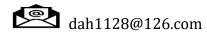# Family Interaction Patterns Among Adult Children and Divorced Parents According to Bowen's Family System Theory: A Case Study of Chinese Family in China

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Abstract

Recent years have seen a global trend that more and more adults experience the divorce of their parents. However, the impact of parental divorce on adult children is overlooked due to the independence and maturity of adult children. Existing studies also tend to focus on young children in divorced families as there is substantial evidence on the consequences of parental divorce that impact underage children's physical and mental development. Parents' divorce can remarkably affect adult children's cognition of family relationships. As some literature has noticed, adult children's relational uncertainty and complication in post-parental divorce demonstrate the importance of research in this domain. However, little focus is on how this change in cognition of family relationships can impact family interaction. Therefore, a preliminary study was conducted to investigate the impact of parental divorce on adult children of divorce (ACOD) in China. The study adopted a narrative inquiry method to explore the family interaction patterns conversationally. The preliminary report shows that there are three patterns for ACOD, namely, support divorce type, avoidance type, and inability to intervene type, and those who grow up in high-conflict families can grapple with family uncertainty after their parental divorce. The intervention emphasises post-divorce parenting programmes and parental conflict resolution initiatives, which play a prominent

protective role in the children's long-term healthy development.

Keywords: Adult children of divorce, parental divorce, parent-child relationship, family interaction, family system.

Introduction

Recent years have seen a global trend that more and more adults experience their parents' divorce. Although increasingly common, divorce is widely regarded as one of the most stressful and challenging events families face as families adjust to the changes in their family structure and might also face financial tension, trust breakdown, and a lack of stability (Abetz & Wang, 2017). Much research has been published on divorce's impact on young children and the parent-child relationship. Children in adolescence and younger age groups are regarded as having decisive developmental stages, which makes this attention towards children of divorce (O'Hara et al., 2019).

Parents' divorce marks a tremendous shift in the family system. Family roles, rules, and membership boundaries can change accordingly and significantly impact children of any age (Beckmeyer et al., 2021). The limited research on adult children of divorce (ACOD) who are 18 years old or older at the time of their parent's divorce mainly focuses on how parents' divorce affects the filial responsibility of adult children (Ko & Sung, 2022). For adult children, especially for emerging adults, little attention is paid to the influence of parents' divorce on their relationship cognition, although parents' divorce can be related to negative social and emotional factors, including identity and happiness (Zagrean et al., 2020).

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of emerging adult children of divorce through qualitative research and try to deeply understand the influence of parents' divorce on their relationship, especially the parent-child relationship. The inputs from this exploration study are essential for social support in family intervention, particularly the future adaptation study of emerging adults to family changes and their psychological clinical research.

Literature Review

The current research results hold that the family is an organic and dynamic system, and the factors in the system influence each other. It is consistent with the viewpoint of the Family System Theory. Children's cognition and

performance can be treated in the whole family system and even regarded as "explicit symptoms" of the family rather than independent events (Cepukiene, 2021). In a family system, the marriage relationship between parents, as a critical subsystem, is regarded as the "cornerstone" of the whole system.

Many empirical studies show that the marriage relationship between parents directly affects the parent-child relationship and children's physical and mental development (Demir-Dagdas et al., 2018; Li et al., 2020; Li & Liu, 2020). The stability of marriage helps to promote the smooth operation of the parent-child relationship in the family (Nesmith et al., 2017), while significant family changes such as parents' divorce can become the most stressful events in family development, which is regarded as a tremendous pressure and challenge to all members of divorced families, breaking the balance of the original system, and thereby directly affecting the subsystem of the parent-child relationship (Lee, 2019; Li & Liu, 2020; Nesmith et al., 2017).

Bowen's Family System Theory regards the family as an emotional unit and uses systems thinking to describe the complex interactions in this unit (Keller & Hall, 2019). Although family members sometimes have a sense of distance or alienation, it is undeniable that the emotional ties between family members are close. Specifically, family members can easily influence each other's attention, feelings, and identity (Eiguer, 2018). Therefore, their emotional autonomy in the family is likely to be massively reduced, and each takes complete emotional independence in daily life, which takes work. Family System Theory can clearly explain the relationship among family members from the triangular relationship, self-differentiation, the emotional system of the nuclear family, family projection, and intergenerational transmission (BRİDGE, 2019; Lim & Lee, 2020).

Self-differentiation is the core of Bowen's Family System Theory. As a thinking and reflection ability, it enables individuals to respond rationally to various emotional pressures and be flexible (Smidova, 2019). Family and other social groups will significantly influence how people think, feel, and behave. However, the sensitivity of individuals to this "group concept" is quite different, and the pressure exerted by each group on individuals to maintain team consistency is also different (Breger & Hill, 2021; Kühl, 2020). The level of self-differentiation reflects this difference between individuals and groups. As far as the context of this study is concerned, there are more children with low self-differentiation in Chinese families (Juan & Qın, 2018). Long-term close emotional ties can make Chinese parents focus more on their children,

imposing what they think is "good and useful for their children" on them (Zhong & Li, 2017) and giving them less chance to think and develop independently.

Although it is believed that imitating parents' behaviour or receiving parents' beliefs can help children grow up when they are young (Tan & Yasin, 2020), when children learn to think independently at a higher age, they may feel confused and hesitate between others and their ideas, then begin to question their parents' beliefs or behaviours, and even gradually engender differences and conflicts (Mahl, 2018), which will harm the parent-child relationship. As a result, children passively meet their parents' requirements without thinking, and parents constantly control and instruct their children to grow up. This vicious circle eventually makes the child gradually lose self-control and judgment and quickly become emotionally unstable (Gordon, 2017), thus becoming a person with a low degree of differentiation.

Bowen put forward two emotional processes in Family System Theory: nuclear family emotions and societal emotions (Erdem & Safi, 2018). However, when placed in the family context, the influence of the family's emotional process seems more significant, affecting children's personalities and understanding and adaptation to societal emotions (Thompson et al., 2019). Bowen also used three fundamental concepts in understanding emotion: the triangle relationship, the emotional process of the nuclear family, and the emotional cut-off (McKnight, 2019). Specifically, triangles within the family, the relationship between the father, mother, and children, can be regarded as the most typical emotional triangle and the most miniature emotional system, including three parties. In this kind of system, the balanced relationship between the two parties may be destroyed and become unstable due to the addition and departure of the third party.

In comparison, the unbalanced relationship between the two parties may also be adjusted by the participation of a third party. Compared with the relationship between two parties, a triangular relationship seems more inclusive to the tension and anxiety among members, and emotions can be transmitted. However, the contradiction between them has not been fundamentally solved; it has only been temporarily covered up by the intervention of a third party, which can play a specific role in the short term. However, the sustainability of its effect needs to be considered (Thompson et al., 2019). It also should be highlighted that if the third party has not integrated into the system for a long time, it is easier to form stable triangles within the family and achieve long-term relaxation (Vetere, 2018).

Once the family relationship is solidified and the emotional connection of family members is gradually finalised, this can substantially impact the nuclear family and even become the root cause of some family problems (Taylor, 2020). In the family model with low self-differentiation, some family problems are more likely to occur, including marital conflict, family dysfunction, excessive concern, or emotional alienation (BRİDGE, 2019; Mohammadi et al., 2019; Simon et al., 2019; Zhu, 2019). As a result, to reduce the tension and anxiety among family members, they may establish social relations with others and reduce their communication with each other. Some deal with undifferentiated emotional problems by directly reducing or blocking contact with parents and relatives.

The situation mentioned-above is also called emotional cut-off in family system theory (Barnwell & Stone, 2016; McKnight, 2019). In this way, their relationship has eased because some separation indicates healthy differentiation on the surface (Thompson et al., 2019). However, their emotional problems have been put on hold and remain unresolved, thereby becoming more serious. In addition, emotionally cut-off people may exert pressure to obtain family emotional needs in new relationships outside the family context, like at work, which can easily lead to forming family-like relationships (Thompson et al., 2019).

Anxiety can be essential in family functioning (Dumont, 2021). Family anxiety can spread in nuclear families and transmit from one parent's generation to the next or several generations. Parents can deliver their emotional problems to their children to a certain extent, which is referred to as the family projection process, including seeking attention or approval, taking too much responsibility for the happiness or well-being of others, or developing impulsive and potentially harmful responses to stress and anxiety (Thompson et al., 2019). In this process, the level of parents' differentiation can affect their anxiety about their children, thereby affecting the self-differentiation of their children through family projection (Lim & Lee, 2020). Specifically, parents' worries and opinions about marital relations, parent-child relationships, family economy, and others expressed in front of the children can powerfully shape children's differentiation and influence their development (Brooks, 2017).

Besides, the difference in self-differentiation level between parents and children can affect the self-differentiation level of multi-generation family members, which is called the multigenerational transmission process (Burger

et al., 2020). In every generation, the children who have a higher integration with family feelings have a lower level of self-differentiation (BRİDGE, 2019), which may lead to long-term anxiety, and they are more sensitive to the words and deeds of family members. On the contrary, children with a minor investment in integration can have less anxiety and better differentiation. Bowen (1993) stated that individuals tend to marry those with similar levels of differentiation. As a result, the transmission process of differentiation or anxiety can be perpetuated, considering they are in the equivalent context to raising a child (Chen Feng, 2018). Both family projection and multigenerational transmission describe the transmission of anxiety; the former is the transmission of anxiety within the nuclear family, while multigenerational transmission makes anxiety span several generations of families, essentially continuing family anxiety. Therefore, the influence of one member's emotion, cognition, and anxiety on other family members cannot be ignored, and it is imperceptible to impact the relationship.

Method

This study adopts a qualitative research method dominated by narrative inquiry. Qualitative research uses the researcher as a research tool, and a variety of data collection techniques are used in the natural situation to explore the social phenomenon as a whole. Induction is used to analyse the data and form the theory so that the researcher's behaviour and meaning can be interpreted by interacting with them (Khaldi, 2017; Mohajan, 2018). Participants in this study are young people who have experienced their parents' divorce as adults. Seven participants (Table 1) aged 18-25 were recruited through the purposive sampling approach. This age group was selected because emerging adults face the challenge of identity formation and separation from their parents (Hochberg & Konner, 2020). They can perform better narrative coherence in late adolescence or early adulthood, that is, around the age of 20, and can construct a self-narrative of their lived experiences (Borelli et al., 2019). Exploring people's needs, expectations, and challenges in emerging adulthood allow for variation and deserve attention from researchers (Tanner & Arnett, 2016). The sample size of qualitative research can be small to reach saturation (Etikan et al., 2016).

This preliminary study comprehensively adopted the category-content analysis strategy in narrative inquiry, referring to the coding process of grounded theory with the bottom-up coding technology. Firstly, all the

interview texts are divided into meaning units and numbered. For example, 02-098 means that 02 is the number of interviewees, and 098 is the 98th meaning unit in the interview. Next, the primary coding adopts open coding. Specifically, in this process, the researcher used the interviewee's original words to name the nodes, including in vivo and emotion coding, to form the initial concept. Next, this study tries to explore the possible meanings of parents' divorce to their parent-child relationship from the ACOD's perspective by examining their interpretations of events, stories, and conversations to develop an in-depth understanding that rendered these communicative actions intelligibly (Baxter & Braithwaite, 2010; Corbin & Strauss, 2014). Finally, the researcher integrated open coding into the core categories of relationships from bottom to top through the focused coding technique and then further aggregated it into three different types according to the characteristics of different children's intervention patterns or attitudes in parental divorce.

Findings

Based on the category-content analysis of ACODs' narratives, this study comprehensively explored the complex family triangle interaction between children and their parents through ACODs' perception and even intervention of their parent's marital status. In this study, three types of perception and intervention of parents' marriage were identified preliminary: support divorce, avoidance, and inability to intervene.

Table 1 Sociodemographic Profiles of the Study's Participants

No.	Age reported	Age when parental divorce	Gender	Reasons for Parental Divorced	Attachment to parents
01	25	24	Female	The mother thought that the father is irresponsible and asked for a divorce.	Favour mother, reject father
02	22	21	Female	My mother had extramarital relations and asked for a divorce; the father was forced to agree.	Have empathy for mother, but feel betrayed; Sympathize with father, but don't agree with his lifestyle
03	19	18	Female	Long-term lived apart; The shop caught fire	Be closer to mother and love her dearly; hate

				and the family lost financial resources.	father's personality, but also want to be close with him.
04	24	22	Male	Father works in other places all the year round and lived apart a long time. Mother found father's infidelity and asked for a divorce.	Live with mother long time and be closer to her; keep negative feelings towards father, and unwilling to contact father.
05	25	21	Female	Parents quarrelled frequently, acted violently with each other, and negotiated divorce many times.	Identify with mother and be closer with her; Hate father, and also sympathize with him.
06	22	21	Male	Parents quarrel too often, father had many affairs; they negotiated divorce many times, and finally mother asked for a divorce.	Hate parents' quarrels which are more attributed to father and feel detached from father; Relatively close to mother but feel that mother is not mature enough emotionally.
07	21	18	Male	Parents have conflicted all year round, and fathers are prone to domestic violence; Mother believes in Buddhism and has a gentle personality. She endured son's college entrance examination and asked for a divorce.	Have a strong attachment to the mother, and be closer; fear and disgust for father

Supportive interaction

This type of participant can actively participate in parents' discussions on divorce and other related matters and express their perceived attitude towards their parent's marital status as children. In particular, when they think that the tension between parents has reached the point where it cannot be adjusted, they support their parents to divorce as soon as possible or even persuade their parents separately to strengthen their parents' decision to divorce to speed up the divorce process.

These participants actively coordinated the relationship between parents not only when they were adults but often mediated their parents'

conflicts when they were minors and persuaded their parents to stop or reduce conflicts or disputes. They play a mature role in a family, such as being a mediator or arbiter of parents' conflicts or even acting as an emotional caregiver and supporter of parents.

However, children should not assume these roles. When the roles between children and parents are reversed, and the hierarchy in the family system is disordered, this structure is usually described as a dysfunctional family system, including parentification (Preciado, 2020; Wei et al., 2021). Such roles and responsibilities are often associated with harmful outcomes, including depriving children of age-appropriate opportunities, activities, and support (Borchet et al., 2020; Boumans & Dorant, 2018). However, in this study, parents' divorce positively impacts the parent-child relationship for the participants with higher parentification.

> *"When my parents just got divorced, I called my mother almost every day to chat with her. Maybe we talked about the same things every day, such as whether we had dinner, what we ate, and what we did today. Later, I felt that my mother seemed to put the divorce down. I took the initiative to tell my mother that I did not mind if she remarried. I am going to graduate now. Later, my mother decided not to look for it, but someone introduced her to a blind date or something before. My mother and I are becoming friends, and we can discuss everything. This mode of getting along is quite good."*
>
> (Participant 01)

Participants who support divorce have not blocked contact with their parents after their parent's divorce. However, because of their responsible role in the family since childhood, participants can show more incredible voices in adulthood, which is conducive to regulating and applying the parent-child relationship after their parent's divorce (Shimkowski & Ledbetter, 2018).

> *"I feel that since I was sensible, they have been quarrelling about trifles from time to time, and there are no moral or principal issues involved. I do not understand why they married like this initially because their personalities are entirely incompatible, and everyone is unhappy. Before I went to college, I would not say I liked communicating with them,*

so I could not talk well. Probably when I was in junior high school, they wanted to separate. Everyone in my family advised them not to divorce. I did not want them to get divorced then and told them directly. I probably thought I had no family once they did get divorced. However, now I think it is quite regrettable. I should have advised them to get divorced earlier. I lived in school from high school, and they probably quarrelled even more fiercely. When I finished the college entrance examination, they told me they wanted to get divorced, so I gave my direct support when I took my mother and went through the divorce process during my college holiday.''

(Participant 05)

As mentioned above, the participants who usually support divorce show parentification in the whole family system. Although this is considered a distortion of the division of family roles and responsibilities and a reversal of roles (Haxhe, 2016), this study found that parentification may benefit adult children in regulating the parent-child relationship.

''After their divorce, I felt more relaxed in dealing with my parents. I am an adult and feel less restricted by my parents, or even not. Whether the root of my divorce problem comes from my father or mother, I am trying to be a qualified daughter to treat them and not spoil this closest relationship. But, if my family can sit together happily in the future, I am not sure ... that is to say, I can contact my father and mother separately, but I do not want to see them meet again like enemies even when they are divorced.''

(Participant 01)

Avoidance interaction

This type of participant showed a significantly negative motivation to participate in their parents' marriage affairs in most family life situations. Even if parents had conflicts, most of them looked the other way and avoided their parents' conflicts. As for whether parents decide to divorce, even if they have a negative and hopeless attitude towards their parents' marriage, they did not directly express their views to their parents. Parents were reluctant to cooperate when they needed their children's attendance in the divorce process. Participants' avoidance attitude towards parents' divorce may be

because children were unwilling or afraid to express their negative perceptions of their marriage to avoid their parents' conflicts affecting them.

In addition, these participants were more likely to become 'scapegoats' in the family triangle interaction situation and formed an apparent parent-child alliance with one parent to counter the other. This gives children more negative experiences about family life and parents' marriage. As a result, when parents' divorce, the relationship between participants and their parents outside the alliance has not improved. However, it is worth noting that the relationship with their parents inside the alliance may also become tense.

> *"Maybe because of work, my dad has been away from home since I was a child, and he seldom talked with me even at home. In any case, I felt afraid of him when I was a child because he often lost his temper quickly and smashed up some things, even somebody. So, you know, domestic violence against my mother. Every time he hit my mother, I hated him even more… but I could not do anything, and it was useless to do anything. When I saw more over time, I became numb. As long as my father did not go too far, I did not care if they quarrelled. The more desperate my mother was for my father, the more she paid attention to my study, hoping I could get ahead. This made me feel much pressure. I did not know what made them finally get divorced. At that time, I went to school in other places, and I did not know how to get involved in their affairs from the beginning. In fact, they later filed a divorce lawsuit and needed me to testify in court for my mother. I was very reluctant to go, but there was no way."*
>
> (Participant 04)

> *"Before their divorce, the most annoying thing for me was that after my parents quarrelled, either he or she came to me to take it out on me, as if all the mistakes were my fault. Maybe I've been like a punching bag since I was a kid, and I'm used to it. They argue with them, and I don't care."*
>
> (Participant 07)

Avoidant participants usually strongly resist one of their parents, including those responsible for the failure of their parent's marriage and those who lack companionship in their children's growth. As a result, these participants found it easier to stand on the other side and form an alliance with

them to "confront" the wrong side they think. This situation can directly affect the parent-child relationship after divorce. Participants can keep in touch with the parents in the alliance, though they were under pressure from the alliance. The parent not in the alliance usually maintains a negative avoidance attitude toward the wrong party.

> *"After their divorce, I lived with my mother. My dad contacted me several times on his initiative and told me something as a father to show his concern. However, I feel love and hate for my parents as their child. Can you understand that? Before and after the divorce, my mother only paid attention to me. I know it is because I am her child, but this makes me tired. For example, "Mom only has you," something like this. I hope she can have her own life, but she only has me."*
>
> (Participant 06)

There is no reverse change in the parent-child relationship of type-avoidance participants before and after their parents' divorce. However, it is worth noting that because of the role of allies and scapegoats with one parent in the triangular family relationship, even the parent-child relationship with the relatively close parent has covered the shadow. The child still bears the mental pressure brought by the role in adulthood. Although this pressure can be treated more rationally, it will still affect the quality of the parent-child relationship.

Inability to intervene

This type of participant, when confronted with their parent's divorce, although they hoped to mediate their parents' conflicts actively, often found that they needed help to get a word in edgewise or were unable to persuade their parents. This may be mainly due to how parents raise their children, which makes these children usually have no expectations and preparation for the possible family crisis and divorce risk of their parent's marriage during the extended family life. In this part of the participants' families, parents have generally reached a consensus when their children are underage, covering up their conflicts in front of their children for a long time and avoiding conflicts in the scenes where children are present as much as possible. Under the background of such family interaction, it can be difficult for children to realize

their parents' marital status and possible problems when they grow up. Therefore, faced with the sudden breakdown of the family, ACODs may have uncertainty about the family, including uncertainty about the reasons for divorce and temporary doubts about the parent-child relationship. On the other hand, this type of participant has long lost equal rights and needed more power of discourse to participate in the affairs between parents since he was a minor. It can be challenging to have access even when they are adults.

> *"After their divorce, I sometimes think of some previous moments. I can feel that my parents were definitely unhappy about something, although they didn't quarrel in front of me. But I probably didn't think it was important at that time, and it was like, my parents and I had problems sometimes, but it won't be long before we get better. Maybe I thought they were like that at that time, but I didn't expect that they would eventually get divorced."*

(Participant 02)

> *"Finally, they emphasised to me again that whether my parents divorced or not had no influence on me, and they loved me as much as before. The whole process was peaceful, but I was turbulent and chaotic facing that scene. I did not know how they got to the point of divorce at that time. In my memory, neither of them had quarrelled, and both were very kind to me."*

(Participant 02)

In the narrative of the family life of the participants who cannot get involved in the relationship between parents, we can find that parents try to avoid conflicts and quarrels in front of their children, that is to say, to minimise their children's involvement in a triangular relationship. Children are always positioned as "children" in the whole family system, and there is a sufficient parent-child boundary. However, this is considered at the cost of losing the right to equal dialogue. Recognising the uniqueness of children's functions and roles in their childhood makes them feel confused about the orientation of the parent-child relationship even when their parents suddenly divorce.

Discussion

In this study, the parent-child relationship is mediated by children's performance of interfering in parents' marital relations. Although different

participants have differences in the parent-child relationship, the unstable family relationship occurs within an imbalanced family system (Garber, 2021). Specifically, the support divorce-type participants showed a strong willingness to get involved in their parent's relationship due to parentification. When there is a conflict between parents, they act as mediators or arbitrators to assume an inappropriate executive or parenting role, such as becoming the parent's confidante or comforting parents. It enables participants to actively deal with the parent-child relationship after their parent's divorce.

However, parentification is regarded as role corruption (Garber, 2021), which can interfere with the child's development and ability to make and maintain a healthy relationship with his or her other parent (Saha, 2016). Although early parentification was not associated with later emotional distress and dysfunctional parenting attitudes (Burton et al., 2018), for ACODs, parentified individuals are doubly burdened by the parent-child relationship and distressed by their parent's divorce.

Second, for the participants in the avoidance type, there is less subjective motivation to intervene in parents' marriage affairs. It is closely related to the fact that the child plays the role of scapegoat in the conflict between parents or is forced to become an alliance drawn by parents. An alliance with one parent or becoming the scapegoat likely exists at the cost of a distant or conflictual relationship with the other parent or both, as Kerig and Swanson (2010) summarised, which also can increase the potential stress on ACODs in the family system.

Participants within the support divorce type and avoidance type have a feeling of 'being caught' in the middle through analysing their narratives, which is detrimental to ACODs, particularly young adults who are mediators of inter-parental conflict or forced to take sides. Some researchers have documented positive associations between feeling mentally unhealthy and diminished parent-child relationships for young adults in non-divorced and divorced families (Galvin et al., 2015).

Although the inability to intervene type in this study seems to be the most incapable of action about the parental divorce, they may get more happiness in the parent-child relationship before and after their parent's divorce, compared with the other two types. This might be because in these families, although the relationship between parents was in crisis, they tried to avoid showing the conflicts in front of their children so as not to involve them in the triangular relationship. As a result, they could have the opportunity for better self-development. Although they felt shocked and spent time digesting

the news of their parent's divorce with grief, they can be more resilient in handling the situation. This is consistent with Nistor's et al. (2017) research results, showing that higher levels of individuation significantly predicted lower anxiety.

In this study, most of the ACODs involved in triangular experienced high inter-parental conflicts within the family before their parents divorced, whether it is verbal arguments, quarrels, and even physical conflicts directly or indirect emotional opposition and dissatisfaction (Cheung et al., 2016). Like the far-reaching impact of high conflict on family members, the broken relationship between parents likely makes ACODs' anxiety and uncertainty of interpersonal relationships in a long-term and easily internalised way (Mirzaei et al., 2019), though the existing literature ignores the impact of parents' divorce on adults (Drill, 2021; Mikucki-Enyart et al., 2018). The findings of this study suggest that exploring and carrying out preventive intervention research on parental conflict in ACODs' divorced families merits further attention, emphasising communication training to share information or group counselling in terms of family roles and role boundaries.

Conclusion

Bowen's Family System Theory provides a valuable lens for examining young adult children experiencing parental divorce of parent-child relational impact. Results revealed that the role of children in the family system, including parentification, mediators, scapegoats, and triangular alliances, appears to shape the parent-child relationship and interference from young adults to their parental divorce. In addition, adult children show family uncertainty regarding the reasons for their parent's divorce and how to get along with their parents after divorce. This suggests that opportunities for future research, such as conducting interviews with parents or parents and adult children, would be a fruitful way to investigate the perceptions of parent-child relationships to collaboratively explore a possible predictor of family adaptability and family functioning.

Although this study provides insight into the impact on the parent-child relationship through individuals' narratives of experiencing parental divorce as an adult, this study within the qualitative methods has the limitation that it is unable to assess the differences between females and males. Second, in many cases of this study, ACODs faced the challenge of divorce from their parents

after experiencing a long-term family conflict. However, this study cannot quantify how the intensity of parents' contradiction and conflict in high-conflict families can reach the degree of divorce. Therefore, future research can adopt the mode of follow-up research and combine quantitative and qualitative research methods to collect data on parents and ACODs through multi-method, explore the relationship between conflict and divorce further, and create effective intervention programs.

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