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TITLE: Examining the Causal Link between Divorce and Mental Health of their Offspring Using the Cross-Generational Sibling Comparison Model

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ABSTRACT:

Children of divorce have increased depression, anxiety, and perform worse in school. These consequences affect subsequent generations (Amato & Cheadle, 2005), suggesting a heritable ‘divorce-induced’ epigenetic modification or a genetic mediation as a result of neuroticism and extraversion (Jocklin, McGue & Lykken, 1996). Therefore, we aim to understand whether divorce actually affects an individual’s wellbeing or reflects those same genetic components.

Using the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979, we examined the cross-generational impact of divorce on mental health (according to the Behavior Problems and Child Depression Report), following individuals of different ages. We compared maternal cousins using the discordant kinship model (Garrison & Rogers, 2016). Controlling for genetic confounds, results suggest that divorce does not impact children's mental health by itself, however, the timing of a divorce might be a factor.

Amato, P. and Cheadle, J. (2005), The long reach of divorce: Divorce and child well-being across three generations. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 67: 191-206. doi:10.1111/j.0022-2445.2005.00014.x.

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Jocklin, V., McGue, M., & Lykken, D. T. (1996). Personality and divorce: A genetic analysis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71(2), 288–299. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.71.2.288>.

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