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## The impact of parental divorce on college age offspring's perception of romantic/marital commitment

A child's life changes in a variety of ways when his/her parents divorce. Amato & DeBoer (2001) found that children from divorced families are at a greater risk of having their own marriages end in divorce. There are many factors that influence this trend. Previous research has stated the parental divorce affects an offspring's certainty about his/her romantic relationships and his/her perceptions of problems in those relationships, (Jacquet & Surra, 2001). This research study surveys college age students in order to gain further information about how a parent's divorce will affect a child's perception of romantic and marital commitment. Divorce is an issue that children have been dealing with for many years. However, with a divorce rate of 50-60% of marriages ending in divorce, it is becoming increasingly important for parents, teachers, and other social service professionals to be familiar with the unique difficulties that children of divorced parents will face. A child's ability to form secure, lasting commitments to romantic partners is affected negatively when parents divorce. In order to learn more about the problems related to romantic/marital commitment in the offspring of divorce, a quantitative design was selected and a 31-question self-administered survey questionnaire was administered to 77 undergraduate students in a lecture class on the University of Missouri-Columbia campus. SPSS 11.5 was used to analyze the variable descriptive and inferential statistics, including t-tests and ANOVA. The romantic/marital commitment levels of college age offspring of divorced parents were not found to be significant when compared to the survey participants whose parents were still married. Variables like cheating in past relationships and fear of commitment were analyzed using t-test comparing the variables with students whose parents were divorced and those whose parents were not divorced. None of the analyses were found to be statistically significant, therefore, the hypothesis that college age students whose parents had divorced would have a lower level of commitment in romantic/marital commitment than their counterparts could not be supported. While the difficulties of children whose parents divorce are important to understand, the question remains unanswered as to the definite factors that a child deals with after their parents divorce. Romantic/marital commitments levels were not found to be lower in college students whose parents were divorced compared to college students who are still married. However, the study did not cover a random sample. Further research should seek to identify clearer variable to measure romantic/marital commitment and should have random sampling. Studying the romantic/marital commitment levels of college students whose parents were never married or divorced would influence future social service efforts for adolescents as well and should not be ignored in future studies.