepts of the theoretical framework, and provided applicable or background information on the topic.

Divorce

Divorce is a life-changing experience for many individuals as what they have come to know, expect, and anticipate about a relationship changes and morphs into a new lifestyle. In 2012, approximately 10% of first marriages ended in divorce, and the data suggested that for second and subsequent marriages ending in divorce, the numbers are even higher (United States Census Bureau, 2012, 2016). Additionally, at least half of those divorces involve children (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2014).

Not only does the individual experience the divorce, but so do the children, extended family, and social network surrounding the individuals involved. A wide array of literature has suggested that there are both long-term and short-term effects from marital conflict, divorce, and other family situations that can carry over in to the adult lives of children (Cusimano & Riggs, 2013; Fraley et al., 2013; Haydon et al., 2012; Shulman et al., 2012; Wallerstein et al., 2013). Some researchers have suggested that the conflict and marital status of parents may have a significant influence on the attitudes of adult children (see Bing, Nelson, & Wesolowski, 2009; Crowell et al., 2009; Cui et al., 2010; Cui et al., 2008; Cusimano & Riggs, 2013; Haydon et al., 2012; Kavas & Gunduz-Hosgor, 2011; Kindsvatter & Desmond, 2012; Lamb, 2012; Sen, & Kavlak, 2012). Cui et al. (2008) pointed out that attention needs to be paid to the family of origin and the effect it has on the individual, both directly and indirectly, especially because one of the most significant predictors of the children's marital relationships comes from the family of origin. Specifically, adult children of divorce will experience different marital outcomes than do children from intact families, due to their fewer positive views of marriage and acceptance of other forms of family that is based on their parents' examples (Cui et al., 2010; Cui et al., 2008; Cusimano & Riggs, 2013; Haydon et al., 2012; Kindsvatter, & Desmond, 2012; Lamb, 2012; Sen, & Kavlak, 2012).

Divorce, defined for the purposes of this paper as the dissolution of a legally recognized marriage between a man and a woman, has a significant impact on the lives of children. The reality is that many children in the United States will be touched in some way by the outcomes of marital conflict and dissolution, whether through personal experiences or seeing a friend go through their parent's divorce. Divorce is a very real factor in children's lives in today's society.

Copen, Daniels, Vespa, and Mosher's (2012) National Health Statistics Report considered as many factors as possible relating to gaining a better picture on a national scale of marital relationships and dissolution. Copen et al. supported the notion that the individual face of divorce has changed significantly over time. These noted life changes have generated a unique and different perspective of today's divorced individual when compared to divorced individuals of 40 years ago (Copen et al., 2012).

Involvement in first marriages was found to have decreased nearly 10% over the years while cohabitation prior to marriage has increased for both men and women (Copen et al., 2012). Women and men are marrying later in life (Copen et al., 2012). Changes were also found in the duration of first marriages up to 20 years. Copen et al. (2012) pointed out that one of the limitations of this study was the age range of the individuals. The age range was selected to incorporate the reproductive health and childbearing ages of most individuals; however, with the later ages of first marriages, the possibility is likely that marriages of 20 or more years are not represented sufficiently (Copen et al., 2012). For both men and women, the duration of first marriages that last at least 10 years is approximately 69%, and for 20 years, approximately 54% (Copen et al., 2012). For both men and women, increased first marriage duration was related to higher educational attainment, no children born prior to marriage, and those who had their first child 8 or more months after the start of the first marriage (Copen et al., 2012).

Three points of data emerged when considering marriages that lasted at least 20 years. First, those who married in their teen years (i.e., before the age of 20 years) were less likely to have first marriages that reached 20 years than those who married after their teen years (Copen et al., 2012). Second, individuals who had lived with both biological parents until the age of 14 years were more likely to have first marriages of at least 20 years duration than individuals who had grown up in other family situations (Copen et al., 2012). Finally, for women who were raised with some sort of religious background, their first marriages were more likely to have a longer duration than those raised with no religious background (Copen et al., 2012).

Increases in cohabitation prior to marriage suggests that many individuals may choose this path prior to a first marriage. Of those individuals who choose to cohabitate prior to marriage, almost 60% were engaged or had definite plans to marry with their first spouse when they began living together (Copen et al., 2012). However, no data were collected about the engagement at other times during cohabitation (Copen et al., 2012). Regardless of engagement status at the beginning of cohabitation, women were more likely to have first marriages that lasted more than 20 years if they had not cohabitated prior to marriage, while there were no discernable differences found for men (Copen et al., 2012).

The information gathered by Copen et al. (2012) contributes to the information available about the changing trends in the American family. This postponement of marriage should not be seen as an abandonment of marriage, but rather, a delay in the timing of first marriages when compared to earlier data. Copen et al. pointed out that any delays in marriage are not apparent by the age of 40. In general, both men and women are waiting longer to marry. First marriages generally reach the 20-year mark under limited circumstances, and premarital births contribute to the increased likelihood of divorce (Copen et al., 2012). These statistics, however reveal little about the emotional and psychological effects divorce has for the individual and their family.

In the more recent literature regarding divorce, the emphasis has been placed on the psycho-emotional impact of divorce on the individual and the family, but there are also physiological and socioeconomic impacts related to divorce. From the physiological viewpoint, divorce is hard on the individual. Individuals tend to suffer from more physical complaints and illnesses, have a greater probability of getting lung cancer and heart disease, and are likely to die earlier (Clarke-Stewart & Brentano, 2006). Clarke-Stewart and Brentano (2006) suggested that another of the many adjustments made by an individual in the aftermath of divorce is the change in economic status experienced prior to the divorce. Specifically, women must often increase their employment from part-time to full-time or return to school to qualify for employment that can support a family (Clarke-Stewart & Brentano, 2006; Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wallerstein et al., 2013). Each of these adjustments creates stress and uncertainty about the future, but when combined with the additional stresses related to the severing of married life, such as divisions of property and financial assets, it can often become a seemingly insurmountable mountain for the newly divorced individual (Clarke-Stewart & Brentano, 2006).

Some economic decisions newly divorced individuals, especially women, may make are not necessarily based on what will further their own future financial gains, but what is necessary and relevant to the immediate needs and best interests of their children. Long-term financial goals and dreams are frequently placed on hold or permanently abandoned in order to meet the immediate, everyday needs of the family (Clarke-Stewart & Brentano, 2006).

In understanding the experiences of children of divorce, an understanding of the life changes to which the parent is adjusting is necessary to fully understand the child's new life as a child of divorce. Just as varied and changing as the financial picture is in the aftermath of divorce, the social network the divorced individual experiences before the divorce significantly changes. Unfortunately, very few are prepared for the changes in their social support network (Clarke-Stewart & Brentano, 2006; Jensen et al., 2015; Rootalu & Kasearu, 2016). The social segregation the divorced individual experiences can result in not only friends withdrawing or choosing sides, but also in the individual withdrawing into themselves due to depression, not fitting into their former social networks, criticism, and/or difficulty in seeing other people's positive feelings (Clarke-Stewart & Brentano, 2006; Jensen et al., 2015; Rootalu & Kasearu, 2016). Conversely, the positive side of changing social networks for the divorced individual comes from finding new friendships, renewing friendships from their past, and finding new romantic partners (Clarke-Stewart & Brentano, 2006; Jensen et al., 2015; Rootalu & Kasearu, 2016).

The individual must also define themselves, their personal boundaries, and their emotional investment in the future, each of which takes time and work to accomplish (Clarke-Stewart & Brentano, 2006; Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wallerstein et al., 2013). In addition to the stress caused by economic and social changes, the divorcing individual can experience anger, depression, anxiety, and loneliness, which causes additional emotional turmoil (Clarke-Stewart & Brentano, 2006). In some cases, these emotions become so difficult to manage they reach the level of mental illness, resulting in the need for psychological help (Clarke-Stewart & Brentano, 2006). This undiscussed aspect of divorce regularly hinders the emotional de-attachment the individual needs to complete the redefinition of themselves as an individual.

While the intellectual understanding of the reality of the decision to divorce is present, there is still an emotional relationship that is also present. These emotional ties usually take more time to separate from, especially when the relationships are of long standing, and in many cases, there is evidence to suggest that they never entirely end (Clarke-Stewart & Brentano, 2006; Mason, Sbarra, Bryan, & Lee, 2012).

The physiological, psycho-emotional, lifestyle, and socio-economic changes that come with divorce are often a source of stress and emotional upheaval for the individual. This often influences the individual's ability to put time and energy into other areas of their lives, including their children. In many cases the parent is so involved in the problems of their own lives that the children, in a sense, are left to fend for themselves (Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wallerstein et al., 2013).

Repartnering, Remarriage, and the Individual

As the parent finds their way through the turmoil of divorce, new relationships begin to be established and new family patterns come into existence. Navigating the stresses and turmoil of divorce during the formation of new relationships is frequently a complicated and emotional decision, especially when children are involved (Anderson & Greene, 2011). Meeting adult needs and addressing child concerns when it comes to new relationships can be challenging at best, and is one of the more difficult processes for a post-divorce family to confront (Anderson & Greene, 2011; Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wallerstein et al., 2013). Wallerstein et al. (2013) showed that the internal and external conflicts newly divorced mothers face, and how they solve those conflicts, can have a great impact on their children. Anderson and Greene found that the strategies and methods the individual uses during re-partnering after a divorce influences the quality of their relationship with their children. The return to the dating scene for many divorced adults is fraught with emotionally loaded concerns, yet at the same time, they must balance the needs of their children with their own concerns and needs.

Anderson and Greene (2011) specifically considered the different approaches, child-focused or adult-focused, used in re-partnering after a divorce. Child-focused patterns of re-partnering after a divorce focus on the impact of the new relationship on the child and the child's feelings about the new relationship. Adult-focused patterns of re-partnering do not consider the child's feelings—rather, how the adult feels about the relationship is considered. Their findings show that divorced parents had to find a balance between child concerns and their personal desires and/or needs (Anderson & Greene, 2011; Diamond et al., 2018). Their findings suggest that for more educated mothers and mothers who were leaving longer-duration marriages, the approach to dating tended to be more adult-oriented, often at the expense of their child's feelings about the new relationship (Anderson & Greene, 2011). Another aspect of the relationship Anderson and Greene explored was the management of the relationship between the new partner and the child. There was more active management for mothers who were more child-focused, especially if the mother perceived that the child was distressed or upset by the new relationship (Anderson & Greene, 2011; Diamond et al., 2018). One possibility for this discrepancy in how mothers manage their approach to re-entrance into the dating world might be based in the enjoyment and satisfaction they receive from their relationship with their children. Specifically, the greater the satisfaction, the more likely the mother is to place her child's concerns above her own (Anderson & Greene, 2011). Overall, one of the most important contributions of Anderson and Greene's work is to show that there is no "one-size-fits-all" approach to divorce or to re-partnering after the divorce (Anderson & Greene, 2011; Diamond et al., 2018).

The 25-year longitudinal study conducted by Wallerstein et al. (2000) is the basis for many of the current insights into divorce. Using qualitative methods, Wallerstein et al. conducted interviews over a 25-year period at five-year intervals with 60 families, including 131 children, from the time of separation through the legal divorce and the years that followed. Their findings include a number of significant insights, but perhaps the most significant is the effect parental divorce had on the adult children of divorce (Wallerstein et al., 2000).

The work by Wallerstein et al. (2013) is based on the original study of Wallerstein et al. (2000), and added 10 more years to the overall understanding of divorce. This follow-up research found there were significant hardships for women who remained single after the divorce, as they balanced child rearing with economic concerns. In many cases, the mothers described themselves as chronically tired. However, their relationships with their children were strong because the children's wellbeing was a priority, and the children provided their mother with the majority of her social and emotional interactions (Wallerstein et al., 2013). In part, the decision to remain single was correlated to the lack of time these women had to seek out new relationships, but for a majority of these women, their views of men were colored by their prior experiences (Wallerstein et al., 2013). A second group was made up of those mothers who had remarried. In many cases, these women had initiated the divorce and retained the careers they had before the divorce (Wallerstein et al., 2013). These women's second marriages often included increased affection when compared to the previous marriage, an improvement in their financial situation, and an improved sex life (Wallerstein et al., 2013). While these relationships provided significant benefits to both the mother and the child, such as improved economic circumstances, there were also some significant drawbacks, such as the more distant relationships between the mother and child (Wallerstein et al., 2013).

Wallerstein et al. (2013) also showed that the father's remarriage had an impact on the children of divorce. In many cases, the father's remarriage and subsequent family increased the likelihood of the loss of contact between parent and child (Wallerstein et al., 2013). Additionally, the relationships between the father and stepfather and or the mother and stepmother, either good or bad, played a role not only in the process of re-partnering after the divorce, but also in the process of parenting as well (Wallerstein et al., 2013).

The vital message received from Anderson and Greene's (2011) work and Wallerstein et al. (2013) work deals with the difficulties and consideration that surrounds the re-partnering and/or remarriage of a divorced individual. For a majority of divorces, a significant concern is the effect new romantic relationships will have on the children involved, not only in the short-term, but also in the long-term as well.

Parenting, Step-Parenting, and the Divorced Person

Divorce is a stressful event for an individual that impacts many different aspects of their abilities to function in their normal pre-divorce roles. The literature is full of information regarding divorce and the parenting role—not only the negative aspects, but some positive aspects as well (see Anderson & Greene, 2011; Bucx, Raaijmakers, & Wel, 2010; Foroughe & Muller, 2012; Hautamaki, Hautamaki, Neuvonen, & Maliniemi-Piispanen, 2010; Lamb, 2012; Miljkovitch et al., 2012; Sayre, McCollum, & Spring, 2010; Shapiro & Stewart, 2012; Shulman et al., 2012; Wallerstein et al., 2013; Yu et al., 2010). However, the overwhelming message is that while parenting is impacted by divorce, the role of both parents is still vitally important to the lives of children of divorce (Anderson & Greene, 2011; Hautamaki et al., 2010; Lamb, 2012; Wallerstein et al., 2013; Yu et al., 2010).

Parenting is one role that is significantly impacted by divorce. Wallerstein et al. (2000) found parenting to be one area that was highly difficult for the divorced individual to deal with, either as the primary residential parent or as the non-residential parent. The initial anger, sadness, and loneliness caused by the divorce generally hamper the parents' ability to expend the emotional energy required to parent their children effectively (Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wallerstein et al., 2013). As time progresses, the process of re-forming a life, parenting from a distance or only on weekends or holidays, and forming new family units can further stretch the individual's coping abilities (Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wallerstein et al., 2013).

Parenting post-divorce, as a single parent, differs from parenting as part of an intact family (Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wallerstein et al., 2013). The emotional and financial changes, conflict with the ex-spouse, and the introduction of new relationships have all been shown to play a role in the success or failure of parenting after divorce (Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wallerstein et al., 2013). Additionally, the diminished amount of time a parent is able to spend with the child, either because of the increased need for financial security or due to visitation schedules, has a bearing on the attachment between the parent and child (Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wallerstein et al., 2013). Wallerstein et al. (2013) showed that many mothers found it difficult to maintain the same level of nurturing in their relationships with their children after their divorce as before their divorce. They also found it challenging to sustain the prior levels of supervision for adolescents after divorce. As the parent faces the overwhelming tasks of divorce, they also face the escalating needs of children who have been affected by the divorce making it more difficult for both to find a new balance (Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wallerstein et al., 2013).

Typically, some sort of plan is put in place after a divorce for the parenting of the child. Repeatedly, this plan gives one parent primary residential custody of a child, while the other parent has periods of visitation, such as every other weekend and an extended length of time during summer and holiday periods. However, other types of time spent with the children are sometimes designated. The literature shows that the best outcomes for children include the positive interactions with both parents, minimal conflict between the parents, and consistency in parenting standards (see Anderson & Greene, 2011; Bucx et al., 2010; Foroughe & Muller, 2012; Hautamaki et al., 2010; Lamb, 2012; Miljkovitch et al., 2012; Sayre et al., 2010; Shulman et al., 2012; Wallerstein et al., 2013; Yu et al., 2010).

The ability to reach this new parenting balance is one of the largest tasks both parents and child must engage in after a divorce. At the most basic level, the parents must learn to parent on their own, without the support of the other parent (Sayre et al., 2010; Shapiro & Stewart, 2012; Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wallerstein et al., 2013; Yu et al., 2010). At the same time, the child must not only adjust to the absence of one parent from their daily life, but also to visitation, changing routines in each parent's household, and being pulled between loyalties to each parent (Sayre et al., 2010; Shapiro & Stewart, 2012; Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wallerstein et al., 2013; Yu et al., 2010) There is an abundance of self-help books meant to guide parents in making the transition from parenting together to parenting separately (e.g., Kreger & Eddy, 2011; Pedro-Carroll, 2010; Ross & Corcoran, 2011; Thayer & Zimmerman, 2001; Warshak, 2011). This influx of information shows there is not one specific method that defines how a family negotiates these changes. What is more, the information is generally confusing, contradicting, and sometimes downright harmful. Making the transition from the couple parenting role to the single parenting role difficult to negotiate and find a role forward.

Lamb's (2012) research suggests that the adjustment of children and adolescents is, at least in part, based on the variations in the quality of their relationships with their parents and other significant adult influences in their lives. In essence, relationship variety is what helps these children's relationships change and grow throughout their lives. However, other research suggests that some of these relationship adjustments are difficult and sometimes harmful to the children because of the distraction the parent is experiencing in dealing with their own adjustment to divorce (Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wallerstein et al., 2013).

A secondary parenting adjustment that many divorced individuals make is the process of remarriage and becoming a stepparent. Sayre et al. (2010) research showed one in three people are part of a stepfamily, that these families have unique challenges that are vastly different than those of intact families, and that there are attachment-related concerns that differ from intact families. The formation of a stepfamily can take as long as three years. The family is created following the loss of previous relationships, and the couple misses the opportunity to bond as a couple before the inclusion of children (Sayre et al., 2010; Shapiro & Stewart, 2012; Yu et al., 2010).

Furthermore, the individual faces the conflicting emotional tug-of-war between their current spouse, their former spouse, their biological children, and their step children (Sayre et al., 2010; Shapiro & Stewart, 2012; Yu et al., 2010). In many cases, the new stepparent feels the rejection of the stepchildren, who view the new partner as an outsider and rejects their authority as a co-parent (Sayre et al., 2010).

Other research has linked step-parenting to increases in stress and depression, as well as increases in the need for family therapy (Shapiro & Stewart, 2012). The depth of this research suggests that step-parenting is not an easy role for most individuals, and that the dynamics created in stepfamilies are different than those created with intact families (Sayre et al., 2010; Shapiro & Stewart, 2012; Yu et al., 2010). The interactions within a stepfamily can be confusing, stressful, and sometimes outright hostile, with the individual feeling pulled between multiple loyalties, such as their new partner, their biological children, their former partner, and their new partner's children (Sayre et al., 2010). The children often engage in testing-type behaviors towards both the biological parent and the new partner in an attempt to identify the new power infrastructure within the home (Sayre et al., 2010). These factors combine to create what Sayre et al. (2010) describes as a redefinition of what family means when referring to stepfamilies.

Children of Divorce

Children of divorce are defined as the biological or adopted children of parents who have subsequently divorced, as defined earlier. The research of Wallerstein et al. (2000) with children of divorce spanned 25 years and followed children of divorce into their adult years. This study introduced the first true look at the long-term impact of divorce on children, and introduced some of the choices, concerns, and consequences that children of divorce experienced immediately after their parent's divorce and in the years following it. The more recent research expands many of the concepts, sometimes agreeing and sometimes disagreeing with the ideas and findings of Wallerstein et al. (2000). Overall, all the research agrees that children of divorce grow up with unique experiences and beliefs that change how they view the world when compared to children raised in intact families (see Cui et al., 2010; Cusimano & Riggs, 2013; Faber & Wittenborn, 2010; Hartman, Magalhaes, & Mandich, 2011; Kavas & Gunduz-Hosgor, 2011; Moon, 2011; Mustonen et al., 2011; Shin, Choi, Kim & Kim, 2010; Ulveseter, Breivik, & Thuen, 2010; Wallerstein et al., 2013). The research indicates that children will have at least some difficulty in adjusting to their parent's divorce. Some children will have a harder time adjusting than others, but in every case the children will find the changes happening in their family worrisome, stressful, and often frightening (Faber & Wittenborn, 2010; Moon, 2011; Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wallerstein et al., 2013).

Social Changes and Emotional Impacts on Children of Divorce

Much of the research surrounding the adjustments children of divorce make specifically focuses on the adolescent years, due to the growth and adaptation the adolescent makes during this time (Faber & Wittenborn, 2010; Hartman et al., 2011; Kavas & Gunduz-Hosgor, 2011; Shin et al., 2010; Ulveseter et al., 2010). Perhaps this is due to the fact that the social and educational effects of divorce are significantly more dramatic for the adolescent than they are for a younger or older child of divorce.

The social changes for children of divorce come about in several different ways, many of which change the children's lives from what they once were to the new reality of divorce. Foroughe and Muller (2012) found that many children of divorce were at greater risk for interpersonal relationship difficulties. Kavas and Gunduz-Hosgor (2011) point to the loss of home or the loss of the traditional view of family as one of the major losses a child of divorce faces. Wallerstein et al. (2013) suggest that the changing of neighborhoods, schools, and friends are some of the most difficult changes for children of divorce. In all of these cases, it is the loss of the comfortable and the loss of the familiar that is thought to be significant for children of divorce. Further, Wallerstein et al. (2013) suggest that children of divorce also suffer from the loss of their parents through the emotional turmoil of coping with the divorce and the distancing between the parents as one parent leaves the family home. In any case, there seems to be a sense that children of divorce are left to their own devices for some time as the parents regroup after divorce. Time and again, these children cite the sense of not being important to their parents and having to raise themselves when interviewed about their parent's divorce (Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wallerstein et al., 2013).

This lack of parental monitoring, in part, may account for the higher rates of drug addiction, alcoholism, and sexual promiscuity that are generally higher in children of divorce when compared to children from intact families (Foroughe & Muller, 2012; Hartman et al., 2011; Kavas & Gunduz-Hosgor, 2011; Moon, 2011; Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wallerstein et al., 2013). Perhaps it is also this lack of monitoring that has led much of the research to show that children of divorce have higher academic challenges, such as truancy, limited education, and school dropout than children raised in intact families (Foroughe & Muller, 2012; Hartman et al., 2011; Kavas & Gunduz-Hosgor, 2011; Moon, 2011; Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wallerstein et al., 2013). It is unclear whether these statistics are due to less monitoring by the residential parent as they deal with their own emotional trauma from the divorce, or if this is due to the absence of one parent as the marriage breaks up. This suggests that the creation of a blended family provides both emotional stability to the family unit and additional parental availability for monitoring (Foroughe & Muller, 2012; Hartman et al., 2011; Kavas & Gunduz-Hosgor, 2011; Moon, 2011; Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wallerstein et al., 2013)

Many children of divorce have far less contact with their fathers after the divorce, and this diminishes further if the father remarries and has additional children (see Foroughe & Muller, 2012; Hartman et al., 2011; Kavas & Gunduz-Hosgor, 2011; Moon, 2011; Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wallerstein et al., 2013). Besides the child's loss of his/her attachment figure, loss of contact can have other ramifications. For example, the child loses the father's financial support for extracurricular activities—and later, college—as the father moves forward with his life and new family (Wallerstein et al., 2013). The loss of the father's income and support often significantly influences the child's financial resources into adulthood. Additionally, Hartman et al. (2011) found that children of divorce who reside primarily with the father have a greater probability of using drugs than children who reside primarily with the mother.

Finally, children of divorce have more limited social networks than children from intact families (see Kavas & Gunduz-Hosgor, 2011; Moon, 2011; Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wallerstein et al., 2013). This is thought to be the result of two factors. First, there is a separation at the time of the divorce from the familiar social networks of the child. This can be due to changes in parent's financial circumstances, the parent's comfort level in old environments, or any number of other reasons, but frequently the child moves from a familiar social environment to an unfamiliar social environment. A second reason is related to the changes that parents make at the time of divorce. Children of divorce usually reside with the mother, and the mother will need to work to meet the financial needs of her family. This leaves the older siblings responsible for the care of their younger siblings, which limits their ability to meet new friends and develop new social networks (Wallerstein et al., 2013). An additional factor in the changes of social networks for children of divorce is the availability of the parent to transport or supervise the child in their activities. Children that have two parents, either in an intact family or a blended family, are more likely to have an adult available to participate in their activities than a child in a single parent family (Kavas & Gunduz-Hosgor, 2011). Any of the social or educational changes and concerns discussed can have a long-lasting impact in the lives of children of divorce, but Kavas and Gunduz-Hosgor (2011) research shows that the loss of home is probably the most noteworthy challenge faced by children of divorce. The lives of children of divorce vary notably from those of children raised in intact families. Their experiences, worries, and concerns change how they view the world and how they react to the changes around them in the long-term.

The emotional impact of divorce on children is considerable and has the potential to impact their psychological wellbeing well into adulthood (see Angarne-Lindberg, Wadsby, & Bertero, 2009; Cusimano & Riggs, 2013; Hartman et al., 2011; Lamb, 2012; Moon, 2011; Wallerstein et al., 2013). Low self-esteem, decreased happiness, anxiety, and depression are just a few of the problems found in higher rates in children of divorce (Angarne-Lindberg et al., 2009; Cusimano & Riggs, 2013; Wallerstein et al., 2013). These children are usually lonely, blame themselves for parental conflict, and have inaccurate perceptions about who they are. These concerns are often variable when the child's age at the time of the divorce and the amount of time since the parent's divorce are considered (Angarne-Lindberg et al., 2009; Cusimano & Riggs, 2013). For the majority of children, Wallerstein et al. (2013) found that two significant feelings were apparent: specifically, feelings of being overlooked and feelings of rejection from the absent parent.

Both Cusimano and Riggs (2013) and Angarne-Lindberg et al. (2009) research showed that children of divorce had a great variability in their response to parental divorce but at the same time were more likely to have adjustment problems and have their wellbeing compromised psychologically. In fact, Lamb (2012) found that children of divorce were twice as likely as children from intact homes to have maladjustment-related issues, while Moon (2011) found that children from non-divorced families displayed fewer behavioral-related issues as children from divorced families. Much of the resulting research follows similar lines, suggesting that children of divorce are emotionally and psychological at risk in relation to the parental divorce (see Angarne-Lindberg et al., 2009; Cusimano & Riggs, 2013; Hartman et al., 2011; Lamb, 2012; Moon, 2011; Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wallerstein et al., 2013).

At the same time, Angarne-Lindberg et al. (2009) pointed out that many children of divorce are resilient, and there is great variability in their responses to parental divorce. Their research suggests that while children of divorce are at greater risk for a variety of adjustment and emotional related concerns, they regularly emerge as competent adults and live good lives (Angarne-Lindberg et al., 2009). Further, the use of intervention programs, concerned and caring individuals, and informed judicial agencies play a major role in the abilities of the child to deal with their emotional and psychological concerns regarding their parent's divorce (Angarne-Lindberg et al., 2009).

Children of Divorce and the Changing Family Structure

One of the most significant changes for the divorced individual is to re-partner or remarry, but this can bring momentous changes to the lives of children. Anderson and Greene (2011) suggest that this re-partnering of the parent can bring major advantages to the child's life, such as financial security and a lessening of the child's need to take care of the parent, but it can also leave the child feeling more lost and alone than before the new relationship. Additionally, other problems can develop if the child becomes close to the potential new partner and then the relationship ends, leaving the child with a further sense of loss (Kavas & Gunduz-Hosgor, 2011). The changes facing the child tend to come in two different forms: a stepparent and stepsiblings or half-siblings, each with its own unique concerns and challenges.

The introduction of a parent's new partner and/or a stepparent into a child's life can become a stressful situation for all involved. Anderson and Greene (2011) showed that two different approaches tended to be used when a parent introduces a new partner.

The first, a gradual approach, allows the parent to get to know the individual before introducing the new person to their children (Anderson & Greene, 2011). While the children may or may not know the parent is dating, they generally are not included in the process until the parent is relatively sure that the new individual is going to become part of the family's life. The individual is then gradually introduced to the children (Anderson & Greene, 2011). This type of approach shields the children from introductions to individuals that may not become a permanent part of their lives in an effort to minimize the loss of attachment that might develop with these individuals (Anderson & Greene, 2011).

The second approach, a more transparent approach, includes the children in all aspects of the parent's re-partnering, including introduction to all relationship partners from the beginning (Anderson & Greene, 2011). Anderson and Greene (2011) found both positive and negative outcomes from these approaches. On the positive side, the child was found to be more likely to develop a relationship with a new stepfather if the child was close to the mother before the relationship started (Anderson & Greene, 2011). Additionally, the child was more likely to feel part of the "package deal" of mother and children if they were allowed time to develop their own relationship with the new stepparent outside of the parent's relationship (Anderson & Greene, 2011). However, on the negative side, if the re-partnering was unsuccessful and the child had been included early in the relationship, it was more likely that later parent re-partnering would be made more difficult by the child (Anderson & Greene, 2011). Anderson and Greene also found that the mother-adolescent closeness was more likely to decline if the mother cohabitated prior to marriage, whereas that was not the case when the mother remarried.

Another family situation that children of divorce face is the inclusion of stepsiblings or half-siblings into their lives. These family relationships are complex and unique and take a substantial amount of time to develop. They usually include questions of exactly what loyalty the child has to the new stepsiblings and what their role in the family entails (see Fortuna, Roisman, Haydon, Groh, & Holland, 2011; Sayre et al., 2010;

Shapiro & Stewart, 2012; Yu et al., 2010). While the sibling relationship is one of the most enduring relationships an individual will experience, it is also one of the most frustrating and changing relationships in an individual's life (Fortuna et al., 2011). The introduction of stepsiblings into the family can throw former alliances and relationships into disarray as the family adjusts to new traditions, roles, and interaction styles (Shapiro & Stewart, 2012). At the same time, children are confronted with creating new relationships with stepsiblings that may be facing the same emotional and psychological traumas from divorce as they have due to their own parent's divorce (Anderson & Greene, 2011; Kavas & Gunduz-Hosgor, 2011;).

Children of Divorce and Relationships

The relationship between step-parents and the child can also have a difficult path of development. Anderson and Greene (2011) found that the child gains many benefits from the parent's new relationship; however, the development of the relationship between the stepparent and child is not as likely to develop if the parent-child relationship is very close. At the same time, the literature also points out that the introduction of a new adult into the child's life can be uncomfortable and, in some cases, drive the child into earlier relationships in order to escape from the uncomfortable situation at home (Kavas & Gunduz-Hosgor, 2011). This difference in the perception about the incorporation of new relationships into the lives of children of divorce shows that there are unique challenges and relationships for children of divorce (Anderson & Greene, 2011; Kavas, & Gunduz-Hosgor, 2011).

As children of divorce grow and begin new relationships of their own, other unique challenges become apparent. The literature indicates separate but related attitudes about how children of divorce approach romantic relationships. On one side is the fear of having a relationship exactly like their parents and failing in that relationship (Cusimano & Riggs, 2013; Miller, Sassler, & Kusi-Appouh, 2011; Shulman et al., 2012; Wallerstein et al., 2013). On the other side is the fact that many children of divorce enter relationships earlier and bear children earlier in order to escape the home (Cusimano & Riggs, 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Shulman et al., 2012).

Many children of divorce are wary of beginning romantic relationships and have difficulty committing to long term relationships (Cusimano & Riggs, 2013; Fish, Pavkov, Wetchler, & Bercik, 2012; Foroughe & Muller, 2012; Gere et al., 2013; Russell et al., 2013; Shulman et al., 2012; Wallerstein et al., 2013). They are unsure of the availability of others and tend to distance themselves from others in order to stay safe emotionally (Cusimano & Riggs, 2013; Gere et al., 2013). Additionally, many children of divorce are exposed to negative relationship communication patterns and interpersonal behaviors, so they are more likely to repeat these patterns in their own relationships (Kavas & Gunduz-Hosgor, 2011). They tend to have a higher sense of independence and are more likely to show less optimism and trust in intimate relationships (Kavas & Gunduz-Hosgor, 2011; Mustonen et al., 2011).

Further, the literature shows that children of divorce fear that their relationships will fail like their parents' relationship, so they tend to distance themselves from others to protect themselves (Cui et al., 2010; Cui et al., 2008; Cusimano & Riggs, 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Russell et al., 2013; Shulman et al., 2012). Kavas and Gunduz-Hosgor (2011) suggest that the fears children of divorce have about repeating their parent's mistakes might, in part, be due to the lack of positive relationship role models. However, other literature shows a more positive outlook, suggesting that some protective factors might play a role in the relationship patterns of children of divorce. For example, Hartman et al. (2011) found that boys who experienced close relationships with their fathers were less likely to experience divorce later in life. Miller et al. (2011) found that individuals who did not cohabitate before marriage were more likely to stay married. Mustonen et al., (2011) established that for women whose parents divorced before they were 16 years of age, the divorce had a greater impact on their later adult relationships than it did for women who were over the age of 16 at the time of parental divorce. Much of the research postulates that the example of relationship instability by the parents, exposure to positive attitudes about divorce as a means of escaping problems in a relationship, and having lower conflict resolution skills all contribute to the seeming transmission of marital instability for children of divorce (Amato & DeBoer, 2011; Cusimano & Riggs, 2013; Kavas & Gunduz-Hosgor, 2011; Miller et al., 2011; Russell et al., 2013; Shulman et al., 2012; Wallerstein et al., 2013).

It is unclear whether children of divorce who are wary of repeating their parent's relationship mistakes lack the skills necessary to build strong intimate relationships, or if there is some other factor at play. What is apparent is that children of divorce tend to have more sexual partners, marry earlier, and bear children earlier when compared to children raised in intact families (Cusimano & Riggs, 2013; Russell et al., 2013; Shulman et al., 2012; Wallerstein et al., 2013). These factors also suggest that children of divorce have more pessimistic views about marriage and are more likely to view divorce as a solution when problems do occur in a relationship (Cui et al., 2010). Shulman et al. (2012) attribute this to a lack of skills in coping with disagreements and relationship strain that can naturally occur in a relationship. Combined, the indication throughout the literature suggests that children of divorce tend to fear repeating their parents' mistakes. At the same time, they lack the positive role models to develop the positive relationship skills for the development of strong intimate relationships (Cusimano & Riggs, 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Russell et al., 2013; Shulman et al., 2012).

Children of Divorce and Parenting

As children of divorce become parents, their own parental history becomes a factor in their new role (Hartman et al., 2011). Hartman et al. (2011) suggest that many of these individuals do not know how to be parents. Kavas and Gunduz-Hosgor (2011) put forward that the only parental roles these children have seen is their own parents parenting separately, and usually in a confrontational manner when dealing with each other.

One side effect of a parental divorce is the difficulty it causes in the relationship between the absent parent and child (Yu et al., 2010). Difficulties in maintaining a relationship with the absent parent, stressful relationship circumstances between parent and child, and adjustments to the new family circumstances can all combine to make it difficult for children of divorce to learn the skills necessary for parenting (Yu et al., 2010). Kavas and Gunduz-Hosgor (2011) suggests that children of divorce not only learn about divorce firsthand from their parents, they also learn other skills and behaviors as well.

Hartman et al. (2011) further developed the theme of children of divorce finding it difficult to learn various skills by stating that this lack of learning, and the other changes from the traditional family where parents teach and model behaviors, is worrisome. An individual develops their views of adulthood during their adolescent years, and the parent-child relationship is extremely important during this time in their lives (Hartman et al., 2011). This research suggested that the stronger the bond between the parent and child, the more likely the adolescent would be able to cope with the changes surrounding them (Hartman et al., 2011). This ability to cope with changes is an important element in the adolescent’s ability to learn the behaviors and attitudes needed to transition into adult society (Hartman et al., 2011). Additional research shows that children’s response to parental divorce is widely varied and each experience is unique to the parents and children involved (Angarne-Lindberg et al., 2009). One conclusion that can be drawn is that the parenting abilities of children of divorce are dependent on the learned behaviors from the parenting they experience as children, their ability to cope with the changes happening around them, and the bond they have with their own parents both before and after the divorce.

Impacts of Divorce on Children in Adulthood From the Perspective of Attachment Theory

Described as an elegant dance between parent and child, attachment is the name of the system that accounts for the bonding between infant and caregiver (Goldsmith, 2010; Pistole, 2010). Attachment is the lifelong mechanism that allows the individual to learn to express and regulate emotion, recognize emotional behaviors and expressions, and respond to social interactions (see Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Goldsmith, 2010; Lowenstein, 2010; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010). Attachment theory has a long history in regards to understanding relationships and is associated with the understanding of divorce and children of divorce.

Attachment is developed first in infancy as the adult caregiver responds in a consistent and sensitive manner to the infant's needs and social overtures (Lowenstein, 2010). Goldsmith (2010) described this attachment behavior as an emotional dance, because neither partner is passive in the development of the bond. While the mother is generally accepted as the primary caregiver of the infant, attachment theory does not limit an infant's attachment to just the mother (see Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Goldsmith, 2010; Lowenstein, 2010; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010). Fathers, siblings, and grandparents are necessary to develop normal social interactions and emotional regulation in the infant (see Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Goldsmith, 2010; Lowenstein, 2010; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010). As these interactions between the child and caregiver are repeated, the child begins to internalize the concept of their own self, their self-worth, and the world around them, creating an internal working model of interaction with others (Faber & Wittenborn, 2010). The literature suggests that these internal working models remain relatively stable throughout life, but they are not static, and later life experiences can alter or modify them to fit how they relate to others (see Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Faber & Wittenborn, 2010; Goldsmith, 2010; Lowenstein, 2010; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010). Pistole (2010) describes the caregiver as providing a safe haven and secure base to anchor the child in changing times.

Brief History of Attachment Theory

Attachment theory is considered one of the leading theories used to understand the individual's personality and relationships. In essence, Bowlby's (1973, 1979, 1982) concept of attachment was an attempt to understand the formation of social relationships and personality. Attachment theory is recognized as one of the leading theoretical frameworks used to understand personality and close relationships (see Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Fraley et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Lowenstein, 2010; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010). After 30 years of research, it is recognized that attachment theory has played a large role in the understanding of parent-child relationships (Bowlby, 1973, 1979, 1982). Bowlby's original research demonstrated that not only could children not be observed in isolation, but that other factors, such as family and home, play a role in development of the important connection between the child's caregiver and the child's emotional development and later relationships (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). Attachment gives some perspective as to how personal relationships have an impact on psychological wellbeing, relationship satisfaction, and social roles (Ho et al., 2012).

While adult attachment was based on the work of Ainsworth, Belhar, Waters, and

Wall (1978), it has been expanded over time with continuing studies from other researchers, including Brennan, Clark, and Shaver (1998), Collins and Read (1990), Feeney and Noller (1990), and Simpson (1990). Adult attachment suggests that individual relationship styles could, in part, be related to the developmental histories of the individual and the quality of their early care giving environment (Fraley et al., 2013). Over time, these early histories come to impact how the individual views others and their ability to be available within the relationship (see Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Lowenstein, 2010; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2013; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010).

Attachment is most often defined as the patterns of behaviors, thoughts, and feelings associated with personal relationships (see Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Lowenstein, 2010; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2013; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010; Wallerstein et al., 2013). Attachment is not a one-sided process, instead it involves a complex reaching-out by the individual and response by the caregiver or partner (see Ainsworth, 1967; Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Lowenstein, 2010; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2013; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010). As the individual’s expectations are met, a system of beliefs and expectations about others, themselves, and relationships is developed and becomes a part of their later relationship expectations (see Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Lowenstein, 2010; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2013; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010; Wallerstein et al., 2013). While these expectations and behaviors can and will shift slightly as the individual grows and develops, the basic patterns are set on these early experiences (see Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Lowenstein, 2010; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2013; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010; Wallerstein et al., 2013).

Adult Attachment

Theoretical understanding of adult relationship attachment evolved from work with infants. Fraley et al. (2013) describe these adult attachment styles as emerging from the history of the individual's development. Many of the characteristics of these attachment styles can be traced and/or attributed to the quality of the caregiving environment the child experienced as an infant through childhood (see Beijersbergen, Juffer, Bakermans-Kranenburg, & Ijzendoorn, 2012; Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Lowenstein, 2010; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2013; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010). Adams and Baptist (2012) postulated that the romantic pair bond replaces the parent-child bond as the individual enters adulthood, resulting in a shifting of primary attachment figure and renegotiation of the cues the individual uses to adjust to this new relationship. In part, this behavior pattern is seen through the adjustment of newlyweds, who leave their parental homes and form an attachment to their spouse as they transition into married life (Adams & Baptist, 2012). Study of adult attachment has encompassed many different aspects of adult relationships, including infidelity, adoption, intergenerational transmission of parenting behaviors, divorce, and romantic functioning (see Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Dinero, Conger, Shaver, Widaman, & Larsen-Rife, 2011; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Foroughe & Muller, 2012; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Haydon et al., 2012; Ho et al., 2012; Knoke et al., 2010; Lowenstein, 2010; Mikulincer et al., 2010; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2013; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010; Wang et al., 2012).

The social experiences of the adult serve to reinforce the patterns of behavior and beliefs the individual has developed over the course of their earlier caregiving experiences (Dinero et al., 2011). Much of the current research has considered the early patterns of behavior using observation, self-reports, and the stranger experience, in relation to adult romantic interactions (see Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Dinero et al., 2011; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Foroughe & Muller, 2012; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Haydon et al., 2012; Ho et al., 2012; Knoke et al., 2010; Lowenstein, 2010; Mikulincer et al., 2010; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2013; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010; Wang et al., 2012;). Their findings suggest that a positive relationship is found between early positive family interactions and later romantic interactions. However, many of the researchers also assert that life experiences are evolving and that attachment is not static in nature (see Candel &

Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Dinero et al., 2011; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Foroughe & Muller, 2012; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Haydon et al., 2012; Ho et al., 2012; Knoke et al., 2010; Lowenstein, 2010; Mikulincer et al., 2010; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2013; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010; Wang et al., 2012;). While attachment is relatively stable over a lifetime, a certain amount of flexibility and adjustment has been found, suggesting that social experiences beyond the original caregiving environment also play a role in adult attachment (see Beijersbergen et al., 2012; Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Dinero et al., 2011; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Foroughe & Muller, 2012; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Knoke et al., 2010; Lowenstein, 2010; Mikulincer et al., 2010; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2013; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010).

Adult attachment theory is conceptualized as four distinct attachment styles that suggest patterns of behavior that are distinctive to each style. Bowlby’s initial work used a two-dimensional approach that considered the individual’s view of themselves and their view of others (Bowlby, 1973). Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) furthered Bowlby’s work by dividing attachment into four categories: secure, preoccupied, dismissing, and fearful. These categories, as with all adult attachment categories, were still based on the individual view of self and others but extended those examples to take in the variations in these views (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). For example, a secure individual would be accepting and responsive to others while having a positive sense of their own worthiness or lovability, while a fearful individual would have low sense of their own worthiness and expect others to be untrustworthy (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). The preoccupied individual finds themselves unworthy but sees others as positive and loveable, while the dismissing individual sees themselves as worthy but has a negative view of others' ability to be worthy and/or loving (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Bartholomew and Horowitz four categories suggest a continuum of how individuals view themselves and others. However, more recent literature looks at adult attachment in a series of three categories: secure, anxious, and avoidant (see Adams & Baptist, 2012; Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Dinero et al., 2011; Dykas & Cassidy, 2011; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Fish et al., 2012; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Ho et al., 2012; Knoke et al., 2010; Li & Chan, 2012; Lowenstein, 2010; Mikulincer et al., 2010; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2013; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010).

These attachment styles have been shown to have a significant impact on the individual's ability to regulate their emotions, interpersonal functioning, and wellbeing (see Adams & Baptist, 2012; Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Dinero et al., 2011; Dykas & Cassidy, 2011; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Fish et al., 2012; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Ho et al., 2012; Knoke et al., 2010; Li & Chan, 2012; Lowenstein, 2010; Mikulincer et al., 2010; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2013; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010). Additionally, the gives and takes of relationships, as well as the perceptions of the individual, are all factors in the development of relationship attachment (Mikulincer et al., 2010). Yet, the individual types of adult attachment can give researchers further insight into the pattern of behaviors exhibited in relationships. Finally, Fraley et al. (2013) stress that within each of the adult attachment styles, there is an individual variation of behaviors and patterns because individuals develop a working model of attachment that is shaped and honed over time and through experience. Additionally, adult attachment is only one possible means of understanding relationships and does not account for everything involved in adult relationships (Fraley et al., 2013).

Secure attachment. The first of the three more recently used adult attachment categories is secure attachment. Individuals identified as secure are more likely to have identified early caregivers as loving, warm, and affectionate. They are less likely to identify parental divorce, high parental conflict, or the absence of a father (Fraley et al., 2013). These individuals are also less likely to report a family history of psychopathology (Fraley et al., 2013). The secure individual also tends to report higher quality friendships than anxious or avoidant individuals (Fraley et al., 2013). They demonstrate a higher level of self-esteem, are more successful in relationships, and display low levels of loneliness (see Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Ho et al., 2012; Knoke et al., 2010; Lowenstein, 2010; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2013; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010).

A secure individual is likely to experience satisfaction in their romantic relationships, and is better able to provide support when the couple is faced with a stressful situation (Fraley et al., 2013). They are likely to see their partner as sensitive, caring, and available (Dinero et al., 2011). Better coping strategies are used, there is less of a tendency toward dissolution and or divorce, and more hopeful attitudes about the relationship are also common to secure individuals (see Adams & Baptist, 2012; Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Lowenstein, 2010; Mikulincer et al., 2010; ; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2013; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010).

Secure individuals are also more accurate in their assessment of their romantic relationships and tend to have less conflict in their relationships (Fraley et al., 2013). Additionally, these individuals tend to use more relationship-maintaining behaviors, show more openness with their partner, tend to share social networks with their partners, and tend to share household tasks (see Adams & Baptist, 2012; Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Ho et al., 2012; Lowenstein, 2010; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2013; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010). In addition, the secure individuals have developed the ability to use interactions that reinforce attachment security with their partners (see Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Dykas & Cassidy, 2011; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Knoke et al., 2010; Lowenstein, 2010; Mikulincer et al., 2010; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2013; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010).

Anxious attachment. The second category of adult attachment is anxious attachment. These individuals tend to fall into a lower socioeconomic status than those with secure attachment. They describe early caregivers as rejecting, have experienced parental divorce, and report more parental conflict and father absences (Fraley et al., 2013). They fear rejection and abandonment, lack self-confidence and confidence in their partners, and experience more loneliness (see Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Fish et al., 2012; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Ho et al., 2012; Knoke et al., 2010; Lowenstein, 2010; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2013; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010). Often the interpersonal goals of the individual with anxious attachment focus on their need for closeness and their fear of separation and rejection (Mikulincer et al., 2010).

Within the relationship, individuals in the anxious category tend to have a higher breakup rate, are more likely to participate in infidelity, and are more likely to use stonewalling, withdrawal, or contempt as a method to control confrontations (see Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Dinero et al., 2011; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Fish et al., 2012; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Ho et al., 2012; Lowenstein, 2010; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2013; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010). These individuals also display a strong need to have the attention of their attachment partner, yet, at the same time, have a deep fear that their partner will be unable to meet those needs (Fish et al., 2012). However, they do not simply look at their attachment in a negative manner, which would imply hopelessness in seeking proximity to their partner; rather they blame themselves for the unreliability of their partner’s attention and care (Mikulincer et al., 2010). In essence, they have complex views of themselves and others, have a history of frustrating interactions with their attachment figures, and believe that if only they were different, their relationships would be better (Mikulincer et al., 2010).

Avoidant attachment. The final adult attachment category is that of avoidant attachment. The avoidance of an emotional attachment and/or emotional relationships is the essence of avoidant attachment. As with anxious individuals, these individuals report a history of parental psychopathology, especially depressive periods (Fraley et al., 2013). They also report a lower socioeconomic status, more parental divorce, father absences, and higher parental conflict than secure individuals (Fraley et al., 2013).

Individuals with avoidant attachment show less relationship satisfaction, a higher breakup rate, and are more likely to use destructive tactics during arguments (see Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Dinero et al., 2011; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Ho et al., 2012; Lowenstein, 2010; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2013; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010). They have a tendency to not seek out the partner and to maintain an emotional distance from their partner, and there is a distinct independence maintained within the relationship (see Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Fish et al., 2012; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Lowenstein, 2010; Mikulincer et al., 2010; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2013; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010). The avoidant individual organizes their relationship interactions around maintaining their independence and self-reliance, especially when the intimacy of the relationship is threatened or stressed (Mikulincer et al., 2010).

As the child enters adulthood, these early attachment styles become a part of their relationships, both in their private lives and in their occupations. Adams and Baptist (2012) highlighted these attachment styles and the movement from the parental home to the marriage home to demonstrate how childhood attachment styles continue into adulthood. The influence of the family of origin, therefore, is of significant interest in understanding the adult attachment styles displayed by children of divorce in later life. Understanding how attachment functions for adult relationships is an important part of understanding the eventual relationship decisions that adults make in their lifetimes (see Beijersbergen et al., 2012; Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Dinero et al., 2011; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Foroughe & Muller, 2012; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Knoke et al., 2010; Lowenstein, 2010; Mikulincer et al., 2010; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2013; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010).

Of particular interest to many researchers are the connections that can be found between the family of origin and the individual. The similarities between the parental marital outcomes and the child's marital outcomes suggest that there is a connection between the life experiences of the child and the relationships they will eventually enact in their own relationships (see Baptist et al., 2012; Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Crowell et al., 2009; Diamond et al., 2018; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Hare et al., 2009; Jarnecke & South, 2013; Lowenstein, 2010; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2013; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010). Lamb (2012) further showed that the relationship between the parent and the child helps the child grow in their relationships and social contacts outside of the family environment. Parental relationships have been shown to influence a child's relationship satisfaction, trust, and commitment in later life (see Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Lowenstein, 2010; Mustonen et al., 2011; Pistole, 2010; Planitz et al., 2009; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2013; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010). At the same time, significant life changes, such as parental divorce or the death of a parent, have been shown to influence the child socially, personally, and financially (see Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Eldar-Avidan et al., 2009; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Lowenstein, 2010; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2013; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010; Warner et al., 2009). When these influences on later relationships are considered, it is perhaps easier to understand why a more complete understanding is so important regarding the influence the family of origin has on the lives of children.

Adult Children of Divorce, Relationships, and Attachment

A review of the literature related to attachment and relationships focuses mainly on how the behaviors and attachment patterns of childhood influence the role of attachment in later adult relationships (see Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Cui et al., 2010; Cui et al., 2008; Cusimano & Riggs, 2013; Diamond et al., 2018; Dykas & Cassidy, 2011; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Fish et al., 2012; Fortuna et al., 2011; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Kavas & Gunduz-Hosgor, 2011; Lowenstein, 2010; Mustonen et al., 2011; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2013; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010; Trotter, 2010). Therefore, it is easy to envision that parental divorce would also have an influence on the later romantic relationships of children of divorce. More specifically, the current research either looks at the general influence childhood attachment patterns have on adult attachment patterns, such as its role in infidelity and marital satisfaction, or it focuses on the general attachment patterns of children of divorce versus children from intact families. However, no literature was found that directly considers how different childhood families, such as long-term blended families, would influence later attachments of children of divorce. This gap in the literature indicates that while there is considerable information about the role of early childhood relations in the attachment process, there is a lack of understanding about how adult relationship attachment is affected by the unique family types experienced by children of divorce subsequent to parental divorce.

After their 25-year longitudinal study, Wallerstein et al. (2000) continued to study children of divorce and attempted to understand how the unique experiences of children of divorce play a role in their later adult lives. Their research took them back to these children in adulthood and considered the far-reaching effects parental divorce had (Wallerstein et al., 2000). Their findings are interesting in that they suggest parental divorce is not a one-time, temporary crisis, but rather series of changes that had a profound impact on how adult children of divorce viewed themselves, others, and romantic relationships (Wallerstein et al., 2000). As children of divorce enter adulthood, they begin to make decisions and set patterns about their own adult relationships. Unfortunately, in many cases, those decisions and patterns of behavior are based on the only examples they have of adult relationships, which are those of their divorced parents (see Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Cusimano & Riggs, 2013; Diamond et al., 2018; Dykas & Cassidy, 2011; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Lowenstein, 2010; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2013; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010; Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wallerstein et al., 2013;).

Adult Children of Divorce and Their Marital Outcomes

Much of the current literature suggests that adult children of divorce have a harder time developing stable adult relationships (see Amato & DeBoer, 2011; Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Fackrell et al., 2011; Jensen et al., 2015; Rootalu & Kasearu, 2016; Schaan et al., 2019; Shimkowski et al., 2018; Shulman et al., 2001; Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wolfinger, 2005). After reviewing two national data sets, each of which included approximately 10,000 participants, Wolfinger (2005) drew some interesting conclusions. Children of divorce were twice as likely to divorce as their counterparts raised in intact families, are more likely to cohabitate before marriage, and are more likely to marry other children of divorce. This combination increases the likelihood of divorce to three times that of children raised in intact families (Wolfinger, 2005). These types of findings can be summed up in Amato and DeBoer's (2011) suggestion that children of divorce are less likely to be committed to the idea of a lifelong marriage and more likely to see divorce as an "escape hatch" during difficult times in the relationship.

Often this approach to the relationship is blamed on learned behaviors from parents who have created a lack of skills needed to develop and maintain relationships (see Amato & DeBoer, 2011; Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Fackrell et al., 2011; Jensen et al., 2015; Rootalu & Kasearu, 2016; Schaan et al., 2019; Shimkowski et al., 2018; Shulman et al., 2012; Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wolfinger, 2005;). Fackrell et al. (2011) study compared the views of children of divorce with children of intact families in regards to marital satisfaction and communication. The sample consisted of nearly 1,000 married heterosexual couples with average ages between 29 and 31 years (Fackrell et al., 2011). Both husband and wife had to complete the survey, and only those couples who answered parent-child questions were included in the study (Fackrell et al., 2011). The sample was then divided into four categories by parent-child relationship type. The first category included those couples where both individual’s parents were not divorced. In the second, only the husband came from an intact family, and in the third, only the wife was from an intact family. Finally, in the fourth group, both spouses were children of divorce (Fackrell et al., 2011). Fackrell et al. findings confirmed that divorce was a major event in children’s lives, which causes difficulties with adult relationships. They also found that differences in the communication styles existed among children of divorce. However, Fackrell et al., showed that there were significant differences in relationships for children of divorce when they came to terms with their parent’s divorce. They suggested that several factors that could play a role in this finding, including religiosity, life experiences, and therapy (Fackrell et al., 2011). In any of these cases, one thing is clear: significant differences exist in the adult relationships of children of divorce when compared to individuals from intact homes and those differences have an impact on their relationships.

Adult Children of Divorce, Communication, and Relationships

The findings of Fackrell et al. (2011) suggested that children of divorce tended toward the use of more negative interactions and communication styles in their spousal communications than children of intact families. Additionally, attachment research shows that those with anxious or avoidant attachment use more negative types of communication (see Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Dykas & Cassidy, 2011; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Fish et al., 2012; Fortuna et al., 2011; Jensen et al., 2015; Rootalu & Kasearu, 2016; Schaan et al., 2019; Shimkowski et al., 2018). This may suggest a relationship between the attachment of children of divorce and their behaviors within the romantic relationship. However, Fortuna et al. (2011) point out there are several relational contexts that could play a role in how the relationship develops over time. Dykas and Cassidy (2011) expand upon this idea, stating that individuals differ over their lifetimes in how they process social and relational information. Taken together, this suggests that the relationships of children of divorce are not static, and that differing events and experiences can change how the individual views themselves and others.

For children of divorce, this brings up the question of exactly what factors would play a role in how they act and react to the interactions in their relationships. Attachment theory suggests that some of these actions and reactions come from experiences with early caregivers (see Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Jensen et al., 2015; Rootalu & Kasearu, 2016; Russell et al., 2013; Schaan et al., 2019; Shimkowski et al., 2018;). At the same time, life experiences have been shown to play a role in the formation of adult relationships (see Beijersbergen et al., 2012; Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Foroughe & Muller, 2012; Haydon et al., 2012; Ho et al., 2012; Jensen et al., 2015; Rootalu & Kasearu, 2016; Russell et al., 2013; Schaan et al., 2019; Shimkowski et al., 2018). Fraley et al. (2013) pointed out that there is not any one answer, but rather a combination of experiences that shape the individuals within the relationship and long before the relationship begins.

Implications for Future Research

Attachment theory is one avenue in attempting to understand the patterns of relationship behavior an individual develops over their lifetime (see Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Lowenstein, 2010; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2013; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010). While it does not answer every question about why individuals behave as they do within the relationship confines, it does give some insight into the possible origins of those behaviors and extends the understanding of the relationship.

Current literature shows that children of divorce have a higher likelihood of being unable to form stable adult relationships and are more likely to divorce (see Amato & DeBoer, 2011; Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Fackrell et al., 2011; Jensen et al., 2015; Rootalu & Kasearu, 2016; Schaan et al., 2019; Shimkowski et al., 2018; Shulman et al., 2001; Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wolfinger, 2005). They are also more likely to use negative communication patterns in relationships, have less trust in others, and are more likely to view divorce as an “escape hatch” from a difficult relationship (see Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Jensen et al., 2015; Knoke et al., 2010; Lowenstein, 2010; Mikulincer et al., 2010; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Rootalu & Kasearu, 2016; Russell et al., 2013; Schaan et al., 2019; Shimkowski et al., 2018; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010; Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wang et al., 2012;). Wallerstein et al. (2000) research followed children through adulthood and showed that, in part, their decisions and behaviors followed the patterns and examples of their parents. The research of Fackrell et al. (2011) showed the differences found between the relationships of children of divorce and those of children raised in intact families. In essence, all of the literature suggests that adult children of divorce experience relationships differently than adults raised in intact families.

However, there is a gap in the current research due to the tendency to lump all children of divorce into one overarching category. The research of Fackrell et al. (2011) showed that by making distinctions in the categorization of the sample, some interesting relationships begin to emerge about the marital relationships. However, this research only considered the status of the family of origin in regards to the adult relationship. It did not consider what happened to the child after the parental divorce; for example, a parental remarriage and the creation of a stepfamily relationship (Fackrell et al., 2011). Dinero et al. (2011) showed that the family of origin influences later selection of romantic partners. Researchers found correlations between the patterns and behaviors of the individual and the influence of the family of origin, suggesting that experience does play a role in later relationship patterns (see Bucx et al., 2010; Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Hautamaki et al., 2010; Jensen et al., 2015; Lowenstein, 2010; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Rootalu & Kasearu, 2016; Russell et al., 2013; Schaan et al., 2019; Scharf, Mayseless, & Kivenson-Baron, 2012; Shimkowski et al., 2018; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010). Taken together, this research suggests that the relationship attachment and relationship patterns of children of divorce who have been raised in long-term blended families might be different than that of children of divorce raised in other family contexts. However, as of yet, there are no studies that separate these categories of children into separate cohorts.

Summary

Divorce is a life event in the lives of many individuals that signifies significant change and adjustment (see Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Cusimano & Riggs, 2013; Diamond et al., 2018; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Haydon et al., 2012; Jensen et al., 2015; Lowenstein, 2010; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Rootalu & Kasearu, 2016; Russell et al., 2013; Schaan et al., 2019; Shimkowski et al., 2018; Shulman et al., 2012; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010; Wallerstein et al., 2013;). Changes to the social, economic, and psychological wellbeing of the divorced individual can be seen throughout the literature. Just as well-documented is the impact parental divorce has on the lives of children of divorce (Kavas & Gunduz-Hosgor, 2011; Moon, 2011; Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wallerstein et al., 2013). Attachment theory is often used to gain a better understanding of the formation of relationships in early childhood and how those relationships carry over into later adult relationships (see Adams & Baptist, 2012; Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Dinero et al., 2011; Dykas & Cassidy, 2011; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Fish et al., 2012; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Ho et al., 2012; Jensen et al., 2015; Knoke et al., 2010; Li & Chan, 2012; Lowenstein, 2010; Mikulincer et al., 2010; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Rootalu & Kasearu, 2016; Russell et al., 2013; Schaan et al., 2019; Shimkowski et al., 2018; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010). Much of the literature indicates that children of divorce experience difficulties in the areas of relationship attachment and poor marital outcomes, but little of the research distinguishes between the differing family experiences of children of divorce (see Beijersbergen et al., 2012; Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Foroughe & Muller, 2012; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Haydon et al., 2012; Ho et al., 2012; Jensen et al., 2015; Lowenstein, 2010; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Rootalu & Kasearu, 2016; Russell et al., 2013; Schaan et al., 2019; Shimkowski et al., 2018; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010;). The importance of this literature suggests that attention needs to be paid to the influences the family of origin has in the later adult relationships of children; specifically, in the lives of children of divorce (see Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Cusimano & Riggs, 2013; Diamond et al., 2018; Dykas & Cassidy, 2011; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Jensen et al., 2015; Lowenstein, 2010; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Rootalu & Kasearu, 2016; Russell et al., 2013; Schaan et al., 2019; Shimkowski et al., 2018; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010; Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wallerstein et al., 2013;).

Given the impact of attachment and parental role models on children, as well as the lack of a clear understanding of how parental examples influence the marital outcomes and relationship attachment of children of divorce raised in long-term blended families, it is important that researchers continue to add to the literature in this area of interest. Chapter 3 proposes a study to further the research in the area of relationship attachment and the marital outcomes of children of divorce reared in long-term blended families, as compared to children reared in single parent families and children raised in intact families.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative, casual-comparative, ex post facto survey study was to examine the relationship between relationship attachments and marital status of adult children of divorce who were raised in long-term blended families versus other childhood family types. This chapter includes methods, sample and setting, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, and procedures to protect the participants. The specific research questions and corresponding null and alternative hypothesis are listed in the following section.

Research Design and Approach

The study was quantitative in nature, using an ex post facto causal comparative design, employing a survey approach for data collection. A quantitative research design was chosen over other designs because the data collected were numerical in nature, could be used to statistically examine the opinions of a sample, and could be replicated by other researchers (see Creswell & Poth, 2018). A causal-comparative research design (as opposed to an experimental design) was appropriate because the goal of the study was to investigate potential differences between intact social groups, with group membership as an independent variable, which it is not feasible to experimentally manipulate (see Schenker & Rumrill, 2004). One issue with analyzing intact groups in the context of a causal-comparative study is that the groups may differ on key variables that may confound the relationship between the independent and dependent variable (Schenker & Rumrill, 2004). In the present study, age was a potential confound because the proportion of adults who have ever been married or ever divorced is a function of age. Age was controlled for in the statistical analysis by using age as a stratification variable.

Ex post facto research is used to understand the relationship between events that have already happened and current outcomes, usually involving two or more variables (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Gravetter & Wallnau, 2009). Salkind (2010) described ex post facto as research that begins with the observation and/or examination of naturally occurring events without researcher interference. This description makes ex post facto research an ideal research tool when considering that attachment and marital outcomes of children of divorce, in that first, the parental divorce has already been a factor in these children's lives, and second, it would be unethical to attempt to manipulate a child's family in order to study children of divorce. An ex post facto design was selected because a prospective longitudinal observational study would involve following the attachment and marital outcomes for a cohort of research participants over a long-time span (e.g. Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wallerstein et al., 2013), which would not have been feasible in the context of a dissertation research study.

A survey approach can be used to study the attitudes or opinions of a large population by studying the attitudes or opinions of a smaller sample of that population (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In the present study, questionnaires were used in the context of a survey design in order to make generalizations about the characteristics or beliefs about attachment and marital outcomes of adult children of divorce raised in long-term blended families, as compared to those of adult children of divorce raised in single-parent families, adult children of divorce raised in serial matrimony families, and adult children raised in intact families.

Setting and Sample

Participants

Estimates by the U.S. Census Bureau stated that in 2014, there were approximately 318,000,000 people in the United States. Kreider and Ellis (2009) estimated that 50% of children have experienced parental divorce. Given these facts, an estimated 63,600,000 adults in the United States have experienced parental divorce in their lifetime. Therefore, participants in this study were adults in the United States, ages 25 to 99 years.

Individuals were considered eligible to participate in this study if they were male or female, between the ages of 25 and 65 years, and were raised in either intact families throughout childhood, long-term blended families post parental divorce with a duration longer than 7 years, serial matrimony families postparental divorce, or single-parent families postparental divorce. Classification of research participants into these categories was based only on divorces that occurred during childhood, prior to participants leaving home. The age range of the participants was selected to include adult participants with a wide variety of life experiences. A lower age limit of 25 was imposed because never having been married was a dependent variable in this study and the majority of adults in their early 20s have never been married (see Copen et al., 2012). An upper age limit of 65 was set because the size of the population diminishes with older age groups.

Participants were excluded from the sample if they were raised in families where the parents never legally married (e.g., cohabitated without marriage or parented singly from separate homes) and participants whose parents divorced after they left home. These family types would provide different dynamics in the relationship and attachment of the children, in addition to the fact that the parents have more freedom from the legal and emotional turmoil brought about by divorce. Additionally, data from children reared in nontraditional families, for example, same-gender parent families, were excluded. The decision to exclude the data of adult children of nontraditional families was made because the family dynamics of this type of family would differ from what is often considered the traditional family type. Although it may be important for future researchers to attempt to understand how nontraditional families influence attachment and marital outcomes of adult children, this was beyond the scope of the present study.

Sampling Method

By nature of the criteria used for selecting participants for this study, a convenience sampling was used as the method for sample selection. Convenience sampling is defined as a technique where subjects are selected because of the convenient accessibility of the participants (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2009). Participants in this study were selected from those who participated in the survey placed on Survey Monkey; therefore, the use of a convenience sample was necessary. However, participants were sorted into categories based on the defined criteria of the participant’s childhood family types.

Participants were recruited using social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter), Survey Monkey's recruiting methods, and from postings on websites related to family, divorce, and blended families. Participants were referred to the Survey Monkey site.

Sample Size

The required sample size was calculated using G*Power software (Buchner, Erdfelder, Faul, & Lang, 2007). For comparison of the groups on ECR-RS scores using ANOVA, assuming an effect size difference of 0.5 standard deviation, statistical power of 90%, and a significance level of 0.05, 70 participants per group were required to reliably detect a difference between a pair of groups. For comparison of the groups on dichotomous marital outcomes, assuming a baseline percentage of 50% marital success rate among children raised in intact families, a reduction in success rate of 40% or more in the other groups, statistical power of 90%, and a significance level of 0.05, 101 participants per group were required to reliably detect a difference between a pair of groups. Therefore, a total of 404 participants were recruited for this study (Buchner et al., 2007).

Instrumentation

Demographic Survey

I created a demographic survey (see Appendix A) to collect data regarding each participant's age, current relationship status, and the childhood experience of divorce, as well as to define the groups in which the participants were placed for this study. Included in the demographic survey were questions about childhood family status, the parent with whom the participant primarily lived as a child, and the participant's current relationships status. The answers to these questions guided the grouping of participants for the research. Additionally, the demographic information allowed me to compare factors that might play a role in later adjustment and attachment in adult relationships, such as which parent with whom the child primarily lived. The items on the demographic survey were selected from similar surveys during the literature review in order to provide the broadest opportunity to better understand the unique experiences of children of divorce without overwhelming the participants with survey questions.

Experiences in Close Relationships –Relationship Structures (ECR-RS)

The ECR-RS (Fraley, Niedenthal, Marks, Brumbaugh, & Vicary, 2006;), was created from the Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised Inventory (Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000). This 9-item self-inventory assesses the participant's relationship domains within four relationships: father, mother, romantic partner, and best friend (nonromantic), creating a total of 36 items included in the ECR-RS. For the purposes of this study, the relationship domains for the best friend (nonromantic) relationship were removed. Therefore, only 27 items were included. Given the wide age range of the participants in this study, one of the advantages of the ECR-RS is that it is written in such a way as to make it useable for a variety of age groups (see Fraley, 2014).

The ECR-RS considers two dimensions of adult attachment: anxiety and avoidance (Fraley, Heffernan, Vicary, & Brumbaugh, 2011a). Attachment anxiety is regarded as how worried the individual is that their partner and/or parent is going to reject them, whereas attachment avoidance involves the strategies and extent to which the person stays detached or distant from others in order to reduce the possibility of rejection

(Fraley et al., 2011a). An individual who displays what is considered prototypical secure attachment would rate low on both of these dimensions (Fraley, Vicary, Brumbaugh, & Roisman, 2011b). One of the advantages of the ECR-RS is that it removes some of the ambiguity present in previous measures of adult attachment by specifically asking the participant to consider specific relationships, as opposed to asking them to consider relationships with close others without defining who that close other may be (Fraley et al., 2011a). Fraley et al. (2011a) pointed out that some ambiguity is necessary in order to use the structure with different relationships. For example, the participant might view their romantic partner in one way, such as warm and caring, while viewing a parent in another manner, such as distant and cold. Another consideration is that other structures often narrowly define their questions, most often focusing on the romantic relationship (Fraley et al., 2011a).

Each of the three relationship domains were scored in two categories: attachment avoidance and attachment anxiety. For each relationship, an average of items 1 through 6 were used to find the participant’s attachment avoidance score, with items 1, 2, 3, and 4 being reversed keyed. Attachment anxiety is the average of items 7 through 9. Finally, a general or global attachment is found by averaging all these scores across the domains, weighing each domain equally (Fraley, 2014).

The median of participants’ scores were used to classify participants into relationship attachment categories. Specifically, a participant was classified as having a secure attachment if both their attachment anxiety score and their attachment avoidance score were less than the median score for attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance

(Fraley, 2014). A participant with a dismissing attachment score will produce an attachment anxiety less than the anxiety median score and an attachment avoidance score greater than or equal to the median avoidance score (Fraley, 2014). Fearful attachment is an attachment anxiety score that is greater than or equal to the median anxiety score and an attachment avoidance greater than or equal to the median avoidance score (Fraley, 2014). Finally, preoccupied attachment is an attachment anxiety score greater than or equal to the median anxiety score and an attachment avoidance score less than the median avoidance score (Fraley, 2014). General or global attachment scores were figured in the same way.

The test-retest reliability over a 30-day period has been shown to be .65 in the domain of romantic relationships and .80 in the domain of parental relationships (Fraley, 2014). Continued research with the ECR-RS is showing some meaningful relationships to various relational outcomes, such as likelihood of experiencing a breakup (Fraley, 2014).

Data Collection

I created a Survey Monkey website that included the demographic survey and the ECR-RS. An invitation to participate in the study along with a link to the Survey Monkey site was placed on various social media websites, such as Facebook and Twitter, as well as on websites and forums related to blended families, divorce, and parenting. The participants were invited to log into the site where they were presented with the informed consent for participation. This information was available for download by the participant as well, and they were asked to acknowledge their consent before proceeding to the demographic survey. The participant was then presented with the demographic survey, followed by the ECR-RS for the domains of romantic relationships, relationship with mother, and relationship with father. After completing the survey, the participants were thanked and again presented with the information in the informed consent pertaining to how to contact the researcher. The data was then compiled using SPSS.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The following research question and associated hypothesis guided this study:

Research Question 1: To what extent do significant differences exist on dimensions of adult attachment between children of divorce raised in long-term blended families with a duration longer than 7 years, adult children of divorce raised in single-parent families, adult children of divorce raised in serial matrimony families, and adult children raised in intact families?

Null hypothesis ($H_0 1$): Among the groups of adult children raised in intact families, those raised in single parent families after parental divorce, those raised in long-term blended families, and those raised in serial matrimony families, all pairs of groups will be equal in regard to mean attachment scores as measured by the Experiences in Close Relationships-Relationship Structures (ECR-RS).

Alternative hypothesis (H_a1): Among the groups of adult children raised in intact families, those raised in single parent families after parental divorce, those raised in long-term blended families, and those raised in serial matrimony families, not all pairs of groups will be equal in regard to mean attachment scores as measured by the ECR-RS.

Research Question 2: To what extent do significant differences exist on marital outcomes (ever marrying or ever getting divorced) between adult children of divorce raised in long-term blended families with a duration longer than 7 years, adult children of divorce raised in single parent families, adult children of divorce raised in serial matrimony families, and adult children raised in intact families?

Null hypothesis ($H_0 2$): Among the groups of adult children raised in intact families, those raised in single parent families after parental divorce, those raised in long-term blended families, and those raised in serial matrimony families, all pairs of groups will be equal in regard to the proportion of adult children who have married at least once.

Alternative hypothesis ($H_a 2$): Among the groups of adult children raised in intact families, those raised in single parent families after parental divorce, those raised in long-term blended families, and those raised in serial matrimony families, not all pairs of groups will be equal in regard to the proportion of adult children who have married at least once.

Null hypothesis ($H_0 3$): Among the groups of adult children raised in intact families and who married at least once, those raised in single parent families after parental divorce, those raised in long-term blended families, and those raised in serial matrimony families, after statistically controlling for age of respondents, all pairs of groups will be equal in regard to the proportion of respondents who are divorced.

Alternative hypothesis ($H_a 3$): Among the groups of adult children raised in intact families and who married at least once, those raised in single parent families after parental divorce, those raised in long-term blended families, and those raised in serial matrimony families, after statistically controlling for age or respondents not all pairs of groups will be equal in regard to the proportion of respondents who are divorced.

Operationalization of Study Variables

The independent variable in the study was the participant's childhood family type. Family types were defined as follows, based on items from the Demographic Survey, specifically how the participant answered question 2 on the demographic survey. A long term blended family was defined as a two-adult male-female marriage -relationship in which one or both of the parents bring a child or children into the family from a previous relationship in which there is a legal, customary, or emotional expectation of the child to maintain an established child-parent relationship with a third party parent figure, in which marriage the child is exposed to a single stepparent relationship prior to the age of 18 years (see Anderson & Greene, 2011; Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Cartwright, 2012; Crowell et al., 2009; Diamond et al., 2018; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Faber & Wittenborn, 2010; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Gierveld & Merz, 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Jensen et al., 2015; Lowenstein, 2010; Martin-Uzzi & Duval-Tsioles, 2013; Noel Miller, 2013; Nuru & Wang, 2014; Pistole, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Rootalu & Kasearu, 2016; Russell et al., 2013; Schaan et al., 2019; Shimkowski et al., 2018; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010). These families have had a duration of at least 7 years, due to the fact that many second marriages fail within the first 5 years of the marriage (Copen et al., 2012). This was determined by the demographic survey questions pertaining to the longest duration of the parental marriage.

A serial matrimony family was defined as a two-adult male-female marriage relationship in which one or both of the parents bring a child or children into the family from a previous relationship in which there is a legal, customary, or emotional expectation of the child, to maintain an established child-parent relationship with a third party parent figure, in which the biological or custodial parent has legally remarried more than once, and in which marriages expose the individual to multiple stepparent relationships prior to the age of 18 years. (see Ahrons, 2007; Anderson & Greene, 2011; Baptist et al., 2012; Boring, Sandler, Tein, Horan, & Velez, 2015; Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Cartwright, 2012; Crowell et al., 2009; Diamond et al., 2018; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Faber & Wittenborn, 2010; Fraley et al., 2013; Garber, 2014; Gere et al., 2013; Gierveld & Merz, 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Hare et al., 2009; Jarnecke & South, 2013; Jensen et al., 2015; Kim, 2011; Lowenstein, 2010; Martin-Uzzi & Duval-Tsioles, 2013; Noel Miller, 2013; Nuru & Wang, 2014; Pistole, 2010; Potter, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Rootalu & Kasearu, 2016; Russell et al., 2013; Schaan et al., 2019; Shimkowski et al., 2018; Sroufe & McIntosh, 2011; Sumner, 2013; Sutton, 2019; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010; Wallerstein, 2005). This was determined by the participant’s responses to the demographic survey questions pertaining to the number of parental marriages the child experienced while living at home and the shortest duration of those relationships.

Single-parent families were defined as a family in which the parent does not legally remarry or cohabitate with an adult relationship partner while the child lives in the home. This was determined by the participant’s responses to the demographic survey questions pertaining to the parental cohabitation arrangements after the divorce.

Intact families were defined as a two-person, male-female relationship in which both the parents are biologically related to the children or both parents have adopted a child or children from a third party; the children of the marriage having never experienced divorce. This was determined by the participant's responses to the demographic survey questions pertaining to the parental marriage.

The dependent variables were adult attachment, as measured by the total score on the ECR-RS, and marital history—whether ever married and whether ever divorced. The ability to maintain an intimate relationship was defined as the ability and willingness of the individual to commit to and maintain a long-term intimate relationship, as measured by the individual's relational history. The relational history was determined by the participant's response to the demographic question related to whether they have ever married or ever divorced.

Procedure

Participants were recruited through the Walden research pool, notices to organizations that work with families and children of divorce, and social network sites, such as Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook. Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous, but participants were asked to encourage others that might be interested in the study to participate.

Participants logged into a survey website, specifically Survey Monkey, and completed two separate questionnaires. The participants first completed a demographic questionnaire, which I created , including questions about the childhood family type, the current marital status, educational background, socio-economic background, relationship history, and parental marital history. Based on answers to the questions about the childhood family types, inclusion criteria were decided and individuals were divided into study categories. If inclusion criteria were not met, the participant received a polite message thanking them for their participation. The second questionnaire was the Experiences in Close Relationships - Relationship Structures (ECR-RS) questionnaire used to measure attachment in the areas of trust experiences, basic trust, interpersonal bonding, self-openness, and world openness on 4 target relationships (mother, father, romantic partner, and best friend). Participants responded using a 7-point Likert-type scale with answers ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) (Fairchild & Finney, 2006; Sibley et al., 2005).

After the creation of the Survey Monkey site, links were created to extend invitations on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media sites to participate in the study. The application for the Walden Participation Pool was be completed at this time and a link to the Survey Monkey site was placed there as well.

When the participants first opened the link on Survey Monkey they were presented with information about the study, the anonymous nature of the survey, informed consent document, and suggestions for solutions if the survey were to bring up uncomfortable or unpleasant memories. The participant was then asked to acknowledge an understanding of the disclosure and confidentiality statement. The demographic survey then began with questions concerning the individual’s childhood family type, age, and if they had taken the survey previously. These questions placed the individual in the different categories of the study or excluded them from the study dependent on their answers. If the participant was included in the study, then they were given the rest of the demographic survey and the ECR-RS.

Consent and Confidentiality

A confidentiality statement and consent statement were placed at the beginning of the survey. The survey was anonymous and did not include identifying information about the individual participants. Each participant was assigned a unique number that was used as identification.

Data Collection Procedure

Survey Monkey was be utilized as the platform for the demographic survey and ECR-RS, which were used in this study. Participants were directed to the Survey Monkey website by the use of internet links. The demographic survey included, but was not limited to, socioeconomic information, educational history, socio-economic information, marital/relationship history, parent marital/relationship history, relationship attachment results, and family history. The Experiences in Close Relationships-Relationship Structures (ECR-RS) questionnaire included information related to the individual's attachment relationships. Items included in ECR-RS included, but were not limited to, questions the individual's worries about their relationship, closeness with their partner, the individual's ability to share their feelings with their partner, and communication between partners (Fraley et al., 2000).

Data Analysis

All data from the demographic survey and the ECR-RS were exported from the Survey Monkey site into SPSS software version 17.0 for analysis. The data for this survey included information from the demographic survey and the ECR-RS.

In this study, the independent variable was childhood family type, which was a categorical variable with four levels: (a) adult children of divorce raised in long-term blended families; (b) adult children of divorce raised in single-parent families post parental divorce; (c) adult children of divorce raised in serial matrimony families post parental divorce; and (d) adult children raised in intact families. The intact family group was the reference group to which the outcomes for the other three groups were compared.

Comparisons of key demographic variables of the participant groups, such as gender, age, marital status, education levels, and relationship status, were conducted from the information obtained in the demographic survey. Descriptive statistics, such as mean age, were also collected and compared between the groups. ANOVA was used to test for between-group differences in age, the Kruskal-Wallis test was used to test for differences in education level, and chi-square tests were used to test for between-group differences on all other categorical variables. P-values less than 0.05 were regarded as statistically significant.

There are certain assumptions that are inherent in the statistical tests used in this study. For the ANOVA test, there are three main assumptions: first, observations within the samples are independent; second, the selected sample populations are considered normal; and third, there is a homogeneity or equality of variances within the population (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2009). ANOVA is robust to violation of the assumption of a normal distribution (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2009). This assumption was tested by examining whether the magnitude of the skewness and kurtosis values for each variable were less than 2.0 in absolute value (Cameron, 2004). To test for homogeneity of variances, Levene's test was applied. For the Kruskal-Wallis test and the chi-square test for independence, the only assumption needed is that each response is generated by a different subject.

The ECR-RS mean scores were analyzed by two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), in which the two grouping variables were childhood family type and age level of respondents (25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-65, or 66 -older). Age level was included in the statistical analyses in order to statistically control for potential confounding effects of the age of respondents. Because Research Question 1 is concerned with differences between respondents by childhood family type, with regard to the ANOVA results, I was primarily interested in the main effects of childhood family type. Therefore, in Chapter 4, the p-value for the main effect of childhood family type and marginal means for childhood family type were reported. These results indicated whether there were differences between adult children of comparable age levels on adult attachment. A p-value less than .05 was considered statistically significant. P-values for main effects of age level and the interactions between age level and childhood family type were reported, but were not interpreted since they were not of theoretical interest.

If the p-value for the main effect childhood family type was statistically significant, then post hoc comparisons were performed to compare ECR-RS total scores for adult children raised in intact families versus each of the other three childhood family types. Post hoc comparisons were performed using Dunnett's test, because this test has greater post hoc tests when comparisons are made against a single reference group (Maxwell & Delaney, 1990).

The proportion of respondents who have married at least once was analyzed by two-factor contingency tables (cross-tabulations). The factors in the analysis were childhood family type and marital history (ever married versus never married). Age level (as defined above for use in the ANOVA for the first research question) was stratified (layering variable) in the analysis in order to statistically control for potential confounding effects of the age of respondents. Statistical significance was based on the generalized Cochran-Mantel-Haenszel test, which is appropriate for stratified contingency tables, and whose test statistic has a chi-square distribution from which a p-value is obtained. A p-value less than .05 was considered statistically significant, which indicated a difference between adult children of comparable age levels in regard to the proportion of respondents who ever married. If this p-value for the main effect childhood family type was statistically significant, then pairwise comparisons were performed for children raised in long-term blended families versus each of the other three childhood family types. Results to be reported included p-values, percentages ever married for each childhood family type, and odds-ratios comparing the children raised in long-term blended families versus each of the other three childhood family types.

Among the subset of respondents who have married at least once, the four childhood family types were compared with regard the proportion that have divorced at least once were analyzed, following the same analytic approach to compare the four groups on proportions ever married. Results to be reported included p-values, percentages ever divorced for each childhood family type, and odds-ratios comparing the children raised in long-term blended families versus each of the other three childhood family types.

Threats to Validity

Internal validity is related to the confidence in the implied relationships between the independent and dependent variables. External validity deals with the how well the conclusions drawn from this study can be applied to other groups.

There were two main weaknesses in ex post facto research designs that posed a threat to the internal validity of the current study. The nonrandom selection of participants of the research study was the first threat to internal validity (Salkind, 2010). Ex post facto research is most often used when the research does not and cannot ethically have complete control over the variables; therefore, participants were assigned to groups based on some existing characteristic or life experience (Black, 2002). Thus, there was a possibility that some unknown or unaccounted for characteristic or experience might have made a significant difference in the outcomes of the study, making this research design less persuasive than true experimental research (Black, 2002).

A second threat to the internal validity of the study was the lack of ability by the researcher to control the independent variables (Salkind, 2010). There are multiple social research studies in which it would be unethical and/or difficult for the researcher to control or manipulate the variables of the study, making ex post facto designs less persuasive than true experimental research designs (Salkind, 2010).

The nonrandom selection was also a threat to the external validity of this research study, which could have had an impact on the inference of the statistics and conclusions that could be made about the outcomes of the study (Salkind, 2010). Additionally, the nonrandom placement of participants indicated the extent that the sample is representative of the population made it difficult to determine the inferences that can be drawn from the statistical outcomes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In other words, caution would need to be exercised in drawing a conclusion that different types of family (intact, single parent, or blended) cause different attachment or marital outcomes among adult children raised in those families, even if the data shows differences between the types of family on any of the study outcome variables. Essentially, ex post facto research design has both internal and external validity weaknesses, but it is the best research design for specific types, especially for social and behavioral-oriented studies.

Ethical Considerations

The guidelines for informed consent and confidentiality for the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) were followed in this study (see IRB number 06-09-16-0045984). Participants were given an explanation of the research, procedures, and anticipated outcomes. Their consent to have their information included was obtained before beginning the surveys. Each participant was assigned a random identifying number, and all personal information was kept in a locked file cabinet and/or on a password-protected USB thumb drive. Participants were assured that all personal information collected during the course of this research would be held in strict confidence, there would be no disclosure of their name or information, and results would be destroyed seven years after the completion of the study. Finally, I would be collecting and analyzing the data, and would have the only access to that data. The data would be stored in a locked filing cabinet and or maintained on a password protected USB thumb drive for a period of seven years after which time it will be destroyed in an appropriate manner.

Additionally, potential participants were informed that they do not have to participate in the study and may withdraw at any time during the study. It was hoped by fully informing and disclosing the nature of the study, the majority of ethical problems would be eliminated. However, divorce and remarriage are a life-changing experience for many people, so it was necessary to consider the emotional fallout that is possible from re-awakening difficult and or painful memories. Therefore, it was important that a cautionary statement be placed at the beginning of the survey, suggesting that if participants find the questions painful or if, at a later point, these surveys awaken painful memories for the participant, they should seek help through their local, state, and community mental health organizations.

Dissemination of Findings

The results of this study may have an impact on the importance of stable marriages in the lives of children; therefore, I considered the possibility of sharing the findings at a Walden poster session and eventually publishing the study in peer-reviewed journals. Additionally, the findings will be submitted for inclusion in the Western Psychological Association and the Washington State Psychological Association functions.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The investigation of the differences found in the attachment relationships and marital status of children of divorce was the primary focus of this study. Primarily children of divorce who were raised in blended families were compared to children raised in other family types, including serial matrimony families, single parent families after parental divorce, and intact families. In essence, I investigated if there were discernable differences between attachment status and marital outcomes, based on the type of family the individual grew up in.

Restatement of Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the differences in the attachment relationship and marital statuses of adult children of divorce who were raised in blended families with a duration longer than 7 years, the attachment and marital status of adult children of divorce raised in single parent families, the attachment and marital status of adult children of divorce raised in serial matrimony families, versus the attachment relationships of adult children raised in intact families. Two research questions were utilized to guide this study, specifically:

Research Question 1: To what extent do significant differences exist on dimensions of adult attachment between children of divorce raised in long-term blended families with a duration longer than 7 years, adult children of divorce raised in single-parent families, adult children of divorce raised in serial matrimony families, and adult children raised in intact families?

Research Question 2: To what extent do significant differences exist on marital outcomes (ever marrying or ever getting divorced) between adult children of divorce raised in long-term blended families with a duration longer than 7 years, adult children of divorce raised in single parent families, adult children of divorce raised in serial matrimony families, and adult children raised in intact families?

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected using a self-administered, online survey. In this research, participants were asked to complete two questionnaires. The demographic questionnaire included questions related to childhood family type, current marital status, educational background, relationship history, and parental marital history questions. The second questionnaire used the ECR-RS questionnaire. This questionnaire measures attachment in the areas of trust experiences, interpersonal bonding, self-openness, and world openness in connection to four basic relationships, specifically attachment to a romantic partner, global attachment, attachment to mother, and attachment to father. Due to the hypothesis of this study, the primary attachment considered was that of the romantic partner. Global attachment, attachment to mother, and attachment to father were secondary considerations.

The questionnaires were presented online through the use of the Survey Monkey site. The participants were self-selected through invitations sent out on social media sites, specifically Facebook, and twitter. Invitations were sent to websites and blogs with areas of focus related to the divorce and or children. Each participant was asked to forward the survey link to other individuals that they felt would be interested in the survey.

Participants and Demographics

Participants

Participants for this study were individuals over the age of 18 who completed the web-based survey after being recruited using social media postings, invitations sent to website, and invitations sent to blogs between April 14, 2016 and May 31, 2017. For all the participants, the surveys were administered according to the instructions of each of the instruments. A total of 696 surveys were completed. Twenty-two surveys were removed due to a large number of missing data. The missing data included missing birth years, missing marital status, and missing data related to attachment scales. Survey responses were also removed if there were not enough data to classify the response into one of the four childhood family types. Hence, the total number of responses included in the dataset analyzed was 674 participants. Participant confidentiality was maintained as described in Chapter 3.

The online surveys were opened in June 2016 using SurveyMonkey. They were closed in January 2017. However, after an examination of the data, it was decided that several of the groups did not have enough participants. Thus, the survey was reopened in February 2017 and closed again in May 2017. An alpha level of .05 was used for all statistical analyses.

Demographic descriptors consisted of gender, age, race and/or ethnicity, religion, education, income, and relationship status. Data were first examined for completeness and outliers. The results are presented in Table 1. A total of 674 participants participated in this study. Overall, of the 674 participants, 21% were male (*n* = 141) and 79% were female (*n* = 533). According to the United States Census Bureau (2016), in July 2016, 50% of the population in the United States was female.

Table 1

Sample Characteristics of Participants (n = 674)

Characteristic	*N*	Percentage
Gender		
Male	141	20.9%
Female	533	79.1%
Current marital status		
Married	480	71.2%
Divorced	67	9.9%%
Widowed	8	1.2%
Separated	14	2.1%
Never married	105	15.6%
Race/Ethnicity		
American Indian	5	0.7%
Asian American	11	1.6%
African American	43	6.4%
Hispanic	8	7.1%
Pacific Islander	2	0.3%
Caucasian	565	83.8%
Religion		
Christian	523	77.6%
Jewish	3	0.4%
Muslim	2	0.3%
Buddhist	4	0.6%
Not affiliated with any religion	96	14.2%
Other	37	5.5%
Rather not say	9	1.3%
Education		
High School, no diploma	9	1.3%
High School graduate	32	4.7%
Some college credit	49	7.3%
1 or more years of college, no degree	125	18.5%
Associate degree	82	12.2%
Bachelor’s degree	209	31.0%
Master’s degree	19	19.1%
Professional degree	13	1.9%
Doctorate degree	26	3.9%

(table continues)

Table 1 (continued)

Characteristic	N	Percentage
Income		
Less than $10,000	34	5.0%
$10,000 - $19,000	21	3.1%
$20,000 - $29,000	40	5.9%
$30,000 - $39,000	35	5.2%
$40,000 - $49,000	49	7.3%
$50,000 - $59,000	52	7.7%
$60,000 - $69,000	67	9.9%
$70,000 - $79,000	53	7.9%
$80,000 - $89,000	61	9.1%
$90,000 - $99,000	42	6.2%
$100,000 - $149,000	139	20.6%
$150,000 or more	81	12.0%
Parents divorced		
Yes	270	40.1%
No	404	59.9%
Childhood family type		
Intact	407	60.4%
Blended	128	19.0%
Single	91	13.5%
Serial	48	7.1%
Age groups		
18 – 24 years	64	9.5%
25 – 34 years	144	21.4%
35 – 44 years	215	31.9%
45 – 54 years	146	21.7%
55 years and older	105	15.6%

The majority of the participants were in a current intimate relationship (82%; n = 555; see Table 2). Seventy one percent of the participants were married (n = 480), 9% were divorced (n = 67), 1% was widowed (n = 8), 2% were separated (n = 14), and 15% were never married (n = 105). While the number of married participants is higher than the 2016 United State Census statistics suggest, the rest of the data were very similar to that research (e.g., married 50%; widowed 5%; divorced 9%, separated 2%, and never married 32%). Fifty seven percent of the participants had children from their current intimate relationship (n = 385) and 27% had children from past relationships (n = 186).

The majority of the participant's household income was within the $100,000 to $149,000 range (*n* = 139).

Table 2

Relationship Characteristics of Study Participants (n = 674)

Current intimate relationship		
Yes	555	82.3%
No	119	17.7%
Children from current relationship		
Yes	385	57.1%
No	289	42.9%
Children from past relationship		
Yes	186	27.6%
No	488	72.4%

The ages of the participants in this study ranged from 19 to 75 years of age, with a mean age of 42 years. Race and or ethnic data showed 83% of the participants were White (*n* = 565), with 6% being of African American descent, and 7% being of Hispanic descent. This data is close to the 2016 United States census information, which indicated 76% of the population identified as White, 13% as African American, and 17% Hispanic (U.S. Census, 2016). The religious data collected showed that 77% of the participants identified as Christian (*n* = 77%). This is similar to the exploration of religious groups in the United States in 2016, which showed that 70% of the population identified as Christian (Pew Research Center, 2017). The next largest group of participants in this study were not affiliated with any religion (*n* = 96; 14% of the sample). Pew Research Center (2017) found that 22% of the population was unaffiliated with any religion. However, a difference between the current study and the research completed by Pew Research Center was found. In this study, I showed that approximately 13% of the participants identified with non-Christian faiths, which included Jewish, Muslim, and Buddhist religions, while Pew Research Center showed only 5% of the population to identify with non-Christian faiths.

The majority of the participants were raised in intact families (60%, n = 407), with 19% raised in long-term blended families (n = 128), 13% in single parent families post parental divorce (n = 91), and 7% in serial matrimony families post parental divorce (n = 48). In 2011 the United States Census bureau (2016) showed that 69% of children in the United States lived with two parents, 18% lived with a stepparent, and 13% lived with only one parent. More recently Blessing (2017) suggested that approximately one million children experience divorce every year and 65% of divorcing parents remarry. While Pew Research Center (2017) suggested that 46% of children live in intact families, 15% are in blended families, and 26% are in single parent families.

Demographics by Family Type

Participant demographics were then broken down by childhood family types, as shown in Table 3. Significant differences were noted regarding religion and race and or ethnicity of the participants. These differences were accounted for in subsequent analyses by including them as factors or covariates in order to statistically control for differences between the groups.

The marital status of children raised in intact childhood families and children raised in a long-term blended family are very similar, with 73% (n = 407) and 70% (n = 90), respectively, being married. Sixty eight percent of children raised in single parent families post parental divorce (n = 62) and 65% of children raised in serial matrimony family post parental divorce (n = 31) were married. Interestingly enough only 14% of participants raised in single parent families post parental divorce were African American (n = 13). Pew Research Center (2017) suggests that 54% of African American children live in single parent households. The majority of participants raised in intact families (n = 138) and those raised in serial matrimony families post parental divorce (n = 17) had obtained bachelor's degrees. Across all the childhood family types approximately 50% of the participants had children from the current relationship. However, a surprising finding is that participants from intact families were more likely to have children from a past relationship (53%; n = 99), while the other childhood family types were more likely not to have children from a past relationship (blended family 70% (n = 89); single parent family 68% (n = 62); serial matrimony family 60% (n = 29)). These results are presented in Table 4.

Table 3

Participant Characteristics as Organized by Family Type (n = 674)

	Family type				
	Intact family (*n* = 407)	Blended family (*n* = 128)	Single parent family (*n* = 91)	Serial matrimony family (*n* = 48)	*P*-value
Gender					0.35
Male	23% (94)	19% (24)	18% (16)	15% (7)	
Female	77% (313)	81% (104)	82% (75)	85% (41)	
Current marital status					0.58
Married	73% (297)	70% (90)	68% (62)	65% (31)	
Divorced	10% (39)	11% (14)	7% (6)	17% (8)	
Widowed	10% (5)	1% (1)	2% (2)	19% (9)	
Separated	2% (7)	2% (3)	4% (4)	0% (0)	
Never married	14% (59)	16% (20)	19% (17)	19% (9)	
Race/Ethnicity					0.03
American Indian	1% (3)	0% (0)	2% (2)	0% (0)	
Asian American	2% (8)	1% (1)	0% (0)	4% (2)	
African American	6% (24)	5% (6)	14% (13)	0% (0)	
Hispanic	7% (30)	4% (5)	9% (8)	10% (5)	
Pacific Islander	<1% (1)	1% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	
Caucasian	83% (341)	90% (115)	75% (68)	85% (41)	
Religion					0.04
Christian	83% (338)	72% (92)	65% (59)	71% (34)	
Jewish	1% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	
Muslim	<1% (1)	0% (0)	1% (1)	0% (0)	
Buddhist	<1% (2)	1% (1)	1% (1)	0% (0)	
Not affiliated with any religion	11% (44)	16% (21)	24% (22)	19% (9)	
Other	4% (15)	9% (11)	7% (6)	10% (5)	
Rather not say	1% (4)	2% (3)	2% (2)	0% (0)	

(table continues)

Table 3 (continued)

	Family type				
	Intact family (*n* = 407)	Blended family (*n* = 128)	Single parent family (*n* = 91)	Serial matrimony family (*n* = 48)	P-Value
Education					0.24
High School, no diploma	1% (4)	2% (2)	1% (1)	4% (2)	
High School graduate	3% (13)	7% (9)	8% (7)	6% (3)	
Some college credit	6% (25)	9% (12)	9% (8)	8% (4)	
1 or more years of college, no degree	17% (68)	26% (33)	20% (18)	13% (6)	
Associate degree	13% (51)	10% (13)	12% (11)	15% (7)	
Bachelor's degree	34% (138)	24% (31)	25% (23)	35% (17)	
Master's degree	20% (80)	17% (22)	22% (20)	15% (7)	
Professional degree	2% (9)	3% (4)	0% (0)	0% (0)	
Doctorate degree	5% (19)	2% (2)	3% (3)	4% (2)	
Income					0.24
Less than $10,000	3% (14)	6% (8)	7% (6)	12% (6)	
$10,000 - $19,000	3% (12)	2% (3)	5% (5)	2% (1)	
$20,000 - $29,000	6% (26)	4% (5)	9% (8)	2% (1)	
$30,000 - $39,000	6% (24)	4% (5)	2% (2)	8% (4)	
$40,000 - $49,000	6% (26)	6% (8)	11% (10)	10% (5)	
$50,000 - $59,000	8% (33)	7% (9)	7% (6)	8% (4)	
$60,000 - $69,000	11% (46)	9% (12)	1% (9)	0% (0)	
$70,000 - $79,000	8% (32)	9% (11)	9% (8)	4% (2)	
$80,000 - $89,000	8% (32)	13% (17)	8% (7)	10% (5)	
$90,000 - $99,000	6% (26)	8% (10)	7% (6)	0% (0)	
$100,000 - $149,000	22% (89)	20% (26)	13% (12)	25% (12)	
$150,000 or more	12% (47)	11% (14)	13 % (12)	17% (8)	

(table continues)

Table 3 (continued)

	Family type				
	Intact family (*n* = 407)	Blended family (*n* = 128)	Single parent family (*n* = 91)	Serial matrimony family (*n* = 48)	P-Value
Age Groups					0.10
18 – 24 years	8% (33)	15% (19)	12% (11)	2% (1)	
25 – 34 years	22% (88)	22% (28)	20% (18)	21% (10)	
35 – 44 years	31% (125)	30% (38)	33% (30)	46% (22)	
45 – 54 years	21% (88)	25% (32)	19% (17)	19% (9)	
55 years and older	18% (73)	8% (11)	16% (15)	13% (6)	

Table 4

Current Relationships and Children by Family Type (n = 674)

	Family type				
	Intact family (*n* = 407)	Blended family (*n* = 128)	Single parent family (*n* = 91)	Serial matrimony family (*n* = 48)	*P*-value
Current intimate relationship					0.98
Yes	82% (334)	83% (106)	84% (76)	81% (39)	
No	18% (73)	17% (22)	16% (15)	19% (9)	
Children from current relationship					0.07
Yes	59% (240)	55% (70)	52% (47)	58% (28)	
No	41% (167)	45 (58)	48% (44)	42% (20)	
Children from past relationship					0.07
Yes	53.2% (99)	30% (39)	32% (29)	40% (19)	
No	63.1% (308)	70% (89)	68% (62)	60% (29)	

Attachment

The first research question of this study is a consideration of how adult attachment differs between adult raised in the different family types. The Null Hypothesis ($H_0$1) stated that among the groups of adult children raised in intact families, those raised in single parent families after parental divorce, those raised in long-term blended families, and those raised in serial matrimony families, all pairs of groups will be equal in regard to mean attachment scores as measured by the ECR-RS. The Alternative Hypothesis (H_a1) stated that among the groups of adult children raised in intact families, those raised in single parent families after parental divorce, those raised in long-term blended families, and those raised in serial matrimony families, not all pairs of groups will be equal in regards to mean attachment scores as measured by the ECR-RS.

This study was specifically designed to compare the differences in attachment between adults raised in different family types in relation to their later marital outcomes, specifically those of children of divorce who have been raised in long term blended families. ECR-RS (Fraley et al., 2006) was used to evaluate the attachment of each participant in this study, in regard to attachment to the participant's romantic partner, attachment in relationships in general (global attachment), attachment to mother, and attachment to father . In view of the study purpose and research questions, the romantic partner relationship attachment was the primary focus of the analysis. For each of the four types of relationship, the ECR-RS has two dimensions of adult attachment: anxiety and avoidance (Fraley et al., 2011a). Attachment anxiety is the worry the individual experiences regarding the possibility of rejection by their partner, while attachment avoidance is related to the strategies and extent, they go to distance themselves from others to reduce the possibility of rejection (Fraley et al., 2013).

There is some debate about the best way to analyzing the scoring of the ECR-RS. The developer of the ECR-RS, Fraley (2012; see also Fraley & Shaver, 2000) strongly recommended that ECR-RS scores should be analyzed using a two-dimensional model (i.e., based on anxiety and avoidance scores as continuous scales). However, Fraley (2012) also stated that in interpreting the attachment of individuals the ECR-RS can also be scored using a categorical model, based upon categorizing anxiety and avoidance scores as above or below the sample median. The categorical model is useful in explaining the meaning of the scores at the individual level. Pace, Santona, Zavattini, and Di Folco (2015) used both methods of scoring in order to better understand the attachment of their participants. While Wongpakaran and Wongpakaran (2012) used the categorical method to compare their results to other attachment protocols. Thus, for this study the family groups were compared using both a two-dimensional model and a categorical method in regard to attachment.

ANOVA was used to analyze participant scores. ANOVA is used to test the general differences between means in one or more samples. The purpose of this test is to determine whether there is a significant difference in the means between the groups.

The categorical method of assessing participant scores was used in this study. This method is more compatible with the original research on attachment. Thus, the terminology and definition of the categories are more likely to be understandable by the individuals that would be working directly with the adult children of divorce, such as therapists and others in the legal field.

Therefore, the participants scores were classified into relationship attachment categories. The category of secure attachment is based on the anxiety score and avoidance score of the participant being less than the median scores for relationship anxiety and relationship avoidance of the group (Fraley, 2014). The other categories are also considered in relation to their distance from the median score, as described in Chapter 2.

The relationship attachment categories of the participants in this study were calculated, results are presented in table 5. Overall the participants were securely attached to their romantic partner (n = 319; 47%), father (n = 316; 47%) and mother (n = 330; 49%). At a global level the participants were also generally securely attached (n = 280; 41%). While these averages suggest that majority of the participants are more likely to identify early caregivers as loving and affectionate (Fraley et al., 2013). Generally, they also demonstrate more successful relationships and low levels of loneliness (Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Fraley et al., 2013; Ho et al., 2012; Jensen et al., 2015; Knoke et al., 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Schaan et al., 2019; Sutton, 2019). However, since these scores are based on the median scores of the group in general they tell us very little about the specific childhood family types of the participants.

Table 5

Sample Characteristics in Relation to Attachment Categories (n = 674)

	Mean	Frequency*	Percentage**
Attachment to romantic partner	2.01		
Secure		319	47.3%
Dismissing		64	9.5%
Fearful		208	30.9%
Preoccupied		83	12.3%
Global attachment	2.19		
Secure		280	41.5%
Dismissing		71	10.5%
Fearful		235	34.9%
Preoccupied		88	13.1%
Attachment to father	2.16		
Secure		316	46.9%
Dismissing		18	2.7%
Fearful		226	33.5%
Preoccupied		114	16.9%
Attachment to mother	2.19		
Secure		330	49.0%
Dismissing		54	8.0%
Fearful		182	27.0%
Preoccupied		108	16.0%

Note. * Number of respondents in each attachment category. ** Percentage of respondents in the sample belonging to each attachment category.

Participant's attachment categories were compared according to their childhood family types. Results are presented in table 6. Participants who were raised in intact families were more likely to be securely attached than participants raised in any other childhood family type (n = 407). Specifically, their attachment to romantic partner was 49% and their global attachment was also at 49%. While their attachment to their mother and father was over 50%, 54% and 58% respectively. The majority of participants across childhood family types reported secure attachment to their romantic partners, with children raised in blended families being the highest at 48%.

Table 6

Attachment by family type (n = 674)

	Intact family (*n* = 407)	Blended family (*n* = 128)	Single parent family (*n* = 91)	Serial matrimony family (*n* = 48)
Attachment to romantic partner				
Secure	49% (200)	48% (62)	43% (39)	38% (18)
Dismissing	8% (33)	11% (14)	10% (9)	17% (8)
Fearful	30% (123)	28% (36)	35% (32)	35% (17)
Preoccupied	13% (51)	12% (16)	12% (11)	10% (5)
Global attachment				
Secure	49% (201)	34% (44)	29% (26)	19% (9)
Dismissing	12% (47)	10% (13)	9% (8)	6% (3)
Fearful	29% (116)	38% (49)	46% (42)	58% (28)
Preoccupied	11% (43)	17% (22)	16% (15)	17% (8)
Attachment to mother				
Secure	54% (220)	43% (55)	48% (44)	23% (11)
Dismissing	9% (36)	7% (9)	5% (5)	8% (4)
Fearful	22% (89)	30% (38)	35% (32)	48% (23)
Preoccupied	15% (62)	20% (26)	11% (10)	21% (10)
Attachment to father				
Secure	58% (237)	35% (45)	27% (25)	19% (9)
Dismissing	3% (11)	3% (4)	3% (3)	0% (0)
Fearful	24% (98)	39% (5)	52% (47)	65% (31)
Preoccupied	15% (61)	23% (29)	18% (16)	17% (8)

A comparison of secure versus insecure attachment was made using logistic regression, as seen in tables 7, 8, 9, and 10. Secure attachment were those individuals who had a low avoidance and low anxiety scores (Fraley, 2012). While insecure attachment categories include preoccupied individuals with low avoidance but high anxiety scores, dismissive individuals with low anxiety but high avoidance scores, and fearful individuals with high anxiety and high avoidance scores (Fraley, 2012). Thus, the attachment categories of preoccupied, dismissive, and fearful were combined into one group labeled insecure attachment.

While no significant differences were found in the primary attachment group of romantic partners, significant differences were found for the global attachment of adult children of divorce raised in blended families, single parent families, and serial matrimony families when compared to children raised in intact families. Significant differences were also found in the attachment to mother for adult children of divorce raised in blended families and serial matrimony families when compared to children raised in intact families. Attachment to the father for children of divorce raised in blended families, single parent families, and serial matrimony families was also found to show significant differences when compared to children raised in intact families. In these results from these logistic regression analyses, for all four of the attachment variables, odds ratios were smallest for the serial matrimony families. This suggests that adult children raised in serial matrimony families are more likely to be insecurely attached to their romantic partner, their mother, their father, and in relationships in general.

Table 7

Logistic Regression – Romantic partner attachment (Secure vs. Insecure)

Independent Variable	B	Std. Error	Odds Ratio	Chi-Square	df	Sig
Intercept	-.461	.728				
Blended family	-.030	.207	.971	.021	1	.886
Single parent family	-.221	.239	.802	.862	1	.353
Serial matrimony family	-.508	.318	.602	2.62	1	.106
Age				2.38	4	.666
Religion				.481	3	.923
White				2.30	1	.130

Table 8

Logistic Regression – Global Attachment (Secure vs. Insecure)

Independent Variable	B	Std. Error	Odds Ratio	Chi-Square	df	Sig
Intercept	-.242	.771				
Blended family	-.599	.214	.550	8.03	1	.005
Single parent family	-.884	.257	.413	12.71	1	<.001
Serial matrimony family	-1.46	.386	.232	17.74		<.001
Age				2.89	4	.576
Religion				.183	3	.980
White				.025	1	.875

Table 9

Logistic Regression – Attachment to Mother (Secure vs. Insecure)

Independent Variable	B	Std. Error	Odds Ratio	Chi-Square	df	Sig
Intercept	-.214	.732				
Blended family	-.434	.208	.648	4.38	1	.036
Single parent family	-.217	.237	.805	.838	1	.360
Serial matrimony family	-1.44	.362	.238	18.57	1	<.001
Age				3.18	4	.528
Religion				1.48	3	.688
White				.440	1	.507

Table 10

Logistic Regression – Attachment to Father (Secure vs. Insecure)

Independent Variable	B	Std. Error	Odds Ratio	Chi-Square	df	Sig
Intercept	1.04	.784				
Blended family	-.996	.216	.369	22.19	1	<.001
Single parent family	-1.30	.262	.273	27.17	1	<.001
Serial matrimony family	-1.82	.387	.161	28.41	1	<.001
Age				7.90	4	.095
Religion				2.60	3	.457
White				.979	1	.322

In terms of global attachment, excluding those in the intact family group, the majority of participants in the other childhood family type fell into the category of fearful attachment, which is considered to be a much more insecure type of attachment (Blended family = 38%; single parent family = 46%; serial matrimony family = 58%; See table 6). Consideration of these participants attachment to their mother and father also suggests that they were more insecurely attached to their fathers than they were to their mothers, with the exception of the serial matrimony family type which showed insecure attachment to both mother and father. Children in the blended family group (n = 128) showed that 43% fell into the secure category in regards to attachment to their mother, while 39% fell into the fearful category in regards to attachment to their fathers. The single parent family group (n = 91) showed that 48% of the participants were securely attached to their mothers, with 52% in the fearful category in regards to their fathers. Finally, 48% of children in the children in the serial matrimony families (n = 48) were in the fearful category in regards to their mother and 65% in the fearful category in regards to their fathers. At the overall level the participants were securely attached to their romantic partners, to their mothers, and to their fathers, as well as globally. However, when these results were broken down by childhood family types it was found that when compared to adults raised in any other childhood family type adults raised in intact families were more likely to be securely attached, not only to their romantic partner but to their mother and father. Adult children raised in serial matrimony families were more likely to be insecurely attached to both their mothers and fathers. At the same time, adult children raised in blended families and single parent families were found to be more insecurely attached to their fathers than they were to their mothers. At the global level adults from intact families were found to be securely attached while children from the other family types fell into the fearful attachment category. This is a more insecure attachment than the other categories.

The Experiences in Close Relationships -Relationship Structures (ECR-RS) (Fraley et al., 2006) assesses attachment patterns on two dimensions, relationship anxiety and relationship avoidance, with separate scores on each pertaining to romantic partner attachment, global relationship attachment, attachment to mother , and attachment to father. To compare childhood family types on the two attachment dimensions, two sets of statistical analyses were performed. First, the anxiety the individual experiences in relation to their relationships was examined. Second, the avoidance an individual engages in relation to their relationships was examined. Each analysis was performed using four-way ANOVA, in which the dependent variable was either relationship anxiety or relationship avoidance. Separate ANOVA's were performed for the ECR-RS scales pertaining to romantic partner attachment, attachment to mother, attachment to father, and to global relationship attachment. In each four-way ANOVA, the four independent (or grouping) variables were childhood family type, age level, race (White vs. other race), and religion (Christian vs. other religion). ANOVA included the main effects of each independent variable and two-way interaction terms between family type and the other independent variable. Higher order interaction terms were omitted because the number of cases in each cell became too small when they were included. Dunnett's post hoc test was used to test for significant differences between means for the childhood family types; this test was used to compare intact families versus blended families, single-parent families, and serial matrimony families.

Results of these analyses are displayed in tables 11 and 13 and post hoc results are displayed in tables 12 and 14. Results of all analyses are based on controlling for age, race, and religion. No significant differences were found on either the relationship anxiety or relationship avoidance pertaining to the romantic partner. However, the post hoc analysis showed that there were significant differences in attachment anxiety for the global attachment and attachment to father categories for children raised in blended families when compared to children raised in intact families. Attachment anxiety was also significant for attachment to father for blended and single parent families when compared to children raised in intact families. There were no significant differences in relationship anxiety related to participants attachment to mother when compared to children raised in intact families. Significant differences were found for attachment to father in relationship avoidance for children raised in single parent families when compared to children raised in intact families.

Table 11

*Comparison of Means on the Category of Relationship Anxiety by Childhood Family Type***.**

Dependent variable	Family type	Mean	Standard Error
Romantic partner	Intact family	1.96	.063
	Blended family	1.98	.133
	Single parent family	1.93	.113
	Serial matrimony family	2.19	.253
Global	Intact family	2.27	.047
	Blended family	2.54	.100
	Single parent family	2.49	.851
	Serial matrimony family	2.66	.190
Mother	Intact family	2.31	.074
	Blended family	2.54	.156
	Single parent family	2.31	.133
	Serial matrimony family	2.55	.300
Father	Intact family	2.54	.071
	Blended family	3.10	.151
	Single parent family	3.24	.129
	Serial matrimony family	3.24	.287

Table 12

Comparison of the Relationship Anxiety of Children of Divorce to Children Raised in Intact Families using Dunnett's Test.

Dependent variable	Family type vs. Intact family	Difference between means [a]	Sig.
Romantic partner	Blended	0.02	1.00
	Single parent	-0.03	.996
	Serial matrimony	0.23	.754
Global	Blended	0.27	.043
	Single parent	0.22	.066
	Serial matrimony	0.39	.132
Mother	Blended	0.23	.454
	Single parent	0.00	1.00
	Serial matrimony	0.24	.819
Father	Blended	0.56	.002
	Single parent	0.70	<.001
	Serial matrimony	0.70	.052

Note. [a] Differences in means are the mean for each family type minus the mean for intact family.

Table 2

Comparison of Means on the Category of Relationship Avoidance by Childhood Family Type.

Dependent variable	Family type	Mean	Standard Error
Romantic partner	Intact family	2.17	.085
	Blended family	2.05	.179
	Single parent family	2.23	.153
	Serial matrimony family	2.32	.342
Global	Intact family	1.91	.057
	Blended family	1.99	.120
	Single parent family	2.14	.103
	Serial matrimony family	2.22	.229
Mother	Intact family	1.71	.070
	Blended family	1.75	.146
	Single parent family	1.73	.124
	Serial matrimony family	2.19	.278
Father	Intact family	1.84	.077
	Blended family	2.18	.161
	Single parent family	2.48	.138
	Serial matrimony family	2.16	.307

Table 3

Comparison of the Relationship Avoidance of Children of Divorce to Children Raised in Intact Families using Dunnett's Test.

Dependent variable	Family types. Intact family	Difference between means[a]	Sig.
Romantic partner	Blended	-0.12	.900
	Single parent	0.06	.986
	Serial matrimony	0.15	.963
Global	Blended	0.08	.089
	Single parent	0.23	.124
	Serial matrimony	0.31	.449
Mother	Blended	0.04	.992
	Single parent	0.02	.998
	Serial matrimony	0.48	.251
Father	Blended	0.34	.165
	Single parent	0.64	<.001
	Serial matrimony	0.32	.686

Note. [a] Differences in means are the mean for each family type minus the mean for intact family.

The relationship anxiety of children of divorce raised in all family types was found to be comparable to that of children raised in intact families in regards to their romantic partners. However, anxiety in relation to global attachment was significantly higher for adult children of blended families vs. intact family ($p = .043$). Anxiety in relation to father was significantly higher for adult children of blended families vs. intact families ($p = .002$), and for single parent families vs. intact families($p < .001$). (See tables 11 and 12)

Children of divorce raised in all family types relationship avoidance showed no significant differences in regards to the romantic partner when compared to children raised in intact families, as well as global attachment and attachment to mother.

Relationship avoidance in relation to father was significantly higher for adult children of single parent families ($p < .001$). (See tables 13 and 14)

In other words, examining relationship attachment in terms of the components of relationship anxiety and relationship avoidance showed further indications that childhood family type is related to attachment. Relationship anxiety at the global level was significantly higher for children raised in a blended family when compared to children raised in intact families. Relationship anxiety was also significantly higher in relation to the father for children raised in blended and single parent families when compared to children raised in intact families. Higher relationship avoidance behavior was only significant for attachment to the father in children raised in single parent families when compared to children raised in intact families.

Marital Outcomes

The second research question guiding this study considers the differences that might exist regarding the marital outcomes of adult children based on their childhood family types. The Null Hypothesis (H_02) states that all of the marital outcomes would be similar based on childhood family type. A second null hypothesis (H_{03}) was considered stating that among the different childhood family types the marital outcomes of participants who had been married at least once would also be similar. The null hypothesis state that there would be differences found in the marital outcomes of based on childhood family type, as well as among participants who had been married at least once.

The overall demographics of the participants suggest that the majority are in relationships with over 70% reporting that they are married. (See Table 1) When this is broken down by childhood family types it appears that for all the childhood family types the majority of the participants are married. However, the second highest group for all the childhood family types is those participants who have never married. (see Table 3). Additionally, children from serial matrimony families reported a current marital status of widowed at about the same rate. Participants raised in single parent families were unlikely to be divorced, widowed, or separated when compared to the other childhood family types. It should be noted that the percentages for all childhood family types current marital status, other than married, were calculated to be below 20%.

Logistic regression analysis was employed to predict the probability that a participant had ever married. The predictor variables were participant's, age, religion, ethnicity or race, and dummy variables coding the childhood family type. Dummy coding of family types enabled comparisons of blended families, single parent families, and serial matrimony families versus intact families. The continuous predictor variables were approximately normally distributed within each of the dependent groups, and the variances were stable. The choice of logistic regression was made to evaluate the simultaneously the effects of three continuous predictors, one dichotomous predictor, and one qualitative predictor. A test of the full model versus a model with intercept, age, and religion as statistically significant, χ^2 (N = 569) = <.001, p <.001). The model was able to correctly to classify 70% of those who had ever married.

Table 15 shows logistic regression coefficients, Wald test, and odds ratio for each of the predictors. Employing a statistically significance level of .05, age, and religion, were significant predictors of ever having been married. However, the dummy-coded variables for family types were not statistically significant predictors in the logistic regression model, which means that adult children of blended families, single parent families, and serial matrimony families are not more likely to have married than adult children of intact families, after controlling for age, religion, and ethnicity/race.

Table 4

Comparison of Family Types in Terms of Ever Married using Logistic Regression.

Independent variable	B	Std. Error	Odds Ratio	Chi-Square	df	Sig
Intercept	21.23	.830				
Blended family	.271	.322	1.312	.729	1	.393
Single parent family	-.078	.348	.925	.050	1	.824
Serial matrimony family	-.451	.422	.637	1.07	1	.300
Age				89.67	4	<.001
Religion				9.21	3	.027
White				.200	1	.654

A second logistic regression analysis was used to predict the probability that a participant who had ever married would ever divorce. The predictor variables were age, religion, and Caucasian yes/no and three dummy variables coding the childhood family type. As stated above logistic regression was chosen to simultaneously the effects of three continuous predictors, one dichotomous predictor, and one qualitative predictor. A test of the full model versus a model with age as statistically significant, χ^2 (N = 181) = <.001, *p*

<.001). The model was able to correctly classify 70% of those who had ever married as having ever divorced.

Table 16 shows the logistic regression coefficient, Wald test, and odds ratio for each of the predictors. An alpha level of .05 was applied for tests of statistical significance. Age, religion, Caucasian yes/no, and three childhood family dummy variables had some significant partial effects. Adult children of divorce raised in serial matrimony families and adult children of divorce raised in blended families were significantly more likely to be divorced than children raised in intact families; the odds ratio for adult children of divorce raised in serial matrimony families were twice as likely to ever divorce than children raised in intact families.

Table 16:

Comparison of Family Types in Terms of Ever Divorced using Logistic Regression

Independent variable	B	Std. Error	Odds Ratio	Chi-Square	df	Sig
Intercept	1.19	.762				
Blended family	.533	.248	1.70	4.55	1	.033
Single parent family	.314	.287	1.37	1.18	1	.277
Serial matrimony family	.755	.359	2.13	4.30	1	.038
Age				36.28	4	<.001
Religion				3.56	3	.313
White				.370	1	.543

Summary

This research attempted to understand the differences found in the attachment relationships and marital outcomes of adult children of divorce raised in post parental divorce blended families, single parent families, and serial matrimony families compared to children raised in intact families. No significant differences were documented in the primary focus of analysis which was the reported attachment to the current romantic partner. However, significant differences between the family types were noted for children of blended families and of serial matrimony families in comparison to children raised in intact families. Of the participants who had ever been married, adult children of divorce raised in blended families and in serial matrimony families were significantly more likely to have ever divorced when compared to the adult children of intact families.

Also, in the secondary analysis of global attachment, attachment to mother, and attachment to father statistically significant differences were found. In terms of global attachment (i.e., attachment in relationships in general) all family types were found to be significantly more insecurely attached when compared to children raised in intact families. Children of divorce raised in the three family types, specifically blended families, single parent families, and serial matrimony families, post parental divorce were significantly more likely to be insecurely attached to their fathers when compared to children raised in intact families. Children raised in blended families and serial matrimony families post parental divorce were also significantly more likely to be insecurely attached to their mothers when compared to children raised in intact families. Of the three family types in which adult children of divorce were raised, children raised in serial matrimony families were most likely to be insecurely attached to their romantic partner, to their mother, to their father, and in relationships in general. Consistent with these findings, among adult children of divorce, children raised in serial matrimony families were most likely to divorce, if they married.

Attachment was also examined in terms of relationship anxiety and relationship avoidance. Again, in the primary analysis of the current romantic partner no statistically significant differences were found. The post hoc tests showed that relationship anxiety in the global category was statistically significant for adult children of divorce raised in blended families post parental divorce when compared to children raised in intact families . Relationship anxiety in regards to the mother was not found to be significant for any of the family types when compared to children raised in intact families. However, significant differences in relationship anxiety were found in regards to the attachment to father in children raised in both the blended family and single parent family types when compared to children raised in intact families.

No significant differences were found in the family groups for relationship avoidance in regards to attachment to current romantic partners when compared to children raised in intact families. Nor were there significant differences found in relationship avoidance at a global level or attachment to the mother for any of the family types when compared to children raised in intact families. The only significant difference found in regard to relationship avoidance was for children raised in single parent families in regard to attachment to the father when compared to children raised in intact families.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between relationship attachments and marital status of adult children of divorce who were raised in long term blended families versus other childhood family types. Relationship attachment was measured using the ECR-RS Questionnaire, while marital status was assessed through a researcher created demographic survey. The analysis was conducted on the responses of a sample of 674 participants ranging from 18 to 75 years of age, who were recruited through social media postings, website invitations, and blogs to complete an online survey.

In Chapter 5, I summarize the study findings presented in Chapter 4 and discuss interpretations based upon these findings. In the final section of this chapter, I relate the results presented in Chapter 4 to the concepts presented in Chapter 1 as well as the review of literature in Chapter 2. The chapter concludes with recommendations for further research.

Summary of the Research Findings

An analysis of the data was run to examine the research questions and to investigate the differences found in attachment relationships and marital status of adult children of divorce raised in various family configurations when compared to adult children raised in intact families. Logistic regression analysis and ANOVA were used as the statistical tools for hypothesis testing. The research questions for this study were as follows:

Research Question 1: To what extent do significant differences exist on dimensions of adult attachment between children of divorce raised in long-term blended families with a duration longer than 7 years, adult children of divorce raised in single parent families, adult children of divorce raised in serial matrimony families, and adult children raised in intact families?

Research Question 2: To what extent do significant differences exist on marital outcomes (ever marrying or ever getting divorced) between adult children of divorce raised in long-term blended families with a duration longer than 7 years, adult children of divorce raised in single parent families, adult children of divorce raised in serial matrimony families, and adult children raised in intact families?

The target sample size analysis was 404 participants between the ages of 18 and 99 years. A total of 696 participants were recruited during the 11 months of data collection. Of the 696 participants, 22 were eliminated due to missing information. The final sample size of 674 participants, which exceeded the minimum required for adequate statistical power, was retained to increase the statistical power to test the study hypothesis. Of these respondents, 82% of the participants identified with being in a current intimate relationship, while 71% identified this relationship as married. The majority of the participants was female, 77% identified as Christian, and 83% were White. The ages of the adult respondents ranged from 19 to 75 years of age, with an average age of 42 years.

The independent variable in this study was the family type in which the participant had been raised. Family type was determined through a self-reported demographic survey. Of the participants, the majority were raised in intact families. In addition, 19% were raised in long-term blended families, 13% in single parent families postparental divorce, and 7% in serial matrimony families postparental divorce. Participants in all the family types were more likely to be married and have children from their current intimate relationship.

For Research Question 1, the data gathered were analyzed using a logistic regression model to determine the extent of differences in the independent variables of the four childhood family types of adult children with the dependent variable of relationship attachment. As noted in Table 17, significant differences were found for children of divorce raised in the three postdivorce family types when compared to children raised in intact families. Specifically, significant differences were found for children of divorce raised in blended families, single parent families, and serial matrimony families in regards to their global attachment and attachment to father. While significant differences were found for children raised in blended families and serial matrimony families in regards to attachment to mother, there were no significant differences found for children raised in single parent families when compared to children raised in intact families. The logistic regression analysis showed no significant differences in the secure versus insecure relationship types for a current romantic partner when adult children of divorce raised in long-term blended families, adult children of divorce raised in single parent families, and adult children of divorce raised in serial matrimony families were compared to adult children raised in intact families. Odds ratios were all less than 1.0, which indicated that adult children of divorce from each family type versus adult children on intact families were less likely to have secure attachments in their relationships. It should be noted that the odds ratios were lowest for the children raised in serial matrimony families.

Table 17

Summary of Logistic Regression Analyses Comparing Adult Children of Divorce by Family Type With Adult Children of Intact Families on Secure Versus Insecure Attachment

Family type vs. intact family	Attachment to romantic partner	Global relationship attachments	Attachment to mother	Attachment to father
Blended family	Not significant	Significant	Significant	Significant
Single parent family	Not significant	Significant	Not significant	Significant
Serial matrimony family	Not significant	Significant	Significant	Significant

For Research Question 2, the data were analyzed using a logistic regression model to determine the extent of differences in the independent variables of the four childhood family types of adult children with the dependent variable of marital outcomes (ever married or ever divorced). The results of the analyses are summarized in Table 18.

Table 18

Summary of Logistic Regression Analyses Comparing Adult Children of Divorce by Family Type With Adult Children of Intact Families on Marital Outcomes (Ever Married, Ever Divorced).

Family type vs. intact family	Ever married	Ever divorced
Blended family	Not significant	Significant
Single parent family	Not significant	Not significant
Serial matrimony family	Not significant	Significant

Among the adults in this study who married, children of blended families and children of serial matrimony families were significantly more likely to divorce than children in intact families. These children were also the ones significantly less likely to be securely attached to their mothers. This suggests that there is some consistency between the results for ever being divorced and attachment to mother. In regards to attachment to father and global attachment, children in all family types were significantly less likely to be securely attached than adult children raised in intact families.

The odds ratios from the logistic regression analysis suggest that children who have been raised in serial matrimony families postparental divorce had the worst outcomes among all four types of families. They have the lowest likelihood of being securely attached to romantic partner, their mother, and their father, as well as in terms of relationships in general. Additionally, they have the lowest likelihood of getting married and the highest likelihood of divorce. Further research is needed to replicate these findings. However, as stated in the literature regarding children of divorce and later relationships, it is most likely that children of divorce base their later views of family and relationships on their own childhood experiences (see Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Cui et al., 2010; Cui et al., 2008; Cusimano & Riggs, 2013; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Haydon et al., 2012; Jensen et al., 2015; Kindsvatter & Desmond, 2012; Lamb, 2012; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Schaan et al., 2019; Sen, & Kavlak, 2012; Sutton, 2019). For children of divorce raised in serial matrimony families, their experiences would suggest a great deal of difficulty in establishing and maintaining a trusting, stable relationship with a partner, their parents, or those around them.

Overall, the results of this study suggest that, regardless of the type of family in which they were raised, children of divorce are negatively impacted in terms of their attachment patterns in relationships. Although the study results suggest there appears to be little impact of ability to form romantic relationships, the ability to maintain healthy relationships may be negatively affected. This appears to be especially true for children raised in serial matrimony families.

Interpretation of Findings

Although the study did not show evidence to suggest that childhood family types substantially affected the ability to form romantic attachments and to get married, it did provide evidence that divorce affects the ability to maintain marital relationships and to impact the ability to maintain healthy relationships. It is clear from the data that there are differences in the relationship attachment experiences of children raised in different family types postparental divorce. These experiences are different than those raised in intact families. According to many studies, it is likely that these children observed a pattern of behavior in their parents that later influenced their later relationships (see

Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Cui et al., 2010; Cui et al., 2008; Cusimano & Riggs, 2013; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Haydon et al., 2012; Jensen et al., 2015; Kindsvatter & Desmond, 2012; Lamb, 2012; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Schaan et al., 2019; Sen, & Kavlak, 2012; Sutton, 2019). Cusimano and Riggs (2013) suggested that the interactions between the child and the parent in the childhood family played a large role in the development of the child's later social relationships, while Moon (2011) showed that children from intact families had less significant adjustment problems when compared to children of divorce.

Attachment itself is not a one-sided process, rather it is a give and take relationship between the parties that influences the patterns and behaviors of individuals (see Ainsworth, 1967; Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Fraley et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Jensen et al., 2015; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2013; Schaan et al., 2019; Sutton, 2019). When divorce happens, there is a diminished amount of time available between the parent and child, whether this is due to financial strain, visitation schedule, or just parents finding it difficult to nurture their children in the same way, and the results appear the same (Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wallerstein et al., 2013). This study's findings are supported by the findings that children of divorce raised in single parent families and serial matrimony families are insecurely attached to their fathers, while those in serial matrimony families are also insecurely attached to their mothers (Foroughe & Muller, 2012; Hartman et al., 2011; Kavas & Gunduz-Hosgor, 2011; Moon, 2011; Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wallerstein et al., 2013). This also supports studies done by Foroughe and Muller (2012), Hartman et al. (2011), Kavas and Gunduz-Hosgor (2011), and Moon (2011), which suggested that after a divorce, fathers generally spend less time with their children, and this gap increases if the father remarries and has additional children.

The results of this study did not show evidence to suggest that childhood family types had an effect on attachment patterns in later romantic relationships. However, this should not be surprising in that most individuals would not want to doubt their relationship attachment to their current partner (see Ainsworth, 1967; Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Fraley et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Jensen et al., 2015; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2013; Schaan et al., 2019; Sutton, 2019). At the same time there was evidence that childhood family types did have an impact on attachment in other relationships. Additionally, the evidence showed that children from blended families and serial matrimony families were significantly more likely to divorce when compared to children raised in intact families. This finding indicates a probability that children of divorce may be affected by the experiences they had related to parental divorce and later parental relationships while growing up. These issues do have a significant impact on their own relationships as adults, as has been previously believed (see Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Crowell et al., 2009; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Jensen et al., 2015; Miles & Servaty-Seib, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Riggio & Fite, 2006; Riggio & Weiser, 2008; Schaan et al., 2019; Sutton, 2019; Yu et al., 2010).

While this is could be due to the impact of outside factors that were not measured in this study, for example the influence of social influences through school, community, and religious relationships, such factors were not assessed in the context of the present study. While only the attachment to a current romantic partner was found to be secure for all of the childhood family groups there was a noted likelihood for divorce in two of the family types. The logistic regression models indicated that single parent family group and the serial matrimony family group were insecure in both their global attachment, and their attachment to father, while the serial matrimony family group also had more insecure attachment to the mother, compared to the intact family group. The blended family group also had more insecure attachment globally and to both mother and father compared to the intact family group.

Further analysis indicated that when compared to children in intact families, participants from blended families experienced significant relationship anxiety in their global attachment and their attachment to father. Those in the single parent family group also had significant relationship anxiety in regards to attachment to father. Relationship avoidance was also measured, showing only significant differences in regards to the attachment to father in the single parent family group. The present study was consistent with many of the previously related findings of earlier studies. Overall the participants indicated a secure attachment to their romantic partner, their father, and their mother, as well as a secure global attachment. However, when this was broken into childhood family types significant differences were found.

Cui et al. (2008) specifically noted that the family of origin has an effect on the later relationships of the children. At the same time, other researchers suggested that adult children of divorce will experience relationships differently than children from intact families (see Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Cui et al., 2010; Cui et al., 2008; Cusimano & Riggs, 2013; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Haydon et al., 2012; Jensen et al., 2015; Kindsvatter & Desmond, 2012; Lamb, 2012; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Schaan et al., 2019; Sen, & Kavlak, 2012; Sutton, 2019;). In part these so-called differences could account for why children of divorce were attached to their current romantic partner but not as securely attached globally or to either of their parents. The indication that attachment is a lifelong process that allows an individual to express, recognize, and respond to emotional behaviors and expressions in their social interactions is perhaps the best rational for understanding how attachment relates to children of divorce (Goldsmith, 2010; Lowenstein, 2010; Pistole, 2010; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2010). Thus, the findings that children of divorce raised in single parent families and serial matrimony families are more likely to have an insecure attachment to their father, while children of divorce raised in serial matrimony families are also indicate an insecure attachment to their mother is better understood.

The results of the study are also consistent with the findings of existing related studies. These studies indicate that while attachment is relatively stable over the lifetime of the individual there is a significant impact of early positive family interactions and later romantic relationships (see Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Dinero et al., 2011; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Foroughe & Muller, 2012; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Haydon et al., 2012; Jensen et al., 2015; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Schaan et al., 2019; Sutton, 2019; Wang et al., 2012). Adams and Baptist (2012) describe this as a movement from the family of origin to the romantic relationship including the adjustments that each individual must make in order to become a participant in the romantic partnership. Wallerstein et al. (2000) went so far as to consider that far reaching effects of parental divorce on children, finding that parental divorce is not a one-time temporary crisis, but a series of changes. Thus, the results of this study support Wallerstein et al. (2000) in focusing on the long-term impact of parental divorce.

Overall, the findings of this study in regards to attachment suggest that adult children of divorce are impacted by parental divorce long after childhood. Relationship anxiety and relationship avoidance are two factors that indicate adult attachment styles. Relationship anxiety is related to the fear of abandonment and or rejection in the individual with regards to their romantic partner (Fish et al., 2012; Ho et al., 2012; Knoke et al., 2010). The results of this study are consistent with other studies that indicate children of divorce are insecure in their relationships with attachment figures (Fish et al., 2012; Mikulincer et al., 2010). This can also be seen when comparing the relationship anxiety of children raised in intact families with the relationship anxiety of children of divorce raised in blended families and single parent families in their relationships with their father. Children raised in blended families also experienced relationship anxiety in relation to their global attachment. Studies by Dinero et al. (2011) and Ho et al. (2012) found that individuals with relationship avoidant characteristics were more likely to emotionally distance themselves in order to minimize the emotional toll of their relationships. This study supports that finding in children of divorce raised in single parent families indicated more relationship avoidance in regards to their father. This is a similar finding to several studies that suggest that while parents are going through a divorce, children are left to fend for themselves on an emotional level making it more difficult for the child to trust others in meeting their emotional needs (Clarke-Stewart & Brentano, 2006; Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wallerstein et al., 2013).

While adult children of divorce in all the childhood family types were more likely to divorce when compared to children raised in intact families, children raised in serial matrimony families and blended families were significantly more likely to divorce when compared to children raised in intact families. At the same, the overall indication is that the participants were more likely to be married. However, adult children of divorce raised in blended families were more likely to have married than were adult children of divorce raised in single parent families or serial matrimony families.

These findings are consistent with several other studies that suggest that children of divorce are more likely to divorce than children raised in intact families (see Baptist et al., 2012; Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Crowell et al., 2009; Dinero et al., 2011; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Foroughe & Muller, 2012; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Hare et al., 2009; Haydon et al., 2012; Jarnecke & South, 2013; Jensen et al., 2015; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Schaan et al., 2019; Sutton, 2019; Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wallerstein et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2012). Wallerstein et al. (2000) is the only study that indicated that the long reaching impact of parental divorce must be considered due to the indication that adult patterns of behavior are often based on examples of adult relationships a child witnesses while other researchers indicated a somewhat less stressful impact from these examples (Cusimano & Riggs, 2013; Dykas & Cassidy, 2011; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Russell et al., 2013). The findings in this study also support Wolfinger (2005) and Amato and DeBoer's (2011) suggestion that children of divorce are more likely to view divorce as escape hatch from a difficult relationship than children from intact families. Thus, the results of this study were supported by previous studies on the relationship between the marital outcomes and relationship attachment of children of divorce raised in blended families, single parent families, and serial matrimony families when compared to children raised in intact families.

Based on other studies and the findings in this study regarding global attachment and attachment to parents, along with the ever-divorced finding found in this study there is reason to question the level of attachment to the current romantic partner reported in this study. There is a known propensity to report good things about a person or relationship closest or most important to an individual even during times of relationship crisis (see Ben-Ari & Lavee, 2011; Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Jensen et al., 2015; Lemay, 2014; Meixner & Herbert, 2018; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Schaan et al., 2019; Sommerfeld & Bitton, 2016; Sutton, 2019; Willoughby, 2015;). This is particularly true for females in relationships and the participants within this study were 80% female.

The type of family a child is raised in is vital in forming their attitudes, and behaviors in regards to their adult relationships. According to several studies an individual is more likely to base their views of family and relationships on their childhood experiences (see Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Cui et al., 2010; Cui et al., 2008; Cusimano & Riggs, 2013; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Haydon et al., 2012; Jensen et al., 2015; Kindsvatter & Desmond, 2012; Lamb, 2012; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Schaan et al., 2019; Sen, & Kavlak, 2012; Sutton, 2019). Other research also suggests that the marital status and conflict that is seen in the parents relationship influences the relationships of their children (see Bing et al., 2009; Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Crowell et al., 2009; Cui et al. , 2008; Cui et al., 2010; Cusimano & Riggs, 2013; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Haydon et al., 2012; Jensen et al., 2015; Kavas & Gunduz-Hosgor, 2011; Kindsvatter & Desmond, 2012; Lamb, 2012; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Schaan et al., 2019; Sen, & Kavlak, 2012; Sutton, 2019). As Cui et al. (2008) indicated children of divorce will experience relationships differently than children of intact families do, while being more accepting of other forms of family. This then indicates that different childhood family types play a role in those experiences of relationship that children of divorce will have. As Wallerstein et al. (2000) suggested as parents' divorce the child experiences differences in their relationships with their parents, for example, there is less supervision of adolescents, less financial security, differences in the parent's ability to nurture the child, and less time spent with one or both parents (see Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Foroughe & Muller, 2012; Hartman et al., 2011; Jensen et al., 2015; Kavas & Gunduz-Hosgor, 2011; Moon, 2011; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Schaan et al., 2019; Sutton, 2019; Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wallerstein et al., 2013;). Wallerstein et al. (2000) findings, as well as other researcher's findings, could explain why the attachment to mother and father in this study differ for children of divorce when compared to children raised in intact families.

The interactions between the child and the parent in the childhood family are an important factor in their later development of social relationships. However, Cusimano and Riggs (2013), as well as Angarne-Lindberg et al. (2009), both indicated that children are different in their responses to parental divorce. At the same time, Moon (2011) showed that children from intact families have significant less adjustment problems than children of divorce.

The results can be understood in terms of the link between childhood family types and marital outcomes and relationship attachment of children of divorce. Childhood family types influence an individual's later marital outcomes and relationship attachment (see Bing et al., 2009; Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Crowell et al., 2009; Cui et al., 2010; Cui et al., 2008; Cusimano & Riggs, 2013; Dykas & Cassidy, 2011; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Foroughe & Muller, 2012; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Hartman et al., 2011; Haydon et al., 2012; Jensen et al., 2015; Kavas & Gunduz-Hosgor, 2011; Kindsvatter & Desmond, 2012; Lamb, 2012; Moon, 2011; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2013; Schaan et al., 2019; Sutton, 2019; Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wallerstein et al., 2013). Faber and Wittenborn (2010) showed that the development of normal social interactions and emotional regulation begin with the relationship between the individual and their parents and siblings. These relationships are described as the safe haven and secure base for the child when other areas in their life is in chaos (Pistole, 2010). Yet, these are exactly the relationships that are disrupted when a parental divorce happens. The results of this study determined that when compared to children of intact families the martial outcomes and relationship attachment were different for children of divorce raised in blended families, single parent families, and serial matrimony families post parental divorce. The results of this study provided some evidence of a relationship between these childhood family types and the marital outcomes and relationship attachment of children of divorce.

Since this was a casual-comparative study rather than a true experiment some caution should be used in drawing conclusions regarding a causal relationship between the childhood family types and the marital outcomes and relationship attachment of children of divorce. The standard would have been to use a true experimental design, in which children could have been randomly assigned to treatments conditions, in which they were subjected to different childhood family types, and observation of the effects of divorce over a period of several years. This would not have been either ethical or practical. On the other hand, the results of this study are consistent with the majority of the literature regarding children of divorce and their marital outcomes and relationship attachment.

Implications for Positive Social Change

In summary, it was shown through this study that the research regarding children of divorce is relatively correct. However, this study had additional insight into how previous findings relate to the different childhood family types a child of divorce experiences post-parental divorce. Specifically, children of divorce experience more insecure attachment to their mother and father than children of intact families experience, and their marital outcomes are similar to their parents in terms of ever divorcing. An understanding of how this early relationship experiences impact a child of divorce is an essential part in understanding their adult relationships (see Bing et al., 2009; Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Crowell et al., 2009; Cui et al., 2010; Cui et al., 2008; Cusimano & Riggs, 2013; Dykas & Cassidy, 2011; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Foroughe & Muller, 2012; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Hartman et al., 2011; Haydon et al., 2012; Jensen et al., 2015; Kavas & Gunduz-Hosgor, 2011; Kindsvatter & Desmond, 2012; Lamb, 2012; Moon, 2011; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2013; Schaan et al., 2019; Sutton, 2019; Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wallerstein et al., 2013;). Placed in a broader context the development of social interactions and emotional regulation as a child is essential to the later implications of these skills as an adult in an adult relationship (Faber & Wittenborn, 2010). An adult that has developed these skills will result in the ability to manage their relationship and their outcomes. For children this would mean that the adults in their lives would demonstrate better relationship skills resulting in examples that will then be carried over in their later adult relationships.

Recommendations for Action

The findings of this study emphasized the need for society to understand the impact of parental examples on children and their future relationships. While society as a whole needs to be more supportive of the survival of intact families, there is a need for schools, communities, and society in general to support and encourage positive relationship examples for children, especially for children of divorce. Identifying those skills and behaviors that are lacking or in danger following a parental divorce would be beneficial. The investigation of this quantitative study showed that parents, social workers, and courts should work hand-in-hand to support children’s social-emotional development following a parental divorce.

Recommendations for Further Research

Future studies could involve the examination of other factors that affect the marital outcomes and relationships attachment of children of divorce in blended families, single parent families, and in serial matrimony families. These include determining the impact of other factors such as which parent the child lives with post-divorce, family contention, level of income culture, and religion, among others. This current study considered post-parental childhood family types in comparison to intact families. The make-up of the family is changing in today's society; therefore, future research could examine other childhood family types, such as that of same sex couples. This comparison could shed additional light on factors that influence the marital outcomes and relationship attachment of children of divorce. In addition, future studies could also investigate the differences between a primarily male participant pool and a primarily female participant pool. It might also be appropriate to further explore the differences ethnicity, race, and religion would have on the marital outcomes and relationship attachment of children of divorce.

Conclusions

Chapter 5 presented a summary of the previous chapter in this study, the summary of the findings and conclusions, implication of results, and recommendations for future research. The focus of this study was to provide quantitative evidence regarding the a statistically significant relationship between childhood family types post parental divorce and adult marital outcomes and relationship attachment. Many researchers indicate that an understanding of early attachment relationships and childhood experiences has an impact on a child throughout their life (see Bing et al., 2009; Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Crowell et al., 2009; Cui et al., 2010; Cui et al., 2008; Cusimano & Riggs, 2013; Dykas & Cassidy, 2011; Ebrahimi & Kimiaei, 2014; Foroughe & Muller, 2012; Fraley et al., 2013; Gere et al., 2013; Hartman et al., 2011; Haydon et al., 2012; Jensen et al., 2015; Kavas & Gunduz-Hosgor, 2011; Kindsvatter & Desmond, 2012; Lamb, 2012; Moon, 2011; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2013; Schaan et al., 2019; Sutton, 2019; Wallerstein et al., 2000; Wallerstein et al., 2013;). This understanding is essential when attempting to understand the later experiences of children of divorce. The results of this quantitative study provided evidence that there is a relationship between childhood family types post parental divorce and later adult marital outcomes and relationship attachment. As a conclusion, it was recommended that practitioners take into account the behaviors and skills an adult child of divorce may be missing based on their childhood family type when an individual enters individual psychotherapy for relationship problems.

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Appendix A: Demographic Survey

Demographics

1. Current Marital status: Are you:
    a. Married
    b. Divorced
    c. Widowed
    d. Separated
    e. Never been married
    f. A member of an unmarried couple

2. What type of family did you grow up in (answer based on the parent you primarily lived with)?
    a. Intact family (i.e. lived with biological or adopted mother and father)
    b. Post parental divorce Blended family (i.e. lived with one biological parent and with a stepparent; possibly included step and or half siblings)
    c. Post parental divorce Single parent family (i.e. biological parent never remarried following a divorce)
    d. Post parental divorce serial matrimony family (i.e. biological parent remarried multiple times following a divorce)
    e. Parents never married

3. Have you taken this survey previously?
    a. Yes
    b. No

4. Where are you located?
    a. United States
    b. Outside the United States
    c. Rather not say

General Information

5. Date of Birth Month __________ Year _____ Age: ________

6. What is your gender?
    a. Male
    b. Female

7. What is your religious preference?
    a. Christian
    b. Jewish/ Orthodox Jew
    c. Muslim
    d. Buddhist
    e. Hindu
    f. Not affiliated with any religion
    g. Other
    h. Rather not say

8. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? If currently enrolled, mark the previous grade or highest degree received.

    a) High School, no diploma
    b) High school graduate - high school diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED)
    c) Some college credits
    d) 1 or more years of college, no degree
    e) Associate degree (for example: AA, AS)
    f) Bachelor's degree (for example: BA, AB, BS)
    g) Master's degree (for example: MA, MS, MEng, MEd, MSW, MBA)
    h) Professional degree (for example: MD, DDS, DVM, LLB, JD)
    i) Doctorate degree (for example: PhD, EdD)

9. . Race/Ethnicity: *Please specify your race/ethnicity*.
    a. American Indian or Alaska Native
    b. Asian or of Asian descent.
    c. Black /African American, or of African descent
    d. Hispanic or Latino
    e. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
    f. White /Caucasian

10. Are you in a current intimate relationship?
    a. Yes
    b. No

11. If married or previously married how old were you at the time of your first marriage? (Textual Response)

12. If divorced, how old were you at the time of your first divorce? (Textual response)

13. If divorced, how many times? (Textual response)

14. Do you have children from current intimate relationship?
    a. Yes
    b. No

15. Do you have children from previous intimate relationship?
    a. Yes
    b. No

Childhood Living Status

16. Were your parents divorced?
    a. Yes
    b. No

17. How old were you when your parent’s divorced?
    a. 0-4 years
    b. 5-9 years
    c. 10-14 years
    d. 15-18 years
    e. Over 18 years old

18. Did you live primarily with your…
    a. Mother
    b. Father
    c. Other, please specify (textual response)

Answer the following questions about the parent you primarily lived with growing up:

1. Did your parent …while you were in the home?
    a. Remarry
    b. Stay single
    c. Have multiple short-term marriages

2. How long after the divorce did they marry?
    a. Less than a year
    b. 1-2 years
    c. 3-4 years
    d. 5-6 years
    e. 7-8 years
    f. 9-10 years
    g. Over 10 years
    h. Don’t know

3. Did your parent have multiple short-term marriages?
    a. Yes
    b. No

4. What was the longest duration of the marriage?

a. 0-5 months
b. 6-12 months
c. 1-2 years
d. 3-4 years
e. 5-6 year
f. Longer than 6 years

5. What was the shortest duration of the marriage?
   a. 0-5 months
   b. 6-12 months
   c. 1-2 years
   d. 3-4 years
   e. 5-6 years
   f. Longer than 6 years

6. Approximately how many short-term marriages did your parent have while you lived at home?
   a. 1-2
   b. 3-4
   c. More than 4

7. If your parents are married, how long have they been married?
   a. 0-4 years
   b. 5-9 years
   c. 10-14 years
   d. 15-19 years
   e. 20-24 years
   f. 25-29 years
   g. 30-34 years
   h. 35-39 years
   i. 40 years or more