

Proposal for an
Honors Directed Research Study
For Distinction at Graduation
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Effects of Attraction on Relationship Longevity
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Effects of Attraction on Relationship Longevity

A readily observed trend in our society is the acceptance of and increase in divorce. According to the research studied in this area, divorce has steadily increased since the 1960's until the 1990's when it started to level off. When researching the different causes of divorce a plethora of information was found on this subject, which also includes how cohabitation affects divorce and how divorce affects children. Since there is already so much research concerning the different causes and consequences of divorce, it has spurred a new interest in the topic of attraction. The goal of the future research is to examine the different types of attraction and how attraction affects the length and/or quality of a relationship. The study will focus on couples in different stages of marriage and examine the initial attraction in the relationship and then how attraction has changed over the years. This research would then be compared to attraction styles and relationships at ETBU.

Research Questions

- ❖ What are different types of attraction?
- ❖ How does attraction affect relationship longevity?
- ❖ How does attraction change over the years in a relationship?
- ❖ How does this research compare to couples at ETBU?

Significance of this Study

The initial goal of the project was to gain a better understanding of the growing trend of divorce that occurs in some 50% of marriages. Although the increase in divorce has leveled off in the 1990's it still does not explain why the increase began. The current research on the topic of divorce examines many causes of divorces including marital infidelity, cohabitation before marriage, women entering the workforce, and divorce as a better alternative to marriage. However, these fail to explain why divorce has become more accepted in our society over the last 40 years and how this might affect the future.

Since there is such a plethora of information concerning divorce and what are potential causes, this spurred a new interest in future research to examine instead marriages that have endured and how a single factor, such as attraction, plays a role in this endurance. This interest came from an older Social Psychology¹ textbook, which explained why we are attracted to individuals whose presence is rewarding to us. The three major ways in which being with someone can be rewarding include rewarding behaviors, rewarding characteristics, and access to external awards. From this explanation the topic of attraction was initiated as to the importance of attraction in beginning a relationship and how it affects the longevity of a relationship.

The student hopes this study will only be the beginning of further studies into this topic as to the possibilities of exploring how a better knowledge of attraction and its effects might help marriages to stay intact instead of looking for alternatives such as divorce. The goal is not only to examine the general population but also to examine the effects of attraction for ETBU students. Since this is such a crucial time in the

¹ Brehm, Sharon; & Kassir, Saul. (1990). *Social Psychology*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

development of relationships and possible marriages the student would like to examine the dominant attraction styles for couples/individuals at ETBU and what role attraction plays in these relationships. Hopefully, the information gathered from this study will give students a better understanding of the importance of attraction in relationships and help to build stronger relationships.

Methodology

The goal of the future research is to study couples at different stages of marriage (newly-weds, 20 years of marriage, and 40 years of marriage) to examine attraction and how it has changed throughout the relationship. The study will include personal interviews with about 10 couples from each category using open-ended questions for evaluation. Phone interviews will be conducted if personal interviews are not possible. Then following a previously used method, a survey will be placed in a newspaper asking couples to respond, concerning attraction and relationships. The survey will be anonymous and more general than the personal interviews. Last, the same survey will be given to randomly selected students from ETBU used as the comparison of attraction styles and its effects.

Annotated Bibliography

Amato, Paul, & Rogers, Stacy. (1997, August). A longitudinal study of Marital Problems and subsequent divorce. Journal of Marriage & Family, 59(3), 612-624.
Presents a study that investigates the extent to which reports of marital problems in 1980 predicted divorce between 1980 and 1982. The study suggests that certain marital problems are a greater predictor of divorce, including cohabitation before marriage, women's employment, and gender differences.

Biblarz, Timothy; & Gottainer, Greg. 2000, May). Family Structure and Children's Success: A Comparison of Widowed and Divorced Single-Mother Families. Journal of Marriage & Family, 62(2), 533-548.
The study compares how children raised in single-mother families created by the death of the father compare to children raised in divorced single-mother families concerning levels of education, occupational statuses, and happiness in adulthood.

Booth, Alan; & Amato, Paul. (2001, February). Parental Pre-divorce Relations and offspring Post-divorce Well-Being. Journal of Marriage & Family, 63(1), 197-212.
Presents a 2-part study using national longitudinal interview data from parents and their adult child to examine the way in which pre-divorce marital conflict influences the impact of divorce on children.

Buss, David,; Shackelford, Todd; Kirkpatrick, Lee,; & Larsen, Randy. (2001, May). A Half Century of Mate Preferences: The Cultural Evolution of Values. Journal of Marriage & Family, 63(2), 491-503.
This study, first tested in 1393 and again in 1956 examined different preferences in selecting a mate. In the recent study both attraction and love climbed in importance for both sexes, while qualities such as domestic skills decreased.

Chen, Fang Fang; & Kenrick, Douglas. (2002). Repulsion of Attraction? Group Membership and Assumed Attitude Similarity. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 83, 111-125.
This study investigates how group membership effects similarity-attraction and dissimilarity-repulsion. It was found that attitude dissimilarity produced stronger repulsion effects for in-group than for out-group members in all studies.

Cohan, Catherine, & Kleinbaum, Stacy. (2002, February). Toward a greater Understanding of the Cohabitation Effect: Premarital Cohabitation and Marital Communication. Journal of Marriage & Family, 64(1), 180-192.
The study examines the relationship between premarital cohabitation experience and marital communication in an effort to understand the cohabitation effect. It suggests that marital communication may link cohabitation with marital instability.

Corliss, Richard/ & McLaughlin, Lisa. (2002, January). Does Divorce Hurt Kids? Time Atlantic, 159(4), 44-46.
Explores the question of whether divorce and its aftermath leave scars that linger in children throughout adolescence and into adulthood.

Critelli, Joseph; & Dupre, Kathleen. (1978). Self-Disclosure and Romantic Attraction. Journal of Social Psychology, 106, 127-128.

Self-disclosure is an integral part in the process through which people become acquainted and establish personal relationships. This study suggests that self-disclosure plays a causative role in producing the intense emotions of romantic love.

Hall, David, & Zhao, John. (1995, May). Cohabitation and divorce in Canada: Testing the selectivity hypothesis. Journal of Marriage & Family, 57(2), 421-427.

This study examines the connection between premarital cohabitation and risk of divorce in Canada. It shows that cohabiting with one's first spouse does not enhance first marital stability and that the cohabitation effect in Canada is quite strong.

Mahl, David. (2000, March/April). The Upside of Divorce. Psychology Today, 33(2), 16-17.

Explores the psychological impact of divorce on children. Surveys how divorce influenced children's romantic lives and the advice given to divorced parents on how to relate with their children.

Maller, Allen. (1992). Reducing the risks of divorce: A responsibility of religious Educators. Religious Education, 87(3), 471-478.

Focuses on the role of religious educators in reducing the risks of divorce. The research shows that religious couples are less likely to get divorced than non-religious couples, as well as the benefits of marrying a spouse with the same religious beliefs.

McClanahan, Kimberly; & Gold, Joel. (1990, August). Infatuation and attraction to a Dissimilar other: why is love blind? Journal of Social Psychology, 130(4), 433-445.

This experiment attempts to increase understanding of the "love is blind" phenomenon. The research suggests that infatuation in an aroused state and this arousal is a causal agent in the infatuated person's failure to follow the traditional rules of interpersonal attraction by rejecting those who differ attitudinally.

Richardson, Stacey; & McCabe, Marita. (2001). Parental Divorce During Adolescence and Adjustment in Early Adulthood. Adolescence, 36, (143), 467-489.

This study examines the relationship between parental divorce during adolescence and the psychosocial adjustment of young adults.

South, Scott. (2001, August). The Geographic Context of Divorce: Do Neighborhoods Matter? Journal of Marriage & Family, 63(3), 755-766.

This study examines how geography affects marriages. Specifically, it examines how the longevity of marriages compares from lower socioeconomic families to high socioeconomic families.

Shortz, Joianne; & Worthington Jr., Everett. (1994, June). Young adults' recall religiosity, attributions, and coping in parental divorce. Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 33(2), 172-179.

This study examines the role of religion in coping with stress in terms of the theoretical framework of religion and coping and the attribution theory. The study was given to university students who experienced their parents' divorce during adolescence.

Thomson, E, & Colella, U. (1992, May). Cohabitation and marital stability: Quality or Commitment? Journal of Marriage & Family, 54(2), 259-267.

This article uses data from the 1987-88 National Survey of Families and households to examine whether couples who cohabitated before marriage reported lower quality marriages, lower commitment to marriage, more individualistic view of marriage, and greater likely of divorce than couple who did not cohabit.

Thornton, Arland, & Young-DeMarco, Linda. (2001, November). Four Decades of Trends in Attitudes Toward Family Issues in the United States: The 1960s-the1990s. Journal of Marriage & Family, 63(4), 1009-1038.

This article examines trends in family attitudes and values across the last 4 decades. Concerning divorce, this article suggests that divorce has become more accepted, while the majority still believe marriage is for a lifetime and should not be ended except under extreme circumstances.

White, L.K., (1990, November) Determinants of divorce: A review of research in the Eighties. Journal of Marriage & Family, 52(4), 904-912.

This article studies work published in the 1980s that concerns the causes of divorce. The article breaks the research into three main categories and compares the research in each category, individually.

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The Effects and Affects of Divorce

Over the past couple of decades, researchers have tried to explain the origin and affects of divorce. However, when researching the topic, it became obvious that there is no one reason for divorce, nor is there any one explanation that can be generalized to all families. Most researchers have found a strong correlation between conflict resolution and the decision of divorce, but there are other effects on divorce including cohabitation and religion, however, there are also affects of divorce such as how it effects children.

Divorce has become a recent trend in research over the past four decades. It has been statistically shown that divorce has skyrocketed from 32% in 1970 to 44% in 1998 (Commerce Department of Census Bureau, 1998). A study performed by Thornton and Young-Demarco (2001) tried to explain the change in family issues from the 1960s to the 1990s. Since it has been shown that divorces have increased dramatically from the 1960s, there should also be a change in attitude about divorce. This study found that couples became much more approving of divorce between 1962 and 1977; however, the percentage of respondents approving of divorce remained steady from 1987 to 1992. This study shows that during the 1960s and 1970s there was a decrease in the belief that marriage was a life-long commitment. A reason for this decline of marriage commitment is that people no longer feel optimistic about marriage and its longevity (2001).

Origin and Causes of Divorce

It has been found when researching divorce and the causes of divorce there is no one explanation alone that can be attributed to all families. One account that has been explored about why marriages dissolve is that it seems that there are better alternatives to marriage (White, 1990; Booth and Amato, 2001). This shows that divorce reflects

consideration of alternatives and barriers and is far from being a simple reflection of marital happiness. As noted by Booth and Amato (2001),

According to this perspective, individuals may be moderately satisfied with a current relationship, but if they perceive weak barriers to leaving the relationships and if they believe that superior alternatives to the relationship exist, then their commitment to the relationship will be low.

This statement seems to show that some individuals find more satisfying and rewarding alternatives than the marriage relationship. They focus on these alternatives and put little effort into marriage itself and eventually choose to dissolve it.

A reason better alternatives have become a trend in divorce rates could have something to do with the amount of women entering the paid work force. There has been a correlation between more women entering the work force and the amount of divorces each year (White, 1990). It has been found that female labor participation reduces marital stability (White, 1990; Amato and Rogers, 1997; Booth and Amato, 2001). A reason for this can be that when wives are employed it makes it easier for either spouse to leave the marriage. When gender roles give women more economic independence from men and families, women have more freedom to divorce. According to White (1990), "Recent economic changes have undermined the social and economic forces that maintained the institution of marriage." This may be due to the fact that when women are earning their own living they feel that they don't need to depend on their husband and when there are problems in their relationship, the idea of making their own living or an *alternative lifestyle is more appealing*.

There are several topics that have been found to have an effect on divorce, but these topics have not been experimented on alone. Although they have not been

experimented in an in-depth study, their findings are significant to further studies on divorce. One of these topics is the actual age when a marriage takes place. It has been found that the younger a couple is upon marriage, the more likely they are to divorce (White, 1990; Amato & Rogers, 1997; South, 2001). Along with the age of marriage, the duration of marriage is a factor. The longer the marriage lasts, the less likely it is that the marriage will dissolve (White, 1990; Amato and Rogers, 1997; Booth and Amato, 2001; Scott, 2001). When studying what respondents have said about their marital problems, another highly cited cause is extramarital sex, making it the most commonly cited cause of marital dissolution (White, 1990; Amato and Rogers, 1997; Thornton and Young-Demarco, 2001).

When looking at divorce many believe that divorced families are caused by high conflict and no means of resolution. However, not all families divorce because of high conflict. There are a number of couples that divorce from low-conflict marriages. It is thought that these marriages end because of their level of commitment. A study done by Booth and Amato (2001) studied levels of commitment and how they affect divorce. This study concludes that the two main levels that cause problems in marriages are moral and structural commitment. This study examined four general factors that reflect low moral and structural commitment: weak community integration, nontraditional attitudes, risk-taking, and economic independence. When studying community integration, the study examined if the individuals owned their own homes, lived in the community for a long time, had many friends, and is affiliated with a religious organization. It was found that couples who weren't well integrated into the local community in these areas lack the network and structural barriers that prevent them from divorce. In studying

nontraditional attitudes, the respondents were asked how accepting they were of divorce. The findings suggested that people with accepting attitudes about divorce do not perceive divorce as an ethical issue and have lower moral commitment to their marriage. Risk-taking was defined by individuals who are willing to risk the marriage at the slight sign of problems, and was found that these individuals have a low structural commitment to their marriage. The last part of the study concerning economic independence found results consistent with many experiments; when women enter the work force there is a great increase in divorce, due to financial independence. This study shows that low conflict divorces are related to low moral and structural commitment, rather than a lack of conflict resolution skills.

Another study examined whether or not geographic regions affect divorce, focusing especially on disadvantaged neighborhoods. South (2001) performed this experiment hypothesizing that lower socioeconomic neighborhoods would have a higher rate of divorce. The study analyzed 6 measures of disadvantaged neighborhoods and how they affected divorce: the poverty rate, percentage of families receiving public assistance, male joblessness rate, percentage of families without high incomes, percentage of residents age 25 and older without a college education, and percentage of workers who are not in managerial or professional occupations. The experiment found that in a given year about 2% of the marriages at risk actually dissolved. Also, it was discovered that the risk of divorce decreased with wife's age at marriage and educational attainment, and increased with the number of hours she worked (a finding consistent with other experiments). Also, the husband's education and income are inversely associated with the risk of divorce. A slight difference was also found among couples living in

metropolitan areas, who showed a slightly higher risk of divorce. However, South concluded that the cause of the divorce was not necessarily attributed to the neighborhood, as much as it could be attributed to the fact that there was a higher concentration of low-income husbands in the disadvantaged neighborhoods, and low-incomes proved to be a far better explanation for the divorce rate. As stated by South (2001),

High rates of marital instability may be more common in disadvantaged neighborhoods not because of any impact of neighborhood status or culture, but because poor people have higher divorce rates wherever they live, and their concentration in poor neighborhoods leads to a higher observed divorce rates in these communities.

This states that there is a correlation that can be found between high divorce rates and lower socioeconomic neighborhoods. Although this study did not prove that disadvantaged neighborhoods cause higher divorce rates, it did give beneficial information to the fact that lower income occupations for the husband can be attributed to higher divorce rates.

Cohabitation and Divorce

Cohabitation is defined as a couple living together without entering marriage, whether it's being prior to marriage or never resulting in marriage. Most people who cohabit feel that it will help their relationship by getting to know their partner on a new level. However, the studies have found that cohabitation has an adverse affect from what couples expected. Cohabitation has greatly increased since the 1970s. Cohan and Kleinbaum (2002) state that in 1996 approximately 4 million couples cohabited, twice the amount of those in 1970. Thornton and Young-Demarco (2001) illustrated how beliefs changed from the 1960s to the 1990s. Their results show that cohabitation was extremely

limited in the 1960s, but in recent decades has increased dramatically among both the older and younger generations. Cohabitation has increased from 11% between 1965-1974 to 44% between 1980-1984. It was reported in the mid 1970s more than half of all high school seniors reported that a man and woman living together before marriage were “doing their own thing and not affecting anyone else”, while another one-fifth said that cohabitation was “experimenting with a worthwhile alternative lifestyle.” The study also showed that mothers also expressed a more positive view towards cohabitation in 1993 than they did in 1985. This trend has been seen to increase throughout each new generation with no sign of slowing down. It seems that cohabitation has become more of a stage in dating than just an alternative lifestyle.

Contrary to the original thought that cohabitation would increase the longevity of a relationship, it has been found to decrease the likelihood of a relationship lasting (White, 1990; Thomson and Colella, 1992; Hall and Zhao, 1995; Amato and Rogers, 1997; Cohan and Kleinbaum, 2002). This counter instinctive association between premarital cohabitation and divorce is called the “cohabitation effect.” Considerable evidence has found that “cohabiters are a select group of people” which differentiate them from noncohabiters (Thomson and Colella, 1992; Hall and Zhao, 1995; Cohan and Kleinbaum, 2002). This is because people who cohabit have more characteristics of divorce. For example, they have parents that divorced, less education, lower income, being non-white, being of a younger age, and having been married before (Cohan and Kleinbaum, 2002). People who are willing to cohabit have an already nontraditional view of relationships, marriage, and have a greater acceptance of divorce.

Another strong explanation is that a cohabitation relationship can have a direct negative impact on marital stability. This idea focuses more on the cohabitation experience and not the individual people (Thomson and Colella, 1992; Hall and Zhao, 1995; Cohan and Kleinbaum, 2002). The reason behind this is that when people are already living together as in a marriage, when they do get married they feel less satisfied in the “new” marriage relationship. As suggested by Hall and Zhao (1995), “...living in a common-law union could undermine the legitimacy of formal marriage and make divorce seem more palatable if one runs into marital difficulty at some future date.” Along the same lines, there is evidence that cohabitating reduces commitment to a marriage, making divorce a strong alternative.

Another aspect of cohabitation is that researchers have come to agree that cohabitation has been found to develop a more negative and less positive problem solving ability. (Cohan and Kleinbaum, 2002). Of all behaviors identified with a healthy marriage, marital problem solving was the strongest predictor of marital satisfaction and stability. “Two separate lines of research have consistently shown that cohabitation and marital communication are each related to marital instability” (2002). Since it is seen that cohabiters are a select group, it is possible to see that those who decide to cohabit rather than marry perceive themselves and the relationship as poorer risks in terms of long-term commitment and happiness (Thomson and Colella, 1992). Because these relationships are not a legal marriage, it is easy to ignore a conflict and hope it goes away instead of trying to work it out for the benefit of the relationship.

When looking at the relationship of cohabiters, it is likely to see two individuals in a relationship rather than seeing two halves of a relationship (like a marriage). Those

who view a relationship in individualistic terms rather than two halves in a whole will be less committed to the institution of marriage (Thomson and Colella, 1992). Because cohabiters are less committed to the institution itself, they are therefore more likely to dissolve a problematic marriage. Therefore, because cohabiters have a less traditional view of marriage, have less conflict resolution skills, and see themselves more as individuals than a half, the relationships of cohabiters are seen to have a decrease in longevity.

Religion and Divorce

Many believe that a deterrent to divorce is religious belief. Although this is a belief of most individuals, it is a topic that has not been greatly studied. It has been found that the more religious a couple is, the less likely they are to divorce (Maller, 1992). An explanation for this is that people who hold religious values have a more traditional view of marriage. There is a substantial difference in the percentages of divorce in the Christian denomination as opposed to those with no religious affiliation. The percent of those who are divorced Catholics is 9.6%, those who are divorced Protestants is 16.8%, and those with no religious affiliation is 25.0% (Maller, 1992). Although this can be seen as a product of the beliefs of the denominations and that they don't allow divorce, the percentages of those who are "divorced plus dissatisfied" in their marriages is still a large difference. The percentage of Catholics that are "divorced plus dissatisfied" in their marriage is 18.6%, the percentage of Protestants is 21.8%, and the percentage that has no religious affiliation is 41.0%. These statistics show that there is a substantial difference between those who are Christian and those that claim no religious affiliation.

Another explanation for how religion affects divorce is that those who have a religious belief claim to be more satisfied in their marriage (White, 1990; Maller, 1992; Amato and Rogers, 1997). 14 out of 18 sociological studies showed a positive relationship between religiosity and marital satisfaction (Maller, 1992). Those who have a religious belief find a deeper cause in the institution of marriage. Most find that their marriage serves as a commitment to God and as are less likely to divorce except in extreme circumstances. Also, those who believe in God also believe that their marriage was “divinely ordained” and that breaking the bond with their spouse would be breaking the life God for choose them to live.

Although the topic of divorce hasn't been studied in-depth in regards to religion, it has been found to be an issue when studying other factors of divorce. A correlation between religion and a lower divorce rate has been found in several studies that were simply looking for explanations of divorce (Shortz and Worthington, 1994; Amato and Rogers, 1997). When people gave reasons for why they didn't divorce, or why the divorce was difficult, many times religious values were discussed. So, although there hasn't been much study done over religion and divorce, it is a topic that will probably be studied more in the future with findings inclusive to the findings to these studies.

Divorce and Children

A main concern of divorce is how it negatively affects children. Many studies have shown that divorce has a negative affect on a child. Many researchers conclude that it is better for any child to live in a two-parent home than to live in a single-parent home (Booth and Amato, 2001; Biblarz and Gottainer, 2000). The reason for this is because when children live with both parents they will learn about the structure of authority

relations and about how to interact with these authority figures. Also, they will learn the nature of a relationship and how couples should relate and behavior with each other (Biblarz and Gottainer, 2000). Another reason two parent families are more successful for children is that two parents can be more efficient in providing time and money in a complementary factor. As stated by Biblarz and Gottainer (2000), "Children from any type of single-mother household will lack the economic resources that fathers provide, and so they will not do as well as children from two-parent families."

Often, studies have found that problems children have occurring with divorce do not necessarily come from the divorce, as much as it is attributed to the relationships the children have with their parents before and after the divorce (Mahl, 2000; Richardson and McCade, 2001). "...studies have indicated that a positive parent-child relationship can act as a buffer against the impact that divorce...has on adjustment," (Richardson and McCade, 2001). This idea states that when children have a strong relationship with their parents before marriage, the effects of divorce are not as harsh as when children have a bad relationship. Some will attribute this idea to the fact that many children blame themselves for their parents break-up, but when a child has a strong relationship with their parents they understand the true reasons behind the divorce (Shortz and Worthington, 1994). Other studies suggest that a strong parent relationship has a greater impact against the effects of divorce because when a child and parent have open communication, they have better psychological well being and have a stronger sense of security in their own lives (Biblarz and Gottainer, 2000; Booth and Amato, 2001; Richardson and McCabe, 2001). Hence, the current theory suggests that negative effects of divorce are due to parent-child relationships, and not just the harm of a divorce.

One suggestion has been made by some research that most of the negative effects that do plague divorce, come from the actual process of divorce and not the institution of divorce itself (Booth and Amato, 2001; Campbell, 2001; Richardson and McCabe, 2001). Many times when children are dragged through the process of divorce it is found that they have to choose sides about which parent to follow. This causes disharmony in the relationship of the child with one parent, and forces the child to choose a side about matters that do not involve them. "It has been suggested that the parent-child relationship with one parent can act as a buffer against the stress and disruption resulting from the divorce process, whereas a close bond to both or neither parent does not appear to act as a buffer," (Richardson and McCabe, 2001). The reason behind this is that when a child has the bond with only one parent they do not experience the pressures of dealing with loyalty conflicts, which lowers the levels of anxiety about possibly abandoning one parent. Shortz and Worthington (1994) found that when parents are experiencing a divorce there is an increased likelihood they will fight and cause more conflict in the family which has been shown to increase the stress levels of a child and in turn make the divorce process more harmful to children. So in many cases, the actual process of a divorce can potentially cause the greatest harm to a child, than the institution of divorce alone.

Many times a single-parent household is considered to be harmful to a child whether it be caused by the death of one parent or caused by parental divorce. A study conducted by Biblarz and Gottainer (2000) found this hypothesis to be false. A single-parent family caused by divorce had more detrimental affects on children than a single-parent family caused by death of a parent. It was found that children

raised in single-mother families produced by divorce were more likely to not complete high school, lower odds of entering and graduating from college, a lower average occupational status, and a lower level of happiness even in adulthood. One explanation may be that when children lose their father to death they will tend to build fond memories of their father and the time they spent together, while children who lose their father to divorce may build resentment towards him because of the feeling of abandonment.

Another explanation given for why divorce may have a more negative effect than the death of a parent is due to the fact that when a couple divorces the amount of money a single-parent will receive is substantially less than that of a widowed single-parent. Widows with dependent children are entitled to social security and survivor's benefits, which provides money for the child until the age of 18. However, the only program for divorced mothers is AFDC, and to be eligible for the program the woman has to be single, and has to have depleted any liquid assets from the divorce, and must prove a standard of living below the poverty level. Because divorced mothers feel so much stress about monetary issues, they have more likely to speak ill of the father, which gives the children a bad idea of the father, and also the women feels less secure about herself as a provider and this feeling is rubbed off onto the children. This study helped to prove that there is a difference in divorced families and that the affects of divorce affect a child in more than just a general single-parent family would.

On the other hand, while there are many studies that show the negative affects of divorce on children, there also have been a numerous amounts of studies

that show the positive affects of divorce on children. These studies state that when a child is living in a high-conflict family, it is better for the parents to divorce and diminish the conflict than to stay married and drag children through years of fighting (Booth and Amato, 2001; Campbell, 2001; Richardson and McCade, 2001; Corliss and McLaughlin, 2002). "...children reported relief and a belief that the divorce was 'for the best.' Those children who reported relief tended to come from the most conflicted family environment prior to divorce," (Booth and Amato, 2001). This statement summarizes the idea that when children are living with parents who have conflicts often, a divorce is often a relief from the fighting and found to be the better choice. Although in general it is thought that a divorce can only be detrimental to a child, these studies have shown that in some cases a divorce is considered an improvement in the home life, especially by the children themselves. Even though this exact topic of divorce and children has not been studied significantly, it does serve a purpose in showing that new areas of divorce need to be studied, and that not all divorce cases can be generalized to all families.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it has been found that divorce is an increasing trend since the 1960s. From this trend, many origins of divorce have been analyzed. A large part of these divorces are caused by couples finding alternatives to the marriage and have a lower commitment to the institution of marriage. Another trend that has increased over the past few decades is the amount of couples that choose to cohabitate. Although these couples believe that cohabitation will have a positive affect on their relationship, this theory has been proven false with the opposite

occurring. Other studies have explained the affect that religion has on divorce.

Although this area of divorce needs to be explored more, the current findings have discovered that the more religious a couple is the less likely they are to divorce.

The last area of research discussed pertains to how divorce affects children. It has been found that divorce does have a negative affect on children, but this is not necessarily due to the institution of divorce as much as it is to the relationship between a parent and child.

Overall, studies that have been performed on divorce are limited, but they do give great possible explanations for many areas in divorce. However, the difficulty of studying divorce is that there is no one explanation that can explain why a marriage ends in divorce, nor is there any one answer that can be generalized to all families. So, the answers that do come of divorce are more possible explanations of their causes, than exhaustive explanations. But it can be said that these possible explanations help us understand a growing trend in our society, divorce overall.

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HONORS RESEARCH IN PSYCHOLOGY

(Psy. 4190)

Course Description: An initial, exploratory research project will be conducted to examine possible causes of divorce and psychological sources of interpersonal attraction.

Course Objectives:

1. Provide a wider range of opportunity for students to learn science by doing it.
2. Provide a discover-oriented experience in learning consistent with the liberal arts goal of providing students with the means and motivation to educate themselves.
3. Enhance critical thinking skills through design and execution of experiments, analysis and interpretation of data, development of theoretical models, and engagement with the scientific literature. The principles of independent problem-solving that are learned by doing research have broad application.
4. Develop written communication skills. As good science, the results of this research should culminate in a report of near publishable quality.
5. Utilize a close student-mentor relationship to add depth to the breadth of the standard curriculum. When students and teachers are research colleagues - neither one knowing the answers to all the questions they pose, but both caring about finding them - the process of science can be learned as in no other way. Such experiences often provide the spark that lights the fire of enthusiasm in aspiring students.

Course Requirements:

1. Reading assignments will be made to allow the student to become knowledgeable of all important variables relevant to the proposed research, and to facilitate an analysis of the present state of knowledge with regard to the question under investigation.
2. Working with the instructor, students will formulate an original research hypothesis, design an experimental test for the hypothesis, conduct a statistical analysis of the results, and write a formal report describing all aspects of the project as it was conducted.
3. Students will meet with the research director weekly to discuss assignments and to develop plans for implementing successive stages of the proposed research.