

How Does Divorce Affect the Individual Relationships of the Children Involved?

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I. Abstract

Research has shown that divorce can have both negative and positive affects for those involved, who may experience different changes that are limited to not only emotions and psychological aspects, but also relationships. The focus of this study is to examine how divorce can affect the relationships of the children involved, whether it is with the parents themselves, their other siblings, or their friends. This study attempts to understand why these relationships may change in both negative and positive aspects, or why they may have no change at all. Multiple factors are considered when understanding the affects divorce may have on relationships. These factors include, but are not limited to the following: age when divorce occurred, current living arrangements, cause of the divorce, number and sex of siblings, and other social stressors. This analysis covers a series of five interviews and an auto-ethnography, both of which contain information regarding the impact of divorce on personal relationships. The results suggest that the factors listed above influence the way divorce impacts personal relationships. In most cases, children become closer with siblings or friends as a way of dealing with the divorce. Most found it difficult to talk to their parents and accrued negative information from them (in regards to the opposite parent or the divorce in general) and thus turned elsewhere for support. Information collected supports the fact that relationships are strengthened in most cases, but also directly correlates to the weakening of one or more at the same time. In many cases the relationship that weakens is the one with a select parent, while the other relationships become strengthened (including the other parent).

II. Introduction

Divorce, in this researcher's eyes, plagues society now more than ever. The current American divorce rate of 50% has become a commonly known statistic. This number is just a projection of current trends, but to see such a high rate of divorce is astounding.

Psychologically, the affects of divorce can be detrimental and have the ability to change relationships with family and friends. Ideally, marriage should last forever, but when it does not, it ends in divorce, which brings this researcher to ask: How does divorce affect the individual relationships of the children involved? There are many factors that can affect the relationships of individuals of a divorce. Inappropriate parental divorce disclosures can greatly change the way a parent-child relationship functions—both negatively and positively depending on the situation and how the information is disclosed (Afifi et al., 2007). The issue stems from the fact that children may be exposed to certain information that is perceived as inappropriate to them, and the parent does not know that what they are revealing could be problematic to the child (Afifi et al., 2007). This is a factor that does affect child-parent relationships, but the underlying affect is unnoticed as it is also affecting other personal relationships of the child. As said before, many factors can affect these individual relationships; on top of inappropriate disclosure, there can also be avoidance issues. Research has shown that children often avoid talking about one parent when in front of the other in order to avoid factors that would affect their psyche, as well as their relationships (Afifi et al., 2008). Avoidance of this type is utilized to prevent information from going from parent to parent and to avoid any conflict that would occur. Maintaining relationships (with parents) can be a difficult thing when children feel as though they are caught in the middle. This researcher perceives that children will then reach out to others in order to deal with their problems. What may seem like avoidance behavior when discussed with parents

leads to the hypothesis that children utilize their other relationships (i.e. siblings and friends) during and even after divorce in order to disclose information that may cause conflict if disclosed in front of parents. Another perception of how divorce changes relationships branches off from more of a mother-son relationship pattern. However, this can be significant to determining why relationships change when understanding the circumstances of a divorce, and how an older adult male will take on the responsibilities of a father figure when a family is in the absence of a father (Shulman et al., 2006). This type of information shows that a mother-child relationship can alter the relationships between them and other individuals. Previous research has shown that mothers would often rely on their family members for emotional support and advice in reference to the divorce. This type of reliance can put pressure on the child to become more involved with a family and thus create a transformation of their relationships (Shulman et al., 2006); this in turn can create that fatherly figure as described earlier, which would greatly change the relationship between siblings.

Social cognitive theory has been utilized to explain the relational outcomes associated with parental divorce: “According to social cognitive theory, people learn attitudes and behaviors through both direct and vicarious experience” (Segrin et al., 2004, pp. 3-4). Studies show the remarkably high divorce rate has association with children of divorced parents and has been described through socioeconomic variables in previous research. Research provided demonstrates the negative factors that influence future relationships as well as the reasoning behind them. Two major explanations based on social cognitive mediators are poor communication skills and negative attitudes towards marriage permanence. Therefore, relationships correlate with social cognitive behavior and as a result, are affected based on what is learned from involvement with the divorce. Parental behavioral influences have a profound

impact on intergenerational transmission of divorce and may breed personal relational factors as well.

In an effort of hermeneutic, ideological, and phenomenological research, this researcher set the focus upon understanding the effects of divorce on the children's relationships with other individuals. These individuals specifically include the parents themselves, their siblings, and finally, their friends. The factors surrounding parent-child bonds can be underlying factors affecting their other personal relationships. Furthermore, information disclosed, whether it be inappropriate or necessary, can affect the relationships of parent and child and may cause a change in family roles. This in turn can impact the way a child perceives his or her relationships with siblings and others, overall reinstating the fact that divorce has factors that influence relationships. Therefore, the goal of this research stems from the previous research between parent and child and attempts to utilize the same ideology to apply it to the other individual relationships that the children of divorce parents attempt to shape and maintain.

III. Literature Review

Afifi et al. (2007) examined the inappropriate parental divorce disclosures. These disclosures had effects on both the parents' and adolescents' well-being. A lack of social support, other divorce stressors, and a lack of control over other factors can cause parents to disclose inappropriate information to their children. Within this research, it is understood that divorce can weaken parent-child relationships, but it also has the ability to strengthen the relationships. Adolescents in this research feel as though the information their parents disclose is out of control, and at the same time, parents feel as though stressors are out of their control. This creates an interesting relationship between the parent and child with the factors surrounding the

divorce. The children could perceive the information their parents disclosed to them in a different manner than their parents perceived that information (2007). This in turn could affect the relationship between parent and child, which permeates into this researcher's phenomenology that children's relationships are widely affected during a divorce. Although this particular research only applies to parent-child relationships, it has the ability to affect other relationships as well. Information deemed as inappropriate to the child can cause a negative reaction in the child's mind and thus make him or her refrain from talking to parents, causing him or her to seek contact elsewhere. The hypothesized model displays the well-being of the child and parent as the end result, both being different endings, yet connected (2007). This perception can also translate into the child's relationships with other individuals. If the child is looking out for his or her own well-being, the lack of communication with the parent (as a result of inappropriate disclosure) will lead to different sources or outlets for information. Ideally, this adds a sense of fulfillment to this researcher's hypothesis that these parent-child disclosures have a greater effect on the child's overall relationships, and not just parent and child relationships solely. The research within this literature not only provides information in regards to parents and children, but also creates the underlying effect to individual relationships as a whole.

Afifi et al. (2008) analyzed adolescents' avoidance tendencies and psychological reactions to discussions in regards to their parents' relationships, both post-divorce and non-divorced families. Avoidance is an interesting strategy in dealing with these types of discussions. This is ideally opposite of the previous study by Afifi et al., (2007) with inappropriate disclosure. The topic of avoiding the situation altogether is key. Intuition says if an adolescent is not talking to his or her parents about something, then he or she is talking to someone else. Thus, although the literature is not solely directed at divorced families, its

information is extremely relative and pertinent to this researcher's question: How does divorce affect the individual relationships of the children involved? Due to the research that Affifi et al. (2008) performed and the data that was collected, it is concluded that divorce created adolescents' feelings of being caught, which affected their relationships with their parents. Unfortunately, these results did not coincide with the avoidance factor, but the sheer fact that divorce has this kind of ability means that it can predict relationship trends as well, which is what this researcher was able to utilize from this literature. Furthermore, it was argued that during the point of psychotic arousal, adolescents should attempt to avoid talking about their parents' marriage relationship. That being said, the options are to suppress the thoughts and build anxiety (as were the results in their methodology) or as this researcher hypothesizes, to find other means of getting the information out (i.e. talking to others such as siblings and friends) (2008).

Shulman et al. (2006) examined a typology of relationship patterns via the method of individual interviews. Those specifically studied were emerging adult men and their mothers in divorced families. This study noted that research primarily focuses on children under the age of eighteen; this one differed as it attempted to analyze the long-term effects during young adulthood. Based on the interviews with young adults of divorced families, mothers who tended to rely on their children for emotional support and advice created a sense of equality, necessity, and a friend-type status in the minds of their children. However, this is not the only case discussed; the children of frequently absent parents may withdraw from the family, act as a loner, or seek support outside the family. Ideally, this translates into the differentiation of the relationships surrounding the children involved with the divorce. The case seems to stem from the parent-child relationship and either builds or deteriorates from there. The individual interview results in the Shulman et al. study yielded different relationship patterns among

emerging adult men belonging to divorced families. These depended on varying factors such as the relationship with the mother and father and any boundaries that existed. The effect of the Shulman et al. study reflects this researcher's ideology of divorce having an impact on the individual relationships of the children involved. The Shulman et al. study aided in the suggestion that divorce outcomes are not limited to childhood; therefore, relationships at any age can be affected by divorce, no matter when it occurs. These emerging young men were studied to understand how they develop as a result of the divorce, reinforcing the fact that relationships continue to change in the wake of a divorce for any child (i.e. any offspring in general, not from a particular age group).

Segrin et al. (2004) bases the relational outcomes of parental divorce with social cognitive mediators. Social cognitive theory was utilized as the basis of the research and analysis for the relational outcomes. Predictions based on the theory were then tested on a sample of 821 adults to understand how behavioral transmission occurred in the children of divorce. Research suggested that more negative marital attitudes were present in adult children as a result of the family conflict that occurs because of divorce, denoting the long-term relational effects based on factors surrounding the conflict. Interestingly, family origin of conflict, when statistically controlled, does not produce negative results. Therefore, direct correlation adheres to the current research as relational aspects are affected based on unique factors relating to divorce. Segrin et al. provides research and analysis on origin of conflict and social cognitive mediators that occur during and after the divorce. Results suggest that the long-term relational and attitudinal effects are correlated with conflict surrounding the divorce, thus supporting this research in understanding how divorce affects personal relationships.

IV. Discussion

Based on the literature reviewed, there is evidence to support the ideology that divorce affects the relationships of the children involved. Multifaceted ideology presented through research suggests different relational affects on children as a result. Divorce as a whole presents unique outcomes from case to case. Thus, the complexity surrounding divorce cannot be summed up or analyzed by one article or methodology. Even after an extensive literature review, research simply suggests theoretical hypotheses based on statistical results.

Parent-child relationships do not stray from the notion of multifaceted ideology when linked with divorce. In an effort of phenomenological research, the analysis of these relationships stemmed from an array of literature. Afifi et al. (2007) suggests that personal relationships of parent and child can be affected by inappropriate divorce disclosures. This includes but is not limited to negative information about a parent, the perception of information, and unknowing disclosures. Analysis of 118 custodial parent-adolescent dyads concluded that “the contributions must be framed within the limitations of it” (p. 98). Due to the dyadic nature of the testing, interdependence of parent-child well-being and their perceptions of what is considered to be inappropriate disclosure were able to be analyzed successfully. Bias surrounding self-reporting was determined to be more common in parents than children when discussing inappropriate disclosures. Furthermore, inconclusive results stemmed from limitations. A small sample size affected the ability to obtain statistically significant differences. Due to this, it was suggested that in order to create statistical differences, a much larger sample size should be analyzed. Even taking into consideration the limitations of the research, the information still supports hypotheses and ideology associated with personal relationships affected by divorce.

The avoidance discussion and testing by Afifi et al. (2008) predicted that divorce created a feeling of being caught in the middle of parents. As a result of this prediction, it was assumed that children's anxiety would increase and create an increase in arousal, ultimately causing children to attempt to avoid conversations with their parents about parental relationships. Data collected from 112 parent-adolescent dyads showed that there were varying degrees of results. Divorce maintained the multifaceted ideology associated with it in this study as well, due to the nature and variation of results. Although the results for the particular study were not the expected results, the overall process of avoidance in parent-child relational communication provided evidence for the effects on relationships. Admittance of the sole topic of the relationship with parents is also taken into consideration. However, the underlying impact that parent-child relations has on other personal relationships is inferred based on the avoidance tactics suggested. The act of communicational avoidance with the parent suggests that a child utilizes unhealthy practices and chooses to suppress emotions or, in a more favorable outcome, strengthens other relationships by expressing emotions to key individuals.

Parent-child research further analyzed the relational affects of divorce in respect to the family as a whole. Shulman et al. (2006), in a series of individual interviews, analyzed the relationships of mothers and sons in an attempt to understand the typology of relationships that occurred as a result of divorce. A total of 64 dyads (mother and son) were interviewed on two areas of interest: their relationships as a whole and the relationships with their fathers. Limitations were addressed as the results were only limited to young men in divorced families. It is assumed that results might have been different if the study applied to young women of divorced families. Taking the limitations into consideration, the results suggested different relationship patterns among emerging adult men belonging to divorced families. These

relational patterns were classified into three categories: Idealized, Balanced-Realistic, and Critical. Analysis showed that there were varied ways in which sons viewed their mothers and fathers and understood their roles. Due to the categorization, it was suggested that there are many factors that influence the relationships as a result of the divorce (2006). Ideology on the material can support the thought of relational effects on the basis of divorce even with the limitations described. Although the presence of limitations creates a hole in the research, the research suggests that divorce affects the personal relationships of children.

Distinction between socioeconomic and social cognitive predictors has led to research on relational outcomes associated with parental divorce. In a phenomenological, ideological method of research and analysis, Segrin et al. (2004) examined the relational and attitudinal effects based on the social cognitive theory. A sample of 821 adults was surveyed to understand how the social cognitive mediators affected their relational futures. Results showed increased conflict, more negative attitudes towards marriage, and greater likelihood to marry a previously divorced person. Although the family origin of conflict did not directly correlate with the odds of divorce in the child's future marriage, it was a predictor for being in a close relationship. This sample data infers that divorce has the ability to affect child relationships based on the behaviors and relationships of the parents during the time of divorce. The "representative sample, high statistical power and corroborating results" (p. 25) play a key role in predicting behaviors of the children of divorce based on the social cognitive theory. Therefore, the absence of limitations allows the research from the literature to be utilized to its full extent in the current research topic as these relational aspects directly pertain to the ideology surrounding the effects of divorce on children.

V. Methodology

Beyond a thorough reading of the literature, this researcher developed original research methodologies in order to further determine how divorce affects personal relationships of the children involved. Two methods of design were created to find factors influencing personal relationships of children associated with divorce. First, an autoethnography detailing the researcher's personal experience with divorce was analyzed to understand how the effects of divorce impacted his own personal relationships. Second, a series of participant-observer interviews were used to collect data about the effects of divorce on other children's relational changes as a result of divorce.

1. Autoethnographic Research

As previously stated, an autoethnography was the first method developed by the researcher. Based on a phenomenological and autoethnographic method of research and design, the personal experience was both written and analyzed in order to gain a better understanding of the relational effects of divorce on the researcher.

i. Autoethnography

That common phrase always rang through my ears as things became worse and worse: "Don't be a statistic." Of course, this can apply to many things. Some are actually good things, but this time it fell into a negative nest of statistics. Divorce now affects so many people, and I never thought it would include me after my parents had been happily (or so I thought) married for 19 years. But conflicts continued to occur until the marriage finally ended in divorce. My two best friends in high school were victims of divorce and I now joined them, dumbfounded

and confused. The roads that led to the divorce did not just involve my parents. No, this drive was not just for them; I would be on this drive as well, obviously in different ways, but the realization was the end. Getting there was just a series of roadblocks, slow downs, and stop signs for me.

I had read a lot of things about divorce affecting children at a young age, but I was a freshman in college and did not think there would be negative repercussions for me. I soon learned that there were. My motivation was diminishing little by little my first semester of my freshman year. There was an emotional roller coaster full of mostly downs and corkscrews that just sent my thoughts spiraling out of control. I, the invincible wrestler, the invincible college student, had finally found that kryptonite that would weaken me. The divorce is hard for me to think about, and even more so to write about. Losing that feeling of being invincible as a freshman obviously will fade for anyone, but I was losing it my first semester. That mindset of it not affecting me because I was an adult quickly faded, and I found myself not knowing what to do. Unaware of where to turn and unable to discuss my feelings to anyone, I did something that was not at all a sign of invincibility: I got help.

There I was in the office of Townsend Velkoff, not quite sure what I was really doing there, not sure if my problem was even worth his time or if it *was* a problem. This was the first time I ever sought counseling for my problems; as insinuated before, I usually think I can do everything on my own without anyone else's help. Velkoff, being a great guy as well as a mental health professional, let me in on a little secret on our first visit. "Divorce is a difficult situation for anyone to deal with, no matter what age," he reassured me. There you go, Superman; you can take a breath and relax. Those words were comforting because he was right, and no matter the age, it is going to have an effect on a person. Often it is hard for anyone to learn things the hard

way or experience them firsthand. As I said before, my two best friends had divorced parents, but they remarried. As an outsider, there was no way to understand what really went on until it happened to me. So, I attempted to understand my mindset, my emotions, and the solutions that existed. As a professional, Velkoff did not just give me the answer to my problems. It was a process; it was a type of self-realization. He was there to guide me and push me towards finding my own answer, and that was definitely rewarding. Talking through problems and different emotions helped me to understand where they were coming from and why I might be feeling that way. It was odd for me to be unmotivated and even stressed out. For those who do know me, the term stress is never associated with me, and it was hard for me to accept being stressed out. However, the visits continued and progress was made.

During one session, I blurted the words, “I just want my mom to be happy.” My mom has always supported me in everything I do and she always will; my dad, to put it nicely, will not win any father-of-the-year awards. The extent to which my mom will go to make her kids happy is unfathomable. I remember during this time my mom said she would have stayed in the marriage if we (the kids) wanted her to. To be honest, love like that is extremely hard to find, and it is a blessing. My response was that her happiness came first; I understood why she wanted to get divorced as the mental abuse my father exhibited was unnecessary and terrible. It was hard, though, to accept the fact that the divorce was going to become a reality. During my time with Velkoff, everything unraveled. The divorce was not official on paper, but at the same time, the whole family knew it was. Growing up I still remember my mom would be crying due to something my dad had done or said, and she would always tell my brother, Nick, and me, “When you grow up, do not be like your father; you need to care and be a good husband to your wife.” Truth be told, it did not make sense at seven or eight years old.

Here is a little bit of insight: My dad was very unsupportive. To be honest, being unsupportive has a connotation of being supportive at one point for just anything in general, and that was not even the case for him. Wanting my mom to stay with my dad was a cruel reality that just had to diminish from my mind. That was a reality that was not going to work. Coming to this realization was a pretty big and intense step for me, but I was the one who came to it. Velkoff merely talked to me about my situation and the pieces to the “problem puzzle” fell into place. My dad obviously had his moments. To say that he was completely terrible would be a complete and utter lie. There are people out there who have dads who would physically abuse them, or who were criminals or even worse. That being said, I still wish he was more involved with my life, and the divorce affirmed that he still really did not care or have those feelings that I wanted from a father. To fully place the blame of the divorce on him would be ignorant and typical to be honest. Too many things in this world are blamed on others because people won’t accept that there are others at fault as well. Therefore, the discussion of blame is irrelevant to this discussion, as it would not have affected the outcome of divorce either way.

At this point in time, the visits with Velkoff were becoming less frequent, although my feelings, thoughts, emotions, etc. still had not completely diminished; but they never would. There are things that just are always going to be in the back of my mind, and there is nothing that can change that. If at any point Velkov reads this, I simply just want him to understand my time with him had profound effects and that feeling of self-realization is much appreciated. This time in my life was one of being there for my family. I had accepted the reality and the reality virtually accepted itself as things were now falling into place—though a different place than the usual. My mom was moving out of the house and into an apartment at this point. Nick and my little sister, Elena, decided to live with her and my dad was fine with that.

Taking a quick step back, I can say that when things were obviously starting to fall apart, I saw myself getting closer with my brother and mom in different ways. Even after seeing Velkoff, it was hard to deal with the situation alone, and I could not always say certain things to my mom in regards to my dad (and vice versa), so Nick was there for me. We had not always had the best relationship and that was mainly due to my being a typical brother. I picked on Nick, I teased him, I scared him, I made fun of him, and I made my friends make fun of him. Consider the older brother role nailed; but the divorce really did end up affecting our relationship for the better. It was—and at times still is—hard to open up to my little brother, especially about the divorce. But we were able to let each other know that we'd always be there for each other. This type of relationship bonding shouldn't have to occur because of divorce; it should be part of growing up. In terms of the relationship with my brother, we became really close during his last years of high school as he was still wrestling for the Pikesville Panthers. We both wrestled there and were the better wrestlers on the team, so I loved going back to help him on the weekends during wrestling season. At times it felt like I was trying to fill in for my dad, but how does one fill in for someone who really didn't exist and show support in the first place? Being home with my brother also had its downsides, even in our time of bonding.

There was negativity from both sides in the presence of either parent. "He said, she said" were common phrases we heard when around our parents, and it was aggravating. The feeling of being caught in the middle of things started to create a mood of depression around me. As a freshman in college, there wasn't a lot that could be done consistently due to the distance between here and my home in Baltimore, but with the advice and guidance Velkoff had given me, I continued to work my way through my problems. When I would go home, my brother would usually be dealing with wrestling stuff, so this was always a relief because I could use that

as my “ace in the hole” excuse to leave and take my mind off things. My sister is a decade younger than I am, but I still tried to be there for her as much as possible, though I don’t think she really understood at the time. At any rate, wrestling kept my mind off things for the most part, and it was nice to be there for my brother and help him out with something we both enjoyed.

As freshman year ended, my emotions and mindset still continued to bother me. My grades were nowhere near what they needed to be, but somehow I scraped by with a 2.0 as a freshman. It took me awhile to get the hang of school in general, and the divorce was not a catalyst in any way, but good progress was made second semester. Throughout my first year at Lycoming, I did have a girlfriend back home, Sarah, but unfortunately with all the emotions and other factors surrounding my parents’ divorce, I ended our relationship. There is not a lot more to say on this issue as that was pretty much it; we’re still friends, but it would take awhile for me to get back to being in a comfortable state, but that state would slowly but surely make its way to me. Being home for the summer allowed me to talk to my best friends about their divorce situations and how they dealt with it, but they were just little kids at the time and the situations were completely different. They were still there for me, though, and that is all one can ask for. All around me relationships continued to change both negatively and positively; the divorce was a negative one, but it needed to happen at the time.

Going into sophomore year, the divorce became closer to being official, and my parents had difficulties settling, but I chose to remain out of the discussion. There is always that association of getting “caught in the middle” with divorce, so I let my parents know that when either of them were around and one started to talk about the other, I would ignore them or leave the room. It seems childish, but that kind of information was the kind I did not want to be

exposed to. Sophomore year I saw relationships grow more, and I spent more time up at school instead of going home on the weekends, and as a result my social network grew. At this point, I wrestled for Lycoming. My time to go home was limited to begin with, but I still found time to go home and watch my brother wrestle and qualify for the state tournament. These are accomplishments that not even divorce could affect because it was such a positive thing in my life at the time. I was so proud of my brother, and he really helped me ease into the situation my parents were in. My mom continued to be supportive of both of us. She and I maintained a close relationship and talked on the phone a lot. She always felt like “checking up,” and as annoyed as some people might get, I enjoyed the fact that she cared enough to make sure I still did my homework.

Overall, there are positive and negative factors surrounding any divorce. I think both types need to be considered carefully. If you have too many positive factors, you will never know how to deal with negativity. My brother and I are still extremely close. The summer after his senior year we got tattoos together on our ribs. They read, “*adelfos*,” or “brother” in Greek. My mom continues to be a blessing and encourages me no matter what the case. And for that I am extremely thankful. While my dad has many negative memories associated with him, the divorce has made him come to several realizations, and I honestly feel like he tries harder now more than ever. Divorce can sometimes be a necessary evil in my eyes, and I definitely do not support it, but sometimes people are not meant to be together and it takes them 19 years to realize it. At least they realize it and do not continue to hurt each other and the ones they love.

2. Participant-Observer Interviews

The second method of design in this study is participant-observer interviews, which were

developed in order to further the current study surrounding divorce. Based on the previous literature reviewed, as well as the autoethnographic study, the data collected from the interviews was incorporated to help support the researcher's ideology.

i. Participants

Word of mouth and networking were utilized in gaining interest for participation in the interview. Criteria for inclusion were that the child currently had divorced parents and a family consisting of at least one sibling. The parameters for age of the individuals were 18 to 24. It was preferred that the age when parents got divorced was a minimum of eight years old. Participants were interviewed after their consent was provided.

ii. Interview Group

Four males ranging from 19 to 21 years old and one female of 20 years—all of whom met the criteria—were included in the data sample. Ages when parents got divorced within the group were 8, 10, 14, 16, and 17.

iii. Procedure

Participants were interviewed individually. The data was collected during the interview. The interview took about 10 to 20 minutes to complete. Each interview was scribed by the researcher and later evaluated.

iv. Structured Interview

In a series of individual interviews, the participants were asked a series of eleven questions.

Minor demographic questions relating to age and living arrangements were asked, as well as questions relating to the reasons behind the divorce, parental recognition, and the positive and negative aspects as a result of the divorce. Participants were asked to describe their relationships with their parents, siblings, and friends after being involved with the divorce.

VI. Analyses and Findings

1.) Autoethnography

Findings in the autoethnographic design method resulted in a personal understanding in the researcher's mind. The self-assessment of relationships created a gateway into understanding the effects that can occur as a result of divorce. Relational effects were exposed in a hermeneutic manner as past events were recalled and analyzed thoroughly. Through self-realization, the researcher was able to identify how personal relationships changed as a result of divorce involvement. Based on the personal experience, the understanding of relational changes became apparent. In a multifaceted autoethnographic analysis, the researcher developed hypotheses and theories that supported the ideology of divorce and its effects on personal relationships.

Transparency exists due to the nature of the topic of divorce. Research suggests the topic of divorce involves an abundance of factors that can affect relationships. Relating to the literature reviewed, the autoethnographic analysis supports and is supported throughout previous research. Although the study of a personal experience breeds personal bias, the transparency remains conclusive with suggested ideology of previous research. Determining how divorce affects personal relationships of children is complex due to the factors surrounding divorce. Therefore, an autoethnography provides a unique analysis as well as reinforces previous research provided. Uniqueness of divorce needs to be taken into consideration.

2.) Participant-Observer Interviews

Findings within the second design method correlated with the research presented in the literature review, as well as with the autoethnography results. Results of the participant-observer interviews varied in aspects such as age of divorce and reasons for parents' divorce. A common answer for reasons of divorce stemmed from a lack of communication or lack of happiness. Based on living arrangements, children felt closer to one parent compared to the other in both a physical and emotional sense. In terms of relational aspects, all participants felt emotionally closer with their siblings due to the divorce; this is because the sibling was available to talk to, while the parents were either too difficult to talk to or unavailable. Final conclusions are that the divorces had both positive and negative effects on the family as a whole. Relationships also experienced positive and negative effects as children felt closer to some individuals and distanced from others after the divorce.

Transparency exists due to the sheer relational aspect involved with the interview. The questions examined how individuals viewed their relationships in terms of emotional closeness and positive and negative aspects. Analysis of previous literature, as well as autoethnographic research, displays overlapping ideas in relation to parental effects on other personal relationships of the children. Unfortunately there were only five participants as the methods of networking and word of mouth did not draw in enough participants. Due to the small number of participants, it is difficult to say if the statistical analysis of the relationships will remain consistent. The bias to be taken into consideration is the location of the participants as they were from the two states of Maryland and Pennsylvania.

VII. Conclusion

Research on the topic of divorce consistently changes as society changes. Theories are the best conclusions for the current topic as it is extremely complex. Divorce is a topic that is broad in itself, but when talking about the relationships that are affected by it, the topic seems to broaden even further. There is an overabundance of factors that determine how parent-child relationships are going to develop or even become underdeveloped as some research has suggested. Factors surrounding parent-child relationships then become factors for other relationships. It is a trickle-down effect that creates and expands new theories due to the nature of the topic of divorce.

As a result of this study's research methods, questions can still be raised about how divorce affects the personal relationships of the children involved. Examining parent-child relationships is not enough to understand how a child will be affected in the future. Segrin et al. (2004) uses the ideology of the social cognitive theory and how it pertains to the relationships of children involved with divorce. While results are conclusive and supported by a sample of 821 adults, the relational aspect cannot be summed up by the social cognitive theory. Asking how divorce affects relationships simply is not specific enough for divorce. Divorce is a type of study that needs to be examined on a case-by-case basis and then associated with other unique cases. This would then result in an extremely specific compilation of divorce cases, but no two cases are exactly alike.

In this researcher's eyes, divorce is too complex a topic to fully understand, and the relational aspect is even more extensive. Predicting behavior of the children based on the social cognitive mediators and family conflict (Segrin et al., 2004) creates a foundation to understanding the impact of divorce on relationships.

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