The timing of parental divorce and filial obligations to care for parents later in life

Prof. Jane Falkingham; Prof. Maria Evandrou; Dr. Joanna Sage (ESRC Centre for Population Change, University of Southampton)

Abstract

This paper explores how the timing of parental divorce within a child's lifecourse can influence the obligations they feel to care for their parents later in life. The majority of studies have suggested that parental divorce that occurs earlier in a child's life will have the most detrimental effect on their relationships with their parents in later years, and their obligations to provide care for their parents as they grow old. Drawing upon life-history interviews with 42 mid-life participants aged 36-65 in Southampton (UK), we challenge this contention by focusing on those who have experienced parental divorce relatively recently as adult children; demonstrating how mid-life experiences of parental divorce have weakened their feelings of obligation to care for their parents in significant ways. We also demonstrate how the deterioration of marital relations in post-retirement couples has resulted in some older parents 'living together apart' rather than divorcing, often involving the social withdrawal of fathers which ultimately weakens relationships with their adult children, and reduces their willingness to provide care. These findings are presented within the context of rising divorce rates in older age groups, and a projected widening of the informal care gap in the UK. We conclude by considering the implications of these findings for family-centric social care policy in the UK.

Key words: divorce; lifecourse; obligation; care

Introduction

In the UK, the majority of care for older people is provided by adult children or spouses (Pickard *et al.*, 2000; Arber and Ginn, 1991), with the role of adult children being particularly important in the care of people aged 85 and over – the fastest growing age group in the UK (Tomassini, 2005). It has been conjectured that demographic changes (increasing life expectancies and reduced fertility) are reducing the availability of mid-life cohorts to provide this care, creating an 'informal care gap' which has been projected to result in a short-fall of 250,000 kin care-providers in the UK by 2041 (Pickard, 2008). More than this, there are a number of other social trends that are expected to contribute to the decline in availability of informal care, the scale and impact of which are not well understood. These include the focus of this study - weakened intergenerational solidarity due to the detachment of adult children from their parents in families where parental marital disruption has occurred (Wells and Johnson, 2001; Bulcroft and Bulcroft, 1991); increasing childlessness (Evandrou, 1998); increased female participation in the workforce (Mooney *et al.*, 2002); the changing nature of filial obligations (Dans and Silverstein, 2006; Finch and Mason, 1992); and reduced co-residence of elderly people with their families (Grundy, 1995). Consequently there is rising concern about the provision of informal care for older people over the next 30 years, since social care policy in the UK makes strong assumptions that the future short-fall in formal care services will be met by adult children, who are expected to be available and willing to care for their ageing parents.

Uncertainties about how formal care services will cope with an ageing population have invoked significant political and societal unease in recent years; particularly in light of recent UK Government austerity measures and policy reform. Although the post-war expansion of the welfare state has typically been viewed as damaging for intergenerational solidarity (as

institutional support services are substituted for family obligations to care and support), there is as yet limited evidence that welfare state shrinkage due to cut-backs and austerity measures (since the global economic crisis of 2008) has witnessed a reverse substitution of family care for institutional services. As such the perceived 'loss' of parent-child solidarity in some families, alongside dwindling formal social care services, has worrying implications for the future support systems for older people (Vlachantoni *et al.*, 2011). Political lip service has been paid to these issues evidenced by a raft of official reports and consultations on how the escalating demand for care might be met (for example the The Dilnot Report, Commission on Funding of Care and Support, 2011; The Wanless report, 2006; the Caring Choices Report on the future of care funding, 2006; the Royal Commission on Long-term Care, 1999). Despite this significant investment in a framework for reform, however, a social care bill to implement these changes was again notably absent from the Queen's speech in May 2012 (which set out the government's legislative plans for the year ahead). Irrespective of implementation, none of the documents listed above have identified that weakened family solidarity and diluted filial obligations to care for parents due to divorce could be a contributing factor to an increasing informal care gap in the UK. Paradoxically, questions of the extent to which parental divorce will undermine the future support system for older people in the UK could be among the most salient of all, due to the current trend of rising divorce rates in older age groups (aged 50-59 and 60+) and high divorce rates during the 1980s and 1990s, which mean that a rising proportion of future adult child cohorts will have been exposed to the disruption and dissolution of their parents' marriage (Smyer and Hofland, 1982).

Although a number of quantitative studies from the USA, UK, Norway and the Netherlands have conjectured that parental divorce weakens child-parent bonds, and the obligations adult

children feel to care for their parents later in life, the processes by which parental marital disruption influences filial obligations later in life are not well understood (Aquilino, 1994; Arditti, 1999; Cooney *et al.*, 1995; Riggio, 2004; Furstenburg *et al.*, 1983). The majority of these and other related studies have focused on experiences of parental marital disruption that occur before a child reaches young adulthood. This is underpinned by the perceived importance of the early phases of socialisation that occur during childhood, and the attachment that forms between children and parents during this time (Woodward and Ferguson, 2000). Where parental marital disruption results in reduced contact with one parent during childhood (because they leave the family home following separation or divorce), it is conjectured that the child's attachment to the non-custodial parent (which in approximately 90% of divorces is the father – Seltzer, 1991) will deteriorate. Less contact and attachment to non-custodial fathers is repeatedly cited in studies that find divorce occurring during childhood has a more detrimental effect on father-child bonds later in life, compared to that occurring later in a child's life (Booth and Amato, 1994; Amato and Booth, 1996). The more pronounced impact of childhood experiences of is echoed across broader literatures which examine the long-term consequences of divorce for intergenerational transfers (Furstenberg *et al.*, 1995); psychological well-being (Amato and Keith, 1991), and demographic, social and academic outcomes for children from divorced families (Furstenberg and Kiernan, 2001).

Crucially, these literatures rarely follow up on children beyond young adulthood (Cooney and Uhlenberg, 1990; Shapiro, 2003). Indeed, it is broadly assumed that "the quality of [child-parent] relationships soon after off-spring reach adulthood is likely to set the tone for relations throughout the life course" (Booth and Amato, 1994: p.21). Statements such as this overlook the effects of experiences and events that unfold from young adulthood onwards (such as child bearing – or from the older parent's perspective, the arrival of grandchildren),

and the potential for these events to moderate the negative effects of earlier experiences of parental divorce. Furthermore, these literatures do not consider the effects of parental marital disruption that occurs during an adult child's *mid-life.*

The findings we present in this paper respond to this by foregrounding mid-life, and experiences of parental marital disruption that occur during this lifecourse stage. Drawing upon the life histories of 42 mid-life participants aged 36-65 in Southampton (UK) we shed light on the experiences of participants whose parents divorced relatively recently, illustrating how the proximity of these experiences has detrimentally effected the obligations they feel to care for their parents, as their parents reach an age when care becomes increasingly necessary. We also illuminate an alternative strategy for managing deteriorating marital relations in older age groups which we have termed 'living together apart'. In these cases, fathers have often become social withdrawn and distant from their kin; participants thus report weakened relationships with their fathers, and less willingness to provide care for them. The importance of these findings for social care policy makers may be even more pronounced in light of recent evidence of an emerging trend in the UK of increasing divorce rates in people aged over 60 – a group referred to recently in the national media as the "silver separated" (The Observer, 20/11/2011). A similar trend has been evidenced in the USA, the significant implication of this being that adult child experiences of parental divorce during mid-life are becoming more commonplace (Shapiro, 2003).

The paper is divided into five more sections. The next section provides a review of previous studies which have examined the timing of parental marital disruption and child-parent relations. The section entitled 'divorce and theorisations of intergenerational solidarity in ageing families' outlines recent debates about the suitability of intergenerational solidarity, or altruism, as a framework for conceptualising filial obligations in ageing families, and the

5

impact of parental divorce. Following this, the findings from our study are presented and discussed, and in the final section we draw some conclusions about the implications of this research for adult social care policy in the UK.

Parental marital disruption: timing matters

There has been widespread recognition within research on parental marital disruption that the timing of divorce events in a child's life is significant. The substantive focus of the present study is contextualised by a broader set of research agendas concerned with the outcomes of parental divorce for children, and their relationships with others. Of most relevance are a number of studies which examine the effects of parental marital disruption on the *attachment* of children to parents (Bowlby, 1982) and child-parent relations during childhood, adolescence or young adulthood (Booth and Amato, 1994; Amato and Booth, 1996; Woodward and Ferguson, 2000; Aquilino, 1994; Arditti, 1999; Cooney *et al.*, 1995; Riggio, 2004).

Furstenberg *et al.'s* (1983) study is key to illuminating the effects of early childhood experiences of divorce, having demonstrated that following encounters of parental divorce between the ages of 7-11, contact with the non-custodial parent (usually the father) dropped off significantly after two years, followed by a steep rise in the proportion of fathers who ceased contact all together. Indeed, five years later 35.5 % of respondents had no contact with their father or didn't know where they were living (compared to 6.8% of mothers). The authors also suggest that these fathers rarely re-establish connections with their children in later life (although the study was limited to a five-year follow-up on these children when they were aged 12-16). These findings make an important distinction between those children who lose contact with a parent during childhood because of divorce, and those whose parents

remain in contact and part of the child's life, leaving a clear path to regain some level of closeness and improved solidarity later in life.

A smaller number of studies have addressed the long-term lifecourse effects of divorce by examining the quality of child-parent relationships when the adult child has reached mid-life, and the parents are entering later life (rather than at the time of the dissolution, shortly thereafter, or at the point where the child reaches young adulthood) (Cooney and Uhlenberg, 1990; Daatland, 2007; Fokkema *et al.*, 2008). Although a number of these studies have identified the potential for adult children and non-custodial parents to redefine their relationships once children have reached adulthood, noting that previous research has overlooked this (see Cooney and Uhlenberg, 1990), the vast majority have drawn upon cross-sectional data sources, which has precluded the analysis of the processes by which adult child-parent relationships change across the adult phase of the lifecourse. Furthermore, studies which have considered how events occurring post-divorce have affected on-going relationships with (adult) children have tended to centre on events occurring in the parent's life – such as post-divorce migration, re-partnering, and building a new family with new offspring (Cherlin, 1992; Tomassini, 2007; Seltzer and Bianci, 1988); most of which are thought to augment the deterioration of child-parent relations.

Research examining the effects of events in the adult child's life is scarcer. The emergence of the 'sandwich generation' as a conceptual tool has brought with it views that child-bearing in the adult child generation, and the new responsibilities this brings, can detract from the resources available to adult children to care for their ageing parents – meaning that care responsibilities must be prioritised, potentially resulting in care trade-offs (see Grundy and Henretta, 2006). Daatland (2007) also makes a contribution here through his analysis of the shift from marriage to cohabitation in the adult child generation; proposing that the increase

in cohabitation reflects the individualisation of these cohorts, which might in turn suggest lower levels of family exchange and solidarity. No difference in the intergenerational solidarity between married adult children and their parents, compared to their cohabiting counterparts was found, however.

Longitudinal analyses in this research area are exceptionally sparse, and of the limited studies which state that they have adopted a longitudinal approach, it was not possible to find an example where adult children or parents had been examined across the lifecourse. This is despite the implicit centrality of the concept of the lifecourse to these research agendas, which is reflected in longstanding concerns about the effects of selection when measuring the outcomes of parental divorce. Disentangling the effects on children of family issues that pre-dated the divorce event (such as parental marital conflict; poor child-parent relations; socio-economic disadvantage), from the effects of the divorce event itself, and post-divorce relations has infused research in this field with a sense that lifecourse matters (Bailey, 2009). A scarcity of appropriate longitudinal data sources for tracing individuals from birth through to mid-life will certainly have contributed to this; however, it does appear that a strong set of assumptions that child-parent relations will remain unchanged through adulthood has limited studies of parental marital disruption to date.

Shapiro (2003) has identified this deficiency, highlighting the absence of research focused on divorce events that occur once offspring are adults and have left the family home. For deepening understandings of adult child obligations to parents and how these are shaped across the lifecourse his findings are somewhat limited, since they focus on parents and are analysed across two waves of the USA's National Survey of Families and Households only five years apart (1987/88 and 1992/94). Nevertheless, Shapiro has contributed much needed longitudinal analysis to the literature, and his findings begin to shed light on the effects of

adult experiences of divorce on the closeness of adult children to their parents. Parents are identified (a nationally representative sample of the population aged 19 or over) who have at least one non-co-resident child, and those who divorced between waves 1 and 2 are compared with those who did not. Shapiro examines indicators of contact and geographical distance between parents and their non-co-resident child(ren), finding no evidence of linkages between divorce and substantial changes in geographical proximity (differing from other studies – see Fokkema *et al.*, 2008), although divorce was found to have a profoundly negative effect on weekly contact between Fathers and their adult children . This is a notable finding since many studies focusing on divorce occurring before a child reaches adulthood assume that poor relationships with fathers stem from non-custodial separation during the early stages of a child's life. Shapiro also makes a significant finding when comparing cross-sectional analyses of the two waves, with multivariate longitudinal analyses, finding that the outcomes of divorce are much more pronounced in the former (see also Furstenberg and Kiernan, 2001). This suggests that cross-sectional studies (which account for the majority in this field) may have, to some extent, over-stated the effects of divorce.

Lin (2008) has also made a rare and valuable contribution to these literatures through his longitudinal analysis of care (help with 'activities of daily living' and 'instrumental activities of daily living') and money transfers received by older parents, also over a five-year period, using the USA Health and Retirement Study. The study found that the care received by mothers (average age across study period 64-69) increased by 7% across the five year period, and that received by fathers (average age of 65-70 across the study period) increased by 4%. Significantly, the rate of increase in the propensity to receive care was greater for parents who lost their spouse (through divorce or bereavement) – unfortunately (likely due to small numbers) the effect of parental divorce and bereavement on the propensity of parents to

receive care from their adult children were not presented separately, meaning the effect of later life divorce remains unclear.

Perhaps even more significant for the present study, Lin (2008) also presented a cross-sectional analysis of the effects of the duration of time that has passed since a parental divorce occurred (regardless of the age of the child at the time of disruption), achieving an original perspective on the effects of the timing of parental divorce on care received by older parents (see also Daatland, 2007). Lin (2008) and Daatland (2007) both concluded that the length of time that had elapsed since a parental divorce event was *unrelated* to adult children's propensity to provide informal care or financial support to their ageing parents, and intergenerational solidarity, respectively – in stark contrast to the conclusions of other studies identified above which find earlier divorce events result in weaker child-parent bonds. Lin's findings were in agreement with the consensus that divorced fathers are in a more vulnerable position than divorced mothers, however.

More commonly, authors concerned with the timing of parental divorce have undertaken cross-sectional analyses of offspring who experienced divorce as young adults, comparing the effects with those of childhood encounters with divorce (Booth and Amato, 1994; Amato and Booth, 1996; Bulcroft and Bulcroft, 1991; Cooney *et al.*, 1995). In common with Lin (2008) and Daatland's (2007) findings, these studies show that relationships between children and divorced fathers suffer more (with less contact, less co-residence and greater geographical distance) than relationships between children and mothers. Aside from this, the different methodological approaches have given rise to contested understandings – unlike Lin (2008) and Daatland (2007), the majority of the studies listed above have reached the collective conclusion that divorce occurring earlier in a child's life will have a more damaging effect on intergenerational bonds with their parents.

10

In summary, despite overall agreement that parental divorce weakens intergenerational solidarity later down the family lifecourse, particularly for fathers, the ways in which the timing of marital disruption can influence obligations to care have remained contested or overlooked. It is clear that mid-life experiences of parental divorce are absent from pre-existing research, and understandings of how post-divorce relationships between adult children and parents change from young adulthood onwards are under-developed. This stems from the majority of studies examining child-parent relations only up to the point at which 'children' reach adulthood, and where scholars have focused on older adult children this has tended to be cross sectional, resulting in an absence of longitudinal perspectives on adult children, parents and how their relationship change across the lifecourse. We address these gaps by adopting a lifecourse perspective on the effects of parental divorce through a retrospective qualitative study of the lives of adult children who are now in their 40's, 50s and 60s.

Divorce and theorisations of intergenerational solidarity in ageing families

This section outlines some theoretical perspectives on intergenerational solidarity as a framework for conceptualising filial obligations in ageing families, and the impact parental divorce can have on these. For some, the perceived 'decline of the family' in Western societies has been intimately connected to the rupture and weakening of intergenerational ties through divorce and re-partnering (Popenoe, 1993) (although others reject this analysis instead emphasising the positives of new and changing family forms – see Stacey, 1993). In the UK and Europe studies suggest that a strong sense of family duty persists, however the distribution of intergenerational solidarity is uneven, with notable differences by gender, religiosity, socioeconomic status and *marital status* (Fokkema *et al.*, 2008).

Intergenerational solidarity in ageing families has been conceptualised by Bengston and Roberts (1991) as consisting of six dimensions: consensual solidarity (degree of agreement on values, attitudes and beliefs); *associational solidarity* (frequency and patterns of interaction); *structural solidarity* (opportunity for intergenerational relations reflected in number, type and geographical proximity of family members); *affectual solidarity* (affection, warmth and closeness); *functional solidarity* (intergenerational exchanges of assistance or resources); and *normative solidarity* (strength of commitment to familial obligations). The present study sheds light on how experiences of parental divorce can shape adult children's perceptions of the latter five of these dimensions (in italics) once they have reached mid-life, and their recollections of how these aspects of child-parent solidarity shifted across their lifecourse.

The concept of intergenerational solidarity is rooted in the notion of reciprocal *exchange* of care and support between adult children and their parents, as opposed to altruistic transfers from one generation to another. In debates that have recently unfolded in the Journal of Marriage and Family scholars have problematized the notion of solidarity, instead proposing ambivalence as a more suitable framework for understanding family relations (Hogerbrugge and Komter, 2012; Bengston *et al.*, 2002). These scholars suggest that intergenerational solidarity overemphasises the harmonious and positive aspects of family life (see Roberts *et al.*, 1991; and Bengston and Roberts, 1991), and intergenerational conflict vice versa. These distinctions between solidarity / ambivalence / conflict, and exchange / altruism are significant to the present study's focus on the timing of parental divorce. As Lin (2008: p. 114) points out, Roberts *et al.*'s (1991) theorisation of intergenerational solidarity implies that as more time passes after parental divorce adult children are less likely to provide support to their ageing parents, because parental divorce weakens the bonds between generations over

time. In other words, the earlier the occurrence of parental divorce in the family lifecourse, the more detrimental the effect on child-parent solidarity (including obligations to care, contact, and closeness) when the child is in mid-life and the parents are becoming elderly.

In contrast, transfers of support from adult children to parents that are motivated by altruism (i.e. not rooted in family solidarity and obligation) respond to need, rather than the history of the child's relationship with their parents. In this sense, an altruistic perspective would suggest that the occurrence (or indeed timing) of parental marital disruption should not interfere with the provision of care for parents, with decision-making about care provision made in response to the present circumstances of parent(s) and child (Lin, 2008). It has been shown in a number of studies that the provision of care to parents from adult children is highly dependent on need (Silverstein *et al.*, 2006; Kalmijn and Saraceno, 2008). Importantly for this study, however, analyses of European data have shown that divorce works against the normative response to parental need – that is, European adult children of divorced parents will be less likely to provide care even when their parent(s) need it, than adult children whose parents are married (Fokkemma *et al.*, 2008).

Finch and Mason's (1990; 1992) seminal work on filial obligations and kin support for older people concludes that care arrangements between children and parents are rooted in a sense of obligation (rather than altruism). Importantly, however, it is stated that filial obligations have *limits*, and they must be viewed as locked into a broader set of obligations. Finch and Mason's findings therefore imply that intergenerational solidarity is a relevant framework for understanding the provision of informal care by adult children, and the factors that can constrain this. The present study will contribute to these debates by deepening understandings of how filial obligations are constructed and (re)negotiated across the lifecourse, to advance theorisations of this dimension of intergenerational solidarity in ageing families.

Methods

It has been emphasised in previous sections that the limits of pre-existing research coalesce around the absence of a lifecourse perspective on parental divorce and filial obligations. We are concerned with understanding not just how the timing of the divorce event in the child's life has affected their filial obligations as a mid-life adult, but also how events and the quality of child-parent relationships pre-and post-divorce across the child's lifecourse have influenced this. In this sense, we are in agreement with Daatland (2007) that the optimal study should be longitudinal, including long-term pre- and post- divorce data.

We achieved a lifecourse perspective on these issues through the collection of restrospective data about 42 participants' lives (aged 36-64) from birth to the time of interview. The vast majority of studies in this area have been quantitative, which has limited the temporal perspectives of pre-existing scholarship to what is achievable through the use of existing quantitative data sets (and this has undoubtedly constrained analyses of mid-life experiences of parental divorce and the renegotiation of child-parent relations during the child's adulthood). Although the insights provided by these studies are extremely valuable, the lack of qualitative research to date has resulted in incomplete understandings of the meanings of parental divorce and filial obligation to adult children; how experiences of parental divorce are intertwined with the filial responsibilities an adult child feels as their parents age; and the complex contexts within which these interactions take place.

The qualitative lifecourse research framework applied in this study necessarily involved the retrospective collection of information about events unfolding over long periods of time, and memory recall can compromise the robustness of this type of data. We overcame this issue through a multi method approach using life history calendar, life narrative and semi-structured interview methods. The accurate 'mapping' of participants' lifecourses (using the

life history calendar) was crucial to understanding the linkages between the timing of parental marital disruption and the changing quality of relationships and contact with parents. The calendar was then used as a reference point to structure participants' life narratives, which resulted in the elicitation of focused and robust narrative data, followed by a semi-structured narrative interview which gave the researcher the opportunity to probe further. The multi-method approach enabled participants to triangulate information from each stage, providing the necessary structure to support their recollection of events. This process also enabled the researcher to cross-reference the data to disentangle the linkages between the timing of parental marital disruption events, changing family relations across the participant's lifecourse, and their intergenerational exchange frameworks and obligations participants felt at the time of interview.

Forty two participants were interviewed in total, with a mixture of experiences of parental divorce (19 respondents), bereavement (14 respondents), or no experience of parental marital disruption (9 respondents). The design of the study was intended to enable comparisons between the effects of parental divorce and bereavement on filial obligations (c.f. Tomassini *et al.*, 2007). We recruited 6 participants who experienced parental divorce during childhood (aged 0-11); 5 during adolescence (aged 12-18); 4 during young adulthood (aged 19-34); and 4 during mid-life (aged 35-64), to compare the effects of parental divorce occurring during each lifecourse stage. Time spent with each participant ranged from 1 hour 40 minutes to 3 hours 45 minutes, and took place either in the respondent's home, in a meeting room on the University of Southampton campus, or in a local café. Life narratives and semi-structured interviews were audio recorded, transcribed and analysed thematically and narratively using NVivo 8. Respondents were recruited from lower (20) and higher (22) socioeconomic groups, and 20 respondents were male; 22 female. Recruitment and interviewing took place over a six

month period from July to December 2011. Respondents from lower socio-economic groups were mainly recruited via social clubs held at local community centres across Southampton; through leaflet dropping on two social-rented housing estates in the city; and through the Tenants Participation Unit at Southampton City Council. Those from higher socio-economic groups were recruited via four local residents associations across Southampton.

Findings

In this section we outline the major themes that emerged from our analysis of participants' life narratives and semi-structured interviews. Of course, a fundamental issue relating to parental divorce and the care of parents as they grow old is the lack of spouse availability to provide care, and how care responsibilities are reallocated. There was strong evidence in our data (aligned with the literature) that this responsibility was predominantly being taken up by adult children (in particular female offspring) – as demonstrated in the quote below:

> "When they're divorced they're not supporting each other. I contrast the issue with my parents with that of my in-laws - my mother-in-law was able to look after my father-in-law at home until he died. They were together and… she was the primary carer…whereas with my father I was the primary carer" (Participant 6).

Importantly, a range of factors emerged as influential on the availability and willingness of participants to provide care (including the geographical proximity of parents; participants' marital status; the presence and sex of siblings; postponement of child-bearing; and depression in parents and participants). Participants' experiences of parental marital disruption, and the effects of these experiences on the quality of relationships with their parents at the time of interview significantly limited participants' feelings of filial obligation. The remainder of this section focuses on the differential experiences of participants who

16

encountered parental divorce during childhood; adolescence; young adulthood or mid-life. Following this, we discuss the experiences of a group of participants whose parents had not divorced, but whose marital relations had deteriorated resulting in an unhappy living arrangement, which we have termed 'living together apart'.

Experiences of divorce at different stages of the lifecourse: childhood

Participants who experienced divorce during childhood frequently reported having blurred recollections of these events. This could, of course, be related to the time that has passed since these events took place; and the challenges of narrating such distant memories. Or, as the quote below suggests, these recall issues could be tied to the distress of experiencing parental marital breakdown as a child. Irrespective of the causes, participants' narratives were notably lacking in emotion, which suggests some level of detachment from these experiences when viewed through adult eyes (although, of course, participants' actual experiences of these events as children may well have been far more distressing).

> "The actual event is a bit of a blur to be honest. I'm not sure if that's because of how old I was, or because I've blocked it out or something – maybe a bit of both. Dad left when I was 8…it didn't seem that different since Mum used to look after us for the most part anyway" (Participant 41).

For some participants, their childhood experience of parental divorce had resulted in losing touch with one parent, in some cases permanently. As demonstrated in the quote below, participants largely felt no residual obligation to care for this parent. This signifies one of two pathways to weakened filial obligations in later life illustrated in Figure 1 - a conceptual diagram representing the effects of the timing of parental divorce on the obligations participants felt to care for their parents at the time of interview (mid-life).

"Researcher: Do you mind me asking why…you don't see your mum?

Participant 23:   My mum and Dad divorced when I was three…we kept in

contact for a while but I stayed with my Dad.

Researcher: If you ever knew that your Mum…needed some care

or support – how do you think you would feel?

Participant 23:   I don't think I could because she's never been in my life, I've

never called her Mum and she's got her own family to deal

with…and it would be quite strange for my Dad…because I've
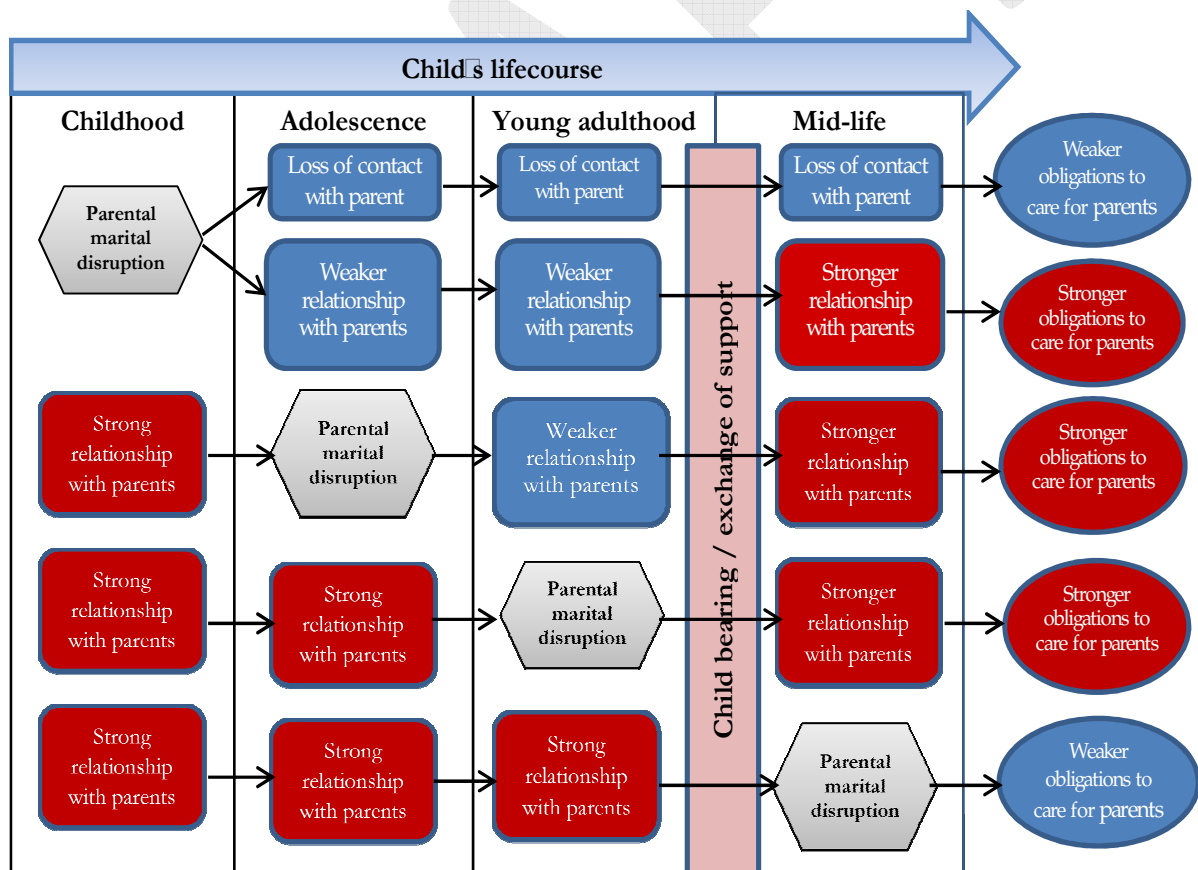
always been Daddy's little girl".

Figure 1: conceptual diagram representing the effect of parental marital disruption occurring

during different phases of a child's lifecourse.

Adolescence

In contrast to the hazy and relatively tepid accounts of childhood parental divorce, the narratives of participants who encountered divorce during adolescence were distinctly emotive, suggesting these experiences had left deep imprints. These accounts were the most affected of all of the participant groups, and references were made (as in the quote below) to the occurrence of disrupted schooling and mental health issues as participants struggled to come to terms with the separation of their parents while negotiating the turbulent transition from youth to young adulthood.

"Researcher: Did…these experiences [parental divorce] have an impact on your time at school?

Participant 20:   Yeah they did…I suffered from depression and I was treated with amitriptyline when I was still quite young, around 12, 13 years old. I had another episode of depression at university, which affected my university years and sort of the outcome from that.

Researcher: So about 12 to 16 you had a particularly difficult time?

Participant 20:   Yeah, I would say around 12, 13 was probably a peak point. When I was 14 I tried to take an overdose, then kind of was a little better and, you know, coped a little bit better".

Both the above and below quotes indicate how participants' experiences of parental divorce during adolescence interrupted their attendance at school and college, aligning with studies of the outcomes of divorce which have shown that individuals who experience divorce during

adolescence are likely to be academically disadvantaged, compared to those who did not (see Tillman, 2007).

> "Researcher: Just going back to your experiences of your parents' break-up, how did that affect you at the time?
>
> Participant 14: Well I dropped out of school and college at 14 because of all what was going on.
>
> Researcher: Okay. So it had quite a profound effect on your life then?
>
> Participant 14: Mmm. Oh yeah. Because I had to then look after my brother and my father".

Young adulthood

Participants who experienced parental divorce during young adulthood tended to emphasise the disruption this had caused in their own lives, often at a time when their resources were over-stretched caring for a young family (as described in the quote below), or establishing a career and negotiating the pathway to residential and financial independence. These narratives were rational and far less emotive than those of participants who experienced divorce during adolescence.

> "He [father] had another woman and my mum found out and my brother was just about to sit his A-levels. We had Julia [daughter] who was 12 weeks old and he [brother] came to stay with us for about a month over the time he did his A-levels and it was a very tiny two bed house… he just couldn't be at home doing his work… They were going to try again but then Mum couldn't cope and Dad left. Mum was a mess, so we took my brother…to get him through his exams" (Participant 18).

Mid-life

A common theme across all participants' narratives in this group was that the breakdown and dissolution of their parents' marriage during mid-life was both unexpected and deeply upsetting. This sense of unexpectedness was peculiar to the experiences of divorce in the mid-life age group. Some participants described feeling emotionally constrained following the breakdown of their parents' marriage, because they perceived it to be inappropriate for an adult in mid-life to express upset at the breakdown of their parents' marriage (illustrated in the quote below). These accounts contrasted with the normative narratives of parental *bereavement* during mid-life, in which participants expressed sadness imbued with some degree of expectation that these events would unfold during this phase of their life.

> "To be honest, I was pretty upset about it. I think it's probably more dramatic when you're a child, it probably leaves a bigger impression, but it's more of a shock when you're older, 'cos you don't see it coming. I think my brother was upset because he's got kids, and now they don't have grand-parents anymore, I mean because Dad's off in France with his new woman, and Mum's trying to make herself happy again. And you don't feel like you're allowed to be upset because you're a grown adult, but it's really upsetting" (Participant 11).

Of course, divorce occurring during an adult child's mid-life will take place when the child's parents are approaching old age, and they are more likely to need care from their adult children. Indeed, the uneasy feelings participants described were simultaneously related to the marital dissolution occurring immediately prior to the latter phases of the parental lifecourse (which are typically associated with couples enjoying retirement together and supporting each other through old age) and the shifting responsibility (from spouse to adult

child) for providing care for parents through their old age. The quotes below describe how participants 6 and 12 felt they were unexpectedly thrust into the role of carer:

> "Dad was left totally devastated. It was really hard for me because I'm an only child, so it really was down to me to pick up the pieces with Dad. It was a total role-reversal having to pick my Dad up off his knees. It was very clear that he was going to be old and fragile…and I was going to have to look after him" (Participant 12).

> "A year before he died, and partly why he died, was she [wife] left him for another man, which was a major blow for him. During his final year I was ringing him every day, going around there, because of course again there was no-one…I went round and saw him nearly every day. He then had a heart attack after she left him" (Participant 6).

There was also evidence (in the quote above) that participants perceived distressing experiences of marital break-down in later life as a contributing factor to a decline in the health (physical and mental) of their parents, in some cases marking the beginning of a new phase in the child-parent relationship where roles were reversed so that the parent became receiver of care and support, and the adult child giver. In some cases a sharp deterioration in one parent's health, or a major health event (such as a heart attack as described in the quote above from participant 6) was reported to have occurred, which the participant perceived as being causally linked to the marital break-down.

Importantly, divorce was not the only form of marital disruption which had unsettled family relations during mid-life – some participants described how their parents had remained married and living in the same household, but no longer shared their lives. In this sense they were 'living together apart'.

"Dad's retirement was quite a stressful time for them…there was no consideration for Mum's readjustment, for the family. She'd just been following him around really, and they didn't really know how to be together, or what to do after my dad left the RAF. I think that's why my Father died so quickly…he had 7 years or something. They didn't really spend much time together…it was sad really, none of this golden years stuff. I know that hurt my Mum greatly, I think she felt isolated and alone from their retirement onwards really" (Participant 28).

Importantly, the unsettling of parental marriages post-retirement, and the emergence of living together apart as a method of managing this deterioration without divorcing was closely related to the social withdrawal of participants' fathers – as demonstrated in the quote below. This is a crucial point, since the tendency for fathers to retreat into themselves and become distant from kin during old age had weakened participants' feelings of obligation to care for them.

Researcher:	Did that [parental marital disruption] change your feelings towards you mum or your Dad?
Participant 28:	Oh yes, I mean, I think we all felt disappointed in Dad for sort of deserting us – he didn't seem at all interested in spending his retirement with his family, he hit the bottle a bit, and was just lost without work. What do you do? I was quite angry with him, which is sad, you don't want to be angry with your Dad when they die. And yes, I've felt strongly like I need to make up for it for my Mum – that's true for my Brother as well".

Both parental divorce and 'living together apart' had significant impacts on participants' willingness to provide care for both parents. The proximity of these events to their parents' old age was important because the bond between adult child and parents was ruptured just as parents were approaching the phase of life when they were likely to require care from their adult child (cementing the vulnerability of parents who were now no longer able to rely upon each other for spousal care). The quote below illustrates the 'rawness' of participants' emotional responses to the disruption of their parents' marriage (events which had often unfolded relatively recently prior to the interview) – highlighting how participants had emotionally detached from the parent they 'blamed' for these events (usually the father); ultimately resulting in diluted obligations to care for this parent:

"This is the first time I've been angry with my father. So in the event that my father was to be the one that was left I would feel very differently towards caring for him than I would towards caring for my mother, because my mother is unchanged. Throughout my life my mother's been other-centred, consistently very responsible, very… I would use the word 'grounded' not that she would use the word but she is. And I would say… I see my father very differently now" (Participant 16).

Another key distinction between participant who had experienced divorce during childhood and adulthood was the tendency for the latter group to become involved in the divorce process. Indeed, for participants who experienced divorce as an adult it appeared that the divorce proceedings had played an important role in defining which parent was 'to blame' for the disruption (see also Cooney *et al.*, 1995). This is crucial, since participants reported feeling limited obligations to care for the 'blamed' parent, whom they often felt had 'abandoned' their other parent to live alone in old age. The most intensely disapproving narratives were those describing acrimonious divorce proceedings, and particularly those that

had involved disputes over the division of family assets or financial investments – as illustrated below:

> "My Dad ruined my Mum after years of her taking care of everything…everything in the house, and us and making the family life. He'd squirrelled bits of their money away in various investments over the years which she couldn't get close to when it [divorce] happened…I couldn't be in the same room as him now" (Participant 5).

It should be noted that some participants in this situation reported that their obligations to the remaining parent were strong (and often strengthened by the divorce); however their narratives of emotional caretaking were often negative, as they struggled to manage the degree to which this parent relied upon their support:

> "I just find her extremely needy, although she's not physically needy, if you see what I mean. She's very independent in the physical side and…it's not like…I'm having to visit her every day to check she's alright, and I do care about her and I do feel responsible. That's what dad left us, he left us with the responsibility of our mum. I do worry about her…but I don't enjoy spending time with her. That's awful. Sorry" (Participant 18).

In sharp contrast, participants who experienced the break-down of their parents' marriage when they were children cited examples of subsequent experiences (such as having their own children – illustrated in the quote below) which had helped them to 'heal' and rebuild relationships with their parents, thus re-establishing their sense of filial responsibility to provide care (see Figure 1 for the conceptual framework that emerged from these findings, which indicates the positive effect of child-bearing). The arrival of grandchildren marked a crucial turning point in the relationships of a number of participants with their parents, and it

is possible that the parochial focus of previous studies on early phases of the lifecourse has meant that the positive effect of grandchildren has been overlooked.

"Researcher: When did you start to see your mother again after separation?

Participant 14:   Probably... I think it was after my daughter was born, my first daughter…I think children can heal wounds, can't they?"

Child-bearing and gaining new life perspectives through parenthood were key factors which had moderated the negative effects of earlier experiences of parental divorce for a number of participants. More generally speaking, the continued downward flow of support from parents to adult children across the child's adulthood was cited as important for re-strengthening bonds and nurturing child-parent relationships:

"I am [close] to both of them, Mum and Dad, but especially close to Mum. I think it's the support they've always given me that makes the bond so strong. You know, it's been really difficult in the past with Andrew [Son who is schizophrenic] and they were always so supportive. Much more so than my husband ever was. When they do so much for you, you'd move the Earth to make sure they're ok" (Participant 7).

The reciprocal exchange of support across participants' adulthoods was also noted as important for rebuilding relationships that had been disrupted during childhood. This was described as a gradual process of reconstruction and nurturing taking place across a period of years and often centred around the participants' children – as demonstrated in the quote below where one participant talks about her father taking care of her son, while in exchange she spent time working on her father's garden:

"My Dad used to pick Alistair [son] up from pre-school and then take him back to his flat and look after him. Or even before Arthur was at pre-school, when he was a baby,

I had postnatal depression so I would take Arthur, you know, to Dad's and he would have him for the afternoon just so I could have some, you know, time out. It worked both ways, so I would keep Dad's garden tidy for him – nothing major – just doing the lawn and putting some pots in 'cos he finds it more difficult bending down now…he'd be playing dominoes with Alistair or something so they get some time together too" (Participant 1).

The next section summarises these findings and discusses how they advance understandings of the effects of the timing of parental divorce on filial obligations, and the implications of what we have found within the context of rising divorce rates in older age groups in the UK.

Discussion

In this paper, we have highlighted the preoccupation of pre-existing research with experiences of parental marital disruption that occur before the child reaches adulthood. The findings we have presented have instead foregrounded experiences of parental marital disruption that occurred relatively recently in our participants' lives, during mid-life. We have demonstrated how the emotional distress of these experiences, and involvement in the divorce process, has detrimentally effected the obligations participants feel to care for their parents, just as their parents reach an age when care becomes increasingly necessary (this is represented in Figure 1 as the second of two pathways to weakened filial obligations to care for parents in mid-life). This suggests that the postponement of divorce may not represent a sensible strategy for minimising the negative outcomes for 'the family' – despite commonly being seen as such.

We have contrasted these narratives with the experiences of participants who encountered parental marital disruption during childhood - for some, the passing of time after childhood

27

experiences of parental divorce has 'healed' relationships with their parents. We have also demonstrated how the continued downward flow of support from parent to child throughout participants' adulthoods, and the reciprocal return of this support (i.e. intergenerational exchange), has helped to reconstruct and nurture child-parent relations during this period of the adult child's life. Furthermore, we have illustrated how participants' child bearing (the arrival of grandchildren for the older parent generation) has in some cases mediated the harmful effects of parental marital disruption that occurred during childhood, by effectively bringing the adult child and parent closer together, and re-introducing intergenerational solidarity. Thus, the parochial focus on the harmful effects of *childhood* experiences of divorce, and the assumption that child-parent relations remain unchanged once a child reaches adulthood have been disrupted, while the deterioration of adult child-parent relations following mid-life experiences of parental divorce has been revealed.

When considering the effects of parental divorce early in a child's life, our findings show that it is important to distinguish between children who lose contact with one parent, and those who retain some contact with both. This is reflected in the conceptual diagram in Figure 1, which shows that the permanent severing of the tie between a child and their non-custodial parent results in the first of two pathways to weakened filial obligations to care for older parents. Furstenberg *et al.'s* (1983) research has rightly focused attention on the importance of the permanent ruptures in child-parent ties that can occur after childhood divorce. However, this noted, the present study has shown for the first time that there is significant potential where these ties are not permanently severed to re-strengthen child-parent relationships later in an (adult) child's life. Indeed, we found considerable evidence that this had occurred, usually once participants had reached the latter stages of young adulthood or later.

Too often, pre-existing studies have examined either the duration of time that has elapsed since the parental divorce occurred, or the effect of key events occurring post-divorce (usually events occurring in the parent's lives such as migration or re-partnering that cause further deterioration to the child-parent bond - e.g. Cooney and Uhlenberg, 1990). Our participants' narratives suggest improvement in their relationships with their parents was simultaneously related to becoming more 'mature', the passing of time ('healing'), the reciprocal exchange of support with parents during adulthood, child bearing and accumulating experience of parenthood. Thus repairing relations was not just a factor of time, but also of events later in the adult child's life, the most important of which being child bearing.

The presence of grandchildren has been identified by Spitze *et al.*, 1994 as pivotal to improving contact between *adult children* who have divorced and their parents, however the authors are not aware of any other published research that has found grandchildren can improve family relations and strengthen filial obligations after they have been weakened by a divorce in the *older parent generation*. In fact, some studies suggest that the presence of grand children can create additional pressures for mid lifers (the 'sandwich generation' – Grundy and Henretta, 2006) which compel adult children to dilute their filial responsibilities in order to prioritise caring for children. As such this is a significant finding worthy of further investigation in future research. Where the present study *has* aligned with the majority of previous research is with the finding that fathers' relationships with adult children fare worse than mothers following divorce. In fact our research builds on previous studies by demonstrating how the vulnerability of ageing fathers may be becoming entrenched via three pathways. First, through severed ties with children following divorce at an early age; second, through divorces occurring later when adult children are in mid-life (where fathers are

perceived to be 'to blame' for the marital break-down), and third by the deterioration of marital relations in older couples who remain married but effectively 'live together apart', resulting in the withdrawal of fathers from kin relationships.

Our findings indicate parental marital break-down (without divorce) resulting in parents 'living together apart' has also been disruptive to filial obligations (although with the former, since parents remain living together, spouse care may still be available). There is some sense here that parents have rejected divorce (perhaps due to social norms of marriage in this cohort or the fear of being alone during old age), instead forming an alternative living arrangement with limited mutual interaction. The significant implication of this is the damage inflicted on relations between fathers and their adult children. Several participants spoke of becoming detached from their father due to the attachment of blame for becoming socially withdrawn and disinterested in nurturing family relations.

In contrast to older parents tolerating deteriorating marital relations and opting to remain married and residing with their spouse, we also found evidence of the older parent generation becoming more anxious to seize new opportunities during retirement, illustrated by the following quote:

> "I think they just got bored of each other to be honest! They got married when they were 20, and they'd done all that travelling together, had all that excitement. And then they were just here, in Southampton, just the two of them…sort of thinking, is this it? I think people look at retirement differently now – it's not about slippers, arm chair, telly anymore" (Participant 11).

Therefore, where other studies have highlighted the potential for individualisation in the adult child generation to destabilise family solidarity, our research suggests that the

individualisation of older populations may be equally as important. Indeed, recent statistics published by the Office for National Statistics show that the divorce rate in men aged over 60 has increased by 0.3 per 1000 married population over the last decade, and the divorce rate in men aged 50-59 has increased by 1.3 per 1000 married population during the same period. These increases occurred at a time when the all ages divorce rate (for men) *decreased* by 1.7 per 1000 married population (these patterns were similar for women). These data may reflect that changing norms of retirement and expectations of marriage and partnership in later life (such as those hinted at in the quote above) are gathering pace. The significant implication of these patterns is that a larger proportion of older people's marriages are dissolving as they approach the stage in their lifecourse where they are more likely to develop care needs. Our findings suggest that these marital dissolutions are disrupting the bonds between older people and their adult children, and since spouses and adult children provide the majority of care for older people in the UK, these groups are entering old age in a more vulnerable position.

Finally, to return to the debates outlined earlier about the suitability of theories of intergenerational solidarity, ambivalence, conflict, or altruism for conceptualising filial obligations to ageing parents, and how these are operationalised. Our findings indicate that the reciprocal exchange of support during adulthood was key to the recovery of intergenerational solidarity in families where parental divorce had occurred earlier in the adult child's life. This suggests theorisations of deteriorating intergenerational solidarity with time following a divorce event should be revisited (Lin, 2008; Bengston and Roberts, 1991). The importance of the continued exchange of care and support between adult children and parents across the lifecourse (along with evidence from the NIDI report on family solidarity which found that divorce worked against the principle that care for parents is provided in response to need – Fokkema *et al.*, 2008), also suggests that theorisations of care transfers

motivated by altruism (i.e. purely in response to need and based on the parent and child's present characteristics and circumstances, not the history of their relationship) do not fit with our conceptual model. Based on evidence of participants managing conflicting feelings about their parents across their lifecourse, we propose that intergenerational ambivalence provides the most suitable framework for understanding how child-parent relations shift with time – and that recognising how feelings of obligation can be rooted in a complex blend of experiences, events and exchanges occurring across an adult child's lifecourse (not only those occurring before young adulthood) is beneficial for conceptualising the effects of parental divorce in the UK today.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we have found evidence that experiencing parental divorce as an adult in mid-life can cause significant damage to parental bonds, resulting in adult children feeling less obliged to provide care for parents just as they reach the point of need. The provision of informal care by adult children is important because it can forestall parents' entrance into institutional care. This enables older people to remain resident in their own homes for longer thus retaining some sense of independence, while also alleviating pressure on formal care services.

Currently, adult social care policy assumes that adult children (and spouses) will be available and willing to fill the care gap created by an ageing population and the deficiencies of formal care services for coping with this need – our findings run counter to this assumption. Although there is undoubtedly political recognition that social support systems for older people are in need of transformation, and some significant investment has been made in consultations to develop a framework for policy reform (for example the Dilnot Report, 2011), this report, and others like it, have failed to recognise that young adults may be

unavailable (where they have lost contact with a non-custodial parent), or unwilling (where relationships with one or both parents have deteriorated due to their divorce) to provide care for their parents. Since divorce rates in older age groups in the UK are rising amid evidence that the individualisation of older age groups may be reconfiguring the social norms of marriage and partnership in later life, our findings could become increasingly salient over the coming years. Of particular concern is evidence in this study of the intensified vulnerability of fathers. This implies that older divorced male cohorts are more at risk than previously thought, and social care policy makers should be mindful of this.

References

Amato, P.R. and Keith, B. (1991) "Parental divorce and adult well-being: a meta-analysis." Journal of Marriage and the Family 53: 43-58

Aquilino (1994) "Impact of childhood family disruption on young adults' relationships with parents". Journal of Marriage and the Family 56: 295-313.

Arditti, J.A. (1999) "Rethinking relationships between divorced mothers and their children: capitalising on family strengths." Family Relations 48: 109-119.

Arber, S. and Ginn, J. (1991) "Gender and later life: a sociological analysis of resources and constraints." Sage: London.

Bailey, A. (2009) "Population geography: lifecourse matters." Progress in Human Geography 33: 407-418.

Bengston, V.L., and Roberts, R.E.L. (1991) "Intergenerational solidarity in ageing families: an example of formal theory construction." Journal of Marriage and Family 53: 856-870.

Bengston, V.L., Giarusso, R., Mabry, J.B., Silverstein, M. (2002) "Solidarity, conflict, and ambivalence: complementary or competing perspectives on intergenerational relationships?" Journal of Marriage and Family 64: 568-576.

Booth, A. and Amato, P.R. (1994) "Parental marital quality, parental divorce, and relations with parents". Journal of Marriage and the Family 56: 21-34.

Bowlby, J.B. (1982) "Attachment and loss: retrospect and prospect." American Journal of Orthopsychiatry 52: 664-678.

Bulcroft, K.A., and Bulcroft, R.A. (1991) "The timing of divorce: effects on parent-child relationships in later life." Research on Ageing 13: 226-243.

Caring Choices (2008) "The future of care funding: time for a change." London: King's Fund.

Cherlin, A.J. (1992) "Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage." Harvard University Press.

Commission on Funding of Care and Support (2011) "Fairer Care Funding: The Report of the Commission on Funding of Care and Support." (accessed 21/3/2012 https://www.wp.dh.gov.uk/.../files/.../Fairer-Care-Funding-Report.pdf).

Cooney, T.M. and Uhlenberg, P. (1990) "The role of divorce in men's relations with their adult children after mid-life." Journal of Marriage and the Family 52: 677-688.

Cooney, T.M, Hutchinson, M.K. and Leather, D.M. (1995) "Surviving the breakup? Predictors of parent-child relations after parental divorce." Family Relations 44: 153-161.

Dans, D. and Silverstein, M. (2006) "Norms of filial responsibility for aging parents across time and generations." Journal of Marriage and the Family 68: 961-976.

Daatland, S.O. (2007) "Marital history and intergenerational solidarity: the impact of divorce and unmarried cohabitation". Journal of Social Issues 63: 809-825.

Dykestra, P.A. (1997) "The Effects of Divorce on Intergenerational Exchanges in Families." Netherlands Journal of Social Sciences 33: 77-93.

Evandrou, M. (1998) "Great expectations: social policy and the new millennium elders." In Bernard, M. and Phillips, J. (eds), Dependency and Interdependency in old Age. Croom Helm: London.

Finch, J. and Mason, J. (1990) "Filial obligations and kin support for elderly people." Ageing and Society 10: 151-175.

Finch, J. and Mason, J. (1991) "Obligations of kinship in contemporary Britain: is there normative agreement?" The British Journal of Sociology 42: 345-367.

Fokkema, T. Bekke, S and Dykestra, P.A. (2008) "Solidarity between parents and their adult children in Europe." Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute report (accessed 18/5/2011 http://www.nidi.knaw.nl/Content/NIDI/output/nidi%20reports/nidi-report-76.pdf)

Furstenburg, F.F., Winquist-Nord, C., Peterson, J.L., Zill, N. (1983) "The lifecourse of children of divorce: marital disruption and parental contact." American Sociological Review 24: 656-668.

Furstenburg, F.F., Hoffman, S., Shrestha, L. (1995) "The effect of Divorce on Intergenerational Transfers: New Evidence." Demography 32: 319-333.

Furstenberg, F and Kiernan, K. (2001) "Delayed parental divorce: how much do children benefit?" Journal of Marriage and the Family 63: 446-457.

Furstenburg, F.F., Winquist-Nord, C., Peterson, J.L., Zill, N. (1983) "The lifecourse of children of divorce: marital disruption and parental contact." American Sociological Review 24: 656-668.

Furstenburg, F.F., Hoffman, S., Shrestha, L. (1995) "The effect of Divorce on Intergenerational Transfers: New Evidence." Demography 32: 319-333.

Grundy, E. (1995) "Demographic influences on the future of family care." In Allen, I. and Perkins, E. (eds) The future of family care for older people. HMSO: London.

Grundy, E. (2005) "Reciprocity in relationships: socio-economic and health influences on intergenerational exchanges between third age parents and their adult children in Great Britain." British Journal of Sociology 56: 233–55.

Grundy, E. and Henretta, J.C. (2006) "Between elderly parents and adult children: a new look at the intergenerational care provided by the 'sandwich generation'." Aging and Society 26: 707-722

Hogerbrugge, M.J.A and Komter, A.E. (2012) "Solidarity and ambivalence: comparing perspectives on intergenerational relations using longitudinal panel data." The journals of Gerontology, Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences (early view online DOI:10.1093/geronb/gbr157).

Kalmijn, M. and Saraceno, C. (2008) "A comparative perspective on intergenerational support." European Societies 10: 479-508.

Lin, I.-F. (2008) "Consequences of Parental Divorce for Adult Children's Support of Their Frail Parents." Journal of Marriage and Family 70: 113–128.

Mooney, A., Statham, J. and Simon, A. (2002) "The pivot generation: informal care and work after 50." Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Policy Press: Bristol.

Pickard, L., Wittenberg, R., Comos-Herrera, A., Davies, B., Darton, R. (2000) "Relying on informal care in the new century? Informal care for elderly people in England to 2031." Ageing and Society 20: 745-772.

Pickard, L. (2008) "Informal Care for Older People Provided by Their Adult Children: Projections of Supply and Demand to 2041 in England." PSSRU Discussion Paper 2515 (accessed 12/5/2011 from http://www.pssru.ac.uk/pdf/dp2515.pdf).

Popenoe, D. (1993) "American family decline 1960-1990: a review and appraisal." Journal of Marriage and Family 55: 527-542.

Riggio, H.R. (2004) "Parental marital conflict and divorce, parent-child relationships, social support, and relationship anxiety in young adulthood." Personal Relationships 11: pp.99-114.

Roberts, R.E.L, Richards, L.N. and Bengston, V.L. (1991) "Intergenerational solidarity in families: untangling the ties that bind." Marriage and Family Review 16: 11-46.

Royal Commission on Long Term Care (1999) With respect to old age: long term care – rights and responsibilities. London: TSO.

Seltzer J. (1991) "Relationships between fathers and children who live apart: the fathers role after separation." Journal of Marriage and the Family 53: 79-102.

Seltzer, J.A. and Bianci, S.M. (1988) "Children's contact with absent parents." Journal of Marriage and Family 50: 663-677.

Shapiro, A. (2003) "Later-Life Divorce and Parent-Adult Child Contact and Proximity : A Longitudinal Analysis." Journal of Family Issues 24: 264-285.

Silverstein, M. (1995)

Silverstein, M., Gans, D. and Yang, F. (2006) "Intergenerational support to aging parents: the role of norms and needs." Journal of Family Issues 27: 1068-1084.

Smyer, M.A. and Hofland, B.F. (1982) "Divorce and family support in later life." Journal of Family Issues 3: 61-77.

Spitze, G., Logan, J.R., Deane, G. and Zerger, S. (1994) "Adult children's divorce and intergenerational relationships." Journal of Family and Marriage 56: 279-293.

Stacey, J. (1993) "Good riddance to 'the family': a response to David Popenoe." Journal of Marriage and the Family 52: 545-547.

The Observer (20/11/2011) "Life begins at 60 for the newly divorced." (accessed 20/3/2012 http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/nov/20/yvonne-roberts-over-60s-divorce).

Tillman, K. H. (2007) "Family structure pathways and academic disadvantage among adolescents in step families." Sociological Enquiry 77: 383-424.

Tomassini, C. (2005) "The demographic characteristics of the oldest old in the United Kingdom." Population Trends 120: pp.24-32.

Tomassini, C. (2007) Family disruption and support in later life: a comparative study between the UK and Italy, *Journal of Social Issues* 63: pp.845-863.

Vlachantoni, A. Shaw, R. Willis, R. Evandrou, M. Falkingham, J. & Luff, R. (2011) "Measuring unmet need for social care among older people." CPC Briefing Paper 3, ESRC Centre for Population Change.

Wanless, D. (2006) Securing good social care for older people: taking a long-term view. London: King's Fund.

Wells, Y.D. and Johnson, T.M. (2001) "Impact of parental divorce on willingness of young adults to provide care for parents in the future." Journal of Family Studies 7: 160-170.

Woodward, L. and Fergusson, D. M. (2000) "Timing of parental separation and attachment to parents in adolescence: results of a prospective study from birth to age 16." Journal of Marriage and the Family 62: 162-174