

April 2007

# Young Adult's Perception Of The Causes Of Their Parents' Divorce, With Special Attention Made To History Of Divorce, Age At Time Of Marriage, And Religious Views

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YOUNG ADULT'S PERCEPTION OF THE CAUSES OF THEIR PARENTS'  
DIVORCE, WITH SPECIAL ATTENTION MADE TO HISTORY OF DIVORCE, AGE  
AT TIME OF MARRIAGE, AND RELIGIOUS VIEWS

A project based upon an independent investigation, submitted  
in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree  
of Bachelor of Arts in Social Work.

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2007

### *Introduction*

The divorce rate for the United States is extremely high, with estimates currently around 49 percent. Conversely, the rate in Italy is one of the lowest in the world at only 12 percent (“World Divorce Statistics”, 2006). One reason it is so low is because of the increased age people marry. Other reasons found in the literature are religion and laws. “Seventy-eight percent of Italians define themselves as Roman Catholics, and fourteen percent more generally as Christians” (Wanrooij, Bruno P.F., n.d.). This is a very large percentage of people who have religious beliefs and values, which would lead to a higher value of marriage. Also, divorce was not allowed in Italy until 1974, which makes it fairly new, which is also reason for the low divorce rates.

Because of the high rate of divorce in the United States, it is certainly important that it be studied. Divorce greatly affects the husband and wife involved, as well as the children. With divorce comes great financial problems; women “more often obtain custody of children after the divorce, reducing their ability to pursue well-paid employment” (“Divorce”, 2006, para.3). Child support is also a financial strain, for both the mother and the father. The father has the obligation to pay, which makes his financial situation difficult; however, when the father is late or does not pay at all, the mother’s situation is hurt. All of these factors put divorced parents, especially single mothers, at risk for poverty. This in turn leads to them needing social welfare and social services just to get by. Children are greatly affected by the divorce of their parents, both during childhood and later in life. According to a recent study, “43.7% of custodial mothers and 56.2% of custodial fathers are divorced or separated” (“Divorce”, 2006, para.3). This percentage is alarming because it shows that half of all parents are divorced, which

affects the condition of those children's living situations. Studies have shown that children of divorce are in greater danger of abuse, have more health, behavioral, and emotional problems, have greater involvement in crime, drug abuse, and suicide, do more poorly in subjects such as reading, spelling and math, are more likely to repeat a grade or drop out, and have lower rates of graduation ("Divorce, 2006", para.3 ). These findings show that children from broken families often fair worse in more situations than other children, and a study has found that "only 42 percent of children aged 14 to 18 live in a "first marriage" family--an intact two-parent married family" (Fagan, P.F. & Rector R.E., 2000). This means that 58 percent of children in this age group are not in these types of families and are at risk for the above mentioned problems. This in itself elicits a need for studies to be done on divorce. A comparison of marriage and divorce between the United States and Italy is beneficial because of the difference in divorce rates.

### *History of Divorce*

#### *The Formation of Divorce Laws.*

The United States has had policy on divorce since the establishment of the colonies. During this time "marital rules were left to the civil code of each colony" (Holland & Yerkes, 1998, p.90). This idea continued when the United States became a country, and each state was similarly responsible for their own divorce laws. Connecticut was the first colony to establish a divorce law. This was a time period of only fault divorce. "A fault divorce is one in which one party blames the other for the failure of the marriage by citing wrongdoing. Grounds for fault can include adultery, physical or mental cruelty, desertion, alcohol or drug abuse, insanity, impotence or infecting the

other spouse with a venereal disease (“Family Law”, 2007, para.1). Connecticut’s policy was to allow divorce in “cases of adultery, fraudulent contract, three years’ neglectful desertion, or seven years’ total disappearance” (Holland & Yerkes, 1998, p.90). Until the American Revolution divorce was only allowed in colonies in New England, as the South disapproved of divorce.

In vast contrast to this is the Roman Republic of Italy. Under strict Roman Catholic rule, divorce and marriage laws were decided for the entire country of Italy as a whole. The country allowed two types of marriage for women, but both were based on the principle that a woman must belong to some man. In the first type of marriage power over the woman was transferred from father to husband; in the second the father kept power over his daughter and could repossess her if he pleased, causing the marriage to end in divorce (Holland & Yerkes, 1998, p.88).

Shortly after American independence, in the 1780’s and 1790’s, states began adopting their own divorce laws. As Connecticut was the first colony with such laws, it was also the state with the most liberal divorce laws. According to an Assembly Committee on Judiciary hearing, Connecticut as a state permitted divorce for “adultery, fraudulent contract, desertion for three years, or prolonged absence with a presumption of death” (Hershkowitz & Liebert, 1997, p.131). This is in accordance with other literature that discusses the laws of Connecticut. In 1843 there were two further reasons for divorce to be allowed, “habitual drunkenness and intolerable cruelty”. In 1849 courts were given sole authority to grant divorce and further grounds for divorce were allowed. These new grounds included, “life imprisonment, any infamous crime involving a violation of the conjugal duty, and any such misconduct as permanently destroys the happiness of the

petitioners and defeats the purpose of the marriage relation” (Hershkowitz & Liebert, 1997, p.131).

The 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the United States’ Constitution was ratified in 1868 in order to forbid any state from denying “to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws” (Baldwin, 1914, p.701). The correlation between this amendment and divorce was to grant to all citizens the same rights of getting a divorce. The purpose of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment was to limit the states from violating the rights of people given by the Bill of Rights (Curtis, 1986, p.2). Although the amendment was created for a good purpose, it has been debated if this purpose was successful, as states continued to find ways to limit divorce for some and make special exceptions for some individuals.

The western states typically have more liberal divorce laws. In 1851 California mandated its own set of laws which “contained the following grounds for divorce: impotence, adultery, extreme cruelty, desertion or neglect, habitual intemperance, fraud, and conviction for a felony” (Hershkowitz & Liebert, 1997, p.132). Throughout the rest of the nineteenth century more states in America had established their own set of divorce laws. By 1900 the majority of the country had agreed upon four key aspects of divorce: “fault-based grounds, one party’s guilt, the continuation of gender-based marital responsibilities after divorce, and the linkage of financial awards to findings of fault” (Hershkowitz & Liebert, 1997, p.132).

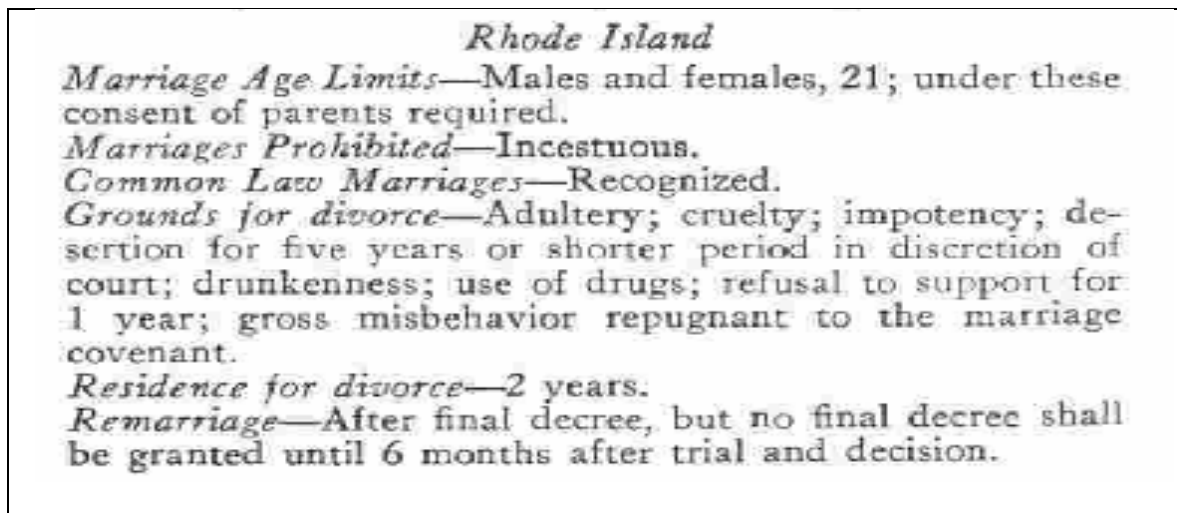
During this time period there was already controversy over divorce laws and whether they helped or hindered marriage. In the 1830’s an observer thought the obtainable divorces in Massachusetts cut down on divorce and created happier marriages since people were no longer trapped; conversely in 1849 it was observed that there were

more divorces in the state of Ohio in one year than there were in ten years in the United Kingdom” (Holland & Yerkes, 1998, p.91). Another reason for skepticism about the divorce laws is that as they became more lenient, even though all were still fault divorces, divorce rates increased from “1.2 per 1,000 existing marriages in 1860 to 4.5 in 1910” (Hershkowitz & Liebert, 1997, p.132). Even at this early time of divorce history these rates were higher than the rates in Europe.

During the turn of the century America went through its first cultural marriage transition, from “institution to companionship” (Cherlin, 2005, p.40). In institution marriage “the family was held together by the forces of law, tradition, and religious belief” and “husband and wife became one legal person when they married---and that person was the husband” (Cherlin, 2005, p.40). As the divorce laws became less strict, “companionship, friendship, and romantic love” (Cherlin, 2005, p.40) became the foundation for marriage.

According to The Congressional Digest, by 1923 each state had designed their own marriage and divorce laws. Each state had age limits for marriage, reasons marriage would be prohibited, waiting periods for divorce, grounds for divorce, and the regulations for remarriage. The laws for Rhode Island at this time period are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1



Source: Keezer, F.H. 1923. A treatise on the Law of Marriage and Divorce

In the 1930's the divorce laws were again relaxed beginning with Nevada in 1931.

The state changed its residency requirements to be only six weeks and “for the first time, no longer being in love became grounds for divorce” (Holland & Yerkes, 1998, p.91).

This corresponds to the above mentioned transition to companionship marriage. People had created expectations of love and marriage that were not being met, which led to an increased desire for divorce. People who were unhappily married at this time would do anything to escape their marriage. There were many observers of this situation who argued that “the law should adapt by providing a straightforward procedure for ending a marriage, rather than forcing a couple who just could not get along to choose between living together in ‘marital hell’ or lying under oath in open court” (Wikipedia, 2006).

California became the first state to openly agree with this and create new updated divorce laws.

During the 1950s and early 1960s “divorce rates remained fairly steady at fewer than 400,000 per year, or 9 to 10 divorce per 1,000 married women” (Hershkowitz &



Liebert, p.135). Pressure was great to marry young and to stay married. This situation was changed drastically in the mid-1960's. During this time was the second cultural marriage transition. People began to marry later and pursued education and careers. Many women remained working after marriage, and pre-marital cohabitation increased. Companionship marriage began to decline as the ideal; instead, both husband and wife worked outside the home and single-parent homes became much more common. Family roles became more flexible and the view of marriage became individualistic (Cherlin, 2005, p.40-41).

*The Establishment of the No-Fault Divorce.*

On May 11, 1966 the Governor's Commission on the Family was created by California Governor Edmund G. Brown (Hershkowitz & Liebert, 1997, p.134). This report was the first step in the establishment of no-fault divorce laws. Governor Brown wanted this commission to "address ways the family law system, substantively and procedurally, could function more effectively" (Hershkowitz & Liebert, 1997, p.134). The commissions answer to this request was a "unified statewide Family Court system with jurisdiction over all matters relating to the family, and an elimination of fault grounds for divorce" (Hershkowitz & Liebert, 1997, p.134). The hope was that these would be put into place to handle the breakdown of marriage and discover the true problems of families.

The Family Court idea was not put into place at this time, but the no-fault divorce law was achieved. "On September 5, 1969, Governor Ronald Reagan signed California's new and revolutionary Family Law Act into law" (Hershkowitz & Liebert, 1997, p.134).

This law was put into place January 1, 1970 in California, making California the first state to establish a no-fault divorce. In the next decade almost every state enacted a similar law. (Simmons, 1986, p.3). These new laws were not meant to make divorce especially easy to receive; rather, “their intent was to permit divorce only after there was considerable evidence that the marriage could not be salvaged and after the spouses were provided with counseling that might lead to reconciliation” (Fine, 1994, p. 251). The other states soon followed suit; by 1985 each “had either replaced its old fault system or had added important no-fault options” (Galston, 1996, p.15). The literature is in agreement with these dates and the timeline for which the no-fault divorce laws came about.

At the time that the no-fault divorce laws were established in the United States, divorce was just becoming legalized by the courts in Italy. “On December 1, 1970, the civil code of Italy was amended to permit the granting of divorce by the civil courts” (Wikipedia, 2006). In 1974 this law was confirmed by a referendum with a 59.1 percent majority (The International Encyclopedia of Sexuality, 2006, p.12). Although with these laws came an increase in divorce, Italy remained the country in the European Union with the highest marriage stability; “In 1996, the divorce rate in Italy was 0.6 per 1,000 population against a European Union average of 1.8” (The International Encyclopedia of Sexuality, 2006, p.12).

### *Benefits and Consequences of the No-Fault Divorce*

The changes of divorce from the traditional fault divorce to the new no-fault divorce are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Summary of Changes in Divorce Law	Traditional Divorce No-Fault Divorce
Restrictive Law To protect marriage	Permissive Law To facilitate divorce
Specific Grounds Adultery, cruelty, etc.	No grounds Marital breakdown
Moral Framework Guilt vs. innocence	Administrative framework Neither responsible
Fault One party cause divorce	No fault Cause of divorce irrelevant
Consent of Innocent Spouse Needed Innocent spouse has power to prevent or Delay the divorce	No consent needed Unilateral divorce No consent or agreement required
Gender-based responsibilities Husband responsible for alimony Wife responsible for custody Husband responsible for child support	Gender-neutral responsibilities Both responsible for self-support Both eligible for custody Both responsible for child support
Financial Awards Linked to Fault Alimony for “innocent” spouse Great share of property to “innocent” Spouse	Financial Awards Based on Equality and Need Alimony based on need Property divided equally
Adversarial One party guilty, one innocent Financial gain in proving fault	Nonadversarial No guilty or innocent party No financial gain from charges Amicable resolution encouraged
Source: Lenore Weitzman, <i>The Divorce</i>	Revolution, <i>The Free Press</i> , 1985, page 40.

The positive attributes of the no-fault divorce were apparent soon after the laws were established, but they were extremely short lived. The beneficiaries were men who had wanted a quick and simple way out of their marriage. Victims were women with

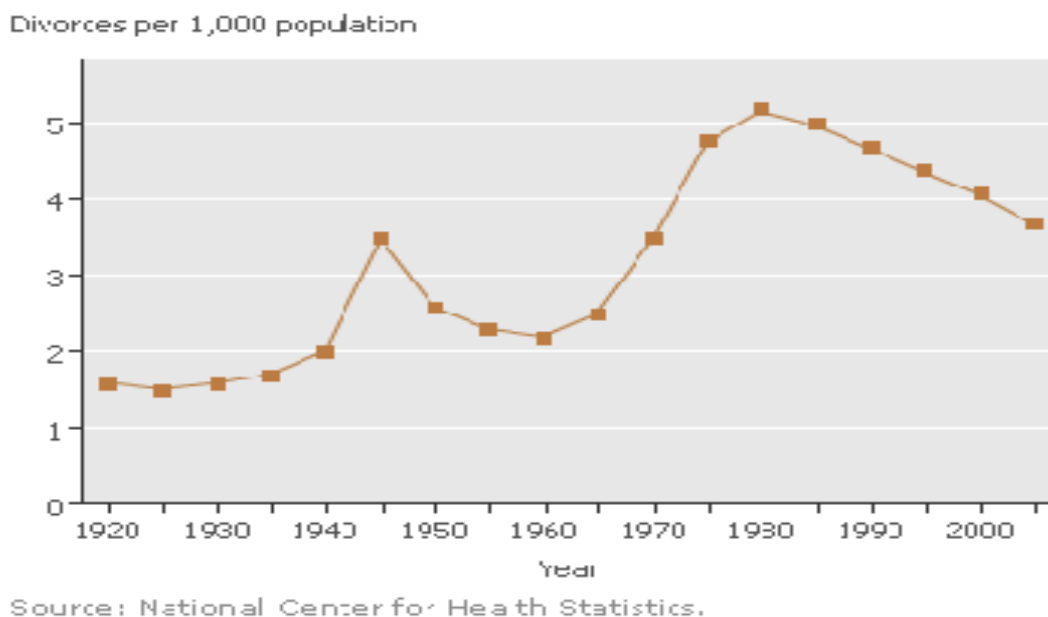
children who would suffer economically, as well as the institution of marriage. The no-fault divorce is both a reaction to and a cause of an individualistic society with changing values. Americans began to “place less value on obligation to others, on sacrifice, and on self restraint” and “more value on individualism, on self-expression and self-realization, and on personal choice” (Galston, 1996, p.15).

There are arguments about the rates of divorce that blame the no-fault laws as well as arguments that provide additional reasons. There has been a rise in divorce in the United States since Civil War time. In 1860 divorce rates were very low at only 1.2 divorces per 1000 people (Furstenberg, 1994, p.30). Since then the rates have almost consistently increased. In general, divorce rates have decreased in times of economic downfall, such as with the Great Depression, and risen quickly after major wars (Furstenberg, 1994, p.30). One reason for low divorce rates is observably the difficulties of obtaining a divorce at that time. The divorce rate rose consistently but only slightly from the 1920s to the 1960s, with low rates in the 1930s due to the Great Depression and a sharp increase in the 1940s following World War II. The rates for these time periods are consistent across the literature on divorce.

The literature on divorce rates between the 1940's and 1980's is somewhat inconsistent, although there are similar trends. When the first laws were established in 1970 the rates began to increase and did so significantly until hitting a peak around 1980. The specifics in the literature disagree about the exact numbers, which may be due to the way the different statistics were measured. However, these trends were found across the majority of the literature. The divorce rate in the beginning of the 1960s was similar to the divorce rates of the previous decades. Several articles are in agreement that in 1965

there were 10.6 divorces for every 1000 people in the United States (Furstenberg, 1994 p.30). The literature becomes somewhat inconsistent when discussing the rates of the 1970s, but the majority reports that the increase that began in the mid-1960s continues. It is estimated that for every 1000 people there were approximately four divorces. The disagreement seems to be that some numbers are based on the number of people in the population, some are out of married women, and some are out of the number of new marriages in that same year. The literature reaches agreement again that around 1980 and 1981 is the highest peak of divorce at approximately 5.3 in 1000 (Hershkowitz & Liebert, 1997, p.135). After this peak the divorce rate begins to level off and even declines about ten percent (Furstenberg, 1994, p.30). The current rates for divorce are still very high compared to other countries, but the rates have not increased significantly since 1980. Figure 1 shows an estimation of the rates that were most common among the literature.

Figure 2



The increase in divorce after 1960 occurred simultaneously with the no-fault divorce laws, which leads to the belief that the new laws caused the increase in divorce. This is certainly one possibility, as the laws made it much easier for married people to obtain a divorce. However, there are several other possibilities for the increase in divorce at this time, as well as reasons for the rates at other times in United States history.

Italy at this time still had no divorce laws. European countries were experiencing the same rebellions over divorce as the United States. Many countries, England included, began establishing no-fault divorce laws. However, “the Roman Catholic Church continued to hold out against divorce, offering only annulment, meaning that for some reason the marriage was never a marriage” (Holland & Yerkes, 1998, p.92).

The low levels of divorce in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century could also be due to the low lifespan age for people at that time. As the 20<sup>th</sup> century unfolded people began to live longer, giving a couple more time to have marital conflict which could lead to divorce (Fine, 1994, p.258). Also in this time period was the decreased role of marriage for economic security, which led to people feeling safer to leave an unhappy marriage and make it on their own.

Marrying young in life and lack of education are two main causes of divorce. Those married in the 1950's and 1960's fell into these categories, which could be one reason for the increase in divorce. Divorce rates began to fall in the 1980s when many women began to choose education early in life and save marriage for later. In 1950 the average age of marriage for women was about twenty years, and in 1992 it had risen to 24.4 (Furstenberg, 1994, p.31). With the second transition in American marriages came increased individualism. This goes along with the fact that women began to think of

themselves and their education as priorities above marriage. They also began to remain in the work force, even after being married. This led to role confusion for husband and wives which has the possibility of turning into marital breakdown. Beginning in the late 1960's and 1970's was the sexual revolution. This gave more freedom for women and "made marriage seem less attractive" (Furstenberg, 1994, p.34). Also during this time came the accessibility of contraceptives; "it also seems plausible that the greater availability of contraception and abortion in the 1970s may have discouraged the formation of early unions" (Furstenberg, 1994, p31). These freedoms give some reasons for why marriage may have been undervalued in the 1970s, as well as for why divorces leveled off after 1980.

There continues to be debate about whether no-fault divorce has harmed the institution of marriage. On one side of the argument is the idea that the new laws came about because of the existing change in values about marriage and the need for divorce to be easier to obtain; "Clearly, the laws were a response to a growing demand for divorce. Increases in marital disruption preceded the legal changes or even the opinion favoring changes" (Furstenberg, 1997, p.34). Conversely, the argument is that the no-fault divorce laws may have led to a decline in the value of marriage; "it is possible that easier legal access to divorce has contributed to the changing view of marriage as a contractual relationship that exists as long as it satisfies both parties rather than as a lifelong commitment" (Fine, 1994, p.258). Hence the reasons for the changing rates of divorce are diverse, but it is a common opinion that both the no-fault laws as well as the environmental factors of the different time periods both played an important role.

### *Causes of Divorce*

The literature is greatly ambivalent in regards to what factors cause divorce. History of divorce, including divorce laws, is the factor most agreed upon among the literature. The rates of divorce at different points in history in the United States are generally consistent. It was reported by all the literature that the divorce laws in Italy were stricter and came later than in the United States. A majority of the articles discussed the less restrictive no-fault laws in the United States as leading to an increase in divorces, as they were then easier to obtain. Age at time of marriage is heavily debated amongst the literature. People in the United States have begun to wait to marry, yet the divorce rate has not declined accordingly. However, it may be too soon to see the results of this. Also, people in America are generally marrying earlier than in Italy, where divorce rates are much lower. The literature is in some agreement in regards to religious causes of divorce, although there is some debate. Some articles argue that being religious often leads to having more values, including those related to the institution of marriage. However, currently the amount of people in Italy who attend church has declined, but this has not lead to a related decrease in divorce.

### *Age at Time of Marriage*

According to the literature in the 1950's and 1960's in the United States "the average age of first marriage was 20, with the greatest single number of women marrying at 18" (Coontz, 2006, p.49). In the decades after more women decided to obtain an education and career and put off marriage; "the average age at first marriage for women is now almost 26. For women with a B.A. it is more than 27, and for women with

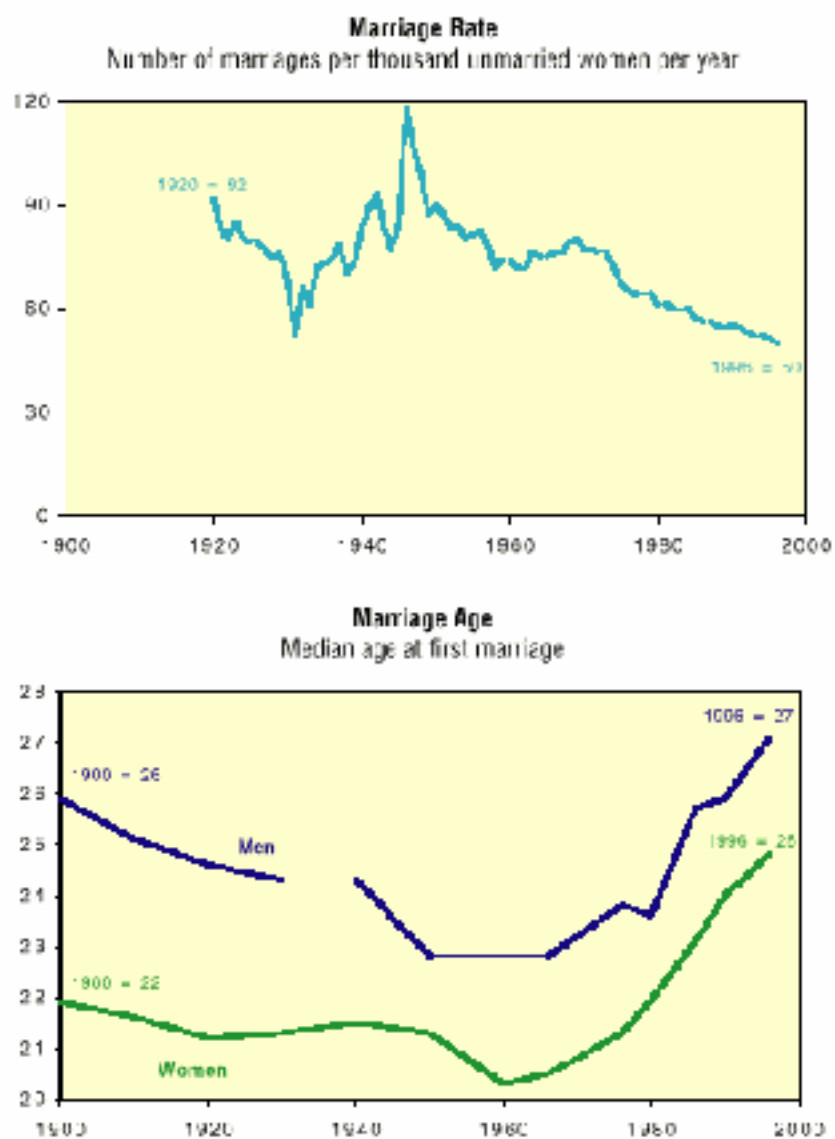


master's or professional degrees it is 30" (Coontz, 2006, p.49). This article shows that people in the United States who are marrying later tend to be people who have received higher education. In recent years "the divorce rate has gone down for college-educated women in the last two decades, while it has gone up for those without college" (Coontz, 2006, p.49). This article also states that it is "college-educated women who have the best chance of marrying late" (Coontz, 2006, p.49). These statistics support the idea that marrying later can lead to a decrease in divorce rates.

The fact that people in the United States are beginning to marry later in life has led to a decrease in the number of marriages per year; "the married proportion of the adult population fell from 66 percent in 1980 to 59 percent in 1997" with part of this decline being in part to an "increase in the average age at first marriage" ("Family", 2006). Figure 3 illustrates the number of marriages in America in relation to the median age at which women marry. In Italy, the average age of marriage has also increased, but has consistently remained higher than the United States. Currently the average age of marriage for men in Italy is 33.2 and 29.9 for women, up from 26 for men and 25 for women three decades ago. Both groups of figures are significantly higher than ages in the United States, supporting that idea that increase age of marriage could be a cause for lower divorce rates ("Upper Italy", 2006). Currently in the United States people are waiting to marry, and a lesser number of the population is married. In 2002 only 59 percent of the population was married, down from 72 percent in 1970. The average age of marriage in 2002 was 27 for men and 25 for women, which is an increase from earlier decades ("Divorce Rates", 2007, para.2). This data could be an indication that American people are following in Italy's footsteps and are waiting to marry, or that people have

simply decided to put off marriage and cohabit instead. In 2005 married families became the minority in the United States for the first time, as “51 percent of women said they were living without a spouse, up from 35 percent in 1950 and 49 percent in 2000” (Roberts, 2007, Para.3). Statistics from 2003 state that there were 7.5 marriages out of 1000 people, compared to 3.8 divorced out of 1000 people, which gives the approximate 50 percent divorce rate. However, the rate is truly found between 40 and 50 percent; this number “comes from detailed analyses of various population demographics, including ages, divorce rates by ages, lifespan projections, etc.” (Stanton, 2003, para. 2). Considering all off these factors, the chance for a marriage begun today has a 41 to 43 percent chance of being divorced (Stanton, 2003, para. 2).

Figure 3



Source: "Family", 2006, from <http://www.pbs.org/fmc/book/4family1.htm>

## *Religion*

The literature is in some disagreement about whether religion plays a role in the causes of divorce. There is some evidence that religion, especially Roman Catholicism, has an impact on the rates of divorce. Alternatively there is research that shows no correlation between religion and causes of divorce.

America was created as a country with the equalities of individualism and equality. Although there are many religious people in this country, religion may have been substituted for these ideals. With the role of equality, Americans “have cast off many of the old notions of how a marriage should be defined, and thus no longer have well-defined expectations about roles as they enter into marriage” (“Upper Italy”, 2006). Unlike Italy, in which the Catholic Church still plays a large part in the culture, in the United States “marriage has come to play only a minor role in the aspirations of many people” (“Upper Italy”, 2006).

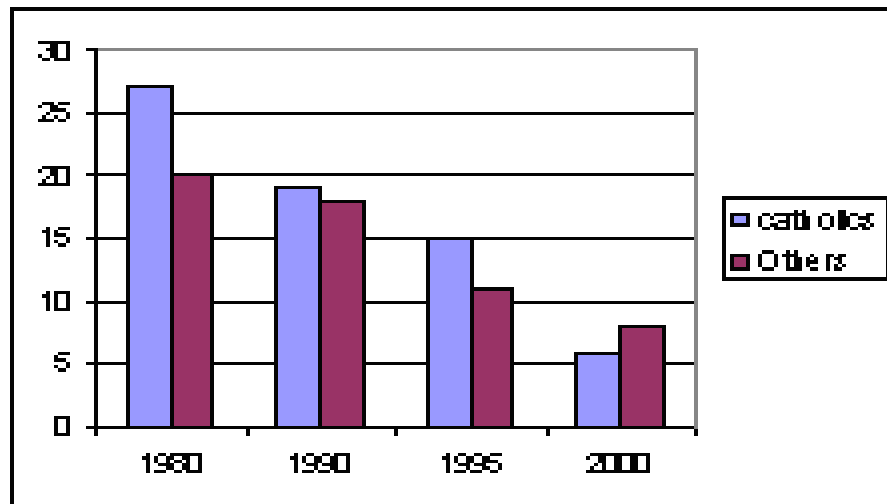
The Catholic Church continues to play a large role in marriage; not only does it promote marriage as a sacred institution, it also has consequences for divorce. Catholics who become divorced are no longer able to receive Holy Communion; this principle has been repeated several times in several different documents, most recently in a document from “the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith addressed to all the bishops of the world” in 1992 ( “Encyclopedia”, 2000).

Research has reported that the institution of marriage may decline soon as the role of the Church has begun to decline. It has been shown that Italians have decreased the role of church in their daily lives, such as consistent church attendance, which is a

concern for marriage. If increases in divorce occur in future years it would support the idea that a heavy church role leads to a low divorce rate (“Upper Italy”, 2006).

There is also some disagreement about whether the church leads to more value placed on the institution of marriage and a lower divorce rate. The low rate of divorce in Italy has been linked to the large role of the Roman Catholic Church. However, there is also research that denies this correlation; “although most people continue to identify themselves as a specific religious denomination, in the case of Roman Catholics, this identification often does little to predict their values and attitudes” (University of Michigan, 2005). Figure 4 supports this by showing that the amount of Americans that claim themselves as Catholics who believe divorce is never justifiable have significantly decreased in the last 40 years.

Figure 4



Percentage of U.S. Catholics and non-Catholics saying that divorce is never justifiable, from 1981 to 2000 ([more data](#))

There is a vast array of available literature on the topic of divorce, and more specifically relating to the history of divorce in the United States and Italy, and the factors that cause divorce. While the literature is for the most part in agreement with the history of divorce, divorce laws, and rates of divorce at different periods in history, there is substantial disagreement about what factors cause divorce. In the literature arguments can be found that the age at time of marriage and religious views may, as well as may not, lead to increased divorce rates. This may be because divorce is very personal and reason for it can be very different for different people. More studies are needed to conclude confidently what factors cause divorce.

### *Methodology*

In this thesis young adults' perception of the causes of their parents' divorce was studied, with special attention made to history of divorce, age at the time of marriage, and religious views. A comparison of the United States' and Italy was employed to aid in the illustration of the main causes of divorce. A self-report questionnaire was answered by volunteers in the college population. Their answers were analyzed and compared between those participants whose parents are divorced and those participants whose parents are not divorced.

### *Participants*

The population studied in this thesis is college students, including those whose parents are divorced, as well as those whose parents are not divorced. This researcher went to the dormitories and asked for volunteers to complete the survey. One hundred

percent of those asked completed the survey. Total number of participants is 57. Out of this population 13 had parents who were divorced and 44 had parents who were not divorced.

### *Data Collection*

The research instrument is a self-report questionnaire that covered the general causes of divorce outlined in the literature review: age at time of marriage, history of divorce, and religious views. Age at time of marriage is illustrated in questions such as: what age were your parents when they married, what age were your parents when they were divorced, what year did your parents get married, and what year did your parents get divorced. Participants whose parents are not divorced only answer age of parents when married and year parents were married. Religion is illustrated in questions such as: were your parents' religious, what religious affiliation would they classify themselves, how often their family attended church services, and how often their family took part in other church activities. Both groups of participants answered all questions relating to religion. Participants were also asked what they think is the main reason their parents divorced, as all were asked what they think to be the main causes of divorce in the United States. Also included in the survey were questions regarding participants own opinions related to divorce and marriage. These questions include: at what age do you hope to be married, how would you rate your feelings about divorce , what is the likelihood that you will one day be divorced, how would you rate your feelings about being divorced in the future, and do you feel divorce has an impact on children. A copy of the instrument is included in Appendix 1.

### *Data Analysis*

The surveyed responses were entered into SPSS. The data were then analyzed to find the mean responses of all the participants' answers. The answers were broken down by two groups, participants whose parents are divorced, and participants whose parents are not divorced. Parents' time at age of marriage and religious views were analyzed. This study also looked at the reasons participants thought their own parents were divorced compared to what they think are the main reasons for divorce in the United States. These data were then used in the analysis of the main causes of divorce in the United States.

### *Results and Findings*

Question 1: Are your parents divorced?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	13	22.8	22.8	22.8
	no	44	77.2	77.2	100.0
	Total	57	100.0	100.0	

Of all the participants surveyed, 13 out of 57 total participants, or 22.8 percent, answered that their parents were divorced, and 44 out of 57 participants, or 77.2 percent, answered that their parents were not divorced.



## Question 12: Reason for parents' divorce

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
reason for parents' divorce (a)	Young age at marriage	6	26.1%	46.2%
	Too little time dating before marriage	2	8.7%	15.4%
	Economic problems	3	13.0%	23.1%
	Infidelity	1	4.3%	7.7%
	Family problems	1	4.3%	7.7%
	Domestic violence	1	4.3%	7.7%
	No longer love each other	2	8.7%	15.4%
	Pregnancy before marriage	1	4.3%	7.7%
	Values/goals no longer the same	3	13.0%	23.1%
	Other	2	8.7%	15.4%
	Incompatible	1	4.3%	7.7%
Total	23	100.0%	176.9%	

A Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

Participants whose parents are divorced were asked to say what they think to be the main cause of their parents' divorce. The cause answered most often was *young age at time of marriage* at 26.1 percent, and this reason was answered by 46.2 percent of participants.

The second most common answers were *economic problems* and *values/goals no longer the same*, each with 13.0 percent, and 23.1 percent of participants answered these reasons each.

## Question19: Main causes of divorce in the United States

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
reasons for divorce in U.S.(a)	Young age at which people marry	28	30.1%	50.0%
	Economic problems	27	29.0%	48.2%
	Lack of religious values	8	8.6%	14.3%
	The ease of getting a divorce in the United States	23	24.7%	41.1%
	Lack of commitment and independence	1	1.1%	1.8%
	Peoples idea change as they get older, no longer compatible	2	2.2%	3.6%
	Unrealistic ideas about romantic love	1	1.1%	1.8%
	People no longer know how to deal with their problems, use divorce as solution	2	2.2%	3.6%
	Individualism	1	1.1%	1.8%
Total	93	100.0%	166.1%	

A Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

*Young age at time of marriage* was also answered most by all participants for the question, *what do you think are the main causes of divorce in the United States*, with 30.1 percent of all answers, and it was answered by 50.0 percent of all participants. *Economic problems* was answered second most with 29.0 percent of all answers, and answered by 48.2 percent of participants. *The ease of getting a divorce in the United States* was next with 24.7 percent of answers, and answered by 41.1 percent of participants. 14.3 percent of participants answered *lack of religious values* as a cause of divorce, and this cause received 8.6 percent of all answers. Although these data do not give conclusions between

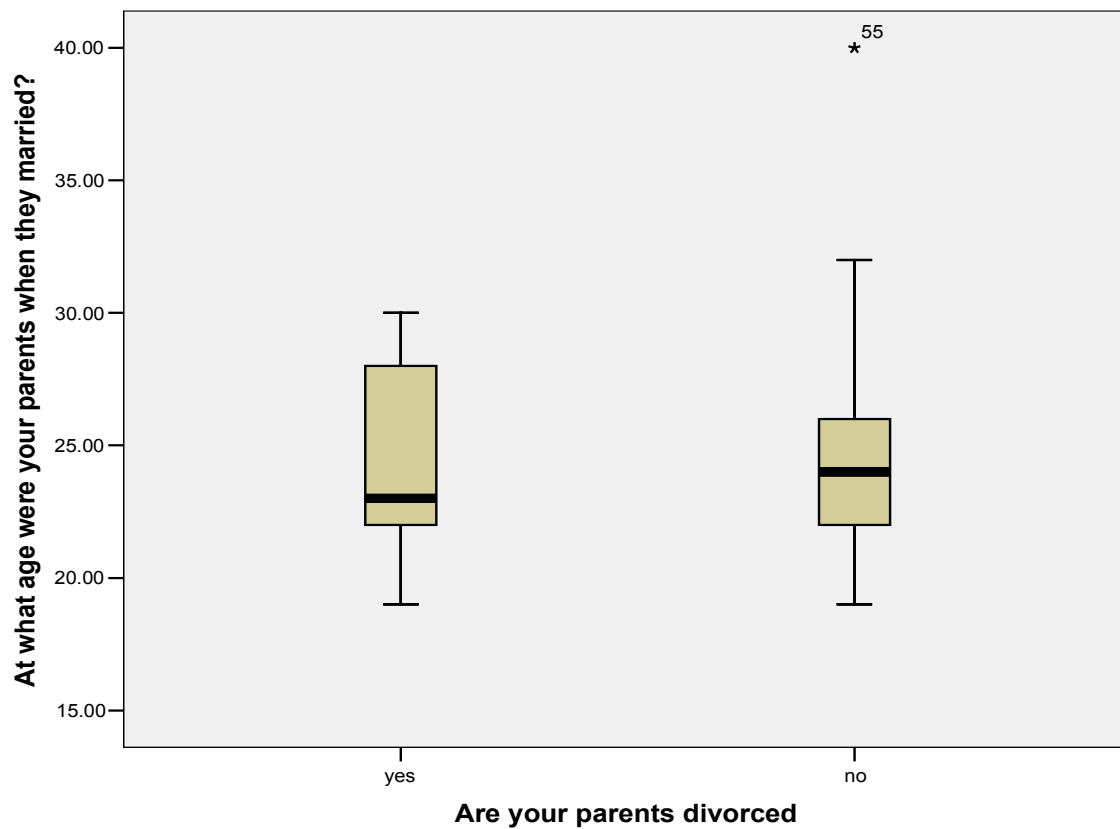
the two groups, it does show that these are what college aged students view to be the largest causes of divorce in the United States. This data can be found in Appendix Nine.

Question 4: At what age were your parents when they married?

yes	N	Valid	13
		Missing	0
	Mean		24.4615
	Median		23.0000
	Mode		23.00
no	N	Valid	43
		Missing	1
	Mean		24.5814
	Median		24.0000
	Mode		25.00

The mean age at time of marriage for participants whose parents are divorced was 24.4615, which was similar to the mean age at time of marriage for participants whose parents are not divorced of 24.5814. The frequency table in Appendix Two shows that the distribution of ages for parents of participants who are divorced was from nineteen to thirty, compared to a distribution from nineteen to forty for parents who are not divorced.

This, along with the box plot, does not offer conclusive evidence about whether age at time of marriage was higher for either group. The lowest responses are very similar, as was the 25 percent quartile. The median is slightly higher for participants whose parents are divorced, but not significantly. The 75 percent quartile is higher for participants whose parents are divorced by a couple of years, but the 100 percent quartile is higher for participants whose parents are not divorced. Therefore there is no conclusion about whether age at time of marriage was a cause of divorce for these participants.



Question 5: What year were your parents married?

yes	N	Valid	13
		Missing	0
	Mean		1980.1538
	Median		1983.0000
	Mode		1985.00
no	N	Valid	43
		Missing	1
	Mean		1979.6047
	Median		1980.0000
	Mode		1982.00

The distribution of year married for participants' parents who are divorced was from 1967 to 1987, and the distribution of year married for participants' parents who are not divorced was from 1967 to 1990. These distributions tables are included in Appendix Three. These distributions, as well as the means shown in the chart below, do not offer any conclusive evidence regarding whether the year parents were married had an impact on whether they are divorced.

## Question 7: Were your parents religious?

yes	N	Valid	13
		Missing	0
	Mean		4.2308
	Median		4.0000
	Mode		2.00(a)
no	N	Valid	43
		Missing	1
	Mean		6.2209
	Median		6.5000
	Mode		6.00(a)

a Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

Participants whose parents are not divorced answered that their parents' religious involvement was much higher than participants whose parents are divorced. In regard to the survey question *how religious were your parents'*, participants whose parents are divorced scores had a mean average of 4.2308 on a ten point scale, while the mean for participants whose parents are not divorced had a mean score of 6.2209. The frequency table in Appendix four shows that over half, 61.6 percent, of participants whose parents are divorced answered a four or lower on the ten point scale. Conversely, 61.2 percent of participants whose parents are not divorced answered a six or higher on the same scale. This could lead to a conclusion that lack of religious values is a cause of divorce.

Question 9: How often did your parents attend church services?

Are your parents divorced			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	Valid	never	1	7.7	8.3	8.3
		.50	1	7.7	8.3	16.7
		rarely	5	38.5	41.7	58.3
		1.50	1	7.7	8.3	66.7
		sometimes	2	15.4	16.7	83.3
		often	2	15.4	16.7	100.0
		Total	12	92.3	100.0	
	Missing	System	1	7.7		
			13	100.0		
no	Valid	never	3	6.8	6.8	6.8
		.50	2	4.5	4.5	11.4
		rarely	5	11.4	11.4	22.7
		sometimes	6	13.6	13.6	36.4
		2.50	4	9.1	9.1	45.5
		often	7	15.9	15.9	61.4
		3.50	5	11.4	11.4	72.7
		3.75	2	4.5	4.5	77.3
		always	10	22.7	22.7	100.0
		Total	44	100.0	100.0	

This chart shows that participants whose parents are not divorced answered that their families attend church services far more often than participants whose parents are divorced. Of participants whose parents are not divorced, 22.7 percent answered that their family always attended church services and only 36.4 percent answered that they attend church services sometimes or less. However, there were no participants whose parents are divorced that answered they always attend church services and 83.3 percent answered that their families attend church sometimes or less.

Question 10: How often was your family in other church activities?

Are your parents divorced			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	Valid	never	3	23.1	25.0	25.0
		.50	1	7.7	8.3	33.3
		rarely	8	61.5	66.7	100.0
		Total	12	92.3	100.0	
	Missing	System	1	7.7		
	Total		13	100.0		
no	Valid	never	9	20.5	20.5	20.5
		.50	1	2.3	2.3	22.7
		rarely	5	11.4	11.4	34.1
		1.50	4	9.1	9.1	43.2
		sometimes	12	27.3	27.3	70.5
		2.50	2	4.5	4.5	75.0
		often	6	13.6	13.6	88.6
		3.25	1	2.3	2.3	90.9
		3.50	1	2.3	2.3	93.2
		always	3	6.8	6.8	100.0
		Total	44	100.0	100.0	

61.5 percent of participants whose parents are divorced answered that their families were involved in other church activities rarely; while only 11.4 percent of participants whose parents are not divorced answered that their families were involved in other church activities rarely.



Question 11: What income bracket would you place your family in?

Are your parents divorced			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	Valid	lower middle class	1	7.7	7.7	7.7
		2.50	1	7.7	7.7	15.4
		middle class	5	38.5	38.5	53.8
		3.50	2	15.4	15.4	69.2
		upper middle class	4	30.8	30.8	100.0
		Total	13	100.0	100.0	
no	Valid	2.50	1	2.3	2.3	2.3
		middle class	13	29.5	29.5	31.8
		3.50	12	27.3	27.3	59.1
		3.75	2	4.5	4.5	63.6
		upper middle class	15	34.1	34.1	97.7
		4.50	1	2.3	2.3	100.0
				Total	44	100.0

Of the participants whose parents are divorced, 38.8 percent answered that their families' income was middle class or less, while only 29.5 percent of participants whose parents are not divorced answered that their families' income was middle class or less. 30.8 percent of participants whose parents are divorced answered that their families' income is upper middle class, compared to 34.1 percent of participants whose parents are not divorced. This could lead to a conclusion that lower income is a cause of divorce.

Question 13: How would you rate your feelings about divorce?

yes	N	Valid	13
		Missing	0
	Mean		4.1923
	Median		3.5000
	Mode		2.00
no	N	Valid	38
		Missing	6
	Mean		3.0263
	Median		3.0000
	Mode		3.00

One hundred percent of the participants whose parents are not divorced all answered 5.5 or less on a one to ten scale with one being negative and ten being positive, in regards to their feelings about divorced. However, 76.9 percent of participants whose parents are divorced answered a 5 or less and 23.1 percent answering a six or higher. The frequency table in Appendix Five shows that of the participants whose parents are divorced had answered that ranged from a one to a ten and were spread out, while the participants whose parents are not divorced all answered below a 5.5 with over half, 65.8 percent, answering a three or lower. This shows that participants whose parents are divorced had a slightly more positive view of divorce.

## Question 14: How would you rate your feelings about being divorced in the future?

Are your parents divorced			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	Valid	I hope to never be divorced	4	30.8	30.8	30.8
		I hope to not be divorced, but would consider	9	69.2	69.2	100.0
		Total	13	100.0	100.0	
no	Valid	I hope to never be divorced	25	56.8	56.8	56.8
		I hope to not be divorced, but would consider	17	38.6	38.6	95.5
		If there is no other solution, would have no problem	1	2.3	2.3	97.7
		Idea of divorce in the future does not upset me	1	2.3	2.3	100.0
		Total	44	100.0	100.0	

Of the participants whose parents are divorced, 30.8 percent answered that they hope to never be divorced, and 69.2 percent answered that they hope to not be divorced, but would consider it. Of the participants whose parents are not divorced, 95.5 percent answered one of these two responses. This shows that that majority of participants, whether their parents are divorced or not, do not hope to be divorced in the future.

## Question 15: What is the likelihood of you one day being divorced?

The frequency table in Appendix Six shows that both sets of participants did not answer higher than a five on a scale from one to ten regarding the likelihood of them one day being divorced. Of participants whose parents are divorced, 30.8 percent answered a five on the scale, while only 15.9 percent of participants whose parents are not divorced answered a five. The percentage of participants whose parents are divorced that answered a three or lower was 53.8, compared to 72.7 percent of participants whose parents are not

divorced. This shows that participants whose parents are divorced perceived themselves getting a divorce more likely those participants who are not divorced.

Question 16: How great of an impact do you think divorce has on children?

Of the participants whose parents are divorced, 30.8 percent answered ten on a one to ten scale in regards to how great of an impact they think divorce has on children, compared to 34.1 percent of participants whose parents are not divorced. The majority of both groups of participants answered approximately an eight, showing that they think divorce has a great impact on children. These data can be found in Appendix Seven.

Question 17: Would you consider divorce less if children were involved?

Are your parents divorced			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	Valid	yes	11	84.6	84.6	84.6
		undecided	2	15.4	15.4	100.0
		Total	13	100.0	100.0	
no	Valid	no	3	6.8	6.8	6.8
		yes	30	68.2	68.2	75.0
		undecided	11	25.0	25.0	100.0
		Total	44	100.0	100.0	

None of the participants whose parents are divorced answered that they would not consider divorce less if children were involved. 84.6 percent answered that they would consider divorce more and 15.4 percent were undecided.

Of the participants whose parents are not divorced, 6.8 percent answered that they would not consider divorce less if children were involved, 68.2 percent answered that they would consider divorce less, and 25 percent were undecided.

Question 18: At what age do you hope to marry?

yes	N	Valid	13
		Missing	0
	Mean		27.1538
	Median		27.0000
	Mode		27.00
no	N	Valid	44
		Missing	0
	Mean		26.5682
	Median		27.0000
	Mode		27.00

The averages for both groups for what age do you hope to marry were very similar.

Participants whose parents are divorced have an average answer of 27.1528, slightly above the average answer for participants whose parents are not divorced, 26.5682. The median and mode was 27 for both groups. The frequency table, shown in Appendix Eight, shows the distributions of the answers. The majority of participants whose parents are divorced answered 27, with other answers being 25, 28, and 30, and these were all evenly answered. The majority of participants whose parents are not divorced also answered 27, with other answers being disperse between 22 and 30; other than 27 the most common answers were 25 and 30. These data give no conclusions if college students whose parents are divorced would like to marry at different ages than college students whose parents are not divorced.

## Question 8: Parents religious affiliation

Are your parents divorced			Responses		Percent of Cases
			N	Percent	
yes	parents' religious affiliation(a)	Catholic	11	73.3%	91.7%
		Protestant	2	13.3%	16.7%
		Religious, but did not belong to a church	2	13.3%	16.7%
		Total	15	100.0%	125.0%
no	parents' religious affiliation(a)	Catholic	34	66.7%	87.2%
		Protestant	10	19.6%	25.6%
		Religious, but did not belong to a church	1	2.0%	2.6%
		Jewish	2	3.9%	5.1%
		Christian	2	3.9%	5.1%
		Pentecostal	1	2.0%	2.6%
		Atheist	1	2.0%	2.6%
		Total	51	100.0%	130.8%

A Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

The majority of all participants answered that their parents' religious affiliate was Catholic; 73.3 percent of participants whose parents are divorced and 66.7 percent of participants whose parents are not divorced.

### A comparison of Question 14 and Question 15

A Crosstabulation was conducted to show a comparison between how participants would rate their feelings about being divorced in the future and the survey question, what is the likelihood that they see themselves one day being divorced. Of those that answered they hope never to be divorced, approximately 50 percent answered less than two on a one to ten scale regarding the likelihood of one day being divorced. For those that answered that they hope to not be divorced but would consider it, more than 50 percent answered between 3 and 5 on a one to ten scale. This Crosstabulation can be found in Appendix Eleven.

The correlation between how would you rate your feelings about being divorced in the future and what is the likelihood that you will one day be divorced is positive meaning as one variable increased the other did as well. This is expected as those who had more positive feelings about being divorced in the future also answered having a higher likelihood of one day being divorced. This correlation is significant, meaning that it is likely the two variables are actually related and the correlation was not created by error. ( $T = .309$ ,  $p = .009$ , two-tailed). This data is shown in Appendix Ten.

Comparing Question 16 and Question 17: How great of an impact do you think divorce has on children and would you consider divorce less if children were involved.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
no	3	7.5000	2.29129	1.32288	1.8081	13.1919	5.50	10.00
yes	41	8.5732	1.67168	.26107	8.0455	9.1008	2.00	10.00
undecided	13	7.9231	1.89128	.52455	6.7802	9.0660	5.00	10.00
Total	57	8.3684	1.75134	.23197	7.9037	8.8331	2.00	10.00

This chart shows that the mean of how great an impact divorce has on children for participants who would not consider divorce less if children were involved is 7.5, the mean for participants who would consider divorce more is 8.5732, and for those who were undecided about considered divorce less if children were involved is 7.9231.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	6.560	2	3.280	1.072	.349
Within Groups	165.204	54	3.059		
Total	171.763	56			

While it would make sense that participants who would not consider divorce less if children were involved would think divorce has a lesser impact on children than participants who would consider divorce more if children were involved, this chart shows that this correlation is not significant at .349, and the two variables are not related.

#### Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
.480	2	54	.622

As .622 is  $> .05$  shows that's the variances of groups are not significantly different, so a non-parametric test is not necessary.



Comparisons of Questions 7, 9, 10: Correlations of were your parents religious, how often did your parents attend church services, and how often family involved in other church activities.

		Were your parents religious?	How often did your parents attend church services	How often was your family in other church activities?
Were your parents religious?	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.666	.347
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.001
	N	56	55	55
How often did your parents attend church services	Correlation Coefficient	.666	1.000	.463
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	55	56	56
How often was your family in other church activities?	Correlation Coefficient	.347	.463	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	
	N	55	56	56

The correlations between the survey question, were your parents religious, and both variables relating to religion, were positive. This shows that the more religious a participant's parent was, the more they attended church services and were involved in other church activities. The correlation between parents being religious and attending church services was higher at .666 than parents being religious and attending other church activities at .347. Both correlations are significant, as both .000 and .001 are  $<.05$ .

Comparison of Question 13 and Question 15: How would you rate your feelings about divorced compared to what is the likelihood of yourself one day being divorced

The correlation between these variable is positive, meaning that as one variable increases the other does as well. This shows that the more positive a participant's feelings about divorce was, the higher they answered their likelihood of one day being divorced. The correlation is significant, meant that it was most likely not caused by error ( $r = .629$ ,  $p = .001$ , two tailed). These findings can be found in Appendix 12.

Question 19a and Question 18: A comparison between participants who answered that they consider young age at which people marry to be a cause of divorce and those who do not, in regards to what age they hope to be married.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
not checked	29	26.0690	5.35144	.99374	24.0334	28.1045	.00	30.00
checked	28	27.3571	1.85021	.34966	26.6397	28.0746	25.00	30.00
Total	57	26.7018	4.04865	.53626	25.6275	27.7760	.00	30.00

This chart compares the answers to questions 18, at what age do you hope to marry, and whether or not participants answered that young age at time of marriage is a cause of divorce in the United States. For those who answered that think young age at time of marriage is a cause, and therefore checked question 19a, their mean age they hope to marry is 27.3571, higher than the mean for the group who does not this is a cause of divorce, at 26.0690. This shows that the participants who consider young age at time of marriage hope to marry later in life than the other group.

### Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
1.338	1	55	.252

The variances of groups are not significantly different, as  $.252 > .05$ , so a non-parametric test is not needed because the homogeneity of variances is met.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	23.639	1	23.639	1.454	.233
Within Groups	894.291	55	16.260		
Total	917.930	56			

However, the ANOVA significance is  $.233$  which is higher than  $.05$ , so the group means are not statistically significant, and therefore it can not be concluded if those who think young age at which people marry is a cause of divorce hope to marry later than participants' who do not think young age at which people marry is a cause.

Question 19c and Question 7: A comparison between participants who answered lack of religious values to be a cause of divorce and those who do not, in regards to if their parents are religious.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
not checked	48	5.5938	2.59225	.37416	4.8410	6.3465	1.00	10.00
checked	8	6.7500	1.98206	.70076	5.0930	8.4070	3.00	10.00
Total	56	5.7589	2.53160	.33830	5.0810	6.4369	1.00	10.00

The question, are your parents religious, used a scale from one to ten with one being not religious and ten being very religious. The participants that answered that lack of

religion is a cause of divorce in the United States had a higher mean of their parents being religious than the participants who did not answer that lack of religion is a cause of divorce.

#### Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
2.622	1	54	.111

.111 is greater than .05 which indicated that the variances of groups are not statistically different so a non-parametric test is not necessary.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	9.167	1	9.167	1.442	.235
Within Groups	343.328	54	6.358		
Total	352.496	55			

However, .235 is greater than .05 so this ANOVA and its conclusions are not statistically significant, therefore it can not be determined by this survey if participants who answered that lack of religion is a cause of divorce has more religious parents than those who did not answer lack of religion as a cause.

#### *Summary and Implications*

The purpose of this research was to discover college-aged students' perceptions of their parents' divorce and its causes. There are not any definite conclusions to be made from the results, but there are some generalizations about the causes of divorce. Some of the survey results were expected while other results were surprising. There were some limitations of the survey and some of the conclusions may have been affected because of this.

The participants' perceptions of their parents divorce, as well as all the participants' views of the main causes of divorce in this country were clear. The main cause for both questions was young age at time of marriage. Economic problems, values/goals no longer the same, and the ease of obtaining a divorce in the United States were also among the top reasons participants answered.

In regards to the question *what age were your parents when they married*, there was not a clear conclusion. The means for the groups were very similar, and the percentiles did not give a distinct answer as they were not all higher for either group. Therefore, it can not be concluded if young age at marriage was a cause of divorce for the surveyed population.

The survey questions regarding religion were more conclusive. For each of the three questions regarding religion, participants whose parents are not divorced answered higher. Participants whose parents are not divorced had higher perception of their parents being religious. This group also answered higher on a ten point scale regarding their families' involvement in attending church and participating in other church activities. This leads to a conclusion that for this surveyed population, lower religious values and involvement could have been a cause of divorce of the parents according to their children's perceptions.

Participants views on divorce in general and their own expectation about divorce in their lifetimes gave more surprising results. All of the participants answered a 5.5 or less in regards to their feeling of divorce, with one being negative and ten being positive. A majority in both cases answered lower than a three, showing that all surveyed participants generally have a negative view of divorce. An interested aspect of this

question is that participants whose parents are divorced answered as having more positive feelings about divorce than the participants whose parents are not divorced. An explanation for this could be that their parents' divorce led to a less conflicted family situation, and they could feel that their home life was better after the divorce. Another expected outcome was that the majority of both groups of participants answered that they hope to never be divorced or that they would consider it if it was the best decision. All participants also answered a 5 or lower regarding the likelihood of them one day being divorced. As with the previous question, it is surprising that the participants whose parents are divorced answered higher on this scale, showing that participants whose parents are divorced have a higher perceived likelihood that they will one day be divorced.

A Pearson's  $r$  test showed that there is a correlation between a participant's view on divorce and his perceived likelihood of one day being divorced. As one variable increased the other does as well, and this was statistically significant. This means that the more positive a participant's view of divorce was, the more likely he was to answer that he will one day be divorced. A Kendall's Tau test showed that there is also a positive correlation between a participant's view about being divorced in the future and his likelihood of one day being divorced. This test was also statistically significant. Therefore, as a participant had more positive feelings about one day being divorced, the greater the perceived likelihood of being divorced one day.

In regards to the impact of divorce on children, the majority of both groups answered an eight or higher on a ten point scale, showing that both groups think divorce has a large impact on children. However, participants whose parents are divorced were

more likely to answer that they would consider getting a divorce more if children were involved. An explanation for this could be that they view divorce being better for children than a conflicted home life. They may also feel that their own childhood was better because of their parents' divorce and this could lead to them not viewing the impact of divorce as negative

The limitations of this research include the small survey size and the limited population surveyed. Fifty-seven participants were surveyed. A larger survey population would increase the significance of the conclusions. All of the participants attended a religious institution. Of the 57 people surveyed, only 11 had parents who were divorced. This is approximately one sixth of the population, which is significantly lower than the almost 50 percent divorce rate in the United States. A reason for this could be the strong religious affiliation of the college that the participants attended. One possibility for this discrepancy could be that the national divorce rate is lower for people who are Catholic. A study was done in 1999 by George Barna that compared divorce rates by different categories, including religion. This study found the divorce rate in the United States to be around 40 percent. The divorce rate for Catholics was found to be only 21 percent (para. 4). This data would explain why only one-sixth of the surveyed population had parents who were divorced. It would also serve as support for higher religious values being a reason for why the divorce rate in Italy is much lower than that of the United States. The United States Census Bureau found that the divorce rate is highest in the South. Reasons given for this were that people in the South enter into marriage at a young age, their incomes are lower than other areas of the United States, and that Southern states have a lower percentage of Roman Catholics (D'Antonio, 2004, para.5).

All of these reasons support this survey's findings, as well as the fact that Catholics may divorce less.

### *Recommendations for Social Work Practice and Policy*

The study of divorce is important to social work as a divorce affects the entire family. Parents going through divorce need counseling, as do the children involved. Divorce generally puts a financial strain on the family, which can lead to other family problems. As stated in the literature review, studies have concluded that children of divorce are at greater danger for a multitude of problems, including behavior and emotional problems. These children may need more social services, which would lead to the children working with social workers. Studying the causes of divorce can be helpful in learning what factors increase the rate of divorce. This knowledge could lead to preventive programs, and furthermore, fewer divorces and more family stability.

There are several follow-up steps that could stem from this research. Since all of the participants were from a Catholic college community, it would be useful to survey other populations. It would be important to survey college-aged participants that do not attend a religious institution. It would also be important to survey participants that are college-aged but do not attend full time classes. Although it would be difficult, it would be extremely useful to survey college-aged students in Italy to compare results. The divorce rate is much lower in Italy than the United States, which leads to a comparison of the two countries being used in this thesis. A comparison of this survey between the two groups could identify the main causes of divorce as perceived by college students in the two countries.



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8. What religious affiliation would they classify themselves?

\_\_\_\_\_ Catholic

\_\_\_\_\_ Protestant

\_\_\_\_\_ Religious, but did not belong to a Church

\_\_\_\_\_ Not religious, but spiritual

\_\_\_\_\_ Other - \_\_\_\_\_

9. How often did your family attend church services?

|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|  
 Never                  Rarely                  Sometimes                  Often                  Always

10. How often was your family in other church activities, including prayers groups, youth groups, communion classes, etc.?

|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|  
 Never                  Rarely                  Sometimes                  Often                  Always

11. What income bracket would you place your family in?

|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|  
 Lower Class                  Lower Middle Class                  Middle Class                  Upper Middle Class                  Upper Class

12. What would you consider to be the main causes of your parents' divorce?

\_\_\_\_\_ Young age at marriage

\_\_\_\_\_ Too little time dating before marriage

\_\_\_\_\_ Economic problems

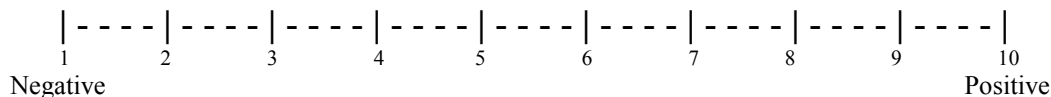
\_\_\_\_\_ Lack of religious views

\_\_\_\_\_ The ease of getting a divorce in the United States

\_\_\_\_\_ Other- \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ N/A

13. How would you rate your feelings about divorce?



14. How would you rate your feelings about yourself being divorced in the future?

\_\_\_\_\_ I hope to never be divorced

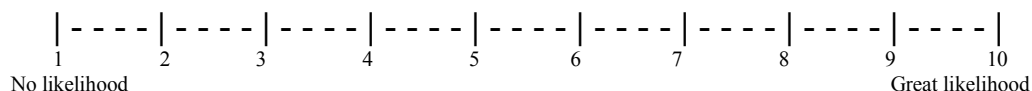
\_\_\_\_\_ I hope to not be divorced, but if it the best decision I would consider it

\_\_\_\_\_ Neutral

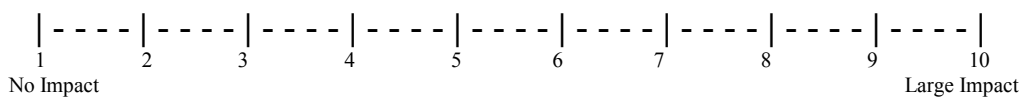
\_\_\_\_\_ If there is no other solution I would have no problem getting a divorce

\_\_\_\_\_ The idea of getting a divorce in the future does not upset me

15. What is the likelihood of yourself one day being divorced?



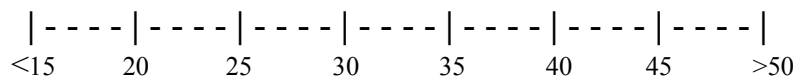
16. How great of an impact do you think divorce has on children?



17. Would you consider a divorce less if children were involved?

\_\_\_\_\_ No      \_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ Undecided

18. At what age do you hope to marry?



19. What do you consider to be the main causes of divorce in the United States?

\_\_\_\_\_ Young ages at which people marry

\_\_\_\_\_ Economic Problems

\_\_\_\_\_ Lack of religious values

\_\_\_\_\_ The ease of obtaining of divorce in the United States

\_\_\_\_\_ Other- \_\_\_\_\_

*Appendix 2*

At what age were your parents when they married?

Are your parents divorced			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent		
yes	Valid	19.00	2	15.4	15.4	15.4		
		21.00	1	7.7	7.7	23.1		
		22.00	1	7.7	7.7	30.8		
		23.00	4	30.8	30.8	61.5		
		28.00	2	15.4	15.4	76.9		
		29.00	1	7.7	7.7	84.6		
		30.00	2	15.4	15.4	100.0		
		Total	13	100.0	100.0			
		no	Valid	19.00	1	2.3	2.3	2.3
				20.00	3	6.8	7.0	9.3
21.00	1			2.3	2.3	11.6		
22.00	8			18.2	18.6	30.2		
23.00	6			13.6	14.0	44.2		
24.00	4			9.1	9.3	53.5		
25.00	9			20.5	20.9	74.4		
27.00	5			11.4	11.6	86.0		
28.00	2			4.5	4.7	90.7		
29.00	1			2.3	2.3	93.0		
30.00	1			2.3	2.3	95.3		
32.00	1			2.3	2.3	97.7		
40.00	1			2.3	2.3	100.0		
Total	43			97.7	100.0			
	Missing	System	1	2.3				
	Total		44	100.0				

## Appendix 3

What year were your parents married?

Are your parents divorced			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent		
yes	Valid	1967.00	1	7.7	7.7	7.7		
		1975.00	2	15.4	15.4	23.1		
		1976.00	1	7.7	7.7	30.8		
		1977.00	1	7.7	7.7	38.5		
		1979.00	1	7.7	7.7	46.2		
		1983.00	1	7.7	7.7	53.8		
		1984.00	2	15.4	15.4	69.2		
		1985.00	3	23.1	23.1	92.3		
		1987.00	1	7.7	7.7	100.0		
		Total	13	100.0	100.0			
		no	Valid	1967.00	1	2.3	2.3	2.3
				1972.00	1	2.3	2.3	4.7
				1973.00	2	4.5	4.7	9.3
1975.00	6			13.6	14.0	23.3		
1977.00	3			6.8	7.0	30.2		
1978.00	5			11.4	11.6	41.9		
1979.00	2			4.5	4.7	46.5		
1980.00	2			4.5	4.7	51.2		
1981.00	3			6.8	7.0	58.1		
1982.00	8			18.2	18.6	76.7		
1983.00	3			6.8	7.0	83.7		
1984.00	2			4.5	4.7	88.4		
1985.00	3			6.8	7.0	95.3		
1988.00	1			2.3	2.3	97.7		
1990.00	1			2.3	2.3	100.0		
Total	43			97.7	100.0			
	Missing			System	1	2.3		
	Total		44	100.0				

## Appendix 4

## Were your parents religious?

Are your parents divorced			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	Valid	1.00	1	7.7	7.7	7.7
		2.00	3	23.1	23.1	30.8
		3.00	1	7.7	7.7	38.5
		4.00	3	23.1	23.1	61.5
		5.00	1	7.7	7.7	69.2
		6.00	1	7.7	7.7	76.9
		7.00	2	15.4	15.4	92.3
		8.00	1	7.7	7.7	100.0
		Total	13	100.0	100.0	
		no	Valid	1.00	3	6.8
3.00	4			9.1	9.3	16.3
3.50	1			2.3	2.3	18.6
4.00	2			4.5	4.7	23.3
5.00	3			6.8	7.0	30.2
5.50	1			2.3	2.3	32.6
6.00	7			15.9	16.3	48.8
6.50	1			2.3	2.3	51.2
7.00	7			15.9	16.3	67.4
8.00	7			15.9	16.3	83.7
9.00	3			6.8	7.0	90.7
10.00	4			9.1	9.3	100.0
Total	43			97.7	100.0	
	Missing System			1	2.3	
	Total	44	100.0			



## Appendix 5

How would you rate your feelings about divorce?

Are your parents divorced			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	Valid	1.00	2	15.4	15.4	15.4
		2.00	3	23.1	23.1	38.5
		3.00	1	7.7	7.7	46.2
		3.50	1	7.7	7.7	53.8
		4.00	2	15.4	15.4	69.2
		5.00	1	7.7	7.7	76.9
		7.00	1	7.7	7.7	84.6
		10.00	2	15.4	15.4	100.0
		Total	13	100.0	100.0	
		no	Valid	1.00	7	15.9
2.00	6			13.6	15.8	34.2
2.50	1			2.3	2.6	36.8
3.00	11			25.0	28.9	65.8
4.00	5			11.4	13.2	78.9
5.00	7			15.9	18.4	97.4
5.50	1			2.3	2.6	100.0
Total	38			86.4	100.0	
Missing System	6			13.6		
Total		44	100.0			

## Appendix 6

What is the likelihood of you one day being divorced?

Are your parents divorced			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	Valid	1.00	3	23.1	23.1	23.1
		2.00	2	15.4	15.4	38.5
		3.00	2	15.4	15.4	53.8
		4.00	2	15.4	15.4	69.2
		5.00	4	30.8	30.8	100.0
		Total	13	100.0	100.0	
no	Valid	1.00	3	6.8	6.8	6.8
		1.50	1	2.3	2.3	9.1
		2.00	15	34.1	34.1	43.2
		3.00	13	29.5	29.5	72.7
		4.00	5	11.4	11.4	84.1
		5.00	7	15.9	15.9	100.0
		Total	44	100.0	100.0	

## Appendix 7

How great of an impact do you think divorce has on children?

Are your parents divorced			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	
yes	Valid	4.00	1	7.7	7.7	7.7	
		5.00	1	7.7	7.7	15.4	
		8.00	5	38.5	38.5	53.8	
		9.00	2	15.4	15.4	69.2	
		10.00	4	30.8	30.8	100.0	
	Total	13	100.0	100.0			
no	Valid	2.00	1	2.3	2.3	2.3	
		5.00	2	4.5	4.5	6.8	
		5.50	1	2.3	2.3	9.1	
		7.00	7	15.9	15.9	25.0	
		8.00	8	18.2	18.2	43.2	
		8.50	1	2.3	2.3	45.5	
		9.00	9	20.5	20.5	65.9	
		10.00	15	34.1	34.1	100.0	
			Total	44	100.0	100.0	

## Appendix 8

At what age do you hope to marry?

Are your parents divorced			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	Valid	25.00	3	23.1	23.1	23.1
		27.00	6	46.2	46.2	69.2
		28.00	2	15.4	15.4	84.6
		30.00	2	15.4	15.4	100.0
		Total	13	100.0	100.0	
no	Valid	.00	1	2.3	2.3	2.3
		22.00	1	2.3	2.3	4.5
		25.00	10	22.7	22.7	27.3
		26.00	3	6.8	6.8	34.1
		27.00	13	29.5	29.5	63.6
		28.00	5	11.4	11.4	75.0
		29.00	2	4.5	4.5	79.5
		30.00	9	20.5	20.5	100.0
		Total	44	100.0	100.0	

## Appendix 9

What do you consider to be the main causes of divorce in the United States?

Are your parents divorced			Responses		Percent of Cases
			N	Percent	
yes	reasons for divorce in U.S.(a)	Young age at which people marry	8	32.0%	61.5%
		Economic problems	5	20.0%	38.5%
		Lack of religious values	2	8.0%	15.4%
		The ease of getting a divorce in the United States	7	28.0%	53.8%
		Lack of commitment and independence	1	4.0%	7.7%
		Peoples idea change as they get older, no longer compatible	1	4.0%	7.7%
		Individualism	1	4.0%	7.7%
		Total	25	100.0%	192.3%
		no	reasons for divorce in U.S.(a)	Young age at which people marry	20
Economic problems	22			32.4%	51.2%
Lack of religious values	6			8.8%	14.0%
The ease of getting a divorce in the United States	16			23.5%	37.2%
Peoples idea change as they get older, no longer compatible	1			1.5%	2.3%
Unrealistic ideas about romantic love	1			1.5%	2.3%
People no longer know how to deal with their problems, use divorce as solution	2			2.9%	4.7%
Total	68			100.0%	158.1%

A Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

## Appendix 10

## Divorce in the future

		How would you rate your feelings about being divorced in the future?	What is the likelihood of you one day being divorced?
How would you rate your feelings about being divorced in the future?	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.309
	Sig (2-tailed)		.009
	N	57	57
What is the likelihood of you one day being divorced?	Correlation Coefficient	.309	1.000
	Sig (2-tailed)	.009	
	N	57	57

## Appendix 11

## Divorce in the Future

		What is the likelihood of you one day being divorced?						Total
		1.00	1.50	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	
How would you rate your feelings about being divorced in the future?	I hope to never be divorced	5	0	10	9	3	2	29
	I hope to not be divorced, but would consider	1	1	7	6	4	7	26
	If there is no other solution, would have no problem	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
	idea of divorce in the future does not upset me	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total		6	1	17	15	7	11	57

## Appendix 12

## Divorce in the Future

		How would you rate your feelings about divorce	What is the likelihood of you one day being divorced?
How would you rate your feelings about divorce	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1  51	.629 .001 51
What is the likelihood of you one day being divorced?	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.629 .000 51	1  57