Perceived Reasons for Parental Divorce: Influence on Young Adults' Attachment Styles

by

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationships among young adults' knowledge about their parents' divorce, the perceived reasons for the divorce (RPDQ), and attachment style as measured by The Relationship Questionnaire (RQ; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) and The Relationships Scale Questionnaire (RSQ; Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994). Participants were 81 university students from homes where parents had separated or divorced. Results indicated that perceived reasons for parental divorce predicted attachment style but extent of knowledge did not. Overt anger of parents, perceived involvement of the children, and an extra-marital affair emerged as the salient variables in differentiating secure from insecure attachment styles. Results are discussed in terms of implications for divorcing parents, conducting therapy with children from divorced homes, and future research.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Overview

The purpose of this thesis is to contribute to our understanding of the interpersonal relationships of young adults who have experienced parental divorce. Specifically, this study considers how individuals' understanding of why their parents divorced when they were children may influence their attachment styles as young adults. The notion that the specific circumstances and reasons for a parent's divorce may influence young adults' approaches to love relationships has been mentioned in the literature, but this idea has not previously been examined empirically.

The Effects of Parental Divorce on Children and Adolescents

Approximately one half of the children in North America today will likely experience the divorce of their parents before they reach adulthood (Bray & Hetherington, 1993; Statistics Canada, 1992). In Canada, it is estimated that at least 60,000 children experience parental divorce every year (Tuzlak & Hillock, 1986). This figure probably underestimates the actual number of children no longer living with both parents, as it does not account for the informal separations, annulments or common-law breakups not included in official statistics.

Many children experience a series of family transitions related to their parents' breakup. It is likely that they have witnessed their parents' separation and divorce, spent some time in a single-parent home, and experienced the remarriage of at least one parent. Remarriage following divorce occurs very frequently, with close to 65% of divorced women and 80% of divorced men remarrying within five years following separation

(Martin & Martin, 1992). As mothers are awarded custody in 70 to 90% of divorces (Martin & Martin, 1992; Statistics Canada, 1993), the vast majority of children in stepfamilies live with their biological mother and a stepfather. Further transitions are likely, as the divorce rate for remarriages is close to 60% (Ihinger-Tallman & Pasley, 1987).

As so many children in our society have experienced parental divorce, a great deal of research has been devoted to examining the psychological consequences of such family transitions. Recent reviews of the literature suggest that parental divorce may have negative consequences for children (e.g., Amato & Keith, 1991b; Hetherington, Stanley-Hagan & Anderson, 1989; Kelly 1988). Children of divorce may be at increased risk for experiencing behavioral, social, emotional, and academic problems (Amato & Keith, 1991b; Bray & Hetherington, 1993; Wallerstein, 1985). The effects of parental divorce on older adolescents and young adults have also begun to be examined recently and findings from these studies indicate that some negative effects of parental divorce may be long-lasting or may be "sleeper effects" and not appear until later in life (Amato & Keith, 1991a; Zill, Morrison, & Coiro, 1993). Therefore, it is important to consider that even children who appear to have adapted fairly well to their parents' divorce during childhood, may develop problems later during their adolescent years (Hetherington, 1991). Young adults from disrupted families may be at an increased risk for poor family relationships, low academic attainment, single-parent status, and social and psychological difficulties (Amato & Keith, 1991a; Kelly, 1988; Wallerstein, 1991; Zill et al., 1993). It has also been suggested that young adults whose parents have divorced may be particularly vulnerable

to difficulties in their own romantic relationships (Booth, Brinkerhoff, & White, 1984; Zill et al., 1993).

Although it appears that children who experience parental divorce may be at an increased risk for developing problems, these findings should not be taken to imply that a negative course is inevitable following marital dissolution. Galambos and Ehrenberg (in press) have suggested that parental divorce should be looked at both as a health risk and as an opportunity for children. Much of the work investigating parental divorce and its impact upon children has focused on negative outcomes. It is possible that, if researchers were to look for potential benefits of experiencing parental divorce, such as increased self-esteem and psychosocial maturity, a less gloomy picture might be painted.

In fact, there may not be as great a difference between children from intact homes and children from divorced homes as was once thought. For example, Levin (1989), using large representative surveys in the United States and assessing broad areas of human development, such as physical health, peer group relations, and cognitive achievement, found the impact of parental divorce on children and adolescents to be significant but small and generally indirect. Similarly, the results of a meta-analysis of the long-term consequences of parental divorce indicate that the average difference between adults who experienced parental divorce and adults who did not is quite small across a number of variables, including parent-child relationships, psychological adjustment, and self-concept (Amato & Keith, 1991a).

Amato and Keith suggest that differences between children from divorced homes and children from intact homes are smaller today than were found in earlier years. It may

be that as divorce becomes more common and society begins to accept marital dissolution as a frequent reality, children will have fewer obstacles to overcome when dealing with family transitions. Consequently, differences between children from divorced homes and children from intact homes may be less dramatic than was previously found. Larger scale differences may also exist but may not be revealed until more specific variables, such as success in romantic relationships, are examined. A need arises to examine such specific divorce-related variables, particularly variables that are theoretically linked to parental break-up.

While the extent to which significant differences exist between children from divorced versus intact homes continues to be debated, it is generally agreed that most children will have to make some adjustments following the break-up of their parents' marriages. The ultimate outcome of this adjustment process for the children involved will depend on a number of factors, which are detailed in the following section.

Factors Influencing Adjustment to Divorce

Most explanations of the negative effects of divorce on children focus on three central notions (Amato & Keith, 1991b): (1) the economic disadvantages of single-parent families, usually mother-headed households; (2) the loss of one parent's presence in the home, usually the father; and, (3) the level of interparental conflict.

Economic disadvantage. Divorce frequently leads to a reduction in the family's income (Stroup & Pollack, 1994), often placing the mother-headed home at or below the poverty line (Duncan & Hoffman, 1985; Statistics Canada, 1992). The combination of losing a partner's income and being short changed on child support payments often leads to situations where separated or divorced caregivers are less able to provide their children

with adequate nutrition, appropriate housing, and access to high-quality education than while they were married. Even if these minimum requirements are satisfied, less money may be available for the extras that contribute to success in school or with peers, such as home computers or fees for team memberships.

Parental absence. Another inevitable consequence of divorce is one parent leaving the home. Living with one parent instead of two may place the child at a disadvantage. While it is possible to spend time with each parent separately, it has been well established that divorce is typically followed by a reduction in the amount of time spent with the non-custodial parent (Amato, 1987; Wallerstein, 1991). Many custodial parents may also be less available to their children than before the divorce, given that they are often placed in the position of sole breadwinner and have increased role and time demands. Children from homes where there is limited interaction with either parent may feel less secure in the availability of their caregivers and may have less opportunities to observe appropriate models of long-term, committed relationships than children from homes where there is interaction with both parents.

Parental conflict. Appropriate models may also be difficult to observe when children reside in homes where there is a great deal of conflict between parents. Recently it has been suggested that the most important predictor of adjustment to parental divorce is how much conflict exists between parents during and following the marriage (Amato & Keith, 1991b). Research has consistently demonstrated that children from homes where there is a great deal of conflict between parents fare worse than children whose parents are cooperating (Buchanan, Maccoby, & Dornbush, 1991; Johnston, 1994; Johnston, Gonzalez, & Campbell, 1987). Children from high-conflict homes may be at an increased

risk for behavioral problems, emotional difficulties, and reduced social competence (Camara & Resnick, 1988; Forehand, Neighbors, Devine, & Armistead, 1994). In fact, it has been demonstrated that children in a harmonious, single-parent family are actually better off than children in conflicted, intact homes (Hetherington et al., 1982). Some researchers have argued that the critical element in understanding how conflict between parents leads to negative effects for children is the extent to which children feel caught in the middle of parental disputes (Buchanan et al., 1991).

Other factors. In addition to the three conditions outlined above, a number of other factors have been linked to children's adjustment following parental divorce. Some evidence indicates that children who are younger at the time of parental divorce have more difficulties adjusting to the transition (Kalter & Rembar, 1981; Zill et al., 1993) while other research suggests that children of all ages have some difficulties adjusting to parental divorce (Booth, Brinkerhoff, & White, 1984; Tasker & Richards, 1994; Wallerstein et al., 1988). Parental remarriage may also affect children's adjustment. Most studies suggest that stepfamilies have more problems and stress than first marriages and that stepparent-child relationships are often very poor (Bray & Hetherington, 1993). However, Hetherington (1987) observed that the introduction of a stepparent could ameliorate, exacerbate, or maintain the effects of divorce, depending on how strong the relationship between the parent and stepparent is and how the existing parent-child relationships change. Another factor that has been suggested to influence a child's adjustment to parental divorce is gender. Some frequently cited studies suggest that boys experience more detrimental consequences of divorce than do girls (Hetherington et al., 1982; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). However, other studies indicate that boys and girls do not

differ in the extent to which parental divorce is associated with problems (Amato & Keith, 1991; Zillet al., 1993). A clear finding stemming from the literature is that positive parent-child relationships can minimize negative effects following divorce (Amato & Keith, 1991a; Wallerstein, 1991). Unfortunately, parent-child relationships often deteriorate following marital dissolution, particularly for older adolescents and young adults (Farber, Primevera, & Felner, 1983; Wallerstein, 1985).

All of the factors discussed have provided important contributions to our understanding of the heterogeneity of children's responses to parental divorce. An additional factor that may add to our current knowledge base of how parental divorce affects children is the reason for the marital breakdown.

Reason For Parental Divorce

Tasker and Richards (1994) reviewed studies of the long-term influence of parental divorce on adolescents' attitudes toward marriage and on their actual marriage patterns. They suggested that "different approaches to the issues of commitment and marriage in relationships may be influenced by the reasons the parental marriage ended" (p. 356), but did not find any studies investigating this relationship.

Some research has considered previously married couples' reasons for divorce and their adjustment following separation. Gigy and Kelly (1992) administered a series of questionnaires to 437 individuals seeking mediation or using an adversarial process to divorce. They determined that perceived reasons for divorce were significantly related to both individual psychological functioning and parenting abilities. Participants reporting they divorced because of their partners' substance abuse or affairs or due to high conflict within the marriage were also more likely to report experiencing psychological difficulties

and conflict over their children than were individuals divorcing due to unmet emotional needs or gradually growing apart from their partner.

It is possible that these perceived reasons for divorce would also be associated with children's adjustment following parental separation. Perceptions of why parents divorced may influence children's thinking about romantic relationships and what makes them succeed or fail. During the last few years, a number of studies have examined the romantic relationships of young adults from divorced backgrounds.

The Effects of Parental Divorce on Young Adults' Romantic Relationships

Research investigating young adults' abilities in love relationships was initiated in part because of the observation that adults whose parents were divorced were much more likely to divorce their own spouses than were adults raised in intact homes (Glenn & Kramer, 1987). Interestingly, although children from divorced homes are at increased risk of experiencing a marital breakdown of their own, much of the research to date has indicated that young adults whose parents are divorced have positive attitudes towards marriage and want very much for their own marriages to succeed (Stone & Hutchinson, 1992; Wallerstein, 1985; Willets-Bloom & Nock, 1992). In a study of 52 families seen for divorce-related counseling, Wallerstein (1985) interviewed forty young adults 10 years following their parents' divorce. She found that these young adults were very positive and committed to the ideals of a lasting marriage, but that they were also worried about repeating their parents' unhappiness in their own marriages. Young adults reported that to prevent this from happening they would need to know their partners very well and probably live with them prior to marriage.

Although young adults from divorced families appear determined not to repeat their parents' "mistakes" and have very positive attitudes towards marriage, the reality is that they are more likely to end their own marriages than are young adults from intact homes. One possible explanation for this paradox is that young adults from divorced homes have more difficulties establishing strong romantic relationships than do young adults from intact homes. A number of studies have suggested that parental divorce is associated with problems in how young adults approach romantic relationships (Garbardi & Rosen, 1992; Jennings, Salts, & Smith, 1992; Tasker, 1992). Young adults from divorced homes are more likely to have short, unhappy, and unsatisfactory relationships than those from intact homes (Booth et al., 1984). Some researchers argue that young adults from divorced homes are placed at a disadvantage in romantic relationships as they lack parental models of healthy love relationships on which to base their own romantic endeavors (Booth et al., 1984).

Although children from divorced homes are at an increased risk for experiencing difficulties in their own romantic endeavors, many individuals from divorced backgrounds do have successful romantic relationships. Further work is required to determine why some young adults from divorced homes are quite successful in their interactions with others while other young adults are less skilled. One theory that has been used to account for why individuals differ in the ways they interact in interpersonal relationships is Bowlby's theory of attachment.

Basic Concepts of Attachment Theory

Bowlby (1977) describes attachment theory as "a way of conceptualizing the propensity of human beings to make strong affectional bonds to particular others" (p. 201). He argues that newborn infants possess behavioral systems designed to maintain proximity to caregivers, ensuring protection from predators and other dangers. Based on parents' accessibility, sensitivity to children's signals, and responsiveness, children learn whether or not to consider the caregiver as a secure base from which to explore the environment. Over time children develop internal representations and expectations of the caregivers and themselves. Bowlby referred to these representations as "internal working models." These working models are described as being integrated into the personality structure and as greatly influencing how individuals view the self, significant others, and the larger social world. Bowlby suggests that problems in attachment lead to later emotional and psychological problems as well as to interpersonal difficulties.

Mary Ainsworth and her colleagues attempted to operationalize the theory of attachment by developing a system of classifying children according to their behavior (Ainsworth, Blehar, Walter, & Wall, 1978). They observed children's behavior in "strange situations." Infants were brought into an unfamiliar laboratory room and their reactions to separation from and reunion with their mothers were monitored. Exploratory behavior was also elicited by offering children several attractive toys. On the basis of their observations of children's responses, Ainsworth et al. (1978) described three primary patterns of infant behavior. Most children acted in a way that was characterized as "secure." Securely attached infants used their mothers as a safe base for exploration, exhibited protest behavior when separated from their caregivers, and welcomed the return of their parents.

The mothers of this group of infants were supportive and responsive to their children's needs. Other children refused to explore, were extremely anxious when separated from their caregivers, and alternated between seeking contact with their mothers and throwing tantrums when reunited with her. These children were described as "anxious/ambivalent." The mothers of these children were often inconsistent in how they responded to their children. A final group of "avoidant" children seemed not to acknowledge a need for their mothers' presence in their behaviors and avoided their caregivers upon reunion. Although the avoidant infants appeared to be indifferent to separation from their caregivers, later findings suggest they may have actually been experiencing distress, as evidenced by measures of cardiac arousal (Sroufe & Waters, 1977). Mothers of avoidant infants were characterized by little expressed emotion and physical contact with their children.

Ainsworth's typology has become the basis of thinking about individual attachment patterns for most researchers. In a review of studies conducted in the United States with young children, Campos, Barrett, Lamb, Goldsmith, and Sterberg (1983) reported that approximately 62% of infants are secure, 23% are avoidant, and 15% are anxious/ambivalent in their attachment to parents.

Young Adults and Attachment Style

Although traditionally attachment has been used to describe the affectional bond established between the infant and the primary caregiver, recently there has been a move toward extending the definition of attachment to include all significant relationships across the life span (e.g., Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Some researchers argue that attachment theory has particularly important implications for adolescence and young adulthood, as one of the primary developmental tasks for this age group is to learn about developing close,

supportive, and intimate relationships outside of the family of origin (Preto, 1988). Over the last several years a number of instruments have been developed to measure attachment style during young adulthood. Studies employing these measures have, in turn, increased our understanding of attachment.

Using Ainsworth's (1978) typology as a guide, Hazan and Shaver have applied the principles of attachment theory to adult romantic relationships and have defined three types of attachment styles in adults. According to their definition, securely attached individuals indicate that they find it relatively easy to get close to others, are comfortable depending on others, and do not worry about being abandoned or about someone becoming too emotionally close to them. Avoidantly attached people indicate that they are uncomfortable being close to others, find it difficult to completely trust others, are nervous when anyone gets too close, and believe love partners often want to be more intimate than they do. Anxiously attached people indicate that they find others are reluctant to get as close as they would like, frequently worry that their romantic partners do not really love them or will not stay with them, often wish to become extremely close to their partners, and sometimes scare people away with their intensity. Hazan and Shaver (1987) found figures similar to those reported by Campos et al (1983) in a study of the attachment styles of adults: 56% of their research participants classified themselves as secure, 25% as avoidant, and 19% as anxious.

Using the Hazan and Shaver (1987) classification system, a number of studies were conducted to examine the role of attachment style in the romantic relationships of older

adolescents and young adults. A coherent picture of how different attachment styles are expressed in adult love relationships is beginning to emerge.

A secure attachment style, as measured by attachment to romantic partners, is typically associated with a sense of oneself as being valued and worthy of others' love and affection and with a mental model of others as being reliable and trustworthy (Simpson, Rholes, & Nelligan, 1992). Secure individuals have romantic relationships that are characterized by high levels of commitment and satisfaction (Simpson, 1990) and by happy and trusting styles of love (Shaver & Hazan, 1987). The relationships of securely attached individuals seem to last longer than those of individuals who are insecurely attached. In Hazan and Shaver's (1987) study of adult attachment styles in romantic relationships, only 6% of the secure group had been divorced, compared with 22% of the insecure group. Secure individuals are more likely to be involved in long-term relationships and to rate these relationships more favorably than insecure individuals (Brennan & Shaver, 1993).

An anxious style of attachment in romantic relationships is often associated with a view of oneself as being unappreciated and lacking in confidence, and of others as being incapable of committed, long-term relationships (Simpson, Rholes, & Nelligan, 1992). Anxious individuals have relationships that frequently involve low levels of trust and satisfaction (Simpson, 1990) and obsessive and jealous forms of love (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Shaver and Hazan (1987) found that anxious individuals were the most jealous, most obsessed, and most likely to fall in love at first sight of the three groups.

Finally, avoidant individuals often perceive themselves as being aloof and skeptical and others as being unreliable or overly eager to rush into love relationships (Simpson,

Rholes, & Nelligan, 1992). Similar to anxiously attached individuals, avoidant adults' relationships are frequently characterized by low levels of trust and satisfaction and by more negative affect (Simpson, 1990). It has been suggested that the problems in their relationships stem from fears of intimacy (Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

Kim Bartholomew (1990) recently expanded Hazan and Shaver's classification of adult attachment style to include a fourth attachment style. Her four categories of attachment are based on Bowlby's theory and were derived by combining two levels of model of "(one)self" (positive and negative) and two levels of model of "others" (positive and negative). Using this four category system, the attachment categories are as follows: secure (positive model of self, positive model of others), preoccupied (negative model of self, positive model of others), fearful-avoidant (negative models of self and others), and dismissing-avoidant (positive model of self, negative model of others). Bartholomew's category of preoccupied is similar to the Hazan and Shaver (1987) category of anxious and the combination of her categories of fearful-avoidant and dismissing-avoidant is similar to the Hazan and Shaver category of avoidant. However, while both the fearful and dismissing groups in the Bartholomew categorization system have difficulties in becoming close to others, the dismissing group (positive model of self) scores higher on measures of self-worth than does the fearful group (negative view of self). Brennan, Shaver and Tobey (1991) conducted a comparison of Bartholomew's (1990) four category typology and Hazan and Shaver's (1987) classification system. Their results indicate both typologies are tapping similar dimensions but that gender differences only become evident when using Bartholomew's measure. When the avoidant group was

further distinguished into the dismissing-avoidant and the fearful-avoidant categories using Bartholomew's classification system, males were grouped more frequently as dismissing-avoidant and more females were classified as fearful-avoidant.

Attachment style in adulthood appears to be related both to young adults' sense of self and of others, and to comfort and success in love relationships. Attachment style has also been associated with psychological health and with general social success. Raja, McGee, and Stanton (1991) measured adolescents' perceived attachments to their parents and peers and their psychological health and well-being. Adolescents who perceived high attachments to both their parents and peers had the highest scores on a measure of self-perceived strengths. Similarly, Blain, Thompson, and Whiffe (1993) found that individuals reporting positive models of both self and others (secure attachment) reported the highest levels of perceived social support from parents and friends and the greatest attachment to friends. A negative model of self and/or other (insecure attachment) had a negative impact on perceived social support and attachment to friends, particularly for males. Kobak and Sceery (1988) classified college students in to different attachment groups and had their peers rate them using a Q-sort method. The group labeled secure was rated as more ego-resilient, less anxious, and less hostile by peers and reported little distress and high levels of social support, compared to those students labeled insecure.

Given that the research conducted indicates that adult attachment style relates to various psychological and social variables, it is important to develop a clearer understanding of how attachment style develops and whether or not it can be changed. Although a basic principle of attachment theory is that early attachment relationships with

caregivers set the stage for later attachment relationships (Bartholomew, 1990), research indicates that there is some variability in attachment throughout the life span (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1993). The permanence of attachment patterns seems particularly affected by the stability of the child's relationships with primary caregivers and the consistency of the quality of the family environment (Bartholomew, 1990; Egeland & Faber, 1984). It is interesting to consider the possibility that major life events, such as parental divorce, may change how accessible caregivers are and consequently change individuals' attachment patterns. Bowlby (1980) saw the crucial time frame for the development of attachment style as extending into adolescence. This implies that parental divorce experienced at even a relatively late age could continue to impact on an individual's attachment style.

Young Adults' Attachment Styles and Parental Divorce

Several research findings point to connections between adult attachment style and parental divorce. Although Hazan and Shaver (1987) reported that adult attachment style does not seem to be directly influenced by experiencing parental divorce, parents' relationships with each other do appear to be related to their adult children's attachment styles (Brennan & Shaver, 1993). Among young adults with parents who were unhappy with each other, insecure attachment styles (especially the avoidant style) were overrepresented, and secure attachment was underrepresented. Brennan and Shaver argue that the reason a direct link has not been found between attachment style and divorce is because some intact marriages are troubled and have insecurity-producing effects on children's attachment styles, whereas various post-divorce arrangements can differ in the degree to which they promote security or insecurity in children.

A study is currently being conducted examining how various factors within intact and divorced homes (e.g., parental conflict, closeness to parents) may influence later attachment in young adulthood (Ehrenberg & Walker, 1995). During the course of collecting data for this study, preliminary evidence was found to suggest that one of the factors related to young adults' attachment styles may be their perceptions of why their parents broke up.

Tasker and Richards (1994) suggest that, "the experience of parental divorce highlights for children issues of emotional security in relationships" (p. 356). Young adults whose parents have divorced may consider marriage a failed institution or may believe marriage is a lifetime guarantee of love, provided certain preparatory requirements are met (such as waiting to marry until older). Tasker and Richards also suggest that one variable that might influence young adults' approaches to romantic interaction is the reason for parental divorce. It is possible that in situations where it is perceived that parents separated due to incompatibility young adults may still feel secure about romantic relationships but will want to make sure they find the right partner. In contrast, if it is believed that parents separated due to a betrayal of trust, such as an extra-marital affair, young adults may feel insecure about romantic relationships and have more difficulty initiating and sustaining long term relationships. It is also possible that young adults' attachment styles may influence how they interpret the reason for parental divorce. For example, securely attached individuals may be more likely to determine that their parents broke up due to incompatibility or external pressures than insecurely attached young adults. Conversely, insecurely attached individuals may be more likely to attribute

infidelity or basic mistrust as leading to parental divorce than securely attached young adults.

The Current Study

Previous work in the area of parental divorce and its effects on children's adjustment has often lacked a theoretical basis for the work performed, specificity in the outcomes studied, and clearly described models of the relationships being observed. This study will attempt to address these dimensions. Because attachment theory has recently been extended to incorporate important relationships throughout the life span and has provided valuable guidance in our quest for understanding interpersonal relationships, it will be used as a framework for this thesis. The specific outcomes to be studied involve young adult attachment styles. It is not assumed that experiencing parental divorce will result in uniformly adverse effects; rather, an outcome has been chosen that allows for a range of responses, both positive (secure attachment) and negative (insecure attachment). A model is proposed where the relationship between parental divorce and adult attachment style is mediated by the perceived reason for parental divorce. That is, parental divorce will not affect young adults' attachment styles directly but, rather, through the child's perception of why his or her parents broke up.

Hypotheses

(1) It is expected that young adults with no comprehension of why their parents divorced will be more likely to describe insecure attachment styles than young adults who have an understanding of why their parents broke up.

(2) It is expected that young adults who perceive their parents divorced for reasons related to themselves (the children), extra-marital affairs, abusive relationships, or intense conflict will be more likely to describe insecure attachment styles than will children who perceive their parents broke up due to incompatibility.

Because the perceived reasons for parental divorce have not been considered before, these variables will be investigated on an exploratory basis.

CHAPTER II

Method

Research Participants

Young adults who had experienced the separation or divorce of their parents were recruited from the Psychology 100 Subject Pool at the University of Victoria for course credit. Eighty-one students (24 males, 57 females) elected to participate. Young adults ranged in age from 17.8 to 26.3 years (M = 19.7 years, SD = 1.82). The average participant was Canadian, Caucasian, and a first year undergraduate student.

Procedure

This study was completed as a part of Ehrenberg and Walker's (1995) Young Adult Study which was approved by the University of Victoria's Human Subjects Committee. All procedures were in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the Canadian and American Psychological Associations.

An 60 minute individual interview session was held with each young adult. Upon arrival at the session participants received a brief description of the study and were asked to sign a consent form. The consent form included information regarding participants' rights to refuse to answer any question, to withdraw at any time, and regarding the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses (see Appendix A). Once the young adults had given informed consent, an interview was conducted by the researcher to obtain demographic and other background information (see Appendix B). Participants then completed a questionnaire regarding perceptions of why parents divorced according to both their present perceptions and their recollections of how they felt at the time of their parents' divorces (see Appendix C), and adult attachment style (see Appendices D and E).

Following the questionnaire, a second interview was conducted to obtain information concerning the extent of knowledge young adults' possessed concerning their parents' divorces (see Appendix F). At the conclusion of the research session, young adults were provided with a debriefing statement, including a description of the study and how to obtain feedback regarding the results of the study (see Appendix G). Throughout and after the session, the researcher was available to respond to any questions or problems that arose. Young adults' anonymity and confidentiality were protected by separating consent forms from the interviews and questionnaires and by keeping all data locked in a filing cabinet.

Measures

Four domains were assessed using individual interviews and self-report questionnaires: (1) demographic characteristics, (2) extent of knowledge about parents' divorce, (3) perceptions of reasons for parental divorce, and (4) adult attachment style.

Demographic characteristics. The interview developed for this study includes questions about demographic information (e.g., gender, age, income), as well as questions about participants' family backgrounds (e.g., family transition history, custodial arrangements) (see Appendix B).

Extent of knowledge about parents' divorce. Four questions were developed for this study to assess how knowledgeable participants felt they were about their parents' divorce: (1) "To what extent or how much do you feel you understand why your parents' marriage ended?," (2) "Do you think your understanding of why your parents divorced is a very deep and thorough understanding or does it just scratch the surface of why your parents broke up?", (3) "How confident are you that the reasons you have given for why

your parents broke up are the most correct or most accurate ones?," and (4) "How much do you feel you know about your parents' marriage and why it ended?" To obtain a multi-method assessment of this domain, two of these questions were asked as part of the RPDQ self-report questionnaire (described below) and two were asked during the demographic interview. Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale, with lower scores indicating less understanding. In the present study, using Cronbach's coefficient alpha, the internal consistency for these four items was .88.

Perceptions of reasons for parental divorce. Young adults' perceptions of why their parents divorced were assessed using the Reasons for Parental Divorce Questionnaire (RPDQ; Walker, 1996), developed specifically for this study (see Appendix C). The RPDQ was developed by drawing on The Reasons for Divorce Checklist (Gigy & Kelly, 1992), qualitative data collected in a previous study (Ehrenberg & Walker, 1995), and the divorce literature. The RPDQ was designed to measure young adults' perceptions of why their parents divorced, including their recollections of how they felt while they were growing up as well as their current perspectives. RPDQ respondents rated 33 potential reasons for divorce on a 5-point Likert scale according to how much they felt these reasons contributed to the dissolution of their parents' marriages (1 = "had nothing to do with it" to 5 = "played a very important role"). Psychometric information about this newly developed self-report questionnaire is detailed in the "Results" section of this thesis.

Adult attachment style. A variety of attachment measures exist in the field. Two measures of attachment style were chosen for this study: The Relationship Questionnaire (RQ; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) and The Relationships Scales Questionnaire (RSQ; Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994) (see Appendices D and E). These measures were selected

because they: (1) have been established as valid instruments for use with young adult undergraduates, (2) measure young adults' attachment styles within romantic relationships, and (3) provide information regarding views of both self and others in romantic relationships.

The RQ is an adaptation of the attachment measure developed by Hazen and Shaver (1987). The forced-choice version of this measure used in this study consists of four short paragraphs describing the four attachment styles (secure, fearful, preoccupied, and dismissing) described by Bartholomew (1990) as they apply to close relationships. Each participant is asked to choose which paragraph most closely describes his or her characteristic style in relationships.

Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) compared attachment ratings obtained through semi-structured interviews and self-report and friend ratings on the RQ. The data showed a convergence among ratings using the three different methods. Bartholomew and Horowitz also collected personality and relationship information using friend and self-report measures and examined the relationship of this information with the attachment ratings. Results indicated that self- and friend-reports of interpersonal problems were generally consistent across the four attachment styles and that each style was associated with a distinct profile of interpersonal problems.

The RSQ is a measure of Bartholomew's prototypes, drawn from Hazan and Shaver's (1987) attachment measure, Bartholomew and Horowitz's (1991) Relationship Questionnaire, and Collins and Read's (1990) Adult Attachment Scale. Participants rate 30 phrases on a 5 point scale according to how well each item fits their characteristic style

in close relationships. The RSQ scores for the four attachment prototypes are derived by computing the mean of the items representing each attachment style.

Griffin and Bartholomew (1994) found the internal consistencies of this instrument to be variable and sometimes low (alpha = .41 for the secure pattern to alpha = .70 for the dismissing pattern). In spite of the sometimes low internal consistencies, the authors found that the RSQ pattern scores do show convergent validity, as indicated by correlations between interview attachment ratings, RQ self-report ratings, and RSQ self-report ratings. Correlations between corresponding attachment patterns (interview and self-report secure) were large and positive while correlations between opposing attachment patterns (interview secure and self-report dismissing) were close to zero. In the present study, the internal reliabilities for the secure, fearful, preoccupied, and dismissing attachment scales were .41, .80, .57, and .57 respectively.

CHAPTER III

Results

The results of this study are reported in three sections. First, descriptive data regarding attachment style, knowledge about and perceived reasons for divorce, and demographic variables are presented. The results of inferential analyses concerning the first hypothesis are also presented. Second, analyses used to reduce the RPDQ data to a smaller set of theoretically relevant variables are described. Finally, the results of inferential analyses to test the second hypothesis are articulated.

Descriptive Data

Demographic data in attachment context. Using responses on the RQ, participants were categorized as either secure or insecure (combining the three insecure attachment categories into one). Preliminary analyses were then conducted to examine possible differences between the secure and insecure groups on demographic and family transition variables. Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and comparison statistics for these descriptive variables. Descriptives are provided for the whole sample, and for each group separately. Using an alpha level of .05 as the criterion, group differences failed to reach significance across these variables, indicating that secure and insecure participants did not differ in age, gender, socioeconomic status, age at parental separation and divorce, length of parents' marriage, nor custody arrangement.

Attachment style. The majority of participants (51%) classified themselves into the Fearful RQ attachment category. Of the remaining participants, 27% classified themselves

Table 1

Descriptive Variables for Total Sample, Secure Participants and Insecure Participants

	Total Sample (N=81)	Secure Participants (n=22)	Insecure Participants (n=59)	Comparison
Age				
M	19.70	19.80	19.67	$t(79) = 0.30$,
SD	1.82	1.69	1.87	$p = .76$
Gender				
Male	29.6%	45.5%	23.7%	$\chi^2(1) = 3.63$,
Female	70.4%	54.5%	76.3%	$p = .06$
Childhood SES				
Working Class	14.8%	18.2%	13.6%	$\chi^2(3) = 0.31$,
Lower Middle Class	22.2%	9.1%	27.1%	$p = .31$
Upper Middle Class	54.3%	59.1%	52.5%	
Upper Class	8.6%	13.6%	6.8%	
Current SES				
Working Class	12.3%	9.1%	13.6%	$\chi^2(2) = 0.68$,
Lower Middle Class	27.2%	22.7%	28.8%	$p = .70$
Upper Middle Class	60.5%	68.2%	57.6%	
Upper Class	0	0	0	
Age at Parental Separation				
M	9.09	8.14	9.44	$t(79) = -1.03$,
SD	5.05	3.91	5.39	$p = .31$
Age at Parental Divorce				
M	10.97	10.35	11.22	$t(79) = -0.59$,
SD	5.57	3.98	6.09	$p = .56$
Length of Parents' Marriage				
M	13.19	12.05	13.60	$t(79) = -1.01$,
SD	6.08	6.18	6.05	$p = .32$
Custody Arrangement				
Sole Custody - Mother	70.5%	71.4%	70.2%	$\chi^2(3) = 0.84$,
Sole Custody - Father	7.7%	4.8%	8.8%	$p = .84$
Joint Custody	20.5%	23.8%	19.3%	
Alternated	1.3%	0	1.8%	
Parental Death				
Yes	4.9%	0	6.8%	$\chi^2(1) = 0.21$,
No	95.1%	100%	93.2%	$p = .21$

into the Secure category, 12% into the Preoccupied category and 10% into Dismissing category. Figure 1 presents proportion of female and male participants classified in each RQ attachment category. Although not statistically significant, there was a tendency for females to classify themselves as insecure more often than males ($\chi^2(1) = 3.63$, $p = .06$).

Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations obtained for each attachment variable on the RSQ. No significant differences were found between male and female respondents on the RSQ variables so data were combined across gender in subsequent analyses.

Since the RQ and the RSQ are different measures of the same construct (attachment style), a t-test and a series of one-way ANOVAs were performed to examine the relationship between the two measures (see Table 3). A Scheffe adjustment was used during post-hoc comparisons to correct for Type 1 errors. As would be expected, on the RSQ secure variable, the RQ secure group scored significantly higher than the three RQ insecure groups combined. The RQ fearful group scored higher on the RSQ fearful measure than both the RQ secure group and the RQ preoccupied and dismissing groups combined. On the RSQ preoccupied variable, the RQ preoccupied group scored higher than did the secure group and the fearful and dismissing groups combined. On the RSQ dismissing variable, after correcting for Type 1 errors, the RQ dismissing group did not score higher than either the secure group or the preoccupied and fearful groups combined. The pattern of consistency between those categorized into an attachment group using the RQ and the scores obtained on the attachment variables on RSQ suggests that the two measures overlap to some degree (although each appears to provide some unique information).

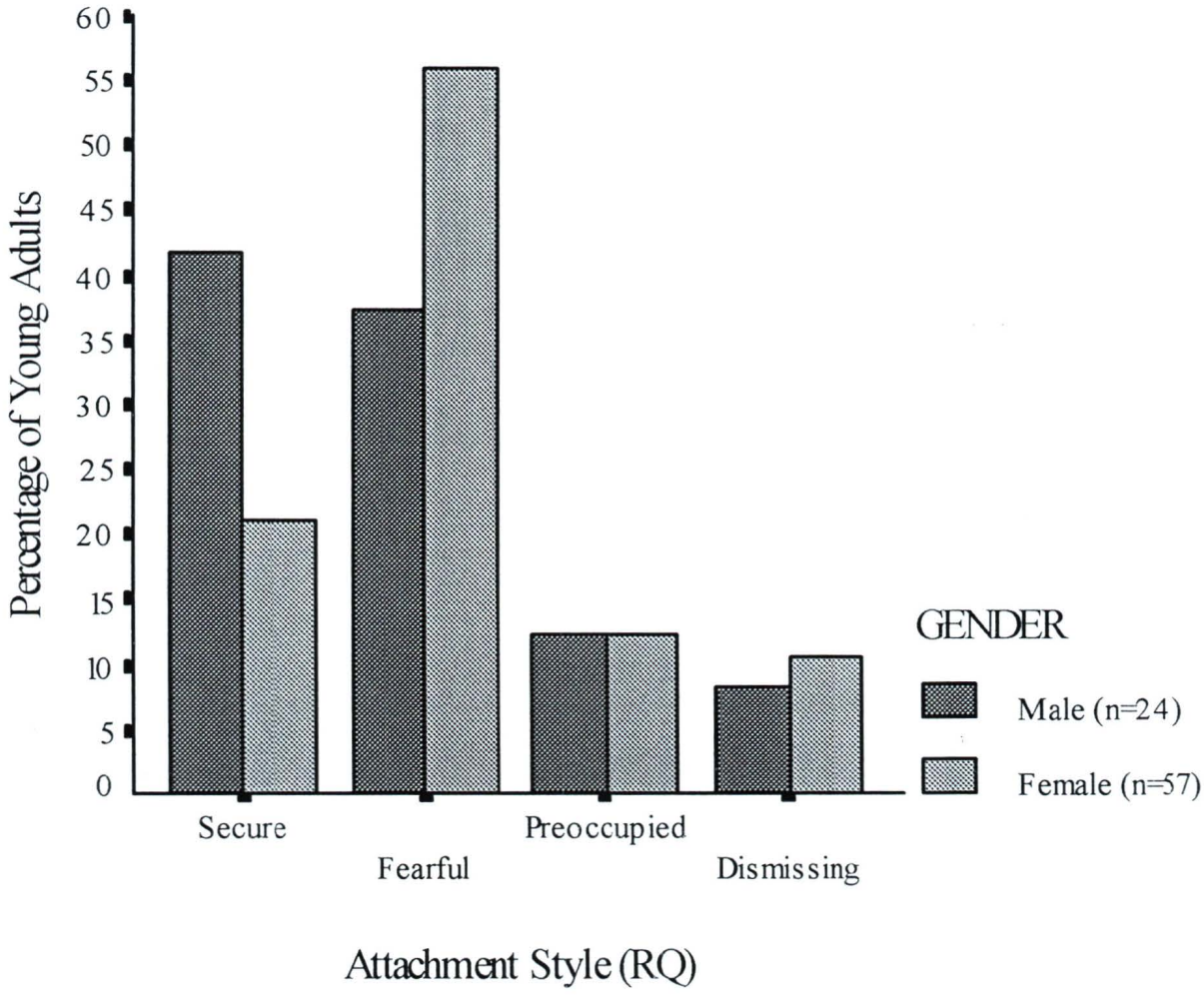

Figure 1. Percentage of males and females endorsing each attachment style category on the RQ (1991) questionnaire (N=81).

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations for RSQ Attachment Variables

	Total (N=81)		Female (n=57)		Male (n=24)	
Attachment Variable	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Secure	3.21	0.67	3.17	0.68	3.30	0.65
Fearful	3.01	0.95	3.00	0.98	3.04	0.91
Preoccupied	2.90	0.78	2.89	0.77	2.93	0.82
Dismissing	3.38	0.66	3.34	0.65	3.48	0.69

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations on RSQ Attachment Variables for Subjects Classified into RQ Attachment Groups

	RSQ Measure				
RQ Grouping	Secure	Fearful	Preoccupied	Dismissing	Comparison (F/t-test)
Secure	**18.09 (2.65)**				t(79) = 3.63
Insecure	15.28 (3.26)				p = .001
Fearful		**14.05 (3.31)**			
Secure		8.59 (2.22)			
Preoccupied & Dismissing		11.72 (3.34)			F(2,78)=22.84 p = .000
Preoccupied			**14.80 (3.33)**		
Secure			10.59 (1.62)		
Fearful & Dismissing			11.43 (3.21)		F(2,78) = 7.56 p = .001
Dismissing				**18.25 (2.76)**	
Secure				15.36 (3.47)	
Preoccupied & Dismissing				17.35 (3.12)	F(2,78) = 3.79 p < .03

Extent of knowledge about divorce. A mean score of 15.42 (SD = 3.11) of a possible maximum score of 20 was obtained by the total sample on the extent of knowledge scale, suggesting that most participants feel they know a good deal about why their parents divorced. To test the first hypothesis that the extent of knowledge participants had regarding their parents' reasons for divorce would be related to attachment style, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with the four extent of knowledge items as the dependent variables and secure versus insecure attachment as the independent variable was used. Contrary to prediction, secure and insecure research participants did not differ significantly on the multivariate test of significance, $F(4,73) = .42$, $p = .79$. Similarly, no significant relationships were found when each extent of knowledge item was related with secure versus insecure attachment style.

Reasons for parents' divorce. Table 4 presents the means and standard deviations for the RPDQ variables rank ordered from most to least frequently endorsed. Of the ten items that were rated as contributing most to parents' decision to divorce, four were from the Dissatisfied Parent, two from the Overt Anger, two from the Undependable Parent, and one from the Incompatibility content scales.[1]

Data Reduction

The number of variables describing perceptions of why parents divorced on the RPDQ scale were reduced through the following steps: (a) averaging "now" and "then" scores, (b) considering themes developed a priori, (c) performing a principle components

[1]Content scales are described in more detail in the following section.

Table 4

Reason for Parental Divorce Items: Rank Ordered According to Mean Ratings (N=81)

RPDQ Item	M	SD	Scale
One parent was basically unhappy in the marriage	4.00	0.95	DP
One parent's needs were not met by the other parent	3.81	0.88	DP
Parents were unable to communicate with each other	3.64	0.98	DP
Severe and intense conflict and frequent fighting between parents	3.57	1.18	OA
Differences in lifestyle or values between parents	3.11	1.29	I
A great deal of anger and tension was always present in the home	2.96	1.32	OA
One parent no longer felt loved or appreciated by the other parent	2.91	1.11	DP
One parent felt the other parent was not reliable	2.81	1.44	UP
One parent was often angry and verbally abusive	2.75	1.49	OA
Family members could not count on one parent to be there when needed	2.56	1.53	UP
Problems and conflicts between parents regarding dividing household responsibilities	2.51	1.21	I
One parent couldn't trust the other parent	2.48	1.31	UP
Parents did not speak to each other	2.43	1.21	UP
One parent had emotional problems	2.31	1.40	OA
One parent was frequently belittled and put down by the other parent	2.27	1.27	OA
One parent was bored with the marriage and wanted freedom	2.22	1.39	EA
One parent abused alcohol or drugs	2.16	1.45	A/V
One parent had an extra-marital affair that created a lot of conflict and tension between parents	2.13	1.35	EA
Employment and job related difficulties	1.97	1.28	FP
Parents disagreed on how to bring up children in the home	1.94	1.13	I
Parents were having many financial problems	1.94	1.15	FP
One parent left the marriage to be with a new partner	1.81	1.34	EA
One parent was abusive to other family members	1.73	1.22	A/V
One parent was unhappy with how sexually intimate parents were	1.63	0.90	DP
One parent physically abused the other parent	1.54	1.01	A/V
Something to do with you or other children in the family	1.54	1.11	IC
Marriage itself was entered into for circumstantial reasons	1.48	1.02	A/V
You or other children in the family created too many problems and broke parents up	1.42	0.89	IC
One parent's extended family was overly involved with your own family	1.37	0.90	EF
One parent was severely or chronically physically ill	1.20	0.69	Ill
Family member became ill or injured or passed away which created a lot of stress	1.15	0.68	Ill

Note. DP = Dissatisfied Parent, OA = Overt Anger, I = Incompatibility, UP = Undependable Parent, EA = Extra-Marital Affair, A/V = Abusive Parent/Violent Lifestyle, FP = Financial Problems, IC = Involvement of the Children, EF = Interference from Extended Family, and Ill = Illness

analysis, and (d) based on conceptual reasons, limiting the number of scales used in subsequent analyses.

Averaging now and then scores. Participants were asked to respond to each item on the RPDQ according to their present perceptions ("now") and, a second time, based on their recollections of how they felt at the time of their parents' divorces ("then"). Correlations between now and then scores were .50 or above for 26 of the 33 RPDQ items (see Appendix H). Furthermore, preliminary analyses between the RPDQ items and the attachment variables revealed similar patterns of prediction when now, then, and mean scores were used for these items. Due to the lack of distinction between now and then responses, a mean score for each item was calculated and used for all subsequent analyses. In addition to reducing the number of RPDQ items from 66 to 33 without losing unique information, this procedure ultimately contributed to subscale internal consistency.

A priori themes. It was hypothesized a priori that the RPDQ was comprised of six content themes: (1) conflict between parents, (2) incompatibility between parents, (3) problems directly involving the children, (4) the presence of an abusive parent, (5) outside stress impinging on the parents' marriage, and (6) serious problem on the part of one parent. Prior to initiating the study, a content analysis was conducted, in which 10 raters categorized each RPDQ item into one of the six themes. Greater than 80% agreement among raters was found on 28 (85%) items. For the remaining five items, agreements between 40% and 75% were found (see Appendix I). These items were retained for their conceptual importance. Appendix J lists the items composing each content theme and the corresponding Cronbach's coefficient alpha, based on the data collected from the 81 participants completing the RPDQ. Internal reliabilities of the themes ranged from .30

(serious problem on the part of one parent) to .77 (the presence of an abusive parent). Deletion of the those items whose inter-rater agreements were less than 80% did not improve the internal reliabilities of the subscales.

Although there was some psychometric evidence for the a priori structure of the RPDQ, the inter-rater agreements for some items and the internal consistencies for some content themes were unsatisfactorily low (i.e., none received higher than .77, and four out of six were in the .60s or below). Therefore, an exploratory principal component analysis was conducted on the RPDQ items to determine whether or not the RPDQ was composed of cohesive underlying dimensions.

Principal components analyses. The principal component analysis, using varimax rotation, extracted 10 factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, which accounted for 70.9% of the variance. Two items, relating to parental jealousy and parents growing apart, were dropped from the 33 item scale following the principal component analysis as they: (a) failed to load above .50 on any factor, (b) correlated less than .35 with the "subscale" corresponding to the factor they loaded highest on, and (c) reduced the internal consistency of the subscale corresponding to the factor they loaded highest on.[2]
A second principal components analysis on the remaining 31 items produced 10 factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, which accounted for 72.7% of the variance (see Table 5). Using a factor loading of .40 and higher as the criterion, ten corresponding scales were

[2] The relevance of the low loading of these items will be investigated further in the Discussion section.

Table 5

Rotated Factor Loadings for Principal Components Analysis for the RPDQ

Variable/Item	Factor 1	2	3	4	5
12. One parent was often angry and verbally abusive	**.84**	.02	.11	-.04	.21
31. A great deal of anger and tension was always present in the home	**.78**	.04	.24	.14	.14
8. One parent was frequently belittled and put down by the other parent	.77	.09	.02	.02	.21
14. One parent had emotional problems	**.61**	.07	-.02	.34	-.05
1. Severe and intense conflict and frequent fighting between parents	**.44**	-.24	.22	.10	.32
29. One parent left the marriage to be with a new partner	-.05	**.88**	-.04	-.01	-.05
22. One parent had an extra-marital affair that created a lot of conflict and tension between parents	.10	**.87**	-.06	.12	-.04
19. One parent was bored with the marriage and wanted freedom	.07	**.57**	.27	.12	.05
2. One parent's needs were not met by the other parent	-.10	-.11	**.76**	.11	-.02
24. One parent was basically unhappy in the marriage	.40	.02	**.72**	-.02	-.11
23. Parents were unable to communicate with each other	.44	.07	**.67**	.14	.02
10. One parent was unhappy with how sexually intimate parents were	.12	.40	**.44**	-.01	.22
15. One parent no longer felt loved or appreciated by the other parent	.26	.33	**.39**	.34	.21
27. One parent couldn't trust the other parent	.02	.25	.01	**.85**	.06
33. Parents did not speak to each other	.36	.07	.25	**.62**	-.08
32. Family members could not count on one parent to be there when needed	.13	-.08	.05	**.60**	.21
18. One parent felt the other parent was not reliable	.04	-.21	.09	**.56**	.30

Table 5 (Cont.)

Rotated Factor Loadings for Principal Components Analysis for the RPDQ

Variable/Item	Factor 1	2	3	4	5
7. One parent physically abused the other parent	.32	.05	-.07	.04	**.73**
5. One parent abused alcohol or drugs	.11	-.09	-.09	.30	**.65**
25. Marriage itself was entered into for circumstantial reasons (e.g., Mother was pregnant)	.05	.00	.16	.00	**.58**
28. One parent was abusive to other family members	.42	-.00	.08	.03	**.56**
26. You or other children in the family created too many problems and broke parents up	.16	-.06	.07	.00	-.04
20. Something to do with you or other children in the family	.33	.01	-.03	.13	.08
6. One parent was severely or chronically physically ill	.08	-.02	-.02	-.06	.04
30. Family member became ill or injured or passed away which created a lot of stress	-.05	.09	.04	.13	.02
11. Employment and job related difficulties	.03	-.04	-.04	.14	-.13
9. Parents were having many financial problems	.12	-.12	.10	.04	.12
3. Differences in lifestyle or values between parents	.11	.20	.01	.11	-.04
4. Problems and conflicts between parents regarding dividing household responsibilities	.04	.00	.30	.09	.19
13. Parents disagreed on how to bring up children in the home	.39	-.12	.08	.11	.01
21. One parent's extended family was overly involved with your own family	.16	-.08	-.03	.03	.06
Variance Accounted For	22.8%	8.4%	7.9%	6.8%	5.9%

Table 5 (Cont.)

Rotated Factor Loadings for Principal Components Analysis for the RPDQ

Variable/Item	Factor 6	7	8	9	10
12. One parent was often angry and verbally abusive	.06	.03	.01	.08	.05
31. A great deal of anger and tension was always present in the home	.15	.08	.00	.00	.05
8. One parent was frequently belittled and put down by the other parent	.13	-.08	.18	.20	.12
14. One parent had emotional problems	.23	.02	.06	.07	.33
1. Severe and intense conflict and frequent fighting between parents	.22	-.32	.08	-.04	-.19
29. One parent left the marriage to be with a new partner	-.03	.04	-.03	-.03	-.06
22. One parent had an extra-marital affair that created a lot of conflict and tension between parents	-.07	-.01	-.07	.06	-.07
19. One parent was bored with the marriage and wanted freedom	.10	.01	-.21	.09	.45
2. One parent's needs were not met by the other parent	-.02	-.13	.09	.23	-.01
24. One parent was basically unhappy in the marriage	-.08	.03	-.22	.15	.02
23. Parents were unable to communicate with each other	.19	.15	.14	-.09	.09
10. One parent was unhappy with how sexually intimate parents were	.34	.21	.33	.03	.03
15. One parent no longer felt loved or appreciated by the other parent	.21	.03	.15	.03	-.04
27. One parent couldn't trust the other parent	-.02	-.00	.10	.07	-.01
33. Parents did not speak to each other	.30	-.16	-.04	-.12	.23
32. Family members could not count on one parent to be there when needed	.16	.10	.16	.47	.03
18. One parent felt the other parent was not reliable	-.12	.20	.10	.37	-.05

Note. Factors 7, 8, and 10 ultimately dropped.

Table 5 (Cont.)

Rotated Factor Loadings for Principal Components Analysis for the RPDQ

Variable/Item	Factor 6	7	8	9	10
7. One parent physically abused the other parent	.02	-.20	-.05	.20	.06
5. One parent abused alcohol or drugs	-.11	.30	-.04	-.03	-.02
25. Marriage itself was entered into for circumstantial reasons (e.g., Mother was pregnant)	-.00	-.08	.32	.03	.49
28. One parent was abusive to other family members	.38	.19	-.09	.07	.01
26. You or other children in the family created too many problems and broke parents up	**.85**	-.04	-.04	.02	.24
20. Something to do with you or other children in the family	**.76**	.30	-.03	.12	.03
6. One parent was severely or chronically physically ill	.05	**.85**	-.04	.06	.22
30. Family member became ill or injured or passed away which created a lot of stress	.15	**.84**	.10	.03	-.22
11. Employment and job related difficulties	-.09	.10	**.83**	.01	-.04
9. Parents were having many financial problems	.03	-.07	**.83**	.18	.00
3. Differences in lifestyle or values between parents	-.11	.07	.15	**.71**	.28
4. Problems and conflicts between parents regarding dividing household responsibilities	.15	-.07	.00	**.69**	-.19
13. Parents disagreed on how to bring up children in the home	.32	.15	.12	**.48**	-.14
21. One parent's extended family was overly involved with your own family	.20	.14	-.05	-.01	**.75**
Variance Accounted For	4.9%	4.7%	4.0%	3.8%	3.4%

Total Variance Accounted For
by all 10 Variables 72.7%

created.[3] The Overt Anger scale (Factor 1) consisted of five items (items 12, 31, 8, 14, and 1) pertaining to the anger, conflict, and verbal abuse present in the home (alpha = .83). This factor accounted for 23% of the total variance. Three complex variables also loaded on this factor: (1) parents' unhappiness with the marriage (item 24), (2) parents' inability to communicate (item 23), and (3) one parent being abusive to family members (item 28). Where complex variables were found, items were placed on the scale corresponding to the factor they loaded highest on.

The Extra-Marital Affair scale (Factor 2) contained three items: (1) one parent having an affair that led to conflict in the marriage (item 22), (2) one parent leaving the marriage for a new partner (item 29), and (3) one parent wanting freedom from the marriage (item 19) (alpha = .76). One complex variable reflecting parents' unhappiness with the amount of sexual intimacy in the marriage also loaded on this factor (item 10). This factor explained 8% of the total variance.

The Dissatisfied Parent scale (Factor 3) consisted of five items (items 2, 24, 23, 10, and 15) reflecting the extent to which parents were unhappy, dissatisfied, unappreciated, and unable to communicate in the marriage (alpha = .75). This factor accounted for 8% of the total variance.

The fourth factor, labeled Undependable Parent, contained four items (items 27, 33, 32, and 18) reflecting how much a parent was unreliable, not trusted, and could not be counted on (alpha = .75). This factor explained 7% of the total variance.

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[3]Both scale scores and factor scores were used in subsequent analyses with the attachment measures and convergent results were obtained. The scale scores are reported in this thesis as they provide a closer approximation to reality than do the factor scores.

The Abusive Parent/Violent Lifestyle scale (Factor 5) was composed of four items (items 7, 5, 25, and 28) pertaining to physical abuse, substance abuse, and circumstantial reasons for the marriage (alpha = .68) and accounted for 6% of the total variance.

The sixth factor, labeled Involvement of the Children, was composed of two items (items 26 and 20) reflecting to extent to which the children felt they were responsible for the marital breakdown (alpha = .78) and accounted for 5% of the total variance.

The Illness scale (Factor 7) was composed of two items (items 6 and 30) and pertained to a family member becoming ill or passing away (alpha = .76). This factor accounted for 5% of the total variance.

The Financial Problems scale (Factor 8) was composed of two items (items 11 and 9) reflecting financial and employment problems (alpha = .74) and explained 4% of the total variance.

The Incompatibility Scale (Factor 9) was composed of three items (items 3, 4, and 14) and pertained to parental differences and disagreements on household responsibilities and how to bring up the children (alpha = .56). One complex variable loaded on this factor and reflected family members' inability to count on one parent (item 32). This factor accounted for 4% of the total variance.

The final factor, labeled Interference from Extended Family, was composed of an item (item 21) regarding the over involvement of a parent's extended family. Two complex variables loaded on the associated factor: one assessed the parent's boredom with the marriage and wish for freedom (item 19), and the other evaluated the extent to which

the marriage had been entered into for circumstantial reasons (item 25). Factor 10 accounted for 3% of the total variance.

Several of the 10 content scales developed using the principle components analysis were similar to the themes proposed a priori. For example, Overt Anger resembles conflict between parents (theme 1), Involvement of the Children reflects problems directly involving the children (theme 3), Abusive Parent/Violent Lifestyle indicates the presence of an abusive parent (theme 4), and Incompatibility reflects incompatibility between parents (theme 2). Other scales identified with the principle components analysis further refined themes that had been suggested a priori, for example, outside stress impinging on the parents' marriage (theme 5) was reflected in three separate scales: Illness, Financial Problems, and Interference from Extended Family. Three scales that resulted from the principle components analysis encompassed dimensions that had not been proposed a priori: Parental Dissatisfaction, Undependable Parent, and Extra-Marital Affair. Because the content scales created using the principle components analysis (a) appeared to reflect the key themes proposed initially, as well as some important new dimensions and (b) all but one scale had internal consistencies in the .70s or above, the decision was made to use the scales based on the principle components analysis.

Limiting the number of scales used in subsequent analyses. In order to increase the participant to variable ratio to an acceptable level, the decision was made to drop several of the scales created following the principle components analysis. Three scales were ultimately dropped for conceptual reasons: (1) Interference from Extended Family, (2) Illness, and (3) Financial Problems. These reasons for divorce were viewed as not directly

related to the marital relationship and, therefore, may be less likely to influence a young adult's later attachment style. Consistent with this theoretical perspective, the Incompatibility scale was retained for conceptual reasons in spite of its relatively low internal reliability. The original factors found using the principal components analysis were turned into "scales" by totaling the scores obtained on the relevant items loading highest on each factor. Table 6 lists the final set of seven scales used in subsequent analyses and their corresponding Cronbach's coefficient alphas. Table 7 presents the intercorrelations among the seven reasons for divorce scales.

Perceived Reason for Parental Divorce and Adult Attachment Style

Secure vs. insecure attachment categories. To test the second hypothesis that the perceived reasons for parental divorce would predict young adults' attachment styles, three analyses examined differences between the secure and insecure groups on the reasons for divorce variables: (1) a MANOVA, (2) a discriminant function analysis, and (3) a logit analysis.

Table 8 presents the means and standard deviations of the seven reasons for divorce scales for secure and insecure participants. A one-way MANOVA revealed a significant main effect of attachment style (Wilk's Lambda = .713, $F(10, 70) = .2.82$, $p < .01$), suggesting that attachment styles can be differentiated on the basis of their scores on this set of seven variables. Subsequent univariate analyses yielded significant effects for Overt Anger, $F(1,79) = 10.93$, $p < .001$, Involvement of the Children, $F(1,79) = 7.60$, $p < .01$, Extra-Marital Affair, $F(1,79) = 5.43$, $p < .05$, Incompatibility $F(1,79) = 4.79$, $p < .05$, and Dissatisfied Parent, $F(1,79) = 4.39$, $p < .05$. The effect of Undependable Parent approached, but did not reach, significance, $F(1,79) = 3.67$, $p = .06$. The effect of

Table 6

Reasons For Divorce Scales

Scale	Items	Alpha
Overt Anger		.83
	12. One parent was often angry and verbally abusive	
	31. A great deal of anger and tension was always present in the home	
	8. One parent was frequently belittled and put down by the other parent	
	14. One parent had emotional problems	
	1. Severe and intense conflict and frequent fighting between parents	
Dissatisfied Parent		.75
	2. One parent's needs were not met by the other parent	
	24. One parent was basically unhappy in the marriage	
	23. Parents were unable to communicate with each other	
	10. One parent was unhappy with how sexually intimate parents were	
	15. One parent no longer felt loved or appreciated by the other parent	
Involvement of the Children		.78
	26. You or other children in the family created too many problems and broke parents up	
	20. Something to do with you or other children in the family	
Extra-Marital Affair		.76
	29. One parent left the marriage to be with a new partner	
	22. One parent had an extra-marital affair that created a lot of conflict and tension between parents	
	19. One parent was bored with the marriage and wanted freedom	
Undependable Parent		.75
	27. One parent couldn't trust the other parent	
	33. Parents did not speak to each other	
	32. Family members could not count on one parent to be there when needed	
	18. One parent felt the other parent was not reliable	
Abusive Parent/Violent Lifestyle		.68
	7. One parent physically abused the other parent	
	5. One parent abused alcohol or drugs	
	25. Marriage itself was entered into for circumstantial reasons (e.g., Mother was pregnant)	
	28. One parent was abusive to other family members	
Incompatibility		.56
	3. Differences in lifestyle or values between parents	
	4. Problems and conflicts between parents regarding dividing household responsibilities	
	13. Parents disagreed on how to bring up children in the home	

Table 7

Intercorrelations among Reasons for Divorce Scales

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Overt Anger						
2. Dissatisfied Parent	.51***					
3. Involvement of the Children	.45***	.30**				
4. Extra-Marital Affair	.08	.23*	.05			
5. Undependable Parent	.40***	.41***	.24*	.12		
6. Abusive Parent/ Violent Lifestyle	.50***	.26*	.27*	.02	.38***	
7. Incompatibility	.36***	.40***	.27*	.10	.46***	.26*

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Table 8

Mean Ratings on Reasons for Parental Divorce Scales for Secure and Insecure Participants

Scale	Secure Participants (n=22) M	SD	Insecure Participants (n=59) M	SD
Overt Anger (5 items)	10.95	3.49	14.95	5.26***
Involvement of the Children (2 items)	2.14	0.44	3.28	1.92**
Extra-Marital Affair (3 items)	4.78	2.27	6.67	3.54*
Incompatibility (3 items)	6.52	2.07	7.94	2.76*
Dissatisfied Parent (5 items)	14.71	3.20	16.47	3.41*
Undependable Parent (4 items)	8.85	3.28	10.81	4.33
Abusive Parent/Violent Lifestyle (4 items)	6.48	3.58	7.08	3.43

Note. Secure group significantly different from Insecure group,
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Abusive Parent was not significant, $F(1,79) = .48$, $p = .49$. As predicted, secure young adults were less likely to attribute their parents' divorce to reasons related to the children themselves, extra-marital affairs, or to overt anger in the home than were insecure young adults. Contrary to prediction, secure young adults were also less likely to attribute their parents' divorce to incompatibility than were insecure young adults. Also unexpectedly, the secure and insecure groups did not differ in the extent to which they attributed an abusive parent as the reason for parental divorce.

A discriminant function analysis was performed to characterize further how well the seven measured variables differentiate secure and insecure young adults. The results showed that 74% of the young adults could be correctly classified as secure or insecure on the basis of their scores on the seven measured variables. As well, the loadings on the classification function indicate that overt anger and involvement of the children appeared most salient of the seven variables in differentiating secure from insecure young adults.

Logit analysis was also used to determine how well the seven variables could predict secure versus insecure attachment style. The overall test of this model was significant, $\chi^2(7) = 24.51$, $p < .001$, indicating that secure versus insecure attachment style could be predicted using perceived reasons for parental divorce. Overt anger ($B = 0.10$, $SE = .05$) and extra-marital affair ($B = .10$, $SE = .06$) were the only individual parameters that were significant (Wald test statistic = 4.45, $p < .05$, Wald test statistic = 4.30, $p < .05$, respectively). These significant effects indicated that the odds of being in the insecure group versus the secure group were higher for those participants who attributed

their parents' marital breakdown to reasons of overt anger in the home and reasons involving an extra-marital affair.

Predicting the four attachment scales. To examine whether the reasons for divorce variables predicted the various attachment styles, a series of hierarchical regression analyses was conducted on the four continuous measures of attachment style (RSQ). Tables 9 through 12 present the unstandardized regression coefficients (B), the standard errors of the regression coefficients (SE B), and the standardized regression coefficients (β) for secure, fearful, preoccupied, and dismissing attachment styles, respectively.

Before performing the regressions, the seven reasons for divorce variables were divided into four conceptually unique blocks to be entered in separate steps. Block 1 consisted solely of the Involvement of the Child variable as it, unlike any of the other reasons, focused specifically on the child. Block 1 was stepped into the equation first as it was the reason for divorce most proximal to the child. It seemed that this reason, as it most directly involved and impacted the child, was most likely to influence attachment style.

Block 2 was originally composed of Overt Anger and Abusive Parent, as both variables seemed to encompass the extent of expressed conflict and tension within the home. However, as (a) the intercorrelation between the Overt Anger and Abusive Parent variables was quite high ($r = .50$) and (b) in previous analyses Overt Anger had proved to be a salient variable and Abusive Parent had not, the decision was made to enter only Overt Anger on Block 2. This block was entered into the equation next as Overt Anger would likely also have some direct impact on the child and as previous research has

Table 9

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Reason for Divorce Variables Predicting RSQ Secure Attachment Style (N = 81)

RPDQ Scale	B	SE B	β	Adj. R^2	R^2 change
Block 1	F(1, 79) = 6.82, p = .01				
Involvement of the child	-.27	.10	-.28*	.07**	.08**
Block 2	F(2, 78) = 4.68, p = .01				
Overt anger	-.06	.04	-.19	.08**	.03
Block 3	F(3, 77) = 3.52, p < .02				
Extra-marital affair	-.06	.05	-.12	.08*	.01
Block 4	F(6, 74) = 2.26, p < .05				
Incompatibility	.07	.08	.11	-	-
Undependable parent	.01	.05	.02	-	-
Dissatisfied Parent	.07	07	.15	.09*	.03

Note. Adj. R^2 = Adjusted R^2.
*p < .05. **p < .01

Table 10

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Reason for Divorce Variables Predicting RSQ Fearful Attachment Style (N = 81)

RPDQ Scale	B	SE B	β	Adj. R^2	R^2 change
Block 1	F(1, 79) = 8.76, p = .004				
Involvement of the child	.35	.12	.32*	.08**	.10**
Block 2	F(2, 78) = 7.06, p < .002				
Overt anger	.10	.04	.26*	.13**	.05*
Block 3	F(3, 77) = 5.95, p = .001				
Extra-marital affair	.11	.06	.19	.16***	.03
Block 4	F(6, 74) = 4.20, p = .001				
Incompatibility	.05	.09	.07	-	-
Undependable parent	.12	.06	.26	-	-
Dissatisfied Parent	-.04	.07	-.08	.19***	.07

Note. Adj. R^2 = Adjusted R^2.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001

Table 11

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Reason for Divorce Variables Predicting RSQ Preoccupied Attachment Style (N = 81)

RPDQ Scale	B	SE B	β	Adj. R^2	R^2 change
Block 1	$F(1, 79) = 6.10, p < .02$				
Involvement of the child	.24	.10	.27*	.06*	.07*
Block 2	$F(2, 78) = 3.21, p < .05$				
Overt anger	.02	.04	.07	.05*	.00
Block 3	$F(3, 77) = 2.11, p = .11$				
Extra-marital affair	.00	.05	.01	.04	.00
Block 4	$F(6, 74) = 2.25, p < .05$				
Incompatibility	-.02	.07	-.04	-	-
Undependable parent	.06	.05	.15	-	-
Dissatisfied Parent	.12	.06	.27	.09*	.08

Note. Adj. R^2 = Adjusted R^2.
*$p < .05$

Table 12

Summary of Stepwise Regression Analysis for Reason for Divorce Variables Predicting RSQ Dismissing Attachment Style (N = 81)

RPDQ Scale	B	SE B	β	Adj. R^2	R^2 change
Block 1	F(1, 79) = 0.02, p = .90				
Involvement of the child	-.01	.11	-.01	-.01	.00
Block 2	F(2, 78) = 0.88, p = .42				
Overt anger	.05	.04	.17	-.00	.02
Block 3	F(3, 77) = 0.81, p = .49				
Extra-marital affair	.05	.06	.09	-.01	.01
Block 4	F(6, 74) = 0.82, p = .56				
Incompatibility	-.01	.08	-.01	-	-
Undependable parent	.08	.05	.21	-	-
Dissatisfied Parent	-.02	.07	-.04	-.01	.03

Note. Adj. R^2 = Adjusted R^2.

indicated that conflict between parents is one of the most salient variables in accounting for later adjustment to divorce.

Block 3 consisted of the Extra-Marital Affair variable, which points to a specific reason for divorce that may affect interpersonal trust.

Finally, Block 4 was composed of Undependable Parent, Incompatibility, and Dissatisfied Parent, variables that seemed to tap subtle forms of parental unhappiness and dissatisfaction with the marriage. This block was entered into the equation last as these reasons seemed most distal from the child and seemed least likely to affect attachment style. The intercorrelations among these conceptually similar variables were also high ($\underline{r}$ = .40 to .46). The decision was made to include all the variables on this step as no one variable was perceived to be more salient than the others.

When predicting secure attachment, Block 1 explained a significant 8% of the variance, with $\underline{B}$ = -0.27, indicating that children who felt they were not involved in their parents' decision to divorce scored high on measures of security. The amount of variance accounted for by each of the remaining blocks of variables was not significant.

When predicting fearful attachment, Block 1 explained a significant 10% of the variance, with $\underline{B}$ = 0.35, suggesting that children who felt they were involved in their parents' decision to divorce were more likely to be fearful than those children who did not. After Block 2 was entered into the equation, an additional significant 5% of the variance was explained, with $\underline{B}$ = 0.10, indicating that young adults who viewed overt anger as leading to their parent's marital break down scored high on measures of fearfulness. The amount of variance accounted for by each of the remaining blocks of

variables was not significant.

When predicting preoccupied attachment, Block 1 explained a significant 7% of the variance, with $\underline{B} = 0.24$, indicating that those children who reported feeling involved in their parents' decision to divorce were more likely to be preoccupied with relationships. The amount of variance accounted for by each of the remaining blocks of variables was not significant although, when Block 4 was entered into the equation, a substantial additional amount (8%) of the variance was explained.

None of the blocks in the hierarchical model significantly predicted dismissing attachment.

CHAPTER IV

Discussion

Overview

This chapter is divided into five main sections. The first section describes the young adults who participated in this study and discusses how they compare to young adults from divorced homes in the general population. Section two explores the development of the RPDQ and provides recommendations regarding the future development of this measure. The third section discusses findings regarding the central hypotheses that attachment style would be related to knowledge about and reasons for parental divorce. Section four describes the limitations of this study, and the final section outlines the implications of these results for parents contemplating ending their marriage, therapists working with individuals who have experienced parental divorce, and future research.

The Current Sample of Young Adults from Divorced Homes

Over the last few decades a great deal of information has been gathered concerning the family circumstances of children from divorced homes. Consistent with this research, the young adults in our study experienced the separation of their parents while in their pre-teens and a subsequent legal divorce approximately 2 years later (Statistics Canada, 1994). Further family transitions, such as the remarriage of at least one parent, were also frequently reported by the young adults in this study, as is typical for children from this background (Martin & Martin, 1992). As is true in most studies of this kind (e.g., Martin & Martin, 1992; Statistics Canada, 1993), the large majority of participants reported that their mothers had sole custody of them while they were growing up.

While there are some clear similarities between the current sample and children from divorced homes in the general population, there are also some important differences that must be kept in mind when interpreting the results of this study. The current sample was composed entirely of university students, and previous research indicates that children from divorced homes are less likely to attend post-secondary educational institutes than are children from intact families (e.g., Zill et al., 1993). Perhaps the young adults who participated in this study had greater financial resources (enabling them to attend university) than would actually be seen in the general population of young adults from divorced homes. In addition, it is possible that this sample may have been exposed to less parental discord than would be seen in a representative sample, as high parental discord has been shown to be related to reduced educational attainment of children from various family backgrounds (McCombs & Forehand, 1989). As the average participant in this study indicated at least some overt anger between parents, it is interesting to consider how much parental discord must be experienced in the general population of children from divorced homes. It is conceivable that the current sample is not representative of young adults from divorced homes in the general population. However, given that results supported the hypothesis that attachment style would be related to perceived reasons for parental divorce even with a less heterogeneous sample than would exist if a representative population were included, it is likely that similar results would have been found, and possibly even stronger results, had the sample included more variability.

The Development of the RPDQ

A review of the literature reveals that very little is known about children's perceptions of why their parents divorce. In an attempt to provide some initial information regarding this question, young adults were asked to rate reasons for their parent's marital break-up from a number of alternatives provided on a measure developed specifically for this purpose (RPDQ; Walker, 1995). A principle components analysis was then conducted on the RPDQ to explore whether or not there are underlying dimensions that young adults consider when determining the reasons for their parents' divorces.

Two items were deleted from the RPDQ following the principal components analysis. Upon reconsidering these items, it is clear that they may have been somewhat ambiguous. For example, one item read, "One parent was unreasonably jealous of the other parent." This item loaded on both the Involvement of the Children factor and the Abusive Parent/Violent Lifestyle factor. Perhaps some participants interpreted this item to indicate that one parent became jealous when the other parent interacted with members of the opposite sex, while other participants interpreted it to mean that one parent was jealous of the attention the other parent paid the children in the family. The second item ultimately dropped, "Parents gradually grew apart and were no longer close," also loaded on two factors: (1) Involvement of the Children and (2) Parental Dissatisfaction. It is possible that this item was sometimes taken at "face value" but that at other times young adults attempted to explain *why* parents grew apart (e.g., as a result of having children). New items would need to be created in subsequent revisions of the RPDQ in order to clarify the meaning of the items dropped in this version.

The principle components analysis indicated that there are indeed specific areas or dimensions that young adults consider when determining why their parents divorced. Ten factors were produced which accounted for most of the variance in the RPDQ. Three of the factors were not used in later analyses: (1) Interference from Extended Family, (2) Illness, and (3) Financial Problems. These factors were considered to be more external to the marital relationship than the remaining factors and, therefore, less likely to influence later attachment style. These factors were also composed of only one or two items, making it difficult to create a reliable scale for subsequent analyses. In addition, the Illness and Interference from Extended Family content scales were composed of the three least endorsed items on the RPDQ, indicating that these reasons were rarely perceived as responsible for parental divorce. The next edition of the RPDQ could include more items within these scales (increasing reliability) and items that may be more typical of marital problems within these domains (e.g., acute health concerns versus chronic illness). Although these scales were not used to predict attachment style, they would be important to retain if a comprehensive exploration of reasons for parental divorce were required.

Seven scales were created from the remaining factors and used in later analyses. These scales seemed to encompass many aspects of the marital relationship and generally had adequate internal consistencies. Three of the scales appeared to tap aspects of the relationship that indicated subtle forms of dissatisfaction with the marriage or displeasure with a spouse: (1) Parental Dissatisfaction, (2) Undependable Parent, and (3) Incompatibility. Consistent with previous research concerning perspectives of divorcing men and women (Gigy & Kelly, 1992), young adults indicated that these themes were among the most common reasons for marital breakdowns. Also consistent with Gigy and

Kelly's findings, other frequently cited reasons included items from the Overt Anger scale, reflecting conflict and anger between parents.

Overall, the items on the RPDQ appeared to encompass the majority of reasons perceived responsible for parental divorce by young adults, as few participants indicated additional reasons that were not outlined on the questionnaire when provided with the opportunity to add explanations not covered on the RPDQ. However, while many important dimensions of young adults' perceptions appeared to be tapped by the RPDQ, a minority of participants (15%) did provide additional responses. Many of the qualitative responses provided reflected themes similar to those covered on the RPDQ (e.g., "Dad was addicted to drugs" and "Dad was not very dependable"). Truly idiosyncratic responses included "Dad was not ready to have kids" and "Both parents were still dealing with their own childhood traumas." Items that reflected these themes of parental preparedness and unresolved past issues will be considered in further editions of the RPDQ. The fact that a number of young adults did offer additional written comments suggests that they were actively engaged in the task and that the questionnaire was meaningful to them.

A final aspect of the RPDQ that should be revised in the future is the distinction between young adults' perceptions at the time of the divorce and their current perceptions. While it is of interest to consider how individuals' perceptions of why their parents divorced change over time, it appeared that the young adults in this study did not distinguish between their thoughts at the time of the divorce and their later understanding. Of note is the fact that, of the "now" and "then' items that were not highly correlated, the lowest four were all from the Dissatisfied Parent scale. Perhaps young adults are

somewhat more likely to recognize parents' needs in a relationship than are children and adolescents (the ages at when divorces typically occurred). However, in general, the young adults did not remember perceiving their parents' divorces much differently when they were younger. Possibly this is because most of the information regarding their parents' decision was obtained at the time of divorce and little new information was received at later times. It is also possible that it is difficult for young adults to distinguish between their present thoughts and those that they may have had at an earlier age. In addition it may be that, while the divorce is occurring, children are so overwhelmed with their own upset that they do not have the mental energy to explore their parents' perspectives of why the marriage is ending. Later editions of the RPDQ should instruct respondents to rate each item only according to their current perceptions.

The RPDQ appears to provide an excellent starting point in discovering young adults' perceptions of why their parents divorced. This instrument provides important information concerning individuals' understandings of their parents' divorces which may be useful both in future research and in clinical settings.

Perceptions of Parental Divorce and Attachment Style

Extent of Knowledge about Parental Divorce. The first hypothesis, that the extent of knowledge participants had regarding their parents' divorces would be related to attachment style, was not supported. It is possible that no relationship was found between these variables because most of the young adults in this sample indicated that they knew a good deal about why their parents divorced. Perhaps lack of knowledge about why parents divorced would be found to predict insecure attachment if a sample that included young adults who knew very little about why their parents divorced was used.

It is also possible that extent of knowledge about parental divorce is unrelated to attachment style or that its effect is mediated by other variables. In this study, although almost all the young adults indicated they knew quite a bit about why their parents divorced, the respondents categorized themselves into a variety of attachment styles. Conceivably, knowing a great deal about why parents divorced will sometimes have positive implications for later attachment style and sometimes not. For example, individuals who have witnessed a great deal of overt anger between parents and know from first hand experience why their parents chose to divorce may be more susceptible to later problems in their own romantic relationships. In contrast, individuals who feel that they thoroughly understand that their parents separated as a result of incompatibilities may feel secure about their own romantic relationships provided they are comfortable that they have selected the right partner. Future research could evaluate optimum amounts of knowledge about parental divorce and how this amount may vary depending on the reasons for the divorce. For example, it may be that knowing a little helps children to come to terms with their parents' divorce whereas knowing nothing will fuel relational anxieties and knowing too much begins to draw the child into the parents' problems.

Future research could also explore how young adults obtain information concerning their parents' divorce and how accurate this information is. In the current study, many young adults indicated that they had discussed the divorce at length with their custodial parent (usually mother) but that they had had less opportunity to hear the other parent's version of what had occurred. When provided with the chance to add reasons for their parents divorce that had not been covered on the questionnaire, a number of young adults offered reasons that suggested they had adopted their mothers' points of view. For

example, "Dad felt inferior to mom and tried to destroy her but she wouldn't let him" and "Dad was a jerk in general. He was a lazy bum who treated my mom like crap." Previous research suggests that men and women have different perceptions of the reasons for their divorces (Gigy & Kelly, 1992). It would be interesting to collect information regarding husbands', wives', and children's perspectives concerning the reasons for divorce and determine the similarities and differences among them.

Perceived Reasons for Parental Divorce. Support for the second hypothesis, that attachment style would vary as a function of the perceived reasons for parental divorce, was generally indicated by the MANOVA, discriminant function analysis, and logit regression. Insecure young adults were more likely to report that overt anger, involvement of the children, or an extra-marital affair were responsible for the marital breakdown than were secure participants. Analyses that were performed to determine how well perceived reasons for parental divorce could predict or differentiate between secure and insecure young adults also indicated that overt anger, the involvement of the children, and an extra-marital affair were the most salient variables in differentiating the two groups.

The finding that overt anger and the involvement of the children is related to insecure attachment style is consistent with previous research which has suggested that parental conflict and feeling caught in the middle can lead to negative outcomes for children of divorce (Amato & Keith, 1991b; Johnston, 1994). Finding a relationship between a parent's extra-marital affair and insecure attachment is also not surprising. It seems likely that perceiving the "betrayal" of one or both parents would make young adults much more likely to fear infidelities in their own relationships. Qualitative

responses from young adults during the interview also indicated that some participants, particularly males, feared that they would be more likely to "cheat" on their partners if their same sex parent had had an affair.

Unexpectedly, the secure group also rated the Incompatibility content scale lower than the insecure group did. In fact, the secure group rated all of the content scales lower than the insecure group did. When provided with the opportunity to offer additional reasons for why parents divorced that may have not been covered on the RPDQ, secure young adults failed to do so, suggesting that these young adults did not attribute their parents' divorces to reasons not covered by the questionnaire. The fact that the secure group rated all the content scales lower than the insecure group could indicate that the secure group downplayed the importance of any one reason as being responsible for their parents' divorces whereas the insecure group viewed their parents' marriage as multi-problematic. Possibly the attachment styles of those young adults who perceive that a few minor marital problems led to their parents' divorces are less "overwhelmed" than the attachment styles of young adults who believe that their parents divorced due to multiple, more "serious" marital problems. It is also conceivable that having a secure attachment style could lead one to view relationships in a more positive light while having an insecure attachment style could lead one to accentuate the problems in a relationship.

Also unexpectedly, the secure and insecure groups did not differ in the extent to which they attributed an abusive parent as the reason for parental divorce. It is possible that no difference was found on this scale as few young adults in this sample endorsed the abusive parent items and little variability was found. It is likely this variable would prove to be important in differentiating secure from insecure young adults in a more

heterogeneous sample. Given that witnessing or experiencing parental abuse is likely a critical component in determining one's comfort with and desire for interpersonal relationships, it will be important in the future to develop RPDQ items that will reflect various dimensions of parental abuse and measure a more heterogeneous sample.

No predictions were made regarding the relationships among the reasons for divorce variables and the four attachment styles. When these relationships were probed in an exploratory fashion using a hierarchical regression model, several interesting results were observed.

The involvement of the children appeared to significantly predict how secure, fearful, and preoccupied one would be in relationships. Young adults who perceived that they were somehow responsible for their parents' decision to divorce were less likely to feel secure and more likely to be fearful and preoccupied in relationships. This is consistent with literature that suggests that the extent to which children feel caught in the middle of parental conflict is one of the most salient variables in predicting later adjustment to divorce (Buchanan et al., 1991). It is understandable that young adults who feel that they are partially responsible for the dissolution of a fundamentally important relationship in their lives (i.e., between their parents) are more fearful and less secure about the future of their own relationships and that they may become more preoccupied about others valuing them as much as they value others.

Overt anger also appeared to be an important variable when predicting fearful attachment. It has been well established in the literature that a high amount of conflict between parents places children at an increased risk for negative outcomes (e.g., Amato &

Keith, 1991b; Forehand et al., 1994; Johnston, 1994). As the overt anger variable appears to encompass several aspects of parental conflict, such as the amount of anger and fighting in the home, it is not surprising that those young adults who described reasons for their parents' divorce related to this block were likely to feel more fearful in relationships than those young adults who did not. It was interesting to note that less obvious forms of conflict between parents, such as parents disagreeing on how to bring up the children or parents not speaking to each other, loaded on factors related to subtle forms of parent unhappiness and dissatisfaction and did not seem as salient in determining feelings of fearfulness in relationships. This suggests that certain aspects of parental conflict may be more or less detrimental to children. In this study, it appears that conflict that is loudly and physically expressed contributes to feelings of insecurity in relationships while conflict that is more concealed has less of an impact on attachment style.

None of the blocks of the RPDQ variables significantly predicted the dismissing attachment style. As the variance of this measure was similar to the other attachment measures, it is likely that factors other than perceived reasons for parental divorce determine how dismissing of relationships one is. Other family background variables may be important, such as closeness to parents, the ratio of benefits obtained and costs sustained from being in a family, or the experience of general deprivation or multiple abuse situations while growing up. In addition, variables outside of family background may be critical in determining whether or not individuals desire interpersonal relationships. For example, the amount of satisfaction and fulfillment obtained through other means, such as in work or in leisure activities, may influence how much a person needs to seek fulfillment

in interpersonal relationships. Future research is required to determine how a dismissing attachment style is developed.

Additional Findings. Although not a focus of this study, it is worth noting that the majority of our participants classified themselves as insecure. Previous research has indicated that just over half of the general population would be classified as securely attached (van Ijzendoorn & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 1996). When the attachment style of young adults from divorced homes has been studied previously, consistent results have not been found. When comparing individuals from intact and divorced homes, Hazan and Shaver (1987) found that adult attachment style did not seem to be influenced by experiencing parental divorce. However, Brennan and Shaver (1993) suggest parents' relationships with each other do appear to be related to their adult children's attachment style. The finding that young adults in our study were more likely to categorize themselves as insecure than they were secure is consistent with previous research which has suggested that young adults whose parents have divorced may be particular vulnerable to difficulties within their own relationships (Booth et al., 1984; Zill et al., 1993).

Although not significant, this finding appeared somewhat different for males than for females. The percentage of males (42%) who classified themselves as secure was much closer to general population estimates than the percentage of females (21%). (It should be noted, however, that the proportion of males who participated in this study was relatively small.) As some previous research has suggested that males exhibit more negative effects immediately following parental divorce than do females (Guidubaldi, 1988), this trend may appear somewhat surprising. However, other research that has considered more long term effects of experiencing parental divorce has indicated that

some individuals, particularly females, may not display any negative effects during their childhood and may only encounter difficulties or "sleeper effects" as they enter adolescence and adulthood (Amato & Keith, 1991a; Zill, Morrison, & Coiro, 1993). For example, Wallerstein (1991) found that many young women who appeared to be well adjusted during their early adolescent years went on to face issues concerning love and commitment with anxiety and fears of betrayal and abandonment as they entered adulthood. Perhaps females from divorced homes spend more time thinking about why their parents divorced and what the ramifications for their own relationships might be than males from divorced homes do. Certainly, more young women than young men elected to discuss their parents' divorces and their own relationships by participating in this study. (Although it is also true that more females than males enroll in the Psychology undergraduate course from which this sample was drawn.)

Limitations of the Current Research

Several limitations need to be considered when interpreting the results of this study. First, only a finite number of questions could be addressed regarding early family atmosphere and relationships with and between parents. In addition, information about important factors such as sexual and physical abuse and mental illness in the family were not solicited. It is likely that these variables would play an important role in later comfort with and competence in interpersonal relationships. Nevertheless, some important clues regarding young adults' early family environments were offered by ratings on the RPDQ content scales, providing a good starting point when considering the question of how early family experiences affect later attachment styles.

A second limitation of this study is that the current sample did not consist of equal numbers of male and female research participants. Specifically, the total sample consisted of 30% males and 70% females. Although no significant differences were found between males and females on the perceived reasons for divorce or on attachment styles, a tendency for females to classify themselves as insecure more often than males was observed. More research would need to be done, using a larger number of males, before the results of this study could be generalized to both genders.

This study was limited by its retrospective nature. While it was possible to establish that a relationship did exist between attachment style and the perceived reason for parental divorce, it would be impossible to determine if a causal relationship between these variables exists or the direction of the causality. It seems likely that observing a highly conflictual relationship between one's parents would make one more susceptible to becoming insecure in one's own relationships. However, it is equally possible that an insecure attachment style could bias one's perceptions so that other relationships are viewed more negatively and features like conflict become most salient. Longitudinal research would need to be conducted to provide the answer to the question of causality. While the question of causality cannot be answered using a cross-sectional design, this study demonstrates an impressive linkage between perceived reasons for parental divorce and attachment style. This finding contributes to the formation of hypotheses about connections between family dynamics and security in relationships.

A final limitation of this study is that one of the attachment measures, the RSQ, contained subscales with low internal consistency. As correlations found between a

variable measured with an unreliable instrument and other variables (in this case RPDQ scales) are attenuated, important relationships may be diminished or overlooked if an unreliable instrument is used. In this study several significant relationships were observed using the RSQ, however it is possible that stronger relationships would have been evident and that some of the non-significant relationships found would have been significant had a more reliable instrument been chosen. The decision to use the RSQ was made as continuous ratings of romantic attachment variables were desired and few alternate questionnaires were available. In future research it would be important to find an alternate measure or work towards improving the internal consistency of the existing instrument (possibly through increasing the number of items contained in each scale).

Conclusions and Implications for Practice and Research

Throughout this thesis, attempts were made to: (1) work within a theoretical framework, (2) study a specific measure which provided the opportunity to observe both negative and positive outcomes, and (3) clearly describe the model of the relationship being observed.

Attachment theory was chosen as the theoretical framework for this study. Children's attachment styles have been shown to be influenced by their relationships with their parents and by their parents' relationships with each other (Cowan, Cohn, Cowan, & Pearson, 1996). As children from divorced homes undoubtedly frequently witness poor relationships between their parents and may be at an increased risk for a poor relationship with one or both parents (Zill et al., 1993), it seems likely that links between parental divorce and attachment style exist. Certainly this study suggests that young adults who

have experienced parental divorce are at an increased risk of being insecurely attached than would be predicted from attachment distributions in the general population.

A specific outcome, security in interpersonal relationships, was also selected for this thesis. In the past, large-scale studies of divorce have measured a number of broad domains and compared children from intact and divorced homes. While these initial broad comparisons were essential in setting the stage for developing a comprehensive understanding of the effects of divorce, often meta-analyses of these studies found small or no differences between the two groups overall. Only by observing outcomes very specific to divorce is it possible to observe the undiluted effects of experiencing parental marital dissolution and to determine if and where certain risks to children from divorced homes exist. By focusing on security in relationships, a variable that is conceptually linked to witnessing the relationship between parents, it became clear that elements of parents' relationships, such as the amount of overt anger and the involvement of the children, may place children from divorced homes at an increased risk of experiencing insecurity in their own relationships.

It should be kept in mind that, although the majority of young adults categorized themselves as insecure, a substantial minority of the respondents considered themselves secure. The opportunity was provided to observe both positive and negative outcomes and, as expected, experiencing parental divorce was not uniformly negative. Future research on the nature of the relationship between parental divorce and attachment style should investigate the factors that allow children to overcome difficult divorce experiences (e.g., lots of parental conflict) and go on to develop or maintain secure attachment styles. Exploring the experiences of these resilient children may provide some answers to the

question of how best to intervene with children from difficult backgrounds to prevent later problems in their own relationships.

A theoretical link was proposed at the onset of this thesis that specified that young adults' perceived reasons for parental divorce would mediate the relationship between experiencing parental divorce and later attachment style. The theoretical link appears to have been generally supported by this study. Young adults who had experienced parental divorce did seem to be at an increased risk of being insecurely attached than would be expected using normative estimates. However, reasons for parental divorce, specifically, overt anger, the involvement of the children, and an extra-marital affair, appeared to be more important than parental divorce alone in predicting security in relationships.

The results of this study have important implications for parents who are contemplating divorce and for mental health practitioners working with individuals who have experienced parental divorce. Divorcing parents would be wise to shield their children from overt anger and hostility expressed in the marriage and protect their children from feeling caught in the middle of the conflict. It may also be wise to spare children from a lot of detail concerning extra-marital affairs and inter-parental conflict. Parents need to be aware that their children's perceptions of the parental relationship may affect their own security in later relationships. Although parents may feel compelled to share their marital views with their children, care should be taken to allow children to develop their own views regarding relationships.

Mental health practitioners working with individuals who have experienced parental divorce need to be aware that these clients may be at an increased risk for problems in their own relationships. It may be worthwhile to inquire why these individuals

perceive that their parents separated and to recognize that children who witnessed overt anger in their parents' marriage or felt caught in the middle of conflict may be especially likely to have difficulties with relationships. We are learning that attachment style is an important variable in a number of areas of mental health. Attachment style appears to have implications for marital success (Hazan & Shaver, 1987), satisfaction with relationships (Brennan & Shaver, 1993), psychological health, and general social success (Blain et al., 1993; Kobak & Sceery, 1988; Raja et al., 1991). Mental health practitioners should recognize that clients, particularly women, from divorced homes may be at increased risk for feeling fearful about relationships, placing them at a disadvantage in a number of areas of their lives. Therapeutic goals, such as increasing feelings of security in relationships and revisiting issues around one's parents' divorce, may need to be developed to target these fears.

The results of this study also have implications for future research. The scope of the current study was somewhat limited and could be expanded upon. This study has considered attachment styles exclusively in the context of romantic relationships. Future studies could address how experiencing parental divorce and the circumstances surrounding the divorce may impact attachment style in a variety of relationships, for example with parents and with peers. This study has also focused specifically on young adults. It would be interesting to see if similar results were found over a broader age range. Perhaps older adults are more influenced by their own experiences in romantic relationships than they are by their parents' relationships. It is also possible that children and adolescents' interpersonal relationships are more affected by their parents' relationships than are young adults. Future research could evaluate these questions.

Although many questions remain surrounding the long-term effects of experiencing parental divorce, this study has provided some indication that children's perceptions of why their parents divorced may be an important factor in predicting their later style in romantic relationships.

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Appendix A

Consent Form Used For Research Participants

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
FAMILIES IN MOTION RESEARCH AND INFORMATION CENTRE
P.O. BOX 3050, VICTORIA, B.C. V8W 3P5
TELEPHONE: (604) 721-8589 / FACSIMILE: (604) 721-8929

INFORMED CONSENT BY INDIVIDUALS
PARTICIPATING IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

I understand that this research project, conducted by Ms. Tavi Walker and Dr. Marion Ehrenberg, is studying the influence of young adults' family histories on their current feelings about relationships. I understand that participation in this study involves being asked about my personal views and feelings, my family background, and my beliefs about relationships in the past and at present. I understand that I will be asked about these topics by completing an individual interview and a questionnaire, which will take approximately one hour of my time.

I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time without explanation. I also understand that I may refuse to answer any particular question without explanation.

I understand that any data collected in the study will remain confidential and that the interview and questionnaire results will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. Furthermore, I understand that my name will not be attached to any published results and that my anonymity is guaranteed by using code numbers only to identify the results obtained from individual subjects.

I understand that my interview will be recorded on paper and that the paper used to record my thoughts/feelings/experiences will be destroyed after the information has been used.

I understand that whether I participate or chose not to participate will have no bearing on my grade/academic standing. I understand that I will be provided with further information regarding this study after I complete the questionnaire and interview.

NAME:_____
ADDRESS:_____
TELEPHONE:_____
SIGNATURE:_____
EXPERIMENTER:_____
DATE:_____

Appendix B

Initial Interview Completed by Research Participants

1. *Indicate gender*: F M

2. What is your date of birth? _____/_____/_____
(month) (day) (year)

3. What is your marital status?
single_____ married_____
living with partner_____ separated/divorced_____

4. Do you identify with any particular ethnic or cultural group or background?
No Yes (specify)_____

5. How far have you gone in school?_____

6. What would you estimate your current household income to be? (*Provide examples such as*, your individual income if you are single and living on your own or with roommates, the income of you and your parents if you live with them, or the income of you and your partner if you are married or living common-law. *Indicate if appropriate* before tax, including all sources).

less than $10,000_____	$20,000 - $24,999_____	$40,000 - $49,000_____
$10,000 - $14,999_____	$25,000 - $29,999_____	$50,000 - $59,999_____
$15,000 - $19,999_____	$30,000 - $39,999_____	$60,000 or more_____

(*If Yes*) How old were you at the time?

7. Did your parents ever separate N Y _____years

How long had your parents been married when they separated?_____

Did you spend any time in a single parent family?
No Yes → Which parent? M F Both
Length of time:_____

Did your parents get back together N Y _____years
Did your parents get a divorce N Y _____years
Did either of your parents get remarried N Y _____years

Which parent? M F Both
Did you spend any time living with your parent and stepparent?
No Yes → Length of time:_____ Who with? M & SF F & SM Both

Did your remarried parents break up N Y _____years

Appendix B (continued)

8. Are your parents both alive?

Yes
No → Which parent? M F SM SF
How old were you when he/she died?_____

9. How far did your parents go in school?

(a) Mother_____ (b) Father_____

10. What did your parents do for a living while you were growing up?

(a) Mother_____ (b) Father_____

11. Do you have an understanding of why your parents broke up? Yes No

Describe:_____
_____
_____

Appendix C

RPDQ Questions Completed by Research Participants

Reasons For Your Parents' Divorce

The following are possible reasons for why a couple might decide to divorce. Please indicate how much you believe each reason contributed to the breakdown of your parents' marriage and decision to divorce. Repeat this process twice. First, respond according to what you currently believe (Now) and, second, respond according to what you believed while you were growing up (Then). Some reasons refer to "one parent." If you feel one of these reasons contributed to your parents' breakup, please circle which parent you are referring to.

	Had nothing to do with it		Played a small role		Played a very important role	
1. Severe and intense conflict and frequent fighting between parents	1	2	3	4	5	Now
	1	2	3	4	5	← Then
2. One parent's needs were not met by the other parent	1	2	3	4	5	Now
	1	2	3	4	5	← Then
Which parent? Mother Father Both						
3. Differences in lifestyle or values between parents	1	2	3	4	5	Now
	1	2	3	4	5	← Then
4. Problems and conflicts between parents regarding dividing household responsibilities	1	2	3	4	5	Now
	1	2	3	4	5	← Then
5. One parent abused alcohol or drugs	1	2	3	4	5	Now
	1	2	3	4	5	← Then
Which parent? Mother Father Both						
6. One parent was severely or chronically physically ill	1	2	3	4	5	Now
	1	2	3	4	5	← Then
Which parent? Mother Father Both						
7. One parent physically abused the other parent	1	2	3	4	5	Now
	1	2	3	4	5	← Then
Which parent? Mother Father Both						
8. One parent was frequently belittled or put down by the other parent	1	2	3	4	5	Now
	1	2	3	4	5	← Then
Which parent? Mother Father Both						
9. Financial problems between parents	1	2	3	4	5	Now
	1	2	3	4	5	← Then
10. Sexual intimacy problems between parents	1	2	3	4	5	Now
	1	2	3	4	5	← Then

Appendix C (continued)

Had nothing to do with it — Played a small role — Played a very important role

11. Employment and job related difficulties

1 2 3 4 5 Now
1 2 3 4 5 ← Then

12. One parent was often angry and demanding

1 2 3 4 5 Now
1 2 3 4 5 ← Then

Which parent? Mother Father Both

13. Parents disagreed on how to bring up you or other children in the family

1 2 3 4 5 Now
1 2 3 4 5 ← Then

14. One parent had emotional problems

1 2 3 4 5 Now
1 2 3 4 5 ← Then

Which parent? Mother Father Both

15. One parent no longer felt loved or appreciated by the other parent

1 2 3 4 5 Now
1 2 3 4 5 ← Then

Which parent? Mother Father Both

16. Parents gradually grew apart and were no longer close

1 2 3 4 5 Now
1 2 3 4 5 ← Then

17. One parent was unreasonably jealous of the other parent

1 2 3 4 5 Now
1 2 3 4 5 ← Then

Which parent? Mother Father Both

18. One parent felt the other parent was not reliable

1 2 3 4 5 Now
1 2 3 4 5 ← Then

Which parent? Mother Father Both

19. One parent was bored with the marriage and wanted freedom

1 2 3 4 5 Now
1 2 3 4 5 ← Then

Which parent? Mother Father Both

20. Something to do with you or other children in the family

1 2 3 4 5 Now
1 2 3 4 5 ← Then

21. One parent's extended family was overly involved with your own family

1 2 3 4 5 Now
1 2 3 4 5 ← Then

Which parent? Mother Father Both

22. One parent had an extra-marital affair that created a lot of tension and conflict between parents

1 2 3 4 5 Now
1 2 3 4 5 ← Then

Which parent? Mother Father Both

Appendix C (continued)

	Had nothing to do with it			Played a small role		Played a very important role	
23. Parents were unable to communicate with each other	1	2	3	4	5	Now	
	1	2	3	4	5	← Then	
24. One parent was basically unhappy in the marriage	1	2	3	4	5	Now	
	1	2	3	4	5	← Then	
Which parent? Mother Father Both							
25. Marriage itself was entered into for circumstantial reasons (e.g., Mother was pregnant)	1	2	3	4	5	Now	
	1	2	3	4	5	← Then	
26. You or other children in the family created too many problems and broke parents up	1	2	3	4	5	Now	
	1	2	3	4	5	← Then	
27. One parent couldn't trust the other parent	1	2	3	4	5	Now	
	1	2	3	4	5	← Then	
Which parent? Mother Father Both							
28. One parent was abusive to other family members	1	2	3	4	5	Now	
	1	2	3	4	5	← Then	
Which parent? Mother Father Both							
29. One parent left the marriage to be with a new partner	1	2	3	4	5	Now	
	1	2	3	4	5	← Then	
Which parent? Mother Father Both							
30. Family member became ill or injured or passed away which created a lot of stress	1	2	3	4	5	Now	
	1	2	3	4	5	← Then	
31. A great deal of anger and tension was always present in the home	1	2	3	4	5	Now	
	1	2	3	4	5	← Then	
32. Family members could not count on one parent to be there when needed	1	2	3	4	5	Now	
	1	2	3	4	5	← Then	
Which parent? Mother Father Both							
33. Parents did not speak to each other	1	2	3	4	5	Now	
	1	2	3	4	5	← Then	
34. Other	1	2	3	4	5	Now	
	1	2	3	4	5	← Then	

Specify: _____

Appendix D

RQ Question completed by Research Participants

About How You See Relationships in General

Following are descriptions of FOUR relationship styles or approaches that people often report. Please read each of the four descriptions and CIRCLE the letter corresponding to the ONE style or way of being that *best* describes you or is *closest* to the way you generally are in your close relationships.

A. It is easy for me to become emotionally close to others. I am comfortable depending on them and having them depend on me. I don't worry about being alone or having others accept me.

B. I am uncomfortable getting close to others. I want emotionally close relationships, but I find it difficult to trust others completely, or to depend on them. I worry that I will be hurt if I allow myself to become too close to others.

C. I want to be emotionally intimate with others, but I often find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I am uncomfortable being without close relationships, but I sometimes worry that others don't value me as much as I value them.

D. I am comfortable without close relationships. It is very important to me to feel independent and self-sufficient, and I prefer not to depend on others or have others depend on me.

Circle one: A B C D

Appendix E

RSQ Questions Completed by Research Participants

About How You See Relationships

Please read each of the following statements and rate the extent to which it describes your feelings about close relationships by circling the number between 1 and 5 (1=Not at All Like Me and 5=Very Much Like Me) that best describes your opinion. Think about all of your close relationships, past and present, and respond in terms of how you generally feel in these relationships.

	Not at all like me ↓	↓	Somewhat like me ↓	↓	Very much like me ↓
1. I find it difficult to depend on people.	1	2	3	4	5
2. It is very important to me to feel independent.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I find it easy to get emotionally close to others.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I want to merge completely with another person.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I worry that I will be hurt if I allow myself to become too close to others.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I am comfortable without close relationships.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I am not sure that I can always depend on others to be there when I need them.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I want to be emotionally intimate with others.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I worry about being alone.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I am comfortable depending on other people.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I often worry that romantic partners don't really love me.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I find it difficult to trust others completely.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I worry about others getting too close to me.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I want emotionally close relationships.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I am comfortable having other people depend on me.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix E (continued)

	Not at all like me ↓	↓	Somewhat like me ↓	↓	Very much like me ↓
16. I worry that others don't value me as much as I value them.	1	2	3	4	5
17. People are never there when you need them.	1	2	3	4	5
18. My desire to merge completely sometimes scares people away.	1	2	3	4	5
19. It is very important to me to feel self-sufficient.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I am nervous when anyone gets too close to me.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I often worry that romantic partners won't want to stay with me.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I prefer not to have other people depend on me.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I worry about being abandoned.	1	2	3	4	5
24. I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others.	1	2	3	4	5
25. I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like.	1	2	3	4	5
26. I prefer not to depend on others.	1	2	3	4	5
27. I know that others will be there when I need them.	1	2	3	4	5
28. I worry about having others not accept me.	1	2	3	4	5
29. Romantic partners often want me to be closer than I feel comfortable being.	1	2	3	4	5
30. I find it relatively easy to get close to others.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix F

Follow-Up Interview Completed by Research Participants

1. To what extent or how much do you feel you understand why your parents' marriage ended?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all		Somewhat		Very much

2. How did you come to an understanding of why your parents separated or divorced?

_____

_____

_____

3. Do you think your understanding of why your parents divorced is a very deep and thorough understanding or does it just scratch the surface of why your parents broke up?

1	2	3	4	5
Merely surface understanding		Some depth		Very thorough understanding

4. How much has what you believed about why your parents divorced while you were growing up changed now that you are an adult?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all		Somewhat		A great deal

5. How have your beliefs changed?

1	2	3	4	5
Much less clear		Neutral		Much more clear

Appendix G

Debriefing Form Given to all Research Participants Upon Completion of Research Session

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
FAMILIES IN MOTION RESEARCH AND INFORMATION CENTRE
P.O. BOX 3050, VICTORIA, B.C. V8W 3P5
TELEPHONE: (604) 721-8589 / FACSIMILE: (604) 721-8929

Dear Research Participant:

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. As you know, we asked you questions about your view of your family while you were growing up as well as your present attitudes about yourself, your friendships and close relationships, and about parenting. We are trying to learn how family experiences during childhood and adolescence might colour how individuals perceive and feel about their relationships with others as young adults. Rather than relying only on our theories, we also wanted to learn how YOU thought past family events might or might not be connected with how you are now. Because we are asking you to look back at your family from your perspective as a young adult, this is called a retrospective study. If we wanted to investigate similar questions in a prospective design, we would be interviewing children and following them up until they were young adults.

We asked you about whether you had experienced your parents' separation, divorce and/ or remarriage while you were growing up, because this is a very common event in many families. In fact, between 35 to 45% of all North American children and adolescents experience their parents' divorce before they reach adulthood. Certainly how you see your parents getting along or not getting along when you are growing up, regardless of whether they actually stay together in their marriage or get divorced, can colour how you think about your own friendships and relationships as you start to make a life for yourself. Of course, people's attitudes about relationships can continue to change throughout their lives. We are interested in young adults' perspectives in particular, because we have learned from other research that this is an important developmental period regarding relationships.

Please remember what we explained to you before you agreed to participate in this study. Your responses are completely CONFIDENTIAL. In fact, the information you provided in the interview and questionnaire is entered in our computer data base only as numbers and without your name ever being attached to it. In fact, once the information you shared with us has been entered, there will be no way for us to know who said it. Our goal is to learn as much as possible about young adults' perspectives IN GENERAL. We think that the best way of going about this is by talking to one young adult at a time.

Sometimes being asked about your family history and relationship can leave you with questions and feelings that you may wish to discuss with someone. If you wish to speak with someone about these issues, you might consider speaking with a friend or family member, or seeing a counsellor at the University of Victoria Counselling Services in Suite B202 of the University Centre. You should also know that anyone can telephone the Victoria Needs Crisis and Information Line at any time for further advice, information and resources that may be useful to you (Tel. 386-6323).

If you have any questions at all regarding the study please feel free to ask the researcher. If you would like to receive a copy of the results of this study when they are complete, please write to us after June 1997 at the Families in Motion Research and Information Centre, RE: YOUNG ADULT STUDY, Department of Psychology, P.O. Box 3050, Victoria, B.C. V8W 3P5.

Thank you again for your time and effort!

Appendix H

Correlations between Now and Then Scores on RPDQ Items

Item	Correlation
1. Severe and intense conflict and frequent fighting between parents	.61*
2. One parent's needs were not met by the other parent	.08
3. Differences in lifestyle or values between parents	.55*
4. Problems and conflicts between parents regarding dividing household responsibilities	.62*
5. One parent abused alcohol or drugs	.69*
6. One parent was severely or chronically physically ill	.83*
7. One parent physically abused the other parent	.75*
8. One parent was frequently belittled and put down by the other parent	.53*
9. Parents were having many financial problems	.62*
10. One parent was unhappy with how sexually intimate parents were	.40*
11. Employment and job related difficulties	.75*
12. One parent was often angry and verbally abusive	.78*
13. Parents disagreed on how to bring up children in the home	.70*
14. One parent had emotional problems	.70*
15. One parent no longer felt loved or appreciated by the other parent	.26
16. Parents gradually grew apart and were no longer close	.48*
17. One parent was unreasonably jealous of the other parent	.60*
18. One parent felt the other parent was not reliable	.66*
19. One parent was bored with the marriage and wanted freedom	.63*
20. Something to do with you or other children in the family	.58*
21. One parent's extended family was overly involved with your own family	.77*
22. One parent had an extra-marital affair that created a lot of conflict and tension between parents.	.48*
23. Parents were unable to communicate with each another	.27
24. One parent was basically unhappy in the marriage	.32
25. Marriage itself was entered into for circumstantial reasons (e.g., Mother was pregnant)	.77*
26. You or other children in the family created too many problems and broke parents up	.70*
27. One parent couldn't trust the other parent	.57*
28. One parent was abusive to other family members	.82*
29. One parent left the marriage to be with a new partner	.67*
30. Family member became ill or injured or passed away which created a lot of stress	.95*
31. A great deal of anger and tension was always present in the home	.76*
32. Family members could not count on one parent to be there when needed	.84*
33. Parents did not speak to each other	.70*

Note. *p<.002 (Bonferroni adjustment)

Appendix I

Inter-rater Agreement on What Theme RPDQ Item Belonged

Item	Theme Among 10 Raters	Percentage of Agreement
1. Severe and intense conflict and frequent fighting between parents	Conflict	90
2. One parent's needs were not met by the other parent	Incompatibility	95
3. Differences in lifestyle or values between parents	Incompatibility	100
4. Problems and conflicts between parents regarding dividing household responsibilities	Conflict	100
5. One parent abused alcohol or drugs	Problem of Parent	100
6. One parent was severely or chronically physically ill	Problem of Parent	100
7. One parent physically abused the other parent	Abusive Parent	100
8. One parent was frequently belittled and put down by the other parent	Abusive Parent	100
9. Parents were having many financial problems	Outside Stress	100
10. One parent was unhappy with how sexually intimate parents were	Incompatibility	100
11. Employment and job related difficulties	Outside Stress	100
12. One parent was often angry and verbally abusive	Abusive Parent	100
13. Parents disagreed on how to bring up children in the home	Involved the Children	80
14. One parent had emotional problems	Problem of Parent	90
15. One parent no longer felt loved or appreciated by the other parent	Incompatibility	100
16. Parents gradually grew apart and were no longer close	Incompatibility	100
17. One parent was unreasonably jealous of the other parent	Conflict	50
18. One parent felt the other parent was not reliable	Incompatibility	75
19. One parent was bored with the marriage and wanted freedom	Incompatibility	100
20. Something to do with you or other children in the family	Involved the Children	100
21. One parent's extended family was overly involved with your own family	Outside Stress	100
22. One parent had an extra-marital affair that created a lot of conflict and tension between parents	Conflict	70
23. Parents were unable to communicate with each another	Conflict	55
24. One parent was basically unhappy in the marriage	Incompatibility	100
25. Marriage itself was entered into for circumstantial reasons (e.g., Mother was pregnant)	Outside Stress	50

Appendix I (Cont.)

Inter-rater Agreement on What Theme RPDQ Item Belonged

Item	Theme Among 10 Raters	Percentage of Agreement
26. You or other children in the family created too many problems and broke parents up	Involved the Children	100
27. One parent couldn't trust the other parent	Incompatibility	75
28. One parent was abusive to other family members	Abusive parent	90
29. One parent left the marriage to be with a new partner	Incompatibility	90
30. Family member became ill or injured or passed away which created a lot of stress	Outside Stress	90
31. A great deal of anger and tension was always present in the home	Conflict	100
32. Family members could not count on one parent to be there when needed	Abusive Parent	40
33. Parents did not speak to each other	Conflict	90

Appendix J

A Priori Themes

Conflict Between Parents

1. Severe and intense conflict and frequent fighting between parents
4. Problems and conflicts between parents regarding dividing household responsibilities
17. One parent was unreasonably jealous of the other parent
22. One parent had an extra-marital affair that created a lot of conflict and tension between parents
23. Parents were unable to communicate with each other
31. A great deal of anger and tension was always present in the home
33. Parents did not speak to each other

(alpha = .67)

Incompatibility Between Parents

2. One parent's needs were not met by the other parent
3. Differences in lifestyle or values between parents
10. One parent was unhappy with how sexually intimate parents were
15. One parent no longer felt loved or appreciated by the other parent
16. Parents gradually grew apart and were no longer close
18. One parent felt the other parent was not reliable
19. One parent was bored with the marriage and wanted freedom
24. One parent was basically unhappy in the marriage
27. One parent couldn't trust the other parent
29. One parent left the marriage to be with a new partner

(alpha = .69)

Problems Directly Involving the Children

13. Parents disagreed on how to bring up children in the home
20. Something to do with you or other children in the family
26. You or other children in the family created too many problems and broke parents up

(alpha = .70)

The Presence of an Abusive Parent

7. One parent physically abused the other parent
8. One parent was frequently belittled and put down by the other parent
12. One parent was often angry and verbally abusive
28. One parent was abusive to other family members
32. Family members could not count on one parent to be there when needed

(alpha = .77)

Outside Stress Impinging on the Parents' Marriage

9. Parents were having many financial problems
11. Employment and job related difficulties
21. One parent's extended family was overly involved with your own family
25. Marriage itself was entered into for circumstantial reasons (e.g., Mother was pregnant)
30. Family member became ill or injured or passed away which created a lot of stress

(alpha = .46)

A Serious Problem on the Part of One Parent

5. One parent abused alcohol or drugs
6. One parent was severely or chronically physically ill
14. One parent had emotional problems

(alpha = .30)

VITA

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University of Calgary	1988 to 1992

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Ehrenberg, M. F., & Walker, T. R. (June, 1996) *The Influence of Early Family Transitions on Young Adults' Attachment Styles: A First Look at a Retrospective Data Set*. Poster presented at the Annual Family Research Consortium, San Diego, CA.

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Title of Thesis: Perceived Reasons for Parental Divorce: Influence on Young Adults' Attachment Styles

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Sept. 6 '96
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