

THE IMPACT OF FAMILY DYNAMIC ON PERCEPTIONS OF MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

by

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Abstract

It has been found that individuals with a non-intact family dynamic often report a lower level of well-being, relationship confidence, decision making, relationship satisfaction, and a more external locus of control than those raised in an intact family dynamic. Furthermore, young adults from a non-intact family can have a more negative attitude toward marriage than young adults from an intact family. The current study sought to support previous literature findings in examining individual levels of well-being, locus of control, deciding, as well as relationship confidence and satisfaction. Individual attitudes toward marriage and divorce were also measured in order to determine if there were variances in attitudes of those raised in differing family dynamics. Additionally, the current study used narratives describing characters from an intact and non-intact family dynamic, to determine the perception the participant had of the character in the narrative. This can be used to understand whether previous personal experience reflects on or influences the participant's attitudes and perceptions of family dynamic forms.

The results showed that females from a non-intact family dynamic reported lower levels of well-being than females from an intact family dynamic, whereas males were found to have lower levels of relationship confidence, deciding, and relationship satisfaction compared to females regardless of their family dynamic. Additionally, attitudes toward marriage were significantly higher than attitudes toward divorce overall. Finally, the non-intact family dynamic was perceived as significantly more negative than the intact family dynamic regardless of the participant's own dynamic.

This study helps to develop a better understanding of how being raised in an intact versus non-intact family household could influence an individual's perspective of themselves, narrative characters, attitudes toward differing family dynamics, and their confidence in interpersonal relationships.

Keywords: Family Dynamic, Divorce, Marriage, Relationships, Narrative, Intact, Non-Intact.

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The Impact of Family Dynamic on Perceptions of Marriage and Divorce

Public opinion towards the sanctity of marriage and attitudes towards divorce have drastically altered over the course of only a few decades (Brown & Wright, 2016). Rates of divorce have been increasing since the 1960's (Brown & Wright, 2016; Robinson, 2000). In 1974, the number of marriages that ended in divorce surpassed those that ended in death (Robinson, 2000). In fact, Potter (2010) found that approximately half of all marriages now end in divorce. In Canada, research has found that based on tax data, the actual divorce rate may be increasingly underestimated due to divorced individuals underreporting their relationship status as divorced (Margolis, Choi, Hou & Haan, 2019). In the United States alone, the number of children that experience their parents' divorce is over one million (Haimi & Lerner, 2016). As a result, people are waiting longer before marrying for the first time (Eype, 2016). In 1890, the median age for a man to marry was 26 years old, and 22 years for a woman. As of 2015, that median has risen to 29 years for a man and 27 years for a woman (Eype, 2016). The mean age of Canadian adults has also risen, from 23.5 in 1965 to 28.5 in 2011 (Margolis, 2016). Furthermore, Segrin (2002) found that although young adults express a desire to enter into a long-term marriage, the majority are not very hopeful that their future marriage will last.

As a result of increasing rates of divorce, decreasing rates of marriage, and delayed age at first marriage, the number of children being born to unmarried parents has more than doubled since the 1980s (Vanorman & Scommegna, 2016). Statistics Canada (2016) has reported that the nuclear family dynamic is no longer the norm in Canada, but rather a diverse mix of family ties including living alone, divorce and remarriage, stepchildren, and multiple generations living in one home are now a more typical make up of a family dynamic. When divorce and separation were relatively uncommon early in the 20th Century, mothers were almost always granted custody of their children as it reflected on the parenting arrangements within the marriage. However, as

the divorce rate rose, maternal care was no longer assumed, and the court process was introduced in order to make decisions regarding childcare (Bala et. al., 2017). It is now more common for children to be raised by a single parent, cohabiting parents, or by stepparents, rather than in a dual parent household. The General Social Survey is a Canadian survey that gathers social trends in order to monitor changes in living conditions and well being of Canadians over time. In 2011, 70% of parents that completed the survey reported that the mother's home was the child's primary residence, whereas only 15% of parents reported their child(ren) living mainly with their father (Sinha, 2014). Under Canadian law, "shared custody" occurs when each parent is responsible for the child at least 40% of the time, whereas "shared parenting" encompasses a range of arrangements that involve both parents significantly as fathers have taken on more childcare responsibility over time (Bala et. al., 2017). Questions have been proposed by researchers regarding the consequences of such living arrangements during childhood. It is important to examine how family dynamics during childhood can impact perceptions and have lasting effects into adulthood.

Although the majority of research compares married and divorced couples, it is important to also acknowledge the large diversity in family dynamic. The term "non-intact" when referring to family dynamic can include single parents, blended or extended families, as well as any other non-traditional dynamic that varies from the traditional nuclear family consisting of a mother and father figure in the home (Amato, 1993). Research into the implications specific to divorce have continually shown that young adults who were raised in a non-intact family dynamic have a much lower level of well-being compared to individuals who were raised in an intact family dynamic (Cherlin, Chase-Lansdale & McRae, 1997; Manning & Lamb, 2003; Potter, 2010). More specifically, individuals with a non-intact family dynamic have been found to have a lower quality of life, less education, lower paying jobs, and a more negative perception on their ability

to attain a successful relationship (Cherlin, Chase-Lansdale & McRae, 1997; Manning & Lamb, 2003; Potter, 2010).

Whitton and colleagues (2008) found that young adults raised in a non-intact household have a more negative attitude toward marriage than young adults raised within an intact family dynamic. The findings of this study showed that individuals from non-intact families had less confidence that marriages can remain stable and happy over an extended period of time. These individuals tended to show less personal relationship commitment later in life, which resulted in an increased likelihood of divorce in their own relationships. Therefore, the trend of divorce tends to be passed on to children, and has been deemed the intergenerational transmission of divorce, as research has shown that children raised in non-intact families tend to also have non-intact families in their adult life (Amato, 1996; Gager, Yabiku, & Linver, 2016).

Research has demonstrated that children raised in a non-intact dynamic experience a number of maladaptive effects during childhood, such as higher rates of mental illness and problem behaviours (Potter, 2010). In addition, children from non-intact families are significantly more likely to have negative self-cognitions and poor school performance (DeBell, 2007). They tend to struggle to develop adaptive coping mechanisms to manage stress and are therefore more likely to express feeling suicidal thoughts and involvement with the criminal justice system (Xiaosong, Xiaojie & Xiangkui, 2007). Furthermore, the impact of parental divorce appears to have a continuing effect on a child's overall well-being throughout their lifetime. For example, studies have demonstrated that young adults raised within a non-intact family dynamic, who have become independent of their parents, have lower psychological well-being, more depressive symptoms, and are more likely to have an income below the poverty line (Cherlin, Chase-Lansdale, McRae, 1997; Potter, 2010; Ribar, 2015). Thus, the impacts of divorce on a child reach far beyond the impact on their future relationships.

The goal of this research was to determine whether individuals perceive those who come from non-intact families as more negative, as well as to determine whether personal experiences with marriage/divorce can impact these perceptions. The use of character narratives is also examined. For the purpose of this study, the intact family dynamic variable is comprised of individuals who were raised in a home with two biological parents who remained in a stable relationship for the duration of their childhood. Whereas the non-intact family dynamic variable is comprised of individuals who were raised by single parents, step-parents, grandparents, or foster parents. The current review of the literature is of the impact of family dynamic on perceptions of marriage and divorce while taking into consideration gender differences. The paper begins with a review of well-being, locus of control, decision making, and relationship confidence and satisfaction. Then the method and results are described, followed by a critical discussion of the results and future direction of the research.

The Impact of Childhood Family Dynamic on Overall Well-Being

The concept of well-being encompasses a person's physical and mental health, socioeconomic status, sense of achievement, as well as any other factors that influence their life satisfaction (Manning & Lamb, 2003; Potter, 2010). Overall well-being of children and young adults has been shown to be impacted by having a non-intact family dynamic. Research has shown that of single parent households, over 80% are single mothers (Statistics Canada, 2016). In the United States, approximately 36% of children live without their biological fathers (DeBell, 2007). DeBell (2007) researched the differences between children living with and without their biological fathers and how that affected their overall well-being. Children with an absent father experience reduced well-being—lower levels of health, lower academic achievement, and fewer educational experiences. In comparison, children from an intact family dynamic tended to be healthier and were less likely to have been suspended from school or repeat a grade.

Manning and Lamb (2003) compared the well-being of children in cohabiting or re-married non-biological parent families (non-intact family dynamic) with children living with two biological married parents (intact family dynamic). The focus of this study was to demonstrate how differing family structure influences child well-being. It was found that children from cohabiting or remarried parent families have much lower ratings of well-being than children from two biological parent families. The same finding was true when controlling for the number of siblings whether natural or blended. This demonstrates the importance of having not only a two parent household, but having two biological parents raising their children. The well-being of children and young adults can thus be affected in multiple ways when subjected to a non-intact family dynamic, which demonstrates the importance of research in this area and further understanding of the impact of family dynamic.

In relation to education, children and young adults from a non-intact family dynamic express lower academic achievement and worse educational experiences (DeBell, 2007). Research in this area is based on a divorced family dynamic, which resulted in a single parent raising the children. DeBell (2007) found that when the father was absent from the household, children had lower academic achievement, and were less involved in school activities. Children from a non-intact family dynamic also had an increased likelihood of being expelled or suspended from school (DeBell, 2007). A potential explanation for this finding may be that single parents have less time to spend with their child resulting in poorer quality communication and interactions between the child and parent. The parental authority structure may be weaker and this may translate into the child having less respect for authority figures in school or within the community. Furthermore, the parent may have less time and finances to devote to their child's education and extracurricular activities leaving more time to engage in delinquent behaviour (Amato, 1993).

Potter (2010) studied the psychosocial well-being of children, and the relationship between divorce and academic achievement. Results suggested that divorce is associated with lowered psychosocial well-being in children, and that this decrease assists in explaining the connection between divorce and diminished academic achievement (Potter, 2010). More specifically, when using the Early Child Longitudinal Study – Kindergarten (ECLS-K), it was found that children of non-intact families have an average academic score of 32.49 (SD=10.21) in math and 39.33 (SD=11.26) in reading, whereas their peers from intact families scored 35.25 (SD=11.99) and 42.58 (SD=14.50) in math and reading, respectively. This measurement was taken at a time within before a divorce or separation of parents occurred in the child's lives, indicating that the family dynamic and parent-relationship quality had an impact on educational performance even before separation or divorce occurred. The differences in scores represent that children who experienced a non-intact family dynamic also had lower scores on measures of math and reading than same-age peers from an intact family dynamic. The same measurements were taken again later in the child's life within 5 years after the divorce or separation occurred, demonstrating a larger discrepancy between children of intact compared to non-intact families. This gap in scores only increased over time, exhibiting that divorce exaggerates educational inequalities between these two groups of children (Potter, 2010). In relation to psychosocial well-being, an individual from a non-intact family dynamic has lowered levels, which could possibly lead to more difficulty interacting with their peers and developing social relationships with others their age (Potter, 2010). This demonstrates that a change in family dynamic can have major implications on an individual's life.

Another study examined adolescent aspirations and success in post-secondary education based on family dynamic (Nybroten, 2016). It was found that family structure did have an impact on an individual's success in post-secondary education. More specifically, women with a non-

intact family dynamic were less likely to enter, as well as to complete college. Depending on family dynamic type, women experienced a 50% decrease in the odds of succeeding in college in comparison to individuals from intact families (Nybroten, 2016). Additionally, men who experienced a change in family dynamic in their adolescent years also experienced a decrease in success and lower odds related to college entry and completion. However, this was only true until academic preparation was accounted for in the analysis, meaning that males who adequately prepared for post-secondary education were able to succeed regardless of their family dynamic. This is an interesting finding, as women who encountered the same change in family dynamic continued to experience difficulty in post-secondary education regardless of level of preparation, which suggests that impact of a non-intact family dynamic may be more salient for women. Ham (2003) also found that family structure impacts both the grade point average and attendance of high school students. This study found that adolescents from intact families outperformed those students from other family structures. These results were also more pronounced for females. The results of these studies therefore suggest that females are more impacted by having a non-intact family dynamic in terms of academic success.

Scabini and Cigoli (2004) analyzed how young adults are affected by the divorce of their parents during childhood. They found that there are gender specific effects of divorce. Firstly, males are found to more frequently display externalizing problems associated with behaviour and conduct. Males are also more likely to drop out of school than females. In comparison, females often struggle internally with issues related to anxiety and depression. Females also struggle more significantly than males with forming meaningful relationships in adulthood and often report lower levels of relationship satisfaction in young adulthood. Females are more likely to report a fear of betrayal and abandonment and distrust in their romantic partners. Therefore, it is apparent that

gender differences exist in the impact of parental divorce on childhood well-being, and aspects of relationship formation and maintenance.

Fuller-Thomson and Dalton (2011) explored whether individuals from divorced parents would be more likely to express suicidal ideation in adulthood with a gender-specific scope. They found that men from non-intact families had more than twice the odds of suicidal ideation in comparison to men from intact families. However, they found that the association between parental dynamic and suicidal ideation was non-significant for women when controlling for other adverse childhood experiences (i.e. physical, verbal or sexual abuse, neglect, witnessing domestic violence, etc.). Interestingly, although it has been less researched, parental divorce has also been found to increase risk for long-term physical health outcomes. Fuller-Thomson and Dalton (2015) also found that males from a non-intact family dynamic were at a significantly greater risk for stroke in adulthood after controlling for various stroke risk factors (i.e. age, income, health behaviours, etc.). In comparison, the same risk was not found for women.

In summary, well-being during adolescence and adulthood is influenced by family dynamic during childhood. The likelihood of pursuing, succeeding and reporting positive experiences in post-secondary studies appear to be influenced by the family dynamic, as well as overall mental health, resilience and adjustment. The research also suggests gender differences regarding the impact of parental divorce during childhood.

The Impact of Childhood Family Dynamic on Perceived Locus of Control and Decision Making

Locus of control is considered to be the degree to which a person believes that they have control over the events in their lives, as opposed to external forces that are not affected by their own actions (Fogas et. al., 1992). A person can be said to have an internal or external perceived locus of control—internal meaning that they can influence the outcome of the event (ex. “I did not study hard enough so I failed the test”) and external meaning that they do not influence the

outcome of the event (ex. “the test was too hard so I failed”). In terms of divorce, a child with an internal locus of control may blame themselves for their parents’ separation, while a child with an external locus of control would see the event as outside of their control.

Previous research has found that children who were exposed to negative divorce-related events during childhood (ex. parental conflict—physical and verbal), are significantly more likely to have a decreased perception of control in their own lives (Fogas et al., 1992; Wiehe, 1984). In turn, these individuals are found to have adjustment problems, such as feelings of anxiety and helplessness. Individuals with higher levels of perceived control tend to try different coping strategies and change their approach to situations to change the outcome of a negative event. Research suggests that individuals with an internal locus of control may be less likely to divorce and more likely to have confidence in their own relationship (Fogas et al., 1992). In comparison, individuals with an external locus of control often believe that no matter what they do their actions will not change the situation, which makes them more likely to give up and end their relationships when conflict arises (Fogas et al., 1992). Parish and Boyd (1983) examined whether a college student’s family dynamic, marital status, or gender influenced locus of control. They found that among these factors, only family dynamic significantly increased the risk of developing an external locus of control. Barkey (2015) also found that college students whose parents had divorced during early childhood reported lower levels of self-esteem and more adjustment problems compared to college students whose parents remained married throughout their childhood.

Slater and Haber (1984) conducted a study to determine whether familial conflict could impact adjustment and self-concept. They found that individuals from high-conflict environments had lower levels of self-esteem, greater anxiety, and an external locus of control. Interestingly, family dynamic (intact vs. non-intact) did not affect these factors when controlling for conflict.

These findings may suggest that it is not the act of divorce/separation per se that influences a person's sense of control, but rather the quality of their environment. However, research has shown that violence is a significant factor leading to divorce, specifically physical violence against women (Kurz, 1996). Furthermore, the process of divorce can increase physical, emotional, and mental stress, which can lead to increased conflict (Cohen & Weitzman, 2016). Therefore, although every situation is unique, conflict and stress are often factors associated with divorce, which leaves children from non-intact family dynamics more likely to be affected by a sense of loss of control and resulting in the development of an external locus of control. Camp and Ganong (1997) found that an internal locus of control positively correlates with one's own marital satisfaction. It was also found that individuals with a spouse who had an internal locus of control also reported higher levels of marital satisfaction. Thus, locus of control can have an impact on the quality, stability, and longevity of marriage.

Gender differences have been reported in locus of control attributed to parental divorce. Evidence has suggested that males are more likely to experience a loss of control following parental divorce (Brown & Portes, 2006; Hetherington, Cox & Cox, 1986). Kalter, Alpern, Spence and Plunkett (1984) found that immediately following divorce, male children are more likely than females to blame themselves for the marital disruption. In comparison, studies conducted on young adults regarding locus of control have found that males from non-intact families express more external control when questioned based on their own adult relationships. It has been speculated that due to the fact they could not prevent the divorce of their parents, they develop an external locus of control. These individuals tend to be more susceptible to social influence because they are less confident in their own autonomy.

Confidence in decision making is based on a person's ability to exercise responsibility, temperance and perspective. Steinberg and Cauffman (1996) found that the greatest maturity of

judgement occurs between early and late adolescents due to both cognitive and psychosocial factors. A person's confidence in their decision-making abilities can be directly related to their perceived locus of control, as this can be considered a strong determinant of decision making. Individuals with an internal locus of control take responsibility for their actions recognizing how their choices affect the people around them. Therefore, self-reliance and internal locus of control or self-efficacy correlate with strong decision-making skills (Greenberger & Sorensen, 1974). It can therefore be concluded that parental divorce directly influences a person's perceived locus of control, which is also linked to weaker decision-making skills in adolescence (Greenberger & Sorensen, 1974).

The Impact of Childhood Family Dynamic on Relationship Confidence and Satisfaction

Studies have found that individuals who grew up with a non-intact family dynamic report a reduced commitment to their own marriage and lower confidence that marriages can remain stable and happy (Amato & DeBoer, 2001; Glenn & Kramer, 1987). Amato and DeBoer (2001) found that adults who experienced a non-intact family dynamic during childhood disagree with the statement that marriage is "lifelong and permanent" significantly more than adults raised by married biological parents. Furthermore, Whitton (2009) found that women from divorced parents showed lower relationship commitment and confidence than those from married biological parents. However, in this study, the same was not found for men, suggesting that childhood family dynamic may have more of an influence on relationship confidence in adulthood for women compared to men. A factor that may play an important role is quality of relationship with their mother, as having a strong mother-daughter relationship has found to be a preventative factor against maladjustment in females after a parental divorce (Bojczyk, 2011).

D'Agotino (2010) found a positive correlation between parental conflict and low self-esteem in children. The existence of lower self-esteem in childhood tends to persist into

adulthood and can lead to maladjustment problems specifically resulting in lower levels of relationship confidence and satisfaction (Amato & Booth, 1991). Franklin, Janoff-Bulman and Roberts (1990) found that young adults from divorced families have less trust in their partners than young adults from intact families. Research has shown that young adults from divorced families are typically more hesitant to commit to relationships and express less desire for long term relationships compared to young adults from intact families (Booth, Brinkerhodd, & White, 1984). It has been hypothesized that instability in parental marriages may serve as a model for what is typical in a relationship. Seltzer (1994) explains that conflict between parents before, during, and after divorce may result in children developing an association between relationships and conflict. Individuals from non-intact families may also fear betrayal and abandonment making them less likely to commit (Seltzer, 1994).

Glenn and Kramer (1987) found that individuals from non-intact families not only report less happiness and satisfaction with themselves, they also report lower levels of satisfaction in relation to their friendships, community, and family. Furthermore, Cui and Fincham (2010) found that young adults from non-intact families reported more negative attitudes towards marriage and more favourable attitudes towards divorce. They also found that individuals from non-intact families report weaker commitment in their own adult relationships reflecting in lower relationship satisfaction. Moreover, they found that individuals who grew up with high levels of parental conflict also report higher levels of conflict in their own adult relationships compared to those who grew up with low levels of parental conflict (Donahey, 2018).

Jacquet and Surra (2001) found that children from non-intact families tend to exhibit low levels of trust in others, which carries into adulthood. A lack of trust, as well as fears of rejection and abandonment likely influence an individual's ability to form deep and strong relationships with others. Furthermore, Riggio and Weiser (2008) found that adolescents with divorced parents

are much more likely to approach romantic relationships with caution. Compared to adolescents from intact families, those from non-intact families are significantly more likely to worry that their future marriages will fail or that they will be subject to a lack of love, trust, and communication, and that they will be faced with infidelity, conflict, or abuse. One study linked parental divorce to lower relationship commitment and confidence in woman, but not men (Silvestri, 1992); while another linked parental divorce to higher rates of hostility in relationships and a lack of confidence in their sexual identify for only men (Billingham & Notebaert, 1993). Research suggests that females are more impacted by having a non-intact family dynamic in terms of relationship confidence and satisfaction (Amato & DeBoer, 2001; Glenn & Kramer, 1987). Therefore, it is important in divorce research to analyze differences in experience between genders.

There is an abundance of research to suggest that one generation passes on marital instability to the next (Bumpass, Martin & Sweet, 1991). Fagan and Nagai (2006) analyzed relationship data 7,510 cases between 1972-2006 and found that within the specified timeframe, 18% of individuals from an intact family had divorced. In comparison, 28% of individuals from a non-intact family had divorced. The results of these studies demonstrate how family dynamic can have lasting effects that negatively influence adult relationships including relationship confidence, satisfaction, as well as other factors that influence relationship success.

Theories—Why Having a Non-Intact Family Dynamic Leads to Maladaptive Effects

This section provides a brief overview of theories to explain why having a non-intact family dynamic leads to the maladaptive effects discussed previously. The theories reviewed are: Social Learning Theory, the Interparental Conflict Perspective, The Life Stress Perspective, and the Parental Loss Perspective. These theories help to explain why divorce is considered an

intergenerational issue and what factors may influence negative outcomes into adulthood. It is important to note that each of these perspectives are not mutually exclusive.

Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory is the most prominent theory that has been used to explain the negative effects of parental divorce on adult relationships. This theory underlies all the perspectives discussed, as it suggests that behaviour results from learning primarily through observation (Bandura, 1977). In relation to the intergenerational transmission of divorce, it can be stated that young adults may observe negative marital interactions between their parents and learn to behave in similar ways in their own adult relationships (Gager, Yabiku, & Linver, 2016). A child from a non-intact family likely encounters negative conflict in the form of verbal abuse and these observations may shape their understanding of conflict resolution in relationships (Gager, Yabiku, & Linver, 2016). Children from non-intact families are also likely to form negative views of the concept of marriage because these views are passed on from their parents after the divorce occurs (Amato, 1993). These individuals may be more likely to terminate their own adult relationships when problems arise because they may not have had the opportunity to see their own parents work through difficult times.

Furthermore, children from non-intact families may never be able to fully develop an understanding of healthy adult relationships. In other words, Social Learning Theory suggests that children may fail to see beneficial interactions involving important concepts, such as teamwork and compromise. Thus, children who are not exposed on a regular basis to healthy adult relationships may struggle in their own adult relationships because they lacked real life models to imitate. These individuals may have a strong sense of independence and self-reliance; however this may interfere with their ability to be open to developing relationships with others.

The Interparental Conflict Perspective

Research has shown that frequent, intense, and long-lasting conflict can cause emotional and behavioural problems in childhood (Cummings & Davies, 1994). The Interparental Conflict Perspective as proposed by Cummings and Davies (1994) is a theory that states that witnessing anger or conflict can cause increased arousal, distress, and aggression in children and lead to long-term problems with adjustment (Cummings & Davies, 1994; Donaghey, 2018). Studies have shown that children living in a home with high levels of interparental conflict tend to have higher rates of externalizing problems, such as physical and verbal aggression and delinquency, as well as higher rates of internalizing problems, such as depression and anxiety (Cummings & Davies, 1994; Cohen & Weitzman, 2016; Donaghey, 2018). The divorce or separation of parents is typically the result of multiple stressors within the family dynamic, that are only exacerbated during the conflict process, potentially resulting in behaviour problems in the children involved (Cohen & Weitzman, 2016). Effects are found to be even more significant for children raised in poverty and “non-intact” households as they are at a greater risk to have low levels of income (Manning & Lamb, 2003). Anderson (2014) found that children tend to develop best when raised by both biological parents, except for in the circumstance that parents are exhibiting unresolvable marital conflict. Therefore, the basis of this theory is not that divorce causes lasting negative effects in children, but rather that children from divorced parents are more likely to be exposed to conflict, and it is conflict which leads to maladjustment in adulthood.

Studies have also shown that children respond differently to a non-intact family dynamic depending on the specific circumstances and consequences of their parents’ relationship ending. Factors that mitigate a child’s feelings about a non-intact family could include for example, the level of conflict within the family at the time of divorce (Amato, 2001). When examining the emotional instability that may be caused by a non-intact family dynamic, it has been found that

children may begin to experience emotional difficulties when their parents' relationship begins to break down rather than after the actual divorce (Parnell, 1992; Potter, 2010). In addition, the emotional consequences increase when the children must adjust to the changes of living in a two-parent home, to a single parent home (Robinson, 2000). Emotional adjustment could also continue for children if their parents remarry, because they are then required to adjust to step-families, which could be a very difficult transition for them as well (Parnell, 1992). Individual circumstances will vary and thus it is important to acknowledge that perceptions, attitudes, and outcomes are not universal. However, overall, the Interpersonal Conflict perspective explains why children raised in a non-intact family dynamic with conflict are more likely to struggle with maladjustment into adulthood.

In summary, the Interparental Conflict Perspective states that a home environment consisting of marital conflict between parents has a negative impact on a child's psychological adjustment (Amato, 1993). Conflict between parents may impact children negatively and sometimes cause them to feel fear, anger, and distress. Children may also feel that they are forced to choose one parent over the other and are drawn into the parental conflict, which may result in deteriorations in parent-child relationships. This perspective states that the conflict between parents experienced by children in a non-intact family is somewhat responsible for the lowered well-being of children of divorce (Amato, 1993). The strongest support from surrounding research is obtained for The Interparental Conflict Perspective. The relationship between the non-intact family dynamic and child well-being is impacted by interparental conflict because it produces both child problems and marital termination. As time passes following a divorce, conflict between parents usually decreases, which suggests that a child's well-being should improve over time. However, it has been found that even as adults, individuals from non-intact family dynamics report a lower level of well-being than adults from an intact family dynamic

(Amato, 1993, Donaghey, 2018). DiGiammarino (2017) found that parental marital conflict was the most significant predictor of anxiety and avoidance in adult romantic relationships demonstrating that the effects of parent marital conflict extends beyond childhood. This may be consistency with explanations for longitudinal effects based on Social Learning Theory previously discussed.

The Life Stress Perspective

The Life Stress Perspective is highly related to the Interparental Conflict Perspective, as conflict can cause an increase in perceived stress on the body. The Life Stress Perspective (Amato, 1993) analyzes how a non-intact family dynamic can be a stressful event for both parents and children, which can impact child development. Divorce is often stressful for the parents emotionally, psychologically, and physically, and children are highly receptive to the impact of these stressors on their parents (Wang & Amato, 2000). They are also directly impacted by their parents' stress. For example, Browne and colleagues (2010) found that children of parents who are highly stressed tend to have higher costs of health care and social services. For children, besides exposure to conflict, divorce is sometimes associated with changing schools and friend groups, losing contact with a parent or grandparents, as well as losing pets. These are all extremely distressing and potentially traumatic occurrences for children to endure (Amato, 1993). The Life Stress theory highlights that adding a stepparent through remarriage, and perhaps step siblings to the family may only add further stress for children and parents potentially leading to an adjustment disorder. However, this perspective focuses on the fact that it is not a single stressor, but the accumulation of multiple negative situations that results in problems for children (Amato, 1993).

The Life Stress Perspective highlights that the amount of stress a child experiences during a parental divorce or separation tends to affect them throughout their lifetime long after the family

separation. Children feel the stressfulness of having less economic security and seeing a single parent (typically their mother) struggle with a loss of emotional support, companionship, and financial pressures (Hetherington, 2014). This perspective states that due to the increased stress throughout childhood and into adulthood, individuals from non-intact families are likely to obtain lower levels of education, earn less income, and are at a greater risk for depression and poorer physical health (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002).

The Parental Loss Perspective

The Parental Loss Perspective (Amato, 1993) states that after marital divorce or separation, children often experience grief and bereavement that can be severe and even similar to losing someone through death. Children often lose contact with an important figure in their life, which can impact their understanding of love and commitment. Children may feel a sense of abandonment and blame themselves for causing the separation, which can be very difficult (Amato, 1993). The Parental Loss Perspective puts forth that family separation is an environmental risk factor that predicts adult mental health difficulties. Kendler and colleagues (1992) found that children from non-intact families are significantly more likely to experience major depressive disorder and generalized anxiety disorder. Furthermore, children raised by a single parent or a parent without a stable romantic relationship may struggle to develop an understanding of healthy adult relationships, again, consistent with explanations based on Social Learning Theory (Amato, 1993). Children with married or intact family dynamics benefit from the social modelling they are exposed to on a daily basis; assuming that the intact family dynamic is free of significant conflict. Rooted in Social Learning Theory, children learn through observation, imitation, and modelling. Therefore, children who are not exposed on a regular basis to healthy adult relationships may struggle when they attempt to build their own adult relationships.

The absence of one parent, most often the father, from the household in a non-intact family may result in problems with communication, cooperation, and socialization for the children (Amato, 1993; Birnbaum, 2020). This is likely because each parent provides a unique contribution in the child's development. In other words, if one parent figure is absent from a home or the child's life in general, they may be unable to more fully contribute to the child's development as a role model (Kalmijn, 2015). The child is unable to learn important lessons involving the division of responsibility and teamwork. Social skills that a child may learn from their parents working together may be lost as they no longer have both parents together to guide by example. Parental separation or divorce most often does not result in the complete loss of a parent from the child's life, but the children's well-being is positively associated with the level of contact the child has with the non-custodial parent. If the child has more contact with the parent who no longer lives with them, they are less likely to report lower levels of well-being (Amato, 1993; Birnbaum, 2020; Kalmijn, 2015). Evidence also suggests that closeness to non-resident fathers is positively associated with child well-being, demonstrating that although the father may be absent, involvement can still increase their child's well-being (Birnbaum, 2020; Kalmijn, 2015; Manning & Lamb, 2003). Closeness of the non-resident parent may also contribute to the individual's adjustment to their non-intact family dynamic. Although difficulties related to adjustment typically subside over the first two to three years following the divorce, the child's sense of loss may last for a number of years due to the exacerbation of the family dynamic on holidays, birthdays, and events (Cohen & Weitzman, 2016). This demonstrates that the parental loss an individual may feel could last for a number of years following the separation or divorce and continue to impact them.

Maintaining parent-child contact following parent separation is important to child well-being (Birnbaum, 2020). More recently, there has been an increased focus on using video technology to

support the continuation of healthy parent-child contact post-separation (Birnbaum, 2020). The 74% increase in use of virtual technology over the past five years aids in limiting direct contact between parents in conflict, while continuing contact between the parent and child. However, challenges may also arise if one parent has limited access to technology or if they refuse to develop an arrangement regarding virtual contact. It was found that most conflicts reported to family justice professionals surrounded concerns of the other parent listening to the conversation, or regarding the child not being made available at the designated time. Furthermore, children themselves raised concerns about the resident parent interfering with their virtual access time, and that they found themselves longing for in-person contact with the non-resident parent. However, it was reported by children that although they missed their non-resident parent, they were able to experience closeness with them while using virtual communication (Birnbaum, 2020). Overall, virtual communication can aid in parent-child closeness as well as to maintain relationships with children and their non-resident parents in situations involving divorce and separation.

Furthermore, virtual communication can help to provide children with the important gender roles mothers and fathers provide. For example, there is evidence to suggest that men are more effective disciplinarians (DeBell, 2007). As a result of having an absent father following a parental divorce, children may exhibit less disciplined behaviour and lower academic performance. In addition, single parents cannot provide as much time or resources to their children, which may result in the children performing more poorly in school or having more negative educational or employment experiences (DeBell, 2007). This demonstrates that there may be different explanations for a child's outcome from a non-intact family dynamic, whether it be from change of dynamic and lack of authority, or lack of resources and time due to single

parent support. However, this theory states that there typically is some form of loss experienced by children when being raised in a non-intact family.

Perceptions of Divorce/Marriage Based on Family Dynamic

A vast amount of research has been conducted in the area of divorce and the impact it has on children; both immediately and over an extended period of time (e.g. Robinson, 2000; Whitton et. al., 2008). However, little research has examined the children's perceptions of divorce if they come from an intact family dynamic compared to a non-intact family dynamic. A study that examined the perceived impact of a non-intact family on children interviewed 645 participants between the ages of 20 and 30 years (Robinson, 2000). The authors included this age group because it is the time when many life decisions are made concerning marriage, children, and careers. Furthermore, it is a time in the young adult's life when they are defining their adult relationship with their parents, others, and their own relationships. All participants in this study experienced a non-intact family dynamic as a child, and results showed that each individual viewed childhood parental divorce as a defining and important event in their lives. All of the participants expressed through the interview that they did not feel as though their parents were positive marital role models, and felt as though their parent's styles of parenting were not going to be used with the participants' own children (Robinson, 2000). Some participants in the study reported that they experienced psychological difficulties as a young adult when having to make important decisions related to marriage and intimate relationships. Most importantly, this study looked at the participants' perception of single parent families. Responses varied; however, most participants reported feelings of loss, anger, sadness, and resentment toward their childhood experience of a non-intact family, which seemed to carry through to their negative perception of this family dynamic as a young adult. One positive perception of a single parent family stated by

a subset of participants who reported a having a mid to high quality upbringing was appreciation of the hard work that their single parent had to do in order to raise them well (Robinson, 2000).

An earlier study by Kalter and Plunkett (1984) examined children's perceptions of the causes and consequences of divorce. They gave children stories about characters who came from either an intact or non-intact family. The children were then asked questions about the character in the story involving their behaviours, feelings, and peer relations. Results showed that the majority of the children who participated in the study perceived that the character in the story was experiencing behavioural and emotional problems that were caused by their parent's divorce or non-intact family dynamic. Approximately half of the children believed that the cause of the divorce in the story was parental incompatibility, whereas one third of children stated that they felt the divorce occurred because of the child in the narrative. This study demonstrates that participant perceptions of different aspects of divorce can be captured by narratives that they are given and asked to respond to. However, although this study is related to the current research project, it is outdated. Therefore, the goal of the current study was to replicate the use of narratives in a way that can determine whether perceptions of young adults can also be reflected onto narrative characters, and whether these perceptions differ based on personal family dynamic.

In summary, an extensive amount of research has been done in the area of divorce or non-intact family dynamics, as well as how that may impact a child both immediately and into young adulthood (e.g. Amato, 1993; Eype, 2016). Literature in this area has examined how individuals may be impacted emotionally, educationally, personally, and how these effects last over a period of time. However, there has been little research on the perceptions of intact and non-intact family dynamics that individuals have, and whether those perceptions differ based on personal family dynamic type. This is an important avenue to pursue because it will provide further understanding of the effects that family dynamic has on individuals as well as their perceptions.

Some previous research has made use of narratives when researching marriage and divorce (e.g. Cunningham & Skillingstead, 2015), however they have never been used to determine if perceptions of individuals can be reflected onto narrative characters and influence how an individual may respond to the narrative character based on their personal history. The goal of this study was to obtain further information surrounding an individual's early life experiences, and whether exposure to a non-intact family dynamic influences their perceptions of divorce, self, others, and confidence in interpersonal relationships.

Previous research has identified differing attitudes toward divorce and marriage based on one's unique circumstances (Whitton et. al., 2008). These findings support the goal of the current study by suggesting that there are differential attitudes towards or perceptions of divorce based on an individual's previous experiences. Therefore, it may be possible to replicate these findings if individual perceptions of a narrative character can be reflected in responses to questions about that character. The current study used narratives describing children from an intact and non-intact family dynamic, followed by questions to determine if the participant has a negative, positive, or neutral attitude toward the character in the narrative based on family dynamic. This was used to understand whether previous personal experience reflects on or influences the participant's attitudes and perceptions. Robinson (2000) also found that perceptions of a non-intact family can differ depending on the individual's personal family background, so one objective of the current study was to provide further insight into this occurrence by comparing participants' responses to a character within a narrative involving an intact family, and a non-intact family.

The Use of Narratives to Measure Attitudes

Narratives or vignettes are short stories that are often used in research to determine how subtle arbitrary details can change a person's attitudes towards someone or something (Cunningham & Skillingstead, 2015). If we modify only a single detail in a story, for example,

character gender, age, race, sexual orientation, or even name, this may change the attitudes towards the character, and one is able to develop assumptions about how perceptions differ between groups. Data that has been collected using narrative studies is also beneficial in that it can also be analyzed in multiple ways to account for participant characteristics. For example, controlling for differences in participant gender through participant-character gender matching. These studies help us to better understand participant characteristics and factors such as social status, stereotypes and discrimination.

Holbrook, Fessler and Navarrete (2016) found that when reading a threatening vignette, participants rated characters with “African American-sounding” names, such as “Jamal, DeShawn or Darnell” as larger with lower financial success, social influence, and respect in their community when compared to those with “Caucasian-sounding” names, such as “Connor, Wyatt, or Garret”—names selected based on prior research into names most commonly associated with various ethnic groups. In another version of the study, participants were found to rate characters with “Hispanic-names”, such as “Jorge or Juan”, as being larger, more violent, and lower in status compared to those with “East Asian-names”, such as “Chen or Hikaru”. The results of this study demonstrate that racism continues to exist within society and that narratives can be used to extract information about the way individuals perceive others. The current study sought to determine whether attitudes towards people who were raised in non-intact families vary from people who were raised in intact families.

Narratives have been used in divorce studies to help understand partner perspectives (Sharpe, Walters, & Goren, 2013), however, not to determine how divorce can impact perceptions of others in the family. Sharpe, Walters and Goren (2013) analyzed adult attitudes towards infidelity using narratives. They found that participants who had reported engaging in infidelity in the past expressed more acceptance and forgiveness to a cheating character of the

same gender compared to a cheating character of the opposite gender. Furthermore, participants who reported never engaging in infidelity found the act of cheating unacceptable and unforgiveable regardless of character gender. The results of this study are applicable to the current study in that it is important to explore whether attitudes towards divorce may differ based on participant family dynamic rather than divorce being viewed as negative by all participants.

The current study used narratives to determine whether the perceptions of family dynamics differ based on the individual's personal experiences. So far, very little research has been done with narratives in this manner. Previously, research has looked at the use of narratives to predict marital outcomes in spouses, as well as contact refusal of non-custodial parents by children from non-intact families (Doohan, Carrere, & Riggs, 2010; Freeman, 2011). Doohan, Carrere, and Riggs (2010) used an Oral History Interview to develop a narrative as well as follow up questionnaires to determine how spouses felt about each other as well as to predict the outcome of their marriage. This study looked at aspects such as loneliness, anxiety, and depression in each spouse and used responses to the interview questions to determine the trajectory of their marriage (Doohan, Carrere, & Riggs, 2010). Freeman (2011) researched the area of non-intact family dynamics involving contact refusal as well as the impact that internal and environmental factors may have on children and their relationship with non-custodial parents. Freeman (2011) addressed many different types of contact refusal and developed narratives to depict these forms in a real-life scenario. The area of contact refusal is an important area when examining the psychological impact that a non-intact family dynamic has on children and young adults and can be used when evaluating and treating children from these families in a therapeutic manner. Each scenario or narrative that is given also has a detailed description of the role of the child, parents, and environment, which is used to deliver an explanation for the child's behaviour or emotions/stressors they may be experiencing. It can be noted that although these studies are

examples of the use of narratives in divorce research, they have not been used to examine an individual's perceptions of a character's family dynamic.

The Use of Questionnaires to Measure Attitudes Towards Divorce and Marriage

Research has shown that compared with children of non-divorced parents, those of divorced parents generally have more negative attitudes toward marriage as an institution and are less optimistic about the feasibility of a long-lasting, healthy, marriage (Whitton et al., 2008). These attitudes suggest that individual's may have a different perceptions of divorce depending on their own family dynamic. In a study performed by Whitton and colleagues (2008), relationship commitment and relationship confidence were assessed, as well as parental divorce and inter-parental conflict in 265 engaged couples prior to their first marriage. To provide a measure of confidence in the individual's relationship, a 10-point scale was used. It was found that during their first marriages, females who came from a divorced family dynamic reported lower relationship commitment and less confidence in their marriages than females from a non-divorced family dynamic. There was concern that inter-parental conflict that could have occurred around the time of the divorce may have impacted the individual's general perception of divorce; however, when the researchers controlled for this variable, they found that it appeared to be divorce itself, rather than any conflict between parents that affected the participant's perception of divorce as well as confidence in their own relationships (Whitton et. al., 2008).

Cunningham and Skillingstead (2015), asked participants to describe their parents' divorce as well as how it changed the way they viewed marriage. Twenty-one in-depth interviews were conducted with university students in the United States. The interviews were guided by a series of open-ended questions about topics including divorce disclosure, divorce-related stressors, beliefs about romantic relationships, and plans for marriage. The participants' perceptions of their family dynamic were assessed using the individual stories of the parental

divorce told by the interviewee, as well as through prompts designed to ascertain whether and how they viewed their parents' divorce as having affected their lives and their experiences in romantic relationships. The study organized its results into socialization narratives by analyzing the way that young adults talk about their experiences of parental divorce. The researchers found that the most common themes in the interviews were that parents had modeled behaviour that the offspring hope to avoid in their own marriages, and that there was an absence of positive relationship models for the interviewees as children. Finally, it was also found that the young adults in the study felt as though they were lacking some skills or traits that could help them to develop and thrive in their own relationships (Cunningham & Skillingstead, 2015). This study is one of the few that focuses on young adult perceptions of divorce, and demonstrates that young adults have differing perspectives of their family dynamic based on what they experienced as a child.

Rationale for The Current Study

The purpose of the current study was to examine differences in perceptions towards individuals raised by married or divorced parents based on their own childhood family dynamic. As was mentioned previously, little research has been conducted in the area of perceptions that young adults have of differing family dynamics, and more specifically whether their perceptions influence their responses to a narrative. The current study examined whether an individual's personal family dynamic impacted their views of a character from the same or opposite family dynamic (intact vs. non-intact). Previous literature surrounding families has examined the effects that parental divorce or separations, parental conflict, single parenting, and parental remarriage have on children and young adults. However, for the purpose of the current study, the terms "intact" and "non-intact" family dynamic were used to distinguish between family dynamic type. There are many differing family types that children may be raised in, so grouping them into two

categories allows for a simpler research procedure and analysis of data. An intact family dynamic was operationally defined for the purpose of this study as a family with two parents either married or common-law that did not separate or divorce for the duration of the participant's childhood. A non-intact family dynamic was operationally defined as a family that has experienced divorce or separation, a single-parent dynamic due to death or absence of one parent, or remarriage of custodial parents.

Previously conducted research has not examined this area of perceptions of family types and whether a young adult's personal family dynamic has an influence on their perceptions of a character in a narrative. The goal of the current study was to determine whether there is a difference in perceptions of narrative character based on the participant's personal experience with their own family dynamic. This compliments existing literature by expanding on the understanding of young adult's perceptions of intact and non-intact family dynamics and whether these perceptions vary in individuals who come from different family dynamic backgrounds. Most theory and research has focused on specific explanations for negative outcomes in young adults from a non-intact family which include; changes to economic resources, declines in parenting quality, high levels of parental conflict, and poor parent-child relationships (Potter, 2010). The current research project aimed to expand upon to this literature by further supporting hypotheses that there are negative effects experienced by young adults who were raised in a non-intact family dynamic. In addition, the current study sought to determine whether family dynamic can also influence individual views of others by examining perceptions of characters from intact versus non-intact families.

Hypotheses

The first hypothesis in the current study was that participants who were raised with a non-intact family dynamic were expected to report lower levels of overall well-being, relationship

confidence, deciding, and relationship satisfaction as compared to individuals raised with an intact family dynamic. They are also expected to have a more external locus of control. As previously discussed, this prediction was made based on findings that individuals from non-intact families are more likely to experience poverty, as well as mental and physical health problems (Fuller-Thomson, & Dalton, 2015; Potter, 2010; Ribar, 2015; Xiaosong, Xiagic, & Xiangku, 2007). Findings have shown that individuals from non-intact families tend to have lower levels of education and therefore lower paying jobs (Cherlin, Chase-Landsdale, & Mcrae, 1997). In addition, the impact of growing up with a non-intact family dynamic seems to translate into less relationship confidence, satisfaction, and success, based on previous findings (Glenn & Kramer, 1987; Whitton, 2009). Therefore, these findings were expected to also be consistent in the current study with individuals from non-intact family dynamics reporting lower levels of the chosen measures related to overall adjustment and stability. Evidence of gender differences and the impact of family dynamic on individuals is inconsistent, as some studies have found little or no effect of family dynamic (Hurre, Junkkari & Aro, 2006), whereas others support that a non-intact dynamic creates a greater risk for female well-being (Amato, 2001; Jonsson et. al., 2000; Glenn & Kramer, 1985; Potter, 2010). The current study sought to explore which of these findings would be supported by analyzing gender differences.

The second hypothesis in the current study was that participants would report more negative reviews of the non-intact narrative overall compared to the intact narrative. The same would be true for attitudes towards divorce; that attitudes towards divorce would be more negative overall compared to attitudes towards marriage when assessed by way of questionnaires. Although research does suggest changing societal attitudes towards divorce—mainly regarding aspects of normality and acceptance, divorce is still not considered a desirable outcome of a relationship (Danesh, 2017). Marriage has long symbolized unity and human connection, while

divorce symbolizes the failure or ending of marriage. For example, a simple internet search was completed by the researcher for words describing marriage and produced results such as, “dedication”, “compromise”, “honour”, “happiness”, “love”, “trust”, and “family”, while a search for words describing divorce produced results such as, “broken”, “damaged”, “guilt”, “shame”, “abandonment”, “anger”, and “betrayal”. Overall, these attitudes are expected to reflect on perceptions of the character in the non-intact narrative, as well as for self-reported attitudes towards divorce.

The third hypothesis pertained to an interaction between family dynamic and perceptions of narratives highlighting either marriage or divorce. It was predicted that participants raised with a non-intact family dynamic would report less negative views of the non-intact narrative compared to participants raised with an intact family dynamic. Furthermore, participants raised in a non-intact family dynamic were expected to have less negative views of divorce and more negative views of marriage when compared to participants raised in an intact family dynamic during childhood. The rationale for this prediction is based on the literature indicating that individuals from non-intact families may be more likely to divorce or live in a non-intact family dynamic during adulthood (Amato, 1996). This has also been shown to negatively affect relationship confidence and satisfaction, as well as locus of control and deciding (Whitton, 2009), which are important factors in developing and maintaining healthy relationships. Thus, marriage was expected to be viewed by participants from non-intact families as less attainable and more likely to fail as compared to participants from intact families; negatively influencing ratings of attitudes towards marriage and those who come from intact families. Individuals with non-intact families may not view their upbringing as desirable, nevertheless, this may be considered normal for them and what they are most familiar with, which may allow them to better connect or potentially sympathize with the character in the narrative.

Methodology

Participants

A total of 168 participants were included in the current study. All participants were young adults, between the ages of 18 and 30 years. Participants were post-secondary students from Laurentian University. The decision to select university students between the ages of 18 and 30 years was made as this is the typical age demographic for individuals becoming independent from their families and beginning to form their own significant personal relationships (Robinson, 2000; Whitton et al., 2008). Furthermore, the use of a university-based sample allowed for some control of the educational attainment of participants as this factor has been found to be impacted by family dynamic (Cherlin, Chase-Lansdale & McRae, 1997; Manning & Lamb, 2003).

Students were excluded from the participant pool if they had been previously married or divorced themselves (leaving a sample size of $n=168$ —136 females/32 males, 120 intact/48 non-intact). This decision was made because the main focus of the study was to determine the effects of family dynamic and parental make-up on an individual's perception of well-being. Individuals who had been through marriage or divorce personally, may have a perspective based on their own experiences and not based on their family dynamic as a child.

Materials

The narratives used in the current study were developed by the researcher based on the previous literature review. Due to the lack of studies that have used narratives, the narratives in the current study used information and statistics from family dynamic research in order to develop an intact and non-intact family narrative that would relate to the majority of participants. There were a total of four narratives used in the current study, with variations in age, gender, and family dynamic type. Participants were given narratives of two individuals; one child and one adolescent—ages 13 and 16 years, from either an intact or non-intact family dynamic, and gender

of the narrative character was matched with that of the participant (refer to Appendix A). One story featured a school aged child and the other an employed adolescent. For the intact family dynamic narrative, the character's mother and father were identified along with characteristics about the character. There is some variation noted in the non-intact family dynamic narrative, however, as only the character's single mother is identified in the story. In the non-intact family dynamic narrative, it was chosen to highlight the child's mother as the primary care giver. This decision was made because during the majority of parental divorces or in single parent families, the mother takes over or is responsible for the primary care of the children (Mueller & Cooper, 1986; Statistics Canada, 2016). More recently, research has shown that of single parent households, over 80% are single mothers (Statistics Canada, 2016). Participants were also gender-matched, meaning that the characters in the stories they were provided were of the same gender in which they identified (male-male, female-female). This was done to allow for the participant to better connect with the character in the story. Narratives, or vignettes as they are also called, are used in research to enable participants to interpret the example in their own terms (Baumeister & Newman, 1994). Research studies have also used narratives as a way to clarify people's judgements, and as a less threatening way of exploring threatening topics. Overall, the narrative technique is a method that can elicit perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes from responses to stories about differing situations (Barter & Renold; 1999).

Narrative style methodologies have been used previously in family research (e.g. (Cunningham & Skillingsstead, 2015; Fiese & Spagnola, 2005), however, not directly for the purpose of examining the perceptions of the character in the narratives when examining family dynamic. The goal of the current study was to develop relatable narratives to determine whether perceptions of young adults can be portrayed onto narrative characters. Furthermore, it was also important to examine whether the individual's perceptions differed based on their own personal

family dynamic. For the purpose of this study, the researcher developed the narratives to include some general details about the character's life, including their school, part-time job, studies, and interests. This allowed for the individual reading the narrative to relate to the character and understand their circumstances before answering questions about them. The narratives were developed to be fairly brief and neutral with few specific details about the character and their family, so that the individual reading them was able to interpret the information independently and potentially relate the story to their own life. Questionnaires were created about the narratives for use in the current study. The questions used were developed by the researcher to capture whether or not the participant would express different perceptions of the character based on their personal experiences regarding the character's well-being and personal characteristics (refer to Appendix B). Participants answered a series of questions using a Likert scale from 1 to 5 (e.g. "How happy do you think Michael is?", with 1 being "not at all", 3 being "somewhat" and 5 being "very much"). While filling out the questions, the participants were able to refer to the narrative at any time. Questions that were reverse scored due to wording are highlighted in the appendices (ex. 1=5, 5=1, 2=4, 4=2, 3=3). Each narrative was followed by 7 questions. Total scores therefore ranged from 7 to 35 with higher scores indicating more positive views of the character. A scoring legend is also included for added clarity (refer to Appendix C).

The demographics form used for the purpose of the current study was developed by the researcher to examine individual characteristics including the participant's gender, age, and details about their family dynamic and their parents (refer to Appendix D).

Attitudes Toward Marriage

The Attitudes Toward Marriage Scale (Wallin & Vollmer, 1954) was developed for previous research studies as well as revised over time. A version of this scale was first used by Wallin and Vollmer (1954), followed by Greenberg and Nay (1982). The tool is a 6-item measure

that requires participants to rate their attitudes toward marriage on a 5-point Likert scale and the responses are summed for an overall attitude towards marriage score, with higher scores indicating a more positive attitude and lower scores indicating a more negative attitude (Kinnaird & Gerrard, 1986). For example, questions include statements such as “If you marry, how happy do you think you will be?”, or “How difficult would it be for you to adjust to married life?”. More specifically, this scale assesses attitudes toward marital responsibilities, happiness, freedom, and adjustment to marriage (Moats, 2004). Most recently, this scale was used by Branch-Harris and Cox (2015), who examined marital conflict and attitudes toward marriage and divorce. This is an important factor to take into consideration when interpreting the current study, as the quality of the marital relationship may influence a person’s attitudes towards divorce and marriage. For this scale, questions 1, 2, 3, and 4 were reverse coded (refer to Appendix D). Scores range from 6 (very negative attitude towards marriage) to 30 (very positive attitude towards marriage).

Attitudes Toward Divorce

The Attitudes Toward Divorce Scale (Hardy, 1957) was not as frequently used in early family studies, as divorce was not as popular as it is today. The first version of this scale was used by Hardy (1957), however the scale used for the purpose of the current study was developed by Coleman and Ganong (1984). The Attitudes Toward Divorce Scale is also a 6-item measure that requires participants to rate their attitudes toward relationships on a 5-point Likert scale. The scores for the items are summed for an overall attitude toward divorce score, with higher scores indicating a more positive attitude, and lower scores indicating a more negative attitude. This scale measures an individual’s attitudes toward divorce using statements related to divorce regarding commitment and attitudes toward stereotypes surrounding relationships. For example, questions include statements such as “People should feel no great obligation to remain married if

they are not satisfied”, or “In the long run, society will be seriously harmed by the high divorce rate”. For this scale, questions 1, 3, and 5 were reverse coded (refer to Appendix D). Scores range from 6 (very negative attitude towards divorce) to 30 (very positive attitude towards divorce).

Measurement of Well-Being

The measurement of well-being used in the current study was adapted from an original, longer version, created by DeBell in 2007. The measure used is composed of 8 statements that participants were asked to rank on a 5-point Likert Scale. The scale is comprised of statements based on areas of an individual’s life that they were asked to rank based on how much satisfaction that area brought them, such as health, friendships, and where they reside. Measurements of well-being have been developed and revised multiple times throughout research, and the scale used in the current study was adapted based on research done by Potter (2010). Scores range from 8 (very low level of well-being) to 40 (very high level of well-being) (refer to Appendix D).

Locus of Control & Deciding

Locus of control is considered the degree to which a person believes that they have control over the events in their lives, as opposed to external forces that are not affected by their own actions (Fogas et. al., 1992). The Locus of Control measure was created for use in the current study based on previous literature, including Parish and Boyd (1983), as well as Kalter and colleagues (1984). Participants were asked to rate how they felt about 6 statements on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree”. Statements include topics regarding individual perceptions about luck, chance, and how others impact outcomes in their lives. For example, statements on this measure include “In my life, luck is more important than hard work for success”, or “Every time I try to get ahead, something or somebody stops

me”. For this scale, questions 1, 3, 4 and 6 were reverse coded (refer to Appendix D). Scores range from 0 to 18 (under 9=internal, 9=neutral, over 9=external).

As previously mentioned, an individual’s confidence in decision making can be related to their perceived locus of control, as well as their ability to exercise responsibility. The measure used to determine an individual’s confidence in deciding was compiled as a result of research from Vennum and Fincham (2011), as well as Yoshida (2013). This measure has 5 statements that participants are asked to respond to on a 5-point Likert scale. Some statements on this measure include statements, such as, “It is important to me to discuss with my partner each major step we take in the relationship”, or “It is better to go with the flow than think carefully about each major step in a romantic relationship”. These questions are used to examine if an individual has a more permissive style of decision making in a relationship compared to a conservative approach. For this scale, questions 3 and 5 were reverse coded (refer to Appendix D.6). Scores range from 5 to 25 with higher scores indicating a higher level of decisiveness.

Relationship Confidence and Relationship Satisfaction

Confidence and satisfaction in relationships has been examined in family research for a number of years (Glenn & Kramer, 1997; Whitton, 2009). More specifically, these measures have been used with individuals who have experienced a non-intact family dynamic, or some type of parental conflict in order to determine if there is an impact on offspring relationships. The measures of relationship confidence and relationship satisfaction used in the current study were developed by the researcher based on information derived from previous research done by Whitton et. al., (2008), as well as Amato and DeBoer (2001). The measure of Relationship Confidence includes four statements that participants respond to on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree” (refer to Appendix D.7).

Furthermore, the Relationship Satisfaction measure examines an individual's relationship with their current partner. This measure encompasses many areas of the relationship such as meeting expectations, satisfaction, and whether their current partner is fulfilling their needs. Participants were asked to provide a ranking on a 5-point Likert scale. Scores range from 5 to 25 with higher scores indicating a higher level of relationship satisfaction (refer to Appendix D.8).

Procedure

Following approval by the Laurentian University Research Ethics Board (refer to Appendix E), participants were recruited using the recruitment script (refer to Appendix F) through public and online postings, snowball sampling, and classroom recruitment. Upon entering the study, participants were first asked to read and sign an informed consent form, which gave them a brief overview of the study and allowed for them to consent to completing the task (refer to Appendix F). Participants were told that they were able to leave at any time during the experiment and did not have to finish the survey or answer any question if they did not feel comfortable doing so. Participants were then asked to complete the demographics form.

Next, participants were given a package that included two short narratives as well as two questionnaires regarding the character featured in the narrative. They were asked to complete each corresponding questionnaire after they finished reading each narrative. Participants were given one intact and one non-intact version of the narratives in a counterbalanced order. As previously mentioned, both narrative characters were matched to have the same gender as the participant. Half of the participants received the narrative highlighting an intact family dynamic first followed by the non-intact family dynamic narrative, and the other half received a narrative highlighting a non-intact family dynamic first followed by an intact family dynamic narrative (refer to Appendix G for detailed procedural steps).

Firstly, participants were asked to express their opinions about the characters in the narrative on 5-point Likert scales. This information was then used to determine whether participants expressed more positive or negative perceptions of either narrative. Participants were then asked to complete the remaining questionnaires after they finished reading the narratives and completing the corresponding narratives following each. The questionnaires covered the topics of attitudes toward marriage/divorce, overall well-being, locus of control, relationship confidence, deciding and relationship satisfaction. Higher scores on each of these measures indicated more favourable or more positive indicators of the measure or a more internal locus of control (e.g. in favour of divorce/marriage or higher levels of well-being, etc.).

Finally, following participation in the current study, participants were provided with a debriefing form. The debriefing form included an overview of the purpose of the study, additional research, contact information for counselling services, and contact information for the researcher and study supervisor (refer to Appendix H).

Results

Results of the current study were analyzed using SPSS version 25 and are presented in the following section. First, the impact of family dynamic as well as gender were examined in relation to well-being, locus of control, deciding, relationship confidence and relationship satisfaction. Secondly, narrative character perceptions were examined. Lastly, attitudes towards divorce and marriage were analyzed.

The Impact of Family Dynamic and Gender on Overall Well-being

The impact of family dynamic and gender on overall well-being was analyzed by way of a 2 (intact/non-intact) by 2 (male/female) analysis of variance (ANOVA). Results show that there was no significant difference between those with an intact family dynamic ($M=29.48$, $SD=4.59$) and those with a non-intact family dynamic ($M=27.58$, $SD=5.34$) on overall well-being. There were also no significant differences between males ($M=28.94$, $SD=5.20$) and females ($M=28.93$, $SD=4.82$). (See Figure 1).

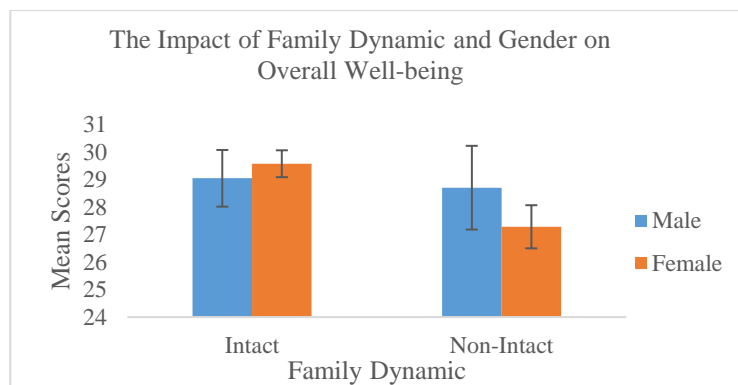


Figure 1. The Impact of Family Dynamic and Gender on Overall Well-being. The error bars represent the standard error of the mean.

The Impact of Family Dynamic and Gender on Locus of Control

Responses for the impact of family dynamic and gender on locus of control were analyzed by a 2 (intact/non-intact) by 2 (male/female) ANOVA. The findings showed no significant differences between those with an intact family dynamic ($M=10.48$, $SD=2.21$) and those with a

non-intact family dynamic ($M=10.19$, $SD=2.60$) on locus of control. There was no significant difference between males ($M=10.28$, $SD=2.63$) and females ($M=10.43$, $SD=2.26$). No significant interactions were found. Mean scores suggest participants regardless of family dynamic and gender tended to have an external locus of control (over 9, which is the middle of the possible scores from 0-18 on the locus of control measure) indicating that they tend to view external factors as responsible for events in their own life (See Figure 2).

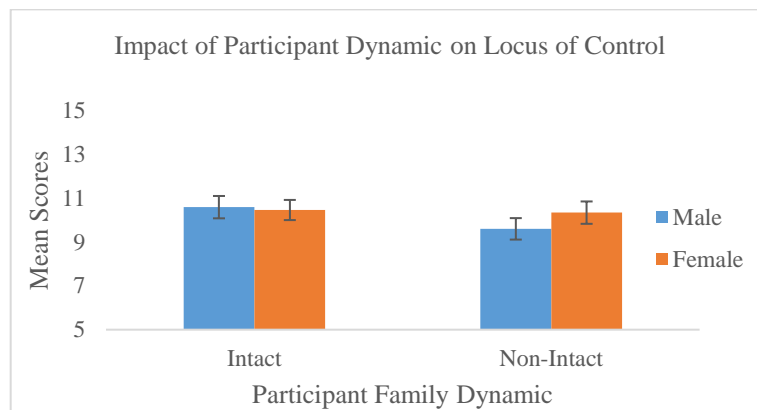


Figure 2. The Impact of Family Dynamic and Gender on Locus of Control. The error bars represent the standard error of the mean.

The Impact of Family Dynamic and Gender on Relationship Confidence

The impact of family dynamic and gender on relationship confidence was then analyzed. A 2 (intact/non-intact) by 2 (male/female) ANOVA showed a main effect for gender: [$F(1,167) = 6.17$, $p < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.36$.] Females reported significantly higher relationship confidence ($M=15.92$, $SD=2.90$) compared to males ($M=14.44$, $SD=3.55$). No significant differences in relationship confidence was found for those from an intact family dynamic ($M=15.78$, $SD=2.32$) compared to a non-intact family dynamic ($M=15.27$, $SD=3.64$). No significant interactions were found. (See Figure 3).

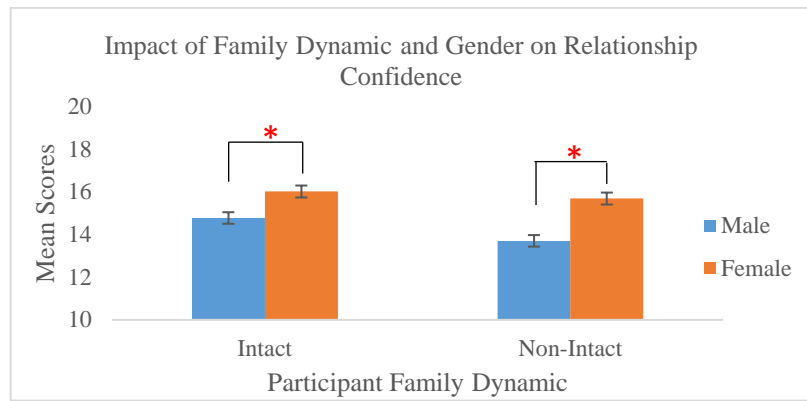


Figure 3. The Impact of Family Dynamic and Gender on Relationship Confidence. The error bars represent the standard error of the mean.

The Impact of Family Dynamic and Gender on Deciding

The results for a 2 (intact/non-intact) by 2 (male/female) ANOVA for deciding showed a main effect for gender. Females reported significantly higher levels of deciding ($M=19.38$, $SD=2.99$) compared to males ($M=17.75$, $SD=2.51$). [$F(1,167) = 8.07$, $p < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.46$.] No significant difference was found for those from an intact family dynamic ($M=19.20$, $SD=2.87$) compared to a non-intact family dynamic ($M=18.73$, $SD=3.20$). No significant interactions were found. (See Figure 4).

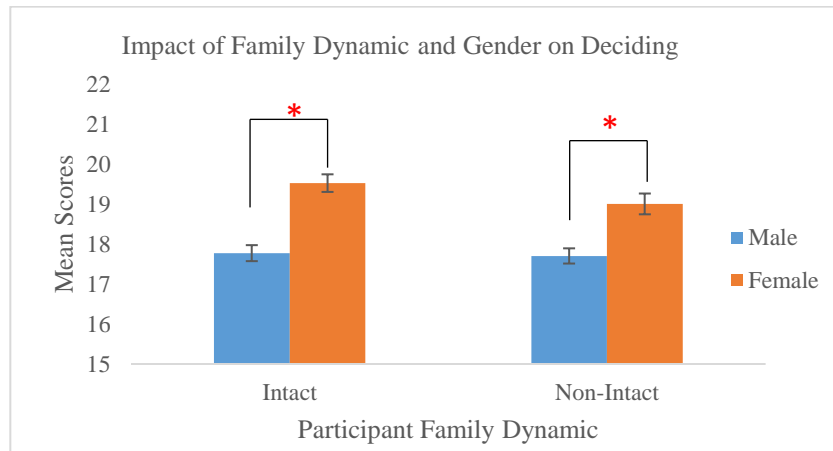


Figure 4. The Impact of Family Dynamic and Gender on Deciding. The error bars represent the standard error of the mean.

The Impact of Family Dynamic and Gender on Relationship Satisfaction

The results for the impact of family dynamic and gender on relationship satisfaction are depicted in Figure 5. A 2 (intact/non-intact) by 2 (male/female) ANOVA revealed a main effect for gender. [$F(1,167) = 3.72, p < 0.05, \eta^2 = 0.54$.] Females reported significantly higher levels of relationship satisfaction ($M=21.95, SD=3.52$) compared to males ($M=19.50, SD=4.60$). No significant difference was found for those from an intact family dynamic ($M=21.87, SD=3.80$) compared to a non-intact family dynamic ($M=21.18, SD=3.75$). No significant interactions were found. (See Figure 5).

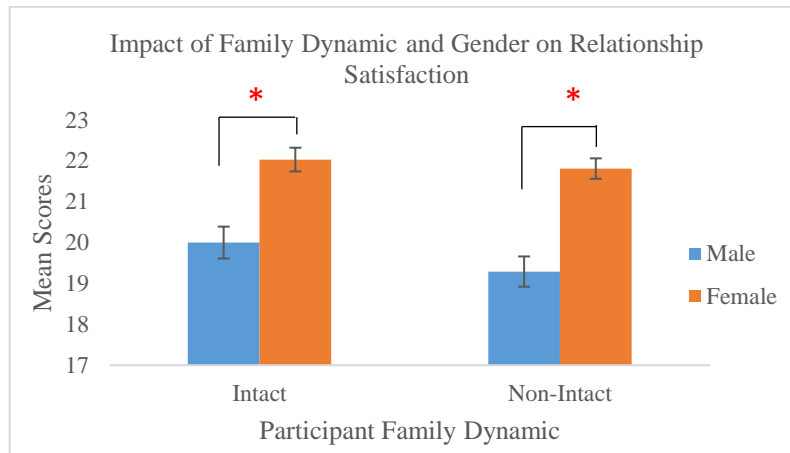


Figure 5. The Impact of Family Dynamic and Gender on Relationship Satisfaction. The error bars represent the standard error of the mean.

Intact vs. Non-intact Narrative Character Perceptions

The intact and non-intact narrative character scores were compared to determine whether there was a significant difference between mean scores regarding character perceptions. Each of the questions were scored using a 5-point Likert scale. Questions that were reverse coded were scored accordingly. Participants could receive a minimum score of 7 (more negative views of the narrative character), or a maximum score of 35 (more positive views of the narrative character) on any of the narratives in the study, so that scores could be directly compared to each other. Results of an independent t-test showed that the intact narrative character ($M=25.70, SD=5.28$) received significantly higher scores than the non-intact narrative character ($M=21.98, SD=5.01$),

indicating that the intact narrative character was perceived more positively than the non-intact narrative character overall [$t(167) = 8.17, p < 0.5, \text{Cohen's } d=0.72.$] (See Figure 6).

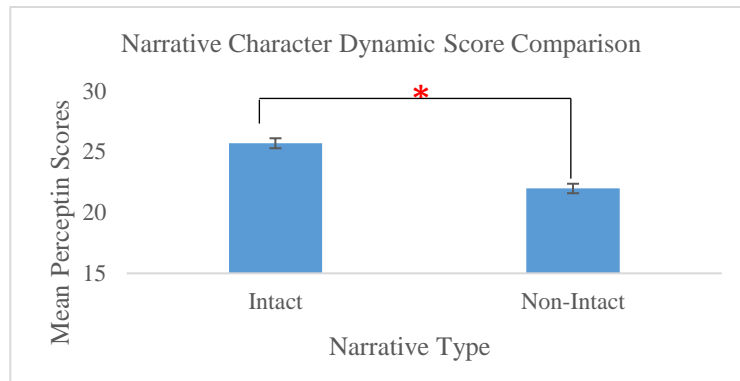


Figure 6. Narrative Character Dynamic Score Comparison. The error bars represent the standard error of the mean.

Intact Narrative Character Perceptions

A 2 (participant dynamic: intact/non-intact) by 2 (male/female) ANOVA was conducted to determine whether perceptions of the character from the intact narrative would vary based on participant family dynamic and gender. It was found that there was no significant difference between those with an intact family dynamic ($M=25.52, SD=5.19$) and those with a non-intact family dynamic ($M=26.17, SD=5.54$) on character ratings for the intact narrative. There was also no significant difference between males ($M=25.47, SD=5.57$) and females ($M=25.76, SD=5.24$) on character ratings for the intact narrative. No significant interactions were found. (See Figure 7). As shown previously, perceptions of the character in the intact narrative were significantly higher ($M=25.70, SD=5.28$) than perceptions of the character in the non-intact narrative ($M=21.98, SD=5.01$), regardless of participant family dynamic and gender [$t(167) = 8.17, p < 0.5, \text{Cohen's } d=0.72.$].

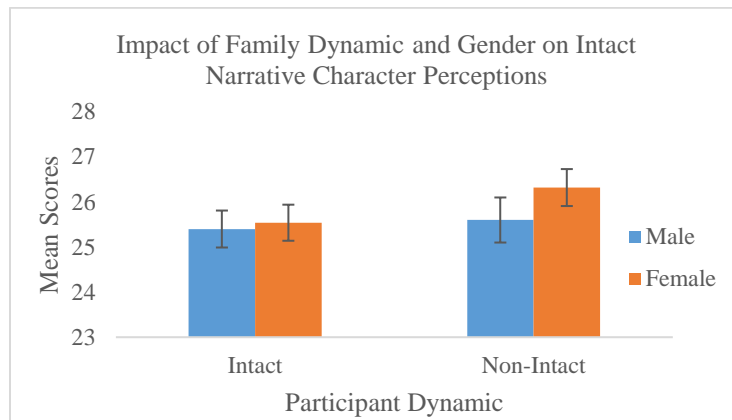


Figure 7. The Impact of Family Dynamic and Gender on Intact Narrative Character Perceptions. The error bars represent the standard error of the mean.

Non-Intact Narrative Character Perceptions

A 2 (participant dynamic: intact/non-intact) by 2 (male/female) ANOVA was conducted to determine whether character perceptions of the non-intact narrative character would vary based on participant family dynamic and gender. It was found that there was no significant difference between those with an intact family dynamic ($M=21.99$, $SD=4.92$) and those with a non-intact family dynamic ($M=21.96$, $SD=5.29$) on ratings for the intact narrative. There was also no significant difference between males ($M=22.25$, $SD=4.65$) and females ($M=21.92$, $SD=5.11$) on ratings for the intact narrative. No significant interactions were found. However, character perceptions for the intact narrative were significantly higher than the character perceptions for the non-intact narrative, regardless of participant family dynamic and gender. (See Figure 8). In other words, based on means, perceptions of the character in the intact narrative were significantly higher ($M=25.70$, $SD=5.28$) than perceptions of the character in the non-intact narrative ($M=21.98$, $SD=5.01$), regardless of participant family dynamic and gender. [$t(167) = 8.17$, $p < 0.5$, Cohen's $d=0.72$].

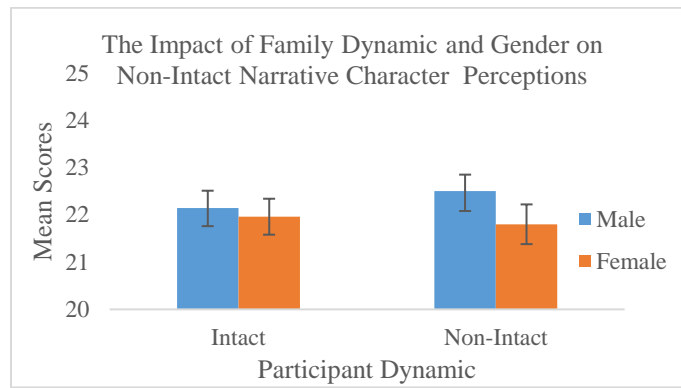


Figure 8. The Impact of Family Dynamic and Gender on Non-Intact Narrative Character Perceptions. The error bars represent the standard error of the mean.

Attitudes Towards Marriage and Divorce Based on Family Dynamic and Gender

Divorce and marriage scores were compared to determine whether there were significant differences between mean scores. Overall scores for these scales could fall between a minimum of 6 and maximum of 30. It is important to note that some variability in scores may reflect the varying wording of the questions of each questionnaire. However, the range of scores is the same for each questionnaire, which can allow for a general comparison of scores in relation to individual attitudes. An independent t-test was utilized. It was found that the attitudes towards marriage scale (M=22.60, SD=4.75) received significantly higher mean scores than the attitudes towards divorce scale (M=16.42, SD=3.15), indicating that perceptions of marriage were more positive than divorce overall. [$t(167) = 64.45, p < 0.5, \text{Cohen's } d = 1.53$ (See Figure 9).

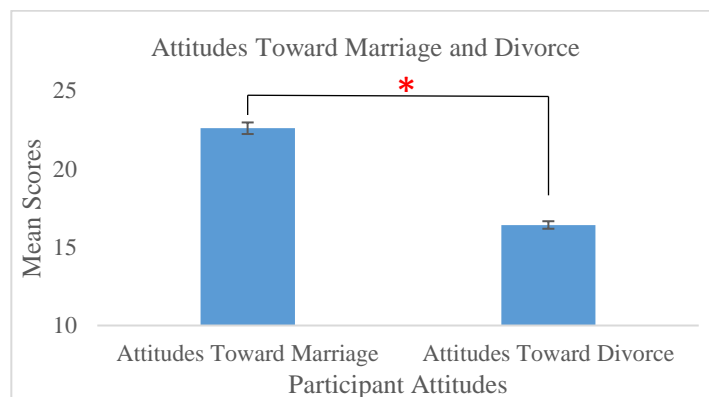


Figure 9. Attitudes Towards Marriage and Divorce Score Comparison. The error bars represent the standard error of the mean.

A 2 (participant dynamic: intact/non-intact) by 2 (male/female) ANOVA was conducted to determine whether attitudes towards marriage changed based on family dynamic and gender. No significant difference was found for those from an intact family dynamic ($M=22.39$, $SD=4.85$) compared to those from a non-intact family dynamic ($M=23.15$, $SD=4.48$) for attitudes towards marriage. Additionally, no significant difference was found when comparing males ($M=22.16$, $SD=5.32$) and females ($M=22.71$, $SD=4.61$). No significant interactions were found. (See Figure 10). Therefore, attitudes towards marriage were more positive than attitudes towards divorce regardless of participant family dynamic and gender.

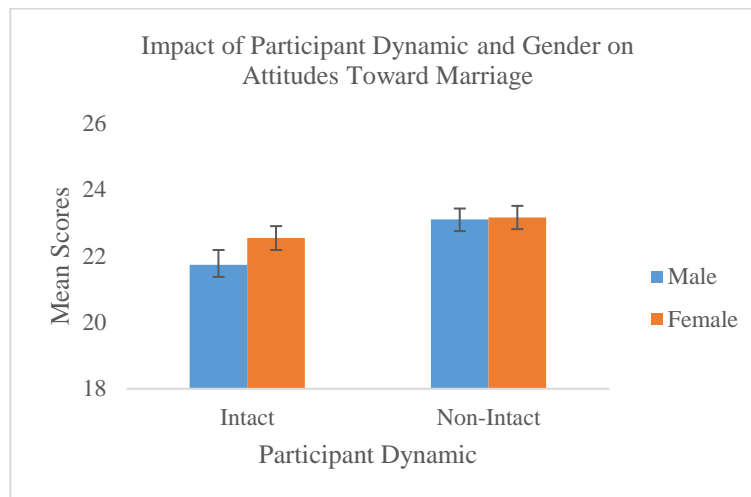


Figure 10. The Impact of Family Dynamic and Gender on Attitudes Towards Marriage. The error bars represent the standard error of the mean.

A 2 (participant dynamic: intact/non-intact) by 2(male/female) ANOVA was conducted to determine whether attitudes towards divorce change based on family dynamic and gender. A main effect of gender was found. Males were found to have significantly higher scores (more favourable views) for attitudes toward divorce ($M=17.59$, $SD=3.27$) compared to females ($M=16.15$, $SD=3.07$) [$F(1, 167) = 5.41$, $p < 0.5$, $n^2 = 0.30$.] A main effect of family dynamic was also found. Those from a non-intact family were found to have significantly higher scores (more favourable views) for attitudes toward divorce ($M=17.56$, $SD=3.05$) compared to those from an intact family dynamic ($M=15.97$, $SD=3.09$) [$F(1, 167) = 7.18$, $P < 0.5$, $n^2 = 0.40$.] Furthermore,

males were found to have more positive attitudes towards divorce than females and those from a non-intact family dynamic were found to have more positive attitudes towards divorce than those from an intact family dynamic. No significant interactions were found. (See Figure 11).

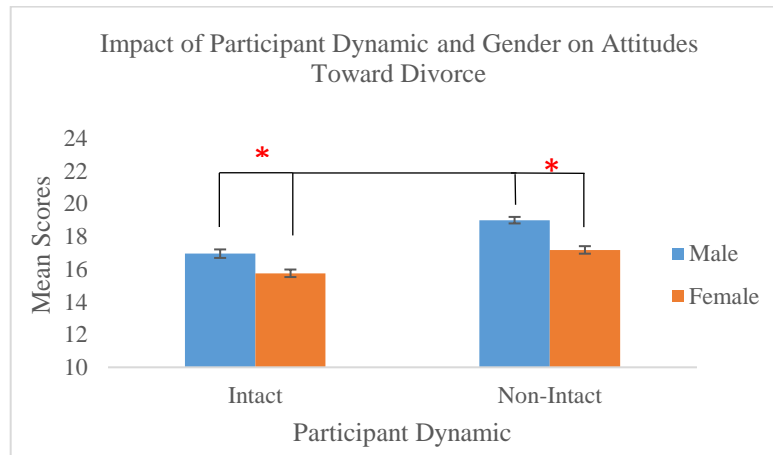


Figure 11. The Impact of Family Dynamic and Gender on Attitudes Towards Divorce. The error bars represent the standard error of the mean.

Finally, participant responses to questions on their demographics form were analyzed. A chi-square test of independence was performed in order to determine if there was a significant difference in responding for individuals raised in differing family dynamics. Interestingly, a difference was found for answers to the question “Will you want to get married in the future?” (refer to Figure 12). Responses were coded using 0 for “Yes” and 1 for “No”. Results shows that individuals from an intact family dynamic were more likely to state that they would want to get married in the future compared to individuals from a non-intact family dynamic (Yes=111, No=8). This finding suggests that there is a significant association between family dynamic and whether an individual will want to get married in the future.

Yes or No Answer Questions

Questions	Intact Family	Non-Intact Family	Significant
1) Would you want a relationship like your parents?	Yes=79 No=40	N/A	No
2) Do you think children from non-intact families are at a disadvantage?	Yes=68 No=52	Yes=20 No=26	No
3) Will you want to get married in the future?	Yes=111 No=8	Yes=39 No=9	$X^2(1,N=167)=5.41,$ $P<.05$

Figure 12. Yes or No Questions. Overall mean and standard deviation are displayed in the chart.

Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to examine whether family dynamic during childhood can have lasting impacts on functioning and perceptions during adulthood. The first area to be considered was the impact of family dynamic on perceived overall well-being, locus of control, decision-making, relationship confidence and satisfaction. The second area to be considered was the impact of family dynamic on perceptions of marriage and divorce. The final area to be considered was the impact of family dynamic on perceptions of individuals raised within intact versus non-intact families.

The Impact of Family Dynamic on Well-Being, Relationship Confidence, Locus of Control, Deciding, and Relationship Satisfaction (H1)

It was originally predicted that having a non-intact family dynamic would lead to lower levels of perceived well-being, relationship confidence, deciding, relationship confidence, and a more external locus of control; however, there were no differences found. There have been contradictory results in research on gender differences regarding the impact of parental divorce during childhood. Results of the current study suggest that males from a non-intact family dynamic indicate higher acceptance or expectation for divorce than females.

Overall, a main effect of gender was found for the measures of relationship confidence, deciding, and satisfaction with males having significantly lower levels of each. Whitton (2009) found the exact opposite with findings showing women, not men, are likely to report lower levels of relationship commitment and confidence in their own marriage when raised in a non-intact family dynamic. The theory provided to explain the findings in that study was that women tend to be socialized to be more relationship oriented than men and suffer more economically after a divorce making them more conscious of the fragility of marriage. However, for the results of the current study, it can be argued that these factors could influence a woman to feel less capable of

life without marriage and co-dependence making them more likely to report confidence and satisfaction even after conflict has arisen. However, the females in the current study are obtaining a university degree, so they may not be as concerned about financial instability within their relationships as they are able to attain gainful employment to support themselves. Therefore, females may be reporting higher levels of relationship confidence, deciding, and satisfaction because they are not as worried about supporting themselves independently as women from previous generations were. In comparison, men are less financially dependent on their spouse overall and less likely to suffer long-term ill effects, therefore, they may feel less obligated to report confidence and satisfaction when conflict arises in the relationship.

The current findings are contradicted by literature in that women from divorced families were found to have no difference in ratings of overall well-being than women from non-intact families (Huurre, Junkkari & Aro, 2006). An important factor in individual well-being is an individual's social network and relationships. Research has found that women's social network scores were lower and their satisfaction with their social supports were lower when they were raised in non-intact families compared to those from intact families (Huurre, Junkkari & Aro, 2006). With less social and personal network supports, an individual may feel more isolated due to fewer close friends and family members. Therefore, women who experience divorce are at a more increased risk of having a lower number and quality of network supports, potentially contributing to their lower reported levels of well-being. However, these affects do not appear to be to the extent that they have an impact on the well-being of women from divorce.

Levels of well-being are also impacted by other factors such as employment and living situation. Individuals who were raised in a non-intact family dynamic are found to obtain a lower level of education than individuals raised in an intact family dynamic (Potter, 2010). Individuals who have a lower level of education may be at a disadvantage for obtaining a secure income as

well as higher social status, which could contribute to a lower income and potentially be related to their lower reported ratings of well-being. The sample used for the current study included only university level students. This is a very specific dynamic for this area of research as socioeconomic status and education are impacted by family dynamic, as previously mentioned. Particularly, women obtaining a university degree have the potential to access more a more positive and supportive social network. Obtaining a university level of education may help to control for the negative implications of being raised in a non-intact family dynamic, as these women are most likely contributing to the workforce, as well as receiving a level of pay with which they are able to support themselves. These factors may help explain why no significant differences were found in levels of well-being in women in the current study.

Current Perceptions of Divorce/Marriage

As predicted by the second hypothesis, overall attitudes towards marriage were found to be more positive than attitudes towards divorce. Furthermore, ratings of the character in the intact narrative were significantly more positive than ratings of the character in the non-intact narrative. This finding demonstrates that stereotypes and attitudes toward marriage and divorce can be carried on to family dynamic perceptions using a narrative. The literature is in wide agreement that although rates of divorce and marriage are changing, attitudes towards marriage continue to be more positive compared to attitudes towards divorce (Amato, 2001; Eype, 2016; Moats, 2004).

Furthermore, it was also found that males have more positive views of divorce when compared to females. This is consistent with research suggesting that females are impacted more greatly after undergoing a divorce than males (Ham, 2003). For example, females are typically responsible for children and are less financially stable following a divorce. Leopold (2018) looked at the economic, housing and domestic, health, and well-being outcome differences

between each gender following a divorce and found that the largest persistent gender difference was women's disproportionate losses in household income, which also increased their risk of poverty and single parenting. In this study males suffered more significantly in terms of well-being in the short term, women tend to suffer long term losses financially, which can impact other factors of everyday living, especially for children. While Statistics Canada shows a surge in the number of women in the workforce in the second half of the 20th century, as of 2014, 82% of women were shown to be participating in the work force, compared with 91% of men (Statistics Canada, 2018). Therefore, a discrepancy still exists in the percentage of women and men who are financially dependent on their partner. In addition, although the wage gap between men and women in Canada has been narrowing since the enactment of the Equal Pay Act in 1956, problems with earning equal pay for equal work continues to be an issue in present society with women earning between \$0.54 and \$0.87 for every dollar earned by their male counterparts (CNBC, 2018).

Narrative Data

The third hypothesis predicted that attitudes towards the character in each narrative would change based on participant family dynamic however this was not the case. For both the intact and non-intact narrative, there were no differences found based on participant family dynamic. This suggests that individuals from intact families do not perceive individuals from non-intact families any differently than individuals from intact families and vice versa. Nevertheless, it is possible that the manipulations employed were not salient enough to influence a change in perceptions. It is also possible that non-intact family dynamics have become more normalized or that attitudes towards divorce are not projected onto children or other family members. It is also likely that a person gets to know further details another person before discovering details

regarding their childhood family dynamic, which has a more significant influence on attitudes towards the individual.

It was further predicted that individuals from a non-intact family dynamic would have more negative views of marriage than individuals from an intact family dynamic. This was based on the theory that divorce would be normalized for individuals from a non-intact family dynamic and therefore be viewed as expected or unavoidable. The results of this study found that individuals from a non-intact family dynamic did have significantly more positive views of divorce than individuals from an intact family dynamic. Therefore, although no difference was found for perceptions of marriage, there was found to be a wider acceptance of divorce from individuals who were raised in a non-intact family dynamic. This demonstrates that individuals who have experienced a non-intact family dynamic themselves may be more open to divorce or not perceive it as major of a life event as do individuals from an intact family.

Demographic Findings

Additionally, some individual questions were analyzed that participants were asked to select “Yes” or “No” responses. Questions stated; “Would you like to have a relationship like that of your parents?”, and “Are children from a non-intact family at a disadvantage?”. There was no significant difference found in responses to these questions, meaning that individuals from differing family dynamics have similar perceptions of their parents and of children. Finally, a third question that participants were asked was; “Would you like to get married in the future?”. There was a significant difference in responses to this question between individuals from an intact family dynamic when compared to those from a non-intact family dynamic. More specifically, it was found that individuals from intact families were more likely to respond “Yes” to this question than individuals from non-intact families. This finding is further evidence supporting the intergenerational transmission of divorce, as it demonstrates that individuals raised

in a non-intact family dynamic are less likely to want to get married themselves (Amato, 1993; Gager, Yabiku, & Linver, 2016).

The intergenerational transmission of divorce theory may also be used to explain this result as individuals who have previously experienced divorce, or a non-intact family dynamic, may be more accepting of it and may be more likely to experience divorce themselves. Similarly, the current study found that individuals who were raised in an intact family dynamic were more likely to share that they would prefer to get married in the future, whereas individuals from a non-intact family dynamic did not. Individuals who have experienced a non-intact family dynamic have a reduced level of commitment to their own relationships, and less confidence that relationships can remain stable and happy, resulting in a higher likelihood of divorce because it is not as threatening or negative of an experience for them (Amato & DeBoer, 2001; Gager, Yabiku, & Linver, 2016; Glenn & Kramer, 1987). The results of the current study support previous research by continuing to demonstrate that the effects of divorce are intergenerational and continue to impact the relationships of children who have experienced a non-intact family dynamic.

Limitations

There are a number of potential limitations in the current study that must be addressed. Firstly, according to the American Psychological Association (2000), 40-50% of marriages end in divorce. Despite this statistic, less than 30% of the sample used in the current study identified as having a non-intact family dynamic (n=48/168). Taking into consideration the previous point, participants in the current study were young adult students between the age of 18 and 30 from a single university. This is a very specific subset of the population, which may raise questions regarding external validity and the generalizability of the results of the study. Additionally, university students may have a different perception towards marriage and divorce compared to

individuals who have not attended post-secondary education. Intact parent families tend to have more resources allowing for higher educational attainment. Long (2007) found that students from families with a low socioeconomic status are significantly less likely than those from families with a middle to high socioeconomic status to pursue postsecondary school. Therefore, family socioeconomic status may differ between the sample of the current population and that of the general population of young adults. These individuals may have been more likely to have had resources and support growing up than those from lower socioeconomic status, thus allowing them to access a higher level of education financially.

Additionally, research suggests that individuals with higher levels of education and higher socioeconomic status tend to have an internal locus of control in comparison to individuals with lower levels of education and lower socioeconomic status, which has important implications in many areas of everyday life, including relationships, education, career, etc. Caliendo, Cobb-Clark and Uhlenborff (2015) found that individuals with an internal locus of control are much more likely to job search and have higher reservation wages, which is the lowest wage rate at which the worker would be willing to accept within a job position, than individuals with an external locus of control. It would be beneficial for future studies to use a larger sample of non-intact families and to further sub-divide this category to help understand a more diverse perspective on the topic of divorce and marriage, as well as the varying circumstances within these categories. Level of educational attainment and socioeconomic status are important areas to explore in more detail in order to understand and potentially control for the confounding effect they may have on family dynamic.

Within the current study, internal validity can also be questioned regarding the researcher-created character narratives. Firstly, the data has not been refuted by other independent studies. With regards to narrative content, it is possible that various details of the story were more salient

than the family dynamic manipulation employed. The details of the narrative and corresponding questions may have influenced the character perception ratings. For example, it may be assumed that a child who is enrolled in an organized sport may be from a household with higher socioeconomic status, regardless of the family dynamic manipulation employed, which may in turn also influence other character perception ratings regarding educational attainment, happiness, likelihood of success as an adult, etc. A more neutral, brief, and less convoluted narrative may be more effective at controlling for the impact of extraneous variables, such as eliminating details regarding school, employment, extracurricular involvement, hobbies, and interests.

Moreover, the categorical aspect of the current study fails to take into account individual experience. While the term divorce and non-intact may not be used synonymously, for the purpose of this study the classification of non-intact was all-encompassing, meaning that many smaller groups of individuals were combined to create the larger non-intact group. Due to time constraints it would have been impossible to collect a representative sample to compare across different family dynamics individually, (ex. single mother, single father, step parents, adoptive children, blended families, homosexual couples, etc.) and even if these samples were available, there will always be differences in family timelines. For example, age at time of parent divorce, circumstances surrounding divorce, conflict during the divorce process and various other uncontrollable factors may all impact individuals differently based on when they occurred in the child's life. All of these factors have the potential to be highly influential on a person's well-being and perceptions of divorce making it an important limitation to highlight. For example, Lee & Bax (2000) found that within two years of marital separation, the vast majority of parents establish new stable living arrangements and as a result, the large majority of children from divorced parents are relatively well-adjusted into adolescents and adulthood. The current study

makes generalizations that may not truly capture an entire population or speak to timelines regarding the impact of parental divorce on well-being throughout development.

Reflecting upon the measures used in the current study, it is likely that the locus of control construct did not provide enough variation in ratings to allow for a significant effect. More specifically, this was the only measure to have participants indicate their rating from 0 to 3 rather than 0 to 5. A wider range of options increases the chances of obtaining a significant score as extreme scores are further apart leading to more pronounced results. Furthermore, little is known about the stability of locus of control and if there are influences in an individual's life that lead to a change in their locus of control (Nowicki, Ellis, Iles-Caven, Gregory, & Golding, 2018). Terms such as efficacy or attribution are often used interchangeably with locus of control, which leads to some ambiguity surrounding the concept. It is believed by some researchers that locus of control is an expectancy that has the ability to impact behaviour differently from situation to situation, and greatly influences novel situations (Nowicki et. al., 2018). Since little is known about how locus of control is developed or changes in adulthood, it is a difficult of somewhat unreliable concept to measure, which may be correlated to the lack of findings for this variable.

Additionally, the measures used in the current study were adapted from research originally conducted close to 60 years ago. Since then, rates of divorce and subsequently attitudes towards divorce have changed significantly. It may have been more useful to provide participants more open-ended questions to allow for a qualitative analysis approach in order to determine common themes among participants. This would have allowed the researcher to look at aspects of each measure that cannot be fully understood through the use of Likert scale questions or to determine if the stigma surrounding marriage and divorce has changed. For example, individuals may have differing definitions of what constitutes a "long term" relationship. Norms regarding gender roles and relationship dynamics have also changed over the years. For example, more

people identifying in open relationships, polygamous, and polyamorous relationships (Moors, 2017). These would be important factors to distinguish in future research. Finally, females significantly outnumber males that participated in the current study (136 females vs. 32 males). Therefore, male perceptions may have been underrepresented.

Implications

Results of the current study suggest that societal norms have a more significant impact on attitudes towards marriage and divorce than personal family dynamic during childhood. It was found that participants responded more negatively to the non-intact family dynamic narrative and attitudes towards divorce regardless of whether they were from an intact or non-intact family background. This is an important finding because it shows that not only does society as a whole still idealize marriage over divorce, it also shows that parental divorce can have an impact on how society views their children. The character in the non-intact narrative was viewed as less favourable compared to the character from the intact narrative demonstrating an automatic bias towards the benefits of marriage and negative consequences of divorce. This may be an important area to expand research toward in order to further develop understanding of social biases or stigma of how individuals interpret marriage and divorce overall. Marriage continues to be seen as a more positive experience than divorce, and current findings demonstrate that individuals from an intact or non-intact family dynamic may be viewed differently from one another based on their upbringing.

Future Directions

Ideally, future studies, both qualitative and quantitative in nature should analyze more narrowly defined groups with similar experiences to better understand the impact of family dynamic on attitudes towards divorce and marriage. Regarding the use of narratives, future

research should build upon the current study by analyzing whether changing the length of the story, content of the story, as well as other aspects may influence perceptions of the character.

As previously acknowledged, attitudes towards divorce are changing, as rates of divorce rise and acceptance of divorce increases. Much of the research available regarding attitudes towards divorce can be considered outdated with the bulk being collected between 1950 and 1970, as trends continue to change and research on the topic has continued to decline over the last few decades (Department of Justice Canada, 1997). Therefore, although attitudes towards divorce remain more negative than attitudes towards marriage, these differences may be less pronounced as time goes on. Future studies should continue to examine the implications of growing up with varying family dynamics, as this will always be an important area of research due to the continuing impact it has on individuals over their lifetime (Amato, 1993; Cherlin, Chase-Lansdale & McRae, 1997).

Furthermore, some research recommends that families who are experiencing a divorce or separation enroll in parenting classes or mediation so that parents can aid in the learning of how to develop new roles in the changing family dynamic and to reduce conflict (Cohen & Weitzman, 2016). Overall, the inclusion of outside sources in the form of training, classes, or group therapy could provide more positive outcomes for all members of the family experiencing the divorce or separation. More specifically, adolescent females who experienced conflict from a non-intact family dynamic were more likely to report symptoms of depression up to ten years after their parent's divorce or separation (Cohen & Weitzman, 2016). In addition, Cohen and Weitzman (2016) highlight that a divorce or separation is more of a drawn-out process than an event for children to continue to adapt to, which makes this area of research very important. There are a number of resources such as websites and books that children and parents of non-intact families can access, which can be very beneficial for adjusting to changes. For example, those available

through the Department of Justice Canada (2007). This raises the question of whether an additional step for children and adolescents experiencing divorce may be to offer tailored “classes” or group gatherings where individuals can share their experiences and develop relationships with others based on a commonality. Therefore, it may be beneficial to conduct further research in the area of developing programs for children from non-intact families, and whether they can provide benefit to these individuals, especially as they develop into adulthood.

It would also be imperative to explore potential protective factors against the negative impact that parental divorce may have on child well-being. For example, Bertoni, Lafrate, and Carra (2015) found that children from divorced parents who are able to speak and support each other have higher levels of well-being in comparison to children whose divorced parents fail to maintain contact. It would be important for future studies to analyze the quality of the marriage and divorce dynamics, as well as other potential protective factors against maladjustment.

It may be beneficial to conduct further research to determine how individuals from non-intact families can work to develop and maintain their own healthy relationships, rather than falling victim to the intergenerational transmission of divorce. Johnson (2011) explored the impact of relationship education in young adults from intact and non-intact family dynamics. This pilot study was developed to determine the altering expectations and perceptions that individuals may have about their own intimate relationships. Individuals were asked to participate in an intimate relationships course to determine if it impacted their attitudes toward marriage and optimism about relationships. It was found that participant optimism about relationships and their attitudes toward marriage were difficult to alter. Even as early as young adulthood, beliefs are engrained and stable over time, therefore any change in relationship outlooks is minimal at best (Johnson, 2011). It is important to note that individuals from non-intact families may enter relationships after not having ideal role models to demonstrate what an

intact relationship is supposed to be. Therefore, young adults from a non-intact background may have unrealistic expectations of their partner and their relationship dynamic, creating tension within it. As stated previously, these individuals are already shown to have reduced commitment to their own relationships as well as less confidence that a relationship can remain stable and happy (Amato & DeBoer, 2001; Glenn & Kramer, 1987). Due to this, individuals from a non-intact family could potentially benefit from developing healthy relationship skills and improving self awareness in their own intimate relationships from professional relationship counsellors (Johnson, 2011). It is more practical to work with the inflated expectations about relationships that these individuals have in order to produce a healthy relationship without altering their entire belief system. This is an important avenue for future research to pursue as it is important for individuals from a non-intact family to be properly educated and provided with the tools to develop their own healthy relationship if needed.

Conclusion

The goal of the current study was to further expand upon existing research in the area of the impact of divorce. More specifically this study was used to develop a better understanding of the impact that one's family dynamic as a child has on an individual when they are a young adult. Previous research has been conducted in order to discover how the effects of divorce or non-intact family dynamics can follow an individual into their adulthood, however, there is little knowledge in the area of how personal experience may change an individual's perception of family dynamic. It is also important to explore how young adults that have experienced a non-intact family as a child come to make sense of and develop their own perceptions of families and personal relationships. Furthermore, it is insightful to look at the implications of the perceptions that individuals may have and whether there is a difference based on their personal family dynamic history.

Results of the current study indicate that childhood family dynamic does not have a significant impact on perceptions of overall well-being, locus of control, decision-making, relationship confidence and satisfaction during early adulthood. Instead, females self-reported higher levels of deciding, relationship confidence and satisfaction than males regardless of childhood family dynamic. Further research will be required to examine other factors that may influence these findings. Furthermore, results of the current study indicate that perceptions of marriage continue to be higher than perceptions of divorce regardless of whether an individual was raised in an intact or non-intact family. However, males reported a higher acceptance of divorce than females, and individuals from a non-intact family reported higher acceptance of divorce than those from an intact family dynamic. Moreover, perceptions of marriage and divorce may also be projected towards children, adolescents, and adults who were raised in these types of family dynamics, as results showed that the character from the non-intact narrative was viewed more negatively than the character from the intact narrative.

An important finding in the current study was that individuals from non-intact families are more accepting of divorce and express less negativity towards the idea of divorce providing a potential understanding of why divorce is considered a transgenerational issue. It will be essential that future research analyzes the impact of more diverse categories than just “marriage” and “divorce” as family dynamics have changed drastically and the new norm is no longer a nuclear family. Studies must analyze the quality of the marriage, the age at which parental divorce occurred and many other important factors. Collecting a representative sample of individuals who were raised in same-sex marriages, raised by extended family, raised in a blended family, etc. will be a next step in this area of research to determine how these family dynamic types influence our attitudes, well-being, and relationships.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Narratives

Intact Family Dynamic Narratives → *Male*

- **Story 1:** Dylan is a 13-year-old boy in Grade 8. He attends junior high at Lambton Secondary School. Dylan walks to school every day with his younger brother Evan, making sure to drop him off at his school down the street. Being in the 8th grade, Dylan receives a lot of homework from his teacher, which he is sometimes frustrated with. Dylan enjoys playing video games on the computer he got for Christmas. He also likes to paint and draw, and has even started designing his own cartoon series. However, Dylan finds that his homework takes up a lot of his free time after school. Almost every day, Dylan gets home from school and has a small snack, then he spends some time on his homework and finishes it before dinner. Dylan is happy that he often has both of his parents around to help with his homework. If his Mom doesn't know the answer to a question he has, then he is able to ask his Dad in order to get his homework done quickly. Both of Dylan's parents are very helpful with homework and if they are unsure of an answer they make sure to work through the question with Dylan until the problem is solved. If Dylan manages to get his homework finished before dinner, then he is able to spend some time on the computer before going to bed.
- **Story 2:** Michael is a 16-year-old who loves to skateboard and works at the local restaurant as a waiter. Michael works at the restaurant 2 nights a week, and every other weekend. Half of his paycheques go into a savings account for college and the other half is for Michael to spend as he wishes. Michael is also responsible for certain chores around the house, such as doing the dishes after dinner and sweeping the floors. One weekend, Michael was planning on attending a concert with his friends, however his parents did not want him to go. Michael was furious that he was not allowed to go and thought that his parents were being very unfair, so Michael lied to his parents and went to the concert anyway. When trying to sneak back into the house, his parents woke up and caught Michael so they immediately grounded him. Michael finds it difficult to communicate with his parents because they are unreasonable and don't seem to listen to him. He feels as though he cannot tell them anything because they react very quickly and very negatively to almost everything he says. Michael wishes that he could have more open conversations with his parents and that they would try to understand where he's coming from and compromise with him when it comes to things like going out with his friends.

Intact Family Dynamic Narratives → *Female*

- **Story 1:** Brooke is a 13-year-old girl in Grade 8. She attends junior high at Lambton Secondary School. Brooke walks to school every day with her younger brother Evan, making sure to drop him off at his school down the street. Being in the 8th grade, Brooke receives a lot of homework from her teacher, which she is sometimes frustrated with. Brooke enjoys playing video games on the computer she got for Christmas. She also likes to paint and draw, and has even started designing her own cartoon series. However, Brooke finds that her homework takes up a lot of her free time after school. Almost every day, Brooke gets home from school and has a small snack, then she spends some time on her homework and finishes it before dinner. Brooke is happy that she often has both of her parents around to help with her homework. If her Mom doesn't know the answer to a question she has, then she is able to ask her Dad in order to get her homework done quickly. Both of Brooke's parents are very helpful with homework and if they are unsure of an answer they make sure to work through the question with Brooke until the problem is solved. If Brooke manages to get her homework finished before dinner, then she is able to spend some time on the computer before going to bed.
- **Story 2:** Emily is a 16-year-old who loves to skateboard and works at the local restaurant as a waitress. Emily works at the restaurant 2 nights a week, and every other weekend. Half of her paycheques go into a savings account for college and the other half is for Emily to spend as she wishes. Emily is also responsible for certain chores around the house, such as doing the dishes after dinner and sweeping the floors. One weekend, Emily was planning on attending a concert with her friends, however her parents did not want her to go. Emily was furious that she was not allowed to go and thought that her parents were being very unfair, so Emily lied to her parents and went to the concert anyway. When trying to sneak back into the house, her parents woke up and caught Emily so they immediately grounded her. Emily finds it difficult to communicate with her parents because they are unreasonable and don't seem to listen to her. She feels as though she cannot tell them anything because they react very quickly and very negatively to almost everything she says. Emily wishes that she could have more open conversations with her parents and that they would try to understand where she's coming from and compromise with her when it comes to things like going out with her friends.

Non-Intact Family Dynamic Narratives → *Male*

- **Story 1:** Dylan is a 13-year-old boy in Grade 8. He attends junior high school at Lambton Secondary School. Dylan walks to school every day with his younger brother Evan, making sure to drop him off at his school down the street. Being in the 8th grade, Dylan receives a lot of homework from his teacher, which he is sometimes frustrated with. Dylan enjoys playing video games on the computer he got for Christmas. He also likes to paint and draw, and has even started designing his own cartoon series. However, Dylan finds that his homework takes up a lot of his free time after school. Almost every day, Dylan gets home from school and has a small snack, then he spends some time on his homework and finishes it before dinner. Dylan is happy that he often has his mother around to help with his homework. Dylan and his brother live with their single mother, and she usually has to multitask and make dinner while helping Dylan with his schoolwork. She is always willing to assist Dylan when he has a question and does her best to help him work through homework that he struggles with. If Dylan's mother does not know the answer to a question, then they attempt to work on it together until the answer is found. Sometimes they are unable to fully complete Dylan's homework so he has to ask the teacher the next day for assistance. If Dylan manages to get his homework finished before dinner, then he is able to spend some time on the computer before going to bed.
- **Story 2:** Michael is a 16-year-old who loves to skateboard and works at the local restaurant as a waiter. Michael works at the restaurant 2 nights a week, and every other weekend. Half of his paycheques go into a savings account for college and the other half is for Michael to spend as he wishes. Michael is also responsible for certain chores around the house, such as doing the dishes after dinner and sweeping the floors. One weekend, Michael was planning on attending a concert with his friends, however his mother did not want him to go. Michael's mom is the only authority figure in the house, so what she says goes. Michael was furious that he was not allowed to go and thought that his mother was being very unfair, so Michael lied to his mom and went to the concert anyway. When trying to sneak back into the house, his mom woke up and caught Michael so she immediately grounded him. Michael finds it difficult to communicate with his mom because she is unreasonable and doesn't seem to listen to him. He feels as though he cannot tell her anything because she reacts very quickly and very negatively to almost everything he says. Michael wishes that he could have more open conversations with his mom and that she would try to understand where he's coming from and compromise with him when it comes to things like going out with his friends.

Non-Intact Family Dynamic Narratives → *Female*

- **Story 1:** Brooke is a 13-year-old girl in Grade 8. She attends junior high school at Lambton Secondary School. Brooke walks to school every day with her younger brother Evan, making sure to drop him off at his school down the street. Being in the 8th grade, Brooke receives a lot of homework from her teacher, which she is sometimes frustrated with. Brooke enjoys playing video games on the computer she got for Christmas. She also likes to paint and draw, and has even started designing her own cartoon series. However, Brooke finds that her homework takes up a lot of her free time after school. Almost every day, Brooke gets home from school and has a small snack, then she spends some time on her homework and finishes it before dinner. Brooke is happy that she often has her mother around to help with her homework. Brooke and her brother live with their single mother, and she usually has to multitask and make dinner while helping Brooke with her schoolwork. She is always willing to assist Brooke when she has a question and does her best to help her work through homework that she struggles with. If Brooke's mother does not know the answer to a question, then they attempt to work on it together until the answer is found. Sometimes they are unable to fully complete Brooke's homework so she has to ask the teacher the next day for assistance. If Brooke manages to get her homework finished before dinner, then she is able to spend some time on the computer before going to bed.
- **Story 2:** Emily is a 16-year-old who loves to skateboard and works at the local restaurant as a waitress. Emily works at the restaurant 2 nights a week, and every other weekend. Half of her paycheques go into a savings account for college and the other half is for Emily to spend as she wishes. Emily is also responsible for certain chores around the house, such as doing the dishes after dinner and sweeping the floors. One weekend, Emily was planning on attending a concert with her friends, however her mother did not want her to go. Emily's mom is the only authority figure in the house, so what she says goes. Emily was furious that she was not allowed to go and thought that her mom was being very unfair, so Emily lied to her mom and went to the concert anyway. When trying to sneak back into the house, her mom woke up and caught Emily so she immediately grounded her. Emily finds it difficult to communicate with her mom because she is unreasonable and doesn't seem to listen to her. She feels as though she cannot tell her anything because she reacts very quickly and very negatively to almost everything she says. Emily wishes that she could have more open conversations with her mom and that she would try to understand where she's coming from and compromise with her when it comes to things like going out with her friends.

Narrative Questions - Dylan

How well do you think Dylan performs in school?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Poorly Average Very Well

How happy do you think Dylan is?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Not at all Neutral Very Happy

Do you think that Dylan completes his homework on time consistently?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
No Sometimes Yes

What kind of relationship do you think Dylan has with his mother?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Poor Average Excellent

What kind of relationship do you think Dylan has with his father?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Poor Average Excellent

How likely is it that Dylan will be successful when he is an adult?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Very Unlikely Neutral Very Likely

Do you think Dylan comes from a low, middle, or high-income household?

How likely is it that Dylan will get married when he grows up?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Very Unlikely Neutral Very Likely

Narrative Questions - Brooke

How well do you think Brooke performs in school?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Poorly Average Very Well

How happy do you think Brooke is?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Not at all Neutral Very Happy

Do you think that Brooke completes her homework on time consistently?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
No Sometimes Yes

What kind of relationship do you think Brooke has with her mother?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Poor Average Excellent

What kind of relationship do you think Brooke has with her father?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Poor Average Excellent

How likely is it that Brooke will be successful when she is an adult?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Very Unlikely Neutral Very Likely

Do you think Brooke comes from a low, middle, or high-income household?

How likely is it that Brooke will get married when she grows up?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Very Unlikely Neutral Very Likely

Appendix C: Scoring Legend

Narratives (Brooke/Dylan)		Min = 7 (more negative) Max = 35 (more positive)
Narratives (Emily/Michael)	Reverse Q1	Min = 7 (more negative) Max = 35 (more positive)
Attitudes Toward Divorce	Reverse Q1, Q3, Q6	Min = 6 (more negative) Max = 30 (more positive)
Attitudes Toward Marriage	Reverse Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4	Min = 6 (more negative) Max = 30 (more positive)
Well-Being		Min = 8 (more negative) Max = 40 (more positive)
Locus of Control	Reverse Q1, Q3, Q4, Q6	Min = 0 (no control) Max = 18 (control)
Relationship Confidence		Min = 4 (less confidence) Max = 20 (more confidence)
Deciding	Reverse Q3, Q5	Min = 5 (indecisive) Max = 25 (decisive)
Relationship Satisfaction		Min = 5 (not satisfied) Max = 25 (satisfied)

Appendix D: Questionnaires—Demographics, Attitudes Towards Divorce/Marriage, Well-Being, Locus of Control, Relationship Confidence, Deciding, and Relationship Satisfaction

D.1. Demographics Questionnaire

Age: _____ Occupation: _____
If student, Major: _____

Gender: _____ Current Relationship status: _____

Have you been previously married? Yes No

Do you have any children? Yes No

How satisfied are you with the quality of your relationships with your family?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Not at all Satisfied Somewhat Very Satisfied

Are you satisfied with the quality of your relationships with your friends?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Not at all Satisfied Somewhat Very Satisfied

How would you rate your level of happiness?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Very Bad Bad Neutral Good Very Good

How would you rate your level of success?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Very Bad Bad Neutral Good Very Good

How would you rate your physical well-being?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Very Bad Bad Neutral Good Very Good

How would you rate your mental well-being?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Very Bad Bad Neutral Good Very Good

What were your parent's occupations during your childhood?

Parent 1: _____ Parent 2: _____

Are your parents currently married (or common law) to each other and living together?

Yes No

**ONLY ANSWER THE NEXT SECTION THAT APPLIES TO YOUR ANSWER ABOVE
IF YES:**

How long have they been married/common law? _____

Do you consider your parents happy in their relationship? Yes No

Do you think you will want to get married in the future? Yes No

Do you want a relationship like your parents? Yes No

Do you currently have a healthy relationship with your mother? Yes No

Do you currently have a healthy relationship with your father? Yes No

Do you think children from divorced/separated parents are at a disadvantage? Yes No

If yes, how so? _____

IF NO:

Were your parents ever married (or common law) to each other? Yes No

If so, how old were you when they divorced/separated? _____

Parents Marital Status

Mother: Remarried	Father:	Remarried
Remained divorced		Remained divorced
Divorced for 2 nd /3 rd /time		Divorced for 2 nd /3 rd /time
Widowed		Widowed
Other _____		Other _____

Do you currently have a healthy relationship with your mother? Yes No

Do you currently have a healthy relationship with your father? Yes No

Who was your primary caregiver(s) throughout your childhood? _____

Do you think you will want to get married in the future? Yes No

Do you think children from divorced/separated parents are at a disadvantage? Yes No

If yes, how so? _____

D.2 Attitudes Toward Marriage Scale

Please respond to each of the following statements by circling the appropriate rating based on your opinion for each scale

1) If you were to marry, to what extent would you miss the life you had as a single person?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Not at all A little Neutral A lot Very Much

2) How difficult would it be for you to give up your personal freedom if you were married?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Not at all A little Neutral A lot Very Much

3) How difficult would it be for you to adjust to married life?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Not at all A little Neutral A lot Very Much

4) Do you ever have doubts about whether you would enjoy living exclusively with one person after marriage?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Not at all A little Neutral A lot Very Much

5) Do you think you would enjoy the responsibilities of marriage?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Not at all A little Neutral A lot Very Much

6) If you marry, how happy do you think you will be?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Not at all A little Neutral A lot Very Much

D.3 Attitudes Toward Divorce Scale

Please respond to each of the following statements by circling the appropriate rating based on your opinion for each scale

1) When people marry, they should be willing to stay together no matter what happens.

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Not at all A little Neutral A lot Very Much

2) If people are not happy in their marriage, they owe it to themselves to get a divorce and try to improve their lives.

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Not at all A little Neutral A lot Very Much

3) The marriage vow "till death do us part" represents a sacred commitment to another person and should not be taken lightly.

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Not at all A little Neutral A lot Very Much

4) The negative effects of divorce on children have been greatly exaggerated.

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Not at all A little Neutral A lot Very Much

5) In the long run, society will be seriously harmed by the high divorce rate.

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Not at all A little Neutral A lot Very Much

6) Many people that get divorced are too weak to make personal sacrifices for the good of their families.

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Not at all A little Neutral A lot Very Much

D.5 Locus of Control

"How do you feel about each of the following statements?"

(0 = strongly disagree, 1 = disagree, 2 = agree, 3 = strongly agree).

1. I don't have enough control over the direction my life is taking.

0-----1-----2-----3
Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

2. In my life, good luck is more important than hard work for success.

0-----1-----2-----3
Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

3. Every time I try to get ahead, something or somebody stops me.

0-----1-----2-----3
Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

4. My plans hardly ever work out, so planning only makes me unhappy.

0-----1-----2-----3
Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

5. When I make plans, I am almost certain I can make them work.

0-----1-----2-----3
Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

6. Chance and luck are very important for what happens.

0-----1-----2-----3
Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

D.6 Deciding

1. With romantic partners, I weigh the pros and cons before allowing myself to take the next step in the relationship (e.g., be physically intimate).

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Strongly Disagree Neutral Strongly Agree

2. It is important to make conscious decisions about whether to take each major step in romantic relationships.

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Strongly Disagree Neutral Strongly Agree

3. Considering the pros and cons of each major step in a romantic relationship destroys its chemistry.

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Strongly Disagree Neutral Strongly Agree

4. It is important to me to discuss with my partner each major step we take in the relationship.

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Strongly Disagree Neutral Strongly Agree

5. It is better to “go with the flow” than think carefully about each major step in a romantic relationship.

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Strongly Disagree Neutral Strongly Agree

D.8 Relationship Satisfaction

Only answer if you are currently in a relationship.

How satisfied were you with your partner during the previous week?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Not At All Neutral Very

How well does your partner meet your needs?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Not At All Neutral Very

Is your current relationship better than your previous relationships?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Not At All Neutral Very

How much do you love your partner?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Not At All Neutral Very

How well does your partner meet your expectations?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Not At All Neutral Very

Appendix E: Approval for Conducting Research Involving Human Subjects



APPROVAL FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS Research Ethics Board – Laurentian University

This letter confirms that the research project identified below has successfully passed the ethics review by the Laurentian University Research Ethics Board (REB). Your ethics approval date, other milestone dates, and any special conditions for your project are indicated below.

TYPE OF APPROVAL / New X / Modifications to project / Time extension	
Name of Principal Investigator and school/department	Paige Smith (PI), Faculty of Arts\Psychology; Elizabeth Levin (Supervisor)
Title of Project	Impact of Family Dynamic on Perceptions of Self, Others, and Interpersonal Relationships
REB file number	6013748
Date of original approval of project	April 30, 2018
Date of approval of project modifications or extension (if applicable)	
Final/Interim report due on: <i>(You may request an extension)</i>	April 30, 2019
Conditions placed on project	

During the course of your research, no deviations from, or changes to, the protocol, recruitment or consent forms may be initiated without prior written approval from the REB. If you wish to modify your research project, please refer to the Research Ethics website to complete the appropriate REB form.

All projects must submit a report to REB at least once per year. If involvement with human participants continues for longer than one year (e.g. you have not completed the objectives of the study and have not yet terminated contact with the participants, except for feedback of final results to participants), you must request an extension using the appropriate LU REB form. In all cases, please ensure that your research complies with Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS). Also, please quote your REB file number on all future correspondence with the REB office.

Congratulations and best wishes in conducting your research.

Susan Boyko, PhD, Vice Chair, *Laurentian University Research Ethics Board*

Appendix F: Recruitment Script and Informed Consent

Recruitment Script

Hello,

My name is Paige Smith and I am an Applied Psychology Masters Student recruiting for my thesis under the supervision of Dr. Levin. My study is looking at individual's perceptions of narratives as well as differing family dynamics. We are looking for Laurentian University students between the ages of 18 and 25 who have not been previously married/divorced and do not have any children.

If you wish to participate, you will be asked to provide some demographic information as well as read 2 narratives and answer questions related to those narratives and a follow up questionnaire about your personal attitudes, relationships, thoughts, and feelings.

Participation in this study will take approximately one hour and you can be rewarded with one bonus point for your class (if permitted my professor). At any point during the study you are able to refuse to continue and may leave if you are uncomfortable. If you leave the study before completing you are still able to claim the participation time in terms of bonus marks.

I will be passing around a form for you to write your name and email address on if you are interested in participating in the study or have any further questions.

Variation for Online Posting If you are interested in participating or have any further questions, please send an email to psmith@laurentian.ca

Thank you for your time.

Once provided with an email address to contact students, or once they have contacted the researcher, they will be sent this email:

Thank you for your interest in this study. I am currently collecting data, and would like to schedule a time for you to complete the study. I am available during these dates and times (students will be provided with a few different times over the following week to choose from). Please let me know which, if any, of these times works best for you and I will provide you with information on the location of the study.

Thank you,
Paige Smith

INFORMED CONSENT

Paige Smith
Laurentian University
psmith@laurentian.ca

I, _____, am interested in participating in this study on participants' perceptions of characters in narratives as well as differing family dynamics. This study is being conducted by Paige Smith, a Master of Arts Applied Psychology student supervised by Dr. Levin.

My participation will consist of attending a one-hour session during which I will be asked to read 2 short narratives and then to respond to questions about the narratives. I will also be asked to provide answers to questions about my perceptions of myself, others, and interpersonal relationships. I give my consent for the use of my answers obtained from the questionnaires. These results will be kept confidential and private, and only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to them.

My participation is strictly voluntary, and I am free to withdraw from the study at any moment or refuse to participate without any penalty. Although it would be preferable that I answer all questions, if I am uncomfortable with any particular question, I am able to refuse to answer. I have also received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. If for any reason I do feel any discomfort, I may stop at any time without penalty.

All of my information will be kept private and confidential. All physical forms of data will be shredded and destroyed. However, I understand that a digital file with the research information will be kept for 2 years after completion of the study for potential use in future studies. After 2 years has passed, all research information will be destroyed.

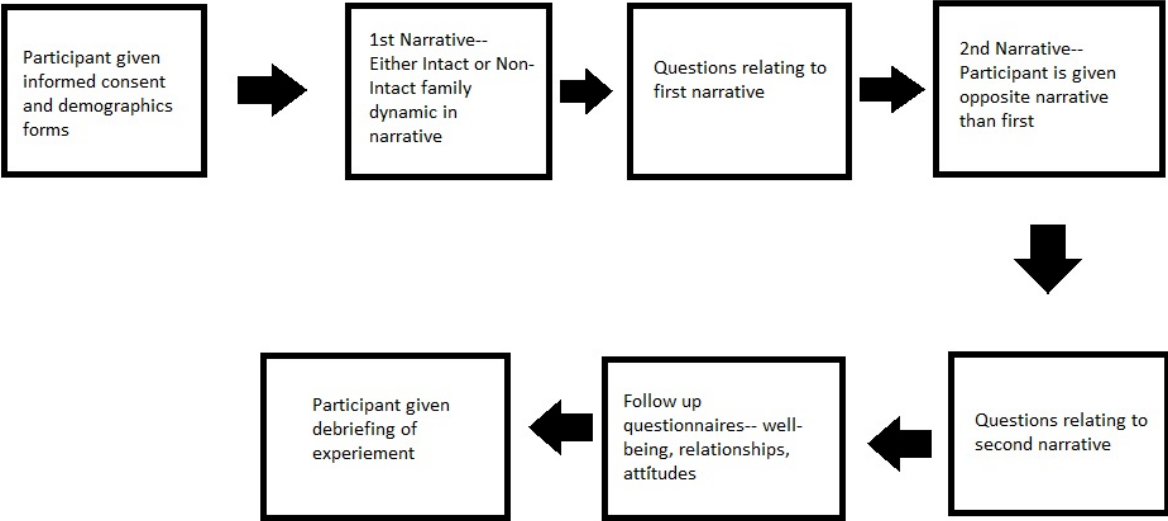
If I have any questions or concerns, I may contact the thesis researcher Paige Smith at psmith@laurentian.ca, or her thesis supervisor, Dr. Levin at elevin@laurentian.ca. If you have any ethical concerns about this study, you may contact: Laurentian University's Office of Research Services at ethics@laurentian.ca or 705-675-1151 ext. 2436.

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

I wish to receive a summary of the results of this study, which will be available when data collection is completed, at the following email address: _____

Appendix G: Procedural Steps



Appendix H: Debriefing Form

DEBRIEFING FORM

Thank you for participating in this research study conducted by Paige Smith under the supervision of Dr. Elizabeth Levin.

Previous research has shown that there are differences between children and young adults from intact and non-intact families. These differences could occur in areas such as well-being, quality of life, education, employment, relationships, and attitudes toward marriage and divorce. However, these differences are not always found, and the impact of a non-intact family dynamic is not the same for all individuals as environmental factors may also play a role.

The goal of the current study is to obtain further information surrounding an individual's early life experiences and whether exposure to a non-intact family dynamic will influence their perceptions of self, others, and interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, this study is designed to determine whether an individual's family dynamic as a child has an impact on how they view characters from intact and non-intact families.

Upon interpreting the collected data, we expect to find that individuals who report that they are from a non-intact family dynamic will also report more negative ratings of well-being, lower ratings of locus of control, more negative attitudes towards marriage and divorce, as well as lower levels of confidence in and commitment to relationships. Any personal information is kept separate from all experiment data. All information provided will remain both anonymous and confidential.

Participating in this research project asks participants to recall and report on their family relationships and relate the narrative to their past experiences. Laurentian University's Counselling Services can be contacted at counsellingservices@laurentian.ca or 705-673-6506. Feel free to contact the Counselling Services department if any negative feelings arise.

If you are interested in reading about the background of this experiment, you may consult the following sources:

Kalter, N., & Plunkett, J. W. (1984). Children's perceptions of the causes and consequences of divorce. *Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry*, 23(3), 326-334.

doi:[http://dx.doi.org.librweb.laurentian.ca/10.1016/S0002-7138\(09\)60512-4](http://dx.doi.org.librweb.laurentian.ca/10.1016/S0002-7138(09)60512-4)

Robinson, C. M. (2000). The perceived impact of childhood parental divorce on young adults Available from Sociological Abstracts. (61517948; 200015900). Retrieved from <https://search-proquest-com.librweb.laurentian.ca/docview/61517948?accountid=12005>