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MARITAL SATISFACTION AMONG ADULT CHILDREN OF
DIVORCE: THE CONNECTION TO POOR CONFLICT
RESOLUTION SKILLS

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Social Work

by
Deanna Michelle Graham

June 2003

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DIVORCE: THE CONNECTION TO POOR CONFLICT
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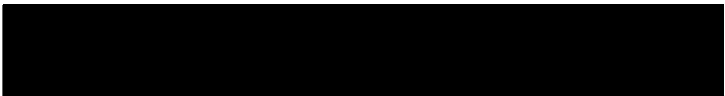
A Project
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by
Deanna Michelle Graham
June 2003

Approved by:


Dr. Trang Hoang, Faculty Supervisor
Social Work

6/3/03
Date


Dr. Rosemary McGaslin,
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ABSTRACT

Each year one million children are newly affected by divorce (Wallerstein et al., 2000). The children of parents who divorced during the 1960's and 1970's are now adults, some are now married themselves. This study focuses on the marital satisfaction and conflict resolution skills among adult children of divorce. Twenty-five graduate level social work students were surveyed and it was found that low marital satisfaction and poor conflict resolution skills negatively impact life satisfaction. Furthermore, it was found that all of these areas were lower among adult children of divorce.

Given that the sample was comprised of only 25 students and only 28% of those students reported their parents were divorced or separated, it is difficult to apply these findings to the general population. However, helpful information about the marital satisfaction and conflict resolution skills of social work students is revealed. Recommendations for social work training and future research are presented.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge three very important people who were an integral part of making this project what it is today. First, I would like to acknowledge my research supervisor, Dr. Trang Hoang. Thank you for your knowledge, experience and never-ending support and encouragement. At every step of this process, I felt as though we were in this together.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The contents of Chapter One presents an overview of the project. The problem statement and purpose of the study are discussed. Finally, the significance of the project for social work is presented.

Problem Statement

The divorce rate doubled during the 1960s and 1970s (Amato & Booth, 1991) and divorce and family disruption in North America has become a common occurrence. The consequences of divorce on children has been widely studied during the last few decades and there is much evidence to support that divorce is a stressful experience for children (Amato & Keith, 1991). According to Judith Wallerstein, a leading researcher in the area of divorce, divorce is a life-transforming experience. After divorce, childhood is different. Adolescence is different. Adulthood, with the decision to marry or not and have children or not is different. Whether the final outcome is good or bad, the whole trajectory of an individual's life is profoundly altered by the experience of divorce (Wallerstein, Lewis, & Blakeslee, 2000). Therefore, adults

who experienced their parents' divorce have different issues and needs than those raised in in-tact homes.

Each year two million adults in this country and one million children are newly affected by divorce (Wallerstein et al., 2000). One in two American marriages ends in divorce, and one in three children can expect to experience their parents' divorce (Wallerstein et al., 2000). With such high divorce rates, and such a high rate of children's exposure to divorce, the area of the effects of divorce on children has been widely studied. More recently, the body of literature has been expanded to include the effects on children of divorce as they move into adulthood because the children born into the marriages that ended in divorce in the 1960s and 1970s are now adults. By the 1980's it was well established that adults who were children at the time of their parents' divorce are themselves more likely to divorce (Glenn & Kramer, 1985). This finding continues to be supported and a recent study concluded that adult children of divorce were twice as likely to see their own marriages end in divorce than adults raised in in-tact families (Amato & DeBoer, 2001).

Given this, one could assume that marital satisfaction among adult children of divorce is low. In

reality, however, the only conclusion that can be reached based on this fact alone is that adult children of divorce often experience such dissatisfaction in their own marriages that they end in divorce. But what about adult children of divorce who are married and still living with their spouse? Do they have a low level of satisfaction in their marriages as well? Or have they been able to overcome the odds and form a healthy union in which they feel fulfilled?

Purpose of the Study

This study will focus on marital satisfaction among adult children of divorce and will also examine how they address conflict in their marriage. It is likely that, given their family of origin issues, children of divorce have developed poor conflict resolution skills and do not effectively address conflict in their marriage, thus leading to low marital satisfaction.

Significance of the Project for Social Work

Divorce and its effects on children in general is of concern to many people. Professionals in the field of social work have a responsibility to be knowledgeable about the populations they serve. Previous research has

found that there are differences among the needs, issues and outcomes, of children raised in divorced homes compared with those from in-tact homes. Wallerstein states:

National studies show that children from divorced and remarried families are more aggressive toward their parents and teachers. They experience more depression, have more learning difficulties, and suffer more problems with peers than children from in-tact families. More of them end up in mental health clinics and hospital settings. There is earlier sexual activity, more children born out of wedlock, less marriage, and more divorce. Numerous studies show that adult children of divorce have more psychological problems than those raised in intact families. (Wallerstein, 2000)

The more insight we have into the specific needs and issues of this population, the better equipped we will be to address their needs and help them overcome these challenges. Based on the multitude of problems that may be present in families of divorce, as well as the poor outcomes and lowered psychological well-being of adult children of divorce, it is likely that the issues that these people face as individuals will impact the quality of their marriage to some extent. By conducting research on the marriages of children of divorce, it is hoped that problem areas will be identified and thus social work practice with this population will reflect these problem areas while working to improve the quality of their

relationships and ultimately break the trans-generational cycle of divorce.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Chapter Two consists of a discussion of the relevant literature. Specifically, a brief overview of the literature on children of divorce will be presented, highlighting the long-term effects of divorce that follow these individuals into adulthood. Finally, the marriages of adult children of divorce will be discussed with special attention to their level of conflict and their ability to resolve these conflicts.

Overview of the Literature

Initially, the research on adult children of divorce was inconsistent and ambiguous in terms of whether or not the children of divorce generally suffer from the long-term negative consequences on their psychological well-being (Glenn & Kramer, 1985). However, as these children have grown into adults, there has been an emergence of the opportunity for longitudinal studies which have greatly contributed to the knowledge of this population. Such studies have provided more information into the long-term effects of divorce on children. This study attempts to contribute further to the knowledge base

by gaining insight into the marriages of adult children of divorce and how conflict is resolved within these marriages.

Theory Guiding Study

Symbolic interactionists are interested in the interactions among people and how those interactions are interpreted (Tepperman & Rosenberg, 1995). Interactionists view the family as the agency of primary socialization, thus, the family is where individuals are initially exposed to relationships. This is where children observe relationships and learn how to interact with others. The family acts as a model for all other relationships. In keeping with the interactionist perspective, children observe their parents' marriage and learn the expectations of marriage, how to be a "good husband", or a "good wife", so they are prepared for their own marriages. Many marriages are abusive, mental health professionals know that children who are exposed to violence are more likely to repeat those abusive patterns in their own relationships. But when a marriage is dissolved, children are left without one to observe and do not have the opportunity to learn to relate to an intimate partner. From this theoretical perspective, it is not

surprising that so many adult children of divorce experience divorce in their own marriages.

Transgeneration Transmission of Divorce

An extension of the interactionist perspective is the trans-generational transmission of marital instability (Pope & Mueller, 1976). This theory contends that children from marriages disrupted by death or divorce during their childhood have higher rates of divorce or separation in their own first marriages than do children from intact parental marriages (Pope & Mueller, 1976). Although there is now strong support for the higher incidence of divorce among adult children of divorce, more recent research has found that children reared by a widowed parent are much less likely to divorce than are children raised by a divorced parent (Wolfinger, 2000). In both cases, children grow up with only one parent, but parental death exposes children to far less stress and conflict than does parental divorce (Wolfinger, 2000). Thus, there has now emerged the intergenerational transmission of divorce (Wolfinger, 2000).

Long-Term Effects of Divorce on Children

Further research on adult children of divorce versus adult of intact families, has increased our understanding of how the effects of parental divorce carry through into adulthood. Jacquet and Surra (2001) found that compared with children from intact families, children of divorce marry earlier (McLanahan & Bumpass, 1988), cohabit more often (Thornton, 1991), are less educated (Mueller & Pope, 1977), hold more lenient attitudes toward divorce (Amato, 1988; Amato & Booth, 1991; Greenberg & Nay, 1982), and report problematic interpersonal behaviors (Amato, 1996). The cumulative picture that emerges from the evidence suggests that parental divorce (or some factor associated with it) is associated with lowered well-being among both children and adult children of divorce. Although a pattern of recovery from the emotional trauma that often results from parental separation is well documented, for many people, the recovery may never be complete leading to their own marital dissatisfaction and/or divorce.

Marital Satisfaction

When compared with their counterparts from intact families, young adults from divorced families report less happiness and satisfaction in general and less

satisfaction from friendships, community and family life (Glenn & Kramer, 1985).

Marital Conflict

Divorce rarely occurs without conflict (Seltzer, 1994). Marriages that end in divorce are usually conflict laden prior to the separation as well as during the divorce proceedings. Jacquet and Surra (2001) studied the level of conflict present in relationships of children from both divorced and intact families. Their study did not address how couples approach conflict in their relationships as is one of the goals of this study.

It is often this high level of conflict which ultimately led to the separation. Often the conflict continues long after the divorce and it is therefore hypothesized that children of divorce will develop maladaptive conflict resolution skills and thus be unable to effectively resolve conflict with their spouse.

It is necessary to acknowledge that there is conflict in any relationship especially marriages. It is also necessary to acknowledge that not all couples who experience conflict will divorce. In-tact families are not exempt from experiencing conflict. However, conflicts in in-tact families appear to be resolved more effectively

than conflict in families disrupted by divorce.

Ultimately, in families of divorce, conflict is either not addressed or poorly addressed, thus leading to the dissolution of the marriage.

In reviewing the literature, Amato discusses marital conflict and its effects on children.

Interparental conflict affects children in several ways. Children react to interparental hostility with negative emotions, such as fear, anger and distress. Children also tend to be drawn into conflict between their parents and are sometimes forced to take sides, resulting in deteriorations in parent-child relationships and general family cohesiveness. (Amato, 1993)

When children are exposed to such conflict and, more importantly, are exposed to maladaptive ways of addressing the conflict, it is likely that these children learn interpersonal behaviors that undermine intimate relationships and increase the risk of marital instability in adulthood (Amato & DeBoer, 2001).

In summary, the literature implies that children of divorced families are more prone to experience significant problems in their own marriages and are much more likely to see their own marriages end in divorce. The literature suggests that this is due to witnessing their own parents divorce and their inability to effectively manage the conflict within their marriage. Parental divorce often

leaves children without a marriage to observe, and they do not learn healthy and appropriate ways of interacting with a romantic partner. By conducting studies such as the current one, increase a better understanding of the transgenerational transmission of divorce can be gained. Furthermore, problem areas (such as a need for conflict resolution skills) can be identified and services and treatment to improve the marital satisfaction of adult children of divorce can be provided. In turn, it is hoped that divorce rates will be lowered and the legacy of divorce will subside.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

Chapter Three documents the steps used in developing the project. Specifically, the methodology of the study including its overall design, sampling methods and an overview of the instruments in data collection is presented. Procedures, as well as measures to taken to ensure the protection of human subjects are also discussed. Finally, data analyses which will be conducted are presented.

Study Design

This was an exploratory and predictive study examining the effects of parental divorce on conflict resolution skills in the marriages of adult children of divorce and their subsequent marital satisfaction. The study utilized mostly quantitative research methods although some qualitative data was collected.

The limitations of this study lie mostly in the sample and limited feasibility of obtaining a sample of married individuals that is representative of the general population. Specifically, college students are easily accessible; however, children of divorce are less educated

than those raised in in-tact families and thus, adult children of divorce may not be adequately represented in a sample comprised of college students (Greenberg & Nay, 1982).

It is hypothesized that marital satisfaction among children of divorce is lower than those raised in-tact families. It is also hypothesized that there is negative correlation between conflict resolution skills and marital satisfaction. That is, respondents that have a low score overall on the Kansas Marital Conflict Scale, will also have a low score on the Index of Marital satisfaction. Further, since marriage is a key relationship that likely affects all other areas of one's life, it is hypothesized that low marital satisfaction and poor conflict resolution skills will negatively affect one's life satisfaction. Furthermore, it is hypothesized that all areas (marital satisfaction, conflict resolution skills and general life satisfaction) will be lower among adult children of divorce and higher among adults who were raised in in-tact families.

Sampling

The sample for this study was comprised of 25 respondents. These were obtained from California State San

Bernardino, School of Social Work. Despite the limitations of using this sample, due to extenuating circumstances, other avenues of obtaining a more diverse sample were not feasible. The only eligibility criterion for inclusion in the sample was that respondents must be heterosexual and married. These broad criteria allowed for a wide range of marital and family structures to be examined. For example, this study did not exclude individuals who are in their second marriage, or who have children. Most importantly, the sample was comprised of adults who experienced parental divorce in childhood as well as those who were raised in intact homes.

Data Collection and Instruments

Respondents were asked to complete a survey (see Appendix A). The questions in this survey were selected and created by the researcher based on the focus of this study and personal experience working with children from divorced families. In completing the survey, respondents will be asked to provide demographic information as well as information regarding family background status. Each item on the demographic survey measures an independent variable. For example, age, gender, ethnicity, are all independent variables. Finally, perhaps the most important

independent variable in this study is intact versus divorced family of origin.

In addition to being asked to provide demographic information, respondents were asked questions which will measure the dependent variable, marital satisfaction. Marital Satisfaction was measured by a congregate of statements which were developed for this survey. Respondents will rate their level of agreement with each of the 18 statements. The statements focus on behaviors and interactions which are reflected in other tests which measure marital satisfaction (Hudson, 1997). This is a continuous level of measurement. Respondents also completed the Kansas Marital Conflict Scale (Eggeman, Moxley, & Schumm, 1985) [see appendix C], which measured how individuals resolve conflict in their marriage. Conflict resolution skills is an intervening variable in this study as it is hypothesized that children from divorced families learned poor conflict resolution skills from their parents and are therefore unable to effectively resolve conflict in their own marriage resulting in low marital satisfaction.

The conflict scale was chosen based on its correspondence to the theories guiding this study. Based on the interactionist perspective, the scale is fairly

behavior specific and measure areas such as communication, affection and sexual satisfaction.

This compilation of tools takes into account time constraints of the respondents and all efforts have been made to make the overall tool as user friendly as possible.

Reliability and Validity of the Data Collection Instruments

The Kansas Marital Conflict Scale has excellent internal consistency, with alphas for men in the range of .91 to .95 and alphas for women ranging from .88 to .95 (Eggeman et al., 1985). This scale also has good known groups validity for wives, significantly distinguishing between distressed and non-distressed marriages in terms of marital satisfaction. The correlations also were positive for husbands but not always significantly so. The KMCS also correlated with several other scales suggesting good construct validity (Eggeman et al., 1985).

Procedures

As noted earlier, this sample was comprised of students from California State University, San Bernardino, School of Social Work. The researcher placed a packet including the informed consent, debriefing statement and

the survey along with an envelope in each student's mailbox in the social work student workroom. The students then completed the survey, placed it in the sealed envelope and returned it to the office of Dr. Trang Hoang. Students were able to return the survey after hours in order to respect their anonymity and can slip it under Dr. Hoang's office door. The surveys were then be picked up by the researcher. The data was gathered in Spring 2003.

Protection of Human Subjects

The respondents in this study remained anonymous. There was no identifying information collected as part of the study. The respondents were provided with an informed consent (see Appendix C) which briefly describes the study and is carefully worded as to not bias the respondents' answers. The respondents voluntarily completed the survey and did not receive any incentive for doing so.

Data Analysis

Descriptive univariate analyses were run for the demographics. These included, the total number of respondents, the number of respondents raised in intact versus divorced families, as well as demographic information such as the mean age, the mean level of education, etc.

A partial r correlation was being performed to determine if there is a relationship between poor conflict resolution skills and low marital satisfaction. An independent t-test was also being conducted to determine the relationship between adults from divorced families and their level of marital satisfaction and adults from intact families and their level of marital satisfaction as well.

A partial r test was conducted in order to determine a correlation co-efficient between parental divorce, conflict resolution skills and marital satisfaction. Finally, based on a specific finding warranting further analysis, a crosstab was conducted on each group to determine how children from divorced families rated their parents' level of negotiation skills.

Summary

This was an exploratory study examining the effects of parental divorce on conflict resolution skills and marital satisfaction of adult children of divorce. The sample was comprised of married people raised in intact families as well as married people raised in divorced families. Several statistical analyses were conducted to determine relationships between the variables.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

Included in Chapter Four is a presentation of the results. Demographic information is provided as well as the general descriptives of the sample. The relationship between each of the dependent variables and the intervening variables are also presented. Lastly, the chapter concludes with a summary.

Presentation of the Findings

The sample for this study was comprised of 25 Graduate level social work students. One student gave no demographic information. Of the other twenty-four students, the age range was between 24 and 54 years of age. 40% of the students were Caucasian, 12% were African American, 28% were Hispanic, 4% were Asian. 24% of the students were males, 72% were females. Only 32% of the students reported that their parents were no longer married. Of those students, 28% reported that their parents were either divorced or separated. 76% of the students in the sample reported that their current marriage was their first marriage for both them and their spouse.

The partial correlation test that was run between the marital satisfaction score, the KMCS score and the life satisfaction score was statistically significant (see Table 1).

Table 1. Partial Correlation Coefficient Marital Satisfaction, Kansas Marital Conflict Scale, Life Satisfaction

	Marital Satisfaction Scale Total	KMCS Total	Life Satisfaction Scale Total
Marital Satisfaction Scale Total Score	1.0000 (0) P = .	.7738 (19) P = .000	.5557 (19) P = .009
Kansas Marital Conflict Scale Total	.7738 (19) P = .000	1.0000 (0) P = .	.6995 (19) P = .000
Life Satisfaction Scale Total	.5557 (19)	.6995 (19) P = .000	1.0000 (0) P = .

A Mann Whitney Test was conducted on the scores of each variable (KMCS, life satisfaction, marital satisfaction) for the students in each group (divorced parents versus non-divorced parents). None of the results of these tests were statistically significant. There was no difference between the two groups on any of the three instruments used to measure marital satisfaction, life satisfaction and conflict resolution skills.

Sixty-two percent of the students in the sample reported that they felt their parents were happy or very happy in their marriage. Sixty-four percent of the students reported that they do not think their parents had good negotiation skills. Sixty percent reported that their parents were still married and they have poor negotiation skills.

Sixty percent of the students in the sample scored in the highest category on the marital satisfaction scale indicating that they have a high level of marital satisfaction. Thirty-six percent were in the highest category on the KMCS, indicating that they have excellent conflict resolution skills in their marriage. Another 36% scored in the second highest category of the KMCS. On the life satisfaction scale, 32% scored in the highest category, indicating the highest level of life satisfaction, and 40% scored in the second highest category.

When asked to what extent the stress of graduate school has impacted their marriage, 36% of the students reported this stress has moderately impacted their marriage. Twenty-eight percent reported that it has had much impact on their marriage while 4% reported that it has greatly impacted their marriage.

Summary

Chapter Four reviewed the results extracted from the project. Included was a discussion of the demographic information of the sample and the results of the correlations between the independent and intervening variables. Finally the results of some frequencies that were run on various variables were presented.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

Included in Chapter Five is a presentation of the conclusions reached from the results of the project. Further, the recommendations extracted from the project are presented. Lastly, the Chapter concludes with a summary.

Discussion

There is a strong correlation between the score on the marital satisfaction scale and the KMCS, however, while sixty-two percent of the students in the sample reported that their parents were happy or very happy in their marriage, only sixty-four percent felt their parents had good negotiation skills. This would support the finding that good negotiation skills are not necessary for marital happiness.

There is also a strong correlation between the scores on all three of the data collection instruments. As hypothesized, low marital satisfaction and poor conflict resolution skills are related to low life satisfaction based on the results of the data analysis.

However, it is interesting that 60% percent of students reported that their parents are still married and they have poor negotiation skills. This could indicate that good negotiation skills are not necessary for marital happiness, but these parents are not necessarily happy. The finding could simply be reflective of the literature which acknowledges that not all unhappy couples divorce. Many stay together for the sake of the children, commitment to their spouse or the sacredness of the vows they took.

While this study was originally designed to focus on the marriages of adult children of divorce, due to the imbalance between the students from intact homes and those from divorced parents, the results are more focused on the marriages of social work students. Only 60% of these students scored in the highest category of marital satisfaction. On the surface one might think that this is somewhat hypocritical that social work students who are learning skills to help other people work on problem areas in their lives, are not equipped with the necessary skills to have a high level of satisfaction in their own marriage. However, when combined with the finding that sixty-four percent of the students in the sample reported that the stress of graduate school had moderate or much

impact on their marriage, other assumptions can be made. Graduate school is stressful and impacts marriage, almost regardless of the area of study. It is perhaps this life stressor that is causing the decreased level of marital satisfaction rather than any lack of skills on the part of the social work student.

It would have been interesting to have asked which cohort these students were part of in the program. Had the researcher had that information, conclusions could be made regarding the stress level among the different cohorts, year of the program as well as the full-time or part-time status. However, due to the preference to keep students anonymity, such questions were not asked.

Limitations

As noted previously, much of the limitations of this study are accounted for in the sampling. Due to extenuating circumstances, Social work graduate students completed the surveys and were the sole source of data for the study. The number of respondents was quite low, only 25. Furthermore, only 28% of the students reported that their parents were divorced or separated. This low number in the comparison group reduces the validity and reliability of the data. However, it was not surprising

that only a small number of these graduate students had parents who are separated or divorced. This is reflective of the existing body of research that has found that children from divorced families are less likely than those from intact families to attend college. Regardless, it would be inaccurate to generalize the findings of this study and apply them to the general population with such a small, unbalanced sample.

Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy and Research

Initially, this study was designed to examine marital satisfaction among adult children of divorce and its connection to conflict resolution skills. While the sample was too small to accurately examine the differences in these areas among these two groups, some interesting findings were presented regarding social work students. A high number of students reported that the stress of graduated school had impacted their marriage. Graduate programs may want to implement student support groups to help manage the stress of this difficult phase in the lives of social workers. Further, it could be beneficial to include the students spouse's in the group so that the spouses can also receive support.

When looking at the key areas of this study, marital satisfaction, life satisfaction and conflict resolution skills, it is interesting to examine these areas specifically in regards to social workers. Since that was not the original focus of the study, it would be helpful to do literature review and then further research to further explain and validate the findings of this study. It is well known that there is a high burnout rate among social workers, but how does this impact their level of marital satisfaction? Are they able to manage this stress due to their professional training or does it increase their level of conflict within their marriage? Given that social work students are trained to mediate and help others resolve conflict why is it that the majority of the social work students in this sample are not obtaining scores in the highest category in terms of conflict resolution skills? This area warrants further research so that social workers' personal conflict resolution skills can be improved, thereby improving their social work practice.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the sample for this study was not adequate to accurately compare adults from divorced

families with those from intact families. While the hypothesis that were initially presented were supported, they are lacking in their strength due to the small sized sample. Unexpected findings were revealed regarding social work students which warrant further research to determine their validity and to improve social work training and practice.

APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE

PLEASE ONLY COMPLETE THIS SURVEY IF YOU ARE MARRIED!!!

Also, Please note that this survey is double sided – be sure to complete BOTH Sides

Today's Date: _____

1. Gender Male _____ Female _____

2. What is your age? _____

3. What is your ethnicity? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Caucasian
- ☐ African American
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Other

4. Is this your first marriage? Please circle: YES NO

If YES go to question # 11

5. If you have been married before, do you think you have learned better negotiation skills from your previous marriage(s) to help you resolve conflict in your current marriage? Please circle:

YES NO

Please explain: _____

6. Including this marriage, how many times have you been married?

7. Do you have any children from a previous marriage or relationship?
Please circle: YES NO
If no go to question # 10.
8. Who has custody of the children? _____
9. If you do not have physical custody of your children, do you have contact with your children? Please circle:
YES NO
10. Do you have any children from your current marriage? Please circle:
YES NO
11. Is this your spouse's first marriage? Please circle:
YES NO

If No go to question #16

12. Including this marriage, how many times has your spouse been married?

13. Does your spouse have any children from a previous marriage? _____
14. Who has custody of the children? _____
15. If your spouse does not have custody, does your spouse have contact with his/her children? Please circle: YES NO
16. Were your parents ever married? Please circle: YES NO
If no go to question # 24
17. Are your parents still married and living together?
Please circle: YES NO
If NO go to question #18, If YES go to question # 21
18. If your parents are no longer married please check the reason.
- ☐ Death of mother
 - ☐ Death of father
 - ☐ Divorce
 - ☐ Separation

19. If your parents are separated/divorced how old were you when they separated/divorced? _____
20. If your parents are separated/divorced who did you live with for most of your childhood? _____
21. If your parents are separated/divorced did either of your parents remarry or live with a partner after the divorce/separation? Please circle:
 YES NO
- Please explain: _____

22. Rate your perception of your parent's level of happiness in their marriage.
- | | | | |
|--------------|---------|-------|------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| very unhappy | unhappy | happy | very happy |
23. From the List below, check all that were used by your parents to resolve family disputes:
- | | |
|---|-------------------------|
| _____ Family Meetings | _____ Disappear/Retreat |
| _____ Discussion/talk it out | _____ Counseling |
| _____ Silent Treatment | _____ Other |
| _____ Yelling/Screaming | |
| _____ Throwing Things | |
| _____ Violence (hitting, punching, pushing) | |
24. Do you think your parents had good negotiation skills?
- YES NO
25. Please check the extent to which your stress level, common to being a graduate student, has impacted your marriage:
- _____ No impact
- _____ Little Impact
- _____ Moderate Impact
- _____ Much Impact
- _____ Great Impact

Marital Satisfaction Scale

The following questions will be asking you about your feelings about your relationship. Please use the scale below in answering how much you agree with each statement.

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Agree

4 = Strongly Agree

1. _____ My partner shows affection toward me.
2. _____ My partner does not treat me well.
3. _____ I feel my partner cares for me a great deal.
4. _____ I would marry my partner again if I could live my life over.
5. _____ My partner and I have a strong level of trust in our relationship.
6. _____ I feel an emotional distance between me and my partner.
7. _____ My partner and I really understand each other.
8. _____ I feel that we have a good relationship.
9. _____ I am happy in our relationship.
10. _____ I wish our life together was more fun.
11. _____ I feel that my partner does not confide in me.
12. _____ I feel close to my partner.
13. _____ I think my partner and I get along very well together.
14. _____ I feel that our relationship is very stable.
15. _____ My love for my partner is not as strong as it used to be.
16. _____ I feel the future looks bright for our relationship.
17. _____ I do not feel fulfilled in my relationship with my partner.
18. _____ My partner and I share common interests.

KMCS

Please use the following scale and indicate how often you and your spouse engage in the activities mentioned in each question. Please indicate how often by recording the number in the space to the left of each item.

- 1 = Never
- 2 = Rarely
- 3 = Sometimes
- 4 = Frequently
- 5 = Almost Always

When you and your spouse are beginning to discuss a disagreement over an important issue, how often:

- _____ 1. Do you both begin to understand each other's feelings reasonably quickly?
- _____ 2. Do you both get your points across to each other without too much trouble?
- _____ 3. Do you both begin to appreciate each other's points of view on the matter fairly soon?
- _____ 4. Does your spouse seem to be supportive of your feelings about your disagreement?
- _____ 5. Does your spouse tell you that you shouldn't feel the way you do about the issue?
- _____ 6. Is your spouse willing to really hear what you want to communicate?
- _____ 7. Does your spouse insist on contradicting many of your ideas on the issue before he/she even understands what the issues are?
- _____ 8. Does your spouse make you feel that your views, even if different from his/hers are really important to him/her?
- _____ 9. Does your spouse seem more interested in justifying his/her own point of view rather than in understanding yours?
- _____ 10. Does your spouse let you feel upset or angry without putting you down for it?
- _____ 11. Does your spouse blame you for any of your feelings of frustration or irritation as if they were mostly your own fault and none of his.

After you and your spouse have been discussing a disagreement over an important issue for a while, how often:

- _____ 1. Are able to clearly identify the specific things about which you disagree?
- _____ 2. Are you able to identify clearly the specific things about which you do agree?
- _____ 3. Are you both able to express how the other feels about the issue?
- _____ 4. Are you both able to express the others view point nearly as well as you could your own viewpoint?
- _____ 5. Does your spouses facial expression and tone of voice convey a sense of:
 - _____ discouragement
 - _____ anger
 - _____ disgust
 - _____ condescension
 - _____ resentment
 - _____ hostility
 - _____ frustration
 - _____ bitterness
 - _____ self pity
 - _____ cynicism
 - _____ respect toward you

About the time you and your spouse feel you are close to a solution to your disagreement over an important issue, how often:

- _____ 1. Are you able to completely resolve it with some sort of compromise that is O.K. with both of you?
- _____ 2. Do you end up with very little resolved after all?
- _____ 3. Do you quickly bring the matter to a conclusion that is satisfactory to both of you?
- _____ 4. Do you realize the matter will have to be re-argued in the near future because at least one of you is basically still unhappy with the apparent solution?
- _____ 5. Do you find that just as soon as you have gotten things resolved, your spouse comes up with a new idea for resolving the issue?
- _____ 6. Does your spouse keep on trying to propose things that are not mutually acceptable ways of resolving the issue at hand?
- _____ 7. Does it seem that no matter what you suggest your spouse keeps on suggesting new supposedly better solutions?

- _____ 8. Are you both willing to give and take in order to settle the disagreement?
- _____ 9. Are you and your spouse able to give up some of what you wanted in order to bring the issue to a close?
- _____ 10. Are you and your spouse able to keep coming closer together on a mutually acceptable solution until you achieve it?
- _____ 11. Are you and your husband able to reach a mutually acceptable contract for resolving the disagreement?

Life Satisfaction Scale

Below are five statements with which you may agree or disagree. Using the scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number beside each item.

1 = strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Agree

4 = Strongly agree

1. ____ I think my life is almost perfect at this time.
2. ____ The factors in my life are as good as can be.
3. ____ I am satisfied with my life.
4. ____ I have almost everything I want in life at this point.
5. ____ I don't want to change anything in my life.

APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMED CONSENT

My name is Deanna Graham and I am a student in the Masters of Social Work Department at California State University, San Bernardino. I am conducting a study regarding childhood experiences, conflict resolution and marital satisfaction. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and should you choose to participate, you will remain completely anonymous as no identifying information will be obtained. The results of this study will be presented as a final research project for the Masters of Social Work program at California State University San Bernardino. The results will be available at the university in the Pfau Library after June 2003.

This project has been approved by the Department of Social Work sub-committee of the CSUSB Institutional Review Board. In completing this project, I am being supervised by Trang Hoang, PhD. Dr. Hoang may be reached at the California State University, San Bernardino, Department of Social Work 909-880-5501.

This survey will take approximately 15-30 minutes to complete. Upon completion, please place your survey in the envelope provided and seal the envelope. Please return the completed survey to Dr. Hoang's office rm. 415. Thank you for your participation in this study.

APPENDIX B
DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

This study asked several question regarding issues such as parental divorce, conflict and your own marital satisfaction. Due to the nature of these questions, you may feel the need to speak with someone regarding feelings that the questionnaire may have provoked. If you wish to discuss this please contact the CSUSB Psychological Counseling Center at 909-880-5040 or another support person.

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