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Family structure and psychological factors: The effects of family-of-origin variables on young adults' psychological well-being

Catherine E. Morgan

Eastern Illinois University

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FAMILY STRUCTURE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS:
THE EFFECTS OF FAMILY-OF-ORIGIN VARIABLES ON
YOUNG ADULTS' PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

MORGAN

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Family Structure and Psychological Factors: The Effects of
Family-of-Origin Variables on Young Adults' Psychological Well-Being

(TITLE)

BY

Catherine E. Morgan

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology

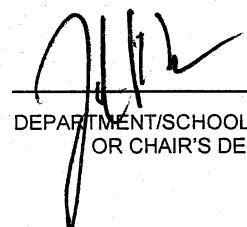
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Running head: FAMILY STRUCTURE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS

Family Structure and Psychological Factors: The Effects of Family-of-Origin Variables
on Young Adults' Psychological Well-Being

Catherine E. Morgan

Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between family structure and life satisfaction in young adults. Additionally, the study examined explanatory style, parenting style, family cohesion, family satisfaction, and the presence of siblings as potential moderating factors between divergent family structures and levels of life satisfaction in young adults. Ninety male and 121 female university students completed a demographic survey, the Parental Authority Questionnaire, the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales IV, the Attribution Style Questionnaire, the Family Satisfaction Scale, and the Satisfaction with Life Scale. As anticipated, results indicated that participants who grew up in single parent and step-family homes, when viewed as a homogeneous group, displayed lower levels of life satisfaction than those who came from intact homes. However, when analyzed as independent groups, those participants who grew up in single parent households showed no significant difference in their levels of life satisfaction as young adults from those participants who were raised in intact homes. Another unanticipated finding was that participants who grew up in intact homes did not have significantly different levels of optimism than those who grew up in non-intact homes. As expected, family satisfaction, family cohesion, and an authoritative parenting style were all shown to be independently significantly correlated with higher levels of life satisfaction in the participants. Surprisingly, though, when each group of participants from different family backgrounds was analyzed through a matrix model, authoritarian maternal parenting style emerged as a significant predictor of life satisfaction in the

young adults who grew up in stepfamilies, permissive maternal parenting style emerged as a significant predictor of life satisfaction in those from single-parent families, and only family satisfaction was shown to be significant for those who grew up in intact homes. Finally, neither the presence nor absence of siblings, nor an increase in the number of siblings, was related to the participants' life satisfaction scores. Suggestions for future research and clinical implications are also discussed.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated, with love, to Lily Morgan.

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In recent years, there has been a dramatic shift in family structure in the United States, with almost 20 million children living in either a single parent family or a stepfamily environment (e.g., Teachman, 2000). According to the 2000 United States Census, 62% of American children lived with both biological parents, while 25% of children lived in single-parent households. Almost 7% of American children lived in step families (Kreider & Fields, 2005). Researchers and the media alike have searched for answers to better understand how divorce affects children. Additional questions of interest have included whether living in a single-parent home disadvantages kids and how a stepfamily environment influences children's behavior and scholastic achievement. On the whole, research has shown us that while living in a non-traditional family has some negative effects on children, many of these effects can be better explained by examining other family variables rather than family structure alone.

Comparisons between the 1970 US Census and the 2005 US Census show a shift in children's living arrangements which varies according to both ethnicity and time period. In 1970, 90% of white children lived with two parents; in 2005, only 74% of white children lived in a two-parent household. For black youths, 59% lived with two parents in 1970; in 2005, only 35% of black children lived with two parents. Among Hispanic children, 78% lived with two parents in 1970, while 65% lived in two parent families in 2005. The percentage of children who live in single-parent households has increased from 1970 to 2005. In 1970, 9% of white children and 32% of black children lived in single-parent headed households. By 2005, 23% of white children and 53% of black children lived in single-parent households (Kincannon, 2007).

In response to such significant increases in the occurrence of "non-traditional" family living arrangements, this study seeks to examine the relationship between levels of life satisfaction among adult children and family structure in high school, as well as to examine potential protective factors. The first aim of this study is to identify whether adult children from step and single-parent families have significantly different levels of life satisfaction than those who come from intact families of origin. The second aim of this study is to determine whether young adult children from step and single-parent families have significantly different levels of optimism than children from intact families. The third aim of the study is to determine which factors of family functioning (family cohesion, family satisfaction, and parenting style) are associated with higher levels of life satisfaction among participants who were raised in step families and single-parent homes. The fourth aim of this study is to determine which factors of family functioning (family cohesion, family satisfaction, and parenting style) are associated with higher levels of life satisfaction among participants who were raised in intact homes. Finally, this study aims to examine whether the presence of siblings is a protective factor for adult life satisfaction among those who were raised in single parent or step family homes.

Effects of family structure

It appears that changes in family structure, such as parental divorce and parental remarriage, generally have negative consequences for children (Amato, 2001; Brown, 2006; Hetherington et al., 1992; Lee et al., 1994; Saucier & Ambert, 1982). However, we do know that significant numbers of children from non-intact families have positive long-term outcomes. Only recently have researchers begun considering the effects of

protective factors: variables in a child's life that may buffer the potential negative impact of a non-traditional family structure. Therefore, while it is important to be familiar with previous research, but it is also necessary to consider whether factors other than family structure contributed to the findings.

Previous studies have shown that in the short term, children and adolescents whose parents divorce and/or remarry suffer a variety of psychological, social, behavioral, and academic problems at a greater rate than their peers who originate from intact two-parent homes. Amato (2001) found that children of divorced homes display significantly lower outcomes than children reared in intact homes. This meta-analysis, which included 67 studies on children of divorce, concluded that children who experience a parental divorce score significantly poorer on measures of psychological adjustment, such as depression, anxiety, and happiness. Additionally, children from non-intact homes scored lower on measures of conduct, academic achievement, self-concept, and social/relational skills.

Other studies support this finding. One study found that adolescents who experience a family structure transition, such as remarriage, divorce, or cohabitation, report higher levels of depression than children who do not experience such a change (Brown, 2006). Another study showed that adolescents from non-intact homes are less optimistic than are adolescents from intact, biological families. When such adolescents were asked about their chances of being successful in life, children from non-intact families rated their chances of success lower than those children who grew up in intact families. For example, these adolescents were also asked about their perceived chances

of one day owning a summer cottage (a goal related to upward mobility); children from disrupted homes again rated their chances as significantly lower than did children from intact homes (Saucier & Ambert, 1982).

Children and adolescents who experience family structure transitions are also at higher risk for behavioral and social problems than are their intact-home peers. Behavioral problems are more likely among children of stepfamilies and single-parent families than in children of intact families (Lee, Burkham, Zimiles, & Ladewski, 1994). Hetherington et al. (1992) found that children of stepfamily and single-parent homes demonstrate significantly higher maladjustment than their peers from intact homes. This maladjustment was operationalized as displaying less social competence, less scholastic competence, and more behavioral problems, both externalized and internalized. Teachers, parents, observers, and the children themselves providing ratings of these dimensions, and children from non-divorced homes generally scored significantly higher on these measures than children from non-intact homes. The authors of this study propose that these differences are due to the risk that marital status changes present to children in these families. However, the authors also point out that maladjustment by children who have experienced such a transition is not inevitable, and that factors other than family status alone are likely to be related to children's maladjustment (Hetherington et al., 1992).

Research has shown that living in stepfamilies may be even more disruptive to the development and well-being of children than the experience of parental divorce alone. Kirby (2006) found that adolescent children whose parents have divorced had an elevated

risk of initiating alcohol use after moving to a stepfamily home from a divorced, single-parent home. Transitioning from a single-mother home to a cohabitating (unmarried) stepfamily home is correlated with decreased adolescent well being (Brown, 2006). Conversely, movement from a cohabitating stepfamily into a single-mother household is associated with adolescents' increased school engagement (Brown, 2006).

Adult children of non-intact families continue to face negative effects of the family structure changes they experienced as children. These young adults experience greater problems in their psychological and social well-being than their peers who were reared in non-divorced, two-parent homes (Amato & Booth, 1991; Amato & Sobolewski, 2001; Barrett & Turner, 2005; Boyer-Pennington, Pennington, & Spink, 2001).

On the whole, young adults who were exposed to family-of-origin structure disruptions experience lower levels of psychological health than those who were not exposed to such changes (Amato & Booth, 1991; Amato & Sobolewski, 2001, Barrett & Turner, 2005). Young adults whose parents divorced displayed a lower level of life satisfaction and a higher level of psychiatric symptomatology than their peers who were raised in non-divorced homes (Amato & Booth, 1991). Additionally, young adults who grew up in non-intact homes scored lower on measures of self-esteem and higher on measures of distress than did young adults who grew up in intact homes (Amato & Sobolewski, 2001), and young adults who grew up in stepfamilies and single-parent families displayed higher levels of depressive symptoms than those who grew up in intact homes (Barrett & Turner, 2005).

Research has shown that adult children from non-intact homes generally have more difficulties with their own marriages than do adult children from intact families. Young adults from divorced homes have less positive expectations about the quality of their own future marriages than young adults coming from intact homes of origin (Boyer-Pennington, Pennington, & Spink, 2001). Additionally, individuals from non-intact families of origin score lower on measures of marital well-being, and parents' marital discord is positively related to the marital discord of adult children (Amato & Booth, 2001). With research showing that children from different types of families display significantly different mental health and life outcomes, it is important to gain a sense of the number of children who are growing up in non-intact homes.

Family Structure

The U.S. Census Bureau (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.a) defines the following types of family households: a married-couple family household (with spouse present or absent); a male householder, no wife present, family household; and a female householder, no husband present, family household. Although the US Census Bureau defines a stepfamily as "a married couple family household with at least one child under age 18 who is a stepchild (i.e., a son or daughter through marriage, but not by birth) of the householder", the Census Bureau did not make a distinction between stepfamilies and two-parent biological families in their 2006 data regarding the living arrangements of children. Consequently, the Census Bureau data does not provide specific statistics regarding children who reside in stepfamilies in comparison to children who live with

their two original parents. However, data is available regarding the numbers of children who live in married-couple households and male/female headed households.

As of 2006, 69% of children under the age of 18 lived in married parent households (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.c). In 2% of these households, one spouse was absent, mostly due to work obligations or service in the Armed Forces. These "married parent" households include both two-parent biological/adoptive households and step-family households. Approximately 26% of children live in single-parent households: 22% live with single mothers and 4% live with single fathers. Approximately 5% of children live in households with neither of their parents present; these children may live with grandparents, other family members, or foster families. With almost one-third of American children living in households without two parents, and many more living in step-family homes, the effects of growing up in a "non-traditional" family has become an area of interest for researchers.

Outcomes of Family Structure for Adult Children

Attachment. Attachment is defined as behavior that results in one person maintaining proximity with another, preferred person who is perceived as stronger or wiser (Bowlby, 1977). Using multiple self-reporting questionnaires, Love and Murdock (2004) assessed parent-child attachment during the participants' first 16 years of life, as well as the participants' current levels of psychological well being, current satisfaction with life, and family conflict levels. Love and Murdock (2004) found that young adults who come from stepfamilies have less secure attachments than those from intact families. Their findings also support the claim that the quality of childhood attachment predicts

psychological well-being in adults. These findings suggest that children who reside in stepfamilies will have, on average, poorer psychological well-being as adults than those adults who were not raised in a stepfamily.

Support. Parental support of children may consist of financial, emotional, and/or practical forms of help. Astone and McLanahan (1991) found that children who live in single parent families or stepfamilies during adolescence receive less help with, and monitoring of, school work and less scholastic/social encouragement than children who reside in two-parent, intact homes. Additionally, they found that parental time and encouragement do have positive effects on adolescents' scholastic achievement, including school attendance, grades, expectations, and school completion, leaving children who receive less parental academic support at an academic disadvantage (Astone & McLanahan, 1991).

This deficit in parental support of children may continue into adult life for individuals whose parents divorced. In their study of 471 parents and their young adult children, Amato, Rezac, and Booth (1995) operationalized "support" as money, assistance with child care, assistance with home or car repairs, and advice or encouragement. The results of this study show that parental support of young adult children may be negatively affected by parental divorce and a non-intact family structure. Amato et al. (1995) found that parental divorce lowered both the young adults' expectations of help from their parents and the helping behaviors between fathers and their young adult offspring. Additionally, Amato et al. (1995) found that single mothers

gave less help to their adult offspring, and received more help from these offspring, than either first-married or re-married mothers.

Psychological Well-Being. While researchers use different measures of “psychological well being,” previous studies have consistently found that family of origin structure is associated with increased risk of mental health problems (Amato, 2000; Barrett & Turner, 2005; Nicholson, Fergusson, & Horwood, 1999). A study by Barrett and Turner (2005) found that young adults who grew up in stepfamilies and single-parent families show higher levels of depressive symptoms than young adults who were reared in intact, two-parent families. However, they also concluded that mediating factors (e.g., family processes, such as family cohesion, positive family support, and family negativity) explain a large portion of the variance in depressive symptomatology, as do socioeconomic status and social stress. Nicholson, Fergusson, and Horwood (1999) found that while negative social and emotional consequences for children living in stepfamilies are present, these effects may be almost fully explained by mediating factors such as socioeconomic status; the mother’s age, religiosity, and smoking; history of family instability, adversity, and conflict; the child’s gender; and child’s preexisting behavioral disorders.

A meta-analysis by Amato (2000) supports the notion that both adults and children who come from divorced families show decreased well-being compared to those who come from intact homes. However, Amato also concludes that this is not true for divorces following a highly conflicted marriage. In fact, life after a high-conflict marriage may include increased well-being despite the change in family structure.

Amato, Spencer Loomis, and Booth (1995) found that parental conflict is a significant mediating factor when explaining the effects of family-of-origin structure on mental health of adults. Specifically, individuals who come from families with high levels of conflict had higher levels of psychological well-being if their parents had divorced than if the parents remained married. The reverse was also true: children from low-conflict families had higher levels of well-being if their parents remained married.

Siblings

The Merriam-Webster Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged (n.d.) defines a sibling as "one of two or more persons who have the same parents but are not necessarily of the same birth." A stepsibling is defined as the son or daughter of one's stepparent by a former marriage. A half-sibling is defined as "a brother or sister by one parent only" (Merriam-Webster Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged, n.d.). Of American children with siblings, 39% have one sibling, 25% have two siblings, and 15% have three or more siblings. Only 21% of American children are "only children" with no siblings (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.c).

Previous research supports the assertion that changes from a two-parent, intact family structure to an alternate structure are correlated with more negative sibling relationships (Deater-Deckard, Dunn, & Lussier, 2002; Hetherington et al., 1992; Lee et al., 1994). A study of adolescents between ages 11 and 15 compared the children of both intact and divorced families with the intent of determining if the presence of siblings acted as a buffering factor for the children who were from divorced homes. The study showed that children who came from intact homes showed less externalizing behavior (as

indicated by scores on the Conduct Disorder and Anxiety-Withdrawal subscales of the Revised Behavior Problem Checklist) than children who came from divorced families. In addition, children of divorced families who had siblings showed less externalizing behavior than children of divorced families who did not. However, when examining internalizing behaviors (as indicated by scores on the Child Depression Inventory), no significant differences were found between divorced children with siblings and without (Kempton, Armistead, Wierson, & Forehand, 1991).

Deater-Deckard, Dunn, and Lussier (2002) evaluated the positivism and negativity of sibling relationships among different types of family structures by evaluating a sample of 192 families with siblings. Negative sibling relationships, such as relationships that are characterized by aggression and conflict, are most prevalent in single-mother families. The authors offer several hypotheses for this finding. First, children in single-mother homes may have, on the whole, experienced a more recent marital transition (i.e., divorce) than children in two-parent families. An alternate explanation offered is that single mothers may experience more frequent partner changes (dating) than mothers in two-parent homes. However, as these hypotheses are unproven by research, the reason for this finding remains unclear (Deater-Deckard et al., 2002). Importantly, another study found that children in stabilized divorced families (who were not coping with further family structure changes) did not display significant differences in the quality of their sibling relationships (Hetherington et al., 1992).

Family Factors

While family-of-origin structure may contribute to children's long-term outcomes, it alone cannot account for all of the outcome variance. This study examines three potential protective factors that may be associated with life satisfaction as a young adult: family cohesion, parenting style, and family satisfaction. Previous research has shown each of these factors to be linked to the psychological well-being of children; however, none have examined the relationship between these factors, family structure, and life satisfaction as a young adult.

Cohesion. Family cohesion can be defined as "the emotional bonding that family members have toward one another" (Olson, Gorall, & Tiesel, 2007). Multiple studies have found that family cohesion is a contributing factor to the well-being of children. Family cohesion is associated with fewer externalizing problems in adolescents (Richmond & Stocker, 2006). Additionally, the cohesion of the family as a whole has been found to be more important to adolescents' functioning than dyadic relationships with family members (Richmond & Stocker, 2006).

Lack of family cohesion is associated with decreases in children's ability to cope with problems (Cumsille & Epstein, 1994; Kerig, 1995; McKeown et al., 1997). Research has shown that family cohesion may influence adolescent's depressive symptoms more strongly than family structure alone (McKeown et al., 1997). For example, the depressive symptoms of adolescent children who were seen in an outpatient clinical setting were significantly influenced by the children's level of satisfaction with the cohesiveness and adaptability in their families (Cumsille & Epstein, 1994).

Scapegoating, or placing blame for family problems on one family member, is one factor that may negatively affect family cohesion. Children who rated their families as utilizing scapegoating to dissipate conflicts within the family displayed higher rates of both internalizing and externalizing problems as rated by their parents (Kerig, 1995).

In stepfamilies, cohesion is equally, if not more, important for coping with family stress than in biological families (Waldren, Bell, Peek, & Sorell, 1990). Unfortunately, stepfamilies generally report lower levels of family cohesion than intact, two parent families (Pink & Wampler, 1985; Waldren, Bell, Peek, & Sorell, 1990). Additionally, it has been found that lower levels of cohesion exist in stepfamilies regardless of the length of the remarriage, the gender of the adolescents, and the quality of contact with the biological father (Pink & Wampler, 1985).

Parenting Styles. Diana Baumrind (1966) recognized three distinct parenting styles: authoritative, permissive, and authoritarian. These parenting styles may be conceptualized as resulting from parenting practices which can be rated along two continuums. Extremes of the first continuum are cold/ distant parenting and warm/close/affectionate parenting. Extremes on the second continuum are strict/controlling/punitive parenting and easygoing/non-controlling parenting. The combination of one's parenting practices on each continuum determine the parenting style. The most beneficial parenting style is authoritative parenting. Authoritative parents are warm and affectionate, but maintain appropriate boundaries with their children and use consistent, yet flexible, rules to maintain their authority. Permissive parents, in contrast, use negotiation and manipulation to achieve their authority, but do not use

external rules effectively. Permissive parents tend to act in a nonpunitive way towards their children, and make few demands on the children's behavior. Authoritarian parents shape their children's behavior by using inflexible rules and punishment. Authoritarian parents do not encourage negotiation by children, and tend to favor restricting children's autonomy (Baumrind, 1966).

Research supports Baumrind's (1966) assertion that authoritative parenting is positively correlated with children's well-being and success (Aquilino & Supple, 2001; Steinberg, Mounts, Lamborn, & Dornbusch, 1991). Children whose parents practice authoritative parenting, rather than authoritarian or permissive parenting, report less depression and anxiety. Additionally, these children earn better grades in school and are less likely to engage in delinquent behavior than their peers whose parents are permissive or authoritarian. This correlation exists regardless of the ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or family structure of the children (Steinberg et al., 1991).

A democratic (authoritative) parenting style is also associated with higher self-efficacy and better adjustment to adult life (Aquilino & Supple, 2001). A 1999 meta-analysis shows that authoritative parenting is an important factor for children of divorce as well. Even the children of nonresident divorced fathers show greater academic success and less maladaptive behavior if these fathers use an authoritative parenting style in raising their children (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999). Conversely, children whose parents use coercion to control them during adolescence show lower levels of well-being and greater rates of substance abuse in young adulthood (Aquilino & Supple, 2001).

Family Satisfaction. Family satisfaction is defined by Carver & Jones (1992, p. 72) as “the degree to which one is generally satisfied with one’s family of origin and the constituent relationships embedded therein (e.g., parent-child, siblings, etc.).” Family satisfaction plays an important role in the psychological well-being of children (Antaramian, Huebner, & Valois, 2008; Amerikaner, Monks, Wolfe, & Thomas, 1994).

Results of a 2008 study of adolescents from varied family structures indicate that family structure is predictive of adolescents’ family satisfaction (Antaramian et al., 2008). While life satisfaction was unrelated to family structure, adolescents in single-parent and stepfamilies reported lower levels of life satisfaction than did adolescents in intact families. Another study revealed that students who have higher levels of psychological health also have higher levels of family satisfaction. In this study, 148 introductory psychology students levels of social interest and psychological hardiness (psychological health) were assessed along with students’ perceptions of family interaction and family “climate variables”, including family satisfaction. Both family cohesion and family satisfaction were shown to be predictive of higher levels of mental health (Amerikaner et al., 1994).

Psychological Factors

It is of interest to researchers to examine non-familial variables associated with family structure in order to more fully understand the interactions among family and individual factors. This study examines both attributional style and life satisfaction. Attributional style is conceptualized as a potential protective factor, while life satisfaction is used as an outcome measure in this study.

Attributional Style. Attributional style can be defined as a cognitive system of perceiving and categorizing events. Three aspects of an individual's interpretation of an event's causation are considered: the positivity or negativity of the event; whether the event is due to internal or external causes; and whether the event is caused by stable or variable influences (Peterson, 1982). Additionally, Seligman (1990) describes three dimensions that make up one's attributional style: permanence, pervasiveness, and personalization. Permanence refers to an individual's belief that the causes of his/ her life events are unchangeable, rather than temporary. Pervasiveness reflects the extent to which life event causes are believed to be universally applicable. Personalization describes an individual's explanation of the cause of life events: internal or external Seligman (1990).

Peterson (1982) identified four attributional patterns: Self-Effacing, External, Self-Enhancing, and Internal. Individuals who display the Self-Effacing attributional style generally assign external attributions for good events and internal attributions for negative events. Individuals who can be categorized as External tend to provide external attributions for good events and bad events alike. Individuals who may be categorized as Self Enhancing provide internal attributions for good events and external attributions for negative events. Persons who can be categorized as Internal provide internal attributions for both good and bad events (Peterson, 1982).

Seligman (1990) explained the three factors that influence an individual's acquisition of an attributional style. The first factor is the explanatory style that a person hears utilized by primary caregivers. The second is the type of responses a person

receives in times of failure. Finally, the outcomes of the individual's early traumas also influence the development of attributional style (Seligman, 1990). Thus, while attributional style is not categorized as inborn or unalterable, its origins are rooted in early childhood.

Studies have shown that an individual's attributional style is linked to mental health. For example, attributional style can be linked to depression. Those who attribute negative events to internal, stable, and global causes, and those who attribute positive events to external, unstable, and specific causes, ("Self-Enhancing" individuals) are more likely to have depression (Sweeney, Anderson, & Bailey, 1986). However, no known studies to date have explored possible associations between attributional style, mental health, and family-of-origin structure.

Life Satisfaction. Life satisfaction can be defined as an individualized judgmental process, in which individuals assess the quality of their lives based on their own set of criteria (Shin & Johnson, 1978). A study examining the life satisfaction of 5,021 high-school aged children living in varied family structures found that the effects of family structure on life satisfaction vary by the gender and race of the child. White highschoolers, both male and female, were significantly less likely to report dissatisfaction with life, as were black females living with single mothers. By contrast, black males living with single fathers were significantly more likely to report dissatisfaction with life. Additionally, white female high school students who lived with their mothers and another adult or adults were significantly more likely to report life dissatisfaction (Zullig, Valois, Huebner, & Drane, 2005). A 1991 study of 227 college

students demonstrated that adult children from non-intact families (primarily young adults who had experienced a parental divorce) have significantly lower levels of life satisfaction than those participants who grew up in intact homes (Pardeck et al., 1991).

Present Study

In sum, previous research has shown that changes in family structure, such as parental divorce and remarriage, often have negative consequences for the children in these families. Adult children from non-intact families continue to face negative effects of the family structure changes they experienced as children. Young adults whose parents divorced display a lower level of life satisfaction and a higher level of psychiatric symptomatology than their peers who were raised in non-divorced homes (Amato & Booth, 2001).

Furthermore, the literature reviewed has shown that family processes appear to serve as a link between family structure and mental health. For example, adolescents in families with both parents present report greater levels of perceived cohesion (McKeown et al., 1997). Also, parental use of a democratic/authoritative parenting style is correlated with higher personal efficacy in adult children and better adjustment to adult life. Conversely, children whose parents use coercion to control them during adolescence show lower levels of well-being and greater rates of substance abuse in young adulthood (Aquilino & Supple, 2001).

Finally, prior research indicates that the presence of siblings in the family influences the mental health of children, and that family structure influences children's relationships with their siblings. Children in stepfamilies display more negative behavior

towards their siblings than do children in intact families (Hetherington et al., 1992).

Among children of non-intact families, greater numbers of siblings leads to increased behavioral problems (Lee et al., 1994).

However, what is lacking from previous research is information regarding potential buffering factors between family-of-origin structure and life satisfaction as an adult. It is unclear how family factors, such as family satisfaction and the type of parenting style that is used in the home of origin influence life satisfaction among young adults from different types of families. Also unknown is what association, if any, exists between an individual's explanatory style and adult life satisfaction with regard to persons who grew up in differently-structured families. This study attempted to address these deficits in the literature by exploring the following research questions:

1. Do adult children from step and single-parent families have significantly different levels of life satisfaction than those who come from intact families of origin? It was hypothesized that young adult children from intact families have significantly higher levels of life satisfaction than children from step and single-parent families (Amato, 2001; Amato & Booth, 1991; Barrett & Turner, 2005).

2. Do young adult children from step and single-parent families have significantly different levels of optimism than children from intact families? It was hypothesized that young adult children from intact families have significantly higher levels of optimism than children from step and single-parent families (Amato, 2001; Saucier & Ambert, 1982).

3. What familial factor or combination of factors (i.e., family cohesion, family satisfaction, and parenting style) best predicts life satisfaction among participants who grew up in step families and single-parent homes? It was hypothesized that for young adults who grew up in step families and single-parent family homes, high levels of family cohesion, high levels of family satisfaction and authoritative parenting are associated with higher levels of life satisfaction (Aquilino & Supple, 2001; Carver & Jones, 1992; Waldren et al., 1990).

4. What familial factor or combination of factors (i.e., family cohesion, family satisfaction, and parenting style) is associated with higher levels of life satisfaction among participants who grew up in intact homes? It was hypothesized that for young adults who grew up in intact homes, high levels of family cohesion, high levels of family satisfaction, and authoritative parenting are associated with higher levels of life satisfaction (Aquilino & Supple, 2001; Carver & Jones, 1992; Richmond & Stocker, 2006).

5. Is the presence of siblings a protective factor for adult life satisfaction among those who grew up in single parent or step family homes? It was hypothesized that increased numbers of siblings would not act as a protective factor for participants who grew up in single or step family homes (Kempton et al., 1991).

Methods

Participants

A non-clinical sample of 211 young adult college students from introductory psychology courses participated in this study. Within the sample, 90 were male students (42.7%) and 121 were female students (57.3%). Participants' mean age was 19 years (with a range of 18 to 24). Participants were primarily Caucasian ($n = 173$; 82.0%), followed by Black/African-American ($n = 24$, 11.5%) and Hispanic ($n = 6$, 2.9%). Most were freshmen students ($n = 144$; 68.2%), followed by sophomores ($n = 37$, 17.5%), juniors ($n = 21$, 10.0%) and seniors ($n = 9$, 4.3%). Most of the participants lived in the university dormitories ($n = 175$; 82.9%); others lived off-campus with roommates ($n = 30$, 14.2%).

In this study, participants were asked to identify their family structure during their last two years of high school. This data was used to categorize the participants into three categories: those who grew up in two-parent, intact homes; those who grew up in stepfamilies; and those who grew up in a single parent household. Those participants whose family structure did not fit into these categories were eliminated for the purposes of the study ($n = 4$; 1.9%). Of the remaining study participants, 114 (54.0%) grew up in two-parent biological homes and 97 (46%) grew up in non-intact households. Of the participants who grew up in non-intact homes, 39 (40.2%) were raised in stepfamily homes, and 58 (59.8%) were raised in single parent households.

Participants most frequently reported having two biological siblings ($n = 71$; 33.6%), no stepsiblings ($n = 178$; 84.4%), and no half siblings ($n = 146$; 69.2%). Of

those who had full biological siblings, participants reported a range of number of siblings from 1 to 9. Those with stepsiblings reported a range of 1 to 6, and those with half siblings reported a range of 1 to 8 siblings.

Measures

Participants completed five questionnaires: a demographic survey (see appendix A), the Parental Authority Questionnaire (see appendix B), the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales IV (not included in appendix due to copyright), the Attribution Style Questionnaire (see appendix C), the Family Satisfaction Scale (not included in appendix due to copyright), and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (see appendix D).

Demographic Questionnaire. Participants completed a demographic questionnaire which provided information regarding the participant's gender, age, ethnicity, year in school, grade point average, current housing situation, family structure during high school, primary caregiver(s) during high school, number and type of siblings, and family socioeconomic status.

Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ). Study participants completed the PAQ, a 30-item scale which was completed regarding both maternal and paternal figures (Buri, 1991). The PAQ was designed to assess Baumrind's (1966) authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting styles. Participants rated their agreement with statements on the measure such as "My primary maternal (paternal) figure does not allow me to question any decision she (he) makes." Participants used a 5-point scale to rate their level of agreement with each statement (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral,

4=agree, 5=strongly agree). The PAQ yields three subscales (authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting.) Scores for each subscale are computed by adding the scores for each of the items that comprise the subscale for a total subscale score. Higher scores on each subscale indicate higher levels of authoritativeness, authoritarianism, and permissiveness, respectively.

Psychometric testing by Buri (1991) showed that reliabilities of the PAQ subscales ranged from .77 (father's permissiveness) to .92 (father's authoritativeness). Internal consistencies ranged from .74 (father's permissiveness) to .87 (father's authoritarianism). The PAQ was also been shown to have good criterion-related validity and good discriminant-related validity (Buri, 1991).

Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales IV (FACES IV).

Participants completed the FACES IV, a self-report measure designed to assess family cohesion and family adaptability (Olson et al., 2007). The FACES IV has a 5-point scale to allow participants to rate their families on these dimensions via statements about family functioning (1=does not describe our family at all, 2=slightly describes our family, 3=somewhat describes our family, 4=generally describes our family, and 5=describes our family very well). The FACES IV consists of 42 items, and has six subscales: Balanced Cohesion, Balanced Flexibility, Disengaged, Enmeshed, Rigid, and Chaotic (Olson et al., 2007). Scores for the FACES IV subscale are determined by adding together the scores for each of the subscale items. Higher scores on each of the subscales indicate higher levels of each type of family dynamic. The FACES IV cohesion ratio provides an overall family cohesion score which allows a summary view of the family's level of cohesion.

The cohesion ratio is computed by adding the "disengaged" and "enmeshed" subscale scores and dividing this score by two, then dividing the balanced cohesion subscale score by the resulting value. When interpreting the cohesion ratio, scores above one (1) may be viewed as healthier, while scores below one (1) may be viewed as less healthy. It is this cohesion ratio that will be used for the purposes of this study.

According to Olson et al. (2007), the subscales of the FACES IV all had acceptable reliability. Reliabilities for the subscales ranged from .77 (Enmeshed subscale) to .89 (Cohesion subscale). The FACES IV has good concurrent validity as well as good discriminant validity.

Attribution Style Questionnaire (ASQ). Study participants completed the ASQ, a 12-item measure that assesses participants' explanatory style. Explanatory style can be described as a combination of two factors: participants' perceived locus of control (internal or external) as well as the stability of the participants' perception of locus of control (Tennen & Herzberger, 1986). The ASQ required participants to give explanations for hypothetical life events, both negative and positive. Participants then rated the importance of the event, the cause of the event (self or others), the likelihood of the event being repeated, and the scope of the event on a 7-point Likert scale. The ASQ is scored by subtracting the mean of the negative event scores from the mean of the positive event scores. Higher scores indicate greater levels of optimism.

Tennen and Herzberger (1986) reported that although ASQ test-retest reliability was questionable in depressed patients, it was shown to be adequate in non-clinical samples. The ASQ had modest internal consistency, possibly due to the small number of

items (6) on each scale. The validity of the ASQ was supported by a number of studies. Both criterion and construct validity were good (Tennen & Herzberger, 1986).

Family Satisfaction Scale (FSS). The FSS is a self-report scale designed to assess participants' overall satisfaction with their families. Participants rate each item on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1=very dissatisfied, 2=somewhat dissatisfied, 3=generally satisfied, 4=very satisfied, and 5=extremely satisfied). The FSS is scored by summing the scores for each item. An overall score of 41-50 indicates that the participant is very satisfied with his/ her family; 30-40 = mostly satisfied; 29-35 = somewhat satisfied; 23-28 = somewhat dissatisfied; and 10-22 = very dissatisfied.

Although the original FSS was a 14 item scale, we utilized the newer 10 item version. The FSS has been shown to have adequate psychometric properties. The FSS has a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .92 for the total FSS score and a 5-week test-retest reliability of .75 (Volker & Ozechowski, 2000).

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). The SWLS is a five-item self-report scale intended by its creators to assess global life satisfaction (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). Participants used a 7-point scale to respond to statements such as, "In most ways, my life is close to ideal" (7=strongly agree, 6=agree, 5=slightly agree, 4=neither agree nor disagree, 3=slightly disagree, 2=disagree, 1=strongly disagree). The SWLS is scored by summing the scores of all items for an overall life satisfaction score.

Pavot and Diener (1993) recommend the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) as a quality measure to assess an individual's own life satisfaction based upon his or her own criteria. The SWLS has been shown to have good criterion-related reliability, as

evidenced by its internal consistency. It has also been shown to have good concurrent validity, as evidenced by its moderate to high correlations with other measures of subjective well-being (Diener et al., 1985).

Procedure

Participants for this study were recruited from introductory psychology classes and were compensated for their participation with course credit. Participation in this study was voluntary. Each participant signed an informed consent (see Appendix E), then completed a questionnaire booklet that contained the surveys reviewed above (i.e., a demographic survey, the Parental Authority Questionnaire, the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales IV, the Attribution Style Questionnaire, the Family Satisfaction Scale, and the Satisfaction with Life Scale.) Upon completion of the questionnaire booklet, each participant was provided with a written feedback statement (see Appendix F).

Results

The results will be presented here by order of the study questions. A significance level of $p < .05$ was set for all analyses that were conducted. For all multiple regression analyses, collinearity statistics were examined, and it appeared that there were no collinearity problems. The tolerance for all variables was above .1 and the VIF for all was less than 10.

1. Do adult children from step and single-parent families have significantly different levels of life satisfaction than those who come from intact families of origin?

Data were first analyzed using an ANOVA, with the independent variable (IV) being the structure of the family in which each participant was raised (i.e., intact, step, or single-parent), and the dependent variable (DV) being the participants' life satisfaction scores. Results show that participants who grew up in different family structures differed significantly in their levels of life satisfaction as young adults, $F(2, 204) = 4.21, p < .05$. Results of a Tukey's HSD post-hoc test indicate that participants who were raised in stepfamily homes ($M = 22.47; SD = 6.10$) had significantly lower levels of life satisfaction than participants who were raised in intact homes ($M = 25.65; SD = 5.61$) (see Table 1). No other pairwise comparisons were found to be statistically significant.

Next, data were analyzed using a t -test for independent means with the IV being the type family structure in which participants were raised (intact home versus stepfamily and single-parent homes) and the DV being the participants' life satisfaction scores. Results showed that participants who grew up in intact homes had significantly different life satisfaction scores ($M = 25.65, SD = 5.61$) than those who grew up in non-intact homes ($M = 23.54, SD = 6.44$), $t(205) = 2.52, p = .01$ (two-tailed).

2. Do young adult children from step and single-parent families have significantly different levels of optimism than children from intact families?

Data were analyzed using an ANOVA, with the IV being the structure of the family in which each participant was raised (intact, step, or single-parent), and the DV being the participants' overall optimism scores. Results show that participants who grew up in different family structures did not differ significantly in their levels of optimism as young adults.

Next, data were analyzed using a *t*-test for independent means with the IV being the type family structure in which participants were raised (intact home versus stepfamily and single-parent homes) and the DV being the participants' optimism scores. Results showed that participants who grew up in intact homes did not differ in level of optimism from those who grew up in non-intact homes. Participants who grew up in two parent biological homes ($M = 3.95$; $SD = 2.75$) had a mean score that was commensurate with the mean score of those who grew up in stepfamily homes ($M = 4.51$; $SD = 2.67$) and single-parent homes ($M = 4.77$; $SD = 2.50$) (see Table 1).

3. What familial factor or combination of factors (family cohesion, family satisfaction, and parenting style) best predicts life satisfaction among participants who grew up in step families and single-parent homes?

In order to preserve statistical power, several multiple regression analyses were conducted. Separate analyses were needed in order to include both maternal and paternal parenting styles. Bivariate correlations were conducted for participants who grew up in non-intact (step and single-parent) families (see Table 2). Family cohesion, family satisfaction, and authoritative maternal parenting style were all found to be significantly correlated with life satisfaction. Then, a multiple regression analysis was conducted with family cohesion, family satisfaction, and maternal parenting style entered as predictors and life satisfaction entered as the outcome variable (see Table 3). The overall regression model accounted for 20% of the variance in life satisfaction, $F(5, 83) = 5.26, p < .001$. In the overall regression model, family satisfaction was shown to be a significant predictor of life satisfaction, and maternal authoritarianism also emerged as a significant predictor

of life satisfaction. In contrast, family cohesion, family satisfaction, and *paternal* parenting style were not found to be predictive of life satisfaction for participants who grew up in non-intact families.

Separate analyses were conducted for participants who were raised in single-parent homes. A multiple regression analysis was conducted with family cohesion, family satisfaction, and maternal parenting style as predictors and life satisfaction as the outcome variable. When bivariate correlations were conducted for participants who were raised by single mothers, family cohesion, family satisfaction, and an authoritative maternal parenting style were all independently significantly correlated with life satisfaction (see Table 4). The overall regression model accounted for 28% of the variance in life satisfaction, $F(5,45) = 4.84, p = .001$. In the overall regression model, family satisfaction was shown to be a significant predictor of life satisfaction, and maternal permissiveness also emerged as a significant predictor of life satisfaction (see Table 5). We were unable to analyze the relationship among family cohesion, family satisfaction, paternal parenting style and life satisfaction for participants who were raised by fathers due to the low number of participants ($n = 12$) who grew up in a single-father home.

Multiple regression analyses which explored the relationship among family cohesion, family satisfaction, maternal/paternal parenting styles and life satisfaction for participants who grew up in step-family homes showed that these variables accounted for little of the variance in life satisfaction. However, each of these groups had a low number

of participants who provided data on stepfamilies (maternal step family data provided $n = 38$; paternal step family data provided $n = 37$).

4. What factors of family functioning (i.e., family cohesion, family satisfaction, and parenting style) are associated with higher levels of life satisfaction among participants who grew up in two parent biological (intact) homes?

Bivariate correlations were conducted for participants who grew up in intact homes. For this group, family cohesion, family satisfaction, and authoritative maternal parenting style were all found to be significantly correlated with life satisfaction (see Table 6). A multiple regression analysis was then conducted, with family cohesion, family satisfaction, maternal parenting style and paternal parenting style entered as predictors and life satisfaction entered as the outcome variable (see Table 7). The overall regression model accounted for 29% of the variance in life satisfaction, $F(8, 94) = 6.30, p = .000$. In the overall regression model, only family satisfaction was shown to be a significant predictor of life satisfaction.

5. Is the presence of siblings a protective factor for adult life satisfaction among those who grew up in single parent or step family homes?

To explore this research question, three sibling group categories were created: no biological siblings, 1-2 biological siblings, and 3 or more biological siblings. Data were analyzed using a 2x3 ANOVA with family structure and number of siblings as the IVs and life satisfaction as the DV. Results show that, regardless of family structure, participants who had no siblings did not differ significantly in their levels of life

satisfaction as young adults from those who had 1-2 siblings or those who had 3 or more siblings.

Discussion

The current study aimed to investigate the relationships among family structure, potential familial and individual protective factors, and life satisfaction in young adults.

Family Structure and Life Satisfaction

The first aim of this study was to determine if young adult children who were raised in two parent, biological homes had different levels of life satisfaction than those who were raised in non-intact homes. It was hypothesized that young adult children from intact families would have significantly higher levels of life satisfaction than children from step and single-parent families (Amato, 2001; Amato & Booth, 1991; Barrett & Turner, 2005). This hypothesis was partially supported. The participants who grew up in single parent and step-family homes, when viewed as a homogeneous group, did display lower levels of life satisfaction than those who came from intact homes. However, when analyzed as independent groups, only young adults who grew up in stepfamilies showed significantly lower levels of life satisfaction than those from intact homes. Participants who grew up in single parent households showed no significant difference in their levels of life satisfaction as young adults from those participants who were raised in intact homes.

This finding is consistent with previous studies which have found that some children who are raised in stepfamilies have more negative outcomes than those who simply continue to live with a single parent (Brown, 2006; Kirby, 2006). Experiencing

the transition from single-parent home to step-family home may partially explain the lower levels of life satisfaction of the young adults in this study, as studies that utilized other measures of mental health have shown that children can react negatively to this change (Brown, 2006). An elevated risk of initiating alcohol use after moving to a stepfamily home from a single-parent home, as found by Kirby (2006), indicates that the transition causes multiple types of stress among adolescents who undergo such a change. It is possible that the stress related to learning to cope in a new family system (possibly, as in the case of a previously divorced parent, a second family restructuring) negatively impacts children's overall satisfaction with life.

Family Structure and Optimism

An additional purpose of this study was to determine if young adult children from step and single-parent families have significantly different levels of optimism than children from intact families. It was hypothesized that young adult children from intact families would have significantly higher levels of optimism than children from step and single-parent families (Amato, 2001; Saucier & Ambert, 1982). Results did not support this hypothesis, as it was shown that participants who grew up in intact homes did not have significantly different optimism scores than those who grew up in non-intact homes.

One's attributional style is influenced by the individual's early traumas (Seligman, 1990). The finding that participants who grew up in non-intact homes do not have significantly levels of optimism indicates that the family transitions experienced by participants were somehow not perceived by participants as permanent, pervasive, and/or personalized (Seligman, 1990). It is possible that society's increased focus on

ameliorating the negative impact of divorce on children has been effective in reducing self-blame by children, hence reducing the level of personalization that children feel after a divorce. Additionally, children may not view divorce or family structure transitions as pervasive if they do not experience multiple transitions. These factors may be mediating the potential negative effects of family structure transitions on children's attributional styles, hence preserving levels of optimism.

Family Factors that Predict Life Satisfaction

Next, this study attempted to determine which factor or combination of factors (i.e., family cohesion, family satisfaction, and parenting style) is most predictive of life satisfaction among participants who grew up in intact or non-intact homes. It was hypothesized that for all of the participants, high levels of family cohesion, high levels of family satisfaction and authoritarian parenting would be associated with higher levels of life satisfaction (Aquilino & Supple, 2001; Carver & Jones, 1992; Waldren et al., 1990). The separate results from non-intact, single-parent, and intact homes are presented below followed by a discussion of the general findings.

Single Parent and Step Family Homes. Consistent with previous research, family satisfaction, family cohesion, and an authoritative maternal parenting style were all shown to be independently significantly correlated with higher levels of life satisfaction in the participants from non-intact homes. This finding is consistent with a significant body of previous research, which indicates that authoritarian parenting is associated with better outcomes for children (Aquilino & Supple, 2001; Steinberg et al., 1991).

However, when investigated within the context of the matrix model, family cohesion and maternal authoritative parenting are no longer shown to be significant factors. Instead, an authoritarian maternal parenting style emerged as a significant predictor of life satisfaction in the young adults. Additionally, a permissive maternal parenting style emerged as a predictor at a level that approached significance. These findings are inconsistent with previous research, which generally shows that an authoritarian parenting style is associated with less desirable psychological outcomes in children and young adult children.

A similar pattern of findings emerged when examining the scores of college students who grew up in single-mother homes. Again, family satisfaction, family cohesion, and an authoritative maternal parenting style were all shown to be independently significantly correlated with higher levels of life satisfaction in the young adults. When investigated within the context of the matrix model, family cohesion and maternal authoritative parenting were no longer shown to be significant predictors of life satisfaction. Instead, a permissive maternal parenting style emerged as a significant predictor of life satisfaction in the young adults. Generally, authoritative parenting, rather than permissive, has been linked to better outcomes for children (Aquilino & Supple, 2001; Steinberg et al., 1991). However, research has shown that permissive parenting may have certain advantages for children, especially for the children's self-esteem. A study of first- and second grade children showed a correlation between parental permissiveness, as rated by parents using the Parent Attitude Measure, and higher teacher-rated self esteem in the young children, as rated on the Behavioral

Academic Self-Esteem Rating Scale (Anderson & Hughes, 1989). A 2001 study of 31 young blind adults and their mothers showed a positive correlation between a maternal permissive parenting as reported by the young adults and young adults' self-reported level of self-esteem (Cardinali & D'Allura, 2001). Interestingly, the ratings of permissive parenting practices as rated by these young adults were not correlated with the ratings of permissiveness given by their mothers, who by and large rated themselves as utilizing authoritative parenting style. It is possible that a similar interaction occurred in the current study. Participants who rated their mothers as permissive may experience greater self-esteem, which may contribute to greater satisfaction with life.

Intact Family Homes. Somewhat consistent with the study hypothesis and previous research, family satisfaction, family cohesion, an authoritative paternal parenting style and an authoritative maternal parenting style were all shown to be independently significantly correlated with higher levels of life satisfaction in the young adults. However, when investigated within the context of the matrix model, family cohesion, maternal authoritative parenting, and paternal authoritative parenting are no longer shown to be significant factors. Only family satisfaction was shown to be significant to the model. This indicates that family cohesion and parenting style are not as important to life satisfaction as a young adult as the level of family satisfaction the young adult experienced.

Parenting Styles and Life Satisfaction. The parenting styles that were predictive of family satisfaction were surprising and somewhat perplexing. For the participants who grew up in intact, two-parent biological homes, no specific parenting style was predictive

of greater life satisfaction. For those who grew up with single mothers, permissive parenting was most predictive of later life satisfaction. And for those who grew up in non-intact homes, whether stepfamily or single-parent, authoritarian maternal parenting was most predictive, followed by permissive maternal parenting. It appears that parenting style, which has been shown to have an impact on many other aspects of children's lives, may have a differential impact depending on family structure.

If the differences in predictive parenting styles are due, in part, to family composition, might this be a result of varying roles that mothers take on in different types of family structures? Single mothers may need to be more permissive due to a lack of time and parenting resources as compared to two-parent families. These children may experience more freedom, less structure, and a greater voice in family decisions by necessity (Carter & McGoldrick, 2005). Alternately, children living in stepfamilies, who are more frequently the biological children of the mother (both on average and in our sample), may have experienced more maternal authoritarian parenting due to their biological mother taking a more active disciplinary role than the stepfather (Carter & McGoldrick, 2005). Perhaps these adaptations in parenting style are beneficial responses to life in a non-traditional family structure, and children ultimately respond positively to the styles adopted by their parents. It would be of interest to examine the types of parenting styles that are most utilized by parents from intact versus non-intact homes.

Family Satisfaction and Cohesion. Throughout all of my analyses, family satisfaction was predictive of life satisfaction in the young adults. As measured in this study, family satisfaction encompasses factors such as family closeness, flexibility,

communication, time together, and conflict expression/ resolution. It is clear that one's personal satisfaction with his/her family is important to one's overall satisfaction with life. Less clear is the relationship between family processes and family satisfaction.

Family cohesion does not predict life satisfaction when viewed through the matrix model. Perhaps strong cohesion is not as important to children as is satisfaction with the family: satisfaction is a more subjective and holistic view of one's perception of his/her family. Alternately, participants who are more likely to rate their family "satisfaction" as high may be more likely to rate life "satisfaction" high as well, whereas their scores on more objective measures are lower.

Siblings

The final aim of this study was to determine whether the presence of siblings would serve as a protective factor for adult life satisfaction among those who grew up in single parent or step family homes. It was hypothesized that increased numbers of siblings would not act as a protective factor for participants who grew up in single or step family homes (Kempton et al., 1991). This hypothesis was supported, as increased siblings did not correspond with increased life satisfaction in participants. Neither the presence nor absence of siblings, nor an increase in the number of siblings, was related to the participants' life satisfaction scores. This finding is consistent with previous research, which has demonstrated that siblings do not necessarily act as a buffer for children affected by a divorce. Such children display similar scores on measures of internalized behavioral problems as children with no siblings (Kempton et al., 1991). Additionally, children in stabilized divorced families (as would be expected in young adults who

experienced such a transition as a child) did not display significant differences in the quality of their sibling relationships (Hetherington et al., 1992). Hence, sibling relations would likely not influence one's life satisfaction, either positively or negatively.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

As discussed above, the present study explored the complicated relationships among family structure, life satisfaction, and potential protective factors including parenting style, attributional style, family cohesion, and family satisfaction. Several limitations of the current study should be discussed. First, this study relied on self-reported data obtained from young adults who were asked about their childhood experiences. Participants' memory, time spent away from the home of origin, and changing perceptions of their families could have confounded the results. Additionally, the questionnaire may have been somewhat ambiguous with regard to time frames; participants may have completed some of the measures (specifically, the FACES IV, the FSS, and the PAQ) without the retrospective view that was desired. If this was the case for some participants, data reflects their current view on their families rather than their perceptions of their families while they were living in the home.

A second limitation of the current study is the lack of information obtained about the time periods during which the participants experienced transitions in family structure. We are aware only of participants' home structure during the last two years of high school, and have no data on the length of time they lived in this environment or the number/ timing of family structure transitions that may have occurred prior to the final living arrangement. These variables may have contributed to the young adults'

adjustment (Aquilino, 1994; Woodward, Fergusson, & Belsky, 2000), but the effects are unknown due to the lack of information.

The number and type of participants that completed this study introduced another limitation. Due to a low number of participants in some groups, including children who were raised in step-family homes, children who were raised by single fathers, and children who had no siblings. The lack of significant findings related to these groups may have been resultant of small sample sizes rather than a true lack of correlation between variables. Additionally, the participants in this study were a fairly homogeneous group, as subjects were drawn from the introductory psychology subject pool at a regional Midwestern university. The majority of the participants were white female college students. While the sample was relatively representative of the student body of this school and of the general geographic region, a greater diversity of race, ethnicity, geographical location, gender, and educational status would be desirable for results with greater generalizability.

More in-depth exploration of the factors that influence family satisfaction would be helpful in understanding the reasons that family satisfaction is linked to life satisfaction, as well as providing valuable information for clinicians and families. Understanding the reasons why some young adults found their families highly satisfactory would provide clues as to how families, of any structure, can improve the satisfaction of their youngest members and provide for their future life fulfillment.

Additionally, more research on parenting styles and the effects of these styles within different family structures is needed. Authoritarian and permissive parenting

styles linked to life satisfaction was an unexpected finding of this study. Future research should explore the possible causes for this finding. Do differently structured families benefit from different types of parenting?

Finally, an exploration of the effects of the study factors within single-father and stepfamily homes is needed. I was unable to obtain enough participant data to adequately explore these areas. Certainly, families in these structures have their own unique vulnerabilities and strengths; further research is needed to better understand the factors that influence children's life satisfaction in these homes.

Conclusion

This study shows that there are noteworthy differences in the types of factors that influence adult children's life satisfaction. Despite multitudes of prior research which demonstrates that authoritative parenting is linked to the most positive outcomes for children, permissive parenting and authoritarian parenting were correlated with greater life satisfaction for adult children in single-parent and non-intact homes, respectively. Additionally, optimism, which is influenced by one's early life experiences, was shown to be unaffected by the structure of the home in which these college students were raised.

The findings of this study indicate that previous analyses of mental health outcomes based on an "intact versus non-intact" family structure model may be inadequate to explore the differences in children from varied home structures. Children who grow up in two-parent biological homes, stepfamily homes, and single-parent homes may all experience unique stressors and protective factors resultant of their home environments. Differences in the factors that predicted higher life satisfaction for each of

these groups demonstrate that they cannot be generalized without obscuring valuable information. By not studying the unique experiences of children raised in each type of family, we lose valuable information about their risk and resiliency factors.

This study generated findings which are useful for both clinicians and researchers. As the family structures in America continue to diversify, and the two-parent biological home is no longer the norm, clinicians can benefit from understanding that the factors which have been shown to predict success for children in intact homes may not be the same factors that lead to success for children from alternate family structures. Researchers who examine family processes should be more alert to the need for more specified research about children in each type of home.

Finally, this study shows that adult children who grew up in single-mother families have similar levels of life satisfaction as those who were brought up in two-parent, biological homes. This important finding may provide a modicum of satisfaction and relief to the large number of children in the U.S. who are living in single-mother homes, as well as the parents of these youth.

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Table 1

Summary of Means and Standard Deviations for All Family Structures: Life Satisfaction and Optimism

Family Variables	Family structure					
	Two Parent Biological (<i>n</i> = 113)		Stepfamily (<i>n</i> = 38)		Single-Parent Family (<i>n</i> = 56)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Life satisfaction	25.65	5.61	22.47	6.10	24.27	6.62
Optimism	3.95	2.75	4.51	2.67	4.77	2.50

Table 2

Intercorrelations for Non-Intact Families: Maternal Parenting, Family Factors, and Life Satisfaction (N = 89)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Family Cohesion	--	.70**	.008	.51**	-.23*	.31**
2. Family Satisfaction		--	-.06	.57**	-.16	.43**
3. Permissive maternal parenting style			--	-.09	-.38**	.08
4. Authoritative maternal parenting style				--	-.23*	.26**
5. Authoritarian maternal parenting style					--	.07
6. Life Satisfaction						--

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .005$.

Table 3

Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Non-Intact Families: Maternal Parenting, Family Factors, and Life Satisfaction (N = 89)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Family Cohesion	.27	.10	.04
Family Satisfaction	.31*	.11	.41
Permissive maternal parenting style	.25	.13	.20
Authoritative maternal parenting style	.08	.13	.08
Authoritarian maternal parenting style	.22*	.10	.24

Note. $R^2 = .195$. * $p < .05$.

Table 4

Intercorrelations for Single Mother Families: Maternal Parenting, Family Factors, and Life Satisfaction (N = 51)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Family Cohesion	--	.59**	-.14	.51**	-.08	.32*
2. Family Satisfaction		--	-.29*	.58**	.04	.50**
3. Permissive maternal parenting style			--	-.19	-.47**	.07
4. Authoritative maternal parenting style				--	-.10	.39**
5. Authoritarian maternal parenting style					--	.05
6. Life Satisfaction						--

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .005$.

Table 5

Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Single Mother Families: Maternal Parenting, Family Factors, and Life Satisfaction (N = 51)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Family Cohesion	.07	1.15	.01
Family Satisfaction	.38*	.14	.47
Permissive maternal parenting style	.40*	.17	.34
Authoritative maternal parenting style	.23	.17	.21
Authoritarian maternal parenting style	.19	.13	.22

Note. $R^2 = .28$. * $p < .05$.

Table 6

Intercorrelations for Two Parent Biological Families: Parenting Styles, Family Factors, and Life Satisfaction (N = 103)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Family Cohesion	--	.71**	-.26**	.41**	-.07	-.17*	.48**	-.13	.47**
2. Family Satisfaction		--	.01	.41**	-.03	.09	.53**	-.22*	.58**
3. Permissive maternal parenting			--	-.04	-.37**	.66**	-.06	-.13	-.06
4. Authoritative maternal parenting				--	-.07	-.04	.50**	-.01	.29**
5. Authoritarian maternal parenting					--	-.16	.08	.49**	.03
6. Permissive paternal parenting						--	.12	-.43**	.01
7. Authoritative paternal parenting							--	-.25*	.35**
8. Authoritarian paternal parenting								--	-.08
9. Life Satisfaction									--

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .005$.

Table 7

Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Two Parent Biological Families: Parenting Styles, Family Factors, and Life Satisfaction (N = 103)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Family Cohesion	.57	.82	.09
Family Satisfaction	.33	.09	.49*
Permissive maternal parenting style	-.04	.14	-.03
Authoritative maternal parenting style	.03	.09	.04
Authoritarian maternal parenting style	.02	.11	.02
Permissive paternal parenting style	.02	.14	.02
Authoritative paternal parenting style	.03	.10	.03
Authoritarian paternal parenting style	.04	.11	.04

Note. $R^2 = .29$

* $p < .05$.

Table 8

Summary of Means and Standard Deviations for All Family Structures: Parenting Styles, Family Factors, and Life Satisfaction

Family Variables	Family structure									
	Two Parent Biological (n = 103)		Stepfamily (n = 75)				Single-Parent Family (n = 63)			
			Maternal (n = 38)		Paternal (n = 37)		Single Mother (n = 51)		Single Father (n = 12)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Life satisfaction	25.42	5.53	22.47	6.10	22.38	6.16	24.12	6.92	21.58	6.97
Family cohesion	2.47	.91	2.32	.90	2.27	.86	2.48	.93	2.35	.82
Family satisfaction	36.37	8.33	34.34	8.89	34.08	8.86	36.61	8.47	36.42	7.43
Permissive maternal	26.81	5.39	26.89	4.42	n/a	n/a	28.84	5.95	n/a	n/a
Authoritative maternal	35.53	6.31	35.84	6.43	n/a	n/a	35.86	6.30	n/a	n/a
Authoritarian maternal	28.58	6.22	29.08	6.69	n/a	n/a	27.12	7.73	n/a	n/a
Permissive paternal	25.98	5.30	n/a	n/a	27.73	5.05	n/a	n/a	27.67	6.01
Authoritative paternal	34.48	6.64	n/a	n/a	34.59	7.34	n/a	n/a	34.17	6.55
Authoritarian paternal	31.28	6.62	n/a	n/a	30.43	7.89	n/a	n/a	30.67	7.48

Appendix A

Participant ID [_ _]

Demographics

NOTE: Use your family situation from the last two years of your high school (junior and senior years) when answering the following questions:

1. Family Structure – In home of primary residence.

- ☐ Two parents (biological)
- ☐ Two parents (stepfamily)
 - ☐ Stepmom and biological father
 - ☐ Stepdad and biological mother
- ☐ One parent
 - ☐ Just mom
 - ☐ Just dad
- ☐ Other: _____

2. Now indicate your Primary Residence paternal and maternal figures, based on your previous answer (For example, if you resided with your step-mom and biological father, your step-mom would be your PR maternal figure and your biological father would be your PR paternal figure).

PR Maternal Figure: _____

PR Paternal Figure: _____

***Note** – Please refer to these individuals and this household when completing the following surveys: FACES, FSS, & PAQ.

Participant ID [_ _]

3. Age _____

4. Sex [] M [] F

5. Ethnic Background: (check all that apply)

- [] White/Caucasian
- [] Black/African American
- [] Hispanic
- [] Asian American
- [] Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- [] Native American
- [] Other: _____

6. Year in school

- [] Freshman
- [] Sophomore
- [] Junior
- [] Senior
- [] Graduate

7. Cumulative GPA: _____

if this is your first semester, enter 999

if you don't know your GPA, enter 777

8. Current housing status

- [] Dorms
- [] Off-campus with roommates
- [] Off-campus with parents
- [] Off-campus with family members other than parents
- [] Off-campus by self

9. Number of biological siblings _____

10. Number of half-siblings _____

11. Number of step-siblings _____

12. Total parental income each year

- ☐ Less than \$25,000
- ☐ \$25-50,000
- ☐ \$50-75,000
- ☐ \$75-100,000
- ☐ More than \$100,000

Appendix B

PAQ

For each of the following pairs of statements, respond with the number response that best describes how the first statement applies to **you and your mother**. There are no right or wrong answers. So don't spend a lot of time on any one item. I am looking for your overall impressions regarding each statement. Be sure not to omit any items.

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

- ___ 1. My mother feels that in a well run home the children should have their way in the family as often as the parents do.
- ___ 2. Even if her children don't agree with her, my mother feels that it is for our own good if we are forced to conform to what she thinks is right.
- ___ 3. Whenever my mother tells me to do something, she expects me to do it immediately without asking any questions.
- ___ 4. Once family policy has been established, my mother discusses the reasoning behind the policy with the children in the family.
- ___ 5. My mother always encourages verbal give-and-take whenever I feel that family rules and restrictions are unreasonable.
- ___ 6. My mother feels that children need to be free to make up their own minds and to do what they want, even if this does not agree with what their parents may want.
- ___ 7. My mother does not allow me to question any decision she makes.
- ___ 8. My mother directs the activities and decisions of the children in the family through reasoning and discipline.
- ___ 9. My mother feels that more force should be used by parents in order to get their children to behave the way they are supposed to.
- ___ 10. My mother does not feel that I need to obey rules and regulations of behavior simply because someone in authority has established them.
- ___ 11. I know what my mother expects of me in my family, but I also feel free to discuss those expectations with my mother when I feel that they are unreasonable.
- ___ 12. My mother feels that wise parents should teach their children early just who is boss in the family.
- ___ 13. My mother seldom gives me expectations and guidelines for my behavior.
- ___ 14. Most of the time, my mother does what the children in the family want when making family decisions.
- ___ 15. My mother consistently gives us direction and guidance in rational and objective ways.
- ___ 16. My mother gets very upset if I try to disagree with her.

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

- _____ 17. My mother feels that most problems in society would be solved if parents would not restrict their children's activities, decisions and desires.
- _____ 18. My mother lets me know what behavior she expects of me, and if I don't meet those expectations, she punishes me.
- _____ 19. My mother allows me to decide most things for myself without a lot of direction from her.
- _____ 20. My mother takes the children's opinions into consideration when making family decisions, but she would not decide something just because the children want it.
- _____ 21. My mother does not view herself as responsible for directing and guiding my behavior.
- _____ 22. My mother has clear standards of behavior for the children in our home, but she is willing to adjust those standards to the needs of each of the individual children in the family.
- _____ 23. My mother gives me direction for my behavior and activities and she expects me to follow her direction, but she is always willing to listen to my concerns and to discuss that direction with me.
- _____ 24. My mother allows me to form my own point of view in family matters and she generally allows me to decide for myself what I am going to do.
- _____ 25. My mother has always felt that most problems in society would be solved if we could get parents to strictly and forcibly deal with their children when they don't do what they are supposed to.
- _____ 26. My mother often tells me exactly what she wants me to do and how she expects me to do it.
- _____ 27. My mother gives me clear direction for my behaviors and activities, but she is also understanding when I disagree with her.
- _____ 28. My mother does not direct the behaviors, activities, and desires of the children in the family.
- _____ 29. I know what my mother expects of me in the family and she insists that I conform to these expectations simply out of respect for her authority.
- _____ 30. If my mother makes a decision in the family that hurts me, she is willing to discuss that decision with me and to admit it if she has made a mistake.

PAQ

For each of the following pairs of statements, respond with the number response that best describes how the first statement applies to you and your father. There are no right or wrong answers. So don't spend a lot of time on any one item. I am looking for your overall impressions regarding each statement. Be sure not to omit any items.

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

- _____ 1. My father feels that in a well run home the children should have their way in the family as often as the parents do.
- _____ 2. Even if his children don't agree with him, my father feels that it is for our own good if we are forced to conform to what he thinks is right.
- _____ 3. Whenever my father tells me to do something, he expects me to do it immediately without asking any questions.
- _____ 4. Once family policy has been established, my father discusses the reasoning behind the policy with the children in the family.
- _____ 5. My father always encourages verbal give-and-take whenever I feel that family rules and restrictions are unreasonable.
- _____ 6. My father feels that children need to be free to make up their own minds and to do what they want, even if this does not agree with what their parents may want.
- _____ 7. My father does not allow me to question any decision he makes.
- _____ 8. My father directs the activities and decisions of the children in the family through reasoning and discipline.
- _____ 9. My father feels that more force should be used by parents in order to get their children to behave the way they are supposed to.
- _____ 10. My father does not feel that I need to obey rules and regulations of behavior simply because someone in authority has established them.
- _____ 11. I know what my father expects of me in my family, but I also feel free to discuss those expectations with my father when I feel that they are unreasonable.
- _____ 12. My father feels that wise parents should teach their children early just who is boss in the family.
- _____ 13. My father seldom gives me expectations and guidelines for my behavior.
- _____ 14. Most of the time, my father does what the children in the family want when making family decisions.
- _____ 15. My father consistently gives us direction and guidance in rational and objective ways.
- _____ 16. My father gets very upset if I try to disagree with him.
- _____ 17. My father feels that most problems in society would be solved if parents would not restrict their children's activities, decisions and desires.
- _____ 18. My father lets me know what behavior he expects of me, and if I don't meet those expectations, he punishes me.

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

- ___ 19. My father allows me to decide most things for myself without a lot of direction from him.
- ___ 20. My father takes the children's opinions into consideration when making family decisions, but he would not decide something just because the children want it.
- ___ 21. My father does not view himself as responsible for directing and guiding my behavior.
- ___ 22. My father has clear standards of behavior for the children in our home, but he is willing to adjust those standards to the needs of each of the individual children in the family.
- ___ 23. My father gives me direction for my behavior and activities and he expects me to follow his direction, but he is always willing to listen to my concerns and to discuss that direction with me.
- ___ 24. My father allows me to form my own point of view in family matters and he generally allows me to decide for myself what I am going to do.
- ___ 25. My father has always felt that most problems in society would be solved if we could get parents to strictly and forcibly deal with their children when they don't do what they are supposed to.
- ___ 26. My father often tells me exactly what he wants me to do and how he expects me to do it.
- ___ 27. My father gives me clear direction for my behaviors and activities, but he is also understanding when I disagree with him.
- ___ 28. My father does not direct the behaviors, activities, and desires of the children in the family.
- ___ 29. I know what my father expects of me in the family and he insists that I conform to these expectations simply out of respect for his authority.
- ___ 30. If my father makes a decision in the family that hurts me, he is willing to discuss that decision with me and to admit it if he has made a mistake.

Appendix C

Attributional Style Questionnaire

Please try to vividly imagine yourself in the situations that follow. If such a situation happened to you, what would you feel would have caused it? While events may have many causes, we want you to pick only one – the *major* cause if this event happened to *you*. Please write this cause in the blank provided after each event. Next we want you to answer some questions about the *cause* and a final question about the *situation*. To summarize, we want you to:

1. Read each situation and vividly imagine it happening to you.
2. Decide what you feel would be the *major* cause of the situation if it happened to you.
3. Write one cause in the blank provided.
4. Answer three questions about the *cause*.
5. Answer one question about the *situation*.
6. Go on to the next situation.

You meet a friend who compliments you on your appearance.

1. Write down the *one* major cause _____.

2. Is the cause of your friend's compliment due to something about you or to something about other people or circumstances? (circle one number)

Totally due to
other people or
circumstances.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Totally due
to me

3. In the future when being complimented, will this cause again be present? (circle one number)

Will never
again be
present.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Will always
be present.

4. Is the cause something that just influences receiving compliments or does it also influence other areas of your life? (circle one number)

Influences just
this particular
situation.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Influences all
situations.

5. How important would this situation be if it happened to you? (circle one number)

Not at all
Important

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely
important

You have been looking for a job unsuccessfully for some time.

1. Write down the *one* major cause _____.

2. Is the cause of your unsuccessful job search due to something about you or to something about other people or circumstances? (circle one number)

Totally due to
other people or
circumstances.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Totally due
to me

3. In the future when looking for a job, will this cause again be present? (circle one number)

Will never
again be
present.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Will always
be present.

4. Is the cause something that just influences looking for a job or does it also influence other areas of your life? (circle one number)

Influences just
this particular
situation.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Influences all
situations.

5. How important would this situation be if it happened to you? (circle one number)

Not at all
Important

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely
important

You become very rich.

1. Write down the *one* major cause _____.

2. Is the cause of your wealth due to something about you or to something about other people or circumstances? (circle one number)

Totally due to
other people or
circumstances.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Totally due
to me

3. In the future when gaining wealth, will this cause again be present? (circle one number)

Will never
again be
present.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Will always
be present.

4. Is the cause something that just influences wealth or does it also influence other areas of your life? (circle one number)

Influences just
this particular
situation.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Influences all
situations.

5. How important would this situation be if it happened to you? (circle one number)

Not at all
Important

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely
important

A friend comes to you with a problem and you don't try to help.

1. Write down the *one* major cause _____.

2. Is the cause of your not helping due to something about you or to something about other people or circumstances? (circle one number)

Totally due to
other people or
circumstances.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Totally due
to me

3. In the future when your friend comes to you for help, will this cause again be present? (circle one number)

Will never
again be
present.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Will always
be present.

4. Is the cause something that just influences when a friend asks for help or does it also influence other areas of your life? (circle one number)

Influences just
this particular
situation.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Influences all
situations.

5. How important would this situation be if it happened to you? (circle one number)

Not at all
Important

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely
important

You give an important talk in front of a group and the audience reacts negatively.

1. Write down the *one* major cause _____.

2. Is the cause of your poorly received speech due to something about you or to something about other people or circumstances? (circle one number)

Totally due to
other people or
circumstances.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Totally due
to me

3. In the future when giving a speech will this cause again be present?
(circle one number)

Will never
again be
present.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Will always
be present.

4. Is the cause something that just influences giving speeches or does it also influence other areas of your life? (circle one number)

Influences just
this particular
situation.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Influences all
situations.

5. How important would this situation be if it happened to you? (circle one number)

Not at all
Important

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely
important

You do a project that is highly praised.

1. Write down the *one* major cause _____.

2. Is the cause of your successful project due to something about you or to something about other people or circumstances? (circle one number)

Totally due to
other people or
circumstances.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Totally due
to me

3. In the future when looking completing a project, will this cause again be present?
(circle one number)

Will never
again be
present.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Will always
be present.

4. Is the cause something that just influences projects or does it also influence other areas of your life? (circle one number)

Influences just
this particular
situation.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Influences all
situations.

5. How important would this situation be if it happened to you? (circle one number)

Not at all
Important

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely
important

You meet a friend who acts hostilely towards you.

1. Write down the *one* major cause _____.

2. Is the cause of your friend's hostility due to something about you or to something about other people or circumstances? (circle one number)

Totally due to
other people or
circumstances.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Totally due
to me

3. In the future when meeting a friend, will this cause again be present? (circle one number)

Will never
again be
present.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Will always
be present.

4. Is the cause something that just influences your friend or does it also influence other areas of your life? (circle one number)

Influences just
this particular
situation.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Influences all
situations.

5. How important would this situation be if it happened to you? (circle one number)

Not at all
Important

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely
important

You can't get all the work done that others expect of you.

1. Write down the *one* major cause _____.

2. Is the cause of your inability to get all the work done due to something about you or to something about other people or circumstances? (circle one number)

Totally due to
other people or
circumstances.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Totally due
to me

3. In the future when you are assigned work to be done, will this cause again be present? (circle one number)

Will never
again be
present.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Will always
be present.

4. Is the cause something that just influences completing work help or does it also influence other areas of your life? (circle one number)

Influences just
this particular
situation.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Influences all
situations.

5. How important would this situation be if it happened to you? (circle one number)

Not at all
Important

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely
important

Your spouse (boyfriend/girlfriend) has been treating you more lovingly

1. Write down the *one* major cause _____.

2. Is the cause of your spouses (boyfriend/girlfriend) love due to something about you or to something about other people or circumstances? (circle one number)

Totally due to
other people or
circumstances.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Totally due
to me

3. In the future when your spouse (boyfriend/girlfriend) is loving will this cause again be present? (circle one number)

Will never
again be
present.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Will always
be present.

4. Is the cause something that just influences your spouses (boyfriend/girlfriend) love or does it also influence other areas of your life? (circle one number)

Influences just
this particular
situation.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Influences all
situations.

5. How important would this situation be if it happened to you? (circle one number)

Not at all
Important

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely
important

You apply for a position that you want very badly (e.g., important job, graduate school admission) and you get it.

1. Write down the *one* major cause _____.

2. Is the cause of your successful application to something about you or to something about other people or circumstances? (circle one number)

Totally due to

Totally due

other people or
circumstances.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

to me

3. In the future when applying for a desired position, will this cause again be present?
(circle one number)

Will never
again be
present.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Will always
be present.

4. Is the cause something that just influences applying for positions or does it also
influence other areas of your life? (circle one number)

Influences just
this particular
situation.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Influences all
situations.

5. How important would this situation be if it happened to you? (circle one number)

Not at all
Important

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely
important

You go out on a date and it goes very badly.

1. Write down the *one* major cause _____.

2. Is the cause of your bad date hostility due to something about you or to something
about other people or circumstances? (circle one number)

Totally due to
other people or
circumstances.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Totally due
to me

3. In the future when going out on a date, will this cause again be present? (circle one
number)

Will never
again be
present.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Will always
be present.

4. Is the cause something that just influences dating or does it also influence other areas
of your life? (circle one number)

Influences just
this particular
situation.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Influences all
situations.

5. How important would this situation be if it happened to you? (circle one number)

Not at all
Important

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely
important

You get a raise.

1. Write down the *one* major cause _____.

2. Is the cause of your raise due to something about you or to something about other people or circumstances? (circle one number)

Totally due to
other people or
circumstances.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Totally due
to me

3. In the future when you are given a raise, will this cause again be present?
(circle one number)

Will never
again be
present.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Will always
be present.

4. Is the cause something that just influences getting a raise or does it also influence other areas of your life? (circle one number)

Influences just
this particular
situation.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Influences all
situations.

5. How important would this situation be if it happened to you? (circle one number)

Not at all
Important

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely
important

Appendix D

SWLS

Below are five statements that you may agree or disagree with. Using the 1-7 scale below indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number on the line preceding that item. Please be open and honest in your responding.

- 7 – Strongly Agree
- 6 – Agree
- 5 – Slightly Agree
- 4 – Neither agree nor disagree
- 3 – Slightly disagree
- 2 – Disagree
- 1 – Strongly disagree

_____ In most ways my life is close to ideal.

_____ The conditions of my life are excellent

_____ I am satisfied with my life.

_____ So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.

_____ If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.

Appendix E

Informed Consent

This is a consent form for participation in a research project conducted by Amy Charlton and Brandon Whittington, clinical psychology graduate students at Eastern Illinois University, under the advisement of Dr. Anu Sharma. This study will examine how family structure and family characteristics affect life satisfaction and attribution style.

I, _____ (PRINT NAME), agree to participate in this research study. I understand that I will be asked to fill out two questionnaires about my parents/guardians and how they interacted with me, as well as how satisfied I am with my family. Then I will fill out two questionnaires about my current overall life satisfaction and attribution of events. This study will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

I have been informed that my participation in this study is voluntary and I may withdraw my participation at any time without penalty. I understand that all information I provide for this study, and my participation in it, will be kept confidential and anonymous. Any information that may serve to identify me will be deleted from all files upon completion of this study.

Signature

Date

Appendix F

Feedback Statement

Thank you for your participation in this research project!

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between family factors such as cohesion, and parental roles between intact and separated families and two measure of psychological health: life satisfaction and explanatory style. Children raised in separated families have been found to have lower measures of psychological health in both childhood (Spruijt & Goede, 1997) and adulthood (Gilman et al., 2003). Previous research has focused primarily on anxiety and depression as measures of psychological health. There are few studies that have examined life satisfaction and no studies that have examined the relationship between family structure explanatory style. This study should provide more information on what effect varying facets of family structure have on individuals reported life satisfaction and explanatory style.

If you have any further questions regarding your participation in this study, please contact Amy Charlton 319-610-0146, Brandon Whittington 618-218-2607, or Dr. Anu Sharma at 581-6089. Thank you again for your participation.

****Please do not discuss this study with other students as they may also be participants in this study. Thank you.****

References

- Gilman, S.E., Kawachi, I., Fitzmaurice, G.M., & Buka, S. (2003). Family disruption in childhood and risk of adult depression. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 160, 939-946.
- Spruijt, E., & de Goede, M. (1997). Transitions in family structure and adolescent well-being. *Adolescence*, 32, 897-911.