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## The Intergenerational Transmission of Attitudes on Divorce and Marriage

Rebecca Elizabeth Bivona-Guttadauro  
*San Jose State University*

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THE INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF ATTITUDES ON DIVORCE  
AND MARRIAGE

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Sociology

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Rebecca E. Bivona-Guttadauro

May 2013

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The Designated Thesis Committee Approves the Thesis Titled

THE INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF ATTITUDES ON DIVORCE  
AND MARRIAGE

by

Rebecca E. Bivona-Guttadauro

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2013

Dr. Susan Murray                      Department of Sociology

Dr. Natalie Boero                      Department of Sociology

Dr. Peter Chua                          Department of Sociology

## ABSTRACT

### THE INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF ATTITUDES ON DIVORCE AND MARRIAGE

by Rebecca E. Bivona-Guttadauro

The present study shed light on the process of intergenerational transmission of attitudes as it occurs for women from divorced and intact families. Taking into account how women from divorced and intact homes view their parents' relationship, this study examined how attitudes of marriage and divorce are transmitted from parents to children. This study utilized quantitative survey methods including surveys to gather data and nested multiple linear regression to analyze the data to determine how the process of intergenerational transmission of attitudes was occurring, if at all, for the women in the sample. Utilizing sample data from a large public university, the study affirmed that the process of intergenerational transmission was supported for women from intact and divorced homes for their attitudes of divorce. However the theory was not supported for women from intact and divorced homes for their attitudes of marriage. The study implemented additional controls such as age, income, education, employment, quality of child/parent relationship, and age at time of parental divorce.

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## **Introduction**

The present study aimed to test how the theory of intergenerational transmission of attitudes applied to American women's attitudes toward marriage and divorce. More specifically, the present study examined attitudes of women from both families in which biological parents remained in a relationship (intact) and families in which the parents were divorced. The study aimed to uncover how women learned about marriage and divorce and whether learning about marriage and divorce was directly attributed to how the women perceive their parents' relationships. To explore intergenerational transmission of attitudes theory, the present study first examined the question of why divorce is important and the costs it presents to institutions and individuals in society. Next, the study examined how individuals from families with divorced parents normalize divorce through a process of social learning, and through the intergenerational transmission of attitudes from parent to child. The study took an in-depth look at the process of intergenerational transmission of attitudes, including the contributions of previous research, as well as reasons for focusing on women. The present study aimed to determine whether or not the intergenerational transmission of attitudes occurs for women from both families in which biological parents remain in relationships (intact), and families in which parents were divorced. To determine if the intergenerational transmission theory of attitudes occurs for women, it was necessary to first explore the state of divorce in the United States.

Divorce rates as well as sentiments regarding divorce have shifted over time. Based on the National Vital Statistics Report published by the Center for Disease

Control, the divorce rate in 2009 was 3.4 per 1,000 individuals, whereas the marriage rate was 6.8 per 1,000 individuals. In other words, in 2009, for every 6.8 people who were marrying, 3.4 individuals were divorcing; therefore, in 2009, the divorce percentage was about 50%. The shifting rates in divorce and marriage are attributed to shifting sentiments in American culture (Adams & Coltrane, 2007).

Adams and Coltrane (2007) noted how popular American sentiment regarding divorce shifts over time as a result of both related political discourse and how the media portray divorce. For example, during the 1970s, divorce became more accepted in American culture with the shift to no-fault divorce. Under a system of fault-divorce, an individual (either the husband or the wife) was to blame in the case of divorce. There had to be a justified reason such as adultery for the divorce to occur. Under the system of no-fault divorce, there was no blame placed on either the husband or the wife. A divorce could occur simply for irreconcilable differences. No-fault divorce laws made divorces more accessible for couples. As a result of the shift in law, more women sought divorce from their husbands. Continuing with the shift in political discourse, in the 2000s, an ideological shift took place with the election of President George W. Bush, which ushered in a political discourse embedded with moral conservatism aimed at marriage and the family. This was evident by Bush's "Healthy Marriage Initiative," which promoted traditional values such as marriage between two heterosexual individuals to ensure a decrease of out-of-wedlock births, deterred divorce, and worked to ensure that more children live with their biological fathers (Prevent Child Abuse America, 1). Though the "Healthy Marriage Initiative" did not appear to significantly affect divorce

rates, sentiments regarding divorce have shifted. Through political discourse and the media, marriage reform promoting the family has been popularized, and divorce reform promoting no-fault divorce has been demonized. Demonizing divorce stigmatizes those who experience it, resulting in detrimental costs to families and society.

The “costs” of divorce are detrimental on structural and individual levels. Structurally, high rates of divorce result in the suffering of the institutions of education, marriage, and the family. On an individual level, high rates of divorce affect the men and women involved. High rates of divorce also affect the children involved, when they are both young and when they become adults.

With high rates of divorce, society suffers. There are two major structural institutions that suffer as a result of divorce: education and family. Pervasive divorce has imposed major costs on society, particularly on the education system. The psychological and behavioral problems children experience post-parental divorce create challenges for teachers and the education system. According to Galston (1996), the psychological and behavioral problems children experience have required the federal system to invest massive sums of money in child-support enforcement in schools. There is a need for specialized teachers to handle the psychological issues children are dealing with in the schools as a result of divorce. This creates a burden at the structural level for the schools. When looking at another structure, divorce has compelled a change in the structure of the familial institution. Whereas the nuclear structure of the family was once the predominant form of family, there has been an increase in alternative forms of families. Step-families are a common structure today; however, some of these families exist in the

form of parental cohabitation, rather than traditional marriage. Compared to the 1960s when about three-fourths of divorced women would remarry, only about two-thirds of divorced women remarried in the mid-1990s (Cherlin & Furstenberg Jr., 1994). With the rise in divorce rates and women's reluctance to remarry, cohabitation becomes more common among the divorced. Research suggests that divorced individuals are hesitant to recommit to formal marriage, instead opting to commit informally through cohabitation (Cherlin & Furstenberg Jr., 1994). Arising alternative forms of the family pose a threat to the traditional images of marriage and family that have persisted within American society. It is important to examine how divorce impacts a different institution, the institution of marriage as well.

High rates of divorce severely affect the institution of marriage, which is closely linked with two other major institutions: religion and politics. Religion is an important institution linked with the institution of marriage for three reasons. First, pious conservatives maintain the religious argument that marriage is sacred and unbreakable, fighting hard against divorce (Mohler, 2010). Second, religion provides the physical institutions within which many marriage ceremonies take place. Third, most marriages produce families and family values are the traditional platform upon which church membership grows. From a religious viewpoint, marriage is the beginning of a family, and families are central for religion. If new marriages are not occurring as often as before and individuals are divorcing at higher rates, the number of families to support the church rapidly declines. The churches and religion as an institution are weakened by divorce and the lack of marriage. Divorce is detrimental to the institution of religion. A

second institution that is closely linked with marriage is politics. Conservative politicians argue against divorce due to the fact that it weakens the institution of marriage. Political leaders, like George W. Bush, influence the institution of marriage by promoting legislation and a discourse of marriage, as he did during his tenure as president. For example, in 2004, Bush gave a speech announcing his support for an amendment to the U.S. Constitution which would create a ban on same-sex unions. In this speech, then President Bush declared that “if we're to prevent the meaning of marriage from being changed forever, our nation must enact a constitutional amendment to protect marriage in America.” Bush then went on to state that the sacredness of marriage is to be experienced between women and men: “The union of a man and woman is the most enduring human institution, honored and encouraged in all cultures and by every religious faith” (Bush, 2004). While the President’s speech impacted many Americans, individual voters affect legislation that is or is not passed in particular states. Individuals for or against particular forms of marriage are able to promote legislation that affect the kind of marriage that is legally acceptable in individuals states. For example, in 2008 Proposition 8 was passed in California which banned same-sex marriages. In 2012, Maine, Maryland, and Washington became the first states to legalize same-sex marriage through the popular vote. The relationships between marriage and religion and politics are not one sided. Each influences the other and affects legislation and decisions within marriage/family, and sometimes decisions within particular churches. What is important to understand is that divorce affects the institution of marriage and its relationship with the institutions of religion and politics. The costs of divorce to institutions are apparent

but the effects are most salient with individuals: to the men, women, and children involved in divorce.

While the costs of divorce are not as severe to men as they are to women, they still exist (Stroup & Pollock, 1994). The effects of divorce on men include subtle economic effects and major effects to health. I would argue that there are emotional effects regarding a fathers relationships with his children as well. Upon divorce, males suffer an initial drop in income. It is important to note, however, that male divorcees' income typically recovers after about five years (Stroup & Pollock, 1994). Divorced men experience a 10-15% percent increase in their standard of living post divorce (Galston, 1996). Many men experience noticeable changes in their social networks, mainly the loss of mutual friends as a result of their divorce, despite no change in their employment status. Oftentimes, divorce affects friendships due to marital problems (Duncan, 1994). Typically, it is the husband who moves out of the family home so he often loses the connection with kin and friends. One of the most pressing concerns for divorced males concerns the health consequences associated with divorce (Galston, 1996). Divorce and the process of marital breakup put people at a much higher risk for both psychiatric and physical disease. Galston (1996) notes that divorced men are twice as likely to die from heart disease, stroke, hypertension, and cancer as married men in any given year. Health issues are important to address, but as mentioned earlier, one severe effect is that upon the relationship between father and children (Hoffman, 1995; Shapiro & Lambert, 1999). Because the father typically moves out of the family home, he is likely to spend less time with his children. It is likely that his relationship with his children will suffer as a result

of his absence in the family home. The effects of divorce for men are less severe than for women, however they are still necessary to address.

When a couple divorces, the costs are more severe for women than for men. The effects from divorce that women experience include a decreased standard of living and negative impacts to mental health. Research notes consistently that following divorce women earn less than men and experience a lowered standard of living and poverty (Duncan, 1994; Galston, 1996; Sayers, 2012; Stroup & Pollock, 1994). In 2010, it was estimated that on average women earned only seventy-seven cents for each dollar earned by men (Sayers, 2012). Due to the disparities in wages between women and men, women tend to have more trouble taking care of themselves and their children post-divorce. As a consequence of structural pay inequality, women experience a decrease in their standard of living post-divorce due to the loss of their husband's income. It is estimated that women experience a 30% decline in their standard of living while men experience a ten to fifteen percent increase in their standard of living post divorce, (Galston, 1996; Stroup & Pollock, 1994). Reflecting on this drop in women's standard of living, Duncan (1994:447) discusses how the ratio of income to needs is particularly revealing, indicating that mother-headed households have only about 70% of the income that had been previously available when fathers were present. The loss of the husband's income is not made up in other ways, by the wife taking on additional jobs, instead, the families' living standard drops. It is important to acknowledge the economic impacts of divorce on women and the potential this may have in leading to poverty. It is also important to look at the specific mental health impacts divorce has on the wife/mother. Post-divorce, many

women feel it necessary to increase their work hours to compensate for the loss of their husband's income. As a result of increased work, the mothers decrease their immediate contact with their children and other kin. These mothers, who may have previously had help from a husband with household chores and taking care of children, are left to care for things by themselves. The added stress of working extra hours and taking care of the household leads many mothers to experience depression (Duncan, 1994). A mother's mental and economic well-being affects not only her own life but the lives of her children.

Galston (1996) argues that pervasive divorce has imposed major costs on society, particularly when looking at children. Specific effects of divorce are seen in children, while additional affects of divorce continue to impact them into adulthood. This section will discuss the effects of divorce on children during childhood and subsequently when they are adult children. Keith and Finlay (1988) argue that parental divorce diminishes the economic and social resources available to children. The social networks available to children via their parents diminish as a result of parental divorce. If one parent had kin networks and that parent moves out of the family home, those networks may no longer be available to the child. In turn, the economic advantages of having a two-parent household also diminish. Whereas there were two incomes from a two-parent household, the children are most likely living with a primary parent subsisting off of one parent's income. The negative consequences for children as a result of divorce include children's educational attainment, family relocation, loss of friends, and moving to a new school (Duncan, 1994). A study by Wallerstein and Lewis (2004) looks at 131 children, ages 3-



18, when their parents divorced and the implications of parental divorce on the psychological and emotional well-being of the children. The study notes that children from divorced homes experienced radical change as they and their parents struggled to reestablish economic, social, and parental functioning. As a result of parental divorce, the children in the study faced high levels of anxiety for fear of not knowing what change would occur next. Regarding mental health issues, divorce causes tremendous stress for a child and can often contribute to mental distress for children. Duncan (1994) notes that stressful life events, such as divorce and moving, combined with decreased parent availability and diminished social support as a result of relocation, contribute to children's distress during divorce. While it is important to look at the impacts of divorce on children, it is also necessary to acknowledge the effects divorce has on adult children of divorced parents.

The negative consequences for children when they are adults include marital timing, marital probability, and divorce probability. Research indicates that adult children of divorced parents are more likely to marry younger and when they do marry they are more hesitant about marriage. These adult children are more skeptical about marriage due to their exposure to divorce. In some instances, there is a likelihood that some will likely not marry at all due to their skepticism about marriage (Amato, 1996; Glenn & Kramer, 1987; Greenberg & Nay, 1982). When they do marry, they are more likely to see their marriages end in divorce compared to their peers who come from intact homes (Amato, 1996; Glenn & Kramer, 1987; Greenberg & Nay, 1982). Some of this skepticism is because adult children of divorce are at risk for emotional factors when they

are children. Galston (1996) notes that the experience of parental divorce diminishes a child's trust and impedes the capacity of adult children to form lasting relationships.

Experiencing parental divorce also makes adult children of divorce more likely to internalize divorce as a normal behavior. This means that an adult child is more likely to choose divorce as an option in a troubled marriage than an adult child who grew up in an intact home (Amato, 1996; Glenn & Kramer, 1987; Greenberg & Nay, 1982).

### **Normalizing Divorce**

One of the detrimental effects of divorce on children concerns the extent to which they normalize divorce. Normalizing divorce means holding attitudes that are more favorable toward divorce. Researchers note adult children of divorced parents will be more likely to divorce themselves (Amato, 1996; Glenn & Kramer, 1987; Greenberg & Nay, 1982). Research also demonstrates that parental divorce elevates the risk that adult children will exhibit behaviors that interfere with the maintenance of mutually rewarding intimate relationships, thus leading to divorce (Amato, 1996). The emotional effects of divorce on adult children can create an inability to form intimate partnerships or relationships using interpersonal behaviors (Amato, 1996; Galston, 1996) including effective communication and compromising. Communication and compromising are behaviors that an adult child of divorce might not experience coming from a divorced home. Conflict in the home and disrupted parent-child relationships can lead to a lack of trust, jealousy, and an inability to commit to a partner (Amato, 1996). These behaviors, as Amato (1996) discusses, stem from emotional insecurity due to instability within the adult child's interpersonal relationships in the home.

Amato (1996) argues that the lack of interpersonal behaviors lead adult children of divorce to divorce themselves. Glenn and Kramer (1987) offer three additional explanations for divorce amongst adult children of divorce parents. Glenn and Kramer's first explanation is referred to as the absence-of-modeling-of-spouse-role explanation. In this first explanation, Glenn and Kramer suggest that the "proper" roles of husband and wife are not modeled for the child and this leaves the adult child prone to divorce in his or her own relationship. The adult child does not learn husband and wife modeling and therefore does not know how to model his or her role in his or her own relationship. This leaves the adult child vulnerable to divorce due to inability to communicate his or her expected role in his or her marriage (Glenn & Kramer, 1987: 811-12). Second, the greater-willingness-to-resort-to-divorce explanation posits that when problems arise in marriages of adult children of divorce, they will more likely resort to divorce. Having come from a family where divorce was an option for the parents, the adult child will see that divorce can be an option for their own marriage as well. When problems arise in marriages of adult children from families with intact families, this explanation states that divorce would be viewed as the lesser of options (Glenn & Kramer, 1987: 812). Third, the lower-commitment-to-marriage explanation explains how adult children of divorce find it harder to make commitments, reflecting Amato's (1996) findings about inability to form lasting relationships. This last explanation notes how adult children of divorce have pre-adult experiences that teach them how fragile marriages can be. This explanation accounts for the adult children of divorce who marry without expectations that the marriage will last, making them less hesitant to opt for divorce. Essentially, adult

children are socialized through their parents' relationship to potentially have a lower commitment to marriage (Glenn & Kramer, 1987: 813).

With regards to socialization, Greenberg and Nay (1982) suggest that parents communicate attitudes both directly and indirectly to their children regarding romanticism, marriage, and/or divorce. The attitudes parents communicate greatly influence how children perceive marriage and divorce. Greenberg and Nay argue that the relationship between parental divorce and adult children's attitudes toward divorce vary along with the nature of the parental divorce (contested or consensual) and its personal impact on the child. For example, if the child experienced a positive divorce, he/she may have a more pessimistic view of marriage and see it as a temporary commitment which can be terminated if deemed unsatisfactory. In this situation, the child experienced a smooth divorce. This could indicate that in the child's adult life, he/she could have a smooth divorce as well. However, if the child experiences a traumatic divorce and suffers personal unhappiness as a result, he/she may enter into his/her own marriage with a profound fear of marital failure and be less inclined to divorce (Greenberg & Nay, 1982:336). In this scenario, the child experienced a traumatic divorce and will be fearful that this will be the same result in his/her own marriage if it were to end in divorce as well. The transmission of attitudes from parents as well as the transmission of the family structure greatly impact adult child behaviors in their own relationships.

### **Intergenerational Transmission Theory**

Intergenerational transmission theory argues that behavioral or patterns exhibited in the home by parents will be replicated by children in their adult lives. This theory is

applicable to various aspects of sociological research including the study of family violence, social capital, and marriage and divorce. Applied to intimate partner violence, this theory explains how violence in the family-of-origin is replicated in later adult intimate partnerships (Franklin & Kercher, 2012; Gover, Kaukinen, & Fox, 2008; Kerley, Xu, Sirisunyaluck, & Alley, 2009). Applied to social capital, Anette Laureau's (2001) book *Unequal Childhoods* explains how social capital in the form of language, status, and knowledge is transmitted through parents to their children based on class. Other studies indicate how parents' educational attainment and their attitudes toward education as a form of social capital are transmitted to their children (Martin 2012; Patacchini & Zenou 2011). When applying this theory to marriage and divorce, researchers argue that parental divorce is transmitted to their children, who will likely divorce themselves (Amato, 1996; Glenn & Kramer, 1987; Greenberg & Nay, 1982). The theory of intergenerational transmission is applicable to a variety of disciplines and topics in sociology.

Studying intergenerational transmission is important in research. The theory takes into account how attitudes and behaviors in the family are passed on from parents to children. Learning about marriage and divorce often occurs within the family. Greenberg and Nay (1982: 336) suggest that since children's earliest and most prolonged exposure to the institution of marriage is through their parents, it is no wonder that their perception of the happiness of their parents' marriage may be strongly associated with their own attitudes toward marriage. When a child grows up in a home where a harmonious marriage and effective communication is practiced, an adult child will

believe that marriage is a good thing. If parents communicate to a young child that marriage is a good thing, a child will reflect those values when they are an adult.

However, if a child grows up in a home in which the parents argue often and there is continuous conflict the child will view marriage as negative. If parents communicate an environment of marital discord and communicate attitudes favorable of divorce, then the child will reflect that in his/her own life when he/she is an adult.

It is necessary to note that research states that the causal mechanisms through which relationship attitudes are transmitted is still unclear (Willoughby, 2012). Intergenerational transmission occurs in families, however, why or how it occurs is unclear. Regarding attitudes about marriage and other family relationships, Willoughby (2012) notes that it is likely that parents model positive and negative relationship behaviors to their children and in turn, these children begin to make generalizations and develop expectations about marriage and other family relationships. Children not only make generalization and develop expectations about marriage and family relationships, but they may also model their own lives after what they experience through their parents' relationship based on this model. This process mirrors Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, which suggests that as children and young adults observe what goes on in their families, including their parent's relationship, they will begin to develop their own perceptions of what marriage and divorce are. As children observe the quality of their parents' marriage they will form their own beliefs and values of marriage based on the relational model provided by their parents (Willoughby, 2012:227). Social learning theory and intergenerational transmission of attitudes theory are connected. Children

learn from their surroundings (parents) and this influences their attitudes. Parental attitudes are passed down to the child via social learning.

The present study focuses on the intergenerational transmission of attitudes and seeks to understand how children who come from divorced homes will replicate attitudes favorable toward divorce. The present study also intends to understand how the intergenerational transmission of attitudes is replicated for women from intact families and if they will hold favorable attitudes toward marriage.

### **Intergenerational Transmission of Attitudes of Marriage and Divorce**

Studies indicate that children who grow up in divorced families hold attitudes that are more favorable toward divorce, and in turn, are more cautious about marriage and life-long commitments in their adult lives (Amato, 1996; Amato & DeBoer, 2001; Cunningham & Thornton, 2006; Greenberg and Nay, 1982; Kunz, 2000; Pope and Mueller, 1976). The literature consistently reports that parental divorce increases the likelihood of adult children's divorce (Amato, 1996; Glenn & Kramer, 1987; Greenberg & Nay, 1982). These studies indicate that adult children of divorce are more willing to seek divorce than their counterparts, adult children of intact families. Some researchers argue that it is a combination of the reduced commitment to marriage as an institution and lower confidence that marriages can remain stable and happy, that may account for the heightened risk of divorce among adult children from divorced families (Amato & DeBoer, 2001; Glenn and Kramer, 1987; Whitton, Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman, 2008). Other researchers argue that it is the transmission of attitudes about marriage and divorce from divorced parents to their children that accounts for the heightened risk of divorce

(Van der Valk, de Goede, Larsen, & Meeus 2008; Willoughby, 2012). Using the intergenerational transmission of attitudes theory, I argue that through the transmission of attitudes from divorced parents to child, children learn attitudes that make them less likely to commit, less confident in marriage, as well as more likely to opt for divorce when marital problems arise. The intergenerational transmission of attitudes about marriage and divorce suggests that adult children who have parents who are divorced are more likely to divorce themselves or are more likely to hold positive views of divorce (Kulka & Weingarten, 1979; Kunz, 2000; Thornton & Freedman, 1982). In order to determine why these adult children of divorced homes are more likely to divorce it is important to understand where attitudes that are pro-divorce stem from. Intergenerational transmission theory provides insight as to how these attitudes may be transmitted. If an adult child grows up with parents that are pro-divorce and have an unstable marriage, then the adult child's ideas about divorce will be positive and ideas about marriage will be negative, as posited by the hypotheses in the current study. Children learn attitudes from their parents' relationship and internalize ideas of divorce to create their own understanding of divorce. Ideas of divorce, whether negative or positive, are transmitted from the parent to the child.

The present study examines whether or not adult children learn attitudes of marriage and divorce through their perception of their parents' relationship. In other words, if adult children perceive their parents to have been committed to each other, are they more or less likely to see commitment in marriage as a positive thing. On the other hand, if adult children perceive their parents to have had a negative relationship and not



been committed, are they more or less likely to see commitment in marriage as a negative thing. This study examines whether or not there is a direct relationship between the perception of the parents' relationship and the respondent's subsequent views of marriage and divorce. Parental attitudes about marriage and divorce are measured using the variable perception of parents' relationship which is transmitted to the adult child. The current study is interested in the way adult child perceive their parents' relationship, whether negative or positive, and whether this affects the adult child's views of marriage and divorce negatively or positively.

### **Extending Previous Research**

The transmission of attitudes about marriage and divorce from parent to child is important in determining how the adult child will act in his/her own marriage and divorce. What a child sees growing up is often carried into adulthood (Willoughby, 2012). According to Willoughby (2012), looking at the intergenerational transmission of attitudes toward divorce it is important to take into account three factors. While it is likely that the adult child's home situation (intact vs. divorced) will affect the likelihood of adult children's decisions to divorce, looking at how adult children perceived their parents' relationship and whether or not that relationship was positive or negative could also greatly affect adult children's views of marriage and divorce. Lastly, the adult child's quality of relationship with the parents may have an affect on the adult child's view of marriage and divorce. These are three important variables that the present study will take into account.

Cunningham and Thornton (2006) utilized a variable similar to perception of parents' relationship in their study when they looked at how the influence of parents' marital quality affected adult children's attitudes toward marriage. Cunningham and Thornton (2006) concluded that parents' marital quality influenced adult children's support for divorce facilitating the intergenerational transmission of attitudes.

An additional variable to acknowledge is the child's age at time of divorce. It makes sense that the older a child is at the time of divorce, the greater the effect of the divorce. If the child is older, then they understand what is going on and are forced to process the events. This means that they understand that their parents are separating. They might understand the economic effects more clearly if they are at an age where they readily need money. There are additional effects at an older age including losing friends and kin networks if children are forced to relocate. If a child is younger, then they do not really understand what is going on and they cannot process the events. There is the possibility that a young child may not even remember a divorce. It is important to acknowledge the timing of divorce on children's attitudes toward marriage and divorce. Some researchers argue that age at time of divorce has no effect on attitudes toward marriage and divorce (Greenberg and Nay, 1982) leading to inconsistent research. The present study proposed that age at time of divorce does affect attitudes toward marriage and divorce.

A third variable that is important to take into account is the quality of the child-parent relationship. Barber and Eccles (1992) suggest including the quality of child-parent relationship in studies on divorce and its effect on children of divorce because of

the effects it has in adulthood. Parent's involvement in their child's life can greatly influence the types of decisions a child will make in their adult years. If the child has a positive relationship with their parents, regardless of if there is a divorce, it is possible that the adult child will still favor marriage for him/herself. Accounting for the quality of the parent-child relationship is an important factor and may indicate that in households where the family structure is intact but the adult child perceived the parent-child relationship to be negative, there will be negative views of marriage and perhaps more positive views of divorce. This may also be true for adult children who grew up in a divorced home but had positive views of the parent-child relationship and therefore he/she might have a favorable view of marriage and less favorable view of divorce. It is important to control for this variable as it may influence how the adult child perceives the parents relationship and his/her attitudes toward marriage and divorce.

### **Focusing on Women**

Researchers note that women who come from families in which the parents have divorced report less confidence in future marriages than women from families in which the parents have remained married (Feng, Giarrusso, Bengtson, & Frye., 1999; Whitton et al. 2008). Whether or not a woman comes from a family with parents who have remained married or from a family with divorced parents effects how relationship-oriented the women are as well as their confidence in the relationships. When women come from intact families they tend to be more relationship-oriented and more confident in their relationships, whereas when women have witnessed parental dissolution they lack confidence in relationships and see marriage as potentially temporary (Whitton et al.,

2008). Women from divorced homes lack confidence in marriage and lasting commitment. Whitton et al. (2008:792) note that women from divorced homes “suppress levels of marital confidence and hold back on their commitment to their marriage.” This expands the discussion about the effects of divorce on adult children. Noted earlier, divorce exposes children to an environment in which communication and compromise are not interpersonally demonstrated (Amato, 1996). Women may be exposed to violence in the home, adultery, or lack of communication. Due to this exposure, a woman may develop a lack of confidence in her own ability to form lasting relationships. In short, divorce may take a deep emotional toll on women. It is also important to explore the economic effects of divorce for women.

The economic effects of divorce are devastating for women. For example, women more frequently report economic loss with divorce as well as loss of social networks than men (Galston, 1996; Stroup & Pollock, 1994). The standard of living decreases for women as a result of divorce (Duncan, 1994; Galston, 1996; Sayers, 2012; Stroup & Pollock, 1994). Reasons for this decrease in standard of living include loss of economic support from the husband, and the commonplace acquisition of sole responsibility for children. While there are post-divorce economic effects on mothers, there are also effects on their children, in particular their daughters. Research notes that daughters of divorced parents marry younger, are less educated, and marry men with less desirable jobs as a result of their own unfavorable economic status (Carlson, 1979; Mueller & Pope, 1977; Weitzman, 1985). With less education, a younger age at first marriage, and a husband with a low-paying job, a woman with an unsatisfying marriage

is setting herself up for a divorce where she will not be well off on her own. In the event that a woman who is uneducated and young to begin with does divorce, she will most likely not be well-off on her own. As discussed previously, the economic situation for women post-divorce is not favorable. If a woman is uneducated and young going into a marriage, her chances of doing well for herself post-divorce are not favorable. If a woman is uneducated she will most likely not have a well-paying job and be able to support herself and her children. If her husband does not have a good job, then he will not be able to support her and his children post-divorce. These conditions result in the decreased standard in living for the woman discussed earlier. The economic support lost as a result of divorce can be life-changing. The effects divorce has on women and their daughters can affect their daughters' abilities to form lasting relationships and ultimately their choices to divorce.

Individual choices to divorce differ between individuals from divorced and intact homes. In their study, Feng et al. (1999) tested the intergenerational transmission of marital quality and marital instability on women and men from divorced and nondivorced families. Feng et al. (1999) found that daughters of divorced parents are more likely than daughters of nondivorced parents to consider divorce if their marriages are not satisfactory or if marital problems are present. Feng et al. (1999) also found that parental divorce increased daughter's proneness to divorce. Parental divorce is highly influential for daughters but not sons according to this study, demonstrating how divorce impacts men and women differently. The study also noted how divorce impacts individuals from

divorced and intact homes differently. Based on research by Feng et al. (1999), it is important to acknowledge the reasons why women choose to divorce or not.

It has been noted that some women are reluctant to divorce due to their educational (Krishnan, 1994) and economic (Arendell, 1987) situations. Krishnan (1994) notes that less educated individuals indicated that marriage is a permanent union which should only be broken for very serious reasons. Women who are uneducated and lack financial independence are less likely to divorce their husbands to prevent a decreased standard of living for themselves and for their children. Pertaining to economic dependence, Arendell (1987) notes that most married women, whether working outside the home or not, are economically dependent on their husbands. Divorce and the loss of partnered income is a primary contributor to the increase in the number of impoverished women. Knowing that the standard of living will decrease and chances of poverty will increase, woman might be more reluctant to divorce their husbands.

The present study specifically focused on women to ascertain if women who are educated and earn higher incomes favor divorce in hypothetical situations. The present study hypothesized that women who feel empowered through financial independence and education will be pro-divorce. A woman's ability to support herself outside of marriage may facilitate divorce by making it more attractive when marital problems arise (Greenstein, 1990). Research also suggests that historically, as women become more educated their attitudes sway in favor of divorce (Martin & Parashar, 2006).

## **Contribution of the Present Study**

The present study added to existing literature by looking at how the theory of intergenerational transmission of attitudes is applicable for women of divorced families through perception of their parents' relationship. Women of divorced families, with negative perceptions of their parents' relationships, should have positive views of divorce and negative views of marriage, according to the transmission of attitudes of marriage and divorce and the present study. According to this general hypothesis, attitudes acquired through the perception of parental relationship influence views of marriage and divorce rather than the event of divorce.

In order to test the intergenerational transmission of attitudes, this study examined respondents' perceptions of their parents' relationships, the family structure (intact and separated/divorced), as well as attitudinal measures of marriage and divorce. Based on the intergenerational transmission of attitudes theory, several hypotheses will be tested. The first set of hypotheses examined a general relationship between the family structure (intact vs divorced) and the dependent variables (index for marriage and index for divorce) to assess any differences in the dependent variables for women from intact and divorced homes. This presented a general understanding of the relationship between the dependent variables.

*Hypothesis 1: Women from divorced families are more likely to have negative views toward marriage than are women from intact families.*

*Hypothesis 2: Women from divorced families are more likely to opt for divorce than are women from intact families.*

The second set of hypotheses included control variables and expands on the relationships between the independent variables (perception of parents' relationship and family structure) and the dependent variables (index for marriage and index for divorce).

*Hypothesis 3: Women from divorced families who have a negative view of their parent's relationship are more likely to have negative views of marriage compared to women from divorced families who have positive views of their parent's relationship.*

*Hypothesis 4: Women from divorced families who have a negative view of their parent's relationship are more likely to opt for divorce compared to women from divorced families who have positive views of their parent's relationship.*

*Hypothesis 5: Women from intact families who have positive views of their parent's relationships are more likely to have positive attitudes toward marriage than women from intact families who have negative views of their parent's relationship.*

*Hypothesis 6: Women from intact families who have positive views of their parent's relationships are less likely to opt for divorce than women from intact families who have negative views of their parent's relationship.*

The second set of hypotheses test for the intergenerational transmission of attitudes amongst women from intact families and women from divorced families. Hypotheses 3 and 4 controlled for age, employment, income, education, age at time of parental divorce, and quality of child-parent relationship. Hypotheses 5 and 6 controlled for age, employment, income, education, and quality of child-parent relationship. The present study tested to see if women from divorced families, who hold negative views of their parents' relationship, view marriage negatively and opt for divorce compared to women from divorced families who have positive views of their parents' relationship. In addition, the present study tested to see if women from intact families who hold positive views of their parents' relationship have positive views of marriage and are less likely to



opt for divorce compared to women who hold negative views of their parents' relationship.

## **Method**

### **Data**

The present study was based on survey data collected in the fall of 2012. The sample included 215 single, never married women from a large public university. The individual sample sizes for each regression model varied depending on list-wise deletion. All of the respondents were currently enrolled students at the university. The mean age of respondent's was 20. Regarding the respondent's primary form of employment, ten respondents worked full-time (5.5%), 72 respondents worked part-time (39.3%), 85 respondents were students (46.4%), and 16 respondents were unemployed (8.7%). Income was measured as individual income. The mean income for respondents was \$75,423. The median income for the sample was \$60,000. Sixty-nine respondents earned a high school diploma (32.4%), 82 completed some college (38.5%), 51 completed two-year college (23.9%), 10 completed a bachelor's degree (4.7%) and 1 completed some graduate school (.5%). Regarding respondent's family structure, 123 came from intact families (57.2%), 70 came from divorced/separated homes (32.6%), 17 came from never married homes (7.9%) and 5 came from widowed homes (2.3%).

### **Measures**

**Independent variables.** The independent variables in this study were perception of parents' relationship and family structure (intact vs. divorced). The variable *perception of parents' relationship* was measured using a series of statements regarding

the parents' relationship to which the respondent used a 5-point Likert scale to answer with choices ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The statements included in this variable are: "growing up, my parents had a good relationship," "my parents communicated well with one another," "my parents trusted each other," "my parents argued a lot," and "my parents were committed to each other." This variable was recoded to measure respondent's negative or positive perception of their parent's relationship. An index of perception of parent's relationship was created measuring for negative perceptions of parents' relationship (a value of 1). The *family structure* variable is the parent's marital status ("married," "divorced," "separated," "remarried," "widowed," and "never married"). This variable was recoded to combine divorced, separated, and remarried into one category measuring respondents from divorced/separated homes. Dummy variables were created for the multivariate regression analysis for individuals from divorced/separated and intact homes.

**Dependent variables.** The dependent variables consisted of two attitudinal variables, one for marriage and one for divorce. To measure *attitudes toward marriage*, the present study utilized Amato's (1988) Advantages of Marriage Scale and Disadvantages of Marriages Scale. The statements used in this index include: "marriage gives you: economic security," "marriage gives you: love, warmth and happiness," "marriage gives you: a regular sex life," "marriage gives you: a sense of responsibility in you that you wouldn't otherwise have," "marriage gives you: children," "you don't have much independence or personal freedom when you marry," "people take one another for granted after they marry," and "there are no advantages to being married." This scale

was tested for reliability and validity. The scales were combined to form one scale with responses on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. This variable was recoded to assess positive and negative views of marriage. The variables were combined to form an index of marriage measuring negative views of marriage (a value of 1). To measure *attitudes toward divorce*, the present study utilized Mulder and Gunnoe's (1999) Likelihood of Divorce Scale which also uses a 5-point Likert scale with answer choices ranging from very unlikely to very likely. Respondents were asked to assume they had been married for a couple of years and have no children. They were then asked to indicate how likely they would be to divorce in each of the following situations: "you and your spouse did not love each other anymore," "your spouse physically abused you," "your spouse did not turn out to be the person you thought he/she was (e.g., was irresponsible, dishonest, etc.)," "all the magic was gone from you and your spouse's relationship," "if there was no romance left," "your spouse was verbally abusive (e.g., continually belittled you, insulted you, etc.)," "your spouse had an affair," "and you and your spouse were always arguing, at least several times a day." This scale is tested for reliability and validity. The variables were recoded to assess opposition to and favor for divorce. An index was then created to assess favor for divorce (a value of 3).

**Control variables.** This study took into account numerous control variables including age, employment status, income, educational level, age of child when parental divorce occurred, and quality of child-parent relationship. Employment status was recoded to include individuals who are employed, not employed and those who are

retired. A dummy variable was then created to look at individuals who were employed compared to those who were not employed and those who were retired. Regarding educational level, this variable was recoded to include those with elementary and middle school education as having primary education; those with some high school or a high school diploma as having secondary education; and those individuals with some college, two-year college, a bachelor's degree, some graduate, or a master's or Ph.D. as having higher education. A dummy variable was created for education looking at higher education. With the previous literature focusing on women's anti-divorce attitudes due to lack of educational attainment (Krishnan, 1994) and low-income (Arendell, 1987), it is important to include variables that account for women's educational attainment and income status. Employment status also influences income. The variable age of child when divorce occurred, is included to explain the effects of divorce. If a child is young, they may be affected less by divorce than if the child is older. The variable quality of child-parent relationship is included to understand how a child's relationship with his/her parent's influences their attitudes toward marriage and divorce. It is possible to grow up in an intact home, have a negative relationship with one's parents, and have a negative view of marriage. This is an important control variable to include because it may influence how the child perceives the parents relationship and her attitudes toward marriage and divorce. Quality of child-parent relationship was measured for both mother and father. The two separate variables for quality of child-parent relationship were originally measured using a 5-point Likert scale and were recoded to assess whether a respondent had a good relationship (3) or bad relationship (1) with their mother/father

growing up with a neutral category (2). The variables were combined to form an index for quality of child-parent relationship, measuring for a bad relationship (value of 1).

### **Analysis**

An ANOVA was used to provide descriptive characteristics for predictors in the multivariate analysis. The first set of hypotheses (hypotheses 1-2) utilized independent samples t-tests to determine if the family structure groups (intact, divorced/separated) differ among the indices of marriage and divorce. The second set of hypotheses (3-6) utilizes nested multiple linear regression to assess how women from varying parental backgrounds (intact vs. divorced/separated) stand in their attitudes of marriage and divorce. The control variables are implemented in the nested multiple linear regressions.

### **Results**

Table 1 displays the means and standard deviations for variables included in the multivariate analyses. It is important to note that there was only one respondent in the never married category and only one respondent in the widowed category for the ANOVA analysis. The respondents had little variation in age with the average age for respondents from intact homes 20.09 years of age ( $SD= 2.14$ ), respondents from divorced/separated homes 22.23 years of age ( $SD = 4.87$ ), respondents from never married homes 20.00 years of age ( $SD = 0.00$ ), and respondents from widowed homes 20.00 ( $SD = 0.00$ ) years of age on average. Respondents from divorced/separated homes had the most variation in age. The respondent with a widowed parent scored lowest on the quality of child-parent relationship index 2.00 ( $SD = 0.00$ ), while the individuals with parents who never married scored the highest 1.00 ( $SD = 0.00$ ). Women with a never

married parent had the lowest average income, \$10,000, while individuals with divorced parents had the highest average income, \$87,730. Women from intact homes closely followed individuals from divorced/separated homes with an average income of \$84,203. Women from divorced/separated homes perceived their parents' relationship the most negatively with an index score of 3.31 (S.D.= 1.52) followed by women from never married homes 3.00 (S.D.= 0.00), women from widowed homes 1.00 (S.D.= 0.00), and lastly, women from intact homes 0.72 (S.D.= 1.10). The divorce index, measuring favor toward divorce showed that women from widowed homes and homes where the parents never married had the highest divorce index score of 7.00 (S.D.= 0.00) while individuals from divorced/separated homes had the lowest index score of 4.50 (S.D.= 2.30). This result is skewed, however due to the fact that there is no variation for women from widowed and never married homes. The marriage index, measuring a respondent's opposition to marriage indicates that women from widowed homes oppose marriage the most with an index score of 3.00 (S.D.= 0.00). Women from intact homes oppose marriage the least with an index score of 1.16 (S.D.=1.41). The average age women from divorced/separated homes experienced the divorce or separation of their parents was 10.12 (S.D.= 5.79).

Table 1

*Means and Standard Deviations for Sample Characteristics by Parental Marital Status*

Variable	Intact		Divorced/Separated		Never Married		Widowed	
	<i>M</i>	( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i>	( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i>	( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i>	( <i>SD</i> )
Age	20.03	(2.14)	22.23	(4.87)	20.00	(0.00)	20.00	(0.00)
Income (in dollars)	84,203	(61,575)	87,730	(76,194)	10,000	(0)	25,500	(0)
Age parents' divorced	—	(—)	10.12	(5.79)	—	(—)	2.00	(0.00)
Quality of parental relationship	1.53	(0.68)	1.15	(0.73)	1.00	(0.00)	2.00	(0.00)
Perception of parents' relationship	0.72	(1.10)	3.31	(1.52)	3.00	(0.00)	1.00	(0.00)
Views of Marriage	1.16	(1.41)	2.00	(1.94)	2.00	(0.00)	3.00	(0.00)
Views of Divorce	4.83	(2.00)	4.50	(2.30)	7.00	(0.00)	7.00	(0.00)
Employed	0.43	(0.49)	0.58	(0.50)	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)
Higher Education	0.74	(0.44)	0.69	(0.47)	0.00	(0.00)	1.00	(0.00)
<i>N</i>	58		26		1		1	

## **Marriage and Divorce**

Table 2 presented an independent samples t-test for the relationship between family structure and the attitudinal indices for marriage and divorce. Table 2 presented the findings for hypotheses 1 and 2 which were looking for differences between women from intact and divorced homes regarding their views on marriage and divorce, respectively. For the marriage index, there was a significant difference for women from intact homes ( $M= 1.07, SD=1.30$ ) and women from divorced/separated homes ( $M=1.76, SD.=1.92$ );  $F(98.67)= 10.00, p=0.011$ . In other words, there was a significant difference between women from intact homes and women from divorced/separated homes regarding their attitudes toward marriage. What this finding indicated was that for women from intact homes and women from divorced homes, there is a significant difference in the attitudes that they have toward marriage. This finding made sense for the study due to the fact that women from intact homes are coming from married parents and may have positive role-models for marriage. On the other hand, it may be true that women from divorced homes lack positive role models for marriage and therefore their views of marriage would differ from women from intact homes.

Regarding the index for divorce, there was no significant difference between women from intact homes ( $M=4.91, SD=1.93$ ) and women from divorced/separated homes ( $M=5.15, SD=1.92$ );  $F(189)=.183, p=0.417$ . This meant that for women from intact homes and women from divorced/separated homes, there is no difference in their attitudes toward divorce. What this finding indicated was that for women from intact homes and women from divorced homes, they had similar views of divorce, regardless of



their family structure. Not taking into account any additional variables, this test showed that for women from intact homes and women from divorced homes, there was no significant difference in the way that they view divorce. It was possible that for women from intact and divorced homes there are additional factors that influence the ways in which their attitudes about divorce are formed. Some additional factors will be addressed in the regression models.

Table 2

*T-test for Relationship between Parental Marital Status and Attitudinal Indices*

Index	Mean	SD	F	p
Marriage Index				
Intact	1.070	1.300	10.000	0.011
Divorced/ Separated	1.760	1.920		
Divorce Index				
Intact	4.910	1.930	0.183	0.417
Divorced/ Separated	5.150	1.920		

Note: df1= 1, 98.67                      df2= 1, 189

**Women from Divorced Families**

Table 3 presented the ordinary least squares (OLS) regression coefficients for women from divorced families (model 1) and after inclusion of age at time of divorce and quality of child-parent relationship (model 2) for attitudes toward marriage. This model tested hypothesis 3 which looked at whether women from divorced families who have negative views of their parents' relationship would have negative views of marriage compared to women from divorced families who have positive views of their parents'

relationship. The  $R^2$  value for model 1 was 0.110. With the addition of age at time of divorce and quality of child-parent relationship, the second model's  $R^2$  value increased to 0.177. This is a moderate amount of variance accounted for from model 1 to model 2. The  $R^2$  value indicated that in model 1, 11% of the change in the dependent variable was explained by the independent variables. In model 2, with the addition of two variables, 17% of the change in the dependent variable was explained by the independent variables. The adjusted  $R^2$  values also increased from 0.044 in model 1 to 0.092 in model 2.

The hypothesis, testing for a relationship between perception of parents' relationship and respondent's views of marriage, which would support the process of intergenerational transmission of attitudes on marriage, was not supported. The predictor variable indicating this, perception of parents' relationship was not significant in either model in this regression. A significant variable in this model was the quality of child-parent relationship ( $b = -0.588, p < 0.05$ ). The coefficient sign indicated a negative value which means that a positive relationship with one's parents indicates a higher likelihood of negative views of marriage. The implications of this finding were contrary to what the literature suggests (Barber & Eccles, 1992). Whereas the literature (Barber & Eccles, 1992) indicated that a positive relationship with the parents might lead to positive views of marriage and sway an individual from favoring divorce, the results indicated that a positive relationship with one's parents will likely lead to more negative views of marriage. It is possible that a "good" relationship with parents meant that the child communicates more openly with the parents about the negative aspects of marriage and this may influence the adult child's views of marriage.

Table 3

*Ordinary Least Squares Regression Coefficients of a Model Predicting Views of Marriage*

<i>Independent Variable</i>	Models			
	<i>(1)</i>		<i>(2)</i>	
	<i>b</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>Beta</i>
From divorced family	0.048 (0.525)	0.014	-1.976 (1.450)	-0.568
Perception of parents' relationship	0.206 (0.140)	0.221	0.042 (0.157)	0.045
Age	0.078 (0.061)	0.159	0.081 (0.060)	0.166
Employed (Dummy)	-0.101 (0.362)	-0.031	0.078 (0.360)	0.024
Income	0.000 (0.000)	0.013	0.000 (0.000)	0.054
Higher Education (Dummy)	0.241 (0.416)	0.067	0.227 (0.406)	0.063
Age at time of divorce	—		-0.026 (0.016)	-0.656
Quality of child/parent relationship	—		-0.588* (0.016)	-0.656
Constant	-0.684		2.594	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.110		0.177	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.044		0.092	
N of Cases	87		87	

*Note:* Standard deviations are in parentheses; \* $p < 0.05$

Table 4 presented the ordinary least squares (OLS) regression coefficients for women from divorced families (model 1) and after inclusion of age at time of divorce and quality of child-parent relationship (model 2) for attitudes toward divorce. This model tested hypothesis 4 which looked at whether women from divorced families who have negative views of their parents' relationship would be more likely to opt for divorce compared to women from divorced families who have positive views of their parents' relationship. The  $R^2$  value for model 1 was 0.092. With the addition of age at time of divorce and quality of child-parent relationship, the second model's  $R^2$  value increased to 0.109. This was very little variance accounted for from model 1 to model 2. The independent variables in model 1 explained about 9% of the change in the dependent variable whereas the addition of the two variables in model two explained about 11% of the change in the dependent variable in model 2. The adjusted  $R^2$  values actually decreased from 0.024 in model 1 to 0.018 in model 2.

The hypothesis, testing for a relationship between perception of parents' relationship and respondent's views of divorce, which would support the process of intergenerational transmission of attitudes on divorce, was partially supported. The predictor variable indicating this, perception of parents' relationship was significant in model 1 ( $b=0.395, p<0.05$ ). The coefficient sign indicated that when respondents have negative views of their parents' relationship they are more likely to have favorable views of divorce. The findings also indicated that there was a relationship between the independent variable, perception of parents' relationship, and the dependent variable, attitudes of divorce. The process of intergenerational transmission of attitudes on divorce

was likely occurring for women from divorced homes. The means through which women were learning about attitudes of divorce was through their parents' relationship. In this scenario, women learn about divorce via their parents' relationship and were influenced by the negative aspects of their parents' relationship.

Table 4

*Ordinary Least Squares Regression Coefficients of a Model Predicting Views of Divorce*

<i>Independent Variable</i>	<i>Models</i>			
	<i>(1)</i>		<i>(2)</i>	
	<i>b</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>Beta</i>
From divorced family	-1.332 (0.679)	-0.296	-2.955 (1.944)	-0.656
Perception of parents' relationship	0.395* (0.184)	0.322	0.297 (0.217)	0.242
Age	0.037 (0.080)	0.058	0.040 (0.081)	0.063
Employed (Dummy)	-0.263 (0.474)	-0.063	-0.151 (0.485)	0.036
Income	0.000 (0.000)	-0.134	0.000 (0.000)	-0.114
Higher Education (Dummy)	-0.253 (0.543)	-0.054	-0.272 (0.546)	-0.058
Age at time of divorce	—		-0.020 (0.021)	-0.398
Quality of child/parent relationship	—		-0.327 (0.393)	-0.111
Constant	4.496		6.871	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.092		0.109	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.024		0.018	
N of Cases	87		87	

*Note:* Standard deviations in parantheses; \* $p < 0.05$

### **Women from Intact Families**

Table 5 presented the ordinary least squares (OLS) regression coefficients for women from intact families (model 1) and after inclusion of quality of child-parent relationship (model 2) for attitudes toward marriage. This model tested hypothesis 5 which looked at whether women from intact families who have positive views of their parents' relationship would be more likely to have positive views of marriage compared to women from intact families who have negative views of their parents' relationship. The  $R^2$  value for model 1 was 0.111. With the addition of quality of child-parent relationship, the second model's  $R^2$  value increased to 0.146. This was minimal variance accounted for from model 1 to model 2. In model 1, 11% of the change in the dependent variable was explained by the independent variables. With the addition of one independent variable, 14% of the change in the dependent variable was explained by the independent variables in model 2. The adjusted  $R^2$  values increased from 0.053 in model 1 to 0.081 in model 2.

The hypothesis regarding the intergenerational transmission of attitudes on marriage, which involved the relationship between perception of parents' relationship and respondent's views of marriage, was not supported. The predictor variable indicating this, perception of parents' relationship was not significant in either model 1 or model 2. There were no other additional significant variables in this model. There were no significant relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variables in either model of the regression.

Table 5

*Ordinary Least Squares Regression Coefficients of a Model Predicting Views of Marriage*

<i>Independent Variable</i>	Models			
	<i>(1)</i>		<i>(2)</i>	
	<i>b</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>Beta</i>
From intact family	-0.434 (0.407)	-0.133	-0.475 (0.402)	-0.145
Perception of parents' relationship	0.093 (0.115)	0.101	-0.002 (0.123)	-0.002
Age	0.084 (0.058)	0.167	0.078 (0.057)	0.156
Employed (Dummy)	-0.013 (0.205)	-0.004	0.078 (0.335)	0.024
Income	0.000 (0.000)	0.061	0.000 (0.000)	0.100
Higher Education (Dummy)	0.321 (0.388)	0.089	0.379 (0.383)	0.105
Quality of child/parent relationship	—		-0.485 (0.249)	-0.218
Constant	-0.526		0.278	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.111		0.146	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.053		0.081	
N of Cases	99		99	

*Note:* Standard deviations in parantheses

Table 6 presented the ordinary least squares (OLS) regression coefficients for women from intact families (model 1) and the inclusion of quality of child-parent relationship (model 2) for attitudes toward divorce. This model tested hypothesis 6 which looked at whether women from intact families who have positive views of their parents' relationship are less likely to opt for divorce compared to women from intact families who have negative views of their parents' relationship. The R<sup>2</sup> value for model

1 was 0.066. With the addition of quality of child-parent relationship, the second model's  $R^2$  value increased very little to 0.072. There was very little explanation in variance from model 1 to model 2. In model 1, 6% of the change in the dependent variable was explained by the independent variables. With the addition of one independent variable, 7% of the change in the dependent variable was explained by the independent variables in model 2. The adjusted  $R^2$  values decreased slightly from 0.006 in model 1 to 0.001 in model 2.

The hypothesis regarding the intergenerational transmission of attitudes on divorce, which involved the relationship between perception of parents' relationship and respondent's views of marriage, was partially supported. The predictor variable indicating this, perception of parent's relationship was significant in model 1 ( $b= 0.298$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). This finding indicated that women from intact homes who had negative views of their parent's relationship were more likely to have favorable views of divorce. The finding could also be interpreted as women from intact homes who had positive views of their parent's relationship were more likely to view divorce negatively, consistent with the hypothesis. What the findings indicated was that there is a relationship between the independent variable, perception of parents' relationship and the dependent variable, attitudes of divorce. The coefficient was positive which indicated that when women from intact homes had negative views of their parent's relationship, they were more likely to have had favorable views of divorce. When women were exposed to the negative aspects of their parent's relationship, they saw the negative aspects of marriage. It was likely that women would become more favorable to divorce knowing the negative aspects of



marriage. What was unique was that the women in this hypothesis were from intact homes whereas the women in hypothesis 4 were from divorced homes. The women in this hypothesis have no direct experience with divorce from their own parents and therefore were not likely influenced by this factor, yet they still favored divorce.

Table 6

*Ordinary Least Squares Regression Coefficients of a Model Predicting Views of Divorce*

<i>Independent Variable</i>	<i>Models</i>			
	<i>(1)</i>		<i>(2)</i>	
	<i>b</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>Beta</i>
From intact family	0.749 (0.525)	0.182	0.725 (0.527)	0.176
Perception of parents' relationship	0.298* (0.148)	0.255	0.250 (0.163)	0.213
Age	0.009 (0.075)	0.015	0.006 (0.075)	0.010
Employed (Dummy)	-0.107 (0.434)	-0.026	-0.065 (0.439)	-0.016
Income	0.000 (0.000)	-0.139	0.000 (0.000)	-0.124
Higher Education (Dummy)	-0.325 (0.497)	-0.072	-0.300 (0.499)	-0.066
Quality of child/parent relationship	—		-0.240 (0.331)	-0.085
Constant	4.324		4.733	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.066		0.072	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.006		0.001	
N of Cases	100		100	

*Note:* Standard deviations in parantheses; \* $p < 0.05$

## **Discussion**

The present study aimed to test how the theory of intergenerational transmission of attitudes applied to American women's attitudes toward marriage and divorce. In doing so, the present study uncovered two important points about marriage and divorce for this sample of never married, single women. The findings lend evidence that intergenerational transmission of attitudes exists for women from intact and divorced homes regarding their views of divorce; however, the findings are inconclusive for women from intact and divorced homes regarding their views of marriage. There are important factors to consider when looking at the inconclusive results for marriage that will be discussed later. It is first necessary to discuss the powerful implications of the intergenerational transmission of attitudes on divorce for women from intact and divorced homes.

Women from intact and divorced homes are affected by their parents' relationship and this effect influences their attitudes about divorce. This is evidenced by the statistically significant relationship presented between the perception of parents' relationship and attitudes favoring divorce. The fourth hypothesis tested whether women from divorced families who have negative views of their parents' relationship would be more likely to opt for divorce compared to women from divorced families who have positive views of their parents' relationship. This hypothesis was partially supported. The sixth hypothesis tested whether women from intact families who have positive views of their parents' relationship are less likely to opt for divorce compared to women from intact families who have negative views of their parents' relationship. This hypothesis

was also partially supported. The second hypothesis, measured by a t-test, tested for a significant relationship among the dependent variable (divorce) among family structure (intact vs divorced) and indicated that there was no significant difference between women from intact and divorced homes regarding their attitudes of divorce. However, the regression findings elaborate on these findings and indicated that women from divorced and intact homes have similar views regarding divorce and that when negative perceptions of parental relationships occurs, it is more likely that the respondent's will hold favorable views of divorce. The initial results of the t-test signifying no difference in attitudes of divorce for women from intact and divorced homes in conjunction with the results of the regression signifying that both women from intact and divorced homes favor divorce prompts further investigation.

Among women from divorced and intact homes, the implications of the lack of difference in divorce attitudes leads to several questions. For example, could the lack of difference in attitudes be attributed to the lack of discourse surrounding divorce in media? This is an important question to address due to the political discussion earlier. Political agendas influence media and discourse. Recent political discourse has emphasized marriage and marriage reform and this is reflected in the media. As a result of political emphasis on marriage reform there is an abundance of media representation of marriage and weddings. From primetime reality shows like *The Bachelor*, *The Bachelorette*, *A Wedding Story*, and *Bridezilla*, to movies such as *Bride Wars*, *Wedding Crashers*, *My Best Friend's Wedding*, and *27 Dresses*, these shows and movies all depict distraught but eager individuals seeking love and marriage and awaiting the day when they will say "I

do” (Ingraham, 2008). Weddings and marriage have been engrained in American popular culture and this is evident by the abundance of marriage and wedding popular culture. The media perpetuates a discourse of marriage that focuses on the positive aspects of marriage and this may be influencing attitudes of marriage. On the other hand, if divorce is mentioned in the media it is primarily in negative representations. Divorce is represented in American television media (e.g., the Real Housewives shows, Two and a Half Men), but rarely are there positive representations of divorce. Social science literature focuses on divorce, but primarily on the detriments divorce has to the individuals experiencing it, as emphasized by the literature on the “costs” of divorce (Cherlin & Furstenberg Jr., 1994; Duncan, 1994; Galston, 1996; Keith and Finlay, 1988; Mohler, 2010; Sayers, 2012; Stroup & Pollock, 1994; Wallerstein and Lewis, 2004). Marriage is dominant in social media and receives more positive attention. The overabundance of marriage discourse potentially influences individuals to have conflicting views of marriage (Ingraham, 2008; Otnes & Pleck, 2003).

The inconclusive results for women from intact and divorced homes regarding their views of marriage raises even more questions. To test for intergenerational transmission of attitudes on marriage for women from divorced homes, the study examined whether women from divorced families who have negative views of their parents’ relationship would have negative views of marriage compared to women from divorced families who have positive views of their parents’ relationship. For women from intact homes, the study examined whether women from intact families who have positive views of their parents’ relationship would be more likely to have positive views

of marriage compared to women from intact families who have negative views of their parents' relationship. Neither hypothesis supported the intergenerational transmission of attitudes on marriage. The inconclusive findings prompt some interesting questions about marriage attitude formation in American society. The sociological literature generally indicates that social networks such as influential peers and social institutions such as the family, media, and religion affect individual perception on marriage. Results from this study suggest that the family may not be the only leading institution by which women negotiate meanings and perception of marriage. With the abundance of television and movies available to women, as well as magazines dedicated to topics of mate selection and dating (Cosmopolitan, US Weekly) it is no wonder there are varying attitudes about marriage (Ingraham, 2008). It is possible that the women in this study are learning about marriage and forming marriage attitudes not based solely on perceptions of their parents' relationship but rather, through these alternative influences (e.g. peers, media, etc.). These inconclusive findings, and the possibility that there are alternative ways in which women are learning about marriage and forming attitudes about marriage lend to particular limitations within the study.

### **Limitations to the Study**

There are a number of limitations to the present study including limitations to the theory used, conceptualization of attitudes, the sample, omitted variables, wording of the questionnaire, and multicollinearity of variables in the regression models.

The inconclusive findings for attitudes of marriage lead to an important limitation within intergenerational transmission theory. Intergenerational transmission theory is a

theory based on transmission where an individual receives attitudes or characteristics from another individual. Primarily, the theory is applied when discussing children's learned behavior from their parents. A theory based on a unidirectional transmission may not truly account for the complexity of the socialization process. The formation and conceptualization of attitudes is complex and includes influences from multiple arenas including family, peers, and media. The findings on marriage highlight that there are a variety of avenues through which individuals form attitudes about marriage, not just through a transmission of attitudes from parents to children. The theory does not account for individual agency in the formation and conceptualization of attitudes of marriage and divorce. It does account for a learning process that involves agency but does not take into account how the individual processes and makes sense of these attitudes.

Related to the limitations of transmission theory, there is a methodological limitation in that the conceptualization of attitudes was already established for respondents. This study was designed quantitatively with already established attitudes for marriage and divorce. The attitudes of marriage and divorce were fixed for respondents and they had to choose to identify from those responses. This is a limitation within the methodological approach chosen.

A limitation within the sample included lack of variability both within age as well as educational and employment background. The sample utilized college-aged students due to convenience and this produced some potentially problematic effects for the study. There were issues with no variability for the never-married and widowed categories for the family structure variable. There was little variation in age. Also, since all

respondents were college students there was little to no variation in both the education and employment predictors.

There were several variables that were omitted from the study or not included. Race was not included due to limited findings in the literature about this variable. However, it would be interesting to assess the differences in individuals from intact and divorced homes to see if there is a difference across race for individuals in primarily intact or divorced homes. An additional variable that was not included but was mentioned in the home was conflict in the home, or family violence. This variable was not included due to sensitivity issues with respondents. It would be interesting to note how violence affects respondent's views of marriage and divorce varying by type of violence, frequency of violence, and who the violence was committed by. This variable could strongly impact an individual's views of both marriage and divorce. Females were the only sex included in this study but it might be interesting to include males to do a comparison between the sexes.

The survey questionnaire featured a variable asking about marital status that featured cohabitation. Cohabitation did not specify whether an individual had been previously married and as a result, these individuals were omitted from the sample. Also, the quality of child-parent relationship was not worded in-depth enough. The question simply asked "my relationship with my mom/dad was good." The measurement of this concept based on the survey question may not consider adequately other possible relevant dimensions related to the child-parent relationship, which may alter somewhat the analytical findings.

Lastly, there was a presence of multicollinearity in several of the regressions. In the second model of the third hypothesis, the independent variables, from a divorced family and age at time of parental divorce had multicollinearity. In the second model of the fourth hypothesis, the independent variables, from a divorced family and age at time of parental divorce had multicollinearity. It is possible that due to low variability from a small sample size for the variable age at time of divorce, multicollinearity exists.

### **Future Research**

There is still much research to be done regarding intergenerational transmission of attitudes. The present study supported intergenerational transmission theory utilizing minimal predictors however; there are other predictors that need to be addressed. As examined in the discussion section, the findings support intergenerational transmission of attitudes on divorce but are inconclusive for intergenerational transmission of attitudes on marriage. As a result, more attention should focus on alternative influences such as the media and peers. Future research should examine the question, how do these influences along with parental influences facilitate the development of attitudes of marriage and divorce?

Looking at the limitations discussed earlier, particularly omitted variables, future research should include variables such as race and conflict within the family home. These variables could potentially lend exciting information about individual's formation of attitudes of marriage and divorce. But in order to get at the deeper way in which attitudes are formed, the methodological approach to this study should be altered. An in-depth qualitative look into the conceptualization of marriage and divorce, as well as



individual awareness of where they learn their own attitudes of marriage and divorce will lend insight into intergenerational transmission theory. Asking respondent's specifically how they believe they learn about marriage and divorce may shed more light on the agency involved in learning about marriage and divorce and may also lend more credibility to intergenerational transmission theory. It may also give more insight into the outside influences such as peers and the media in influencing attitudes on marriage and divorce.

In conclusion, intergenerational transmission theory is supported for women from both divorced and intact homes when examining their views of divorce. The findings in this study indicate that a relationship between perceptions of parents' relationships and attitudes toward divorce is present. A relationship is not present for perception of parents' relationship and attitudes toward marriage however. This shines light on the fact that the process of intergenerational transmission and social learning are occurring, but occur for different reasons, as discussed previously. The women in this study learned attitudes and behaviors from their parents' relationships and this in turn influenced their own views of divorce. However, the women in this study may have developed their attitudes of marriage elsewhere, for example from the media or their peers. The attitudes and behaviors parents expose their children to, starting at a young age, influence the attitudes and behaviors adult children will have. Future research should continue to investigate how adult children of divorced and intact homes are influenced by their surroundings and how these surroundings shape the attitudes adult children have toward marriage and divorce.

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## Appendix A: Questionnaire

### Effect's of Parent's Relationship on Children's Perceptions of Marriage and Divorce Survey

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this survey. I am a sociology graduate student interested in the study of marriage and divorce. The purpose of this survey is to gain more insight into different views of marriage and divorce from women of different backgrounds. The first set of questions is demographic. Thank you again for your time.

**For the first set of questions please clearly select the answer choice that most appropriate answer choice (only one).**

1. How old are you?
2. What is your current employment status?
  1. Full-time
  2. Part-time
  3. Student
  4. Unemployed
  5. Retired
3. What was your total family income for last year?
4. What is the highest degree of schooling you have completed?
  1. Elementary
  2. Middle school
  3. Some high school
  4. High school Diploma
  5. Some college
  6. Two-Year College
  7. Bachelor's Degree
  8. Some Graduate
  9. Master's or Ph.D.
5. What is your marital status?
  1. Single, never married
  2. Married
  3. Divorced
  4. Widowed
  5. Separated
  6. Living with partner (cohabitating)
6. Are your parents currently:
  1. Married
  2. Separated
  3. Divorced
  4. Remarried (1 or both)
  5. Never Married
  6. Widowed
7. If your parents are divorced, at what age did your parents divorce? (How old were you?)
8. Growing up, my relationship with my dad was good (please circle the one that is most appropriate)
  1. Strongly Disagree
  2. Disagree
  3. Neither agree nor disagree
  4. Agree
  5. Strongly Agree
9. Growing up, my relationship with my mom was good (please circle the one that is most appropriate)
  1. Strongly Disagree
  2. Disagree
  3. Neither agree nor disagree
  4. Agree
  5. Strongly Agree

The second set will ask more specific questions about your views on marriage and divorce as well as your perceptions of your own parents' relationship.

**10. Please indicate on a scale of 1-5 how strongly you disagree or agree with the following statements. Please indicate your answer by marking an X in the box that corresponds with how much you agree or disagree with the statement to the left. Please clearly select the most appropriate answer choice (only one).**

	<b>1 Strongly disagree</b>	<b>2 Disagree</b>	<b>3 Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>4 Agree</b>	<b>5 Strongly Agree</b>
<b>Growing up, my parents had a good relationship.</b>					
<b>My parents communicated well with one another</b>					
<b>My parents trusted each other.</b>					
<b>My parents argued a lot.</b>					
<b>My parents were committed to each other.</b>					

**11. Please indicate on a scale of 1-5 how strongly you disagree or agree with the following statements: Please clearly select the most appropriate answer choice (only one).**

	<b>1 Strongly disagree</b>	<b>2 Disagre e</b>	<b>3 Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>4 Agree</b>	<b>5 Strongly Agree</b>
<b>Marriage gives you: Economic security</b>					
<b>Marriage gives you: Love, warmth and happiness</b>					
<b>Marriage gives you: A regular sex life</b>					
<b>Marriage gives you: A sense of responsibility in you that you wouldn't otherwise have</b>					
<b>Marriage gives you: Children</b>					
<b>You don't have much independence or personal freedom when you marry</b>					
<b>People take one another for granted after they marry</b>					
<b>There are no advantages to being married</b>					



**12. For each of the following situations, assume you have been married for a couple of years and have no children. Please indicate how likely you would be to get a divorce in each situation. Please clearly select the most appropriate answer choice (only one).**

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

	<b>1 Very unlikely</b>	<b>2 Some- what unlikely</b>	<b>3 Not sure</b>	<b>4 Some- what likely</b>	<b>5 Very likely</b>
<b>You and your spouse did not love each other anymore?</b>					
<b>Your spouse physically abused you?</b>					
<b>Your spouse did not turn out to be the person you thought he/she was (e.g., was irresponsible, dishonest, etc.)?</b>					
<b>All the magic was gone from you and your spouse's relationship, if there was no romance left?</b>					
<b>Your spouse was verbally abusive (e.g., continually belittled you, insulted you, etc.)?</b>					
<b>Your spouse had an affair?</b>					
<b>You and your spouse were always arguing, at least several times a day?</b>					

## **Appendix B: Agreement to Participate in Research (Implied Consent)**

**Responsible Investigator:** Rebecca Guttadauro

**Title of Study:** Effects of Perceptions of Parent's Relationships on Children's Perceptions of Marriage and Divorce

1. You have been asked to participate in a research study investigating how perception's of your parent's relationship affects your views of marriage and divorce. I am doing this research as part of my Master's Thesis and I will use this information as the data for my thesis.
2. You will be asked to will be asked to complete the survey I have for you. Participation should take about 10-15 minutes to complete the survey. Participation is voluntary.
3. There are no known risks associated with this study. The survey you fill out as well as others I collect will be used for my data analysis for my thesis. Your individual data will not be associated with your name in any way and will be kept confidential.
4. The data you provide will help to allow me to see how women's views of their parent's relationships affect their views of marriage and divorce. This is adding to a body of scientific knowledge that needs updating.
5. Although the results of this study may be published, no information that could identify you will be included as this is an anonymous survey.
6. Questions about this research may be addressed to Rebecca Guttadauro, rebecca.bguttadauro@gmail.com. Complaints about the research may be presented to Wendy Ng, wendy.ng@sjsu.edu or 408-924-5594. Questions about a research subjects' rights, or research-related injury may be present to Pamela Stacks, Ph.D., Associate Vice President, Graduate Studies and Research, at (408) 924-2427.
7. No service of any kind, to which you are otherwise entitled, will be lost or jeopardized if you choose not to participate in the study.
8. Your consent is being given voluntarily. You may refuse to participate in the entire study or in any part of the study. You have the right not to answer questions you do not wish to answer. If you decide to participate in the study, you are free to withdraw at any time without any negative effects on your relations with San Jose State University.
9. Please keep a copy of this form for your own records. By agreeing to participate in the study, it is implied that you have read and understand the above information. Please do not write any identifying information on the survey/questionnaire.