Divorce, Intergenerational Solidarity, and Perceived Support*

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Abstract

Using two waves of the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study, I examine how parental divorce and remarriage affect parent-child relationships and exchanges in midlife, and consequently how parents' ties with their children affect parental perceptions of support availability in late life, with particular attention to gender differences. This analysis shows that parental divorce lowers parent-child solidarity in midlife, particularly for fathers. Divorced parents are also less likely than married parents to name their adult children as a potential source of support. Remarriage and having stepchildren do not improve parental beliefs about potential support from adult children. Surprisingly, the association between parental divorce and perceptions of support cannot be explained by intergenerational solidarity in midlife.

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Adult children are an important source of support for parents in old age, yet the high prevalence of parental divorce and remarriage have changed parent-child relationships and the patterns of adult children's support to their older parents. Some researchers supporting the *family decline argument* suspect that parental divorce weakens children's ties with their parents, resulting in less support from children when their divorced parents become frail (Popenoe, 1993). Indeed, recent studies confirm that parental divorce has negative consequences for adult children's care of their older parents and the impacts tend to be more detrimental for fathers than for mothers (Amato, Rezac, & Booth, 1995; Aquilino, 1994; Cooney & Uhlenberg, 1990; Furstenberg, Hoffman, & Shrestha, 1995; Lye et al., 1995; Pezzin & Schone, 1999). Other researchers supporting the *expanded network argument* posit that because people usually remarry after their divorce, experiencing multiple marriages actually expands kin networks, which may subsequently increase the likelihood and amount of assistance that remarried parents could receive from adult children (Furstenberg, 1981; Riley, 1983; Wachter, 1998). However, empirical evidence so far shows that parental remarriage has a negative association or no association with adult children's transfer, contact, and relationships with their parents (Cooney & Uhlenberg, 1990; Lye et al., 1995; Pezzin & Schone, 1999).

While most prior studies have centered on the long-term consequences of parental divorce for adult children's actual support of their older parents, little is known about the extent to which divorce and remarriage shape older parents' beliefs about the availability of support from adult children in times of need. Perceptions of potential support from adult children are as important as actual support for older parents because people who perceive support availability are able to cope with stressful events better and engage in more health-promoting behavior than

are people who perceive little or no support (Kessler & McLeod, 1985; Krause, 1997a, 1997b; Ross & Mirowsky, 2002; Schmitz, Russell, & Cutrona, 1997; Shaw & Janevic, 2004; Wethington & Kessler, 1986). Thus far, two studies have examined the consequences of parental divorce and remarriage for older parents' beliefs about potential support (Cooney & Uhlenberg, 1990; Curran, McLanahan, & Knab, 2003), but both studies are limited in the way they approach the question. Cooney and Uhlenberg focus exclusively on older fathers, while Curran et al. pay attention to anticipated support from kin in general. Neither of the studies examines whether the association between parental divorce and perceptions of support in late life is mediated by intergenerational solidarity, as many family researchers assume.

In this paper, I attempt to fill the gap in the literature by examining gender differences in divorced and remarried parents' beliefs about potential financial assistance, emotional support, and sick care from adult children. I use two waves of data from the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study that follows a cohort of high school graduates from young adulthood to retirement age. The data provide a valuable opportunity for researchers to examine how parental divorce affects parent-child relationships and exchanges in midlife, and consequently how parents' ties with their children affect parental perceptions of support availability in late life. These are timely research questions because people who experienced striking increases in divorce in the 1970s will be passing into old age during the next decades. It is important for researchers and policymakers to understand the long-term consequences of divorce and remarriage for older parents' well-being.

Theory and Hypotheses

Parental divorce and the parent-child relationship in midlife

Parental divorce disrupts the ongoing exchanges of emotional and instrumental support between parents and their children. Bengtson and his colleagues develop a typology summarizing the principal components of solidarity between generations, including structure, association, affect, consensus, function, and norms (Bengtson & Schrader, 1982; Roberts, Richards, & Bengtson, 1991). In their latent class analysis of these six components, Silverstein and Bengtson (1997) find three dimensions underlying intergenerational family relationships: affinity (emotional closeness and consensus of opinion between generations), opportunity structure (frequency of contact between parents and their children), and function (providing and receiving support across generations).[1]

Parental divorce is likely to weaken adult children's relationships with their fathers because most children live with their mothers after parental divorce and men's bonds to their children are usually through their ties to the children's mother (Furstenberg, 1988; Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991; Townsend, 2002). Once the union dissolves, the bonds between fathers and their children are likely to weaken. Remarriage could weaken children's relationships with their fathers further, as remarried fathers are likely to diminish their support to children due to the increasing demands from the new obligations to children acquired in the subsequent marriages (Furstenberg, 1995). Past research has consistently shown that parental divorce and remarriage have negative consequences for adult children's relationships with their fathers. Compared with older fathers who are still married to their children's mother, divorced fathers are more likely to have a detached relationship with their adult children (Rossi & Rossi, 1990; Silverstein & Bengtson, 1997) and are less likely to coreside with their children, to have frequent contact with nonresident children, or to receive help with household errands or activities of daily living from

[1] On the basis of Bengtson's conceptualization, Rossi and Rossi (1990) also developed four measures of parent-child relationships similar to the measures used in this study: affectional solidarity (closeness), consensual solidarity (similarity), associational solidarity (frequency of contact), and functional solidarity (help between generations).

their adult children (Aquilino, 1994; Cooney & Uhlenberg, 1990; Furstenberg, Hoffman, & Shrestha, 1995; Lye et al., 1995; Pezzin & Schone, 1999; Silverstein & Bengtson, 1997; White, 1992).

Parental divorce is also likely to weaken adult children's relationships with their mothers because divorced resident mothers have fewer resources to invest in their children, compared with married parents (Hoffman & Duncan, 1988). Divorce often causes emotional stress as well, consequently reducing resident mothers' energy to devote to their children (Astone & McLanahan, 1991; Furstenberg & Nord, 1985; Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1978; Thomson, McLanahan, & Curtin, 1992). Remarriage may further weaken children's relationships with their mothers as the norm of a remarried spouse's interaction with children in a stepfamily is often ambiguous (Cherlin, 1978; Ganong & Coleman, 1999) and stepfathers may be perceived by stepchildren as competing for their mothers' time and attention (Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991). Empirical findings regarding the effects of parental divorce and remarriage on adult children's relationships with their mothers are less consistent than the findings for divorced fathers. While some researchers find that mothers' divorce and remarriage decreases parent-child contact, the quality of parent-child relationships, instrumental support, and care in late life (Amato, Rezac, & Booth, 1995; Aquilino, 1994; Furstenberg, Hoffman, & Shrestha, 1995; Lye et al., 1995; Silverstein & Bengtson, 1997; White, 1992), other researchers find that parental divorce and remarriage have no association with coresidence, frequency of visits, and adult children's provision of support to their older mothers (Aquilino, 1994; Lye et al., 1995; Pezzin & Schone, 1999). Still others find that adult children who experienced parental divorce and remarriage report a better relationship with their resident parents than do adult children whose resident parents do not remarry (Lye et al., 1995). Based on the literature reviewed above, I expect that in

this study parental divorce and remarriage have a negative association with parents' relationships with their adult children (affinity, opportunity structure, and function) and the association is likely to be stronger for men than for women.

Parental divorce and perceived support from adult children in late life

Prior researchers suggest that older Americans have a network of potential support that can be called upon in times of need (Antonucci, 1990; Cantor, 1979; Riley, 1983). The network of potential helpers is usually ranked hierarchically depending on the convoy of the kinship system and the nature of the task (Cantor, 1979; Litwak, 1985). Spouses are most likely to be named as potential helpers. When spouses are not available, adult children are the primary source of emergency aid. There are gender differences in ranking the hierarchy of potential helpers, however. Because women, on average, have a longer life expectancy than men, older men generally expect more help from their spouses and less help from their children than do older women (Hogan & Eggebeen, 1995; Spitz & Ward, 2000). Thus, in this study, I expect that older women are more likely than older men to ask their children for help in times of need.

Parental divorce may reduce older parents' anticipation of receiving support from adult children because divorce weakens the bonds between parents and their children. Using the first wave of the National Survey of Families and Households, Cooney and Uhlenberg (1990) find that ever-divorced fathers are less likely to consider their adult children as a potential source of support, compared with older fathers who are still married to their children's mother. Curran and her colleagues (2003), using the same data, also find that divorce reduces older men's perceptions of having kin versus nonkin for emergency aid and advice. Thus, in this study, I expect that divorced parents are less likely to name adult children as their potential helpers,

compared with parents whose marriage stays intact. Moreover, the association between parental divorce and the belief of support availability from adult children is likely to be stronger for men than for women because divorced fathers generally have a weaker tie with their children than divorced mothers do.

On the other hand, parental remarriage may offset the negative consequences of parental divorce on older parents' perceptions of potential support from adult children. Because people who divorce are likely to remarry and remarriage expands kin networks by increasing the number of biological and step children, multiple marriages may increase older parents' perceptions of adult children's support availability. The evidence supporting this argument is mixed, however. Curran and her colleagues (2003) find that multiple marriages increase fathers' perceptions of emergency aid from kin, but Cooney and Uhlenberg (1990) show that among divorced fathers, remarriage and having stepchildren or additional biological children do not affect fathers' subjective evaluations. Because women are usually kin-keepers, if multiple marriages increase older parents' perceptions of adult children's support, I would expect that the effect is stronger for women than for men. In other words, women benefit more from multiple marriages than men do.

This study addresses a gap in the literature on the long-term consequences of parental divorce and remarriage for older parents' anticipated support from adult children. Using a longitudinal study that follows the same parents from young adulthood to late life, I am able to examine how parental divorce and remarriage affect parents' and children's emotional closeness and consensus of opinion (affinity), coresidence and frequency of contact (opportunity structure), and exchanges (function) in midlife. I am also able to examine whether parent-child solidarity in

midlife mediates the association between parental divorce and parents' subjective evaluations of adult children's support availability.

Data

Two waves (1992 – 1993 and 2003 – 2005) of the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study (WLS) are used in this analysis. The WLS is a longitudinal study of a random sample of 10,317 men and women who graduated from Wisconsin high schools in 1957. Survey data were collected from the graduates in 1957, 1975, 1992, and 2003. Both the 1992 and the 2003 surveys were administered by telephone and mail. The response rates for the graduates in both telephone surveys are 87% and 88%, respectively; the response rate for the graduates in the 1992 mail survey is 80% (the information about the recent mail survey was not yet available at the time when this paper was prepared). Of the 10,317 graduates, 1,293 died (12.5%), 3,496 did not respond to both the 1992 and the 2003 surveys (33.9%), 3,141 were not selected, at random, to answer detailed questions about a randomly selected child (30.4%), 58 had a selected child who died by 2003 (0.6%), and 42 had a selected child who was not acquired by birth or adoption during a marriage (0.4%). As a result, the analytic sample consists of 2,287 graduates who answered questions about a randomly selected living child in the 1992 survey and who completed the 2003 interview. Overall, the select sample is similar to the 1957 original sample in terms of gender composition, living arrangement in high school, sibship size, and parental socioeconomic status. However, compared with the original sample, the select sample tends to have had a better performance in high school, to have a higher IQ, and is less likely to be from a farming background (see Appendix).

Because the WLS follows a cohort of respondents for almost five decades, it provides researchers an excellent opportunity to examine how respondents' divorce affects their relationships with children in midlife and in turn, whether intergenerational solidarity mediates the association between respondents' divorce and their beliefs about potential support from adult children in late life. Prior researchers in this line of research mainly rely on cross-sectional data. The current study advances prior research by examining a recent cohort of older adults who are on the brink of retirement. It also examines whether the association between parental divorce and perceptions of support availability from adult children in old age is attributable to intergenerational solidarity in midlife.

Perceived support

Respondents' perceptions of support from adult children are measured in the 2003 – 2005 survey and consist of three questions. Respondents were asked to whom (other than a spouse) they would turn for assistance if: (a) they had to borrow $250 for a few weeks because of an emergency; (b) they had a personal problem and wanted to talk to someone about it; and (c) they were sick and unable to take care of themselves for a week or more. The response categories include: no one; friends, neighbors, or co-workers; sons or daughters (age 19 or older); parents; brothers or sisters; grandchildren; or other relatives. A dichotomous variable – one if adult children and zero otherwise – was created for the answer to each of the three questions.

Marital status

Because questions about the parent-child relationship in midlife were asked only of respondents who gave detailed information about a randomly selected child, several variables

summarizing respondents' marital history were constructed in reference to the marriage in which the selected child was acquired by birth or adoption. Four dichotomous variables were created for the 1992 – 1993 survey and the 2003 – 2005 survey, respectively: (a) respondents were continuously married to the other parent of the selected child, (b) respondents divorced or separated from the other parent of the selected child and stayed unmarried at the time of the interview, (c) respondents divorced or separated from the other parent of the selected child and remarried, and (d) the other parent of the selected child died. The last group was not further divided into unmarried and remarried groups because in a preliminary analysis I found that remarriage does not affect intergenerational solidarity or perceived support among widows or widowers. Respondents who were continuously married to the other parent of the selected child are treated as the reference group in the multivariate analysis. The divorce effect is the coefficient from combining group (b) and group (c). The comparison of the coefficients between group (b) and group (c) tells us whether remarriage worsens or improves intergenerational solidarity and perceived support among divorced respondents.

Intergenerational solidarity

A series of variables measuring intergenerational solidarity were taken from respondents' responses in the 1992 – 1993 survey. Two items indicate affinity, including similarity between the respondent's and a randomly selected child's general outlook on life, and closeness between the respondent and the selected child. Response categories range from *not at all* (coded 1), *not very* (coded 2), *somewhat* (coded 3), or *very* (coded 4). Respondents' report of coresidence and frequency of contact with the selected child either in person or by letter or phone (ranging from once a year to everyday, 1 – 365) is indicative of opportunity structure. Finally, functional

solidarity is measured by four items: provision or receipt of help with transportation, errands, or shopping; work around the house; advice, encouragement, moral, or emotional support; and childcare during the past month. Four dichotomous variables were created: (a) respondents both provided and received any of the four types of support; (b) respondents provided but did not receive any of the support; (c) respondents received but did not provide any of the support; and (d) respondents neither provided nor received any of the support (the reference group).

Other control variables

Other demographic characteristics are also taken into account in the analysis because previous studies have shown that these characteristics are related to parental divorce, parent-child relationships, and anticipated support from adult children. These characteristics include respondents' age, educational attainment, personal income, self-reported health, number of biological sons, daughters, and stepchildren, and living arrangement. The children's characteristics include gender, genetic ties to the respondents (i.e., biological or not), age, educational attainment, and marital status.

Analytic strategy

Two multivariate analyses were conducted. The first analysis answers whether respondents' divorce and remarriage affect their relationships with their children in midlife. Five outcomes were examined: similar outlook on life, closeness, coresidence, frequency of contact if noncoresidence, and exchange with children (both directions, child to parent only, and parent to child only). Ordinary least squares regression models were used to predict factors that are associated with similarity, closeness, and contact; a logistic regression model was used for

coresidence, and a multinomial logistic regression model was used for exchange with children. The second analysis answers whether intergenerational solidarity mediates the association between respondents' divorce and perceived support. Three outcomes – financial support, emotional support, and sick care – were examined using logistic regression models. The analysis consists of two parts. First, the association between respondents' marital status and perceived support was examined without considering intergenerational solidarity between respondents and the selected child. Next, variables regarding intergenerational solidarity were included to examine whether respondents' marital status and perceived support can be explained by intergenerational solidarity. All analyses were separated by respondents' gender. A multiple imputation procedure was applied to the missing information on the variables used in the analysis (Royston, 2004, 2005). All estimates were obtained using the statistical package Stata (StataCorp, 2005).

Results

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for the variables used in the analysis, separated by male respondents (N = 1,055, 46%) and female respondents (N = 1,232, 54%). By the time of the 1992 – 1993 survey, 78% of the male respondents were married, 20% were divorced (6% not remarried and 14% remarried), and less than 2% were widowed. On average, these male respondents were about 53 years old, had received 14 years of education, and had a personal income of 64,000 dollars. A majority of the male respondents reported good health (4.18 out of a 5-point scale). Approximately one third of the male respondents both provided and received help to and from their adult children (two-way exchange), two in five provided help to their children but did not receive help from them, 3% received help from their children but did not provide help

to them, and one in five did not engage in any form of exchange with their adult children. Compared with the male respondents, the female respondents were slightly less likely to remarry after union dissolution, had received about one fewer years of education, had lower incomes, and were more likely to engage in two-way exchanges with their adult children.

(Table 1 about here)

A decade later, more respondents were divorced (and subsequently remarried) during the 2003 – 2005 survey. Approximately 10% of the female respondents became widowed (as opposed to 3% in 1992). Educational attainment, personal income, and self-reported health remain at about the same level. On average, these parents have 3 biological children and less than 1 stepchild. Approximately 9% of the respondents lived with a child at the time of the interview. Finally, 71%, 63%, and 81% of the male respondents said they would ask adult children for assistance if they had to borrow $250 for a few weeks because of an emergency (financial support), if they had a personal problem and wanted to talk to someone about it (emotional support), and if they were sick and unable to take care of themselves for a week or more (sick care), respectively. Female respondents were more likely than male respondents to mention their adult children for financial support (76%) and emotional support (73%), but they did not differ from male respondents in anticipation of sick care (83%).

Table 1 also shows the characteristics of the selected child in the 1992 and 2003 surveys. For male respondents, half of the selected children were sons and a majority of them were biological children (96%). The children's age ranged from 18 to 37 during 1992 and 1993, with a mean of 26 years old. The average years of education were about 14. Approximately 60% of the selected children were single and more than one third were married. Male respondents also reported that they shared a similar outlook on life with their selected child and were close to the

child (3.18 and 3.51, respectively, out of a 4-point scale). One in five of the selected children lived with the respondents and the average number of contacts in person or by letter or phone was about 3 times a week (= 150 / 52 weeks). The selected children of the female respondents were slightly older than the selected children of the male respondents and thus they were more likely to be married and less likely to live with the respondents. Compared with the male respondents, the female respondents were more likely to perceive that they and the selected child shared similar values and were close, but the frequency of contact did not differ between nonresident fathers and mothers. By 2003, more than two thirds of the selected children were married and only about 3% of the selected children lived with the respondents.

Divorce and intergenerational solidarity in midlife

The first multivariate analysis that examines the association between respondents' martial status and intergenerational solidarity in midlife is shown in Table 2A and Table 2B, with parallel analyses for male respondents and for female respondents. The results in Table 2A indicate that divorced fathers (remarried or not) score 0.16 points lower than married fathers on perceiving that they share a similar outlook on life with their children. Divorced fathers also score 0.26 points lower than married fathers on the closeness scale. The odds of living with a child are roughly three times as high for married fathers as for divorced fathers (= 1 / 0.29). Divorced fathers who lived apart from their selected child have on average 54 fewer contacts in person or by letter or phone a year with the child than do nonresident married fathers. Finally, married fathers have three times the odds of having a two-way exchange (as opposed to no exchange) as divorced fathers (= 1 / 0.32). Divorced fathers are also less likely to receive help from their adult children than are married fathers (0.26). In general, remarriage does not worsen

divorced fathers' perceptions of intergenerational solidarity, except that remarriage significantly reduces divorced fathers' feeling of closeness to his child from a previous relationship (0.01 for not remarried versus –0.38 for remarried, $p < 0.001$). Widowed fathers, regardless of whether they are remarried or not, are similar to married fathers in their relationships with their children.

(Table 2A about here)

Other individual factors are related to intergenerational solidarity. For example, fathers' educational attainment is negatively associated with coresidence but positively associated with a two-way exchange or downstream transfer (from father to child). Fathers' income is positively related to the frequency of contact between fathers and nonresident children. Fathers are more likely to share similar values with their biological, more educated, and married children. Fathers also feel closer to their daughters, educated children, and married children. Older children and children with more education are less likely to live with their fathers than are younger children and children with less education. On the other hand, never-married and divorced children are more likely to live with their fathers and never-married children are more likely to rely on support from their fathers or to help fathers in return, than are married children. Among children who live apart from their fathers, children with more education have less contact with their fathers than do children with less education.

A parallel analysis for female respondents is shown in Table 2B. Unlike divorced fathers, divorced and married mothers do not differ in their perceptions of similarity and closeness with their children. Moreover, divorced mothers are as likely as married mothers to live with their children and make transfers. The only negative consequence of divorce for the mother-child relationship is that divorced mothers have fewer contacts with nonresident children compared with married mothers (–24.77). Mothers' remarriage significantly decreases the likelihood of

divorced mother-child coresidence (1.47 for not remarried versus 0.35 for remarried, $p < 0.05$) and the likelihood of having a two-way exchange between divorced mothers and children (2.19 for not remarried versus 0.73 for remarried, $p < 0.05$). Widowed mothers are similar to married mothers in their relationships with their children, but compared with married mothers, widowed mothers are more likely to receive upstream transfers (child to mother).

(Table 2B about here)

The pattern of the association between other individual factors and intergenerational solidarity for female respondents is similar to that for male respondents. The major differences lie in the fact that mothers' health improves their perceptions of sharing similar opinion with their children but their education decreases mother-child closeness. Unlike fathers, mothers' education and income are unrelated to the likelihood of coresidence and contact. Never-married children are not perceived as closer to their mothers or as engaging more frequently in two-way exchanges or downstream transfers than are married children.

In sum, divorce and remarriage have different consequences for father-child and mother-child relationships in midlife. Divorce worsens all dimensions of intergenerational solidarity (affinity, opportunity structure, and function) for fathers and affects only parent-child contact for mothers. Remarriage significantly decreases divorced fathers' perceptions of closeness to their children from a previous relationship, and decreases the likelihood that divorced mothers will live with their children from a prior marriage and engage in a two-way exchange. Consistent with prior research, this study shows that divorce has a more detrimental consequence for fathers than for mothers and that remarriage is likely to further worsen parents' ties with their children. This study advances prior research by examining whether the association between parental

divorce and perceived support in late life can be explained by different dimensions of intergenerational solidarity in midlife.

Divorce and perceived support

Table 3A shows the results from logistic regression models on the relationship between fathers' perceived support from their adult children and fathers' marital status and other covariates. For each outcome, two separate regression models were run, one with and one without the controls for intergenerational solidarity. Compared with married fathers, divorced fathers, whether remarried or not, are less likely to ask adult children in the future for financial support, emotional support, and sick care (0.59, 0.70, and 0.29, respectively, $p < 0.05$). Taking the father-child relationship in midlife into account, however, does not change the association substantially. Moreover, neither remarriage nor the number of stepchildren improves divorced fathers' perceptions of potential support from adult children, in contrast to what some researchers have suggested (all tests for the two groups of divorced fathers do not reach statistical significance). With regard to other individual characteristics, fathers' increased age decreases their belief that they will obtain care from their adult children during illness; however, the number of biological children significantly increases fathers' perceived support for sick care. Fathers' years of education and number of sons increase their perceived financial support from adult children. Fathers are also more likely to expect support from their older children, their children with more education, and their married children. Having a two-way exchange with adult children in midlife appears to be the important factor increasing fathers' perceptions of future support. Fathers who share a similar outlook on life with their children are more likely to ask for

financial and emotional support in times of need, whereas fathers are more likely to ask their children for sick care when they feel close to the children.

(Table 3A about here)

A parallel analysis for mothers' perceived support is shown in Table 3B. Unlike divorced fathers, divorced mothers are as likely as married mothers to name adult children as a potential source of emotional support and sick care. However, similar to divorced fathers, the odds of divorced mothers mentioning children for financial support are 0.65 times as high as the odds for married mothers. Remarriage and the number of stepchildren do not change divorced mothers' beliefs about potential support from adult children. The association between perceived support and mothers' marital status is not affected by intergenerational solidarity either. Mothers with higher incomes are more likely to expect sick care from their children, compared with mothers with lower incomes. The number of biological children, particular daughters, significantly increases mothers' perceptions of all types of support. Mothers are also likely to perceive support from biological children and educated children. Like fathers, exchange in support at midlife increases mothers' perceptions of support. Felt closeness and frequent contact are also important predictors for emotional support and sick care.

(Table 3B about here)

Summary and Discussion

Questions about how divorce and remarriage shape older parents' perceptions of potential support from adult children in late life will become increasingly important in the next decade as higher proportions of divorced and remarried parents move into retirement age (Kreider, 2005). Using two waves of the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study, this analysis shows that parental divorce

lowers parent-child solidarity in midlife, a consequence that is worse for fathers than for mothers. Specifically, divorced fathers and their children share more divergent views about life, are more distant, are less likely to live together, have less contact in person or by letter or phone when not living together, and are less likely to help each other, compared with married fathers. Divorced fathers are also less likely than married fathers to name their adult children as a potential source of financial support, emotional support, or sick care. Remarriage (and having stepchildren) does not appear to improve fathers' beliefs about potential support from adult children. Mothers are also harmed by their divorce and remarriage. Compared with married mothers, divorced mothers are less likely to live with and engage in exchange with their children in midlife and to ask adult children for emergency financial support in late life. Remarriage significantly decreases divorced mothers' contact with their nonresident children. Contrary to what prior research suggests, the association between parents' divorce and their perceptions of support cannot be explained by intergenerational solidarity in midlife, although prior experience of mutual support consistently increases parental beliefs about the support availability from adult children.

This study has several limitations. First, the WLS sample is mostly white and consists of respondents who received at least a high school degree. Thus, it is unclear the extent to which the results can be generalized to minority groups and people without a high school degree. To gauge the possible effect of race and education, I selected a group of older white respondents (age 62 - 67) who have received at least a high school degree in the NSFH (1987 – 1988) and compared their responses to the WLS sample. The results summarized below need to be interpreted with caution, however, because both surveys refer to different birth cohorts and questions in the

NSFH and the WLS were not identically worded.[2] Whereas the number of WLS respondents who named adult children as a potential source of financial support, emotional support, and sick care is 65.8%, 60.6%, and 74.0%, respectively, the corresponding percentage in the NSFH is lower: 51.8%, 47.4%, and 56.6%, respectively (weighted results). African Americans and Hispanics in the NSFH are less likely than Whites to mention adult children for emotional support and sick care. As for financial support, African Americans are less likely and Hispanics are more likely to expect help from adult children, compared with Whites. Older adults without a high school degree are more likely than older adults with a high school degree to rely on their adult children for emotional support and advice.

Another limitation of the study is that support perceptions may be influenced more by personality traits that have been present throughout life, than by current life circumstances. For example, people who have a positive outlook on life may have a better quality of marital relationship with their spouse and may view their interactions with their children more positively than those who have negative life views (McCrae & Costa, 1999). Because the WLS also asked respondents questions about the big-5 personality traits, I am able to examine the extent to which the association between parental divorce and perceived support is affected by respondents' personality. Only one component of personality is related to parents' beliefs about potential support from adult children: conscientiousness (being orderly, responsible, and dependable) is negatively associated with mothers' beliefs about financial support but it is positively associated with fathers' beliefs about emotional support. Taking into account parents' personality traits,

[2] In the NSFH, respondents were asked (a) whom they would call if they had an emergency in the middle of the night and needed help, (b) whom they would ask for help if they had to borrow $200 for a few weeks because of an emergency, and (c) whom they would ask for help or advice if they had a problem and were feeling depressed or confused about what to do.

however, does not affect the association between parental divorce and perceived support (results not shown).

The final limitation of the study is the lack of information on children's proximity to respondents' residences. Parents are likely to perceive potential support for sick care when children live nearby than when they live far away. However, the lack of information on proximity should have little consequence for the results regarding perceived financial and emotional support, since these two forms of support rely less on proximity than does the provision of sick care.

Despite these limitations, the findings point to important avenues for further research. The most critical finding is that parental divorce and remarriage weaken parental beliefs about support availability from adult children, yet intergenerational solidarity in midlife cannot explain the association. This suggests that other underlying factors lead divorced parents to have lower expectations of receiving support from their children in times of need. Because perceived support is likely to affect older adults' coping skills and health-promoting behavior, it is important for researchers to identify the pathways to improve older adults' well-being. Moreover, although an overwhelming number of parents perceive that they could call on someone for help in an emergency, only two thirds of older parents in need actually received informal support (Hogan & Eggebeen, 1995). Therefore, it is important for researchers to understand the congruence between perceived support and actual support, and how the discrepancy between expected and actual support affects older parents' well-being and the parent-child relationship.

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Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for the Variables Used in the Analysis

	Men		Women		
	M or *%*	*S.D.*	*M* or *%*	*S.D.*	diff
Respondent's characteristics in 1992 - 1993[a]					
Marital status[e]					***
Married	78.04		76.31		
Divorced and not remarried	6.23		8.77		
Divorced and remarried	14.09		11.39		
Widowed and not remarried	0.38		2.13		
Widowed and remarried	1.25		1.39		
Age (52 - 56)	53.35	0.70	53.25	0.65	***
Education (12 - 20)	14.09	2.56	13.32	1.95	***
Personal income	63539.56	54057.48	25078.46	27104.17	***
Self-reported health (1: *very poor* - 5: *excellent*)	4.18	0.64	4.17	0.67	n.s.
Exchange with children					*
No exchange	22.43		11.48		
Two-way exchange	32.22		51.61		
Child helped respondent only	3.13		2.97		
Respondent helped child only	42.21		33.94		
Respondent's characteristics in 2003 - 2005[b]					
Marital status[e]					***
Married	73.92		67.87		
Divorced and not remarried	5.47		8.69		
Divorced and remarried	16.49		13.03		
Widowed and not remarried	1.73		8.44		
Widowed and remarried	2.40		1.97		
Age (63 - 67)	64.35	0.70	64.25	0.65	***
Education (12 - 20)	14.10	2.57	13.34	2.00	***
Personal income	64192.52	75136.79	29323.34	46222.60	***
Self-reported health (1: *very poor* - 5: *excellent*)	4.00	0.69	4.02	0.68	n.s.
Number of biological or adopted sons	1.45	1.00	1.53	1.06	n.s.
Number of biological or adopted daughters	1.41	1.02	1.53	1.11	*
Number of stepchildren	0.22	0.79	0.18	0.79	n.s.
Lived with a child (1 = *yes*)	8.91		8.85		n.s.
Would ask child for financial support (1 = *yes*)	71.10		76.40		**
Would ask child for emotional support (1 = *yes*)	62.98		73.34		***
Would ask child for sick care (1 = *yes*)	80.98		83.14		n.s.
Random child's characteristics in 1992 - 1993[c]					
Gender (1 = *son*)	51.28		50.97		n.s.
Biological child (1 = *yes*)	95.73		97.16		n.s.

Age (18 - 37)	26.39	3.91	28.48	3.97	***
Education (1 - 24)	14.17	2.22	14.22	2.29	n.s.
Marital status					***
Never married	57.47		41.99		
Married	37.39		51.42		
Divorced or separated	4.95		6.51		
Widowed	0.19		0.08		
Outlook similar to respondent's (1: *not at all* - 4: *very*)	3.18	0.66	3.32	0.65	***
Closeness to respondent (1: *not at all* - 4: *very*)	3.51	0.63	3.73	0.50	***
Lived with respondent (1 = *yes*)	19.14		12.68		***
Contact with respondent if noncoresidence (0 - 365)	150.00	143.07	158.43	137.58	n.s.
Random child's characteristics in 2003 - 2005[d]					
Age (29 - 48)	37.39	3.91	39.48	3.97	***
Education (9 - 24)	14.66	2.40	14.49	2.30	n.s.
Marital status					*
Never married	19.87		15.89		
Married	68.63		72.29		
Divorced or separated	11.50		11.65		
Widowed	0.00		0.16		
Lived with respondent (1 = *yes*)	2.18		3.01		n.s.
N	1055		1232		

Note: The 1992 -1993 and 2003 - 2005 waves of the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study

[a]The percentages of missing cases for respondents' marital status, personal income, self-reported health, and exchange with children in the 1992 - 1993 survey are 1.05%, 9.71%, 0.09%, and 2.40%, respectively.

[b]The percentages of missing cases for respondents' marital status, personal income, self-reported health, coresidence with children, perceived financial support, perceived emotional support, and perceived sick care in the 2003 - 2005 survey are 1.05%, 7.91%, 0.44%, 0.04%, 1.62%, 2.06%, and 1.57%, respectively.

[c]The percentage of missing cases for random child's genetic tie with respondent, age, marital status, closeness, similarity, coresidence and contact with respondent in the 1992 - 1993 survey are 0.09%, 0.04%, 0.31%, 7.17%, 7.48%, 0.31%, and 6.38%, respectively.

[d]The percentage of missing cases for random child's age, education, marital status, and coresidence with respondent in the 2003 - 2005 survey are 0.04%, 0.61%, 0.35%, and 0.04%, respectively.

[e]Marital status refers to the status of the marriage in which the random child was acquired by birth or adoption.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$ n.s. indicates $p > 0.05$

Table 2A. Unstandardized Coefficients (b), Odds Ratios (expb), and Standard Errors (s.e.) for Regression Models of Intergenerational Solidarity among Fathers

									Exchange with Children					
	Similarity		Closeness		Coresidence		Contact[a]		both directions		child to father		father to child	
	b	s.e.	b	s.e.	expb	s.e.	b	s.e.	expb	s.e.	expb	s.e.	expb	s.e.
Respondent's characteristics														
Marital status														
Married (omitted category)														
Divorced and not remarried (1)	-0.12	0.09	0.01	0.08	0.44	0.19	-32.11	14.99*	0.42	0.15*	0.32	0.34	0.71	0.23
Divorced and remarried (2)	-0.18	0.06**	-0.38	0.06***	0.22	0.09***	-62.78	10.08***	0.28	0.08***	0.24	0.18	0.74	0.16
combine (1) and (2)	-0.16	0.05**	-0.26	0.05***	0.29	0.08***	-53.83	8.77***	0.32	0.07***	0.26	0.17*	0.73	0.14
test: (1) = (2)	n.s.		***		n.s.		n.s.		n.s.				n.s.	
Widowed	-0.02	0.16	-0.16	0.15	0.52	0.40	-29.04	27.33	1.01	0.86	3.09	3.98	1.94	1.51
Age	-0.02	0.03	0.02	0.03	0.98	0.13	1.87	5.49	0.89	0.11	0.87	0.23	0.83	0.10
Education	0.00	0.01	-0.02	0.01	0.87	0.04**	-2.05	1.67	1.14	0.05*	1.12	0.10	1.10	0.05*
ln (Personal income)	-0.01	0.03	-0.03	0.03	0.93	0.11	12.92	4.56**	0.88	0.10	1.17	0.34	1.00	0.12
Self-reported health	0.05	0.03	0.02	0.03	1.10	0.17	6.03	5.61	0.88	0.13	0.62	0.18	1.04	0.14
Random child's characteristics														
Gender (1 = *son*)	-0.04	0.04	-0.15	0.04***	1.25	0.24	-19.69	7.38**	1.38	0.25	1.67	0.66	1.33	0.23
Biological child (1 = *yes*)	0.25	0.10*	0.20	0.10	0.62	0.24	3.72	20.75	1.90	0.85	0.52	0.33	1.70	0.66
Age	-0.01	0.01	-0.01	0.01	0.81	0.02***	-1.69	1.17	0.98	0.03	0.91	0.06	0.97	0.02
Education	0.05	0.01***	0.03	0.01**	0.88	0.04**	-8.72	1.78***	1.07	0.05	1.06	0.11	1.05	0.04
Marital status														
Married (omitted category)														
Never married	-0.18	0.05***	-0.14	0.05**	17.61	7.90***	-8.78	8.34	0.47	0.11**	0.49	0.24	0.45	0.10***
Divorced or widowed	0.01	0.11	-0.13	0.09	6.15	4.60*	-18.54	15.74	0.99	0.46	1.03	1.16	1.31	0.55
Constant	3.84	1.71*	2.72	1.60			55.66	301.89						
Log likelihood	-1037.52		-963.57		-359.71		-5110.69				-1186.65			
N	1055		1055		1055		854				1055			

Note: The 1992 - 1993 wave of the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study. Missing values are imputed using multiple imputation methods.

[a]Only those fathers who did not live with the random child were included in the model.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, n.s. indicates $p > 0.05$

Table 2B. Unstandardized Coefficients (b), Odds Ratios (expb), and Standard Errors (s.e.) for Regression Models of Intergenerational Solidarity among Mothers

									Exchange with Children					
	Similarity		Closeness		Coresidence		Contact[a]		both directions		child to father		father to child	
	b	s.e.	b	s.e.	expb	s.e.	b	s.e.	expb	s.e.	expb	s.e.	expb	s.e.
Respondent's characteristics														
Marital status														
Married (omitted category)														
Divorced and not remarried (1)	-0.02	0.07	-0.06	0.06	1.47	0.50	-24.04	13.49	2.19	0.93	1.20	0.90	1.20	0.55
Divorced and remarried (2)	0.04	0.06	-0.03	0.05	0.35	0.17*	-25.24	11.40*	0.73	0.21	0.14	0.15	0.64	0.20
combine (1) and (2)	0.02	0.05	-0.04	0.04	0.85	0.24	-24.77	9.41***	1.10	0.28	0.39	0.24	0.18	0.22
test: (1) = (2)	n.s.		n.s.		*		n.s.		*		n.s.		n.s.	
Widowed	-0.20	0.11	-0.07	0.09	1.20	0.66	-34.49	20.21	6.06	6.22	11.57	15.57*	2.73	2.91
Age	-0.01	0.03	0.04	0.02	0.97	0.17	-3.37	5.66	0.85	0.13	0.90	0.28	0.89	0.15
Education	-0.01	0.01	-0.02	0.01*	0.95	0.06	-2.03	2.23	1.21	0.07*	1.05	0.14	1.11	0.07
ln (Personal income)	0.02	0.02	0.00	0.01	1.01	0.10	-0.90	3.22	0.93	0.09	1.21	0.26	0.93	0.09
Self-reported health	0.10	0.03**	0.05	0.02	0.86	0.13	3.93	5.61	0.91	0.14	0.64	0.18	1.10	0.17
Random child's characteristics														
Gender (1 = *son*)	-0.02	0.04	-0.06	0.03*	1.20	0.27	-45.94	7.37**	0.69	0.14	0.52	0.21	0.82	0.17
Biological child (1 = *yes*)	0.46	0.13***	0.18	0.10	0.94	0.52	29.84	25.31	1.17	0.72	0.00	0.00	0.90	0.53
Age	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.85	0.03***	-1.48	1.25	1.04	0.03	1.21	0.07**	1.05	0.03
Education	0.04	0.01***	0.02	0.01*	0.81	0.05***	-8.18	1.79***	0.97	0.05	0.91	0.08	0.95	0.05
Marital status														
Married (omitted category)														
Never married	-0.24	0.05***	-0.03	0.04	28.88	14.17***	-16.70	8.99	0.73	0.18	2.10	0.99	0.68	0.17
Divorced or widowed	-0.16	0.08	-0.02	0.07	13.75	8.70**	4.25	15.50	0.70	0.31	0.64	0.56	0.93	0.41
Constant	2.65	1.67	1.42	1.31			490.29	312.37						
Log likelihood	-1112.80		-855.29		-298.56		-6300.21				-1205.43			
N	1232		1232		1232		1076				1232			

Note: The 1992 - 1993 wave of the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study. Missing values are imputed using multiple imputation methods.

[a]Only those mothers who did not live with the random child were included in the model.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, n.s. indicates $p > 0.05$

Table 3A. Odds Ratios (expb) and Standard Errors (s.e.) for Regression Models of Fathers' Perceived Support from Adult Children

	Financial support						Emotional support						Sick care					
	expb	s.e.		expb	s.e.		expb	s.e.		expb	s.e.		expb	s.e.		expb	s.e.	
Respondent's characteristics																		
Marital status																		
Married (omitted category)																		
Divorced and not remarried (1)	0.57	0.17		0.63	0.19		0.95	0.28		1.06	0.32		0.35	0.11	**	0.39	0.13	**
Divorced and remarried (2)	0.59	0.12	*	0.66	0.15		0.61	0.13	*	0.69	0.15		0.27	0.06	***	0.32	0.08	***
combine (1) and (2)	0.59	0.11	**	0.65	0.12	*	0.70	0.12	*	0.79	0.15		0.29	0.06	***	0.35	0.07	***
test: (1) = (2)	n.s.			n.s.			n.s.			n.s.			n.s.			n.s.		
Widowed	1.22	0.47		1.14	0.45		1.61	0.62		1.56	0.63		0.52	0.22		0.48	0.21	
Age	0.84	0.09		0.84	0.09		0.93	0.09		0.93	0.09		0.78	0.09	*	0.77	0.09	*
Education	1.11	0.04	**	1.10	0.04	*	1.00	0.03		0.99	0.03		0.99	0.04		0.98	0.04	
ln(Personal income)	0.92	0.09		0.89	0.09		1.11	0.10		1.09	0.10		1.04	0.12		1.02	0.12	
Self-reported health	0.99	0.11		1.00	0.11		0.98	0.10		0.98	0.10		1.16	0.14		1.16	0.15	
Number of biological sons	1.31	0.12	**	1.27	0.12	**	1.00	0.08		0.97	0.08		1.31	0.14	*	1.26	0.14	*
Number of biological daughters	1.14	0.10		1.11	0.10		1.13	0.09		1.12	0.09		1.78	0.20	***	1.77	0.21	***
Number of stepchildren	1.04	0.11		1.06	0.11		0.92	0.09		0.93	0.09		1.23	0.15		1.26	0.16	
Lived with a child (1 = yes)	1.20	0.32		1.28	0.35		1.12	0.27		1.17	0.29		1.30	0.43		1.36	0.46	
Random child's characteristics																		
Gender (1 = *son*)	0.89	0.16		0.89	0.16		0.95	0.15		0.98	0.17		1.07	0.23		1.11	0.25	
Biological child (1 = *yes*)	1.53	0.51		1.43	0.49		0.69	0.24		0.58	0.21		1.28	0.49		1.16	0.46	
Age	1.06	0.02	**	1.05	0.02	*	1.05	0.02	*	1.04	0.02		1.03	0.02		1.03	0.03	
Education	1.15	0.04	***	1.13	0.04	**	1.05	0.03		1.02	0.04		0.98	0.04		0.96	0.04	
Marital status																		
Married (omitted category)																		
Never married	0.85	0.16		0.97	0.19		0.87	0.15		1.02	0.19		0.88	0.19		1.02	0.23	
Divorced or widowed	0.65	0.14		0.65	0.15		0.57	0.12	**	0.57	0.13	*	0.74	0.19		0.74	0.20	
Outlook similar to respondent				1.32	0.17	*				1.47	0.18	**				1.14	0.18	
Closeness to respondent				1.11	0.16					1.22	0.16					1.41	0.22	*
Contact with respondent				1.00	0.00					1.00	0.00					1.00	0.00	
Exchange with children																		

No exchange (omitted category)												
Two-way exchange		2.27	0.48	***		2.11	0.41	***		2.37	0.59	**
Respondent to child only		1.26	0.23			1.10	0.20			1.35	0.29	
Child to respondent only		2.05	0.97			1.14	0.46			2.85	1.67	
Log likelihood	-586.65		-571.92		-670.31		-646.93		-463.08		-448.75	
N	1055		1055		1055		1055		1055		1055	

Note: The 1992 - 1993 and 2003 - 2005 waves of the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study. Missing values are imputed using multiple imputations methods.
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, n.s. indicates $p > 0.05$

Table 3B. Odds Ratios (expb) and Standard Errors (s.e.) for Regression Models of Mothers' Perceived Support from Adult Children

	Financial support						Emotional support						Sick care					
	expb	s.e.		expb	s.e.		expb	s.e.		expb	s.e.		expb	s.e.		expb	s.e.	
Respondent's characteristics																		
Marital status																		
Married (omitted category)																		
Divorced and not remarried (1)	0.68	0.17		0.63	0.16		0.78	0.19		0.72	0.18		0.86	0.26		0.83	0.25	
Divorced and remarried (2)	0.63	0.15		0.62	0.15		0.84	0.19		0.83	0.20		0.63	0.18		0.68	0.19	
combine (1) and (2)	0.65	0.12	*	0.63	0.12	*	0.81	0.15		0.77	0.14		0.73	0.16		0.75	0.17	
test: (1) = (2)	n.s.			n.s.			n.s.			n.s.			n.s.			n.s.		
Widowed	1.14	0.31		1.06	0.29		1.68	0.44	*	1.57	0.42		1.17	0.38		1.12	0.37	
Age	1.01	0.11		1.02	0.12		0.93	0.10		0.92	0.10		1.01	0.14		1.01	0.14	
Education	1.03	0.04		1.02	0.04		1.04	0.04		1.04	0.04		0.94	0.04		0.93	0.04	
ln(Personal income)	1.07	0.08		1.08	0.09		0.93	0.07		0.94	0.07		1.26	0.11	**	1.28	0.11	**
Self-reported health	1.08	0.12		1.07	0.12		1.14	0.12		1.13	0.12		0.93	0.12		0.95	0.12	
Number of biological sons	1.37	0.12	***	1.33	0.12	**	1.13	0.09		1.10	0.09		1.29	0.13	*	1.28	0.13	*
Number of biological daughters	1.28	0.10	**	1.25	0.10	**	1.27	0.10	**	1.26	0.10	**	1.82	0.20	***	1.79	0.20	***
Number of stepchildren	1.09	0.11		1.08	0.12		1.02	0.10		1.01	0.10		1.26	0.18		1.23	0.18	
Lived with a child (1 = yes)	0.98	0.27		0.97	0.27		0.65	0.16		0.61	0.15	*	2.16	0.87		1.93	0.78	
Random child's characteristics																		
Gender (1 = *son*)	2.14	0.83		2.07	0.81		2.49	0.94		2.26	0.88		1.71	0.71		1.65	0.70	
Biological child (1 = *yes*)	0.99	0.17	*	1.02	0.18		0.75	0.12	*	0.79	0.13	*	0.94	0.19		0.99	0.21	
Age	1.01	0.02		1.01	0.02		1.00	0.02		0.99	0.02		0.98	0.02		0.99	0.02	
Education	1.14	0.04	***	1.14	0.04	**	1.02	0.03		1.01	0.03		0.97	0.04		0.99	0.04	
Marital status																		
Married (omitted category)																		
Never married	1.19	0.25		1.24	0.27		1.08	0.21		1.16	0.24		0.76	0.17		0.74	0.17	
Divorced or widowed	0.96	0.22		0.98	0.22		0.76	0.16		0.78	0.16		0.88	0.24		0.88	0.24	
Outlook similar to respondent				1.06	0.15					1.14	0.16					1.02	0.16	
Closeness to respondent				1.20	0.19					1.40	0.23	*				0.98	0.19	
Contact with respondent				1.00	0.00					1.00	0.00					1.00	0.00	*
Exchange with children																		

No exchange (omitted category)												
Two-way exchange		1.61	0.37	*		1.61	0.37	*		1.50	0.39	
Respondent to child only		1.15	0.27			0.93	0.21			1.09	0.28	
Child to respondent only		1.54	0.75			2.21	1.15			1.87	1.11	
Log likelihood	-624.79		-619.66		-668.43		-653.88		-449.6		-493.8	
N	1232		1232		1232		1232		1232		1232	

Note: The 1992 - 1993 and 2003 - 2005 waves of the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study. Missing values are imputed using multiple imputation methods.
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, n.s. indicates $p > 0.05$

Appendix. Comparison between Original Sample and Analytic Sample

	Original Sample		Analytic Sample		
	M or *%*	*S.D.*	*M* or *%*	*S.D.*	diff
Gender (1 = *male*)	48.39		46.13		n.s.
High school grades percentile rank	100.45	14.96	102.83	14.44	***
IQ scores	100.46	14.92	102.56	14.37	***
Lived with both parents in high school	89.89		90.38		n.s.
Number of siblings	3.25	2.57	3.21	2.43	n.s.
Father's education	9.72	3.36	9.75	3.39	n.s.
Mother's education	10.39	2.83	10.51	2.81	n.s.
Parental income	5873.37	3253.23	5929.66	3223.34	n.s.
Farmer background (1 = *yes*)	82.80		80.37		**
Father's occupation-education score	208.84	220.90	210.52	222.70	n.s.
Father's occupation-income score	291.49	202.50	294.69	203.71	n.s.
N	10317		2287		

Note: The 1957 wave of the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, n.s. indicates $p > 0.05$