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Parental Quality Of Marriage And The Effects It Has On Children's Willingness To Support Married, Separated, Or Divorced Parents

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PARENTAL QUALITY OF MARRIAGE AND THE EFFECTS IT HAS ON
CHILDREN'S WILLINGNESS TO SUPPORT MARRIED, SEPARATED, OR
DIVORCED PARENTS

being

A Field Study Presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the Fort Hays State University in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Education Specialist

by

Deirdre Deiter

M.S., Fort Hays State University

Date _____

Approved _____
Major Professor

Approved _____
Chair, Graduate Council

ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL

The research described in this field study utilized human subjects. The field study prospectus was therefore examined by the Human Subjects Research Committee of the Psychology Department, Fort Hays State University, and found to comply with Title 45, Subtitle A – Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, General Administration; Part 46 – Protection of Human Subjects.

Date

Ethics Committee Chairperson

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the current study was to investigate how marital quality affects children's willingness to provide support to their divorced, separated, or married parents. It was hypothesized that children would be more willing to provide support to parents with higher levels of marital quality prior to divorce or separation. One focus of the current study was to investigate the amount of support given to parents from a younger sample of adult children than typically studied. Data were collected from both the virtual and on-campus student population. One hundred and twenty-four students participated in the study (45 males and 79 females) and ranged in age from 18 to 44.

When specifically comparing male and female participants and the amount of support provided, it was hypothesized that women would be more likely than men to provide physical and emotional support and that men and women would be similar in the amount of financial support provided. No significant differences were found between male and female participants and the amount of support provided. Ethnicity and support was also tested in the current study, no significant differences were found.

Based on previous research and the hypotheses formulated for the current study using the younger sample population, results did support some hypotheses while others were not. It can be concluded from the results found that marital quality does in fact affect the amount of support provided and the amount of support provided by participants does vary depending on the gender of the parent.

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INTRODUCTION

Within the past fifty years divorce rates have climbed, resulting in large numbers of divorced parents in the United States. Researchers have taken an increased interest in divorce and the effects it has on children's well-being and many other related variables. Much research has been conducted on the effects divorce has on children and parents in relation to variables such as age, gender, race, and socioeconomic status. Recently, researchers have begun looking into the consequences of parental divorce and the effect it has on children's willingness to support their parents. Minimal research has been conducted to investigate the relationship between divorce and the effect it has on children's willingness to help their parents, and researchers have indicated that further research is needed. Marital quality and its relationship to divorce is another area of increased interest for researchers, yet there is very little information on the topic.

The current study was interested in investigating marital quality and the effects it has on children's willingness to provide support to divorced or separated parents. Support can be defined as physical, emotional, and or financial support. Examples of physical support included but were not limited to doing chores around the house or helping a parent move. Emotional support was classified as talking on the phone and visiting with the parent in an effort to calm them down and make them feel better. Financial support was identified as assisting parents or family members such as brothers and sisters financially. Examples of financial support included but were not limited to giving money to family members, paying bills for family, and providing a home to family members. In relation to marital quality and children's support to married,

divorced or separated parents, other factors were also investigated such as which gender was most likely to provide support, what type of support was provided, the influence age and race/ethnicity has on support, which parent the child was most likely to help, and reasons for helping or not helping parents. Research that has been conducted in the past has focused primarily on individuals providing support to their elderly parents.

Participants themselves were also older individuals, therefore they were typically better equipped with the resources and means necessary to provide support for their parents.

The study focused on identifying how much support was provided to divorced, married, and separated parents with a younger group of adult children.

Although past research investigated support given to divorced parents, marital quality was not included as a variable. One unique purpose of the current study was to examine the effect of parents' marital quality and the effect it has on children's willingness to support them. Using marital quality as a variable helped to examine whether or not the amount of support given to parents is different based on the quality of the marriage before divorce or separation.

Marital Quality

Divorce and Health. The focus of the current study was to investigate the quality of marriage and the effect it has on the children's willingness to help married, divorced or separated parents. The definition of marital quality has changed due to information found through research. For the purpose of the current study, marital quality was defined as the evaluation of a married couple's relationship. Although research has been conducted on

quality of marriage and children's support to elderly parents, research has not been conducted with the two variables in relation to each other.

When comparing married and non-married individuals, research has shown that divorce has a negative effect on an individual's well-being. Divorced and separated individuals are more likely to have increased levels of depression, anxiety, and general unhappiness in divorced and separated individuals (Gove & Shin, 1989). Along with increased health problems, mortality rates are higher in non-married cancer patients when compared to married cancer patients (Goodwin, Hunt, Key, & Samet, 1987). In hospitalized patients, the severity of the illness was higher in individuals who were unmarried when compared to married individuals. Survival rates were also higher in married individuals (Gordon & Rosenthal, 1995). When specifically looking at social relationships and health, bereavement and divorced contributed to an increase in poorer health and mortality. Marital disruption also seemed to be more of a detriment to men than to women (House, Landis, & Umberson, 1988). Divorced individuals are also more likely to report more severe illnesses and are less likely to survive illnesses. They are also at an elevated risk for suicide, motor vehicle accidents, psychiatric illness, homicide, alcoholism, physical illness, and overall mortality (Bloom, Asher, & White 1978; Gordon & Rosenthal, 1995; Gove, Style, & Hughes, 1990).

Marital Quality and Health. Although research has shown that divorced individuals tend to report more health problems than those still married, taking into consideration the marital quality prior to the divorce is important as it proves to have an

influence on individual's reports of health following divorce. Marital quality proves to have a large impact on individuals both during marriage and after divorce in relation to physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Research has shown that an individual's health perception is dependent upon the marital status as well as the quality of the marriage (Ren, 1997). Troubled marriages are reliably associated with higher levels of distress. Unmarried people are generally happier on average when compared to unhappily married people (Glenn & Weaver, 1981). It has also been found that both men and women from unhappy marriages are at a higher risk for major depressive disorders (Weissman, 1987). Marital discord and problematic marriages are strongly associated with syndromal depression and increased depressive symptoms (Beach, Fincham, & Katz, 1998; Fincham & Beach, 1999). When investigating the impact of remarriage on health, marital satisfaction was associated with better health for both men and women. Overall, individuals with higher marital quality report better health (Ganong & Coleman, 1991).

In addition to an increased risk of depression and distress, individuals from unhappy marriages are also at an increased risk for other health problems. Problematic marriages and poor marital quality also have a negative impact on an individual's physical well-being (Ross, Mirowsky, & Huber, 1983). When comparing relationships and physical health, women who identified their relationships with their partners as happy reported fewer medical symptoms and claimed to be in better health than did the participants who claimed to be less satisfied in their relationships (Barnett, Davidson, &

Marshall, 1991). Along with depression and poor health habits, poor marital relationships have a negative impact on cardiovascular, endocrine, immune, and neurosensory systems. Higher blood pressure readings and heart rate responses were found in women with lower levels of marital satisfaction during a marital conflict recall when compared to those with higher levels of marital satisfaction (Baker et al., 1999).

Research has shown that poor marital quality has a negative impact on an individual's mental and physical well-being. Studies on divorce and health have also indicated that divorce has a negative impact on an individual's physical and mental well-being. Despite these findings, researchers have supported the idea that divorce can in fact have a positive effect on an individual's well-being when taking into consideration the quality of marriage prior to divorce or separation. Marital satisfaction prior to divorce does in fact affect an individual's happiness and health after divorce or separation. Individuals from unhappy marriages reported fewer health problems after divorce while individuals from happy marriages reported more (Prigerson, Maciejewski, & Rosenheck, 1999). Divorced individuals from unhappy marriages showed fewer symptoms of distress two to four years after the divorce while divorced individuals from good marriages showed higher levels of stress indicating that divorce can prove to be a relief for individuals in unhappy marriages. Participant's psychological distress also increased after divorce for those who saw their marriage as having few problems, but decreased for individuals who saw their marriage as having many problems (Wheaton, 1990).

Individuals with low levels of marital quality have smaller increases in depressive symptoms after divorce when compared to those who had higher levels of marital quality. This was found to be true unless individuals experienced high amounts of abuse and aggression during marriage. Experiencing such abuse resulted in more detrimental effects on well-being after marriage as the abuse and aggression continued after divorce, therefore the participants experienced no relief from the abuse (Kalmijn & Monden, 2006). Poor marital quality can have a negative effect on an individual's well-being; therefore the end of the marriage can be a sort of relief (Wheaton, 1990; Williams, 2003).

Booth and Amato (1991) stated that divorce can be a disturbing and emotional experience which can lead to a reduction in well-being. Research has shown that quality of marriage may in fact impact the way an individual transitions after a divorce. Individuals with higher levels of marital quality prior to divorce had higher levels of depression and other illnesses when compared to individuals with poor levels of marital quality. Previous research found that individuals with a higher quality of marriage report more problems such as depression after divorce. Based on the results found by Kalmijn and Monden (2006), Kiecolt-Glaser and Newton (2001), and Ross, Mirowsky, and Huber (1983), it was hypothesized in the current study that higher levels of marital quality would result in an increased willingness to help parents, as research shows that divorced parents with a higher quality of marriages are more likely to experience increased depression therefore requiring more support.

Types of Help by Gender of Child

Previous research noted that the type of support provided to parents is dependent upon the gender of the child. The current study was interested in looking at individuals at a younger age to determine if the results would be consistent with previous research. In past research, four types of support were investigated including, financial, emotional, physical, and assisted daily living (ADL). Each of these types will be discussed in regards to support provided and the gender of the child.

The type of support studied in previous research varied, as some research looked at financial and emotional support while others looked at physical support. Personal visits, phone calls, and writing were a few types of support investigated (Cooney & Uhlenberg, 1990); Dewit, Wister, and Burch, 1988). Financial and emotional supports were also examined in previous research (Horowitz, 1985). The current study focused on three types of support including financial, emotional, and physical support. Financial support can be identified by a child giving financial support to any member of the family such as a parent or sibling. Emotional support includes talking on the phone or visiting a parent to help them with a problem in an effort to make them feel better. Physical support includes bathing, dressing, getting out of bed, walking, etc. Past research focused on help given to elderly parents by adult children therefore activity of daily living (ADL) and instrumental activity of daily living (IADL) assistance is discussed in research. ADL assistance including activities such as eating, bathing, dressing, and toileting, while IADL assistance includes activities such as shopping, laundry, housework, and preparing meals.

The current study did not test ADL support provided as the target population of the current study was younger individuals therefore parents were not in need of ADL support.

An interest of the current study was to investigate the types of support provided to parents as well as whether or not males and females differ in the amount of support provided. Family is the most likely resource to provide support in areas such as emotional and social support and crisis intervention (Shanas, 1979). Older people were more likely to turn to middle aged women for help in a health crisis, typically those that were a married adult daughter or other married relatives that were a mother of a child (Shanas, 1962). Older women were also more likely than older men to move in with their children when they found it difficult to live on their own (Troll, Miller, & Atchley, 1979). Overall, adult children were most likely to provide support to older parents (Lang & Brody, 1983). Investigating the differences between men and women and the type of support provided to parents was one focus of the current study.

Past studies show differences between men and women and the amount of support provided to parents. When looking at the differences in support provided, seventy percent of adult children providing care were female. Of the thirty-two males interviewed in the study, 88% of them providing care to their parents did so because they were either an only child or geographically closest. When comparing overall care, men were just as willing as women to share their homes with their parents but were eager to pass the care off to their wives or other family members when possible (Horowitz, 1985). Daughters

are more likely than sons to provide care to their mothers. If men did provide care, they were more likely to provide care to their fathers than their mothers, but most care came from the daughters (Lin, 2008).

Overall results indicated that caregiving is and may always be the female role as long as a female is available for the position. Although women do provide more care, men not helping their parents does not indicate they have no feelings it just means that men and women have different gender roles. Women are seen as caregivers and therefore should be the ones to care for their parents based on culturally appropriate gender behaviors (Brody, 1981). Men typically have not been expected to take care of their parents in the past as it has generally been a female role; therefore there is no reason to expect them to do so now (Treas, 1977).

Research shows that women are more likely to provide support to their parents. The current study investigated whether or not women are more likely than men to provide support to their parents in regards to financial, emotional, and physical support. For financial support specifically, men were just as likely as women to provide financial support to their parents. Although daughters were more likely to provide care to their mothers, the amount of financial support provided by men was similar to women showing that there is not a significant difference between the two in this area (Horowitz, 1985; Lin, 2008). Based on previous research, it was expected with the current younger sample that the amount of financial support provided by both men and women would be similar.

The current study was also interested in identifying differences in the amount of emotional support provided. Previous research determined that emotional support was the most common type of support provided with over 90 percent of participants reporting that they provided emotional support to their parents. Results were consistent to those found with financial support as males were just as likely as women to provide emotional support to their parents with results being proportionate to those reported by women in the study (Horowitz, 1985). Past research focused on older individuals providing care to elderly parents. The current study focused on younger individuals therefore it was hypothesized that women would be more likely than men to provide emotional care to their parents.

Physical care or hands on care was another area of interest for the current study. Previous research has shown that women are more likely than men to provide personal care to their mothers and their fathers. If men did provide personal care, they were more likely to provide the care to their fathers and not their mothers (Horowitz, 1985; Lin, 2008).

Overall, research indicated that women were more likely than men to provide hands on care such as transportation, chores, and personal care. It was expected with the current younger sample that women would be more likely than men to provide personal care such as doing chores. As past research has shown, women tend to take care of household chores and provide personal care therefore leading to the hypothesis that women would be more likely to provide such care. In regards to financial support,

previous research found that men were more likely to provide this type of support when compared to women. However, it was expected with the current younger sample that there would not be a difference in the amount of financial support given to parents. Given that the current sample consisted of younger individuals it was expected that they would not have the means necessary to provide financial support at differing levels. In regards to emotional support, previous research indicated that men are just as likely as women to provide emotional support to their parents. However, with the current younger sample, it was hypothesized that women would be more likely to provide emotional support to their parents. Although research has shown that men become more nurturing with age, it is shown that women are naturally more nurturing towards others (Hoyer & Roodin, 2009).

ADL is another type of care provided to parents investigated by researchers. Data indicates that women are more likely to provide certain types of care while men are more likely to provide others. Having an understanding of this data provides support that there is a difference between the types of care provided in relation to the gender of the child. As mentioned previously, ADL assistance includes activities such as eating, bathing and toileting while IADL includes shopping, laundry, money management, and preparing meals. Daughters were three times as likely as sons to provide ADL assistance and nearly twice as likely to provide IADL assistance. Specifically looking at the gender of the parent, daughters were 40 percent more likely to assist their fathers with ADL assistance than sons and nearly four times as likely to assist mothers in this way.

Concerning IADL assistance, daughters were 50 percent more likely to assist their fathers than the sons and more than twice as likely to assist their mothers when compared to sons. Sons were found to equally provide ADL assistance to both the mother and the father while daughters showed significantly more help to the mothers than the father. In regards to the mother, sons were 50 percent more likely to assist them with IADLS when compared to helping their fathers, and daughters were more than twice as likely to assist their mothers in this way as their fathers (Lee, Dwyer, & Coward, 1993).

Previous research also investigated increases in the amount of support needed as well as explanations as to why the needs increased. The amount of support reported increased 50 percent between 1998 and 2002. The increase in support given to parents can be explained by an increase in divorce rates therefore leaving parents to rely more on children for help and individuals not having the finances needed for assisted living facilities. Concerning mothers, about five percent of adult children reported providing both ADL and IADL support. ADL support is identified as dressing, bathing, eating, toileting, etc. while IADL includes tasks such as shopping, meal preparation, money management, etc. In 1998 approximately 14 and nine percent of mothers reported receiving time or monetary assistance from at least one adult. The percentages increase to 21 and 12 percent in 2002. In 1998 five and four percent of fathers reported receiving time or monetary support from their children with an increase in percentages to nine percent for personal care and six percent for monetary support in 2002. Older mothers were more likely to receive care from their children than were younger mothers at

baseline but the rate of increase is slower for older mothers than for younger mothers (Lin, 2008). Many studies proved that women provide more care to their parents for reasons such as, they have more time to provide care, parents are more comfortable with their daughters providing their care, and it is primarily a woman's role to provide care. ADL support was not tested in the current study as the target sample of the study was younger individuals therefore there was not enough parents in need of ADL services.

Gender of Parent

Another area of interest for the current study was whether or not there would be a difference in the willingness to help parents based on the gender of the parent. Mothers were more likely than fathers to receive support from their children. Previous research found that fathers were less likely to have contact with their children after divorce. One – third of fathers in the study reported that they had lost contact with one or more of their children. Only half of divorced fathers saw or communicated with their adult child on a weekly basis, and one in ten men typically had no contact with any of their adult children. Losing contact with the parents was one of the most common reasons given for children not providing support to their parents. Divorced fathers typically do not think of their children as a source of support therefore they were less likely to ask for assistance from their children, which was another explanation given as to why fathers were less likely to receive support from their children (Cooney & Uhlenberg, 1990).

In addition to these findings, results found in another study indicated that fathers were more likely to have no contact with their kids than they were to have seen their

child even once in the last 12 months. Only one-third of children had contact with their father at least once a month or more while one in six had contact with their fathers on a weekly basis (Furstenberg, Nord, Peterson, & Zill, 1983). The child's age at the time of the divorce or separation also proved to be significant as having more time to spend with the parents (especially fathers), gave the children more time to develop ties and relationships with the parents the more time spent with the parents (Hodges, 1986). The theory that fathers were more likely to lose contact with their children after a divorce was consistently found throughout research. Due to loss of contact, fathers were less likely to receive support from their children. Although no linear relationship was found between the frequency of contact between family members and the amount of assistance provided, some interaction is necessary for support to be provided (Troll, 1971). It is important to hold on to and maintain relationships and ties with family members (Moss, Moss, & Moles, 1985).

Examining the association of parental divorce and remarriage in relation to adult children's personal care and financial assistance to their older frail parents also provided insight on support provided to parents. Factors such as marital history and current marital status were investigated to assess the consequences of divorce and children's support. Results revealed that although divorce may have long-lasting effects on the parent-child relationship, children were willing to help their mothers in times of need. Fathers on the other hand were less likely to receive personal care from their children. For both mothers and fathers, the amount of help provided to parents did increase from

1998 to 2002; however, the increase was higher for mothers than for fathers. Mothers were also more likely to receive help from the children if they were divorced or widowed opposed to those that were married. This was not true for fathers as results indicated that adult children of divorced fathers were as likely as children of married fathers to provide personal care to them. Reasons for this were identified as men having shorter life expectancy than women do suggesting that women need more support since their life expectancy is longer (Lin, 2008).

Many explanations have been given to explain the differences in the amount of support between mothers and fathers. Overall, mothers are more likely than fathers to receive help from their children. Another reasons used to explain why mothers may receive more care than fathers was that mothers tend to outlive fathers therefore needing the help (Lee, Dwyer, & Coward, 1993). In one study women outnumbered men at a ratio of 180:100 for ages seventy-five and older and 229:100 for individuals eighty-five and older. Parents remarrying may also explain the differences in the amount of support provided. If an individual remarries, the need for support from children decreases as the support can be given from the spouse (Brotman, 1982).

Research has proven that women are more likely to receive support from their children based on a variety of reasons such as having stronger relationship with them after divorce, the fathers remarrying and losing contact with children, fathers tend to be less likely to ask for help, etc. Aseltine and Kessler (1993) found that women from marriages with poor marital quality have higher levels of depression than men. It is

possible that women struggle more than men after a divorce, therefore men may require less help than women following a divorce. Previous research found that individuals were more likely to provide support to their mothers than their fathers. With the current younger sample it was hypothesized that participants would also be more likely to give help to their mothers.

Ethnicity and Support

Research has briefly looked into race and the differences in care provided to parents of different ethnicities. However, the amount of research conducted to examine ethnicity and the relationship it has to providing support is limited. Therefore, this variable requires more study. Previous research has not placed a lot of emphasis on ethnicity in relation to support given to parents therefore it is only discussed briefly here.

When comparing ethnicities and the amount of support provided results revealed that fathers who were nonblack or poorly educated were more likely to have limited contact with at least one of their children. As age increases in these adults, the likelihood of naming an adult child as a source of support increases. On the other hand, being black and living farther away from the closest adult child reduces the chances of the father naming their children as an available source of support. The likelihood of a father naming a child as a potential source of support is between 30 and 45 percent lower for divorced fathers when compared to married men. This statistic is dependent upon ethnicity with a greater difference favoring married men that were black. When comparing nonblack and black individuals, the greatest differences occurred when the

chances of limited contact with at least one child was 35 in 100 for nonblack divorced fathers, and 1 in 100 for nonblack married fathers. The statistics for limited control in black individuals when compared to nonblack individuals was 14 in 100 for divorced fathers and 0 in 100 for married fathers. This indicates that divorced fathers have a higher risk of limited contact with a child when compared to married fathers with the statistics proving to be higher for nonblack fathers (Cooney & Uhlenberg, 1990).

When comparing the amount of support given to Caucasian, Hispanic, and African American mothers, Hispanic and African American mothers were more likely to receive financial support from their children than Caucasian mothers, whereas Hispanic mothers were less likely to receive time from their children when compared to Caucasian mothers. When comparing Caucasian and Hispanic fathers, Hispanic fathers were more likely to receive financial support from their children than Caucasian fathers (Lin, 2008).

Although minimal research has been done to investigate the differences between race and the amount of support given to parents, research has found differences between these factors. Based on the results found in prior studies, it was hypothesized with the current younger sample that there would be a difference between ethnicity and the amount of support given by children. It was hypothesized with the current study that there would be a difference between ethnicity and the amount of support provided.

Age and Support

Age has not been a key variable tested in previous research therefore a relationship between age and the amount of support given to parents has not been

provided. A few studies have been conducted on this topic, however, further research is needed to add to the current literature to better understand and identify the relationship between age and the amount of support given to parents.

Research has shown that older children were less likely to care for their older mothers at baseline when compared to younger children, but the rate of increase in care given to parents over time was steeper for older children than it was for younger children when looking at time transfers. Results were similar for fathers in that older children were less likely than younger children to provide for their fathers at baseline (Lin, 2008).

Minimal research has investigated a relationship between age and support to parents. Age has been included as a minor variable in studies to identify reasons for not providing support; however, it has not been a key variable in the study. Past research has focused on support given to frail parents. The purpose of the current study was to identify how much support is given to parents by individuals from a college age population.

Reasons for No Support to Parents

The results of previous research discussed the fact that women are more likely to provide support to their parents when compared to males. Many reasons were given to explain the results found. Reasons were also given to discuss why mothers receive more support than fathers from their children. Most of the results discussed by previous research studies indicated that women provide more care. Looking specifically at the differences between men and women, women were more likely to provide care to their

mothers while men provide more care to their fathers. With that said, it was explained that women tend to outlive men, which could contribute to the fact that women tend to provide more care than men (Lee, Dwyer, & Coward, 1993; Lin, 2008). Another explanation given through research is that fathers are less likely to ask their children for support. While investigating differences between married and divorced fathers and naming a child as a potential source for help, it was determined that more than half of divorced men when compared to one-fifth of married fathers did not mention a child as a potential source for help. It was also explained that men tend to lose contact with their children more often than women do when they go through divorce. Due to loss of contact, divorced fathers were less likely than fathers of intact first marriages to have adult children available to them in times of need. Through loss of contact and failure to ask for support, it can be predicted that men would receive less support based on these factors (Cooney & Uhlenberg, 1990).

Research has also found that women are having a harder time devoting an adequate amount of time to parents needing the help. Women who were married or had jobs devoted less time to helping their mothers. With the increase of women in the workforce there is some concern about how elderly individuals will receive the care they need. Individuals providing care to their parents indicated that the amount of time provided is similar to that of a fulltime job (Lang & Brody, 1983). Caring for parents has been a family affair for many years and will continue to be in the future which is why

there is concern for parents receiving help from their children based on the reasons mentioned above (Sussman, 1976).

All of these are viable reasons to explain the common results found in previous research. Considering a younger sample population, reasons given for providing support may differ than those found for older individuals. For a younger population reasons given may include living too far away to provide the support, the parents do not need support, or it may be that they have lost contact with one or both of their parents. Geographical reasons for non-support could be used when children state that no physical support is provided to their parents. A lack of emotional support provided to parents could be because they have lost contact with the parents or simply because they have no interest in providing emotional support to their parents. Financial support is the final variable of support to be identified in this study. Reasons for not financially supporting divorced and separated parents may be because they do not have the money to help them or because they again have no interest in helping them financially.

Previous research found that individuals reported lower levels of support for reasons such as lack of resources, living away from the parents, and the inability to provide support. With the current younger sample it was hypothesized that the most common reasons for not providing support to parents would be a lack of resources and living away from home making it harder to provide support.

The purpose of the current study was to examine the effect parental marital quality has on a child's willingness to support their parents after divorce or separation.

Prior research has focused on the amount of support given to elderly parents in the time of need; however, minimal research has been done on the amount of support given to parents by individuals at younger ages. The current study was interested in determining the amount of support given to parents whom are divorced or separated; therefore data was collected on individuals at the college level. Based on the research provided above, the following hypotheses were made for the current study.

Hypothesis 1: Previous research shows that individuals with higher qualities of marriage before divorce have increased symptoms of depression and other illness which increased their need of help after divorce. With the current younger sample, it was believed that children would be more willing to help parents with a higher quality of marriage prior to divorce or separation than those with poor marital quality.

Hypothesis 2: Previous research has shown that individuals after divorce report more health problems and need more assistance. With the current younger sample, it was hypothesized that the willingness to help would be stronger for individuals whose parents are divorced or separated when compared to those whose parents were still married.

Hypothesis 3: In past research women were more likely than men to provide hands on care to parents such as transportation, chores, etc. With this sample it was hypothesized that women would be more likely than men to provide hands on care to their parents.

Hypothesis 4: Previous research indicated that men were more likely to provide support in areas such as financial assistance and money management. With the current sample it was hypothesized that financial support would be similar between males and females as

the sample was of a younger population and financial situations may be different than those of the older individuals in previous studies.

Hypothesis 5: Previous research found that the amount of emotional support was similar between males and females. Research also shows that women tend to be more nurturing than men. With this sample it was hypothesized that females would provide more emotional support than males.

Hypothesis 6: Previous research indicated that women were more likely than men to receive help from their children. With the current sample it was hypothesized that children would give more help to their mothers.

Hypothesis 7: Previous research has found a difference between ethnicity and the amount of support given. It was hypothesized with this sample that there would be a difference between ethnicity and the amount of support provided.

Hypothesis 8: Previous research indicated that lack of resources and distance created problems for providing support. With this sample it was hypothesized that the lack of resources and distance would be common reasons for not providing support.

METHODS

Participants

Data was collected from both the virtual and on-campus student population at Fort Hays State University. One hundred and twenty-four students participated in the study. The survey was posted on surveymonkey.com to allow all students access to it. The survey was also given on-campus to students in their classrooms. Collecting data both virtually and on-campus created an opportunity to get a diverse sample.

Of the one hundred and twenty-four participants, 45 were males and 79 were females. The participant's ages ranged from 18 to 44, ($M=20.64$, $SD=3.13$). In regards to ethnicity, 96 participants reported their ethnicity as Caucasian while three reported African American, 13 reported Asian, nine reported Hispanic, and three reported other. Participants were asked to identify their parents' marital status with three options available (married, divorced, and separated). Eighty-three participants reported that their parents are married, 36 indicated that their parents are divorced, and three reported that their parents are separated. Two participants did not indicate a marital status for their parents.

Measures

An author-constructed survey was given to all participants containing questions to determine demographic variables such as participant's age, parent's age, gender, and race (see Appendix A). They were also asked to identify their parents' relationship status (married, divorced, separated).

After answering demographic questions, participants were asked about the amount of support they provide to each of their parents in three areas including emotional, physical, and financial support. Information was gathered in regards to both parents to determine which parent receives more help. Each type of support for both parents was tested to determine which parent receives more help in all three areas (emotional, financial, and physical). For physical care, participants identified the number of hours they spend per month providing hands on care to their parents. In regards to financial support, participants indicated the monetary amount they provide to their parents each month. To test emotional support, participants identified how many hours per month they spend providing emotional support to their parents. The total amount of help provided to each parent was tested as well by adding all three areas of help (emotional, physical, and financial) together and comparing mother versus father to see which parents receives more help. In regards to ethnicity, two groups were formed based on the numbers reported. The two groups were split with Caucasians representing one group the other reported ethnicities representing the other group. To determine whether or not there are differences between the groups and the amount of support provided, statistics were run comparing the two groups with the three types of help (emotional, physical, financial) for both the mothers and the fathers. If participants answered no to providing support to their parents were asked to explain why they do not provide support. To identify the most common reasons for individuals not providing support, a list of

reasons was given to them to choose from as well as a space to provide their own reasoning.

After completing questions about the amount of support provided to each parent, participants answered questions to determine their parent's marital quality before divorce or separation. This allowed researchers to identify how marital quality affects the amount of support provided to each parent. Participants also answered questions from the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire to assess their parents' quality of marriage.

Individuals whose parents are still married were asked to identify what they believe their parents current marital situation to be (marriage is in trouble, they will probably get divorced, they will be getting divorced). Participants who reported their parents as divorced were asked to identify who sought the divorce (mother, father, or both). Next individuals were asked to answer questions based on their parents' marriage. Individuals with divorced or separated parents answered the questions based on the marriage before divorce or separation. Individuals whose parents are still married answered the questions based on how the marriage is at the current point in time. Individuals answered the questions basing their answers on a scale with one being extremely dissatisfied and seven being extremely satisfied. Information gathered was used to determine how the reported marital quality affects their willingness to provide help. Marital quality was scored based on the number indicated for the level of quality reported with a one being extremely dissatisfied and a seven being extremely satisfied. Scores were added together for the

three questions giving a total score of marital quality ranging from 3 to 21 with 3 indicating lower levels of satisfaction and 21 indicating higher satisfaction.

Procedure

Data were collected from both the virtual and on-campus student population at Fort Hays State University. On-campus students were given an informed consent (Appendix B) to read through and sign if they were interested in completing the survey. Informed consents were placed in an envelope to maintain confidentiality. Once the informed consent was signed, participants were given the survey to complete. Names were not written on the survey, and surveys were also placed into envelopes to maintain confidentiality. Upon completion of the survey, participants were given a debriefing statement with a list of numbers to contact in the event that the survey caused any discomfort.

Virtual students at Fort Hays State University were able to access the survey through [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com). Students were asked to read through the informed consent (Appendix C) and were instructed to move forward to the survey which signified consent to participate. Upon completion of the survey, participants were directed to the debriefing statement which again contained a list of numbers for participants in the event the survey caused any discomfort.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics were run to gain an understanding of the participants' parents. In regards to age for mothers ($M=48.21$, $SD=5.69$), the minimum age reported was 36 with a maximum age of 66. For fathers ($M=50.57$, $SD=6.66$), the minimum reported age was 36 with a maximum age of 72.

Table 1 reflects information gathered regarding the responses participants provided about their parent's marital quality. Marital satisfaction was measured using the Kansas Marital Survey 7. Participants were asked how satisfied they believed their parents to be in three areas including their parents' overall relationship, their marriage, and with each other as spouses. For each of the levels of satisfaction, one was the lowest score possible and seven was the highest. The scores shown in the table are the actual range of answers reported for each variable.

TABLE 1

Summary of Descriptive Statistics for Parents' Marital Satisfaction

<u>Group</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Minimum</u>	<u>Maximum</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Relationship	120	1	7	4.73	1.98
Marriage	118	1	7	4.56	2.17
Spouses	117	1	7	4.73	2.06

Descriptive statistics were also run to identify the minimum and maximum for total marital quality. In regards to overall marital satisfaction, participants were asked to rate three factors on a scale of one to seven with one representing extreme dissatisfaction and seven being extreme satisfaction. Scores were then added together to identify the

overall level of marital satisfaction. The lowest score obtained in the data was a 3 and the highest was a 21 for overall satisfaction with 3 being the lowest score possible and 21 the highest. Scores for the 117 responses fell between these numbers with a mean of 13.99 and a standard deviation of 6.1.

To better understand the range of data collected regarding the types of support provided by participants, descriptive statistics were run. Table 2 reflects the minimum and maximum values for each of the types of help for mothers and fathers as well as the mean and standard deviation for each. Based on scatterplots of the data, outliers were determined. One outlier was removed from each of the following variables: mothers' emotional support, financial support, and physical support, as well as fathers' emotional support, financial support, and physical support. Table 2 reflects the data with the outliers removed.

TABLE 2

Summary of Scores for Mothers and Fathers and the Type of Support Provided

<u>Group</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Minimum</u>	<u>Maximum</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Mom Financial	123	0	1000	33.70	144.82
Dad Financial	123	0	2000	44.31	231.51
Mom Physical	123	0	60	6.30	11.01
Dad Physical	123	0	60	5.38	11.27
Mom Emotional	123	0	500	18.96	55.94
Dad Emotional	123	0	168	9.85	22.53

Marital Quality and Support to Parents

A series of Pearson Correlations were run to analyze whether or not there was a correlation between marital quality and the amount of support provided to mothers and fathers in the three areas of financial, emotional, and physical support. It was hypothesized with the current study that children would be more willing to help parents with a higher quality of marriage prior to divorce or separation than those with poor marital quality. A significant correlation was not found between marital quality and the amount of financial support provided to mothers, $r(114)=-.17, p>.05$ indicating that the level of marital quality does not affect the amount of support provided to mothers financially. A significant correlation was found between marital quality and the amount of financial support provided to fathers, $r(114)=-.19, p<.05$ indicating that the level of marital quality before divorce or separation does affect the amount of financial support provided to fathers. Participants who reported lower marital quality in their parents provided more financial support to their fathers.

In regards to marital quality and physical support, a significant correlation was not found for mothers, $r(114)=.16, p>.05$; however, a positive significant correlation was found for fathers, $r(114)=.24, p<.05$. This indicates that marital quality did affect the amount of physical support provided for fathers but not for mothers.

For emotional support a significant correlation was not found for mothers, $r(114)=.04, p>.05$ but was found for fathers, $r(114)=.21, p<.05$, again indicating that marital quality had an effect on the amount of emotional support provided to fathers but

not mothers. When participants reported higher marital quality in their parents, they were more likely to provide physical and emotional support for their fathers.

Support and Married vs. Divorced/Separated Parents

To determine whether or not there was a significant difference between married parents' and divorced/separated parents in relation to the amount of support provided by the participants, independent sample t-tests were run. It was hypothesized that individuals whose parents were divorced or separated would be more willing to help than those whose parents were still married. The three groups (married, divorced, separated) were categorized into two groups with married parents representing the first group and divorced/separated parents representing the second group. This was done because there was not a large enough group of separated parents to be analyzed alone. As can be seen in Table 3, a significant difference was not found between the two groups and the amount of financial support provided to mothers, $t(119)=-.47, p>.05$. A significant difference was not found for fathers either in regards to married vs. divorced/separated parents and the amount of financial support provided, $t(119)=-.06, p>.05$.

Also shown in Table 3 is the amount of physical support and whether or not there is a significant difference between the two groups. A significant difference was not found between the two groups for support provided for mothers, $t(119)=.58, p>.05$. A significant difference was found for fathers in regards to the two groups and the amount of physical support provided, $t(119)=1.98, p=.05$, with still married fathers receiving more physical support than divorced and separated fathers do.

A t-test was also run to determine whether there is a significant difference between the two groups and the amount of emotional support provided to parents. This information can also be found in Table 3. In regards to mothers, a significant difference was not found between the two groups, $t(119)=-.29, p>.05$. A significant difference was found for fathers, $t(119)=2.56, p<.05$. Fathers who were still married received more emotional support than those who were divorced or separated.

The results of the t-tests indicated that there is a significant difference between married parents and divorced/separated parents for fathers when looking at the amount of support provided physically and emotionally but not financially. Results also indicated that there is no significant difference between the two groups and the amount of support provided in all three areas for the mothers. Although a significant difference was not found between married and divorced/separated mothers and the amount of financial support provided, the means suggest that divorced/separated mothers receive more financial support than married mothers but the high standard deviations made it mathematically difficult to find a significant difference. Information shown in Table 3 does not include the outliers which were determined through the analysis of scatterplots.

TABLE 3

Summary of Scores of Marital Status and Types of Support for Mothers and Fathers

Support and Parent	Married			Divorced/Separated		
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
Mom Financial	82	25.98	125.66	39	38.85	166.64
Dad Financial	82	31.95	221.96	39	34.10	103.94
Mom Physical	82	6.49	12.01	39	5.26	8.10
Dad Physical	82	6.57	12.90	39	3.05	6.64
Mom Emotional	82	18.24	41.35	39	21.45	79.85
Dad Emotional	82	12.70	26.51	39	4.37	8.87

Note: $p < .05$

Type of Support and Gender of Child

Independent sample t-tests were also run to determine whether or not there was a difference between male and female participants in the amount of financial, physical, and emotional support provided to parents. In regards to physical care, it was hypothesized that women would be more likely than men to provide hands on care to their parents. Results of the t-test revealed that there was not a significant difference between males ($M=4.96$, $SD=8.76$) and females ($M=7.08$, $SD=12.09$) and the amount of physical support provided to mothers, $t(121)=-1.03$, $p > .05$. No significant difference was found between males ($M=4.51$, $SD=10.57$) and females ($M=5.88$, $SD=11.70$) and the amount of physical support provided to fathers, $t(121)=-.65$, $p > .05$.

When looking at the amount of financial support, it was hypothesized that the amount of financial support provided to parents would be similar between males and females. A significant difference was not found between male ($M=70.89$, $SD=228.50$)

and female participants ($M=12.24$, $SD=46.04$), $t(121)=1.70$, $p>.05$. Results of the t-test also found that there was not a significant difference between male ($M=97.78$, $SD=374.30$) and female participants ($M=13.46$, $SD=47.17$) for support provided to fathers, $t(121)=1.50$, $p>.05$. Although the t-test did not find a significant difference between males and females in support provided for mothers and fathers, the means suggest male participants provided more financial support to parents than females.

The difference between males and females and the amount of emotional support provided to mothers and fathers was also tested. It was hypothesized that females would provide more emotional support to their parents than males. Results of the independent sample t-test revealed that there was not a significant difference between male ($M=9.48$, $SD=18.14$) and female participants ($M=24.44$, $SD=68.46$) for support provided to mothers, $t(121)=-1.44$, $p>.05$. A significant difference was not found for fathers either when comparing male ($M=7.01$, $SD=16.40$) and female participants ($M=11.49$, $SD=25.36$) for support provided, $t(121)=-1.06$, $p>.05$.

Support and Mothers vs. Fathers

Paired sample t-tests were run to determine whether or not mothers receive more help than fathers do. It was hypothesized that children would provide more support to their mothers than their fathers. In regards to financial support provided, results of the paired sample t-test revealed that there is not a significant difference between mothers ($M=33.70$, $SD=144.82$) and fathers ($M=44.31$, $SD=231.51$), $t(122)=-.80$, $p>.05$. Results of the paired sample t-test also revealed that there is not a significant difference between

mothers ($M=6.30$, $SD=11.01$) and fathers ($M=5.38$, $SD=11.27$) for support provided to them, $t(122)=1.36$, $p>.05$. Although a significant difference was not found between mothers and fathers for physical and financial support, a significant difference was found between mothers ($M=18.96$, $SD=55.94$) and fathers ($M=9.85$, $SD=22.53$) for support provided, $t(122)=2.10$, $p<.05$. More emotional support was given to mothers than to fathers.

Support and Ethnicity

Independent sample t-tests were run to determine whether or not there was a significant difference among ethnicities in the amount of support provided for mothers and fathers. It was hypothesized that there would be a difference between ethnicity and the amount of support provided. To run this test, ethnicity was split into two groups, Caucasians and non-Caucasians. Although non-Caucasians are not a homogenous group, there were not enough participants from each ethnic group to analyze separately. As can be seen in Table 4, a significant difference was not found between the two groups and the amount of financial support provided to mothers, $t(121)=1.38$, $p>.05$. A significant difference was not found between the two groups and the amount of financial support for fathers, $t(27.36)=1.37$, $p>.05$. Also shown in Table 4 are the results for the amount of physical support provided to mothers and fathers and whether or not there is a difference between ethnicities. Results of the independent sample t-test revealed that there was not a significant difference between the two groups and the amount of physical support provided to mothers, $t(121)=-.30$, $p>.05$. Results also revealed no significant difference

between the two groups and physical support for fathers, $t(121)=-.72, p>.05$. A difference between the two groups and the amount of emotional support provided to mothers and fathers was also tested by using a t-test. Results indicated that there is not a significant difference between the two groups and the amount of emotional support provided to mothers, $t(121)=.53, p>.05$. A significant difference was not found between the two groups and the amount of emotional support provided to fathers, $t(31.33)=.75, p>.05$. Further information can be found in Table 4.

TABLE 4

Summary of Scores of Ethnicity and Types of Support for Mothers and Fathers

Support and Parent	Caucasian			Non-Caucasian		
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
Mom Financial	95	23.95	119.51	28	66.79	39.45
Dad Financial	95	17.00	69.53	28	136.96	462.40
Mom Physical	95	6.46	10.24	28	5.75	13.49
Dad Physical	95	5.78	11.22	28	4.04	11.58
Mom Emotional	95	17.52	53.39	28	23.86	64.68
Dad Emotional	95	8.70	17.70	28	13.75	34.39

Reasons for Not Providing Support

Data were collected to identify why participants do not provide support to their parents. Participants were given options to choose as well as an option to provide their own reason for not providing support. Percentages were run to determine which reasons were most commonly indicated. Responses were calculated by using yes and no to identify whether or not the participants listed that reason as a reason for not providing

support. Based on the percentages calculated, the four most common reasons given for not providing support to mothers were that the participants live too far away, the mother does not need help, and the participant does not have the resources needed to provide help, and other. For fathers, the top four reasons given for not providing support are that their fathers do not need help, they live too far away from their fathers, and that they do not have the resources, and other. Participants were given the opportunity to provide their own reasons for not providing support. A few participants indicated that the parent in prison while others listed that the parent left when they were young and has no contact with them. Results are shown in Table 5.

TABLE 5

Summary of Percentages for Reasons Given for not Providing Support

<u>Reason</u>	<u>Mothers</u>		<u>Fathers</u>	
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Live too far away	25.0%	74.2%	26.6%	73.4%
Not enough time	8.1%	91.9%	6.5%	93.5%
Don't have resources	14.5%	85.5%	12.9%	87.1%
Not my responsibility	0.8%	99.2%	1.6%	98.4%
Don't talk to them	4.0%	96.0%	8.1%	91.9%
Doesn't need help	24.2%	75.8%	30.6%	69.4%
<u>Other</u>	<u>12.9%</u>	<u>87.1%</u>	<u>12.9%</u>	<u>87.1%</u>

DISCUSSION

The current study focused on identifying whether or not marital quality has an effect on children providing support to their married, separated, or divorced parents. Researchers were also interested in determining whether there was a difference between male and female participants in the amount of support provided to parents, as well as which parent is more likely to receive support. Ethnicity and reasons for not providing support were also areas of interest in this study. Three types of support were tested within the study (financial, physical, and emotional). Financial support was identified as the child giving financial support to any member of the family. Emotional support was identified as talking on the phone or visiting to make them feel better, whereas physical support was identified as doing chores and helping a parent move.

Marital Quality and Health

The first area of interest for the current study was to determine whether or not marital quality seemed to have an effect on the amount of support children provide to their parents. The researcher hypothesized that children would be more willing to help parents with a higher quality of marriage prior to divorce or separation than parents with poor marital quality. This hypothesis was based on results found in previous research which indicated that individuals with higher levels of marital quality were more negatively affected after divorce than those with lower levels of marital quality (e.g., Barnett, Davidson, & Marshall, 1991).

Results of the current study found that marital quality did not have an effect on

the amount of financial, physical, and emotional support provided to mothers. However, marital quality did have an effect on the amount of financial, physical, and emotional support provided to fathers. Specifically, results found that more financial support was provided to fathers with low marital quality, and higher amounts of physical and emotional support were provided for fathers when there was higher marital quality.

There are a few possibilities which could explain the results found regarding marital quality and support provided. One reason which may explain the results found is that mothers are more likely to receive support when compared to fathers (e.g., Lee, Dwyer, & Coward, 1993). It is possible that children are more willing to provide support to mothers despite the quality of marriage. Research also shows that individuals with a higher quality of marriage before divorce report poorer health and more depressive symptoms after divorce therefore they may require more help (Kalmijn & Monden, 2006). This may explain why individuals are more likely to provide physical and emotional support to their fathers when the reported quality of marriage is higher.

Married vs. Divorced/Separated

In regards to the amount of support provided to parents, data were collected to determine whether a difference between married parents and divorced/separated parents exists. Research has found that divorce has a negative impact on well-being as divorced individuals are more likely to report more health problems than are those who are still married. Studies by Bloom, Asher, and White (1978) and Gove, Styles, and Hughes (1990) found that divorced and separated individuals have an elevated risk of suicide,

psychiatric illness, alcoholism, homicide, and physical illness. Based on the results that show divorced/separated parent may need more support, it was hypothesized that individuals would provide more support to their divorced/separated parents than to those whose parents were still married.

Results from the current study found that there was not a significant difference between married versus separated/divorced parents for either mothers or fathers in regards to the amount of financial support provided. However, results were significantly different between married and divorced/separated parents in some aspects of physical support. A significant difference was not found between the two groups for mothers, whereas a significant difference was found for fathers with still married fathers receiving more physical support than divorced and separated fathers. Regarding emotional support, a significant difference between the two groups was not found for mothers. However, a significant difference was found between the two groups for fathers, with married fathers receiving more support than divorced/separated fathers.

Many reasons may explain why it is that married fathers were more likely to receive emotional and physical help than divorced/separated fathers. Research has found that divorced/separated fathers are more likely to lose contact with their children after divorce or separation which eliminates them as a source of support. Furstenberg et al. (1983) and Cooney and Ulhenberg (1990) both found that men are less likely to have contact with their children after divorce which may be why many of them do not receive support. This reason was the most common reason given in previous research as to why

support was not given.

Types of Help and Gender of Child

Identifying a difference between male and female participants in the amount of support provided to parents was another area of focus for this study. Previous research has found a significant difference between the two with females providing more physical and emotional support to their parents. For example, Horowitz (1985) and Lin (2008) found that daughters are more likely than sons to provide physical and emotional support to their parents. However, sons were just as likely as daughters to provide financial support to their parents.

Based on these results it was hypothesized that women would be more likely than men to provide physical support to their parents. Research shows that sons are just as likely as daughters to provide financial support to their parents. It was hypothesized that the amount of support provided would be similar between males and females. The third area of support tested was emotional support. It was hypothesized with the current study that females would be more likely than males to provide emotional support to their parents.

Results from the current study revealed that there was not a significant difference between male and female participants in the amount of physical support provided to both their mothers and their fathers. Results were similar for financial support as a significant difference was not found between men and women. Although a significant difference was not found, the mean support provided monthly for mothers ($M=70.89$, $M=12.24$) and

fathers ($M=97.78$ $M=13.46$) suggest that males provided more financial support to their parents than females did, although the large standard deviations prevented a significant difference from being found. A significant difference was not found between males and females for emotional support provided to both mothers and fathers.

It was hypothesized that women would provide more physical and emotional support to their parents than men. It was also hypothesized that men and women would provide similar financial support. The hypotheses for physical and emotional support were not supported as there was not a significant difference between male and female participants in the amount of support provided. The hypothesis for financial support was supported as a significant difference was not found between men and women and the amount of support provided.

Previous research studied older individuals providing support to their parents. The current study had a younger sample population which may explain the differences in the results found. Younger individuals do not have the same resources as older individuals which is a possible explanation for the differences in results.

Gender of Parent and Support

Another focus of the current study was the differences between mothers and fathers in terms of support provided to them. The researcher hypothesized that mothers would receive more help than fathers. Past research has shown a difference for support provided to mothers and fathers, with mothers more likely than fathers to receive support from their children. Cooney and Uhlenberg (1990) found that fathers are less likely to

receive help from their children as they often lose contact from their children after divorce. Lee, Dwyer, and Coward (1993) also found that mothers are more likely to receive support from their children.

To determine whether or not there was a significant difference between mothers and fathers in the amount of support provided, tests were run for each of the three types of support. In regards to financial and physical support, a significant difference was not found between mothers and fathers indicating that fathers are just as likely as mothers to receive support in those areas. A significant difference was found between mothers and fathers for emotional support. Results from the current study indicated that mothers were more likely to receive emotional support from their children. Results from this study did not support the hypotheses in regards to financial and physical support, as it was predicted that mothers would receive more help. However, it was confirmed for emotional support, as results revealed that mothers received more emotional support than fathers.

Ethnicity and Support

Prior research has examined differences among ethnicities in the amount of support provided by adult children to parents. Cooney and Uhlenberg (1990) found that fathers who are non-black are more likely to have limited contact with at least one of their children resulting in their receiving less support from their children. Results also indicated that being black and living farther away from the closest adult child also reduced the chances of the father naming that child as a source of support. Lin (2008)

found that Hispanic and African American mothers were more likely to receive financial support from their children when compared to Caucasian mothers. Hispanic mothers on the other hand were less likely to receive time from their children when compared to Caucasian mothers. Concerning fathers, Hispanic fathers were more likely to receive financial support from their children than were Caucasian fathers.

The current study hypothesized that there would be a difference among ethnicities in the amount of support provided. To test the hypothesis, two groups were formed with Caucasians representing the first group and non-Caucasians representing the second group as there were not enough participants from each group to analyze the results separately. Results from the current study indicated that there was not a significant difference between the two groups in the amount of financial support provided to either mothers or fathers. A significant difference was not found between the two groups when looking at the amount of emotional and physical support provided to mothers or fathers. Based on the results provided, the hypothesis was not supported as there was not a significant difference between ethnicities in support.

One of the major factors which may have influenced the results regarding ethnicity is the sample population. There were not enough diverse participants to analyze each ethnicity separately. Having a more diverse population would have provided a better understanding of whether or not there are differences among ethnicities in the amount of support provided.

Reasons for not Providing Support

The final area of interest for the current study was to identify why individuals do not provide support to their parents. Cooney and Uhlenberg (1990) found that men are less likely than women to receive support from their children. Reasons given for the results were that men are less likely to ask their children for help. Another reason given was that men are more likely to lose contact with their kids therefore they do not name them as a source of support. Lin (2008) also found that women receive more support than men. The study supported the idea that women are more likely to outlive men and therefore need help from their children.

Given the younger sample tested for the current study, it was hypothesized that the most common reasons for not providing support to parents would be that they live too far away from their children or their children lack resources to help. Percentages were run to determine which reasons were most commonly given. Results indicated that living too far away, the parent not needing help, and not having resources were the most common reasons given for not providing support to mothers. For fathers, the most common reasons provided were living too far away, the parent not needing help, not having the resources to help, and "other." Reasons provided in "other" included having no contact with the father, or having the father in prison. Based on the results, the hypothesis was supported as living too far away and lack of resources were two of the most common responses given for not providing support.

Future research would benefit from having a larger sample size and a more

diverse group. Due to minimal diversity, the current study was not able to analyze each ethnicity specifically which limited the results found in this study. Having a larger diverse population would provide a better understanding as to whether or not there are differences between each ethnic group and the amount of support provided.

It may also be a benefit for future research to investigate differences for individuals with widowed parents. Having this dynamic allows researchers to better identify how these individuals are affected and whether or not this impacts the amount of support provided to a parent. Due to the younger age of the sample tested in this study, widowed parents were not taken into consideration. Including a widowed parent's category may be useful in more diverse samples.

Testing the college age sample may also have been a limitation as the resources needed to support a parent are not as readily accessible as with older samples. Results found that college age individuals are in fact providing support to their parents with the resources they do have. Having a larger sample size in this population may generate different results than those found in regards to the amount of support provided as well as differences between males and females.

Previous research used an older sample which provided data on the amount of support provided to older individuals. Results from the current study provide an understanding of the amount of support provided to parents by a younger sample. The results indicate that younger individuals do in fact provide support to their parents. These results can be used in future research to gain a better understanding of the amount of

support provided. Results can also be used in future research to investigate differences in ethnicities in the amount of support provided as the sample in the current study was not diverse enough to analyze all ethnicities individually.

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APPENDIX A
Self-Constructed Survey

Marital Quality and the Effect it has on Children's Willingness to Support Married, Separated, or Divorced Parents

Demographic Information:

Your Gender: Male Female

Your Age: _____

Your Mother's Age: _____

Your Father's Age: _____

Your Ethnicity: ___ African America
 ___ Asian
 ___ Caucasian
 ___ Hispanic
 ___ Other: Please identify _____

Circle whether your parents are: Married Divorced Separated

If divorced or separated, how old were you when it happened? _____ Years

How much financial support do you provide for you parent(s)? Financial Support is identified as assisting a parent or family member financially. Examples may include paying for bills, giving them money, etc. What is the average amount of money provided each month?

Mom: \$ _____

Dad: \$ _____

How much physical support do you provide for your parents? Physical support is identified as doing chores, helping parents move, etc. What is the average amount of time spent each month providing physical support?

Mom: _____ Hours

Dad: _____ Hours

How much emotional support do you provide to your parents? Emotional support is defined as talking on the phone, visiting with a parent to make them feel better, etc. What is the average amount of time spent providing emotional support?

Mom: _____ Hours

Dad: _____ Hours

If you do not provide support to your mother what are the reasons?

- Live too far away
 Not enough time
 Don't have the resources to provide help (ex: no money, no phone, etc.)
 It's not my responsibility
 Don't talk to my parents
 Mother doesn't need help
 Other: If you choose other please explain below.

If you do not provide support to your father what are the reasons?

- Live too far away
 Not enough time
 Don't have the resources to provide help (ex: no money, no phone, etc.)
 It's not my responsibility
 Don't talk to my parents
 Mother doesn't need help
 Other: If you choose other please explain below

Kansas Marital Survey 7

Do any of the following situations apply to your parents current marital situation?
 (Please circle as many as apply)

Marriage is "in trouble" They will probably get divorced They will be getting divorced

If you parents are divorced, was the divorce sought by your mother, father, or both equally? (If your parents are not divorced skip to the next question)(Please circle your answer)

Sought mostly by mother Sought mostly by father Sought equally by both of them

APPENDIX B
On-Campus Consent Form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Department of Psychology, Fort Hays State University

Study title: Parental Quality of Marriage and the Effect it has on Children's Willingness to Support Married, Separated, or Divorced Parents

Name of Researcher Deirdre Deiter

Contact Information Deirdre Deiter: 785-738-0160 or dcdeiter@scatcat.fhsu.edu

Name of Thesis Advisor & Contact Information: Carol Patrick, 785-628-4406, cpatrick@fhsu.edu

You are being asked to participate in a research study. It is your choice whether or not to participate. If you would like to participate please sign below. If you choose to participate you are free to withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If you have any questions concerning the study please feel free to ask.

What is the purpose of this study ? The purpose of this study is to examine the effects marital quality has on a child's willingness to support their parents after divorce or separation. Data will also be collected from individuals whose parents are still married to compare the data. Previous research suggests that individuals with a higher quality of marriage prior to divorce or separation will receive more support from their children than will those with a poor quality of marriage prior to divorce or separation. Data will also be collected on participants age, parents age, gender of participant, gender of the parent receiving help, race, and type of help given to examine how each of these factors affects the support given. Reasons as to why or why not individuals provide support will also be collected to gain a better understanding of why individuals do or do not provide support.

What does this study involve ? If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete a survey about your parent's marital quality and types of support given such as emotional, physical, or financial. Individuals whose parents are married will be given scenarios and asked whether or not they would provide support and if so, what type of support they would be willing to provide. You will also be asked to provide information about you age, parent's age, gender, gender of your parents, and ethnicity.

If you decide to participate in this research study, you will give consent by signing your name at the bottom.

Are there any benefits from participating in this study ? Participating in this study will help understand the effect quality of marriage has on children's willingness to support their parents. Through your participation you will help expand the knowledge in this area as minimal research has been conducted in this area.

For students completing the study, extra credit may be given by instructors for your participation in this study, no other rewards are given for the participation in this study. At the end you will receive a debriefing statement discussing resources in the event you feel you need to talk to someone. Upon completion you will also be given a slip of paper to turn in to your professor in the event extra credit is given.

What are the risks involved with being enrolled in this study ? This study has been reviewed to determine that it poses little to no risk of harm so it is unlikely that participation in this study will cause harm. However, if you feel any discomfort or threat at any time during the study, you may choose to withdraw with no questions asked. If you choose to withdraw, you will still receive credit if you are participating for credit given by an instructor. Information obtained through the study will be kept confidential and only used for the purpose of obtaining data. Each survey will be given an ID data for data collection purposes only.

Whom should you call with questions about this study ? Questions about this study may be directed to the Thesis Chair: Dr. Carol Patrick at cpatrick@fhsu.edu, Psychology Department Ethics Chair: Janett Naylor at jmnaylor@fhsu.edu, and the University IRB at lp Paige@fhgsu.edu. You may also contact Deirdre Deiter at dcdeiter@scatcat.fhsu.edu.

CONSENT

I have read the above information about Quality of Marriage and the Effect it has on Children's Willingness to Support Married, Separated, or Divorced Parents. By signing my name I agree to participate in the study, confirm that I am at least 18 years of age, and have the opportunity to obtain a copy of the informed consent for my own records.

Signature _____

APPENDIX C

Online Consent Form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Department of Psychology, Fort Hays State University

Study title: Parental Quality of Marriage and the Effect it has on Children's Willingness to Support Married, Separated, or Divorced Parents

Name of Researcher Deirdre Deiter

Contact Information Deirdre Deiter: 785-738-0160 or dcdeiter@scatcat.fhsu.edu

Name of Thesis Advisor & Contact Information: Carol Patrick, 785-628-4406, cpatrick@fhsu.edu

You are being asked to participate in a research study. It is your choice whether or not to participate. If you would like to participate please sign below. If you choose to participate you are free to withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If you have any questions concerning the study please feel free to ask.

What is the purpose of this study ? The purpose of this study is to examine the effects marital quality has on a child's willingness to support their parents after divorce or separation. Data will also be collected from individuals whose parents are still married to compare the data. Previous research suggests that individuals with a higher quality of marriage prior to divorce or separation will receive more support from their children than will those with a poor quality of marriage prior to divorce or separation. Data will also be collected on participants age, parents age, gender of participant, gender of the parent receiving help, race, and type of help given to examine how each of these factors affects the support given. Reasons as to why or why not individuals provide support will also be collected to gain a better understanding of why individuals do or do not provide support.

What does this study involve ? If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete a survey about your parent's marital quality and types of support given such as emotional, physical, or financial. Individuals whose parents are married will be given scenarios and asked whether or not they would provide support and if so, what type of support they would be willing to provide. You will also be asked to provide information about you age, parent's age, gender, gender of your parents, and ethnicity.

If you decide to participate in this research study, you will give consent by clicking the next button and continuing with the survey.

Are there any benefits from participating in this study ? Participating in this study will help understand the effect quality of marriage has on children's willingness to support their parents. Through your participation you will help expand the knowledge in this area as minimal research has been conducted in this area.

For students completing the study, extra credit may be given by instructors for your participation in this study, no other rewards are given for the participation in this study. At the end you will receive a debriefing statement discussing resources in the event you feel you need to talk to someone. Students can turn in the debriefing statement to prove participation in the study.

What are the risks involved with being enrolled in this study ? This study has been reviewed to determine that it poses little to no risk of harm so it is unlikely that participation in this study will cause harm. However, if you feel any discomfort or threat at any time during the study, you may choose to withdraw with no questions asked. If you choose to withdraw, you will still receive credit if you are participating for credit given by an instructor. Information obtained through the study will be kept confidential and only used for the purpose of obtaining data. Each survey will be given an ID data for data collection purposes only.

Whom should you call with questions about this study ? Questions about this study may be directed to the Thesis Chair: Dr. Carol Patrick at cpatrick@fhsu.edu, Psychology Department Ethics Chair: Janett Naylor at jmnaylor@fhsu.edu, and the University IRB at lp Paige@fhsu.edu. You may also contact Deirdre Deiter at dcdeiter@scatcat.fhsu.edu.

CONSENT

I have read the above information about Quality of Marriage and the Effect it has on Children's Willingness to Support Married, Separated, or Divorced Parents. By clicking next I agree to participate in the study, confirm that I am at least 18 years of age, and have the opportunity to print of the informed consent for my own records.