

Applied Theory Paper

Makenzie Marwitz

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Dr. Joanna Carlin Instructor

## Introduction

Divorce has been on the rise in the 21st century, and there are numerous ways the relationship between parents and their children after divorce is overall affected. Through divorce, there is always a parent who gains or loses custody. Because of this, some theories examine how often nonresident family members contact their children. With the nonresident family guardian, there is a shift in holidays, family dynamics, and funds that channel through the aftermath of divorce. In most instances, mothers of children have custody of the child, while fathers lose custody. Within this applied theory paper, there will be generational effects of how divorce travels among my family, which runs through my grandparents to my parents. Although I am not married, I have been careful with whom I engage due to growing up in a single-mom household and watching her go through two divorces. The theory that plays into the role of divorce is the life course perspective theory. The life course perspective and family systems theory play a crucial role in generational transitions such as divorce, which could play a contentious role in divorce within families. My genogram illustrates the various aspects of divorce, cut-off, and general hatred fused throughout my family tree. While covering my personal family genogram, there will be research articles that explain generational divorce, common reasons for initiating divorce, and the social support and/or mental health that is involved with divorce.

**Article One: Long-Term Effects of Divorce on Parent—Child Relationships:  
Within-Family Comparisons of Fathers and Mothers**

Kalmijns's research article summarizes the effects of how a parental divorce in childhood could affect the relationships between adult children and their parents' relationship. In their study, they decided to compare how fathers and mothers differ between the same family structure. Because of the effect of divorce, their findings found that there are often conflicting views among the children. The majority of the time, when there are traumatic events in childhood, they manifest into adulthood through grudges and cut-offs. In the study, they hypothesized that "fathers rarely get custody, and although many divorced fathers remain involved in the lives of their children, this involvement will typically be less intensive than it was before the divorce" (2013). There is consistent evidence that shows "negative long-term effects of divorce on relationships between fathers and adult children" (2013). In addition to the lack of involvement, there is a decrease in emotional and social support for the children involved, creating a barrier in the relationship (Kilmijn, 2013). With the numerous findings from this article, the family dynamics within my family tree are often seen as expected. This is found in the "loyalty" aspect of compensating for the lack of parental guidance from my father; he was seen in my eyes as a friend more than a parental figure. This ultimately led to jealousy and resentment from my mother, which led to conflict. Overall, this article summarized the various findings of Bowen's family systems theory, where a family member's interaction may cause a ripple effect on the family's dynamics.

## **Article Two: The Long Reach of Divorce: Divorce and Child Well-Being across Three Generations**

Another article that supports generational divorce among families is by Amato et al., who researched the linkage of divorce through three generations. My genogram inspired the usage of this article to relate to divorce because my previous genogram showed three generations of divorce that resulted in an emotional cut-off. In the article, Amato et al., define generational divorce as “These linkages across generations occur because the effects of divorce and other family problems in one generation become the causes of similar problems in the next generation” (2005). Similar to the common themes of divorce in my genogram, as children, we could often carry on similarities in our adult relationships because of the repeating patterns in families. As Bowen states in his theory, repeating behavior patterns affect family dynamics. Amato et al. state that their study of generational divorce supported a life course perspective of the long-term effects of divorce but was challenged by genetics (2005). Quoted from the research article, “In other words, children who grew up with continuously married (but previously divorced) parents should inherit traits that increase their risk of interpersonal problems, much like children with divorced parents” (2005). Because of the linkage of the first-generational divorce problems, they are often the causes of similar issues in the next generation. Amato et al. concluded that the parent-child tension results from the first generational divorce were the initial “culprits” to the passing down the family issue of divorce. In conclusion, this article demonstrates how generational divorce affects children genetically and physically through the life course perspective theory and Bowens family systems theory.

### **Article Three: Self-reported reasons for divorce, social support, and depression: An exploratory study with Hmong women**

The last article that plays an influential role in understanding the effects of divorce is understanding the origin of divorce that is self-reported by women. In Her et al., they explain the reasons for divorce, divorce initiation, and the relationship between social support and depression levels. Although this article is targeted towards Asian women's divorce rates, it gives reasons why divorce occurs across numerous cultures and the process of divorce initiation. The article states, "The most prominent reasons reported by divorcing clients were incompatibility (43%), infidelity (28%), and money issues (22%) (Institute for Divorce Financial Analysts, nd)(Her et al., 2024)." Relating this statement to my genogram, the main reasons for divorce were incompatibility and infidelity. It is interesting to relate to the statistic that the "majority of women initiate divorce and report that many say it is the "lack of communication," but in reality, it is due to infidelity from the husband (Her et al., 2024). With the effect of divorce, the researchers examine the social support and psychological adjustment that are the outcomes of divorce. For example, as stated in the article, "after divorce, there is an initial decline in people's personal networks and support with some able to quickly reform their social networks faster than others based on a variety of factors" (Amato, 2014) (Her et al., 2024). As reported, social support stems from family members, friends, and children. Social support can be expected, but there could be a lack of communication with family members due to women feeling depressed and not wanting to be a burden on other family members. According to Bowens' theory, it is necessary to be in a structure with family dynamics and not examine a family member individually. The social support should understand the whole perspective and look at it from the outside. In

conclusion, this article supported the common reasons for divorce, the initiation, and the social support from family members in the divorce process.

### **Systems and Life Course Perspective Theory Analysis**

In conclusion, the systems theory can help us understand the origin of divorce, which can result in a change of characteristics in family functions. Parents, children, and other family members involved in the divorce could experience a loss of self. Although there will be a difference in characteristics, there will still be parental roles. As stated previously in Kalmjins's article, once there is a change in family structure with divorce, the parent who lost custody of the child is more than likely not as present, decreasing their emotional attachment (2013). The life course perspective plays a crucial role in understanding how children see the impact of divorce and often reflects in their adulthood relationships. As stated by Her et al., the parent who initiates the divorce frequently relies on children or family members for support (2024). Based on the family issue in my genogram, the research articles supported the generational divorce, common reasons for initiating divorce, and the social support and/or mental health that is involved with divorce that led to emotional cut-off or other forms of hate in my family.

## References

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