

Young Peoples' Feelings about and Attitudes towards Marriage:
The Influence of Attachment Style and Early Family Functioning

by

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B.Sc., McMaster University, 2007
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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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Researchers are recognizing the importance of examining underlying family functioning in order to understand the varying influences of parental divorce on offspring. The current study investigated the relations among young adults' attachment styles, their reported family-of-origin functioning and parents' marital status (divorced or non-divorced), and their current feelings about and attitudes towards marriage, in a sample of 537 young adults, half of whom experienced the divorce of their parents. The results demonstrate that knowledge of divorce status alone does not tell the whole predictive story for a child's later relational connections and attitudes. In fact, parental marital status may, at times, act as a *proxy* for lower intimacy, fewer democratic parenting practices, and higher conflict in the family. Family-of-origin functioning, and, in particular, higher levels of intimacy, was the best predictor of the young adult's secure attachment in close relationships. Although adult children from divorced households did report more negative feelings and opinions of marriage, parents' marital status, attachment style and family-of-origin functioning variables were all important in explaining their feelings about and attitudes towards marriage. Notably, those with

higher levels of attachment avoidance were more likely to express negative feelings and opinions about marriage. It may be that the role of family functioning on attitude towards marriage includes an indirect pathway: Family-of-origin functioning predicts a young adult's attachment style in close relationships, which, in turn, can have an important influence on their feelings about and attitudes towards the institution of marriage.

Ultimately, we document that if a family-of-origin is experienced to be cohesive and close – even if parents do divorce – it appears that young adult children can still feel securely attached in their close relationships and still feel positively towards marriage.

Therefore, the “intergenerational transmission of divorce,” is neither automatic nor inevitable and this term should no longer be utilized in the divorce literature.

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Introduction

Marriage and Psychological Health

The institution of marriage is a tradition that continues to thrive in many cultures. Research evidence maintains that a healthy, supportive and trusting marriage contributes to positive psychological and physical adjustment for both spouses and their children. Empirical support has amassed over the last two decades to demonstrate that marriage can protect against depression, foster health-promoting habits (such as lowering substance use and facilitating nutritious eating), and directly influence cardiovascular, endocrine and immune systems (Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001). Individuals who are married enjoy greater physical and psychological health, longer lives, and report greater levels of happiness than those who were never married (Wilson & Oswald, 2005). Specifically, convincing longitudinal data shows that rates of depression and alcohol abuse decline more sharply for those who are married than those who never married, even when controlling for the financial and social support benefits of marriage (Horwitz , White, & Howell-White, 1996). Further, the literature appears to show that marriage surpasses even non-married cohabitation in terms of psychological and physical health benefits (Wilson & Oswald, 2005; Brown, 2000).

Holt-Lunstad, Birmingham, and Jones (2008) showed that both marital status and marital quality were influential in promoting life satisfaction and in lowering ambient blood pressure and perceptions of stress and depression. In their study of 204 married and 99 single males and females, those who had not married appeared to fare better than those in low-quality marriages (as operationalized by a median split on the Marital

Adjustment Test) on the physical functioning measure only, demonstrating lower ambient blood pressure. The authors also found that having a strong support system as a single or unhappily married individual did not buffer the negative effects of being single or unhappily married, indicating that there may be something distinctly beneficial about a strong, positive marriage. Data gathered from children have also revealed that there may be a distinguishing benefit for offspring of happily married parents. Children living in families with two biological cohabitating parents demonstrated worse behavioural and emotional outcomes than their counterparts living in two biological parent married families (Brown, 2004).

Some argue these results merely represent a selection effect, reasoning that those individuals who marry are healthier and happier to begin with than those who remain single or divorce. However, research has invariably rejected this assertion through the use of controls and longitudinal designs, showing that selection does not account for the significant benefits of marriage (Wilson & Oswald, 2005).

In summary, the current literature points to physical and mental health advantages of a strong and supportive marriage for both spouses and their children.

Children's Adjustment to Parental Divorce: Inter- and Intra-Individual Variability

Although the institution of marriage has been shown to have compelling benefits for both the couple and their offspring, the divorce rate in North America continues to increase, despite most people's intentions for life-long commitment when they enter marriage (Stats Canada, 2010). Research on the effects of divorce on offspring shows large variability in children's adjustment, both *between* and *within* affected individuals

over the course of time. Some individuals who experience a parental divorce during childhood show poorer psychological, academic, and social functioning (Amato & Keith, 1991; Størksen, Røysamb, Moum & Tambs, 2005), while outcomes for others appear comparable to their counterparts from intact (non-divorced) families (Amato, 2001; Ruschena, Prior, Sanson, & Smart, 2005). Although this variability in outcomes is found among individuals, it may also be seen within individuals, as one child will display changeable reactions to the divorce of their parents, depending on their age and the number of years since their parents' divorce (Hetherington, 1989). For this reason, our understanding of divorce has shifted from a crisis model, stating that children may have difficulties in short-term adjustment but subsequently stabilize (Chase-Lansdale & Hetherington, 1990); to a chronic-stress model, which argues for ongoing effects of divorce, including those not apparent until later in life (Wallerstein & Lewis, 2004; Huurre, Junkkari, & Aro, 2006). For instance, studies have found sleeper effects, such as negative impacts on mother-child relationship quality during the offspring's young adulthood, a finding that is not observed in adolescence (Zill, Morrison, & Coiro, 1993). In addition, some offspring from divorced families have been shown to experience lower levels of relationship satisfaction in their own romantic relationships, another finding only seen once they have reached maturity (Cui & Fincham, 2010).

In order to understand this intra- and inter-individual variability in outcomes, the divorce literature has increasingly focused on exploring the underlying factors that may promote risk or resilience in children from divorcing households. This vast literature discusses the importance of various family functioning variables, such as children's exposure to and involvement in parental conflict both before and following the divorce

(Grych 2005; Afifi & Schrodt, 2003), the quality of parents' parenting practices (Simons, Whitbeck, Beaman, & Conger, 1994; Videon, 2002), custody and access arrangements (Bauserman, 2002), parents' well-being (Emery, Waldron, Kitzmann, & Aaron, 1999), and the quality of parent-child relationships (Amato & Sobelowski, 2001; Short, 2002).

Impact of parental divorce on adult children's attachment style. Researchers have puzzled over a lack of (what is arguably an intuitive) relation between an adult child's attachment style and their parents' relationship status (divorced or non-divorced). Robust findings have shown that attachment styles often seem to be *transmitted* from parents to their offspring (Van Ijzendoorn & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 1997); that attachment styles typically remain consistent over the life-span (Rothbard & Shaver, 1994); and that parents with insecure attachment styles are more likely to divorce (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Therefore, it is felt that children with divorced parents should be more likely to show insecure attachment styles in adulthood than those who grew up with continuously married parents. However, researchers have not always found such an association (Lopez, Melendez, & Rice, 2000; Bernstein, Keltner, & Laurent, 2012; Rossi, 2011). Brennan and Shaver (1994) help illuminate the lack of association in their own and others' findings: They found that parental divorce was not related to a young adult child's attachment style or to their own relationship status and satisfaction. The authors argued that parental relationship status does not necessarily convey the *underlying* complexities of parental marital distress and of insecurity-promoting behaviours in the parents (Brennan & Shaver, 1994). Some intact marriages may be high in these behaviours, the authors contended, while some post-divorce arrangements may actually promote attachment security in their children (Brennan & Shaver, 1994). In fact, Jelić

and Kamenov (2015) have found that it is *low quality* parental marriages that are more likely to put the adult offspring at risk for anxious romantic attachment than either well-functioning parental marriages or parental divorce. This line of inquiry calls for a deeper examination of marital and family *functioning*, versus relationship status alone, in order to understand impacts on offspring.

For instance, Hayashi and Strickland (1998) suggest that it is ongoing inter-parental conflict and rejecting, overprotective parenting that is most likely to put the adult offspring at risk for experiencing insecure attachments in their own romantic relationships, regardless of whether parents ultimately divorced. Other studies have found an association between broader negative family-of-origin experiences and insecure attachment; Knapp, Norton and Sandberg (2015) found that those who reported generally poorer family-of-origin interaction quality and parental marital quality specifically, were less likely to demonstrate secure attachment behaviours in their own marriages. Further, an avoidant attachment style specifically, has been associated with a disengaged style of family-of-origin interaction and avoidance of conflict in the family-of-origin (Leveridge, Stoltenberg & Beesley, 2005). Conversely, securely attached adults have been shown to come from cohesive, close family-of-origin environments, with parents who respected their children's autonomy (Tanaka et al., 2008). Our own research group has found that women from divorced households are at particular risk for reporting greater levels of discomfort with closeness (an indicator of insecure-avoidant attachment style) and that this finding is fully mediated by their reported closeness to their fathers (Regev, 2014).

The risk for intergenerational transmission of divorce. One known and robust effect of divorce on the adult offspring is that adult children from divorced households

tend to have a higher rate of divorce in their own marriages than those from intact families-of-origin (Amato, 1996). Often found to be strongest for women, this reliable result has been examined in over 17 countries across Europe and North America (Feng, Giarrusso, Bengtson, & Frye, 1999; Dronkers & Härkönen, 2008). Further, adults with divorced parents have a tendency to marry others with divorced parents and these marriages have an even greater likelihood of dissolution (Wolfinger, 2003); while those who experience *multiple* parental transitions during childhood are also more likely to dissolve *multiple* marriages themselves in adulthood (Wolfinger, 2000). Efforts have been underway to understand this phenomenon. The effect cannot be explained simply by the absence of a parent, as studies have performed large-scale comparisons of offspring from divorced families to offspring from both intact families and those dissolved by the death of a parent, finding that individuals from divorced families have a significantly greater risk of marital dissolution than the other two groups (Diekmann & Engelhardt, 1999). Although the *intergenerational transmission of divorce*, as it is referred to in this literature, may partially be explained by the younger age of marriage often found in offspring from divorced versus non-divorced families (Feng et al., 1999), other theories abound.

Many researchers apply social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1973; 1986) to argue that children from divorced homes may be learning interpersonal behaviours such as poor conflict resolution strategies, which impact their own functioning in relationships and put them at risk for divorce (Cui & Fincham, 2010; Delevi, Cornille, & Cui, 2012). For instance, Conger, Cui, Bryant and Elder (2000) found that parenting practices are associated with the quality of an early adult couple's relationship; young people who had

nurturing and involved parents were found to treat their romantic partners with warmth and support in observational data. Since parents who divorce often report problems in their relationships with their children – even up to 12 years prior to the divorce – and divorce *itself* has been found to impact the quality of parent-child relationships, it is probable that divorce has a significant influence on the types of interpersonal behaviours children learn, both directly and indirectly from their parents (Amato & Booth, 1996). In terms of *modeling* intimate relationship behaviours with their married partners, parents who ultimately divorce have been found to display more negative communication and emotion with each other, which their children are likely to observe (Lavner & Bradbury, 2012). In fact, young adults with divorced compared to continuously married parents have themselves been found to report poorer communication in their own intimate relationships (Herzog & Cooney, 2002). A recent study by Delevi and colleagues (2012) has examined these factors together, noting that self-reported exposure to negative inter-parental conflict was in fact associated with young adults' own engagement in negative conflict management tactics in their own romantic relationships. Furthermore, exposure to negative inter-parental experiences appears to be more consequential for young adults' intimate relationships than exposure to positive inter-parental behaviours (Delevi et al., 2012; Amato & Booth, 2001), a finding that is difficult to explain. Research has shown that parental behaviours such as jealousy, being domineering, getting angry easily, being critical, being moody, and not talking to one's spouse (based on parents' self-reports) are most likely to predict marital discord among their adult offspring, as reported by the offspring 17 years later (Amato & Booth, 2001). The authors conclude that a “disruptive and unpleasant interpersonal style on the part of one or both parents lies at the core of the

intergenerational transmission of marital discord” (Amato & Booth, 2001, p. 635).

However, some studies have had difficulty finding confirmation for the modeling portion of social cognitive theory in this context and reveal little support for an interpersonal communication skills-deficit in adult offspring of parental divorce (Segrin & Taylor, 2006). These authors suggest that study results differ based on the operationalization of communication skills and that at the very least we have learned that “problems with interpersonal skills are obviously not a deterministic or pervasive consequent of parental divorce” (Segrin & Taylor 2006, p. 76).

Consequently, researchers have questioned whether a more casual attitude towards marriage is what is being taught or modeled to offspring, rather than poor interpersonal skills; an attitude that supports divorce as an option when things are not going well in a marriage. Such a (more favourable) attitude towards divorce has not only been found in young people from divorced families, but has actually been associated with the dissolution of their own romantic relationships through lower levels of commitment (Cui, Fincham, & Durtschi, 2010). Segrin and Taylor (2006) have found that adult children of divorce are less likely to believe in the efficacy of marriage, i.e., that a lifelong marriage is possible or desirable, even after controlling for family conflict while growing up. This is an important control because the attitude one holds regarding divorce appears to be related not only to the experience of parental divorce itself, but also to important *underlying features* of the parental relationship prior to the divorce, such as levels of inter-parental conflict and the quality of parents’ marital relationship (Cui et al., 2010). For instance, young people with either divorced or unhappy parents have been shown to attribute learning messages such as “relationships are not permanent,” “one

must approach relationships with caution,” and “relationships are beset by lack of trust and fidelity” from their parents’ relationships, and they perceive these messages as having impacted their own intimate relationship experiences (Weigel, 2007).

Researchers therefore argue that it is difficult to isolate family status alone (divorced or non-divorced) “as the salient variable in adult children’s choices to divorce” (Gadsden & Hall, 1996, pp. 15) and again invite a richer investigation into marital and family *functioning* variables to better understand the influences of parental divorce on children’s feelings about and attitudes towards marriage.

Certainly how individuals enter marriage, that is, the attitudes, views and feelings with which they engage in this decision, will likely have an impact on its success, as measured by their relationship satisfaction and likelihood of future divorce (Amato & Rogers, 1999). In fact, attitudes towards marriage have also been shown to impact the benefits obtained from it. For example, those who value the permanence and importance of marriage have been shown to have a greater reduction in depressive symptoms following marriage than their counterparts (Simon & Marcussen, 1999).

In sum, despite the healthful impact of marriage, the divorce rate in Western countries continues to increase, generating large variability in children’s adjustment. Researchers are recognizing the importance of examining underlying family functioning variables in order to understand the inconsistent impact of parental divorce on offspring. For instance, family variables such as greater levels of conflict, less respect for children’s independence, and lower levels of family closeness have been associated with adult children’s insecure attachment styles in their own romantic relationships. However, despite theoretical reasoning, insecure attachment has proven difficult to

associate with the more superficial variable of parental relationship status (divorced or non-divorced).

One robust effect of divorce is that adult children from divorced households tend to have a higher rate of divorce in their own marriages than those from non-divorced families-of-origin. Researchers theorize that children from divorced homes may be learning either interpersonal behaviours (such as poor conflict resolution strategies) or attitudes (such as those that support divorce as an option when things are not going well in a marriage), which impact the adult child's own functioning in relationships and put them at risk for divorce. Either way, the attitudes and feelings with which one enters into marriage have been shown to play a role in both its quality and longevity, indicating the importance of studying how these attitudes arise and develop.

Family Functioning as Predictive of Divorce

Family functioning prior to divorce has received relatively less attention in the literature than the effects of divorce, particularly on children. In fact, some authors argue that family functioning prior to divorce accounts for many of the child adjustment outcomes following divorce that are reported, though it is rarely investigated (Peris & Emery, 2004; Sun 2001). Therefore, Cheng, Dunn, O'Connor and Golding (2006) argue that it is important to track family functioning prior to the divorce in order to understand the ongoing impact of family *processes* on child adjustment, versus a static variable such as family separation. Overall, research shows that families who ultimately divorce typically have less intimacy/closeness and greater levels of conflict during their pre-divorce functioning (Sun, 2001; Peris & Emery, 2004; Cheng et al., 2006). Further,

longitudinal research demonstrates that more negative behaviours between couples, such as conflict, mistrust, and unskilled communication, and/or low levels of relationship commitment, rather than relationship dissatisfaction, are often what predict marital instability (Karney & Bradbury, 1995; Amato, 2010).

In sum, marital instability and divorce is often preceded by lower levels of intimacy / closeness and higher levels of conflict in the family.

Young Adulthood: Attitudes Towards Marriage & Relationship Formation

Young adulthood is a key developmental phase for studying the perceptions and attitudes children of divorce bring to their own romantic relationships, including their notions of marriage and divorce. In this and other realms of independent functioning, young adulthood is a time of exploration, attitude formation, decision making, and future planning (Arnett, 2012, Chapter 15). By the time an individual enters young adulthood, personal close relationship experiences have added to family-of-origin models of romantic relationships, such that relationship attitudes tend to become fairly stable (Axinn & Barber, 1997; Halpern-Meehin, 2012). These attitudes form a foundation for family decision-making in adulthood (Halpern-Meehin, 2012). Willoughby, Medaris, James and Bartholomew (2014) argue that the feelings about and attitudes toward marriage held during individuals' early 20's place them on varying "relational trajectories," because of how these attitudes affect the individual's relationship decisions.

Similarly, Carroll, Willoughby, Badger, Nelson, Barry and Madsen (2007) contend that it is young adults' attitudes and beliefs that underlie the lifestyle changes they make (e.g., decreased substance use and sexual permissiveness) to allow for and

facilitate a transition to marriage. For example, Willoughby (2012) has found that individual expectations for marrying at a relatively young age and placing more importance on marriage at the end of adolescence are associated with an increased likelihood of transitioning to marriage earlier. Furthermore, a greater belief in the importance and permanence of marriage has been associated with greater effort put forth in one's relationship and higher relationship satisfaction and stability, with stronger levels of commitment to one's partner being the relevant mechanism in this association (Willoughby, 2015). Therefore, attitudes towards marriage during this fledgling developmental period have important implications for an individual's relational future.

Although many young people today expect a period of cohabitation to precede marriage, a divergence from more traditional generations, youth continue to endorse marriage as an ultimate life goal (Manning, Longmore, & Giordano, 2007; Goldberg, 2014). Therefore, it continues to be relevant and important to understand young adults' feelings about and attitudes towards marriage, and how these attitudes develop. Further, compared to children raised by continuously married parents, young adults who experienced their parents' divorces during childhood tend to demonstrate a bimodal distribution of age-of-entry into marriage; they marry at a significantly younger or older age than is typical (Wolfinger, 2003; Tasker & Richards, 1994). Therefore, the emergent adulthood phase that precedes marriage decisions may be *particularly* important to understanding young persons with divorced parents.

In summary, young adulthood is an important time to investigate feelings about and attitudes towards marriage, as they have important implications for the young

person's relational decision-making and experiences in the future, including marriage and divorce.

Family-of-Origin Experiences and Attitudes to Marriage

A number of childhood experiences have previously been investigated in the development of young adults' attitudes towards marriage. These include the family-of-origin functioning and attachment experiences, and the parents' marital functioning and experience of parental divorce,

Parental divorce. Consistent with other findings in the adjustment of children to divorce literature, large variability has been seen in the feelings about and attitudes towards marriage of children from divorced households (Dennison & Koerner, 2008). Dennison and Koerner (2008) have found that following their experiences of parental divorce, some individuals feel very negatively towards the possibility of marriage for themselves, while others believe their own marriage will be different. Correspondingly, some researchers state that family structure (particularly, divorced versus non-divorced) is not significantly related to marital attitudes (Willoughby, 2010; Flouri & Buchanan, 2001; Tomey, 1994), while others have found that it is (Cunningham & Thornton, 2006; Dennison & Koerner, 2006; Boyer-Pennington, Pennington & Spink, 2001; Tasker & Richards, 1994). It is possible that the *type* of parental divorce a child experienced matters. For instance, in a recent literature review of studies published between 1984 and 2008, Li (2014) found that it is *conflictual* parental marriages and divorces that are most associated with strongly negative feelings about marriage in young adult children. Therefore, "family structure by itself may be a blunt instrument for understanding how

family experiences while growing up influence relationship perspectives” (Halpern-Meekin, 2012, p. 614).

In the current study, participants were categorized as coming from either divorced or non-divorced families-of-origin, but the level of conflict between parents and the feelings of family closeness will also be assessed.

Attachment style. Some recent studies have supported the intuitive notion that being securely attached is associated with more positive feelings about marriage. For instance, Mosko and Pistole (2010) have shown that low attachment avoidance, specifically, contributed to both a positive marital attitude and readiness for entering into marriage. Similarly, Brydon (2005) found that low levels of attachment avoidance (but not attachment anxiety) in young adults were found to be significantly predictive of an increased desire to marry. However, in this study, attachment was unrelated to the participants’ perceived ideal age for first marriage and participants’ expectations of how marriage would improve their lives (Brydon, 2005). *In order to further explore these relations, in the current study, the construct of avoidant attachment was measured through an individual’s self-reported levels of discomfort with closeness, viewing relationships as secondary to achievement, and lack of confidence in themselves and others (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007; Feeney, Noller, & Hanrahan, 1994). The construct of anxious attachment was measured through levels of preoccupation with relationships and need for approval and confirmation by others (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007; Feeney et al., 1994). Lastly, a secure attachment style was measured by low levels of discomfort with closeness, viewing relationships as secondary, preoccupation with relationships and*

need for approval by others, and with high levels of confidence in themselves and others (Leveridge et al., 2005).

Family functioning. Studies have shown a number of family functioning variables to be related to attitudes towards marriage: Family conflict, family support for children's independence, and family closeness. The possible impact of parenting style is also reviewed.

Family conflict. As previously discussed, family conflict appears to have an important influence on the offspring's feelings about and attitudes towards marriage, with higher rates of inter-parental conflict associated with more negative attitudes towards marriage (Li, 2014). *In the current study, the construct of family conflict was measured as both overt and subtle forms of conflict. Subtle forms of conflict are the extent of misunderstanding and interference in the family, as well as the family's difficulties solving problems and making plans, while overt forms are more obvious arguments, anger and fighting in the family.*

Family support for children's independence. Triangulation and fusion in the family-of-origin have been shown to have an influence on more negative attitudes towards marriage (Larson, Benson, Wilson, & Medora, 1998). Similarly, Willoughby, Hersh, Padilla-Walker and Nelson (2015) have shown that higher levels of helicopter parenting (referring to intense and intrusive involvement by parents in their children's lives, rather than actively supporting the young person's independence and ability to solve problems) has an influence on young adults' beliefs; young adults are more likely to feel that being single is superior to being married and to expect a delay in their eventual marriage. *The current study measured the construct of family support for*

children's independence by evaluating young persons' perceptions about how much independence was encouraged in their families-of-origin.

Family closeness. Although blurred boundaries among family members may have negative implications, Li (2014) has shown that higher family integration (e.g., closeness with parents) is associated with more positive feelings and attitudes toward marriage than a perception of distance in the family. Consistently, Muench and Landrum (1994) found that higher levels of emotional expressiveness and perceived comfort with expressing one's feelings in the family-of-origin were related to more positive attitudes toward marriage (Muench & Landrum, 1994). In addition, Willoughby and colleagues (2015) have demonstrated that more feelings of warmth between children and their mothers, and children and their fathers, were associated with the young adult child placing higher importance on marriage. *In the current study the extent of sharing and closeness perceived in the families-of-origin, as well as expressiveness and openness in communication in the family was measured in order to articulate this construct of family closeness/intimacy.*

Parenting style. Schönflug (2001) indicated that some parenting styles (e.g., empathic and democratic) are more effective in promoting the transmission of values, while others (e.g., rigid and authoritarian) tend to distance the parent and child and diminish or prevent the transmission of values. Therefore, it might be expected that adult children are more likely to share their parents' attitudes towards marriage if they were raised within a more democratic household, as this style of parenting tends to promote a closer child-parent bond than a distancing, authoritarian style of parenting (Schönflug, 2001). *Therefore, the construct of parenting style, and the extent to which young adults*

perceived they had a voice in negotiating house rules and decisions while growing up, was also measured in the current study.

Demographic variables. Previous research in Canada has found younger women with lower educational attainment and higher religiosity to have a more positive (traditional) attitude towards marriage than older women with higher educational attainment and lower self-reported levels of religious convictions (Wu & Balakrishnan, 1992). Higher parental income and education have also been associated with a more positive attitude towards marriage in the offspring (Manning et al., 2007). Furthermore, adolescent girls are more likely to view marriage favourably than adolescent boys, but not when other factors (such as higher education attainment) are taken into account (Manning et al., 2007; Willoughby, 2010).

In conclusion, a number of factors have been shown to play a role in the development of negative attitudes towards marriage. These include a conflictual family-of-origin dynamic and parental divorce, higher attachment avoidance, less support of developing independence within the family, and lower levels of family intimacy and parent-child closeness. Important demographic variables include parental income and education, religiosity, age, and gender.

Summary of Key Findings and Rationale for the Current Study

Despite the physical and mental health benefits of marriage for both spouses and their children, the divorce rate in Canada is on the rise (Wilson & Oswald, 2005; Brown, 2004; Stats Canada, 2010). Divorce and its effects have long been studied and theorized about. Of particular relevance to the current study are findings of sleeper effects, those

that show up during the adult years for a child-of-divorce, including impacts of parental divorce on the adult child's romantic relationships. Researchers are now recognizing the importance of examining underlying family functioning variables, such as family closeness and conflict, in order to understand the inconsistent influences of parental divorce on offspring. One important finding is that adult children from divorced households tend to have a higher rate of divorce in their own marriages than those from non-divorced families-of-origin (Amato, 1996). Researchers have theorized that children from divorced households are learning important messages from their parents' relationships. These messages may come in the form of poor interpersonal and relationship behaviours (such as poor conflict resolution strategies) or as more casual attitudes towards marriage (such as those that support divorce as an option when things are not going well in a marriage) (Cui, Fincham & Durtschi, 2010). Either way, these learned responses would impact the adult child's functioning in their own relationships and may contribute to the likelihood of divorce. Furthermore, childhood experiences of family functioning may play a role not only in forming attitudes towards marriage, but on the adult child's attachment style (which may, in turn, have an impact on their attitudes towards marriage). Notably, the attitudes with which one engages in marriage have been shown to play a role in its quality and longevity, indicating the importance of studying how these attitudes arise and develop (Amato & Rogers, 1999). As many young adults are in the process of making important relational decisions and planning for their futures, this is a significant developmental time in which to investigate their feelings about and attitudes towards marriage (Willoughby et al., 2014).

Thus far, the literature has demonstrated a number of key family-of-origin factors to play a role in the development of negative feelings about / attitudes towards marriage. These include a conflictual family-of-origin dynamic and parental divorce, higher attachment avoidance, less family support for independence, and lower levels of family intimacy and parent-child closeness (Li, 2014; Mosko & Pistole, 2010; Willoughby et al., 2015). Important demographic variables include lower levels of parental income and education, lower levels of religiosity, older age, and possibly male gender (Manning et al., 2007; Wu & Balakrishnan, 1992). However, to date, all of these factors have been investigated in isolation. In the present study all of these relevant factors were simultaneously investigated.

The Current Study

The current study examined to what extent a young adult's attachment security and family-of-origin functioning – including the key family functioning factors of family conflict, encouragement of independence, family closeness/intimacy, and parenting style – *considered together*, may impact their feelings about and attitudes towards marriage, when controlling for demographic variables and family-of-origin status (e.g., divorced or non-divorced family).

Specifically, based on a review of the literature, it is hypothesized that:

- (1) Young adults from divorced families have more negative feelings about and attitudes towards marriage than their non-divorced counterparts;
- (2) There is no significant difference between the attachment styles of young adults from divorced and non-divorced families;

- (3) Young adults from divorced families report lower levels of closeness, higher levels of overt and subtle conflict, less democratic parenting and more independence in their families-of-origin than those from non-divorced families;
- (4) Differences in family functioning better explain young adults' attachment styles than family status alone (divorced or non-divorced);
- (5) Young adults with a more insecure attachment style have more negative feelings about marriage than those with more secure attachment styles;
- (6) Differences in attachment styles and family functioning better explain feelings about and attitudes towards marriage than family status alone (divorced or non-divorced).

Although research supporting specific links among some of these variables exists, this study is unique in its attempt to offer an examination of the *underlying processes* linking family-of-origin status to young adults' feelings about and attitude towards marriage, in a single, systematic investigation.

Method

Participants & Recruitment

The current study utilized the *Young Adult Study* dataset (Ehrenberg, Perrin & Bush, 2009) with permission. Previous findings using this dataset have shown that young adult women from divorced households are at particular risk for reporting greater levels of discomfort with closeness (an indicator of insecure-avoidant attachment style) and that this finding is fully mediated by their reported closeness to their fathers (Regev, 2014). Please see **Appendix A** for the “Informed Consent by Individuals Participating in a Research Project” Form. The current study utilized the entire Young Adult Study sample, which was comprised of 537 young adults enrolled at a mid-sized university (87%), attending a local high-school (3%), or living in the community and not attending school (10%). Recruitment began by casting a wide net, advertising to young adults at the University of Victoria and those in the community who had recently graduated high-school but were not attending a post-secondary institution. Undergraduate students were recruited from a psychology participant pool composed of Psychology 100 students, who received bonus points in exchange for their participation. The study was advertised as “investigating the influence of young adults’ family histories on their current feelings about relationships.” As recruitment continued, it targeted participants needed to equalize cell sizes of the four distinct groups: (1) females from intact homes, (2) females who had experienced their parents’ divorce, (3) males from intact homes, and (4) males who had experienced their parents’ divorce, with this latter group being the most difficult to recruit. The data of participants who had experienced the death of a parent (considered

to be a distinctly different phenomenon than parental divorce) and that of outliers (e.g., a 45 year old mature student, much older than the young adult age range targeted in this study) were excluded. Of the final sample of participants, two-hundred and seventy (50.3%) were female. Ages ranged from 15.5 to 30.6 years ($M=20.7$, $SD=2.74$). Two hundred and sixty-eight participants had experienced their parents' divorce (49.9%) and two hundred and sixty-nine grew up with continuously married parents (50.1%). Mean and modal age at parental separation was 9 years ($SD=5.5$), and the range was from 0 to 24 years. Of the total sample, 165 participants (30.7%) were living with one or both parents, 195 participants (36.3%) were living with roommates, 79 participants (14.7%) were living alone, 45 participants (8.4%) were living with their romantic partners, and the rest (9.9%) reported various other living arrangements. Of participants who experienced their parents' divorce, 59% reported they grew up in their mother's custody, 10% reported father's custody, 24% reported joint custody, 1% reported that custody changed back and forth while they were growing up, and 6% reported that they were near adults at the time of divorce and no formal custody arrangements were established. Please see Table 2 (page 30) for additional participant demographics.

Procedure

The *Young Adult Study* procedures used to gather the larger data set (Ehrenberg et al., 2009) were in compliance with the Ethical Standards of the Canadian and American Psychological Associations and were approved by the University of Victoria's Human Research Ethics Committee. The researcher team consisted of the lead investigator, a university professor specializing in family transitions, her five graduate

students, and another professor acting as a research design and statistical consultant. The research team, except for the research design and statistical consultant, conducted all individual participant interviews, data transcription, and coding. An interview training procedure was in place involving a transition from observing individual interviews, co-conducting individual interviews, and then conducting independent individual interviews with research participants. The research team met on a regular basis to discuss any questions or issues that arose during individual interviews throughout the data gathering phase and then, subsequently, to discuss coding, inter-rater reliability, data entry and analysis issues.

Participants were seen individually. After informed consent was obtained, participants were asked to fill out a self-report demographics and background information questionnaire. Following the completion of the questionnaire, participants were interviewed for approximately half an hour, and were asked Young Adult Interview questions (see below), based on their family background (divorced/non-divorced). All participants were asked about their feelings and attitudes towards marriage. Then, participants completed a questionnaire packet including, among others, the measures of attachment style and family functioning variables of intimacy, overt and subtle conflict, independence and parenting style, considered in the current study. Finally, each participant was debriefed by the interviewer. They were told more detail about the study's goal of investigating the potential impact of family-of-origin experiences, including but not limited to parental divorce, on the young adults' current relationship experiences, and any questions were answered. Research participants were advised that study-based questions and discussions of family-of-origin dynamics might leave them

wanting to discuss their experiences and reactions further. They were provided with resources, including the brochure of the University of Victoria's Counselling Centre, should they wish to pursue these discussions and/or receive support. Finally, research participants were offered access to future study results via the Families in Motion Research and Information Group's website by a certain date, or by email if they preferred. The entire study procedure took approximately an hour and a half per participant.

Measures

Please see Table 1 for a summary of important constructs and the measures used to assess them in the current study. These measures are also detailed in the sections below. Despite these being non-copyrighted measures found in the public domain, permission to use them was sought from each measure's author at the time of study development.

Young Adult Interview (YAI). The Young Adult Interview (YAI; Ehrenberg et al., 2009) is a 23-item structured interview comprehensively measuring personal demographics, past and current family structure and family functioning, relationship history, as well as perceptions of the relations between parents' divorces and young adult's relationship style. All participants were asked the same set of initial questions (e.g., sex, age, SES, ethnicity, religion), but slightly different questions were asked in the second part of the interview, depending on whether the individual experienced their parents' divorce during childhood or whether their parents remained married (e.g., age at time of parents' divorce). Please see **Appendix B** for the excerpt of the Young Adult

Interview used in the current study.

All participants were asked an open-ended, qualitative question on the YAI to assess their *attitudes* towards marriage: “What is your opinion of marriage?” Participants’ responses were analyzed for themes by being sorted into groups according to similarity, by separate researchers from the same research team as those who conducted the participant interviews. Researchers then met to discuss, thereby creating *in vivo* codes and researcher codes. *In vivo* codes were those derived directly from the participants’ words, whereas researcher categories were used to link ideas and abstract themes from participants’ responses (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1996). Therefore, codes were identified both directly from the transcripts and from the researcher’s understanding and integration of this information (Bush & Ehrenberg, 2003). Related concepts were grouped together to form higher-level categories with more explanatory power (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), for example, “Marriage is a trap,” “I don’t believe in it,” “It’s pointless” all constituted negative reactions to marriage. Once sorted, each of the groups that were identified was named and defined as a *code* by the researchers together, to reflect the common underlying meaning expressed in all the responses in a given group, e.g., Cynical/Pessimistic. Each of the codes was defined, again with further discussion and several refinements, in order to establish the clearest definitions possible, e.g., “An overall negative opinion of marriage, reflecting cynicism or pessimism about the stability of marriage. May reflect disbelief that partners can commit to one another long-term, based on personal experiences or social patterns.” Independent raters then categorized each of the responses based on the emergent definitions of these codes to ensure that they were clearly defined and could be reliably categorized ($\geq 90\%$ inter-rater reliability).

Eight codes were identified in the original data set, three of which were utilized in the current study: Cynical/pessimistic attitude towards marriage, optimistic/hopeful attitude towards marriage, and ambivalent/mixed feelings regarding marriage. These codes were not discrete and could co-occur. For instance, an individual response could be coded as both ambivalent/mixed and optimistic/hopeful towards marriage, depending on what (and how much) the individual said over the course of their responses. As above, a code of cynical/pessimistic attitude towards marriage was defined as an overall negative opinion of marriage, reflecting cynicism or pessimism about the meaning or stability of marriage. It could reflect disbelief that partners can commit to one another long-term, based on personal experiences or societal patterns. An example of a cynical/pessimistic response was: “Marriage is a trap. Women get stuck with unpredictable men.” For the purposes of the current study, participants were placed by the current investigator into a Negative Opinion of Marriage category if they had a code of cynical/pessimistic in their response, *regardless of any other codes in their responses*. A code of optimistic/hopeful attitude towards marriage was defined as an overall positive opinion of marriage, reflecting hope or optimism about aspects of marriage, or an expressed desire to marry in the future. It could reflect an idealized view of marriage and long-term commitment. An example of an optimistic/hopeful response was: “Marriage is great. I don’t think bad things will happen in my relationship.” For the current study, participants were placed into a Positive Opinion of Marriage category if they had a code of optimistic/hopeful in their response, *without the presence of either a cynical/pessimistic code or an ambivalent/mixed code*. Their response could, however, have any of the other five codes not used in the current study because of their lack of relevance to the current

investigation. A code of ambivalent/mixed attitude towards marriage was defined as a response reflecting mixed opinions or indifference towards marriage, including a dual recognition of the pros and cons of marriage or a reservation of judgment due to conflicting views of marriage. An example of an ambivalent/mixed feelings response was: “I’m on the fence. Most marriages don’t work. It’s a positive thing, but the stats are negative.” In the current study, participants were placed in an Ambivalent Opinion towards Marriage category if they had an ambivalent/mixed code in their response, *but no cynical/pessimistic code*. Lastly, participants were placed in the None category of the current study if they had *did not have any of the three codes* relevant to the current study (cynical/pessimistic, ambivalent/mixed, nor optimistic/hopeful) present in their response. However, their responses frequently contained other codes, such as Key Elements to a Successful Marriage, or Timing as Critical to a Marriage’s Success, which were not evaluated in this study.

Following this open-ended question, participants were also asked to rate their *feelings* about marriage on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “Very Negative,” 2 being “Somewhat Negative,” 3 being “Neutral,” 4 being “Somewhat Positive,” and 5 being “Very Positive.”

Attachment Style Questionnaire (ASQ). Participants’ attachment style was measured using the *Attachment Style Questionnaire* (ASQ; Feeney et al., 1994). The ASQ is a 40 item self-report measure assessing 5 underlying dimensions of adult attachment: Confidence, Relationships as Secondary, Need for Approval, Discomfort with Closeness, and Preoccupation with Relationships. Please see **Appendix C** for the Attachment Style Questionnaire. Respondents rated eight questions measuring their

confidence in themselves and others (e.g., “Overall, I am a worthwhile person;” “I feel confident that other people will be there for me when I need them”), seven questions measuring whether they view relationships as secondary to achievement in various domains such as school or career (e.g., “Achieving things is more important than building relationships;” “My relationships with others are generally superficial”), seven questions measuring their need for approval and confirmation by others (e.g., “I find it hard to make a decision unless I know what other people think;” “It’s important to me to avoid doing things that others won’t like”), ten questions measuring their discomfort with closeness to others (e.g., “I find it hard to trust people;” “While I want to get close to others, I feel uneasy about it”), and eight questions measuring their preoccupation with close relationships (e.g., “I wonder how I would cope without someone to love me;” “I worry a lot about my relationships”). Participants rated on a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 6 (totally agree), the extent to which each item described their feelings and behaviour in close (not necessarily romantic) relationships.

The Discomfort with Closeness and Relationships as Secondary subscales are related conceptually and statistically with measures of avoidant attachment (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). The authors found that Confidence also loads, negatively, on attachment avoidance and positively on security (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007; Leveridge et al., 2005); whereas Preoccupation with Relationships and Need for Approval are associated theoretically and statistically with anxious attachment (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Past studies have reported good internal consistencies: .80 for Confidence, .76 for Relationships as Secondary, .79 for Need for Approval, .84 for Discomfort with Closeness, and .76 for Preoccupation with Relationships (Feeney et al., 1994).

Cronbach's alpha in the current sample of 537 young adults was .81 for Confidence, .70 for Relationships as Secondary, .78 for Need for Approval, .87 for Discomfort with Closeness, and .74 for Preoccupation with Relationships.

Family Environment Scale (FES). Levels of overt family conflict and family independence were measured using a modified version of the *Family Environment Scale* (FES; Moos, 1981). The FES is a self-report measure assessing three underlying family dimensions: Family Relationship, Personal Growth, System Maintenance and Change, with two subscales important for the current study being selected: Conflict and Independence. Please see **Appendix D** for the modified version of the Family Environment Scale used in the current study. Respondents rated four questions measuring Conflict and five questions measuring Independence on a 6-point Likert-type scale, with higher numbers indicating higher levels of overt family conflict and family encouragement of independence. Sample FES Conflict items include: "We fight a lot in my family," and "Family members sometimes get so angry they throw things." Sample FES Independence items include: "In our family, we are strongly encouraged to be independent," and "Family members almost always rely on themselves when a problem comes up." Reported internal consistencies for the FES Conflict Scale range from .72 to .78, and from .31 to .61 for the FES Independence Scale (Moos, 1990; Boyd, Gullone, Needleman, & Burt, 1997; Touliatos, Permuter, & Straus, 2001, pp. 267). Cronbach's alpha in the current sample was .80 for Conflict and .39 for Independence. This alpha is typical of the FES Independence subscale, which often shows relatively low internal consistencies (Moos, 1990). Although removing one item of the scale ("Family members almost always relied on themselves when a problem came up") would have raised the




internal consistency to .62, the decision was made to retain all five items in order to stay true to the original scale and to allow for the comparison of study results to previous research.

ICPS Family Functioning Scale. Family cohesion and intimacy, subtle family conflict and democratic parenting style were assessed using a modified version of the *ICPS Family Functioning Scale* (Noller Seth-Smith, Bouma Schweitzer, 1992). The ICPS Family Functioning Scale is a self-report instrument, assessing three main family functioning domains: Intimacy, Parenting Style, and Conflict. Please see **Appendix E** for the modified version of the ICPS Family Functioning Scale used in the current study. The Intimacy subscale of the ICPS Family Functioning Scales measures the extent of sharing and closeness, as well as expressiveness and openness in communication in the family (Noller et al., 1992). An example question is: “People in our family help and support each other.” The Conflict subscale of the ICPS measures the extent of misunderstanding and interference in the family, as well as the family’s difficulties solving problems and making plans (Noller et al., 1992). An example question is: “Even though we mean well, we interfere too much in each other’s lives.” Finally, the Parenting Style subscale of the ICPS measures the extent to which family members have a say in rules and decisions, and are encouraged to make up their own minds and ‘stand on their own two feet’ (Noller et al., 1992). An example item is: “Each member of our family has a say in important family decisions.” Respondents rated six questions measuring family closeness, cohesion and intimacy, five questions measuring subtle family conflict, and four questions measuring levels of democratic parenting style on a 6-point Likert-type scale, with higher numbers indicating higher levels of family closeness, higher levels

of subtle family conflict, and a more democratic (vs. controlled) parenting style. Alpha coefficients have previously been reported as .92 for Intimacy, .68 for Parenting Style and .82 for Conflict subscales (Noller et al., 1992). Cronbach's alpha in the current sample was .84 for Intimacy, .87 for Parenting Style and .72 for Conflict subscales.

Table 1

Summary Table of Constructs Assessed and Measured

Construct		Measure
Family Status		Participants' report of divorced vs. non-divorced parents on the YAI
Attachment Style	Avoidant Attachment	ASQ – Discomfort with Closeness; Relationships as Secondary; and Confidence subscales
	Anxious Attachment	ASQ – Preoccupation with Relationships; and Need for Approval subscales
	Secure Attachment	ASQ – Confidence subscale
Family-of-Origin Functioning	Family Conflict (Overt)	FES – Conflict subscale
	Family Conflict (Subtle)	ICPS – Conflict subscale
	Family Support for Independence	FES – Independence subscale
	Family Closeness	ICPS – Intimacy subscale
	Democratic Parenting Style	ICPS – Parenting Style subscale
Attitude Towards Marriage	Feelings About Marriage	Participant ratings (1 to 5) of their feelings about marriage on the YAI
	Attitude Towards Marriage:	Coded participants' responses to the open-ended question, "What is your opinion of marriage?" on the YAI
	(most negative)  <u>Negative Opinion of Marriage</u>	Cynical/Pessimistic Code in response
	(most positive)  <u>Ambivalent Opinion towards Marriage</u>	Ambivalent/Mixed Code (but no Cynical/Pessimistic Code) in response
	 <u>Positive Opinion of Marriage</u>	Optimistic/Hopeful Code (but no Cynical/Pessimistic or Ambivalent/Mixed Codes) in response
	<u>None</u>	NO Cynical/Pessimistic, Ambivalent/Mixed OR Optimistic/Hopeful codes in response

Results

Overview of Analyses

Following the calculation of descriptive statistics to chronicle the demographic characteristics of the sample, separate Mann-Whitney U tests were performed to investigate the first, second and third hypotheses and to determine whether there were any significant differences between young adults from divorced families and those from intact families in their (1) feelings about and attitudes towards marriage, (2) attachment styles, and (3) family-of-origin functioning variables.

A multivariate multiple regression was conducted to investigate whether family-of-origin variables predict attachment variables. Hierarchical multiple regressions were also run to examine whether differences in family functioning would *better* explain young adults' attachment styles than their parents' marital status (hypothesis four).

Regressions were also run to predict feelings about marriage from parents' marital status (divorced versus non-divorced), from family-of-origin functioning variables, and from attachment style variables (hypothesis five). A hierarchical multiple regression was again run to answer the sixth hypothesis question, whether differences in attachment styles and family functioning would better explain feelings about marriage than family status (divorced or non-divorced) alone. Lastly, a multinomial logistic regression analysis was run to answer this same question regarding the coded attitude towards marriage responses (hypothesis six).

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 shows the sample demographics, separated by family-of-origin status.

Table 2

		Non-Divorced	Divorced	Total	
		<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	
Sex	Male	133	134	267	
	Female	136	134	270	
Relationship Status	Not dating	140	109	249	
	Dating 1 person	18	11	29	
	Dating >1 person	11	21	32	
	Steady relationship	88	98	186	
	Engaged but not living together	2	7	9	
	Married or living with partner	10	22	32	
Ethnic Identity	Canadian	166	189	355	
	Asian	40	8	48	
	Western European	38	40	78	
	Eastern European	6	6	12	
	East Indian	11	9	20	
	Jewish	1	3	4	
	Middle Eastern	1	6	7	
	Australasian	2	3	5	
	African	2	3	5	
	Caribbean	1	--	1	
Religious	No religion identified	161	185	346	
	Religion identified	108	83	191	
Socio-Economic Status (SES)	Working class	42	42	84	
	Lower middle class	65	79	144	
	Upper middle class	157	142	299	
	Upper class	3	5	8	
Total		269	268	537	
		Non-Divorced		Divorced	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age in years		20.67	2.71	20.73	2.79
Years in school		13.83	1.39	13.57	1.19
Years of school hope to complete		16.91	3.04	16.97	2.67
Mother's years of education		14.14	2.96	14.71	2.90
Father's years of education		15.10	3.54	14.71	3.47
Child's age at separation		--	--	9.05	5.47
Child's age at divorce		--	--	10.50	5.95

Group Differences

Separate Mann-Whitney U tests were performed, using SPSS 20, in order to test hypotheses one, three and four; that is, to determine whether there were any significant differences between young adults from divorced families and those from non-divorced families on the following ordinal measures: (1) feelings about marriage, (2) attachment styles, and (3) family-of-origin functioning variables. The Mann-Whitney U-test is a non-parametric version of the t-test, allowing for testing of group differences on a single, *ordinal* variable (such as those with Likert-scale ratings). As the current study measured feelings about marriage, attachment style, and family-of-origin functioning using Likert-scale ratings, the Mann-Whitney U test, which does not assume any properties regarding the distribution of variables, was more appropriate than its counterpart, the independent samples t-test, which requires interval or ratio level, normally distributed variables (McKnight & Najab, 2010). In order to control for the multiple tests completed, the conservative Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons was applied. Chi-Square Tests were also conducted to determine if there was an association between family-of-origin status (divorced versus non-divorced) and coded Attitude towards Marriage responses.

Hypothesis 1 – negative feelings about marriage after parental divorce. As expected, based on the Mann-Whitney U test results, young adults who experienced their parents' divorce reported significantly more negative (less positive) Feelings about Marriage based on the Mann-Whitney U test than those from non-divorced homes ($z = -4.738, p < .001$). Further consistent with the first hypothesis, according to chi-square tests, the responses of participants from divorced families had a greater frequency of

Negative Opinion about Marriage codes than those from non-divorced households ($\chi(1) = 4.274, p = .039$). However, contrary to expectations, there was no significant association between family-of-origin status and the frequency of Ambivalent Opinions towards Marriage or Positive Opinions of Marriage codes seen in the participants' responses. Nor was there an association between family-of-origin status and not having any of the three codes in one's response (None). Table 3 shows the means and frequencies for measures of feelings about and attitudes towards marriage.

Table 3

<i>Attitudes Towards Marriage Descriptive Statistics</i>				
	Non-Divorced (n = 269)		Divorced (n = 267)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Feelings About Marriage [^]	4.16	0.84	3.77**	0.97

[^]Likert scale: 1 = 'Very Negative' to 5 = 'Very Positive'

Attitude Towards Marriage	Non-Divorced	Divorced	Total
	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>
Negative Opinion of Marriage	27	43*	70
Ambivalent Opinion of Marriage	37	39	76
Positive Opinion of Marriage	138	127	265
None	67	59	126
Total	269	268	537

** $p < .001$; * $p < .05$

Therefore, as hypothesized, participants who had experienced their parents' divorce were more likely to hold a negative opinion of marriage and had less positive feelings about marriage than their counterparts from intact homes. However, they were just as likely to hold a positive opinion of marriage or an ambivalent opinion towards marriage as individuals who had not experienced their parents' divorce.

Hypothesis 2 – similar attachment styles after parental divorce. Using the Mann-Whitney U test, individuals from non-divorced families demonstrated lower levels of Discomfort with Closeness than those from divorced homes ($z = -2.459, p = .014$). However, with a Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons, this result was no longer significant, consistent with the second hypothesis. Further, as expected, there were no significant differences in levels of Confidence, Preoccupation with Relationships, Need for Approval or seeing Relationships as Secondary between individuals from divorced and non-divorced homes. Table 4 shows descriptive statistics for measures of attachment style.

Table 4

Attachment Style Descriptive Statistics

Attachment Style	Non-Divorced (n = 268)		Divorced (n = 268)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Confidence	36.47	6.01	35.80	6.88
Discomfort with Closeness	32.76	8.86	35.09*	10.17
Relationships as Secondary	15.67	5.10	15.48	5.38
Need for Approval	22.63	6.47	22.16	6.98
Preoccupation with Relationships	25.94	6.58	26.07	7.08

* $p < .05$; no longer significant after Bonferroni correction

Therefore, consistent with the second hypothesis, there were no significant differences between the attachment styles of individuals from divorced and non-divorced families-of-origin.

Hypothesis 3 – differences in family functioning of divorced families. Mann-Whitney U tests revealed that, as hypothesized, individuals from divorced homes reported significantly lower levels of Intimacy ($z = -6.337, p < .001$) and democratic

Parenting Style ($z = -4.764, p < .001$), and significantly higher levels of subtle ($z = -3.074, p = .002$) and overt Conflict ($z = -4.269, p < .001$) in their families-of-origin than those from non-divorced homes. Even with the conservative Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons taken into account, these tests remained statistically significant at $p < .05$, consistent with the third hypothesis. However, contrary to expectation, there was no statistical difference between participants from divorced families and those from non-divorced families in the reported level of encouragement of independence in the family-of-origin. Table 5 shows means and standard deviations for family-of-origin functioning variables.

Table 5

Family-of-Origin Functioning Descriptive Statistics

Family Functioning	Non-Divorced (n = 268)		Divorced (n = 265)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Intimacy	29.10	5.11	25.51**	6.72
Parenting Style	16.24	4.53	14.16**	5.20
Subtle Conflict	13.98	4.74	15.51*	5.61
Overt Conflict	10.49	4.63	12.70**	5.78
Independence	21.45	3.63	21.50	4.08

** $p < .001$; * $p < .05$; all four $p < .05$ following Bonferroni corrections

Therefore, as hypothesized, individuals from divorced homes reported that their families-of-origin had higher levels of subtle and overt forms of conflict, and lower levels of intimacy/closeness and democratic (as opposed to controlling) parenting, than their counterparts from non-divorced homes. However, contrary to expectations, participants from divorced and non-divorced families-of-origin viewed their families as encouraging similar levels of independence.

Regressions to Predict Attachment Style

Hypothesis 4 – family functioning explains attachment style.

Multivariate multiple regression. A multivariate multiple regression was conducted to investigate whether family-of-origin variables predicted attachment variables. The overall model was significant for each of the attachment style variables: Confidence $F(6, 483) = 18.650, p < .001$; Discomfort with Closeness $F(6, 483) = 12.643, p < .001$; Relationships as Secondary $F(6, 483) = 8.654, p < .001$; Need for Approval $F(6,483) = 9.586, p < .001$; and Preoccupation with Relationships $F(6, 483) = 10.830, p < .001$. In particular, family-of-origin Intimacy $F(6,483) = 8.351, p < .001$ and Subtle Conflict $F(6,483) = 3.133, p = .009$ were statistically significant predictors of attachment style variables. Encouragement of Independence in the family-of-origin approached significance as a predictor $F(6,483) = 2.026, p = .074$. Importantly, parents' marital status was also a significant predictor of attachment style in adult children $F(6,483) = 3.514, p = .004$.

When evaluated overall, parents' marital status, and intimacy and subtle conflict in the family-of-origin, were significant predictors of adult children's self-reported attachment styles.

Specifically, Intimacy in the family-of-origin significantly predicted almost all of the attachment style variables. It was a significant predictor of adult children's levels of Confidence $F(6,483) = 27.173, p < .001$, Discomfort with Closeness $F(6,483) = 27.051, p < .001$, viewing Relationships as Secondary $F(6,483) = 24.436, p < .001$, and Need for Approval $F(6,483) = 8.396, p = .004$, in that reports of higher levels of intimacy in the family-of-origin were associated with higher levels of confidence, lower levels of

discomfort with closeness, lower levels of viewing relationships as secondary and lower levels of needing approval from others in adult children currently. Intimacy in the family-of-origin also approached significance as a predictor of adult children's Preoccupation with Relationships $F(6,483) = 3.826, p = .052$, where higher levels of intimacy in the family-of-origin were predictive of lower levels of preoccupation with relationships; whereas, Subtle Conflict in the family-of-origin did significantly predict the adult child's Preoccupation with Relationships $F(6,483) = 12.768, p < .001$, in that higher levels of subtle conflict in the family-of-origin were predictive of current higher levels of preoccupation with relationships. Encouragement of Independence in the family-of-origin significantly predicted adult children's levels of Confidence $F(6,483) = 4.415, p = .036$ and Need for Approval $F(6,483) = 7.947, p = .005$, where higher reports of encouragement of independence were predictive of higher levels of confidence and lower need for approval from others. Independence in the family-of-origin also approached significance as a predictor of adult children's Preoccupation with Relationships $F(6,483) = 3.621, p = .058$, in that higher levels of independence encouragement promoted lower amounts of preoccupation with relationships. Parents' marital status, on the other hand, significantly predicted adult children viewing Relationships as Secondary $F(6,483) = 6.606, p = .010$, and their Need for Approval $F(6,483) = 4.662, p = .031$, with children from divorced homes reporting lower levels of viewing relationships as secondary and need for approval from others.

Although parents' marital status, subtle conflict and encouragement of independence in the family-of-origin all significantly predicted one or two attachment style scales, intimacy in the family-of-origin was the most consistent variable

significantly predicting almost all of the attachment style scales.

Table 6 shows correlations among family functioning variables; Table 7 documents correlations among attachment style variables; Table 8 indicates correlations among family-of-origin functioning variables and the adult child's attachment style; Table 9 demonstrates the correlations between parents' marital status and the adult child's attachment style; and Table 10 depicts the correlations between parents' marital status and reported family-of-origin functioning.

Table 6

Correlations Among Family-of-Origin Functioning Variables

	Intimacy	Parenting Style	Subtle Conflict	Overt Conflict	Independence
Intimacy	--	.684**	-.589**	-.521**	.336**
Parenting Style	--	--	-.411**	-.380**	3.61**
Subtle Conflict	--	--	--	.509**	-.378**
Overt Conflict	--	--	--	--	-.301**
Independence	--	--	--	--	--

** $p \leq .001$

Table 7

Correlations Among Attachment Style Variables

	Confidence	Discomfort w/ Closeness	Relationships as Secondary	Need for Approval	Preoccupation w/ Relationships
Confidence	--	-.652**	-.382**	-.536**	-.405**
Discomfort w/ Closeness	--	--	.484**	.449**	.321**
Relationships as Secondary	--	--	--	.253**	.106*
Need for Approval	--	--	--	--	.595**
Preoccupation w/ Relationships	--	--	--	--	--

** $p \leq .001$; * $p \leq .05$

Table 8

Correlations Among Family Functioning and Attachment Style Variables

	Confidence	Discomfort w/ Closeness	Relationships as Secondary	Need for Approval	Preoccupation w/ Relationships
Intimacy	.398**	-.361**	-.269**	-.233**	-.228**
Parenting Style	.313**	-.250**	-.160**	-.140**	-.142**
Subtle Conflict	-.255**	.233**	.181**	.216**	.277**
Overt Conflict	-.266**	.195**	.124**	.179**	.191**
Independence	.236**	-.138**	-.138**	-.230**	-.214**

** $p \leq .001$

Table 9

Correlations Between Parents' Marital Status and Attachment Style

	Confidence	Discomfort w/ Closeness	Relationships as Secondary	Need for Approval	Preoccupation w/ Relationships
Parents Marital Status [^]	-.052	.121**	-.018	-.035	.010

[^]coded as 1 = non-divorced, 2 = divorced; ** $p \leq .001$

Table 10

Correlations Between Parents' Marital Status and Family-of-Origin Functioning

	Intimacy	Parenting Style	Subtle Conflict	Overt Conflict	Independence
Parents Marital Status [^]	-.288**	-.210**	.147**	.206**	.007

[^]coded as 1 = non-divorced, 2 = divorced; ** $p \leq .001$

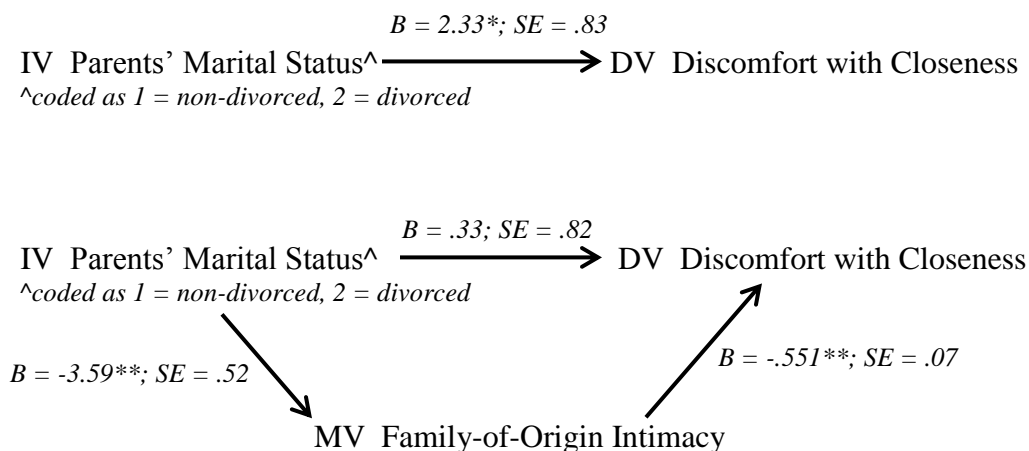
Hierarchical multiple regressions. Hierarchical multiple regressions were then run to examine whether differences in family functioning would *better* explain young adults' attachment style than family status alone (divorced or non-divorced). Demographic variables (see Table 2) were entered into stage one for each of the attachment variables. Family-of-origin status (divorced or non-divorced parents) was entered in stage two. At stage three, all five family-of-origin functioning variables were included.

Confidence. The regression revealed that parents' marital status was not a significant predictor of the adult child's Confidence in themselves and in close others. Adding family functioning variables to the model explained an additional 16.9% of the variance in an adult child's Confidence, and this R^2 change was significant $F(16,463) = 20.386, p < .001$, with the final model explaining 23.1% of variance in an adult child's Confidence. Intimacy alone predicted 4.2% of the variance in Confidence ($p < .001$), with higher levels of intimacy predicting higher levels of confidence. Encouragement of Independence in the family-of-origin approached significance ($p = .052$), however, it explained only 0.6% of the variance in an adult child's reported level of Confidence in close relationships, with higher levels of encouragement of independence predicting higher levels of confidence. The only significant demographic predictors ($p = .001$) were relationship status and social class, predicting 1.8% and 1.9% of the variance in an adult child's reported level of Confidence in relationships, respectively. As a participant's social class or commitment in a relationship went up, so did their confidence in relationships. *Therefore, as expected, Intimacy in the family-of-origin was significantly predictive of the adult child's level of Confidence, whereas parents' marital status was not.*

Discomfort with closeness. For Discomfort with Closeness, parents' marital status was initially significantly predictive, $F(11,465) = 8.681, p = .003$, itself accounting for 1.7% of the variation in adult children's Discomfort with Closeness, with adult children from divorced homes reporting higher levels of discomfort with closeness. Adding family functioning variables explained an additional 10.7% of the variation in Discomfort with Closeness; this change in R^2 was significant, $F(16,460) = 12.060, p < .001$, with the

final model explaining 18.2% of variance in the adult child's Discomfort with Closeness. However, once family functioning variables were included in the model, family status was no longer a significant predictor. At that point, Intimacy in the family-of-origin was again the only significant family-of-origin functioning predictor, uniquely explaining 4.8% of the variation in adult children's Discomfort with Closeness ($p < .001$), with higher levels of intimacy predicting lower levels of discomfort with closeness. This result indicated that the perceived effect of parents' marital status on a young adults' discomfort with closeness is entirely mediated by the level of intimacy in the family-of-origin. The indirect effect was tested using a bootstrap estimation approach with 1000 samples (Shrout & Bolger, 2002). The PROCESS macro for SPSS was used for this test (Hayes, 2013). The results indicated the indirect coefficient was significant ($B = 2.005$, $SE = .38$, 95% CI = 1.3014, 2.8407). Please see Figure 1 for the mediation pathway of family-of-origin intimacy on the relation between parents' marital status and the adult child's discomfort with closeness.

Figure 1. Family-of-Origin Intimacy Mediates Relation between Parents' Marital Status and Discomfort with Closeness in Young Adulthood.

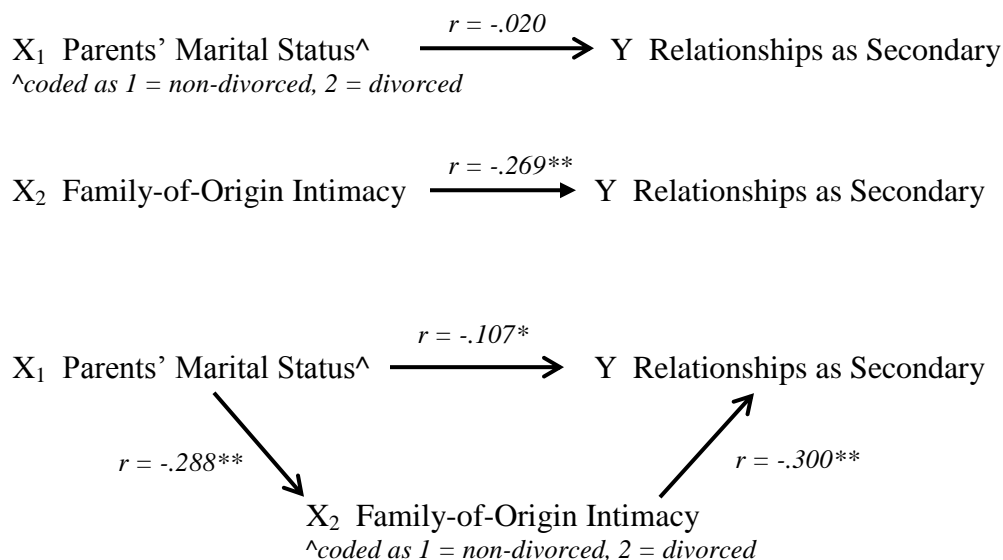


Intimacy in the family-of-origin significantly mediated the link between the adult child's levels of Discomfort with Closeness and his or her parents' marital status. Again, the only significant demographic predictors were relationship status ($p = .003$) and social class ($p = .007$), predicting 1.6% and 1.3% of the variance in an adult child's reported level of Discomfort with Closeness in relationships, respectively. As a participant's social class or commitment in a relationship went up, their discomfort with closeness went down.

Relationships as secondary. Parents' marital status was not a significant predictor of viewing Relationships as Secondary in stage two of the model. When family functioning variables were included in stage three, the full model explained 16.4% of the variance in viewing Relationships as Secondary and this was significant, $F(16,458) = 9.114, p < .001$, with the addition of family functioning variables explaining 8.3% of the variance in the adult child viewing Relationships as Secondary. Family functioning variables acted as a moderator of the relation between parents' marital status and the young adults' self-reported Relationship as Secondary scores. Parents' marital status became significant at $p = .030$, explaining 0.9% of the variance in the Relationships as Secondary scale, with children from divorced homes reporting lower levels of viewing relationships as secondary. As the partial correlation coefficient for parents' marital status became larger (Beta = $-.103$) than its zero-order correlation with the Relationships as Secondary subscale ($r = -.038$), this result represented a type of moderation – a suppression effect of parents' marital status between family-of-origin functioning variables, particularly intimacy, and young adults viewing close relationships as secondary to achievement (Cohen, Cohen, West & Aiken, 2003). Intimacy in the family-

of-origin was the strongest predictor, explaining 4.4% of the variance ($p < .001$), such that those who reported greater levels of Intimacy in their family-of-origin were less likely to view Relationships as Secondary. However, they were also less likely to have divorced parents, and those with non-divorced parents but low levels of intimacy in the family-of-origin were more likely to view relationships as secondary to achievement. Please see Figure 2 for the suppression pathway of parents' marital status on the relations between family-of-origin intimacy and the adult child viewing relationships as secondary to achievement.

Figure 2. Parents' Marital Status Acting as a Suppression Variable between Family-of-Origin Intimacy and Viewing Relationships as Secondary in Adulthood.



Therefore, self-reported levels of Intimacy in the family-of-origin better predicted the adult child viewing Relationships as Secondary than parents' marital status alone.

This time, the only significant demographic predictors were relationship status ($p = .002$)

and sex ($p < .001$), predicting 1.7% and 3.0% of the variance in an adult child's reported level of viewing Relationships as Secondary, respectively. As a participant's commitment in a relationship went up, their view of relationships as secondary to achievement went down. Further, female participants were less likely to view relationships as secondary to achievement than were males.

Need for approval. The regression revealed that parents' marital status was not a significant predictor of the adult child's Need for Approval from others. The final model explained 11.4% of the variance in Need for Approval from others, $F(16, 461) = 8.514$, $p < .001$, with the addition of family functioning variables explaining 8.2% of the variance in the Need for Approval scale. Intimacy explained 1.3% ($p = .011$), with greater levels of intimacy predicting less need for approval from others, and family-of-origin encouragement of Independence explained 1.5% ($p = .006$) of the variance in Need for Approval from others, with more encouragement of independence predicting less need for approval from others. None of the demographic variables were significant predictors of the adult child's Need for Approval. *This time, both levels of Intimacy and encouragement of Independence in the family-of-origin better predicted the adult child's Need for Approval from others than parents' marital status alone.*

Preoccupation with relationships. Lastly, for the Preoccupation with Relationships subscale, parents' marital status was never a significant predictor. Again, the final model was significant, explaining 14.2% of the variation in Preoccupation with Relationships, $F(6,493) = 10.246$, $p < .001$, with the addition of family functioning variables solely explaining 8.3% of the variation. Individual significant predictors were Subtle Conflict, explaining 1.8% of the variation in Preoccupation with Relationships (p

= .002), with greater levels of subtle conflict in the family-of-origin predicting higher levels of preoccupation with relationships, and encouragement of Independence, explaining 0.9% of the variance ($p = .031$), with more encouragement of independence predicting less preoccupation with relationships. Of the demographic variables, only sex was significantly predictive ($p = .006$), explaining 1.4% of the variance, with females showing greater levels of Preoccupation with Relationships. *Lastly, both levels of Subtle Conflict and Encouragement of Independence in the family-of-origin significantly predicted the adult child's Preoccupation with Relationships, while parents' marital status did not.*

Overall, as expected, family-of-origin functioning, and particularly levels of intimacy/closeness in the family of origin, was a stronger predictor of adult children's attachment styles than parent's marital status alone.

Regressions to Predict Feelings about Marriage

Hypothesis 1 – negative feelings about marriage after parental divorce. A regression was run to predict Feelings about Marriage from parents' marital status (divorced or non-divorced). Parents' marital status statistically significantly predicted 3.8% of the variance in Feelings about Marriage, over and above the demographic variables (see Table 2), $F(11, 502) = 21.184, p < .001$. The correlation between parents' marital status and adult children's feelings about marriage was $r = -.210, p \leq .001$. *As expected, those with divorced parents tended to express less positivity towards marriage.*

Hypothesis 5 – negative feelings about marriage with insecure attachment.

Another multiple regression was run to predict Feelings about Marriage from attachment style variables. Attachment style variables statistically significantly predicted 4.4% of the variance in Feelings about Marriage, over and above demographic variables, $F(15, 486) = 4.837, p < .001$. Only one of the five attachment style variables, Discomfort with Closeness, added significantly to the prediction, explaining 2.1% of the variance in Feelings about Marriage alone ($p = .001$). Table 11 shows correlations between adult children's attachment styles and their feelings about marriage. *Those with higher levels of discomfort with closeness (an indicator of insecure-avoidant attachment style) were less likely to express positive feelings towards marriage, consistent with the fifth hypothesis.*

Table 11

Correlations Between Feelings About Marriage and Attachment Style

	Confidence	Discomfort w/ Closeness	Relationships as Secondary	Need for Approval	Preoccupation w/ Relationships
Feelings about Marriage	.166**	-.232**	-.147**	-.080	-.068

** $p \leq .001$

Hypothesis 6 – attachment & family functioning explain feelings about marriage.

Multiple regression. A multiple regression was run to predict Feelings about Marriage from family-of-origin functioning variables. Family-of-origin variables statistically significantly predicted 5.0% of the variance in Feelings about Marriage, over and above demographic variables, $F(15, 464) = 5.309, p < .001$. Two of the five family-

of-origin variables added significantly to the prediction; Intimacy in the family-of-origin explained 1.0% of the variance in Feelings about Marriage ($p = .022$) and Overt Conflict in the family-of-origin alone explained 1.3% of the variance in Feelings about Marriage ($p = .009$). Table 12 shows correlations between family-of-origin functioning variables and adult children's feelings about marriage. *Those with more intimacy and less overt conflict in their families-of-origin were more likely to express positivity about marriage.*

Table 12

Correlations Between Feelings About Marriage and Family-of-Origin Functioning

	Intimacy	Parenting Style	Subtle Conflict	Overt Conflict	Independence
Feelings about Marriage	.225**	.105*	-.148**	-.201**	.075

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .001$

A hierarchical multiple regression was then run to answer the question whether differences in attachment and family functioning better explained Feelings about Marriage than family status alone (divorced or non-divorced). Multiple regression allowed for answering the following questions: Which variables predict adult children's feelings about marriage? Does a particular variable increase or decrease the probability of having more positive feelings about marriage, or does it have no effect on it? What proportion of the variability of having positive feelings about marriage is accounted for by family status, attachment style, and family functioning variables? Due to past research that shows demographic differences in attitudes towards marriage, the current multiple regression model included demographic variables, such as sex, parental education, family SES, age, cultural background and religiosity (Amato, 1988) in stage one. At stage two,

parents' marital status (divorced or non-divorced) was entered. The five family-of-origin functioning variables were entered into stage three. Lastly, all five attachment style scales were included in stage four of the model.

Hierarchical multiple regression. The hierarchical multiple regression revealed that at stage one, demographic variables were significant in explaining 6.4% of the variance in Feelings about Marriage, $F(10,458) = 3.140, p = .001$. At stage two, the inclusion of parents' marital status explained an additional 4.9% of the variance in adult children's Feelings about Marriage. This R^2 change was significant, $F(11, 457) = 25.432, p < .001$. Stage three included family-of-origin functioning scales, accounting for an additional 2.6% of the variance in Feelings about Marriage. This R^2 change was again significant at $F(16, 452) = 2.681, p = .021$. Lastly, stage four of the model, the addition of attachment style functioning variables, again produced a significant R^2 change of 2.7%, $F(21, 447) = 2.893, p = .014$. The final model explained 16.6% of the variance, with religiosity alone explaining 2.2% of the variance in Feelings about Marriage ($p = .001$), the participant's relationship status alone explaining 1.4% of the variance ($p = .007$), parents' marital status alone explaining 2.6% of the variance ($p < .001$), Overt Conflict in the family-of-origin alone explaining 1.0% of the variance ($p = .021$), and Discomfort with Closeness alone explaining 1.4% of the variance ($p = .006$), and in adult children's Feelings about Marriage.

Overall, adult children who were religious, had higher levels of commitment in their current romantic relationships, came from families with continuously married parents, experienced less overt conflict in their families-of-origin, and had less discomfort with closeness were more likely to feel higher levels of positivity about

marriage. Contrary to expectations, parents' marital status continued to be an important predictor of adult children's feelings about marriage; however, it was not the only significant predictor.

Mediation analyses. Lastly, moderation and mediation analyses were run to examine whether Intimacy and Overt Conflict in the family-of-origin, and Discomfort with Closeness acted as either moderators or mediators in the relation between parental marital status and Feelings about Marriage. All three variables acted as partial mediators (not moderators) of the association between parental marital status and the adult child's Feelings about Marriage. Results indicated that the simple regression of parental marital status on Feelings about Marriage was significant, $B = -.39$, $t(523) = -4.93$, $p < .001$. Participants' ratings of their feelings about marriage were .39 points (almost 8%) lower if they came from a divorced versus an intact household.

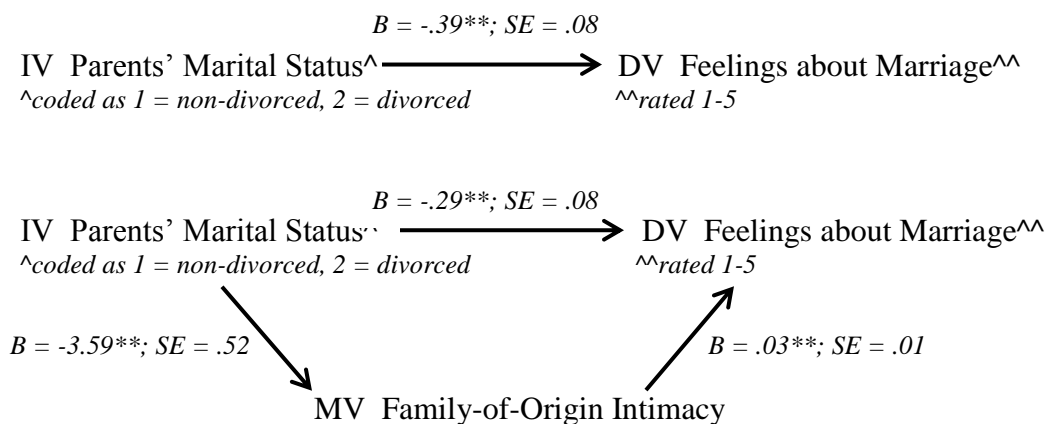
Parental marital status was also a significant predictor of the adult child's report of Intimacy in their family-of-origin, $B = -3.55$, $t(523) = -6.83$, $p < .001$; their report of Overt Conflict in the family-of-origin, $B = 2.16$, $t(528) = 4.53$, $p < .001$; and their current Discomfort with Closeness in intimate relationships, $B = 2.327$, $t(529) = 2.81$, $p = .005$. These results indicated that adult children of divorce rated their families-of-origin 3.55 units (almost 11.8%) lower on ratings of Intimacy, 2.16 units (10.8%) higher on ratings of Overt Conflict, and themselves as 2.33 units (4.7%) higher on Discomfort with Closeness. They were also .09 (9%) less likely to rate themselves as religious. Results supported a partial mediation hypothesis for each variable.

Intimacy as a mediator. Parental marital status was still a significant predictor of Feelings about Marriage after controlling for Intimacy in the family-of-origin as a

mediator, though the effect had been reduced, $B = -.294$, $t(522) = -3.63$, $p < .001$.

Participants' Feelings about Marriage were equal to $3.67 - .29$ (parents' marital status) + $.03$ (Intimacy), where parents' marital status was coded as 1 = non-divorced, 2 = divorced, Intimacy was rated out of 30, and Feelings about Marriage was rated out of 5. Participants' ratings regarding their Feelings about Marriage were $.29/5$ (6%) lower if they were from a divorced home versus having continuously married parents. Further, the higher their rating of Intimacy in the family-of-origin, the more positively they rated their feelings about marriage. In total, about 7.4% of the variance in Feelings about Marriage was accounted for by parents' marital status and Intimacy in the family-of-origin together ($R^2 = .074$; $F(2, 523) = 20.93$, $p < .001$). The indirect effect was tested using a bootstrap estimation approach with 1000 samples (Shrout & Bolger, 2002). These results indicated the indirect coefficient was significant ($B = -.095$, $SE = .03$, 95% CI = $-.1587$, $-.0485$). Having divorced parents was associated with approximately a $.1/5$ decrease in feelings about marriage, as mediated by Intimacy in the family-of-origin. This is approximately a 2% decrease. Please see Figure 3 for the mediation pathway of family-of-origin intimacy on the relation between parents' marital status and the adult child's feelings about marriage.

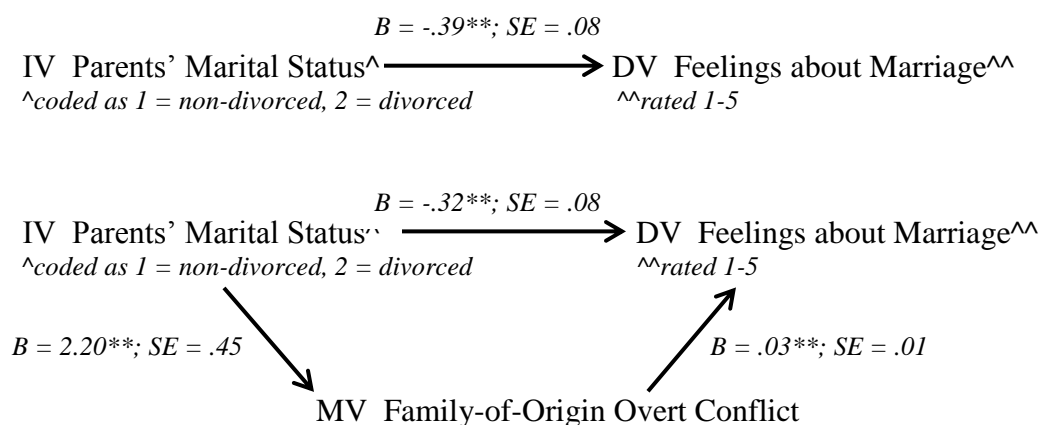
Figure 3. Family-of-Origin Intimacy Mediates the Relation between Parents' Marital Status and the Young Adult Child's Feelings about Marriage.



Overt conflict as a mediator. Parental marital status also continued to be a significant predictor of Feelings about Marriage after controlling for the mediator of Overt Conflict in the family-of-origin, though the effect had also been reduced ($B = -.323$, $t(527) = -4.08$, $p < .001$). Participants' Feelings about Marriage were equal to $4.78 - .32$ (parents' marital status) $- .03$ (Overt Conflict), where parents' marital status was coded as 1 = non-divorced, 2 = divorced, Overt Conflict was rated out of 20, and Feelings about Marriage was again rated out of 5. Participants' ratings regarding their Feelings about Marriage were $.32/5$ (6%) lower if they were from a divorced home versus having continuously married parents. Further, the higher their rating of Overt Conflict in their family-of-origin, the more negatively they rated their feelings about marriage. About 7.0% of the variance in feelings about marriage was accounted for by parents' marital status and Overt Conflict in the family-of-origin together ($R^2 = .07$; $F(2, 528) = 19.80$, $p < .001$). The indirect effect was again tested using the bootstrapping approach described earlier and the indirect coefficient was significant ($B = -.062$, $SE = .02$, 95% CI = $-.1148$,

-.0287). Having divorced parents was associated with approximately a .06/5 decrease in feelings about marriage, as mediated by Overt Conflict in the family-of-origin. This is only approximately a 1.2% decrease. Please see Figure 4 for the mediation pathway of family-of-origin overt conflict on the relation between parents' marital status and the adult child's feelings about marriage.

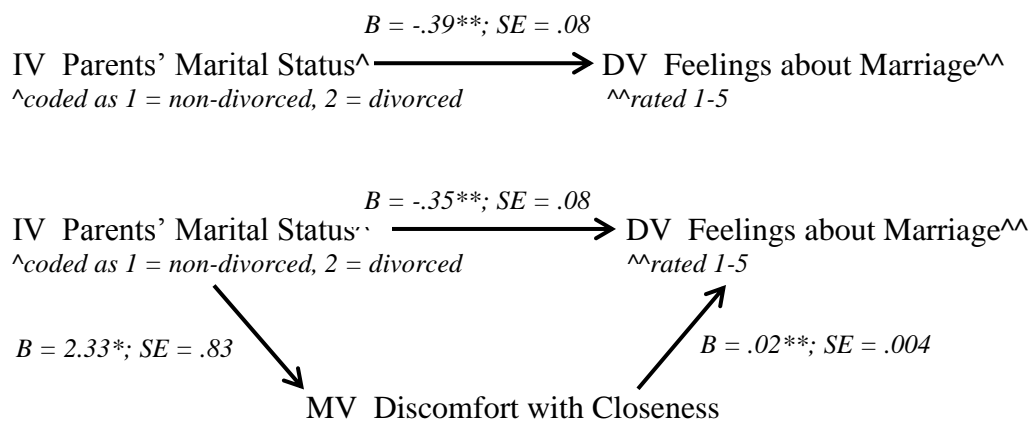
Figure 4. Family-of-Origin Overt Conflict Mediates the Relation between Parents' Marital Status and the Young Adult Child's Feelings about Marriage.



Discomfort with closeness as a mediator. Similarly, parental marital status was still a significant predictor of Feelings about Marriage after controlling for the mediator Discomfort with Closeness, though the effect had again been slightly reduced ($B = -.35$, $t(528) = -4.55$, $p < .001$). Participants' feelings about marriage were equal to $5.18 - .35$ (parents' marital status) $- .02$ (Discomfort with Closeness), where parents' marital status was coded as 1 = non-divorced, 2 = divorced, Discomfort with Closeness was rated out of 50, and Feelings about Marriage was rated out of 5. Participants' ratings regarding their

Feelings about Marriage were .35/5 (7%) lower if they were from a divorced home versus having continuously married parents. Further, the higher their rating of Discomfort with Closeness, the more negatively they rated their Feelings about Marriage. About 8.9% of the variance in feelings about marriage was accounted for by parents' marital status and Discomfort with Closeness together ($R^2 = .089$; $F(2, 259) = 25.94$, $p < .001$). The indirect effect was again tested using the same bootstrap estimation approach, which indicated that the indirect coefficient was significant ($B = -.047$, $SE = .02$, 95% CI = $-.0909$, $-.0108$). In this case, having divorced parents was associated with approximately .05/5 decrease in feelings about marriage, as mediated by Discomfort with Closeness. This is only approximately a 1% decrease. Please see Figure 5 for the mediation pathway of the adult child's discomfort with closeness in relationships on the relation between their parents' marital status and their feelings about marriage.

Figure 5. Young Adults' Discomfort with Closeness Mediates the Relation between their Parents' Marital Status and their Feelings about Marriage.



In sum, intimacy and overt conflict in the family-of-origin, as well as discomfort with closeness, all partially mediated the effect of parental marital status on the adult child's feelings about marriage. However, although these mediations were statistically significant, they only mediated a small proportion of the effect of parental divorce on feelings about marriage, the minor direct effect of which continued to be statistically significant.

Regressions to Predict Attitudes towards Marriage

Hypothesis 6 – attachment & family functioning explain attitudes towards marriage. Lastly, multinomial logistic regression was employed to answer the question: Do differences in attachment and family functioning better predict *attitudes* towards marriage than family status (divorced versus non-divorced) alone? As previously described, attitudes towards marriage was defined using four groupings of young adults' responses to the question "What is your opinion of marriage?": 1. Negative Opinion of Marriage, if any cynical/pessimistic code was present in a participant's response; this was considered the most negative attitude towards marriage, 2. Ambivalent Opinion towards Marriage, if any ambivalent/mixed code (but no cynical/pessimistic code) was present in a participants' response; this was considered a moderately negative / ambivalent attitude towards marriage, 3. Positive Opinion of Marriage, if an optimistic/hopeful code (but no cynical/pessimistic or ambivalent/mixed codes) was present in the participants' response; this was considered the most positive attitude towards marriage, lastly, 4. 'None' captured those participants who had neither a cynical/pessimistic, ambivalent/mixed, or optimistic/hopeful code in their response to the open-ended question regarding their view

of marriage. Please see Table 1 for a summary of these groupings and Table 2 for frequencies of occurrence in the current sample.

Logistic regression was used in this case because the dependent variable, Attitude towards Marriage, was categorical with four groups (Hosmer & Lemeshow, 2000). Logistic regression was also advantageous as it requires no assumptions about the distributions of the predictor variables to be met (Hosmer & Lemeshow, 2000). Again, demographic variables, such as sex, parental education, age, and religiosity were included in the model, as was parents' marital status (divorced or non-divorced), the five family-of-origin functioning variables, and the five attachment style scales. *Positive Opinion of Marriage* defined as the reference category in the model.

Multinomial logistic regression. A test of the full model against a constant only model was statistically significant, indicating that the predictors as a set reliably distinguished between the four types of attitudes towards marriage (chi square = 71.97, $p = .014$, with $df = 48$). Nagelkerke's R^2 of .15 indicated a moderate relation between prediction and grouping. Prediction success overall was 52.2% (3.6% for None; 12.9% for Negative Opinion of Marriage; 9.5% for Ambivalent Opinion towards Marriage; and 95.5% for Positive Opinion of Marriage).

None. According to the Wald criterion, none of the predictors investigated made a significant contribution to the prediction of the 'None' category – not expressing an explicit opinion of marriage – versus expressing a Positive Opinion of Marriage.

Negative opinion of marriage. The Wald criterion demonstrated that only Discomfort with Closeness and sex made a significant contribution to the prediction of a Negative Opinion of Marriage ($p = .004$ and $p = .008$, respectively). The Exp(B) value

indicates that when Discomfort with Closeness is raised by one, the odds ratio is 1.07 times as large and therefore participants are 1.1 times more likely to express a Negative Opinion of Marriage in their response, as opposed to the more common Positive Opinion of Marriage. The Exp(B) value indicated that female participants were .42 times more likely to express a Negative Opinion of Marriage in their response than a Positive Opinion of Marriage than male participants. *Therefore, females were more likely than males to express a negative opinion of marriage than a positive one, and the higher the participants rated their level of discomfort with closeness, the greater their likelihood of expressing a negative opinion of marriage as opposed to a positive opinion of marriage.*

Ambivalent opinion of marriage. The Wald criterion demonstrated that family-of-origin's Encouragement of Independence and religiosity contributed significantly to the prediction of an Ambivalent Opinion of Marriage ($p = .022$ and $p = .009$, respectively). The Exp(B) value indicated that when family-of-origin Independence is raised by one, the odds ratio is 1.11 times as large and therefore participants are 1.11 times more likely to express an Ambivalent Opinion of Marriage than a Positive Opinion of Marriage in their responses. When participants do not identify as religious, they are 2.51 times more likely to have an Ambivalent Opinion of Marriage than a Positive Opinion of Marriage. Discomfort with Closeness and family-of-origin Intimacy both approached significance as contributors to the prediction of an Ambivalent Opinion towards Marriage versus a Positive Opinion of Marriage ($p = .085$ and $p = .087$, respectively). The Exp(B) value indicated that when Discomfort with Closeness is raised by one, the odds ratio is 1.04 times as large and therefore participants are 1.04 times more likely to express an Ambivalent Opinion of Marriage than a Positive Opinion of Marriage. When family-of-

origin Intimacy is raised by one, the odds ratio is .94 times as large and therefore participants are .94 times more likely to express an Ambivalent Opinion of Marriage (so, those who come from more close/intimate families are less likely to have Ambivalent Opinions towards Marriage than they are to have a Positive Opinion of Marriage).

Overall, individuals who did not identify a religion were more likely to express an ambivalent opinion towards marriage than a positive one, and the higher their rating of family-of-origin encouragement of independence the more likely they were to express an ambivalent opinion of marriage as opposed to a positive opinion of marriage.

As expected, parents' marital status was not a significant predictor of adult children's attitudes towards marriage groupings. Instead, sex and levels of discomfort with closeness played an important role in predicting the likelihood of expressing a negative opinion towards marriage versus a positive one, while religiosity and family-of-origin encouragement of independence were important predictors of expressing an ambivalent opinion of marriage versus a positive one.

Discussion

The current study investigated the relations among young adults' attachment styles, their reported family-of-origin functioning – including the key constructs of family conflict, encouragement of independence, family intimacy, and parenting style – and their parents' marital status (divorced or non-divorced). In particular, this study offered an examination of *underlying processes*, analyzing the impact of family-of-origin functioning, above and beyond family structure (divorced / nondivorced), in predicting young adults' feelings about and attitudes towards marriage.

Attachment

As expected, the current study revealed that young adults' retrospective report of family-of-origin functioning while growing up was a better predictor of the young adult's current attachment style in close relationships (and particularly of their confidence in relationships) than was their parents' marital status. In fact, intimacy and closeness in the family-of-origin was the most salient predictor of all five measures of attachment style, as indicative of the three most common types of attachment: secure, insecure-avoidant, and insecure-anxious (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). The more intimacy reported in the family-of-origin while growing up, the more secure and confident the young adult described themselves as being, both confident in themselves and in obtaining support from others. They also described themselves as having less avoidant attachment styles, in that they reported lower levels of discomfort with closeness to others and tended to place less emphasis on individual achievements versus relationships. Lastly, the higher

the reported level of intimacy in the family-of-origin, the less anxious attachment was reported in the young adults currently: They reported less need for approval from others. Importantly, these results apply to the young adults' attachment in all close relationships rather than specifically to the parent, expanding on previous research showing that a cohesive and supportive family environment is predictive of secure parent-child attachments, even in later life (Rawatlal, Kliewer, & Pillay; 2015; Kapanee & Rao, 2007). This result supports theories proposing that parent-child attachment experiences, and even broader family-of-origin functioning and parenting practices, create internal working models of attachment that impact how the child handles other important attachment relationships in later life (Allen & Land, 1999; Mikulincer, Florian, Cowan, & Cowan, 2002).

The study results also revealed an important suppression outcome, in that it was individuals raised in *non-divorced yet reportedly low-intimacy families* who rated themselves most highly on viewing relationships as secondary to achievement. This was the only instance when parents' marital status played a role in predicting young adults' current attachment styles, supporting other researchers' findings that parental divorce by itself does not convey the *underlying* complexities of insecurity-promoting behaviours in the family (Brennan & Shaver, 1994). It may be that individuals in continuously-married but low-intimacy families are more chronically exposed to the low-levels of cohesiveness and support than those whose low-intimacy families divorce, promoting greater levels of insecure attachment style by strengthening their insecure internal working models over time. In this case, as in other situations where parents are unwilling or unable to shift enduring, maladaptive interaction patterns, divorce may in fact be a more favourable

option as compared to an unhappy, distant or conflictual marriage (Amato, Loomis, & Booth, 1995; Amato, 2000).

In addition, reported levels of subtle conflict in the families-of-origin predicted young adults' current levels of anxious preoccupation with relationships: The higher the amount of subtle conflict in their families, the greater their anxious preoccupation with relationships currently. Hayashi and Strickland (1998) also found that higher levels of ongoing inter-parental conflict (e.g., overt verbal and physical arguments) placed adult offspring at risk for experiencing insecure attachments in their own romantic relationships. However, the current study emphasizes the role of *subtle* family conflict – including the extent of misunderstanding, interference and family coalitions – in promoting young adults' levels of insecure-anxious attachment.

Lastly, encouragement of independence in the family-of-origin also played an important role in predicting a young adult's current levels of anxious attachment: The more the child's independence was promoted in the family-of-origin (according to their recollection), the less they reported needing approval from others and feeling preoccupied with relationships, and the more confident they felt in themselves and others (the latter approaching statistical significance). These results are in line with previous research showing that securely attached adults tend to develop in close, supportive family-of-origin environments, with parents who respected their children's autonomy and encouraged their participation in familial decisions (Diehl, Elnick, Bourbeau, & Labouvie-Vief, 1998; Tanaka et al., 2008; Pfaller, Kiselica, & Gerstein, 1998). However, as participants in the current sample most often identified themselves as Canadian (66%), it would be imperative to investigate how these associations between family-of-origin

functioning and adult children's attachment styles differ among various cultural groups (e.g., those that value and promote interdependence versus independence).

These results may have strong implications for a young adults' "relational trajectory" as many authors, including Bowlby (1979) himself, argue that attachment processes are one of the important factors in developing and sustaining positive romantic relationships in adulthood (see Mikulincer et al., 2002 for a review). As shown in the current study, attachment security may play a significant role in the attitudes individuals form towards marriage and close relationships, in general. In turn, attitudes impact marital quality, and marital quality may play a causal role in affecting parenting style, children's adaptation, and children's own attachment style. In fact, securely attached individuals have been found to have more intimate and less conflictual families themselves, and to score higher on democratic parenting style than insecure adults (Strahan, 1991). Further, many of these relations could be thought of as bi-directional, for example, attachment style impacts attitudes, attitudes impact behaviour, which in turn informs attachment experiences and internalized working models of attachment.

Ultimately, the results of the current study fit with the original theory of attachment: Families that were described as close and supportive, but encouraging of independence and lacking in interference and coalitions, were most predictive of secure attachment, aptly conforming to Bowlby's (1979) concept of a "secure base," from which the child can explore the world. *It is significant that this base can be created and maintained, despite a family's divorce.* Therefore, family practitioners should work to promote and develop the family's cohesiveness, intimacy and autonomy-promoting

behaviours, whether the family is currently experiencing a transition (e.g., separation, divorce, remarriage) or not.

In terms of the influence of demographic characteristics on reported attachment style, the current study showed that greater levels of socio-economic status were associated with greater levels of attachment security and less attachment avoidance. It is important to note that families tend to experience a decrease in socio-economic status following divorce (Braver, Gonzales, Wolchik & Sandler, 1989). This decrease in economic resources may be one pathway through which parental divorce influences the child's attachment style, as parents may experience increased levels of stress, and have fewer resources for the type of parenting needed to build strong, secure attachment working models (Cooper, McLanahan, Meadows, & Brooks-Gunn, 2009). Further, greater levels of commitment in the young adult's current relationship were associated with greater levels of secure attachment style and lower levels of avoidant attachment style. In fact, as one might expect, attachment security has been shown to increase with length of time in a dating relationship and is, in turn, predictive of the relationship's stability (Duemmler & Kobak, 2001). Lastly, females were shown to place a greater emphasis on their relationships: reporting lower levels of viewing relationships as secondary to achievement and greater levels of preoccupation with their relationships. Longstanding research has shown that women "tend to devote more effort than men to relationship maintenance efforts" (Kirkpatrick & Davis, 1994, pp. 504).

Family-of-Origin Functioning

The current study's findings supported our assertion that parental marital status

(e.g., intact versus divorced) may at times act as a proxy for underlying family functioning factors, such as lower levels of intimacy/closeness, fewer democratic parenting practices, and higher amounts of overt and subtle conflict. These findings support the relatively small volume of previous research in this area, also demonstrating that families who ultimately divorce have lower levels of intimacy and higher amounts of conflict (Sun, 2001; Peris & Emery, 2004; Cheng et al., 2006). The current study showed that even when these factors were reported retrospectively (versus longitudinally), they still held true. However, individuals in the current study were asked about their experiences in the family “*while growing up,*” which for some may have involved the period of divorce and even thereafter. Therefore, these results merely represent the differences young adults see in their upbringing, based on *current* family structure.

In the present study, divorced families were rated by their adult children as having lower levels of closeness and intimacy and lower levels of a democratic parenting style from their parents. This follows from literature that shows that a democratic parenting style tends to encourage feelings of family cohesion (Hill, 1995). However, no differences were found for encouragement of independence in the family-of-origin, based on parents’ marital status. It is possible, however, that the encouragement of independence may be motivated by slightly different reasons in divorced families, where children are often given more autonomous and adult responsibilities (sometimes too much so) without two parents in the home (Sessa & Steinberg, 1991). It may be that the use of a different, more specific or nuanced scale to measure the fostering of a child’s independence in the family is required with this population, particularly as the

Independence subscale of the Family Environment Scale (FES) showed the lowest internal consistency in our study.

Feelings About & Attitudes Towards Marriage

Based on a review of the literature showing that some individuals feel very negatively towards the possibility of marriage for themselves after experiencing their parent's divorce, while others believe their own marriage will be different (Dennison & Koerner, 2008), it was first hypothesized that young adults from divorced families would have less positive feelings about and more negative attitudes towards marriage than their non-divorced counterparts. The current study confirmed that adult children from divorced households reported less positive feelings about marriage and were more likely to express a negative opinion of marriage when compared to their counterparts with continuously married parents. However, the open-ended responses of young adults, and how they were coded by the original research team, indicated no group differences in *positive* feelings of marriage, indicating that a positive attitude towards marriage is just as common in young people from divorced versus intact homes. It is significant that both quantitative ratings and coded interview responses showed a pattern of more negative feelings and attitudes towards marriage in young adults from divorced homes, as past studies have shown discrepancies in findings based on their operationalization of attitudes towards marriage (Brydon, 2005). The current study hypothesized that *underlying* family-of-origin functioning and attachment style factors would better explain these apparent differences in feelings about and attitudes towards marriage between young adults from divorced and non-divorced households. However, contrary to

expectation, it was found that parents' marital status was a significant predictor of young adults' current feelings about marriage, with those from divorced families-of-origin being less likely to self-report positive feelings about marriage, though it was not predictive of their attitudes towards marriage, as identified from their responses by the research team. In both cases, other significant predictors of feelings about and attitudes towards marriage arose.

Family-of-origin functioning factors such as greater levels of intimacy and lower levels of overt conflict were predictive of more positive feelings about marriage. This finding supports recent research that also shows conflictual parental marriages and divorces to be most associated with strongly negative feelings about marriage in young adult children, and close, integrated families-of-origin to be associated with positive feelings about marriage (Li, 2014). As other results in our study showed that families who ultimately divorced typically had reportedly lower levels of intimacy and higher levels of overt conflict, it makes sense that those from divorced homes were shown to have less positive feelings about marriage, even if family-of-origin functioning did not fully explain this relation. Both parents' marital status and family-of-origin functioning were important in explaining a young adult's feelings about and attitudes towards marriage. In particular, those with continuously married parents, higher reported levels of intimacy and lower levels of overt conflict in their families-of-origin, were more likely to express greater levels of positive feelings about marriage. A partial mediation model was tested and confirmed, though as the original influence of parents' marital status on feelings about marriage was relatively small (explaining approximately 4% of the variability), the partial mediation model with intimacy in the family-of-origin was even

smaller (explaining approximately 2% of the increase in feelings about marriage); and the partial mediation model with overt conflict in the family-of-origin was similarly small (explaining approximately 1% of the decrease in feelings about marriage). It is possible that the term “marriage” itself is loaded for those who have experienced their parents’ divorce, such that they instinctually rate their feelings towards it more negatively. However, when they are able to articulate their responses directly in an open-minded manner, their opinions are similar to their counterparts from non-divorced homes. Either way, it is important that different constructs were predictive of *rated* feelings about marriage versus *coded* attitude towards marriage responses, again reflecting the notion that how attitudes are assessed and interpreted affects findings (Brydon, 2005).

In fact, family-of-origin structure in general appeared to play a limited direct role in predicting reported and coded attitudes towards marriage, as neither status (divorced or non-divorced) nor functioning factors (except for one) were significant predictors. The only direct finding of family functioning on attitudes towards marriage was that young adults who reported that their families-of-origin promoted greater levels of independence, were more likely to respond with an ambivalent (versus positive) opinion towards marriage. These responses were marked by mixed opinions or conflicting feelings towards marriage. It makes sense that an ambivalent or possibly analytical-skeptical attitude towards marriage would be promoted if young adults learned to value independence and autonomy during their upbringing, but continued to be exposed to the traditional values instilled by their society.

Additionally, those who indicated a religious affiliation tended to rate themselves as having more positive feelings about marriage, and had less of a tendency to express an

ambivalent (versus positive) opinion towards marriage in their qualitative interview responses. These findings were consistent with previous research that speaks to religiosity promoting more traditional values and therefore, more positive feelings about marriage (Wu & Balakrishnan, 1992). Further, those with greater levels of commitment in their current romantic relationships tended to rate themselves as having more positive feelings towards marriage, supporting the notion that marriage continues to be a relational goal for young people (Manning, Longmore, & Giordano, 2007; Goldberg, 2014). Contrary to previous research, however, neither age, nor parental income or education were significant in predicting feelings about or attitudes towards marriage. This could be due to the fact that the current sample did not exhibit a wide age or SES range. The current study did find that in general, females were more likely than males to be identified with a negative (versus positive) opinion of marriage in their coded responses, though not in their ratings. This finding was surprising as previous research has shown that adolescent females often have more positive attitudes towards marriage than adolescent males (Manning et al., 2007; Willoughby, 2010). However, Manning and colleagues' (2007) finding similarly did not hold true when higher education attainment was taken into account, and the majority of the current sample was university educated, with a desire to obtain a high level of education (on average, at least a bachelor's degree). It may be that the young women we studied value education and careers above marriage, at least at this stage in their development, or that their level of education promotes a more feminist attitude / critical examination of the institution of marriage.

Once again, consistent with previous research, those who rated themselves as

having greater levels of discomfort with closeness also rated themselves as having less positive feelings about marriage. Discomfort with closeness is indicative of an insecure-avoidant attachment style (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007) and previous research has shown that low attachment avoidance, specifically, contributes to a positive marital attitude, and readiness and desire to enter into marriage (Mosko & Pistole, 2010; Brydon, 2005). In the current study, a similar finding arose from the coded responses to the interview question, “What is your opinion of marriage?” Those who rated themselves as having greater levels of discomfort with closeness were more likely to have a negative (versus positive) opinion of marriage in their responses. These opinions were characterized by pessimism and cynicism about the institution of marriage. Therefore, it appears that family-of-origin functioning predicts a young adult’s attachment style in close relationships, which in turn can have an important impact on their feelings about and attitudes towards the institution of marriage. Another partial mediation model was tested, showing that discomfort with closeness mediated the influence of parents’ marital status on a young adult’s feelings about marriage, again explaining approximately 1% of the decrease in feelings about marriage due to the experience of parental divorce.

Therefore, although parents’ marital status is an important predictor of young adults’ feelings about marriage (but not their coded attitudes towards marriage), its effect appears to be in part mediated by other important predictors, such as family-of-origin’s levels of intimacy and overt conflict, and the individuals’ current levels of discomfort with closeness. We agree that “family structure by itself may be a blunt instrument for understanding how family experiences while growing up influence relationship perspectives” (Halpern-Meekin, 2012, p. 614).

Study Strengths & Limitations

Sample. The current study focused on the investigation of feelings about and attitudes towards marriage in young adults since this developmental stage often involves the contemplation of long-term relationships and marital decisions. James and Bartholomew (2014) argue that the feelings about and attitudes toward marriage held during individuals' early 20's place them on varying "relational trajectories," because of how these attitudes affect the individual's relationship decisions. Further, compared to children raised by continuously married parents, young adults who experienced their parents' divorces during childhood tend to demonstrate a bimodal distribution of age-of-entry into marriage; they marry at a significantly younger or older age than is typical (Wolfinger, 2003; Tasker & Richards, 1994). Therefore, the young adulthood phase that encompasses the consideration of marital decisions may be *particularly* important to understanding young persons with divorced parents.

Our sample had a mean age 20.7 years ($SD=2.74$ years), placing them directly in the young adulthood, or what Arnett (2012) terms emerging adulthood, phase that is typically defined as extending from 18 to 24 years of age. However, broader definitions consider late adolescence to 30's as the transition from adolescent to adulthood, as by 30 years of age most individuals will have taken on adult responsibilities, including marriage (Arnett, 2012). Again, the age range in the current sample (15.5 to 30.6 years) fit this definition. Due to the encompassing age range and large sample size of the current study, results are likely generalizable to many young adults in their late teens and 20's.

Furthermore, the current study included a sample from the community, though ultimately the majority (87%) were highly-educated university students. Therefore, it is

difficult to offer comment about the generalizability of results to community samples, particularly with lower educational attainment and socio-economic backgrounds.

Nevertheless, a positive characteristic of current sample was that it was relatively large and balanced between males and females (50.3%), and equally representative of divorced and non-divorced households (50.1%).

Methodology. In the present study, attitudes towards marriage were investigated both through quantitative ratings and coded interview responses, in order to at least partially address the impact of *how* attitudes are measured on results (Brydon, 2005). Further, it is important to note that the current study used only the term “marriage,” which may itself be loaded, particularly for those from divorced homes. We question what our sample might have said about their “sense of family,” for example, which could turn out to be more related to their experience of their family’s functioning while growing up, or to their feelings of closeness with friends and romantic partners. Ultimately, we believe that young adults’ attitudes towards marriage in our study represent their developing attitudes towards commitment, as “... marriage is the supreme form of [the] commitment [people make to one another]” (Wilson, 2005, pp. 9).

Furthermore, in the present study, retrospective and current data was obtained from the same person at the same time. Mikulincer and colleagues (2002) discuss how data from the same source may confound causality. In addition, we note that participants could have been biased in their recollection of family-of-origin functioning, based on whether their parents ultimately divorced or not. Further, participants were asked to think about their family functioning *while growing up*, which for some may have included the divorce while not for others (even though their parents’ ultimately divorced).

Either way, “while growing up” is somewhat vague and may have been interpreted differently by the participants. On the other hand, asking “while growing up” was intended to evoke the overall experience and feeling of family during childhood and adolescence without imposing a particular mindset about parental divorce or continuous marriage. Either way, there are necessary limitations to the statistical investigation of such complex experiences, such as an individual’s upbringing and attitudes. The systematic qualitative procedures included in the current study were an attempt to delve deeper into this complexity and learn from participants’ own phenomenological understanding, though these procedures have their own limitations due to the necessity for researcher interpretation of the interview data.

Another important limitation is that the current study did not control for participants’ recent romantic relationship experiences, which also may have coloured their perceptions of and attitudes towards marriage. However, it is important to note that the attachment style questionnaire asks participants to think about all close relationships not just those of a romantic nature or parent-child relationships. Nonetheless, someone experiencing a break-up may think very differently about marriage / relationships currently than they did while they were happy with their partner.

Implications for Future Research and Clinical Practice

Future research. Although the current research provides insight into the various pathways through which early family functioning may have an impact on a young adults’ attitudes towards marriage, such as through the occurrence of parental divorce, experiences of family intimacy, conflict, and encouragement of independence in the

family, and through attachment experiences, these factors explain a relatively small portion of young adults' feelings and opinions about marriage. It is therefore important for future research to investigate additionally relevant factors, such as other important attachment experiences with siblings, peers, and adult figures (e.g., grandparents, aunts/uncles, and teachers), as well as losses thereof. The impact of culture, ethnicity and religion on attitudes towards marriage should also be further explored, particularly in a multicultural society such as Canada's, where young people may be exposed to numerous and varying ideals (e.g., from their family, their country-of-origin, their peer group, and popular culture / media). Similarly, important early romantic relationships and losses (e.g., break-ups), as well as young adults' current romantic relationship status and their experience of it, may play an important role in explaining a young person's current attachment style and possibly their outlook on marriage as a permanent, legal commitment to one close partner. Furthermore, prospective, longitudinal research would aid in testing (potentially bidirectional) models of the studied and additionally suggested factors' influences on a young person's attitude towards marriage and family.

Clinical practice. Importantly, the current research carries some practical implications for professionals working with families. For example, it is significant that even if the family experiences a divorce, a secure attachment base can still be created and maintained. Therefore, results point to the value of fostering and developing family cohesiveness and feelings of intimacy, as well as balancing autonomy-promoting behaviours, prior, during and following a family transition (e.g., separation or divorce). Although divorcing parents may find the thought of developing a sense of intimacy between each other challenging, they may understand the need to promote intimacy and

closeness between *each* of them and their children, as well as among the children themselves, if this notion is presented as in the best interest of the children and all family members' relational functioning.

Furthermore, as those who grew up in intact households with reportedly low levels of intimacy conveyed higher levels of insecure-anxious or insecure-avoidant attachment styles, all families (including continuously married families) would benefit from a focus on intimacy building. To this end, this study's results may be translated to inform not only selective preventive interventions (e.g., support groups for families undergoing separation) but also universal family, couple or parenting programs, which may focus on teaching effective intimacy and autonomy-building strategies. As democratic parenting style and intimacy were closely related in the current research, one way that a clinician or educator may help to foster intimacy in the family could be by coaching democratic parenting practices, whether the parents are divorced or continuously married.

Moreover, change in attachment style in adulthood most often occurs in the direction of attachment security due to novel attachment experiences (e.g., peers, romantic partners) that disconfirm original, insecure internal working models (Rothbard & Shaver, 1994). Therefore, young adulthood is a critical time to explore family-of-origin experiences and feelings. Professionals or invested others can help young adults to examine their own outlooks on romantic relationships and to consciously adopt positive aspects of early family practices as well as identify aspects they want to do differently in their own close relationships. This type of exploration during the young adult developmental period could be facilitated through groups offered, for example, in senior

secondary schools, at College and University Counselling Centres and in the community, or in individual treatment. Practitioners can encourage their young adult clients to reflect on their attachment experiences with each parent, their parents' model of marriage, as well as the family's overall functioning, in order to acknowledge any attachment injuries they may have experienced or internalized and develop their own, conscious opinions of marriage and family. Ultimately, clients can reflect on how they want to experience their attachment relationships moving forward, and practitioners can aid in coaching more intimacy and security-promoting behaviours in current relationships.

Conclusions

The current study demonstrates that the static variable of divorce does not tell the whole predictive story for a child's later relational connections and attitudes. We document that if a family-of-origin is experienced to be cohesive and close – even if parents do divorce – it appears that young adult children can still feel securely attached in their close relationships and still feel positively towards marriage. Therefore, a secure base and positive internal working models of relationships can be created and maintained, despite a family's divorce. Further, as greater levels of insecure attachment (in particular attachment-avoidance) appear to be related to less positive feelings about marriage and more negative opinions of marriage, it may be that the role of family functioning involves an indirect pathway: Family-of-origin functioning predicts a young adult's attachment style in close relationships, which in turn can have an important influence on their feelings about and attitudes towards the institution of marriage.

Some of the current study results support our assertion that parental marital status (e.g., intact versus divorced) may, at times, act as a proxy for underlying family functioning factors, such as lower levels of intimacy/closeness, fewer democratic parenting practices, and higher amounts of overt and subtle conflict in the family. However, parents' marital status, attachment style and family-of-origin functioning are **all** important in explaining a young adult's feelings about and attitudes towards marriage. In particular, those with continuously married parents, higher reported levels of intimacy and lower levels of overt conflict in their families-of-origin, and lower levels of attachment avoidance, were more likely to express greater levels of positive feelings about marriage. In fact, family functioning and attachment avoidance acted as partial mediators, explaining portions of the relation between parents' marital status and a young adult's feelings about marriage. However, it is important to acknowledge the impact of divorce in regards to views of marriage, as it does tell a part of the story. Our study supports theories that purport that parents' divorces implicitly (or explicitly) model more negative feelings about marriage to children, which may be *taken up* by the child. This pathway likely plays a role in the apparent intergenerational transmission of divorce phenomenon seen in the divorce literature. Importantly, however, the complexity of the current findings speak against the use of the term "intergenerational transmission of divorce," which implies an automatic and inevitable repetition of the parents' divorce in the offspring's marital trajectory, when in fact the current research points to multiple family and developmental pathways, in which risk for divorce is only one possible and not at all unmalleable outcome.

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Appendix A: Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT BY INDIVIDUALS PARTICIPATING IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

I understand that this research project, directed by 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 family background and my beliefs about relationships 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 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 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. I can receive a written summary of the research results as soon as they are complete, by indicating my interest below.

I wish to receive a written copy of the results of this study: Yes___ No___

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

EXPERIMENTER: _____

DATE: _____

FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS UNDER THE AGE OF 19 YEARS ONLY

I am the parent or legal guardian of _____. I have read and understood this document, and provide permission for my son or daughter to participate in this study.

NAME: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

Appendix B: Excerpt used from Young Adult Interview

Ehrenberg, M.F., Perrin, M.B., & Bush, J. (2009). *Young men's and women's opinions of marriage and divorce in the context of family of origin experience*. Poster presented at the Canadian Psychological Association's Annual Conference. Toronto, ON.

Demographics and Basic Background Information

1. Indicate gender: F M

2. What is your date of birth? _____/_____/_____

(month) (day) (year)

3. Are you currently in a relationship? *Query for options.*

not dating_____	engaged but not living together_____
dating more than one person_____	married or living with partner_____
dating one person_____	separated/divorced_____
steady relationship with one person_____	other_____(specify):_____

4. Are your parents together?

Yes → Are they married?	Yes No
No	

5. Are you Canadian? Yes No → What is your nationality?_____

6. Do you identify with any particular ethnic or cultural group or background?

No	Yes (specify)_____
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7. Do you identify with any particular religion?

No	Yes (specify)_____
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8. How far did your Mother and Father go in school?

(a) Mother _____	
(b) Father _____	

9. People often think of themselves as belonging to one social class or another. If you had to make a choice, which of the following classes would you consider yourself as belonging to?

working class_____	upper middle class_____
lower middle class_____	upper class_____

Feelings Regarding Marital Transitions

1. What is your opinion of marriage?

If you had to rate your feelings towards marriage on a scale of 1 to 5, what would you say?

1	2	3	4	5
Very Negative	Somewhat Negative	Neutral	Somewhat Positive	Very Positive

Divorced Version: Early Family Functioning

1. Did your parents ever separate: N Y
 (If Yes) How old were you at the time? _____years

2. Did your parents get a divorce N Y _____years

Appendix C: Attachment Style Questionnaire

Feeney, J. A., Noller, P., & Hanrahan, M. (1994). Assessing adult attachment. In *Attachment in adults: Clinical and developmental perspectives* (pp. 128–152).

Rate each item from 1-6:

1	2	3	4	5	6
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Totally Agree

Confidence Subscale:

1. Overall, I am a worthwhile person.
2. I am easier to get to know than most people.
3. I feel confident that other people will be there for me when I need them.
4. I find it relatively easy to get close to other people.
5. I feel confident about relating to others.
6. I often worry that I do not really fit in with other people.
7. If something is bothering me, others are generally aware and concerned.
8. I am confident that other people will like and respect me.

Discomfort with Closeness Subscale:

1. I prefer to depend on myself rather than other people.
2. I prefer to keep to myself.
3. I find it hard to trust other people.
4. I find it difficult to depend on others.
5. I find it easy to trust others.
6. I feel comfortable depending on other people.
7. I worry about people getting too close.
8. I have mixed feelings about being close to others.
9. While I want to get close to others, I feel uneasy about it.
10. Other people have their problems, so I don't bother them with mine.

Relationships as Secondary Subscale:

1. To ask for help is to admit that you're a failure.
2. People's worth should be judged by what they achieve.
3. Achieving things is more important than building relationships.
4. Doing your best is more important than getting along with others.
5. If you've got a job to do, you should do it no matter who gets hurt.
6. My relationships with others are generally superficial.
7. I am too busy with other activities to put much time into relationships.

Need for Approval Subscale:

1. It's important to me that others like me.
2. It's important to me to avoid doing things that others won't like.
3. I find it hard to make a decision unless I know what other people think.
4. Sometimes I think I am no good at all.
5. I worry that I won't measure up to other people.
6. I wonder why people would want to be involved with me.
7. When I talk over my problems with others, I generally feel ashamed or foolish.

Preoccupation with Relationships Subscale:

1. I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like.
2. I worry that others won't care about me as much as I care about them.
3. It's very important to me to have a close relationship.
4. I worry a lot about my relationships.
5. I wonder how I would cope without someone to love me.
6. I often feel left out or alone.
7. I get frustrated when others are not available when I need them.
8. Other people often disappoint me.

Appendix D: Modified Family Environment Scale

Moos, R. and Moos, B., *Family Environment Scale manual*. Palo Alto CA: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1981.

Rate each item from 1-6:

1	2	3	4	5	6
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Totally Agree

Overt Family Conflict Subscale:

1. Generally speaking, while I was growing up, we fought a lot in our family.
2. Generally speaking, while I was growing up, family members rarely became openly angry.
3. Generally speaking, while I was growing up, family members sometimes got so angry they threw things.
4. Generally speaking, while I was growing up, family members sometimes hit each other.

Family Independence Subscale:

1. Generally speaking, while I was growing up, in our family, we were strongly encouraged to be independent.
2. Generally speaking, while I was growing up, there was very little privacy in our family.
3. Generally speaking, while I was growing up, family members almost always relied on themselves when a problem came up.
4. Generally speaking, while I was growing up, it was hard to be by yourself without hurting someone's feeling in our household.
5. Generally speaking, while I was growing up, we were not really encouraged to speak up for ourselves in our family.

Appendix E: Modified ICPS Family Functioning Scale

Noller, P., Seth-Smith, M., Bouma, R., & Schweitzer, R. (2003). Parent and adolescent perceptions of family functioning: A comparison of clinic and non-clinic families, 1–14.

Rate each item from 1-6:

1	2	3	4	5	6
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Totally Agree

Family Cohesion / Intimacy Subscale:

1. Generally speaking, while I was growing up, people in our family helped and supported each other.
2. Generally speaking, while I was growing up, we were honest with each other.
3. Generally speaking, while I was growing up, parents usually agreed on things involving the children.
4. Generally speaking, while I was growing up, we showed affection and tenderness to one another.
5. Generally speaking, while I was growing up, each family member was accepted for who they were.
6. Generally speaking, while I was growing up, even when we disagreed, we still showed our love for each other.

Subtle Family Conflict Subscale:

1. Generally speaking, while I was growing up, we often misunderstood each other.
2. Generally speaking, while I was growing up, even though we meant well, we interfered too much in each other's lives.
3. Generally speaking, while I was growing up, we interrupted and talked over each other.
4. Generally speaking, while I was growing up, one parent sided with children against the other parent.
5. Generally speaking, while I was growing up, making decisions and plans was a problem for our family.

Parenting Style Subscale:

1. Generally speaking, while I was growing up, each member of our family had a say in important family decisions.
2. Generally speaking, while I was growing up, children had a say in the rules.
3. Generally speaking, while I was growing up, children were consulted with and participated in decisions.
4. Generally speaking, while I was growing up, parents and children talked about things before decisions were made.