

Public release date: 26-Nov-2001

[[Print This Article](#) | [Close This Window](#)]



Contact: Paul Blaum

pab12@psu.edu

814-865-9481

[Penn State](#)

Parental marital discord affects quality of offspring marriages

University Park, Pa. -- Parents who are jealous, moody, inclined to fly off the handle, critical and prone to dominate their spouse have a far worse effect on their children's marriage than does parental divorce or poor parent-child relations, according to a Penn State study.

"The dark side of their parents' marriages, not their marital harmony, impacts all aspects of offspring's marriages, including the degree of matrimonial happiness or conflict, thinking about divorce or shared activities such as eating main meals and working on projects around the house," says Dr. Alan Booth, Distinguished Professor of Sociology and Human Development.

"In short, the transmission of marital conflict from one generation to the next results when children learn poor interpersonal behaviors from observing how their parents treat each other," says co-researcher Dr. Paul R. Amato, professor of sociology.

Parental divorce by itself does not substantially mar the matrimonial happiness of children. Neither is the children's marital quality necessarily lessened by poor relationships with their parents during adolescence; psychological distress resulting from parental discord; or deficits in their parents' socio-economic status and their levels of education.

Booth and Amato published their conclusions in the paper, "The Legacy of Parents' Marital Discord: Consequences for Children's Marital Quality," in the October issue of the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology.

Their data were based on a longitudinal study of marital quality begun 21 years ago. Booth and Amato analyzed a sample of 297 parents, comparing the quality of their marriages in 1980 with that of their children in 1997.

###

[[Print This Article](#) | [Close This Window](#)]

