The Relationship Between The Family Of Origin Processes And Attitudes Towards Marriage And The Likelihood To Divorce Among College Students

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FAMILY OF ORIGIN PROCESSES AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS MARRIAGE AND THE LIKELIHOOD TO DIVORCE AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between the family of origin processes and attitudes towards marriage and the likelihood to divorce among college students

By exploring the relationship between the family of origin processes and attitudes toward marriage and the likelihood to divorce among late adolescent, this study attempted to increase our understanding of the influence the family of origin has on attitudes toward marriage and divorce. Another goal of this study was to validate the observations of family systems theorists that the intergenerational transmission process has an impact on the late adolescents' view of marriage and divorce.

Because recent literature has examined marriage and divorce attitudes separately and not within Bowen's family systems' theory, both marriage and divorce within the context of Bowen's theory was considered in this research. The specific aspects of the intergenerational transmission process that were examined were individuation, intimidation, and triangulation.

Participants were 209 undergraduate students at a Northeastern Catholic university ranging between 18 and 24 years of age. Participants were administered a demographic questionnaire, the Personal Authority in the Family Questionnaire, Young Adult Version, the Marital Attitude Scale, and the Likelihood of Divorce Scale.

Multiple linear regression analyses were conducted to determine if marital attitudes were predicted by individuation, intimidation, and triangulation. In addition, regressional analyses were conducted to determine individuation, intimidation, and triangulation were significant predictors of the likelihood to divorce.
Results revealed that only individuation was a significant predictor of attitudes toward marriage as well as the likelihood to divorce. It may be hypothesized that there are additional factors related to the intergenerational transmission process that influence attitudes toward marriage and divorce.
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CHAPTER I

Introduction

The relevance of considering the relationship between the family of origin processes, attitudes toward marriage and likelihood of divorce is introduced and reinforced within this chapter. The present study uses Bowen's family systems theory as the theoretical framework. The problem of high divorce rate and unstable marriages is introduced and researched. The statement of the problem, the purpose of the current study, hypotheses, definitions, and limitations of the study are reviewed.

Background of the Problem

Research shows that children of divorce are at a higher risk to divorce themselves than those whose parents had stable marriages (Glen & Shelton, 1983). As the family ages, the offspring from divorced parents are again at a higher risk to divorce. In other words, divorce seems to run in families. Preparation for marriage programs have been a traditional component of family socialization, supported by religious and social guidance on mate selection and marital role performance (Williams, Riley, Risch & Van Dyke, 1999). With the advent of rapidly changing family roles, mobility, and adolescent/young adult autonomy, both role norms and socialization processes have been interrupted (Jacobson & Addis, 1993). In the past century, the complexity and interpersonal demands of family and careers has increased but couples' resources and supports have not kept pace (Stahmann & Salts, 1993). The consequent personal distress, couple conflict, or breakup, and its impact on children, extended family and friends, workplace, and community contexts often leads to families seeking therapy (Jacobson & Addis, 1993) and/or prevention education and enrichment programs (Stahmann & Salts, 1993).
Therefore, increased efforts to strengthen marriage may result in significant benefits to partners, families, and communities.

In our ever-changing society, it is crucial to research contributing factors toward marriage and divorce in order to begin at an earlier age to educate and implement programs. Marriage preparation programs have been in existence prior to World War II (Williams et al, 1999). As a result, marriage preparation programs have been designed to focus on prevention oriented social skills.

But what is going wrong? Are couples realizing that they are not compatible after marriage? It is difficult to attribute the divorce rate to only a few factors; yet, researchers have increased the wealth of studies within the last fifteen years to look at the impact of divorce on children. Further, Glick (1994) a family demographer has argued that marriage is in decline: since the 1960's, American society has moved away from familism toward individualism. During recent years this idea of individualism may be changing back to the idea of familism (Williams et al., 1999).

Given that, late adolescents are beginning to form intimate relationships and movement toward marriage, researchers have turned the focus onto the late adolescents and their attitudes and feelings about marriage and divorce (Greenberg & Nay, 1982; Black & Sprenkle, 1991; Jennings, Salts, & Smith, 1991; Stone & Hutchinson, 1992; Kozuch & Cooney, 1995; Mulder & Gunnoe, 1999). Do young people want to marry? Has a parental divorce impacted their decision not to marry? Is divorce simply less unthinkable to those, whose parents have divorced, so that they are more likely to resort to divorce when problems arise in their marriages (Greenberg & Nay, 1982)? Understanding what their attitudes are about marriage and divorce can provide
professionals with data in order to better prepare late adolescents to become successful marriage partners. It is the overall objective of this study to investigate the extent to which the family of origin processes predict attitudes toward marriage and divorce.

Statement of the Problem

Divorce is a major disruption of the family unit and often occurs when children are at a young and vulnerable age (Ahrons, 1994). Many researchers have questioned how children are affected by this disruption in their family's growth and development. Specifically, researchers examine how divorce influences individuals in their own adulthood and in their intimate relationships with others and even in their own marriages.

Earlier research confirmed that late adolescents who experienced parental divorce/separation maintain the most favorable attitudes toward divorce in comparison to late adolescents from intact homes (Greenberg & Nay, 1982). As a result, the family of origin plays one of the most significant roles in still developing attitudes of late adolescents. Unfortunately, previous research has not exhausted the breadth of variables that influence and are related to the family of origin process. For example, there have only been a few studies that investigate Bowen's theory.

Of the family systems theories, Bowen's theory is considered one of the most carefully elaborated (Nichols & Schwartz, 1991). Despite all the attention and accolade, Bowen's theory has surprisingly little research on the concept of intergenerational transmission, the process in which characteristics of the family of origin are recurrent in succeeding generations. As a result, researchers have conceptualized the concept of intergenerational transmission, but few have tested it (Benson, Larson, Wilson, & Demo, 1993 and Larson, Benson, Wilson & Medora, 1998).
Bowen's (1978) theory provides a basis for extrapolation of several hypotheses regarding attitudes and feelings about marriage and divorce. To the extent that individuals experience fusion, triangulation, and control in the family of origin, they are less likely to develop independent thinking, feeling, and believing or to learn the necessary skills for developing intimate relationships outside the family. They are more likely to perceive major life changes such as marriage with trepidation. Their relatively unsatisfying dating relationships (Benson, Larson, Wilson, Demo, 1993) may create negative expectations and feelings about future relationships like marriage and discourage them from pursuing more intimate relationships especially those leading to marriage.

Bowen's theory has been useful in conceptualizing family processes in clinical practice (Innes, 1996), yet these concepts have been operationalized only within the last ten years into psychometric instruments for use. A measure used in this study was developed to measure intergenerational family process based on aspects of Bowen's family systems theory, the Personal Authority in the Family System (PAFS) is one of many aspects of Bowen's theory (Bray, Williamson, & Malone, 1984a). For the purpose of this study, PAFS will be explained and operationalized in order to understand intergenerational transmission processes and its relationship to late adolescents' attitudes.

Personal Authority in the Family System (PAFS) is defined as a pattern of abilities to do the following: to order and direct one's own thoughts and opinions; to choose to express or not to express one's thoughts and opinions regardless of social pressures; to make and respect one's personal judgements, to the point of regarding these judgements as justification for action; to take responsibility for the totality of one's
experience in life; to initiate or to receive (or to decline to receive) intimacy voluntarily, in conjunction with the ability to establish clear boundaries to the self-at will; to experience and relate to all other persons without exception, including "former parents," as peers in the experience of being human (Williamson, 1982, p.311).

The development of PAFS results from a reciprocal and co-evolutionary renegotiation of the patterns of intergenerational relationships and politics previously established between the first and second generations in the three generation family life cycle. This renegotiation constitutes, and ultimately results in, a radical redistribution between the two generations. Further, this process establishes peerhood and relational psychosocial equality between adults in the second generation and their "former parents" in the first generation (Williamson, 1981). In other words, it is the transition from being the child and dependent on the family into being a self-reliant adult.

PAFS is offered as a synthesizing construct in the inherent tension between differentiation and intimacy. PAFS is viewed as a continuum with personal authority at one pole and intergenerational intimidation at the other. PAFS implies the patterns of behavior characteristic of an integrated and differentiated self (Bowen, 1978), exercising increased conscious control over individual destiny in life, and choosing personal health and well being in a systemic or holistic sense. This sense of self is expressed behaviorally through the resolution of idiosyncratic intrapsychic conflicts, as well as through the resolution of relational intimacy issues. Relational intimacy includes both intergenerational intimacy within the family of origin and intimacy with peers, particularly with the spouse.
PAFS further implies a resolution of those vocational, achievement, and intimacy conflicts that are generated by transgenerational mandates and loyalties (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Spark, 1973). Therefore, PAFS includes reconnection and belongingness to the family of origin, while simultaneously acting from a differentiated position within the family of origin. This creates a sense of belonging and purpose to the human experience. Although various theorists advocate a more comprehensive understanding of the interplay between the family of origin processes and attitudes toward marriage, a need for more empirical data supporting this position continues.

Rationale of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand the specific psychological processes, triangulation, fusion and control, within the family of origin based on Bowen's Family Systems Theory and its relationship to attitudes toward marriage and the likelihood to divorce, in order to educate individuals before marriage.

In this study it is believed that a healthy individual can possess positive attitudes toward divorce while also being able to view divorce as an option under certain negative marital situations. Therefore, marriage and divorce are not considered polar opposites in this study. For example, an individual may have positive attitudes toward divorce but will be likely to consider divorce if there was the presence of physical abuse within the marriage. This view of divorce is not seen as negative but as a healthy consideration.

Divorce has been found to have both positive and negative effects on society and individuals. On one hand, the positive effects of divorce on children have been studied and some results reveal the following: a child of divorce can develop a healthier sense of self, create stronger bonds with siblings, and benefit from more open communication
within the family (Ahrons, 1994; Pam & Pearson, 1998; Stewart, Copeland, Chester, Malley, Barenbaum, 1997).

On the other hand, negative aspects of divorce on children studies have found increased sexual promiscuity, more frequent dating behavior, relationship difficulties and higher levels of depression (Kinnaird & Gerrard, 1986; Vannoy, 1995; & McCabe, 1997). Research shows that children of divorce are at a higher risk to divorce themselves, which is called the intergenerational transmission process (Ahrons, 1994).

Though few studies explore gender differences when looking at attitudes toward divorce and marriage. Some studies have found gender differences in attitudes toward marriage as well as divorce. For instance, females have been found to be more negative in their attitudes toward divorce than males (Black & Sprenkle, 1991). While Jennings, Salts, and Smith (1991) discovered males have less favorable attitudes toward marriage than females. Further, Feng, Giarrusso, Benston, and Frye (1999), found that parental divorce significantly increased the odds of daughters' divorce by 114% in comparison to sons' divorces whom were not significantly increased. Therefore, Feng et al. (1999) found evidence of the transmission of divorce from parents to daughters but not from parents to sons. Since some gender differences have been found, this warrants the need to separate by gender to avoid over generalizing.

This study will provide professionals with more information about attitudes toward marriage and the likelihood to divorce in order to work towards putting a stop to this transmission process. One principle inherent in social psychology is that attitudes influence behavior (Kraus, 1991). Aronson (1965) reported how situational variables are often strong determinants of our behavior. For example, attitudes toward marriage and
divorce can be strong determinants if a person marries or even divorces. Obviously, attitudes do not always lead to behaviors but they do color and modify our interpretation of the social world, which then leads to acting upon our perceptions and in doing so, our actions come to create the word we previously only perceived (Aronson, 1965). For the purposes of this study, attitudes are examined which may lead to the ability of therapists to intervene before individuals carry out their behavior. Can professionals target individuals early on to prevent intergenerational transmission? Adolescence and young adulthood is a time when intimate relationships are prominent and a focal point in individuals’ lives (Amato & Rogers, 1999), therefore, it is important to examine how these relationships are affected by parental marital status. In order to stay consistent with previous research, the current study will continue to examine college students as a target population.

It is the purpose of this research to contribute to the growing body of literature that views the relationship of the family of origin processes on developing adolescents based on Bowen's Family Systems theory. The focus of this research is to demonstrate the possible relationships among individuation, triangulation, intimidation for attitudes relative to marriage and the likelihood of divorce. Using a regresional model along with a quantitatively descriptive design, the purpose of this study is to explore the predictive relationships between the intergenerational processes (Individuation, Intimidation, and Triangulation) and attitudes related to marriage and the likelihood of divorce while staying grounded within Bowen's theory.
Hypotheses

1) Attitudes toward marriage will be significantly predicted by Individuation, Intimidation, and Triangulation. Therefore, Individuation, Intimidation, and Triangulation will each have a positive relationship with marital attitudes. Further, those individuals who are more individuated, less intimidated, and less triangulated with their family of origin will have more positive attitudes toward marriage.

2) The Likelihood of Divorce will be significantly predicted by Individuation, Intimidation, and Triangulation. As a result, Individuation, Intimidation and Triangulation will each have a positive relationship with the likelihood to divorce, thus those individuals who are highly individuated, less intimidated, and less triangulated with their family of origin will be more likely to see divorce as an option under specific marital circumstances.

Definition of Variables

Family of Origin Process or Intergenerational transmission process. The family of origin processes also known as the intergenerational transmission process describes the ebb and flow of emotional process through the generations. This concept expands the idea of the nuclear family being an emotional unit to the perception of the multigenerational family as an emotional unit. The family projection process continues through multiple generations (Bowen, 1978). For example, divorce usually is transmitted from one generation to the next.

Individuation. Individuation refers to the degree to which the family relationships are positively emotionally bound. Although sometimes it may be expressed in reactive
disengagement from the family which is called fusion. Fusion shares the quality of
tangled engulfment that is associated with the concept of enmeshment. The dynamics of
fused families, such as emotional dependence, lack of autonomy, and use of double
binds, create anxiety in the adolescent. Confusion over emotional interactions in fused
families provides a basis for doubts and insecurities about present and future relationships
(Benson et al., 1993).

**Intimidation.** Intimidation may heighten the family projection process. Although
parents' rigid expectations and excessive control over the adolescent's behavior may
alleviate the anxiety in the marital dyad; it merely shifts the anxiety from the marital dyad
to the adolescent (Benson et al., 1993). The excessive expectations in controlling families
raise fears about failing to meet expectations, particularly fears of disciplinary
consequences of love withdrawal if expectations are not met. Controlling dynamics also
promote intimidating views about the world. If these expectations and views are
internalized, the result is a generalized apprehension across interpersonal situations
(Benson et al., 1993).

**Triangulation.** Triangulation is a process by which a third party, here an
adolescent becomes the focus of tension in a marital dyad. Triangulation serves to
decrease anxiety within the couple relationship itself, but increases anxiety in the
individual who is triangulated. Such anxious individuals perceive close relationships as
negative and threatening, with a result being a lack of intimacy and satisfaction (Benson
et al., 1993; West, Zarski, & Harvill, 1986).

**Marital Attitude.** Marital attitudes refer to a person's subjective opinion of the
institution of marriage (Braaten & Rosen, 1998). Blagojevic (1989) notes that a person's
"attitude toward marriage is shaped by a number of factors, ranging form the
characteristics of the global society and prevailing attitudes toward marriage, to the
concrete conditions of the person's socialization and the experience within one's own
family" (p. 217). Positive attitudes toward marriage usually include an idealistic notion of
a model marriage (Blagojevic, 1989).

Likelihood of Divorce. As a measure of attitudes toward divorce, the Likelihood
of Divorce scale was used. The likelihood of divorce is how likely one would view
divorce as an option under certain marital circumstances. Divorce attitudes in this study
have been operationalized as likelihood of divorce.

Late Adolescent. The late adolescent/young adulthood stage is marked by a
transition from financial and emotional dependence on parents to a reliance on self and
peers. The process of college is generally recognized as a period of growth and transition.
For the purpose of this study, an unmarried college student between the ages of 18-
21 years, inclusive, was considered a "late adolescent."

Significance of the Study

This study will contribute to the growing body of literature supporting the
conceptual framework that examines Bowen's family systems theory. Further research on
Bowen's theory will strengthen the concepts, as well as, provide feedback for
practitioners utilizing Bowen's theory. Further, results of this study can continue to
prompt other questions about the relationship of the family on individual development.

Specifically, this study will focus on the relationships among triangulation,
individuation, intimidation and attitudes toward marriage and divorce. Because the family
of origin processes play such a major role in children’s lives, the explanatory power of the
family of origin variables in this study will be enhanced. Additionally, current research
on the relationship between family of origin and attitudes toward marriage and divorce
has been limited.

Results of this study can provide a framework for practitioners to understand the
relationship between the family of origin and attitudes about marriage and divorce, with
the understanding that both positive attitudes toward marriage and divorce can co-exist.
Napier (1988) asserts that the foundation of marital intimacy resides within each spouse's
experiences of his or her family of origin. Consequently, the marriage becomes a stage
for the replication of functional or dysfunctional processes that have their foundation in
the family of origin when the two spouses become the primary "architects" of the
emotional atmosphere of the nuclear family and each child is incorporated into that
atmosphere (Napier, 1988). Therefore, the practical implications of learning more about
the family of origin will prepare practitioners to work with individuals in relationships
leading to marriage, as well as, married couples.

This study can also guide the re-evaluation and designing of marriage preparation
programs. Information regarding what influences attitudes can be applied in a broader
sense to marriage preparation programs. Silliman and Schumm (2000) investigated the
quality of marriage preparation programs, in which results revealed a need to understand
couples and their backgrounds. These findings lend more support to the significance of
this current study and its practical implications.

Limitations

The current study yields five major limitations. The first theoretical limitation
concerns the use of the two-generation interaction, without considering the third (the
grandparents of the student). Intergenerational theories examine patterns over at least
three generations, so the lack of information about this generation may result in incorrect
conclusions about the patterns in any particular family.

Methodological limitations of the proposed study include the nature of the
sample. The sample consists of young college undergraduates attending a private,
Catholic university in the New York metropolitan area. Since these late adolescents are
functioning academically, the results will not reflect those adolescents who have not
chosen to pursue academics beyond high school. Youth who have decided not to pursue
college would not be available with the current sampling procedure.

This study will have limited generalizability in that it is a survey of mostly middle
to upper middle class college students. It is retrospective in nature and asks students to
express their future expectations. The answers to such questions may or may not be
accurate due to self-report bias, although the method employed may be the best way of
tapping current perceptions. Other disadvantages of using a survey include the loss of
depth of information and potential problems related to social desirability.

Finally, the cross sectional design of this study will not allow generalizations
beyond the parameters of the study. The nature of a cross sectional design examines
participants at a very specific time for only a brief moment. Therefore, it does not take
into consideration the individuals maturation processes over time as well as specific
circumstances that a participant may be experiencing at the time of the study. For
example, if a participant is currently experiencing a parental divorce his or her responses
may be effected, to favor or oppose divorce in comparison to the same participant two
years ago. Further assessment using a longitudinal design that examines participants at different life-stages may be a more thorough examination of the present research variables. The non-experimental design also did not permit any cause and effect relationship to be established.

A delimitation of this study is the use of young adults. As stated earlier, young adults who are currently enrolled in college at least part-time are the population utilized. Therefore, it is necessary to consider this population in order to continue to contribute to the present research utilizing college students.
CHAPTER II

Theoretical Foundation and Review of the Related Literature

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the theoretical foundation for this research and the empirical literature relevant to this study. This material involves late adolescents and is grouped into several related areas around which this review is organized including: attitudes toward marriage, attitudes toward divorce, attitudes toward both marriage and divorce, late adolescents and the family of origin, Bowen's family systems theory, and Bowen's theory and attitudes toward marriage. A discussion of each area will include a review of the theoretical basis followed by a review of the relevant empirical research.

Attitudes Toward Marriage

The studies by Jennings, Salts, and Smith (1991), Kozuch and Cooney (1995), and Jones and Nelson (1996) contribute a major piece to the literature looking at the relationship between the family structure and marriage. These studies provide support for future research to further explore the relationship between the family of origin and marital attitudes.

Early research conducted by Jennings, Salts, and Smith (1991) examined attitudes toward marriage while considering the effects of parental conflict, family structure, and gender. A sample consisting of first year college students was used to look at premarital attitudes. The findings revealed that participants from homes with parental conflict had less favorable attitudes toward marriage than those from homes without conflict. Males
had less favorable attitudes toward marriage than females, and participants from divorced homes also had less favorable attitudes towards marriage than those from intact families.

Overall, results revealed that young adults who reported higher degrees of turmoil between their parents are likely to have less favorable attitudes toward marriage, regardless of family structure. Jennings et al. (1991) believe that parental conflict has the most significant influence on premarital attitudes. These results are consistent with other studies that reported a link between marital quality and the offsprings' position on matrimony (Long, 1983; & Wallin, 1954). Future research should be looking at the type of relationship between parents and children, rather than just the quality of the relationship in order to see how an individual's relationship with parents impacts their intimate relationships.

Kozuch and Cooney (1995) examined the role of recent parental divorce on young adults' marital and family attitudes. The sample included 444 white unmarried young adults between the ages of 17 and 23. Fifty-two percent of the sample had experienced parental divorce within the last 15 months, while the rest of the sample was from intact homes.

Results were not surprising; participants whose parents recently divorced reported a higher level of parental conflict during their teen years. Family conflict did not have a significant impact on marital attitudes, yet parents' marital status had a significant impact on marital attitudes. Participants, who reported high parental conflict, were also more likely to support pre-marital cohabitation and those parents just recently divorced were more significantly in favor of pre-marital cohabitation. These findings support that adult children of divorce have a greater caution towards marriage. Furthermore, this study
examined more closely parental conflict and family conflict with each playing a separate role. Parental conflict had a stronger significance on attitudes toward divorce than family conflict.

Further, there was no main effect of parents' marital status on the items dealing with commitment to marriage, acceptability of singlehood, and accessibility of divorce. Therefore, these findings give support to the idea that children of divorce are as committed to the idea of a lasting marriage as their peers from intact families and are no more accepting of divorce.

Kozuch and Cooney (1995) made a major contribution to the literature by finding that the role played by both family conflict and interparental conflict was to be separate in determining marital and family attitudes. The results indicate that family and interparental conflicts are distinct features of family life, although these terms are used interchangeably in the literature.

Strengths of this study include the diversity of the population. The researchers identified participants through a state's list of driver's licenses that would include participants both in college and in the workforce. Many studies that look just at college students exclude an entire part of the population that are not continuing their education. Also, this study emphasizes the importance of going beyond simple family structure features (divorced or intact) in gaining insight into how family background shapes the lives of children.

This study is retrospective in nature and was conducted through phone interviews, which can cause responder bias. It is not clear what a high level of parental conflict really means, the frequency is not very clear. The question was asked about parents disagreeing,
which does not always lead to higher levels of conflict. Therefore, a flaw in this study does not assess what actually is a high level of conflict.

Jones and Nelson (1996) examined college students from intact and non-intact homes and their expectations of marriage. Furthermore, love styles, levels of romanticism, as well as expectations of marriage were also assessed. This study was based on three hypotheses. The first was that students from intact families would report more realistic expectations of marriage while students from non-intact families would report either unrealistic-pessimistic or unrealistic-idealistic expectations of marriage. The second hypothesis predicted that respondents with more realistic expectations of marriage would report higher levels of Storge (friendship) and Pragmatic ("shopping list") love attitudes than other love attitudes. The Storge and Pragmatic love attitudes are believed to be the more down to earth, realistic types of love than any of the other forms. Therefore, the researchers believed that those two love attitudes complimented realistic expectations of marriage. The third hypothesis was that participants who reported unrealistic-pessimistic expectations of marriage would be less romantic and participants who reported unrealistic-idealistic expectations of marriage would be more romantic.

The participants were 307 college students that included 220 females and 87 males. The majority of the participants were between the ages of 17-21 years of age. Also, almost all of the participants reported being single and never been married. There were 244 participants who reported that their parents were still married and living together while 61 participants reported that their parents were divorced and one or both parents were remarried.
The results revealed that the first hypothesis was not supported because participants from intact and non-intact families did not differ in their expectations of marriage. These findings support Kozuch and Cooney's (1995) study about individuals from intact and divorced homes being no different in their attitudes toward marriage. The second hypothesis was also not supported due to the fact that participants who reported realistic expectations of marriage displayed Eros, Storge, and Agape love styles rather than Storge and Pragma. In addition, participants who reported pessimistic expectations of marriage were not more likely to report having Ludus love style more than any other love style. Which still leaves to question of what factors are correlated with attitudes toward marriage.

Finally, results did reveal the respondents that reported idealistic expectations of marriage were more likely to adhere to Eros love style than any other love style. Furthermore, correlational results illustrate that romanticism may be related to expectations of marriage. In other words, levels of romanticism went up as expectations went from pessimistic to realistic to idealistic.

The limitations of this study were that it did not look into the level of family conflict as a variable, which may have effected expectations of marriage. Also, this study did not examine the presence or absence of parental role models in the home, which may have also effected expectations of marriage. In addition, the Marriage Expectation Scale, which was used, is still relatively new and needs to be validated and strengthened through future research on this topic.

This study contributes to the body of literature that connects expectations of marriage and love styles. Future research should continue to look at marriage
expectations in relation to styles of love. How does this study relate to attitudes toward marriage? Are expectations similar to attitudes? Therefore, the expectations of marriage were more related to love style than family structure (divorced or intact) providing more support for the importance of family environment rather than family structure.

In summary, the research on marital attitudes has provided support that it is not the structure of the family that plays a role in attitudes, but more of interparental conflict that leads to less favorable attitudes toward marriage. While these three studies are important contributions to marital attitudes literature, they leave questions still unanswered: Does the relationship with parents play a role in late adolescents' attitudes toward marriage? And if it does how strong is the relationship between the family and attitudes toward marriage?

**Attitudes Toward Divorce**

In the body of literature related to reasons for divorce, as well as, attitudes there are some conflicting findings. Greenberg and Nay (1982) and Ganong, Coleman, and Brown (1981) found differences in attitudes toward divorce between late adolescents from intact and divorced homes. Yet, more recent research found no differences in attitudes toward divorce based on family structure, but rather differences were found based on gender (Black & Sprenkle, 1991 & Mulder & Gunnoe, 1999).

Early research (Greenberg & Nay, 1982) on college students attitudes' toward divorce revealed that those whose parents were divorced viewed divorce more favorably than did participants from intact families. In a sample of high school students, Ganong et al. (1981) found that participants from reconstituted families (those that divorced and one
or both parents were remarried) reported significantly more accepting attitudes toward divorce than did those from intact or single parent families.

Black and Sprenkle (1991) examined differences in attitudes about divorce among college students who had experienced parental divorce and those from intact families. Based on the previous literature, (Greenberg & Nay, 1982; Ganong et al., 1981) it was predicted that students from divorced homes would have more favorable attitudes toward divorce, males would have more positive attitudes toward divorce, and students who experienced parental divorce at a pre-adolescent age, would have more positive attitudes toward divorce than those that experienced it later on in adolescence.

Black and Sprenkle (1991) looked at intergenerational transmission process and hypothesized that intergenerational marital instability would be greater in the group of students whose parents are divorced than those whose parents are still married. In addition, it was predicted that students from divorced homes would report more dating behaviors then those from intact homes while students from intact homes would report greater willingness to marry.

The findings revealed 58% of the respondents who came from divorced homes experienced divorce between birth and 12 years of age, while the rest of the 43 participants experienced parental divorce in their adolescent years. Both the intact and the divorced groups reported being neutral or indifferent in their attitudes toward divorce. Males from divorced homes had more positive attitudes toward divorce than males from intact homes. In addition, no group differences were found between participants who experienced divorce during pre-adolescence or adolescence. The most significant finding
was that intergenerational marital instability was greatest among the divorced group, which lends support to the intergenerational transmission process.

Overall, Black and Sprenkle's (1991) findings indicate that college students who experienced parental divorce and those who did not were not found to significantly differ in their readiness to marry and their attitudes toward divorce. Limitations of this study are the limited generalizability of findings because of the homogeneous sample, it is retrospective, which could cause inaccurate responses, and there is lack of depth in responses because the data was collected via survey rather than interviews.

The contribution of this study to the literature is quite significant. First and foremost, gender differences were found in attitudes toward divorce, which needs to be further supported. Secondly, there were no real group differences between respondents from intact and divorced families on their attitudes toward divorce and readiness to marry. Black and Sprenkle (1991) have provided further support to the notion that parental divorce does not have a significant impact on attitudes toward marriage and divorce.

Mulder and Gunnoe (1999) researched divorce more thoroughly by investigating predictors of attitudes toward divorce using college students. The researchers based their study on three possible predictors of attitudes toward divorce: gender, experience of parental divorce, and perception of parental relationship. The sample consisted of 150 freshmen and sophomores, one hundred thirty three were from intact families and seventeen were from divorced families.

Results revealed that women did not have more reasons than men did for divorce and differences were found in reasons why women and men would divorce. Most
importantly, findings support that those who experienced parental divorce were more likely to say they would divorce for arguing, no love, no magic, physical abuse, and verbal abuse. Although, parental divorce did not differentially predict likelihood of divorce in situations of an affair or a spouse that changed, suggesting that college students have more uniform evaluations of these potential threats to marriage.

Some limitations in this study include that small population of college students from divorced families in comparison to intact homes. In addition, the questionnaires that were used, did not have reliability and validity information as to whether or not, the topics of interest were appropriately assessed. This study is a good beginning for researchers to examine attitudes and reasons for divorce, which will enable professionals to provide intervention strategies to prevent intergenerational divorce.

Earlier research found significant differences in attitudes toward divorce among late adolescents from intact and divorced homes, yet more recent research has contributed results that reveal little to no difference in attitudes of late adolescents from divorced and intact homes. The above studies on divorce leave many questions unanswered. For example, why are there contradicting findings among divorce research? Are researchers not asking the right questions? Since the divorce research is contradicting, more comprehensive studies are still needed to understand relationships and attitudes among late adolescents.

**Attitudes Toward Marriage and Divorce**

The research that looked at attitudes toward marriage and divorce together (Stone & Hutchinson, 1992; Amato, 1988; Landis-Kliene, Foley, Nall, Padgett & Walters-Palmer, 1995; and Duran-Aydintung, 1997) found supportive results that family structure
is not significantly related to attitudes toward divorce or marriage. Yet, family conflict was found to be related to both positive and negative attitudes towards marriage.

Stone and Hutchinson (1992) reviewed marital attitudes and the relationship between current and past familial conflict and expanded this research to also look at attitudes toward divorce. The findings reveal perceived levels of familial conflict were not significantly related to attitudes toward marriage. Kozuch & Cooney (1995) later found that family conflict did not have a significant impact on marital attitudes. In addition, they found that family structure (intact or divorced) was not a significant predictor of attitudes toward divorce, which supports the findings from Black and Sprenkle (1991) on family structure.

Findings from Stone and Hutchinson (1992) support the notion that high levels of conflict do not necessarily lead to less favorable attitudes toward marriage. Children may have a certain amount of resiliency when exposed to conflict and may not be as affected in their attitudes toward marriage as one might expect.

Stone and Hutchinson's (1992) results are consistent with Amato's (1988) study that looked at adult children of divorce and found that they were no more or less likely than other respondents to be in favor of divorce. Amato's findings indicate that adult children of divorce are not in any sense 'pro-divorce' or 'anti-marriage. Instead, the great majority appear to value family life to the same extent that other young people do (Amato, 1988).

Landis-Kleine, Foley, Nall, Padgett, and Walters-Palmer (1995) examined young adults' attitudes toward marriage and divorce. Furthermore, Landis-Keine, et al. (1995) explored whether adult children from divorced homes had different attitudes about
marriage and divorce than adult children from intact families. The researchers hypothesized that adult children of divorce would be more likely to consider divorce if they were in an unhappy marriage. This study also tested to see if they would show less commitment to intimate relationships.

In addition, Landis et al. (1995) attempted to outline the circumstances that young adults believe that a couple in an unhappy marriage should divorce. This study consisted of 188 predominantly white college students with the mean age of 23 years old. Participants read one of eight randomly assigned scenarios and answered questions related to it. The scenario described a couple who had been married for twelve years when one member of the couple began to neglect the family.

Results did not support the hypotheses that adult children of divorce if in an unhappy marriage would be more likely to consider divorce and would demonstrate a lower commitment to relationships. Furthermore, there were no significant differences in response to any variables in the study based on parental marital status. The researchers found that the participants' attitudes about marriage and commitment were found to be very positive. Overall, most participants indicated a desire for a strong commitment to marriage regardless of their parental marital status.

Finally, Duran-Aydintung (1997) interviewed sixty adult children of divorce in areas such as their attitudes toward cohabitation, marriage, divorce, and their dating behavior. In-depth interviews were conducted with sixty participants with the mean age of 22.6. Of the 60, 37 were females and 23 were males. Most of the respondents' parental divorce occurred during the ages of six and 18 years of age. All the participants whose parents divorced before they were 18 years old lived with their mothers.
More than half of the participants indicated favorable attitudes toward marriage. The individuals with negative attitudes reported parental conflict during the marriage and after the divorce, had infrequent contact with one of the parents, and their parents changed many partners or remarried more than once. All the respondents who were 18 or older at the time of the divorce were in this group. These results lend further evidence to the importance of the family environment, as opposed to the family structure, as an important mediator in attitudes toward marriage and divorce. The majority of participants were in favor of cohabitation that was characterized as a trial marriage in which one realizes whether the relationship works and if not one can leave without legal or economic complications.

In these circumstances, respondents who experienced family conflict then saw divorce as a relief, but those who did not experience parental conflict were not in favor of divorce. Therefore, divorce was seen as an option for most of the participants. They were very careful to avoid stigmatizing people who divorce as failures. As far as dating behavior, the participants in comparison to their friends from intact homes had more dating partners. The common reason was that their standards for a partner were higher and therefore, they felt they needed to "play the field" and "find the right person" from the start more than their counterparts from intact homes.

The findings in this qualitative study provide some evidence that divorce does not always have detrimental effects on children, as most literature concludes.

Despite family structure, children with supportive and open parents at the time of divorce, can overcome the transition of divorce, which lends more support to the
relationship that late adolescents have with their parents as opposed to their parents' relationship with each other. We need to stop stigmatizing people who divorce.

**Late Adolescents and the Family of Origin**

Researchers (Livingston & Kordinak, 1990; Muench & Landrum, 1994; Robinson, Garthoeffner, & Henry, 1995; Bartle-Harding & Sabatelli, 1998; and Feng, Giarrusso, Bengton, & Frye, 1999) have explored many aspects of the family of origin from the intergenerational transmission of marital instability, closeness and expressiveness of the family, quality of the relationship with parents, to the impact of a multigenerational systemic model on individual development. Each of these researchers have contributed to the importance of looking at the family system, but not to one specific theory, in understanding attitudes about marriage, divorce, and relationship behaviors.

Livingston and Kordinak (1990) performed a study that investigated the effects of participant's gender, level of religiosity, and marital history of the family of origin on the development of marital role expectations. The researchers based this study on the role-model rationale; whereby the family of origin plays a major role in creating individuals who are successful marriage partners understand appropriate sex and marital roles and the marital relationship. The study's purpose was to test the validity of the role-model rationale of the intergenerational transmission of marital instability.

The sample was comprised of white middle to upper middle class college students between the ages of 18 and 28 who have never been married. The groups were split into high and low religiosity and were administered the Marriage Role Expectancy Inventory and a demographic questionnaire that elicited information concerning family marital
history, socioeconomic status, education, religious belief system and frequency of church attendance.

The results revealed that marital role expectations are the product of a complex interaction of the subject's sex, religiosity, and marital history of the family of origin. No differences were found between males with religiosity from intact families and males with low religiosity from non-intact homes. These two groups had the most traditional expectations of marriage. On the one hand, females with low religiosity from intact and non-intact homes showed the most egalitarian expectations. As far as the role-model rationale, this study is not comprehensive enough to understand the intergenerational transmission of marital instability; therefore it would be helpful if future research expands this idea into a comprehensive theory of the development of marital roles.

Muench and Landrum (1994) investigated the family experience as an indicator for college students' attitudes about marriage. These researchers believed that closeness and expressiveness among family members might have a positive effect on children's attitudes toward marriage. Their hypotheses were: (1) the higher the degree of family conflict the more negative attitudes toward marriage; (2) the higher the degree of expressiveness would result in more positive attitudes toward marriage.

Forty undergraduate students were administered the Marriage Attitudes Questionnaire and the Family Environment Scale. A correlational analysis was conducted and only the second hypothesis was supported. The hypothesis that the higher the degree of family conflict would result in more negative attitudes toward marriage was not supported. People who had a high degree of family conflict did not differ significantly in their attitudes toward marriage from those with a lower degree of family conflict which
was also found in later studies (Stone & Hutchinson, 1992; Kozuch & Cooney, 1995). On the other hand, it was found that the higher the degree of closeness and expressiveness the more positive attitudes toward marriage was supported.

This study's limitations include a very small data set. This study is a good start for future research with a larger population. Caution should be exercised in generalizing the results from this study. Additionally, the researchers were not clear as to how family conflict was operationalized. For example, the researchers did not explain if family conflict also included divorce or just conflicted intact families. Further, no demographic information was reported on the participants. This study is a great foundation from which future research can use to expand in order to understand more clearly the relationship between family conflict and attitudes toward marriage as well as family closeness and expressiveness and how that plays a role in attitudes. Results from this study emphasize the necessity for approaching family dynamics from multiple perspectives.

Robinson, Garthoeffner, and Henry (1995) investigated the extent to which selected personal, interpersonal, and family characteristics were related to interpersonal relationship quality in young adults. The researchers based this study on the family systems perspective in order to test a model of personal, dyadic, and family systemic factors as predictors of the quality of interpersonal relationships of young adults. They hypothesized that parental relationship, relationship with father, relationship with mother, family cohesion and adaptability, self-esteem, and conflict resolution skills would be positively related to interpersonal relationship quality. In addition, they hypothesized that there would be a negative relationship between anxiety and interpersonal relationship
quality. Furthermore, Robinson et al. (1995) hypothesized that these relationships would vary according to parental marital status.

The participants were 306 college students with a mean age of 19.9 mostly Caucasian Protestants. A majority of participants reported being single and were never married. Participants from intact homes composed 66% of the sample while 34% were from divorced homes.

The results revealed that parental marital status is not a significant variable in predicting the quality of relationships in young adults. Family adaptability was linked positively to interpersonal relationships. Therefore, the ability of the family system to adapt and change roles, power and rules as a child transitions from adolescence into young adulthood is positively related to interpersonal relationships. Additionally, conflict management skills revealed a strong positive relationship with interpersonal relationship quality in young adults.

Furthermore, future research should examine types of conflict management in order to reduce conflict and increase interpersonal relationship quality. Relationship anxiety was negatively related to the potential for quality intimate relationships especially for those from divorced homes. This study was limited because the sample was predominantly Caucasian middle class Protestants. Robinson et al. (1995) contribute to the body of literature relating anxiety within the family of origin with late adolescent relationships which then carry over into marriage which Bowen has based his family systems theory on (Bowen, 1978).

Bartle-Harding and Sabatelli (1998) investigated a multigenerational systemic model of individual and family development. The researchers proposed a model
connecting parents’ experiences of family of origin, parents' marital adjustment, and parents' psychological adjustment to adolescents' experiences of their family of origin. This model highlights the patterns of interaction in the family of origin as having a significant influence on individual development.

Bartle-Harding and Sabatelli (1998) asked several questions. One hypothesis investigated the parents' family of origin experience as having a direct relationship with their marital adjustment, psychosocial maturity, and the child's family of origin experience. A second hypothesis examined parents' marital adjustment as having a direct relationship to their child's family of origin experience. A third hypothesis looked at the parents' psychosocial maturity as having a direct relationship to their child's family of origin experience. The final hypothesis believed that parents' family of origin experience would have an indirect effect on their children's family of origin experiences through the parents' marital adjustment and psychosocial maturity. The sample consisted of 52 three-member families, married, middle class and predominantly white.

Results revealed important support for the impact of the family of origin on children. For mothers and fathers, perceptions of their parents' interaction with them as they were growing up were related to their marital adjustment and their psychosocial maturity. The more mothers and fathers perceived that their interactions with their parents while growing up were differentiated, the more likely it was that both mothers and fathers said that they had fewer marital complaints and more marital intimacy, and the more likely it was that they reported higher psychosocial maturity. The study found that the higher the mother's marital and psychosocial adjustment, the more her adolescent
viewed her relationship with her husband as differentiated. These findings were not true for fathers.

Some limitations include a small sample and the power of the mothers' recollection of the family of origin rather than using a combination of both parents for their recollections of their family. The relationship that fathers and mothers have with their children is very different; therefore, it should be viewed separately. Bartle-Harding and Sabatelli (1998) have made a significant contribution in the study of the intergenerational transmission process. The findings in this study are a significant stepping stone for researchers looking at the impact of the family of origin on children. As a result of this study, further research needs to ask other questions on how to intervene on negative situations and how can researchers understand the relationship and power of the family of origin.

Feng et al. (1999) conducted a longitudinal study of the intergenerational transmission of marital quality, marital instability, and divorce involving parents and children. The researchers developed five hypotheses. The first stated that children of divorce were more likely to divorce than children from non-divorced families. The second examined demographic and life course factors and how they mediate the transmission of divorce from parents to children because parental divorce lowers children's later income and educational attainment and age at first marriage. It was believed that once these premarital risk factors are taken into account, the intergenerational transmission of divorce will be weakened or will disappear.

The third hypothesis focused on the children from divorced families having fewer barriers to divorce and more attractive alternatives to marriage. When compared with
children from non-divorced families, children from divorced families are less likely to have their own biological children. Also, parental divorce increases the likelihood that daughters will be employed. The fourth hypothesis highlighted children from divorced families as having fewer positive marital interactions and more negative sentiment, used verbal aggression more frequently to solve marital problems, and were less close to their spouses than are children from non-divorced families. The fifth hypothesis predicted that parents' marital quality was positively correlated with their children's marital quality when their children become married adults.

The sample consisted of working to middle class white families. Over a twenty-six year period packets of questionnaires were sent six times to all the members of each of the families. The results of Feng et al.'s (1999) reflect partial support for the intergenerational transmission of divorce. More specifically, the transmission appeared to be from parents to daughters more so than from parents to sons. In addition, it was supported that the age of first marriage appears to mediate the effects of parental divorce and daughter's education on daughter's divorce. It was found that the effects of parental divorce do not play a role in the quality of their children's marriages. This study included only white families from working class to middle class homes; as a result, it is difficult to generalize these findings to urban communities with diverse racial backgrounds. Feng et al. (1999) did provide a framework for which future research on intergenerational transmission processes can be examined. Although Feng et al. (1999) did look at this process, this study does not supply the literature with an exhaustive search, therefore, there is still a real need to further evaluate the power of the intergenerational transmission process.
Overall, the studies that have been explored have all taken specific aspects of the family of origin and related it to either attitudes toward divorce and/or marriage. The research discussed have either found support for this study or have challenged the hypotheses, which this current study is based upon. Yet, none of this research is grounded in a theory, therefore, it is difficult to understand the interplay of the variables. As a result, Bowen's theory has been chosen to assist in conceptualizing aspects of the family. More specifically, Bowen's theory has been chosen because of the lack of research in the literature.

**Bowenian Family Systems Theory**

Bowen's Family Systems Theory is one of the most comprehensive family theories because of its view of human behavior and human problems. The theory involves two main variables: the degree of anxiety and the degree of integration of self. Bowen (1978) believed that all organisms are reasonably adaptable to acute anxiety. The organism has built-in mechanisms to deal with short bursts of anxiety. It is sustained or chronic anxiety that is most useful in determining the differentiation of self. If anxiety is sufficiently low, almost any organism can appear normal, that is, symptom free. When anxiety increases and remains chronic for a certain period, the organism develops tension, either within itself or in the relationship system. The tension subsequently results in symptoms, dysfunction, or sickness.

The tension may also result in psychological symptoms, physical illness, emotional dysfunction, social illness characterized by impulsiveness or withdrawal, or by social misbehavior (i.e., schizophrenia) (Bowen, 1978). Another phenomenon of anxiety is infectious, whereby anxiety spreads rapidly through the family or through society.
Bowen's theory has major concepts that apply to certain areas of the family. Differentiation of self, the cornerstone of Bowen's theory, is both an intrapsychic and interpersonal concept. Intrapsychic differentiation is the ability to separate feeling from thinking. Lack of differentiation between thinking and feeling occurs in concert with the lack of differentiation between oneself and others. Because they are less able to think clearly, undifferentiated people react emotionally-positively and negatively to the dictates of family members or other authority figures. These people have little autonomous identity; instead they tend to be fused with others.

Most believe the formative influence of family on molding personality; many people imagine that once they leave home they are grown up, independent adults, free from their parents' influence. Some people prize individuality and take it as a sign of growth to separate from their parents. Others wish they could be closer to their families but find visits home too painful; therefore they stay away to protect themselves from disappointment and hurt. Once they are beyond the immediate conflict, they forget and deny the discord.

As Bowen discovered, the family remains within us irrespective of our physical location. Wherever we go, we carry unresolved emotional reactivity to one's parents. This reactivity is demonstrated in the form of vulnerability that repeats the same old patterns in every new intense relationship entered into. Unresolved relationships with one's original families are the most important unfinished business in our lives (Nichols & Schwartz, 1995).

The concept of intergenerational transmission process describes the transmission of the family emotional process through multiple generations. In every generation the
child most involved in the family’s fusion moves toward a lower level of differentiation of self, while the least involved child moves toward a higher level of differentiation. Some think that after they leave home they will marry someone who will make them happy. Some expect to keep the good stuff from our families and get rid of the bad. It does not work that way. We may fight against our family inheritance, but it catches up with us eventually.

Bowen's multigenerational transmission concept takes emotional illness not only beyond the nuclear family but also traverse through several generations. The problem in the individual is a product of the relationship of that person's parents, which subsequently is a product of the relationship of their parents, continuing back for several generations. It is unclear where it begins but it can be very exact in where it ends (Bowen, 1978). The problem does not reside in the child and it is not the child's fault. The parents are not to blame either. Instead, the problem is the result of a multigenerational sequence in which all family members are actors and reactors, which perpetuate the dysfunctional behaviors.

In Bowen's system there is no discontinuity between normal and abnormal family development. He found that there were no discrete categories of families, but that all families vary along a continuum from emotional fusion to differentiation. Optimal family development is thought to take place when family members are relatively differentiated, when anxiety is low, and when the parents are in good emotional contact with their own families of origin.

Empirical Research of Bowen's Family Systems Theory

There are two major studies (Benson, Larson, Wilson, & Demo, 1993 and Larson, Benson, Wilson, & Medora, 1998) that were conducted to investigate Bowen's family
systems theory. Benson et al. (1993) explored Bowen's Family Systems Theory as a foundation for late adolescent romantic relationships. Further, Benson et al. (1993) examined the role of anxiety in mediating the influence of family of origin characteristics on subsequent relationship processes. Bowen's theory suggests that high levels of chronic anxiety are likely to prompt aversive communication and that lower levels of anxiety foster the characteristics associated with open communication.

A sample of unmarried late adolescents was used to examine three hypotheses based on Bowen's theory. The researchers hypothesized the following: (a) family of origin factors would be related to individual anxiety; (b) anxiety would be related to poor communication in close relationships; and (c) anxiety would mediate the effects of family dynamics on communication in close relationships.

The sample used was single/never-married, late adolescents between the ages of 17 and 21 years of age. Eighty-two percent of the sample reported that their parents were married and family income was assessed and the sample was primarily Caucasian (89%). Benson et al. (1993) used three subscales from the Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire, Version C to assess aspects of the intergenerational family theory. More specifically, triangulation, fusion, and the intergenerational intimidation scale were used in this study. The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory was employed to assess anxiety. The researchers developed a 15-item scale to assess the quality of communication in intimate, romantic relationships.

Benson et al's most significant finding partially confirmed Bowen's theory of intergenerational transmission. It found that anxiety in the individual mediates the influence of fusion and control in the family of origin on subsequent romantic
relationships. In addition, the role of anxiety in mediating the influence of fusion in the family of origin on subsequent communication among late adolescents appeared to be the clearest confirmation of Bowen's theory. The researchers believed that the dynamics of fused families such as emotional dependence, lack of autonomy and use of double binds create anxiety in the child. This, in turn created poorer communication in subsequent relationships.

As far as the control variable, the mediational hypothesis was only partially confirmed. The hypothesis pertaining to the influence of control on open communication was not supported, but the anxiety was shown to mediate the influence of control in the family of origin on aversive communication. Controlling dynamics in the family of origin are related to higher levels of anxiety. The lack of relationship between control in the family of origin and open communication in subsequent relationships indicates that other factors contribute to the process, whereas the hypothesis regarding fusion and control are confirmed, the hypothesis for triangulation is not supported. Triangulation failed to show indirect effects through anxiety as a mediator. Instead, triangulation exhibited a direct effect on aversive communication.

Some limitations of this study are that non-college bound late adolescents are not utilized and therefore, results cannot be generalized across educational backgrounds. Also, the definition of functional verses dysfunctional families need to be further explained in order to utilize those concepts in the future. Those individuals in romantic relationship, as opposed to those who were currently not or never had been, were not separated. Therefore, the findings may not be as a result of actual experiences, but rather fantasies about relationships.
Benson et al.'s (1993) results provide an empirical test of a central tenet of Bowenian theory. The findings suggest that Bowen's model depicting anxiety, as a mediator in intergenerational transmission is most accurately applied to fusion and least accurate for triangulation.

Larson et al. (1998) also examined the Bowenian family systems theory and emphasized emotion as the central feature in the transmission process and conceptualized the family as an emotional unit. Furthermore, the theory held that anxiety is the central emotion that modulates emotional distance in the family and drives the transmission process across generations. This study focused on the understudied assumptions of this intergenerational transmission process. The researchers examined three features within the family of origin and its impact on the transmission process. The three features are fusion, triangulation, and control or intimidation. In addition to these three features, several hypotheses were extrapolated from Bowen's theory regarding attitudes and feelings about marriage and readiness for marriage. The researchers believed that the more an individual experiences the three features (fusion, triangulation, or control) in the family of origin, the less likely one would be to develop independent thinking, feeling, or believing. This in turn would cause them to have difficulty in developing intimate relationships outside of the family.

Bowenian theory led to the development of six hypotheses: (1) triangulation in the family of origin will be related to negative attitudes and feelings about marriage; (2) fusion in the family of origin will be related to negative attitudes and feelings about marriage; (3) control in the family of origin will be related to negative attitudes and feelings about marriage; (4) triangulation in the family of origin will be related to less
perceived readiness for marriage; (5) fusion in the family of origin will be related to less perceived readiness for marriage; and (6) control in the family of origin will be related to less perceived readiness for marriage.

The study consisted of 977 participants (433 males and 544 females) and all were single or never married between the ages of 17 and 21. 82% of the participants were from families in which their parents were married. In addition, 89% of the participants were Caucasian with a median household income in the family of origin as $50,000. The participants were asked to respond to questions about the family of origin characteristics, attitudes toward marriage, feelings about marriage, and readiness for marriage. The Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire was used to measure the family or origin characteristics. The Marital Attitudes Scale was used to measure attitudes and feelings toward marriage and finally readiness for marriage was measured with the Readiness for Marriage subscale of the Preparation for Marriage scale.

The results revealed no gender differences in attitudes or feelings about marriage. In addition, there were no gender differences for fusion and triangulation in the family of origin. There were differences found with control. Females reported higher control than males in the family of origin yet this difference was not statistically significant. Higher triangulation and higher fusion in the family of origin were both related to more negative attitudes and more negative feelings about marriage. On the one hand, control was not significantly related to attitudes or feelings.

The findings of this study revealed that individuals who perceive their families of origin as less healthy were more likely to have negative perceptions of marriage. Triangulation and fusion in the family of origin were more likely to report negative
attitudes about marriage. In addition, the findings serve to partially confirm an extend Bowen's (1978) theory of intergenerational transmission process. As hypothesized, triangulation and fusion were related to negative attitudes and feelings about marriage. Specifically, those individuals who reported triangulation or fusion in their family of origin were more likely to report negative feelings about marriage compared to those from families without these dysfunctional family processes.

None of the background variables (i.e., gender, age, parents' income, or parental marital status) was related to attitudes or feelings about marriage. This result supports the research of Greenberg and Nay (1982), who found no significant attitudinal differences related to family structure. By evaluating problems in the family of origin and their current or future relationships, more productive transmission processes can be fostered and nonproductive ones can be interrupted (Benson et al., 1993).

Overall Summary

The research on attitudes toward marriage provides a starting point in examining the factors that contribute to marital attitudes. Unfortunately, the literature is not consistent in methodology or even measurement of attitudes. A basic finding that the current study is based upon is that a late adolescent's attitudes may be more significantly influenced by parental relationships rather than whether or not parents are intact or divorced. Past research has provided the foundation to guide this current study to examine attitudes toward marriage while considering the family relationships.

Divorce research also varies in methodology as well as measurement, which have led to a variety of findings. Despite the extensive research conducted on divorce and divorce attitudes few studies examined both marriage and divorce in one study. Previous
research has provided the groundwork and the instrument for the current research to investigate the likelihood to divorce among college students.

The body of literature reviewed all examined various family variables outside the context of a theoretical foundation. As a result, it is the goal of this research to begin to focus within the context of Bowen's family systems theory while asking questions about attitudes related to marriage and divorce. Although the current study will not close the book of research in this area, it will begin to fill in the gaps related to Bowen's theory. For example, Bowen's theory has not yet been examined along with the likelihood to divorce; rather it has only been examined with marital attitudes. As stated earlier, in order to strengthen Bowen's theory on the intergenerational transmission process, more research needs to be conducted.

The theoretical foundation of this research was reviewed and discussed. This discussion included attitudes toward marriage and divorce, family of origin, and Bowen's Family Systems Theory. Empirical literature relevant to this study was reviewed and analyzed. Further research can provide counselors and therapists with a better understanding of the major concepts of Bowen's theory (1978) and continue to demonstrate the role that emotional mechanisms in the family of origin play in the development of intimate relationships and preparation for marriage. As a result, Bowen's theory was evaluated while integrating attitudes toward marriage and divorce as variables. Previous research on Bowen's theory have not examined both marriage and divorce, therefore, this study will enhance existing research to include likelihood of divorce among college students in addition to attitudes toward marriage.
CHAPTER III

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the methodology used in the present study. The selected design and the nature of the sample and sampling procedures are explained. All instruments used are thoroughly described, including reporting on all important information regarding reliability and validity. The statistical analyses are reviewed and a rationale for their selection is provided.

Research Design

The design chosen for the present study is a quantitative regresional research design. This type of design was chosen in order to predict scores on an outcome variable from knowledge about predictor variables. Regresional research is designed to test research hypotheses in cases where it is not possible or desirable to experimentally manipulate the independent variable of interest (Stangor, 1998). Specifically, multiple regression uses more than one predictor variable to predict a single outcome variable. In the current study, the dependent variables are attitudes toward marriage and the likelihood to divorce, whereas the independent variables are Individuation, Intimidation, and Triangulation.

Population

Participants were undergraduate male and female students enrolled at a private, Catholic university in the Northeast. All participants were 18 years of age or older. According to the University's planning office, the undergraduate population is comprised of about 5,000 students broken down into 52% females and 48% males, with 48% being
white. Seven-seven percent are New Jersey residents while 23% are from out of state with 66% living on campus and 34% commuting.

Participants

Table 1 presents the obtained sample for the study, which was comprised of 209 participants of whom 122 (58.40%) were women and 87 (41.60%) were men. Participants’ ages ranged from 18 years to 24 years, (M = 19.0, SD = 1.22). The percentages of 18-, 19-, and 20-, 21-year olds were 37.3%, 28.7%, 19.5%, and 11.5%, respectively. The overall ethnic makeup of the sample was as follows: 73.7% Caucasian (n = 154); 8.1% African-American (n = 17); 5.3% Hispanic (White) (n = 11). With respect to religious affiliation, 150 (71.8%) respondents identified themselves as Catholic, 32 (15.3%) classify themselves as belonging to religious groups other than those listed. The economic status of the family was predominantly middle class (n = 107, 51.2%), with 60 (28.7%) upper middle class, 19 (9.1%) working class, 14 (6.7%) upper class, and 9 (4.3%) belonging to the lower middle class. Respondents residing on campus consisted of 143 (68.4%) while those commuting were 66 (31.6%). Of the participants, 201 (96.2%) were heterosexual and 8 (3.8%) were homosexual. Participants were asked about parental marital status, 148 (70.8%) reported their parents currently still married and 60 (28.7%) revealed their parents were divorced (Table 1).

Research Instruments

Participants were given a packet of materials containing the following: administration instructions (see Appendix A), a demographic questionnaire requesting information regarding age, gender, race/ethnicity, religious affiliation, economic status,
Table 1

Table of Frequency Distributions of Demographic Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>78</td>
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<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Gender:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>58.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>73.70</td>
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<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
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<td>4.30</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>Variable</td>
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<td>Percent</td>
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<td>--------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Upper Middle Class</td>
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<td>Commuter</td>
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<td>Homosexual</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are Biological Parents Still Married?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>70.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>28.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
academic major, sexual orientation, parental marital status and age at which parents divorced (see Appendix B); Marital Attitude Scale (MAS) (Braaten & Rosen, 1998) (see Appendix C); The Likelihood of Divorce Scale (Mulder & Gunnoe, 1999) (see Appendix D); and Personal Authority in the Family Questionnaire (Bray, Williamson, & Malone, 1984b) (see Appendix E).

**Demographic Information Questionnaire.** A demographic information questionnaire was devised. The instrument requests information regarding the following: age, gender, race/ethnicity, religious affiliation, economic status of the family by class, academic major, sexual orientation, parental marital status, age at which parents divorced (if applicable), and if parents are remarried. Most of this data was collected for exploratory purposes.

**Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire.** Young Adult Version (Bray & Harvey, 1992)

The Personal Authority in Family System Questionnaire, Young Adult Version (PAFS-QVC) is the modification of the original PAFS (Bray et al., 1984b) designed to measure the relationships in a three-generational family system. It operationalizes the concepts of intergenerational systems theory (Bowen, 1978; Williamson, 1991). The young adult version is suitable for use with late adolescents.

The PAFS-QVC is a paper and pencil self-report instrument with 84 items rated on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 5 (1 = excellent, all the time, strongly agree, very often, or very comfortable and 5 = very poor, never, strongly disagree, or very uncomfortable). It is hand-scored to create total scores for each of the subscales.
For the purposes of this study only three of the eight subscales will be examined. The first scale included eight items that assessed intergenerational triangulation, with scores ranging from 8 to 40. Higher scores are indicative of less triangulation. Questions on this scale involved feeling compelled to take sides, feeling caught in the middle, or feeling that more closeness with one parent would result in less closeness with the other. Other questions on the scale include parental disagreements regarding discipline or privileges and parental intervention in disagreements between the child and the other parent.

The second scale is the intergenerational individuation scale, which includes eight items designed to assess individuation, with scores ranging from 8 to 40. Higher scores reveal more individuation and less fusion with the family of origin. The questions on this scale asked about the tendency of parents to embarrass their children, to use double binds, or to frequently try to change their children’s personality. Other questions asked about doubting the genuineness of parental love, confusion over emotional interactions with parents, and worry about the parents’ ability to care for themselves without the child’s presence.

The third scale is the intergenerational intimidation scale, which included eight items designed to assess degree of control exerted by parental expectations. Scores range from 8 to 40 with higher scores indicating less intimidation or control from the family of origin. The items asked about the frequency with which one felt the adolescent needed to modify one’s behavior in school, work, dating, appearance, and lifestyle due to pressures or expectations of their mother or father.
It is expected, because of the ages and dependence of undergraduate students on their peers, theoretically, an adolescent in a well-functioning family should have high scores on the Individuation scale and low scores on the Triangulation and Intimidation scales (Bowen, 1978 and Minuchin, 1974).

**Reliability.** The Individuation subscale of the Personal Authority in the Family System-QVC (PAFS) revealed an alpha of .74, which is consistent with previous alphas ranging from .55 to .95 found by Bray, Williamson, and Malone (1984) indicating good internal consistency. The Intimidation subscale of the PAFS showed an alpha of .91, revealing very good internal consistency. The Cronbach's alpha found in this study is higher than in previous studies in which the alpha ranged from .82 to .89 (Bray et. al, 1984). The Triangulation subscale of the PAFS showed an alpha of .84, indicating good internal consistency. Bray et al (1984) found alpha to range from .73 to .82 in a previous study.

**Validity.** The validity of the PAFS-QVC scales has been demonstrated in previous research through concurrent validation and factor analysis. With regard to concurrent validation, all three family of origin scales, low Individuation and higher Intimidation and Triangulation, were found to be related to higher rates of both somatic symptoms and psychological problems (Bray, Harvey, & Williamson, 1987). In addition, problems in marital relationships have been found to be associated with low scores on the Individuation scale (Bray et al, 1984) and high scores on the Triangulation scale (Bray et al, 1987). Besides these associations with other constructs, factor analysis of the PAFS-QVC items indicates theoretical consistency within the scales. Previous research has
demonstrated that the factor loadings of the items are consistent with the theoretical
design of the scales (Bray et al, 1984).

The PAFS-QVC is one of the few instruments with adequate validity and
reliability on theoretically interactional patterns in a family. In addition, it is a self-report
instrument and has been revised to address specific concerns of late adolescents, college
students.

The Marital Attitude Scale. The MAS is a self-report measure in which
participants endorse one of four choices for each of the 23 items (Braaten & Rosen,
1998). For each item, the response format asks the participant to rate how strongly they
agree or disagree with a number of statements regarding marriage. Items were written to
sample the various ways that persons can regard the institution of marriage. Six of the
items ask the participant to rate their feelings regarding their own present, or possibly
future, marriage, while the remaining items ask the participant to react to statements
dealing with general concepts regarding marriage. The MAS is scored by summing the
individual item scores (Strongly Agree = 0; Agree = 1; Disagree = 2; Strongly Disagree =
3) after correcting for reverse keying nine items. The total MAS score can range from a
minimum of 23 to a maximum of 92. Higher scores indicate a more positive attitude
toward marriage. Analyses were conducted using the total MAS scores. The mean score
on the MAS was 55.89, with a range of 35 to 72, and a standard deviation of 7.07
(Braaten & Rosen, 1998).

Reliability. In the current study, the Marital Attitude Scale showed an alpha of
.84, indicating good internal consistency. This finding is consistent with Braaten and
Rosen's (1998) findings of an alpha score of .82. Due to the recent development of this scale no other reliabilities were available.

**Validity.** Concurrent validity was found between the MAS, Attitudes toward Marriage Scale, subscales of the Relationship Beliefs Inventory, and Marlow-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Braaten & Rosen, 1998). The MAS showed good discriminant validity in that it discriminated students from divorced homes with those from non-divorced homes. Additional validity studies have not yet been conducted, yet findings from this study do provide further support for concurrent validity. Because the findings of the current study are consistent with previous studies that used the MAS, it may be suggested that preliminary concurrent validity exists.

**The Likelihood of Divorce Scale.** The scale that was used to measure attitudes toward divorce was the Likelihood of Divorce Scale (Mulder & Gunnoe, 1999). Participants were asked to rate the likelihood that they would consider a divorce in seven hypothetical marriage situations: no more love, physical abuse, spouse turned out differently than expected, no magic left, verbal abuse spouse had an affair, and a lot of arguing. Response range from 1 (very unlikely) to 5 (very likely). A higher score indicates more likelihood to divorce within the marital circumstances presented.

**Reliability.** In the current study, the Likelihood of Divorce Scale showed an alpha of .86, illustrating good internal consistency. This alpha is similar to the relationship reported by Mulder and Gunnoe (1999) (r = .83). Because this scale has not been used in other studies, no other reliability information was available.

**Validity.** Due to the recent development of this scale there are no validity statistics reported on this scale. There may be preliminary validity evidence based on the
results of this scale in comparison to previously used scales. Attitudes toward divorce
from previous studies (Black & Sprenkle, 1991 and Mulder and Gunnoe, 1999) were
found to be consistent with the findings in this study, suggesting, that there is some
evidence of concurrent validity for the Likelihood to Divorce Scale.

Procedure

According to the American Psychological Association's (1992) ethical standards
and principles, it was required that approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB)
be obtained before collecting any data. Once approval from IRB was achieved professors
in the following departments were contacted via e-mail: psychology, religion,
mathematics, and biology. The above departments were chosen due to the large class
size. Professors were contacted in advance, and permission was requested to recruit
volunteers before or after class time. This researcher was allowed five minutes at the end
of six undergraduate classes to recruit participants. A general description of the purpose
of the study was explained and the letter to participants was read which asked students to
participate in a study designed to explore attitudes about marriage and divorce in relation
to their family of origin.

Students were advised that they must be 18 years of age or older in order to
participate in the study. There were no students under the age of 18 in any of the classes
as reported by the students themselves. Students were further informed that completion
and return of these materials indicated understanding and willingness to participate in this
study. Participants were reassured as to the voluntary nature of their participation and
were urged to read the letter to participants on their own. They were also reassured as to
their rights to withdraw from this study at any time without negative consequences
regarding their academic status. Participant anonymity was guaranteed and maintained because the participants were not asked to put their name anywhere on questionnaire packet. The questionnaires were placed in randomized order within each packet in order to counterbalance or eliminate the possible confounding of order effects.

At the end of each class, packets were handed out to all participants willing to participate. The participants were asked to return their packets at the start of the next class. Upon return of their packet, participants were asked to place them in a box at the back of the class. At the end of the class, the researcher collected the box with the packets. Additionally, each packet had a number code on the top; thus, data was entered by the number code on each packet. All professors agreed to provide extra credit for each student willing to participate. Each professor had the students sign a sheet of paper as he or she handed in their completed packet. Those students who did not wish to participate were offered additional opportunities to earn extra credit points.

Data Analysis

A variety of statistics were conducted on particular item variables (gender, race/ethnicity, religion, age, economic status, residency status, and marital status of parents) on the Demographic Questionnaire, the three PAFF-QVC subscales, the Marital Attitude Scale, and the Likelihood to Divorce Scale. Descriptive statistics were comprised of measures of central tendency (Mean, Median, Mode), Variance, and Standard Deviation. Reliability analysis was run on each of the scales in order to obtain the Cronbach's alpha on each of the scales. In addition, exploratory analyses of gender differences were done. The purpose of exploratory analyses of gender detects whether gender differences are found to have a significant role in investigating the results.
Further, if males and females are found to respond significantly different on measures being examined then further analyses would be separated by gender. Exploratory analysis was also done on each of the demographic variables.

Multiple Linear Regression was also used to predict the relationship between one dependent variable (attitudes toward marriage or divorce) and several independent variables (Individuation, Intimidation, and Triangulation). Because it was the goal of this study to predict and describe the relationship between the independent and dependent variables simultaneous entry was conducted (Newton & Rudastam, 1999). Multiple linear regression assumes that all variables are interval or ratio scaled. In addition, the dependent variable should be normally distributed around the prediction line. This of course assumes that the variables are related to each other linearly. Normally, all variables should be normally distributed (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). Exploratory analysis on the data to check the assumptions of normality (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996)

**Summary**

This chapter reviewed methodological issues relevant to this study. Also described are methods of participant recruitment and characteristics. Measures utilized in this study were the Demographic Questionnaire, the three PAFF-QVC subscales, the Marital Attitude Scale, and the Likelihood to Divorce Scale. Procedure of administration of measures was described in detail. A description of statistical analysis, (i.e. Descriptive Statistics and Multiple Linear Regression) was covered.
Chapter IV

RESULTS

This chapter reports the results of the statistical analyses derived from the obtained participants in the study. It will comprise two sections which include the following: 1) a presentation of the descriptive statistics, including exploration of gender differences; 2) and hypotheses testing using correlational and multiple regressional analysis.

**Descriptive Statistics**

Means and standard deviations for the Individuation, Intimidation, and Triangulation subscales of the PAFS, The Marital Attitude Scale, and the Likelihood to Divorce Scale are also shown in Table 2. The mean is a measure of central tendency, a value that represents a typical member of the sample or population (Sprinthall, 1997). The standard deviation is a measure of variability that indicates by how much all of the scores in a distribution typically deviate or vary from the mean. Together, a measure of central tendency and a measure of variability provide a great deal of information about the data set (Sprinthall, 1997). The descriptive statistics can provide explanations of findings that may be unexpected. An exploratory analysis was conducted to test the assumptions of normality by using a histogram and examining skewness. As a result, of the findings, assumptions have been met. Furthermore, exploratory analyses were run for each of the demographic variables, but only gender revealed significant results.

**Exploratory Analyses of Gender Differences.** A multivariate analysis of variance was used to compare male and female scores on the various measures to determine
Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations for the Marital Attitude Scale, Personal Authority in the Family System-QVC subscales, and the Likelihood of Divorce Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Females (N = 122)</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Males (N = 87)</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Totals (N = 209)</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individuation</td>
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<td>28.75</td>
<td>5.91</td>
<td>26.56</td>
<td>5.62</td>
<td></td>
<td>27.84</td>
<td>5.88</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.21*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intimidation</td>
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<td>7.60</td>
<td></td>
<td>29.08</td>
<td>8.03</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.40*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marital Attitude Scale</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19.32**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood to Divorce</td>
<td></td>
<td>47.42</td>
<td>7.22</td>
<td>42.18</td>
<td>9.99</td>
<td></td>
<td>45.24</td>
<td>8.85</td>
<td></td>
<td>25.97**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * p < .05, two tailed  ** p < .01, two tailed

Individuation, Intimidation, and Triangulation are subscales of the Personal Authority in the Family System-Q.
whether there are significant differences between groups. The MANOVA produces an F statistic designed to test for interactions as well as main effects (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). A MANOVA was chosen as opposed to a series of t-tests to avoid increasing the likelihood of a Type I error (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). F scores on all but one measure revealed significant differences between males and females at the $p < .05$ or the $p < .01$ level (see Table 2), suggesting that the sample should be examined separately by gender.

Further, the one-way MANOVA was calculated examining the effect of gender on scores on each of the measures used. A significant gender effect was found on the Individuation subscale, suggesting that females scored significantly higher than did males ($F(1,207) = 7.21, p < .05$). In other words, females had significantly higher autonomy and emotionally independent scores from the family the males. Females also scored significantly higher on the Intimidation subscale ($F(1,207) = 5.40, p < .05$) than did males, indicating that females feel less controlled by their families of origin than do males. There was no significant gender differences found on the Triangulation subscale. Yet, females scored significantly higher than males on the Marital Attitude Scale, ($F(1,207) = 19.32, p < .01$), revealing more positive attitudes toward marriage for females than males. Finally, females scored significantly higher on the Likelihood to Divorce Scale than males ($F(1,207) = 25.97, p < .01$), illustrating that females would be more likely to divorce than males.

Exploratory analyses were utilized because parental marital status may have been a significant factor in responses on each of the measures. None of the F scores revealed significant differences between respondents from intact or divorced homes in this study.
precluding the need for further examination of the variance contributed by within group differences.

Analysis of Hypotheses

Two statistical tests were performed on the data to test the hypotheses proposed in this study.

Hypotheses

1) Attitudes toward marriage will be significantly predicted by Individuation, Intimidation, and Triangulation. Therefore, Individuation, Intimidation, and Triangulation will each have a positive relationship with marital attitudes. Further, those individuals who are more individuated, less intimidated, and less triangulated with their family of origin will have more positive attitudes toward marriage.

2) The Likelihood of Divorce will be significantly predicted by Individuation, Intimidation, and Triangulation. As a result, Individuation, Intimidation, and Triangulation will each have a positive relationship with the likelihood to divorce, thus those individuals who are highly individuated, less intimidated, and less triangulated with their family of origin will be more likely to see divorce as an option under specific marital circumstances.

The two tests used were (a) Pearson correlation coefficient and (b) multiple linear regression. The Pearson correlation coefficient determines the strength of the linear relationship between two variables (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). The correlations between variables were assessed as a test of this study's hypothesis.
In Table 3, moderate to small positive correlations were found between a number of variables in this study. A moderate correlation was found \((r = .41, p < .01)\), indicating a significant linear relationship between the Marital Attitude Scale and the Individuation subscale. As expected, the respondents with more positive attitudes toward marriage tend to be more individuated within the family of origin. There was a significant small linear relationship between marital attitudes and intimidation \((r = .24, p < .01)\) and marital attitudes and triangulation \((r = .25, p < .01)\). Respondents with more positive attitudes toward marriage were less intimidated and triangulated within the family of origin.

Moderate correlations were found between Individuation and Intimidation \((r = .45, p < .01)\) and between Individuation and Triangulation \((r = .43, p < .01)\). These linear relationships illustrate that the more a respondent was individuated the less intimidated or controlled they felt from their family of origin. Further, the more individuated a respondent was the less triangulated they felt with their family of origin. A weak positive correlation was found between Individuation and the Likelihood to Divorce Scale \((r = .22, p < .05)\), indicating a significant linear relationship between these two variables. As expected, participants who were found to be more individuated viewed divorce as a more favorable option under certain marital circumstances. Finally, a significant weak relationship was found \((r = .32, p < .01)\) between Intimidation and Triangulation, indicating a significant relationship between these two variables. The less participants felt intimidated or controlled by their family of origin, the less triangulated they were with their family.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Individuation</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.45**</td>
<td>.43**</td>
<td>.41**</td>
<td>.22*</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Intimidation</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.32**</td>
<td>.24**</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Triangulation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.25**</td>
<td>-.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Marital Attitude Scale</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Likelihood to Divorce Scale</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note. * p < .05, two tailed  ** p < .01, two tailed  N = 209
When looking at the male and female sample separately there were some significant findings (see Table 4). For the female sample, all linear relationships that were found to be significant were positive but weak to moderate in nature. There were significant relationships between the Marital Attitude scale and Individuation ($r = .39, p < .01$); the Marital Attitude Scale and Intimidation ($r = .25, p < .01$); and the Marital Attitude Scale and Triangulation ($r = .26, p < .01$). Each relationship illustrating that the more positive attitudes towards marriage are related to more individuation, less intimidation, and less triangulation within the family of origin. Individuation and Intimidation were found to have a weak positive relationship ($r = .37, p < .01$) while Individuation and Triangulation ($r = .43, p < .01$) were found to have a moderate positive relationship. Females were not found to have a significant relationship between Individuation and the Likelihood to Divorce scale as was found within the total sample. Yet, females were found to have a moderate positive relationship between Intimidation and Triangulation ($r = .34, p < .01$), indicating that the less females felt intimidated by the family of origin the less they were triangulated.

The male sample was also examined separately and results can be found in Table 5. There was a significant positive relationship between the Marital Attitudes Scale and Individuation ($r = .36, p < .01$), indicating a weak relationship between males who had positive attitudes toward marriage and males that felt individuated from their family of origin. A moderate relationship was found between Individuation and Intimidation ($r = .54, p < .01$), revealing that more individuation is correlated with less intimidation from
Table 4

Intercorrelations Between Individuation, Intimidation, Triangulation, Marital Attitudes Scale, and the Likelihood of Divorce Scale for Female Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Individuation</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.37**</td>
<td>.43**</td>
<td>.39**</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Intimidation</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.34**</td>
<td>.25**</td>
<td>-.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Triangulation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td>-.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Marital Attitude Scale</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Likelihood to Divorce Scale</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * p < .05, two tailed ** p < .01, two tailed N = 122

Table 5

Intercorrelations Between Individuation, Intimidation, Triangulation, Marital Attitudes Scale, and the Likelihood of Divorce Scale for Male Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Individuation</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.54**</td>
<td>.40**</td>
<td>.36**</td>
<td>.32**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Intimidation</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Triangulation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Marital Attitude Scale</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Likelihood to Divorce Scale</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * p < .05, two tailed ** p < .01, two tailed N = 87
the family of origin in the male sample. Individuation was also found to have significant relationships with Intimidation ($r = .40, p < .01$) and the Likelihood to Divorce Scale ($r = .32, p < .01$), indicating that the more an individual is individuated from the family the less intimidated he feels and the more likely he would be to divorce under certain marital circumstances. Finally, there was a significant positive relationship between Intimidation and Triangulation ($r = .26, p < .01$), revealing that the less one feels intimidated the less triangulated he is within his family.

A multiple linear regression analysis allows the prediction of one variable from several other variables (Cronk, 1999). The goal of a multiple regression analysis is to find a linear combination of independent variables that makes the best prediction of a single quantitative dependent variable in the sense that it minimizes the squared deviations around a line of best fit (Stangor, 1998). A multiple linear regression assumes that all variables are interval or ratio scaled. In addition, it is assumed that the variables are related to each other linearly. These assumptions were tested and met for this study.

A multiple linear regression was calculated to predict participants' marital attitudes based on their levels of Individuation, Intimidation, and Triangulation, as well as predicting attitudes toward divorce based on levels of Individuation, Intimidation, and Triangulation. Both the independent variables (Individuation, Intimidation, and Triangulation) and the dependent variables (marriage and divorce) were simultaneously entered. Because gender differences were found in previous analyses, multiple regression analysis was run first for the total sample, then separately for each gender.

A multiple linear regression was calculated to predict participants' marital attitudes based on Individuation, Intimidation, and Triangulation. A significant regression
equation was found for the total sample, \((F(3,205) = 4.52, p < .01)\) with an \(R^2\) of .17 and Individuation (see Table 6). Results revealed that the beta weight of this equation is .34, which illustrates that individuation, accounts for 34% of the variance. It was found that only Individuation was a significant predictor of attitudes toward marriage.

A multiple linear regression was calculated to predict participants' divorce attitudes based on Individuation, Intimidation, and Triangulation. A significant regression equation was found for the total sample, \((F(3,205) = 3.41, p < .01)\) with an \(R^2\) of .06 and Individuation (see Table 7). Results revealed that the beta weight of this equation is .27, which illustrates that individuation, accounts for 27% of the variance. It was found that only Individuation was a significant predictor of attitudes toward divorce. For both marriage and divorce, Intimidation and Triangulation were not significant predictors of attitudes.

The female and male sample was examined separately to predict respondents' attitudes toward marriage based on Individuation, Intimidation, and Triangulation. First, a significant regression equation was found for the female sample, \((F(3,118) = 3.29, p < .01)\) with a \(R^2\) of .18. Results revealed that the beta weight of this equation is .32, which illustrates that individuation accounts for 32% of the variance. Surprisingly, Individuation was the only variable that was a significant predictor for females' attitudes toward marriage (see Table 8). In comparison, with the male sample there was also a significant regression equation found, \((F(3,83) = 2.88, p < .01)\) with a \(R^2\) of .14. Results revealed that the beta weight of this equation is .37 that illustrates that individuation accounts for 37% of the variance. Similar to the female sample, it was found that Individuation was
### Table 6
Multiple Regression Analysis for the Marital Attitudes Scale (MAS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>14.39**</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Variable**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individuation</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>4.52**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimidation</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triangulation</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * p < .05, two tailed  ** p < .01, two tailed

### Table 7
Multiple Regression Analysis for the Likelihood of Divorce Scale (LDS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model 1</td>
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<td>.06</td>
<td>4.69**</td>
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**Variable**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
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<th>t</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Individuation</td>
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<td>3.41**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimidation</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triangulation</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * p < .05, two tailed  ** p < .01, two tailed
the only variable that was a significant predictor for males' attitudes toward marriage (see Table 9). Secondly, when examining if the three variables were significant predictors for the likelihood to divorce among females and males, the regression equation was not significant. Therefore, Individuation, Intimidation, and Triangulation are not significant predictors of attitudes toward divorce for this female sample (see Table 10). Yet, with the male sample, Individuation was the only significant predictor for the male sample. The significant regression equation was found ($F (3, 83) = 2.52, p < .01$), with an $R^2$ of .14. Results revealed that the beta weight of this equation is .32, which illustrates that individuation, accounts for 32% of the variance. Therefore, Intimidation, and Triangulation are not significant predictors of the likelihood to divorce for this male sample but Individuation is (see Table 11).

**Summary**

Based on the statistical analyses conducted on the collected data, Hypothesis I was only partially supported in the current study. Individuation was the only predictor variable to be a significant predictor of marital attitudes. As a result, Intimidation and Triangulation was not found to be significant predictors of marital attitudes. Further Hypothesis II was also only partially supported with Individuation being the only significant predictor of the likelihood of divorce. As in the first hypothesis, Intimidation and Triangulation were not found to be significant predictors of the likelihood to divorce.
Table 8

Multiple Regression Analysis for the Marital Attitudes Scale (MAS) for Females

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R^2</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>.18</td>
<td>8.33**</td>
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</table>

Variable

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
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<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individuation</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>3.29**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimidation</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triangulation</td>
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<td>.99</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * p < .05, two tailed  ** p < .01, two tailed

Table 9

Multiple Regression Analysis for the Marital Attitudes Scale (MAS) for Males

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R^2</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>4.43**</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Variable

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Individuation</td>
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<td>2.88**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimidation</td>
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<td>-.36</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triangulation</td>
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<td>.47</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * p < .05, two tailed  ** p < .01, two tailed
### Table 10

**Multiple Regression Analysis for the Likelihood of Divorce Scale (LDS) for Females**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>R</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>1.67</td>
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**Variable**

<table>
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<th>Variable</th>
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<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimidation</td>
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<td>-1.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triangulation</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>-1.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * $p < .05$, two tailed  ** $p < .01$, two tailed

### Table 11

**Multiple Regression Analysis for the Likelihood of Divorce Scale (LDS) for Males**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>R</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>4.38**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Variable**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individuation</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>2.52*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimidation</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triangulation</td>
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<td>-1.54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * $p < .05$, two tailed  ** $p < .01$, two tailed
CHAPTER V
Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This chapter presents the results of the data analyses conducted in this study, and presents conclusions and discussion based upon the analyses of both the descriptive and statistical data relevant to this investigation. The first section contains a summary of previous research that frames the background for the present study. The second section presents the findings the study hypothesis; the third section presents and discusses the findings of this investigation, determined as a result of the analysis of the data. The fourth section highlights the major contributions of this dissertation to our understanding of marital and divorce attitudes and variables related to the family of origin. The fifth section describes the strengths and limitations of the present study, and the sixth section suggests areas for future empirical research. Finally, the last section discusses the implications of this research on counseling practice.

Summary of Previous Research

Many researchers have questioned how children are affected by this disruption in their family's growth and development. Specifically, how divorce influences individuals in their own adulthood and in their intimate relationships with others and even in their own marriages. Research shows that children of divorce are at a higher risk to divorce themselves than those whose parents had stable marriages (Glen & Shelton, 1983). As the family ages, the offspring are again at a higher risk to divorce. In other words, divorce runs in families. With the advent of rapidly changing family roles, mobility, and adolescent/young adult autonomy, both role norms and socialization processes have been interrupted (Jacobson & Addis, 1993). This evidence highlights a unique opportunity for
research to aid in the construction of a proactive psychological approach that will assist in prevention of the fundamental problem of divorce.

This study focuses on three main variables as unique in helping to investigate the components of the foundation of marriage and divorce: individuation, intimidation, and triangulation. It is concerned with the process of intergenerational transmission and the family of origin along with the relationship with attitudes related to marriage and likelihood to divorce under certain negative marital circumstances.

Bowen's (1978) theory provides a basis for extrapolation of several hypotheses regarding attitudes and feelings toward marriage and divorce. To the extent that individuals experience individuation, triangulation, and intimidation in the family of origin, they are less likely to develop independent thinking, feeling, and believing or to learn the necessary skills for developing intimate relationships outside the family.

Bowen's theory as measured by the Personal Authority in the Family System (PAFS) as a synthesizing construct in the inherent tension between differentiation and intimacy. PAFS is viewed as a continuum with personal authority at one end and intergenerational intimidation at the other. PAFS implies the patterns of behavior characteristic of an integrated and differentiated self (Bowen, 1978), exercising increased conscious control over individual destiny in life, and choosing personal health and well being in a systemic or holistic sense. This sense of self is expressed behaviorally through the resolution of idiosyncratic intrapsychic conflicts, as well as through the resolution of relational intimacy issues. Therefore, the PAFS includes reconnection and belongingness to the family of origin, while simultaneously acting from a differentiated position within the family of origin. Because Bowen's theory is crucial to understanding processes within
the family of origin, it was included in this study to examine how much individuation, intimidation, and triangulation influence attitudes toward marriage and divorce among college students.

The first hypothesis was designed to investigate how much attitudes toward marriage can be accounted for by the family of origin processes (Individuation, Intimidation, and Triangulation). The second hypothesis examined how much the likelihood of divorce can be accounted for by the family of origin processes (Individuation, Intimidation, and Triangulation).

The dependent variables examined in this study were marital attitudes and likelihood of divorce. The independent variables examined in this study were three subscales from the Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire-Version C, Individuation, Intimidation, and Triangulation. A Pearson correlation matrix was developed to explore relationships among the variables (Cronk, 1999). A multiple regression analysis was used to explore the prediction of one variable (marital attitudes or likelihood of divorce) from several other variables (Individuation, Intimidation, and Triangulation) (Cronk, 1999).

Summary and Discussion of Findings

Results of the Pearson correlation matrix revealed a statistically significant positive correlation was found for the following variables: Individuation and Intimidation; Individuation and Triangulation; Individuation and Marital Attitude Scale; and Individuation and the Likelihood to Divorce Scale, which confirm the state hypotheses. These findings reveal that the more one is individuated from the family the less likely they are triangulated and intimidated by the family of origin. In addition, the
more one is individuated the more positive their attitudes toward marriage and higher the likelihood to divorce. Further these findings support the notion that one can have positive attitudes toward marriage and divorce simultaneously, since divorce is viewed as an option under negative circumstances within a marriage. An individuated person is considered to be less fused, able to communicate openly, independent, and overall, secure within their family of origin. Therefore, the expected findings in this study illustrate a sample that is considered a healthy individual and able to be autonomous from their family of origin. Further, the more a participant was individuated the more likely he/she would consider a divorce under certain marital circumstances. These findings support the foundation of the study hypothesis and continue to support the notion of a healthy individual who is able to understand and actively remove themselves from unfortunate marital circumstances.

Furthermore, these findings support Larson et al.'s (1998) study on attitudes toward marriage. Larson et al. (1998) found that individuals that reported higher triangulation and less individuation in the family of origin were related to more negative attitudes toward marriage, yet intimidation was not significantly related to attitudes. Unlike, Larson et al. (1998) there were gender differences for all three family of origin variables. The most significant finding in this study was that males' level of individuation was positively correlated with the Likelihood to Divorce Scale, whereas, there was no correlation for the female sample. In other words, the more males felt individuated from their families of origin, the more likely they were to consider divorce as an option more so than females. This supports findings by Black and Sprekle (1991) who found that females were less likely to be in favor of divorce than males.
Intimidation was positively correlated with marital attitudes for females, yet no correlation was found in the male sample. In other words, females that felt less controlled by their family of origin had more positive attitudes toward marriage. Jennings et al. (1991) also discovered that females had more favorable attitudes toward marriage than males. Another gender difference found was triangulation in the female sample was correlated with positive marital attitudes. Evidently, females who experienced less triangulation in their family of origin had more positive attitudes toward marriage that continues to support the basis of the study hypothesis.

Results of the multiple regression analysis revealed that a statistically significant regression equation was found. Individuation was found to be the only significant predictor of marital and divorce attitudes among the total sample. These findings are similar to Duran-Aydintung (1997) who found that most individuals who participated in the study had positive attitudes toward marriage while also viewing divorce as a likelihood. For instance, participants who had positive attitudes toward marriage and divorce, saw divorce as an option without stigmatizing divorce as failure. Therefore, the findings in the current study support these results; individuals who had positive attitudes toward marriage also were able to see divorce as an option if needed. In other words, positive attitudes toward marriage does not necessarily lead to negative attitudes toward divorce. A healthy individual is able to view marriage positively but also comprehend the possibility of divorce in conflicted and adverse marriages.

More specifically, Individuation for females was a significant predictor for marital attitudes but not divorce attitudes, while Individuation for males was a significant predictor for both marital and divorce attitudes. Therefore, females in this study who
were more individuated viewed marriage positively but not necessarily seeing divorce as an option. An explanation for this may be how females are still socialized in this society. For example, women who can have a healthy relationship with their family are then able to have healthy views of marriage, but it is still not acceptable to divorce. Furthermore, since the sample was mostly Catholic; religious beliefs about marriage may be encouraged in the family of origin while divorce is still not viewed positively through the Catholic religion. Yet, males who were more individuated were able to see marriage positively while also considering divorce as an option in certain marital circumstances. Again, socialization of males may be playing a role in their attitudes. Males who have a healthy relationship with their family of origin can view marriage positively; yet will also consider divorce under certain circumstances. Unfortunately, since most of the sample was Catholic, it does not explain why men in this study would be more likely to consider divorce than women.

Overall, the study hypotheses were partially supported, since Individuation was the only significant predictor variables found. Because Individuation only accounted for 27% to 37% of marital and/or divorce attitudes, this provides evidence that there are other factors playing a role in attitudes. It is possible that the sample chosen have healthier families of origin than expected. Due to the large number of intact families involved in this study, it may be conceivable that this sample has more individuated participants than previous studies.

Due to the lack of research on Bowen's theory it is not possible to relate the findings of this study related to divorce attitudes with other family of origin based on Bowen's theory research. The important thing to consider in this study is that more likely
individuals were to divorce does not mean that individuals were in favor of divorce under any circumstances. More specifically, when individuals viewed divorce more positively or as an option it was under certain marital situations such as physical abuse, extramarital affair, or conflictual relationship.

Therefore, the results of this research contribute to the belief that healthier individuals can see divorce as an option rather than staying in a conflicted or unhealthy marriage. Past research shows that less healthy families filled with conflict are strong predictors of negative attitudes toward marriage (Larson et al., 1998).

This study provides a promising foundation for family of origin research. Rather than looking at the negative aspects of the family of origin, it may be more productive to examine how healthy individuals contribute to the research. If the literature begins to investigate what a family of origin can offer and teach late adolescents, then group and individual therapy can focus on specific skills.

It is the belief of this researcher that the findings in this study may have been influenced by the large portion of participants being Catholic and from intact families. Since the literature shows that it is not the family structure that impacts attitudes toward marriage and divorce, but more so the family environment, it would be helpful to look further into the family of origin variables of intimidation and triangulation. Because this study looks at the intergenerational transmission process, Bowen does not talk about other variables that may be playing a part in views on marriage and divorce, for example, anxiety, sibling relationships, and direct relationships with each parent separately. This study is only the beginning for family systems theory and research, but it does have some important contributions to the literature.
In summary, this research makes several contributions to the literature on family of origin variables and marital and divorce attitudes. Most strikingly, the results of the present study offer support for the correlation of the family of origin variables and marital attitudes. Although, divorce attitudes were found to be correlated with Individuation, further research needs to examine family of origin variables more closely. There is a void in the literature concerning divorce attitudes and the family of origin based on Bowen’s theory. Although the Likelihood of Divorce Scale has not been widely used, this study contributes to the support of further use of the scale.

Furthermore, the prediction of positive marital attitudes by Individuation presents a unique insight for the purpose of this study: the development of a proactive psychological approach to assist late adolescents and young adults to individuate from their family or origin in order to form healthier relationships outside the family. With this in mind, a healthier view of self and marriage may lead to a lower divorce rate.

In addition, this research serves to partially reinforce and extend Bowen’s theory of intergenerational transmission process. With the expansion of the current research to embrace divorce, researchers can continue to augment and investigate how the family of origin plays a role in future relationships.

Because the literature related to Bowen’s theory is so sparse, this current study will add more recent data and will possibly intrigue researchers to continue examining Bowen’s theory on the intergenerational transmission process. Further, this study will continue to educate professionals in the field about the transmission process in order to better understand clients.
Limitations of the Study

The research design for this study was fundamentally sound and balanced using valid and reliable instruments to collect the data. Since reliabilities of all the measures used ranged from an alpha of .74 to an alpha of .91, it is safe to believe that the results found were reliable for use with young adults.

There are a number of methodological limitations. This study used a quantitative, correlational approach to measure the relationship and predictability of variables within the family of origin and attitudes related to marriage and divorce. Therefore, results do not provide proof of a casual direction of this relationship (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). For example, could individuation be caused by attitudes toward marriage or divorce? Although the casual direction cannot be proven, individuation has been found to be an integral component in attitudes toward marriage.

Despite the success of Bowen's theory and research, certain aspects of the theoretical approach to personality need further work (Nichols & Schwartz, 1995). One problem is measurement. It appears to be unlikely that simple self-report measures of the family of origin and brief measures of attitudes toward marriage and divorce will automatically converge into a full explanation of what an individual experiences. Bowen's theory has been studied and operationalized in order to expand the literature on the theory, yet refinement is still necessary. Although this research is an important step in understanding the variables within the family of origin, further cultivation of the measures is still needed.

Further, despite the variety of outcomes and depth of study available on divorce, little empirical studies have adequately measured this variable. Additionally, the
interchangeability of the terms likelihood of divorce and divorce attitudes in previous studies prove to be confusing to what is actually being studied. Thus, additional fine-tuning of divorce attitude scales continues to be necessary.

The investigation of attitudes as opposed to behaviors can also be viewed as a limitation. A researcher can only hypothesize about how individuals may act in certain situations when examining only attitudes rather than behaviors also. For sampling purposes, attitudes were investigated but it does limit the overall generalizability of this study.

In addition, participants were not asked if they were married or in romantic relationships themselves. This may be a limitation, which may have provided more detailed information about the sample being studied. For example, if a group of the participants were married they may have been a subgroup within this sample. Although it is an assumption that many college students are not married, it is limiting to exclude that information in the demographic questionnaire. Unfortunately, those questions were not asked and should be in future studies.

There are several strengths and weaknesses associated with using a college student sample. First of all, most people who attend college are at least in the middle-class income range. Limiting a study to such a select group of economically advantaged, homogeneous group of persons could affect findings. There may be important differences in the lower-socioeconomic status or a multicultural group that cannot be obtained using a private East Coast university (Jones & Nelson, 1996). In addition, college students' development and experiences may differ greatly from peers who do not attend college, again limiting generalizations to young adults.
One strength associated with utilizing college students supported by Greenberg and Nay (1982) is that it is advantageous to limit one's sample to a select population to examine more closely the effects of the variable. Unfortunately, it is not realistic to believe that all extraneous variables were accounted for in this study. Another strength includes the ability to relate findings in the present study with findings in previous studies, since college students have been used in a majority of comparative studies.

A strength of this study is the homogeneity of the group. For instance, most participants were White, Catholic, 18 to 20 year olds from middle to upper-middle class families whose parents are still married. This homogeneous group does not allow for enough diversity in order to be able to generalize findings, yet the significant differences found can be attributed to between group as opposed to within group differences (Cronk, 1999).

Research Implications

The present research examined whether there was a relationship between attitudes related to marriage and divorce and individuation, intimidation and triangulation. In addition, this study examined if individuation, intimidation, and triangulation were predictive of positive attitudes toward marriage and divorce among college students.

As adolescents approach adulthood, they begin to explore their feelings toward love, marriage, and expectations of a future mate. There are many salient factors outside the realm of this study that may influence a young adult's attitudes toward marriage. Results of this study can only account for a very small portion of contributing factors, which lends evidence to further investigate more salient factors.
Future research could examine how marital attitudes are formed and influenced. In particular, the relationship between casual attributions in close relationships and close relationship beliefs and attitudes would be of importance. In all the variables presented in this study, it is important to recognize areas of integration among Bowen’s theory. Therefore, more empirical data are needed to make comparisons of theory-based models, such as Bowen’s theory.

There is a distinct and dire need for more research in not only understanding how divorce attitudes are shaped, but also strategies for preventing future divorces. As noted above, the Likelihood of Divorce Scale has not been widely used, future research should focus on utilizing this scale on different populations from the one used in this study. For example, a non-college group of late adolescents may expand the knowledge in this aspect of the field. Unfortunately, there is a real void in the literature using divorce scales and many researchers create their own measures. It would be useful in the arena of divorce research if a valid and reliable measure could be more widely used by researchers. This type of measure would allow researchers to compare results in a more systematic format, with the common goal of a greater sense of understanding.

In addition, future research may replicate this study using a non-Catholic sample in order to compare findings. Since the majority of the sample was Catholic, religious beliefs may have played a role in attitudes toward marriage and divorced. Furthermore, the participants may have been influenced based on the religions’ beliefs about marriage and divorce. Future research may continue to investigate this effect.
Practice Implications

The premise of this study is that the knowledge of a person's level of individuation, intimidation, and triangulation and marital and divorce attitudes would be beneficial components of background knowledge for successfully working with a client in therapy. This information would be an integral component to proactively build strong healthy relationships and in corrective therapy.

This study provides professionals with more information about attitudes toward marriage and divorce in order to work with clients on the phenomena of the intergenerational transmission process. Since late adolescence or young adulthood is a time when intimate relationships are prominent and a focal point in individuals' lives (Amato & Rogers, 1999) it is pertinent to examine the influence that clients' family of origin impact their development of relationships outside the family.

Intervention efforts need to be sensitive to the family of origin of clients since these relationships seem to play a role in forming relationships outside the family in adulthood (Benson et al, 1993). Clinicians may want to focus intervention efforts on assisting clients in becoming individuated from the family of origin first, then work on restructuring beliefs and attitudes about marriage and divorce. In particular, when working with clients therapists should be conscious of the individuation process. Therefore, it is important for therapists to work with male clients to understand the importance of family while developing one's self separately. With the knowledge of the client's quality of relationship within the family of origin, attitudes toward marriage and divorce, a clinician can be better equipped in to understand the client's world more clearly, which in turn fosters a productive therapeutic relationship.
Conclusions

This research found empirical evidence that highlights the dire need to research the contributing factors toward marriage and divorce. Empirically validated factors that contribute to some component of attitudes toward marriage and divorce were investigated. Quantitative measures were used to show relationships between these variables.

The findings of this study support the premise of investigating the family of origin processes and quality of family relationships as well as the status of marital and divorce attitudes. Therefore, suggesting the importance of careful attention to these variables in developing and managing client interactions, psycho-educational programs or empirical contributions.

It is important that premarital counselors and therapists better understand the major concepts of Bowenian theory as research continues to demonstrate the role that emotional mechanisms in the family of origin play in the development of intimate relationships and preparation for marriage. This includes learning how to better recognize and treat negative attitudes toward marriage, triangulation, and lower levels of individuation within clients. Through such interventions, attitudes and feelings about marriage and divorce may become more positive. Then, the basis for starting a marriage will be more solid, hopefully reducing the number of divorces.


Dear Potential Research Participant:

I am a Doctoral Candidate in Counseling Psychology. I am collecting data for my dissertation and would appreciate your assistance. My research focuses on the relationship between the family of origin and attitudes toward marriage and divorce among college students. Your voluntary participation will be greatly appreciated.

If you are at least 18 years of age, I invite you to take 20 minutes to complete the following self-report measures: (1) a demographic questionnaire; (2) The Marital Attitudes Scale; (3) The Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire; and (4) The Likelihood of Divorce Scale. Be sure to follow the instructions for each scale and do not leave any items blank.

If you decide to participate in the present study, I ask that you complete all of the brief questionnaires and place the anonymous survey materials in the box provided in the classroom. You are free to ask questions or to discontinue participating without penalty at any time. In return for participating and returning your survey packet, your instructor may provide you with extra credit towards your coursework. If you are under the age of 18 or if you freely decide to not participate in the study for any reason, your instructor will provide you with alternative means of earning extra credit under no penalty. There is no penalty for choosing not to participate.

Your confidentiality and anonymity will be protected in a variety of ways. First, please do not place your name or any other identifying information on the survey materials. Drop the survey material in the box as you leave the classroom. Thirdly, your individual responses and demographic data will be consolidated with other responses in order to be analyzed as an anonymous group. All final summaries or conclusions will be based on aggregate data only. Finally, your anonymous survey will be kept confidential by the researcher and used for the purposes of this research project.

Should you experience any distress during or after participating in this study, I strongly encourage you to contact Seton Hall's Counseling Services (973) 761-9500 to help you address any of your concerns.

If you have any questions about this study or would like a copy of the results please contact me at 973-275-2761 or by e-mail at valerian@shu.edu. If you have any questions about the rights of research participants, you may contact The Chairperson of the IRB, Office of Grants and Research Services 973-378-9809.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research. The IRB believes that the research procedures adequately safeguard the subject's privacy, welfare, civil liberties, and rights. The Chairperson of the IRB may be reached through the Office of Grants and Research Services. The telephone number of the Office is 973-378-9809. I have read the material above, and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this activity, realizing that I may withdraw without prejudice at any time.

Thank you very much for considering participating in my study. Your informed consent is implied if you decide to complete and return your survey.

Sincerely,

Alison Valerian, M.A.
Ph.D. Candidate
Counseling Psychology
Appendix B
## Demographic Background

1. **Age:** ______ years old.  
2. **Gender:**   ___ Female   ___ Male

3. **Race/Ethnic Background:** (check all that apply)  
   ___ African American/Black  ___ Afro-Caribbean  
   ___ African  ___ Asian/Pacific Islander  
   ___ Asian/East Indian  ___ Hispanic/Latino(a) (of color)  
   ___ Hispanic/Latino(a) (White)  ___ Native American  
   ___ White/Caucasian (not Hispanic)  ___ Other (please specify:__________________)

4. **Religious Affiliation:**  
   ___ Catholic  ___ Protestant  
   ___ Jewish  ___ Hindu  
   ___ Buddhist  ___ Muslim  
   ___ None  ___ Other (please specify:__________________)

5. **Economic status of your family:**  
   ___ Upper Class  ___ Upper Middle Class  
   ___ Middle Class  ___ Lower-Middle Class  
   ___ Working Class  ___ Lower Class

6. **Academic Major:** __________________________

7. **Campus Residency Status:**   ___ Resident   ___ Commuter

8. **Sexual Orientation:**   ___ Heterosexual   ___ Gay/Lesbian

9. **Are your biological parents currently married?**   ___ Yes   ___ No

10. **If not, how old were you when they divorced?**   ______ years old

11. **Who are you currently living with? (Check all that apply)**  
    ___ Biological Mother  ___ Biological Father  
    ___ Stepmother  ___ Stepmother  
    ___ Other (please specify:__________________)

12. **Is your mother re-married?**   ___ Yes   ___ No

13. **Is your father re-married?**   ___ Yes   ___ No
## The Marital Attitude Scale

Instructions: Please indicate by circling how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding marriage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(Strongly Agree)</th>
<th>(Agree)</th>
<th>(Disagree)</th>
<th>(Strongly Disagree)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>People should marry.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I love her/him so much that I want to marry.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>People should stay married to their spouses for the rest of their lives.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>The purpose of marriage is to maintain a happy home.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I will be satisfied when I get married.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>That is what marriage is all about.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>I have doubts about marriage.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>People should be cautious about marriage.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>People should feel very cautious about entering into a marriage.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Most marriages are happy, and so should be.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Marriage is only a legal contract.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Marriage is an ethical issue.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Most marriages aren't equal partnerships.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Most people have no idea what marriage is.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Because half of all marriages end in divorce, marriage seems futile (useless).</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>If marriage is so bad, why isn't everyone divorced?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>If people don't get along, I believe they should divorce.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>I believe the problems caused by unhappy marriages can be solved.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>My lifelong dream includes a happy marriage.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>I'm not concerned about who marries whom.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Marriage restricts individuals from achieving their goals.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>People wouldn't need to marry if they could achieve the same things.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Marriage provides companionship that is missing from other types of relationships.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Likelihood of Divorce Scale

For each of the following situations, assume you have been married for a couple of years and have no children. Please indicate how likely you would be to get a divorce in each situation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(very unlikely)</td>
<td>(Somewhat unlikely)</td>
<td>(Not sure)</td>
<td>(Somewhat likely)</td>
<td>(Very likely)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

1. You and your spouse did not love each other anymore?  
   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
2. Your spouse was verbally abusive (e.g., continually belittled you, insulted you, etc.)?  
   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
3. Your spouse did not turn out to be the person you thought he/she was (e.g., was irresponsible, dishonest, etc.)?  
   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
4. Your spouse was verbally abusive (e.g., continually belittled you, insulted you, etc.)?  
   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
5. You and your spouse were always arguing, at least several times a day?  
   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
If you are interested in using the PAFS-QVC and would like to obtain a copy please contact Dr. James Bray at (713) 798-7751 or e-mail him at Ibray@bcm.tmc.edu for permission.
Appendix F
Debriefing Statement

The study you have just completed is being conducted with first year undergraduates enrolled in a number of Introduction to Psychology courses. You were randomly selected to participate in the following study:

The Relationship between the Family of Origin Processes and Attitudes towards Marriage and the Likelihood to Divorce among College Students.

The goal of this study is to investigate the degree to which the family of origin plays a role in attitudes toward marriage and divorce. The group data will be entered and analyzed during the early part of the Spring 2001 semester. Additional analyses will be run in order to predict the attitudes toward marriage and divorce based on the student's demographic background variables.

If you have any questions regarding this project you participated in or would like to request a summary of the results, please contact me, Alison Valerian by telephone at (973) 275-2761 or e-mail at valerian@shu.edu.

Thank you for your participation.