

Some pages of this thesis may have been removed for copyright restrictions.

If you have discovered material in AURA which is unlawful e.g. breaches copyright, (either yours or that of a third party) or any other law, including but not limited to those relating to patent, trademark, confidentiality, data protection, obscenity, defamation, libel, then please read our [Takedown Policy](#) and [contact the service](#) immediately

Adolescents and the Experience
of Parental Divorce;
Including Reference to the Expectations
of Teacher Trainees

David McLoughlin

Doctor of Philosophy
The University of Aston in Birmingham

September, 1982

University of Aston in Birmingham

ADOLESCENTS AND THE EXPERIENCE OF
PARENTAL DIVORCE;
INCLUDING REFERENCE TO THE EXPECTATIONS
OF TEACHER TRAINEES

David McLoughlin

Doctor of Philosophy

1982

SUMMARY:

The aims of this study were to investigate the impact of parental divorce on adolescents, and the expectations of teacher trainees with regard to children of divorce. The literature related to children of divorce is reviewed and the results of interviews with a sample of recently divorced custodial parents and their adolescent children, using a structured interview schedule, are described. The semantic differential technique was used to obtain ratings of a sample of teacher trainees' expectations of children of divorce as compared with their ratings of several other categories of children.

The results of the interviews with parents and their adolescent children suggested that parental divorce does not necessarily interfere with adolescent development, and that for some adolescents the reduction of conflict in the home might enhance normal development. They also suggest that adolescents would prefer to live in a one parent home rather than a two parent home which is fraught with conflict, and that it is preferable for parents who are unable to resolve such conflict in any other way to separate rather than allow it to persist.

The ratings of children of divorce by teacher trainees suggest that they hold more negative expectations of such children than of other groups such as adopted children. The contrast between this finding and the results of the interviews with adolescents and their parents lends some support to the existence of the divorce myth; that is, the cultural belief that divorce has the inherent power to make people unhappy. The implications for policy, practice and further research are discussed.

Key Words: Adolescence
Children of Divorce
Divorce
Teacher Expectations

PREFACE

This work was carried out during a three year period beginning in October, 1979. During this time the author was a full-time research student at the University of Aston in Birmingham, and was supported by a University Research Studentship, without which the work would not have been possible.

My thanks are due to Mr. M. Wilkinson, Senior Divorce Court Welfare Officer, West Midlands Probation and After-Care Service, who arranged access to records and was an enthusiastic supporter of the project. Also I am grateful to Miss P. Dooley, of the College of St. Paul and St. Mary, Cheltenham, for distributing and collecting questionnaires to students. I should also like to thank several members of the Department of Educational Enquiry: Miss M. Small for arranging access to Comprehensive Schools; Dr. P. Goodyear, who has since left the Department, for his advice on data analysis; Miss W. Bayliss and Miss R. Hawker for their typing and clerical assistance. I am most grateful to Miss R.A. Nott for typing the final draft and for her support.

I would especially like to thank those parents and children who welcomed me into their homes and openly discussed very personal aspects of their lives. Finally, I am particularly indebted to my supervisor, Professor R.C. Whitfield, for his guidance and for providing me with the opportunity to undertake the work.

I declare that this thesis is not, in whole or in part, substantially the same as one which has been submitted to any other university. Except where specifically stated, the work is original. Where modifications of published tests or questionnaires were used these have been duly acknowledged in the text.

David McLoughlin

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Summary		i
Preface		ii
Table of Contents		iv
List of Tables		ix
CHAPTER I	BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT	1
1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	The Divorce Setting	3
1.3	Children in the Divorce Setting	6
1.4	Children and the Divorce Courts	7
1.5	The Need for Research	13
1.6	Summary of Chapter I	20
CHAPTER II	THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES OF DIVORCE FOR CHILDREN	21
2.1	Related Literature	21
2.1.1	One Parent Families as a Homogeneous Group	22
2.1.2	Teacher Expectations and the One Parent Family	23
2.2	Divorce Specific Literature	24
2.2.1	Clinical Studies	25
2.2.2	Theoretical Studies	27
2.2.3	Surveys	29
2.2.4	Divorce as a Process	31
2.3	The Findings of Research	32
2.3.1	Infancy and the Pre-School Years (0-5 Years)	32
2.3.2	School Aged Children (6-12 Years)	43

2.3.3	Adolescents (13-18 Years)	51
2.3.4	Children of Divorce as Adults	60
2.4	Directions for Research	63
2.5	Summary of Chapter II	65
CHAPTER III	DESIGN AND PROCEDURE	67
3.1	Aims of the Project	67
3.2	The Interview Study	70
3.2.1	Instrumentation	70
3.2.2	The Sampling Frame	72
3.2.2	Procedure	74
3.3	The Self-Concept Study	77
3.3.1	Instrumentation	78
3.3.2	The Sampling Frame	79
3.3.3	Procedure	80
3.4	The Expectation Study	80
3.4.1	Instrumentation	81
3.4.2	The Sampling Frame	83
3.4.3	Procedure	84
3.5	Summary of Chapter III	84
CHAPTER IV	PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE DIVORCE EXPERIENCE FOR THEMSELVES AND THEIR CHILDREN	86
4.1	The Sample	86
4.2	Characteristics of the Sample	88
4.2.1	Sex of Parents	88
4.2.2	Age of Parents	88
4.2.3	Occupation and Income	89
4.2.4	Accommodation	90
4.2.5	Number of Children	91

4.2.6	Duration of Marriage	92
4.2.7	Grounds for Divorce	93
4.3	Background to the Divorce	94
4.3.1	Conflict in the Marriage	94
4.3.2	Attempts at Reconciliation	95
4.3.3	Use of Counselling and Support Networks	96
4.3.4	The Marriage and Divorce in Retrospect	97
4.3.5	Advice Parents Would Give to Adolescents About Marriage	98
4.4	Problems Since Divorce	101
4.4.1	Source of the Problem	101
4.4.2	Assistance with Problems	101
4.4.3	Perceived Needs Regarding Assistance	103
4.5	Perception of Children's Reactions to Divorce	104
4.5.1	School Behaviour, Peer and Sibling Relationships	104
4.5.2	Access	107
4.5.3	Positive Versus Negative Effects	108
4.6	Summary of Chapter IV	111
CHAPTER V	ADOLESCENTS AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF THE DIVORCE EXPERIENCE	112
5.1	The Sample	112
5.1.1	Age and Sex	112
5.1.2	Family Composition	113
5.1.3	Education	114
5.2	Family Life Prior to the Separation	114
5.2.1	Inter-Parent Conflict	114
5.2.2	Reaction to Inter-Parent Conflict	115

5.3	Contact with Estranged Parent	118
5.3.1	Adolescents with Contact	118
5.3.2	Adolescents without Contact	118
5.3.3	Access: Whose Decision?	120
5.4	School Performance and Peer Relationships	120
5.4.1	School Performance	120
5.4.2	Peer Relationships	122
5.5	Views on Marriage and Parenthood	124
5.5.1	Attitude to Marriage	124
5.5.2	Attitude to Parenthood	125
5.5.3	Attitude Towards Family Life Education	127
5.6	Needs Regarding Support and Guidance	128
5.6.1	Information	128
5.6.2	Counselling and Advice	130
5.7	Retrospective Feelings About the Divorce Experience	131
5.7.1	Factors Which Caused Unhappiness	131
5.7.2	Divorce Versus Staying Together	135
5.7.3	Advice from Adolescents	136
5.8	The Self-Concept Study	139
5.8.1	The Sample	139
5.8.2	Analysis	139
5.8.3.	Interpretation	142
5.9	Summary of Chapter V	143
CHAPTER VI	THE EXPECTATIONS OF TEACHER TRAINEES WITH REGARD TO CHILDREN OF DIVORCE	146
6.1	The Sample	146
6.2	Results and Analysis	147
6.2.1	Means and Standard Deviations	148

6.2.2	The Factors	149
6.2.3	Scale Construction	156
6.3	Conclusions	160
6.4	Summary of Chapter VI	164
CHAPTER VII	DISCUSSION	165
7.1	Issues of Methodology	165
7.1.1	Enlisting Parents' Co-operation in Research	165
7.1.2	Representative Samples: Are They Important?	168
7.2	Implications of Findings	170
7.2.1	Adolescent Development	170
7.2.2	Parents in Conflict	174
7.2.3	Marriage, Divorce and the Family	176
7.2.4	Policy and Professional Practice	179
7.3	The Divorce Myth: Does It Exist?	182
7.4	The Need for Further Research	183
7.5	Summary of Chapter VII	185
APPENDICES		187
A.	Children of Divorce Interview Schedule	188
B.	Letter to Parents	203
C.	Form for Return	204
D.	Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale	205
E.	Semantic Differential	209
REFERENCES		215

LIST OF TABLES

1.1	Divorces Granted in England and Wales, 1971-1980	4
1.2	Children of Divorcing Couples Under 16 Years in England and Wales, 1971-1980	6
4.1	Response to Invitation to Participate in the Study	86
4.2	Reasons Given for Non-Participation	87
4.3	Proportion of Custodial Fathers and Mothers in the Sample and in Two Studies of Custody Orders	88
4.4	Age of Sample Members Compared with All Divorces Involving Children	89
4.5	Tenure of Accommodation: Sample and Great Britain, 1981	91
4.6	Number of Children Per Couple: Sample and England and Wales, 1980	91
4.7	Duration of Marriage: Sample and All Divorces Involving Children in England and Wales, 1980	92
4.8.	Grounds for Divorce: Sample and England and Wales, 1980	93
4.9	Length of Time Between Difficulties Arising in Marriage and Divorce	94
4.10	Informants' View of the Cause of Marriage Breakdown	98
4.11	Chief Problem Since the Divorce	101
4.12	Perception of Children's School Performance in the Pre-Separation and Post-Divorce Period	104
5.1	Age and Sex of Adolescents in the Sample	113

5.2	Association Between Separation Being a Surprise and Adolescents Being Kept Informed	115
5.3	Association Between Conflict in the Home and the Separation Being a Relief	116
5.4	Association Between Conflict in the Home and Separation/Divorce Being Desirable	117
5.5	Association Between Separation Being a Relief and Separation/Divorce Being Desirable	117
5.6	Association Between Parents' and Adolescents' Information About Access	118
5.7	Association Between Parents' and Adolescents' View of How Schoolwork had been Affected	121
5.8	Number of Adolescents from Two Schools Broken Down by Age	139
5.9	Means and Standard Deviations for Divorced, Two Parent and Normative Groups	141
5.10	Analysis of Variance: Difference Between Means of Divorced and Two Parent Groups	141
6.1	Scale Means and Standard Deviations for Four Categories of Children	147
6.2	Varimax Rotated Factors: Children of Divorce	150
6.3	Varimax Rotated Factors: Adopted Children	152
6.4	Varimax Rotated Factors: Physically Handicapped Children	154
6.5	Varimax Rotated Factors: Educationally Sub-Normal Children	155
6.6	Varimax Rotated Factors: Four Categories of Children	157
6.7	Attitude Towards Children of Divorce Scale	158

6.8	Attitude Towards Adopted Children Scale	158
6.9	Attitude Towards Physically Handicapped Children Scale	159
6.10	Attitude Towards Educationally Sub-Normal Children Scale	159
6.11	Difference Between Scale Means for Children of Divorce, E.S.N. Children, Adopted Children and Physically Handicapped Children	162

CHAPTER I

1. BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

1.1 Introduction

The subject of this dissertation is essentially the impact of parental divorce on adolescent children. There is, however, an underlying theme; that of investigating the existence of what Bernard (1981) has called the divorce myth, "the cultural belief that divorce has the inherent power to make people unhappy", particularly as it relates to children.

My interest in divorce research developed while working as a court counsellor/welfare officer with the Australian Family Court during the period 1976-1978. It would seem natural for research interests to develop out of one's applied work, however, it was the dilemmas that working within the family Court presented that intensified this interest. With a background in educational psychology I took to that situation pre-conceptions about the relationship between divorce and child adjustment and I expected to encounter a large number of emotionally disturbed children.

Contrary to my expectations I was both surprised and impressed by the way in which the majority of children appeared to be coping with what were often very complex situations. Further, in the course of preparing reports for the court on matters such as custody and access it was sometimes necessary to interview children's school teachers, and their reaction was frequently one of surprise as they had been unaware of any

change in the family's circumstances or the child's behaviour and performance. This was in spite of the fact that, theoretically, the counselling service dealt with the more difficult cases; that is, those in which parents were unable to resolve conflicts and disputes themselves and were relying on the court to arbitrate for them.

Recourse to the literature on the subject of children's reactions to divorce did not prove helpful in explaining this discrepancy between expectations and experience. At the time many of the articles which are referred to in Chapter II had yet to be published, and I was surprised at the paucity and dearth of research. Divorce has been regarded as a subject worthy of serious academic endeavour for some years in the United States where Hunt (1975) has remarked that 'as fast as the divorce rate is rising the output of books on divorce seems to be rising even faster'.

Most of the divorce specific studies referred to in Chapter II were undertaken in the United States, but even in that country the need for further research into the consequences of divorce for children has been remarked upon (Levetin, 1979; Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980). In Britain 'surprisingly little direct research has been made into the effects of divorce on children' (Jobling, 1975). When the present project commenced in 1979 there were no equivalents of the American studies. This situation has not changed radically in the past three years and consequently researchers are presented with a relatively uncharted field.

It is because of the lack of systematic research that the subject of children's reactions to divorce might enter into the realm of myth. Bernard adopts Levin's (1959) definition of myth as deviation from, or approximation to, fact. In the absence of systematic research any interpretation of the only fact - that is the raw statistics - can too easily become deviation or approximation. The effects of divorce on children is a matter for investigation not speculation. Thus, when provided with the opportunity to pursue independent research it presented as an ideal topic.

1.2 The Divorce Setting

The Divorce Law Reform Act 1969, which became operative on 1st January 1971, made significant changes to the grounds upon which a married couple could obtain a divorce. The concept of 'matrimonial offence' was dispensed with and 'irretrievable breakdown of marriage' became the sole ground for divorce. The new law provided five 'tests' of irretrievable breakdown, which have since been restated in the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973. These five 'tests' are that:

- (i) the respondent has committed adultery and the petitioner finds it intolerable to live with the respondent;
- (ii) the respondent has behaved in such a way that the petitioner cannot reasonably be expected to live with the respondent;
- (iii) the respondent has deserted the petitioner for at least two years;
- (iv) the spouses have lived apart for at least two years,

- and the respondent consents;
- (v) the spouses have lived apart for at least five years.

To its supporters the passing and implementation of the Divorce Reform Act 1969, was a welcome rejection of the fallacious argument which equates security of marriage with unavailability of divorce (Eekelaar, 1971). To its opponents it was a 'nail in the coffin of the family' as they predicted that it would open the flood gates and produce a spate of divorces (Morton, 1956).

The divorce statistics for the years since 1971 would suggest that the fears of the opponents of the 1969 Act have been realised. Between 1971 and 1980 there has been a twofold increase in the number of divorces granted annually in England and Wales.

TABLE 1.1 Divorces Granted in England and
Wales 1971-1980 (Thousands)

1971	1973	1975	1977	1979	1980
74	106	121	129	138	148

Adapted from Central Statistics Office (1982) Social Trends 12 p 37, and O.P.C.S. Monitor FM2 82/1

However, that the increase in the divorce rate is attributable to changes in the law is questionable. It can be argued, for example, that when one discounts the backlog of previously

separated couples who fell outside the former grounds of divorce the rate at which divorce has increased annually since 1971 is not significantly different from the rate at which it was increasing prior to 1971 (Chester, 1977).

Further, interpretations of the rise in the divorce rate, which range from it representing a threat to marriage and the family to it being the inevitable product of changing values and necessary for the satisfaction of individual needs (Study Commission on the Family, 1980), are primarily speculative and are complex in that they are as much about values and definitions as they are about empirical research. In the present context these arguments and interpretations are less important than the fact that the statistics show that divorce has become a mass phenomenon (Chester, 1981).

The increase in the divorce rate is also important in that it has been responsible for changes in the administration of the law. The pressure put on the machinery of the courts by the rapid increase in divorce petitions stimulated moves to simplify divorce procedures. In 1973 the Special Procedure, which allowed for the granting of a divorce decree without the appearance of petitioners in court, was introduced for childless couples divorcing by consent after two years separation. In 1975 the Special Procedure was extended to 'all childless divorces', except those based on unreasonable behaviour. Further extension of the Special Procedure to all undefended divorce petitions took effect in 1977.

When children are involved in undefended cases the petitioners have to satisfy the court that the interests of the children have been considered and that appropriate arrangements have been made for their welfare. In commenting on the implications of the Special Procedure Davis and Murch (1976) wrote:

"...the Special Procedure's main significance is that it indicates the general direction in which legal administration is moving in response to social trends. It provides further evidence that the centre of gravity of family law is shifting from the relationship between husband and wife to that between parents and children."

(Davis and Murch, 1976, p.78)

In the last ten years divorce has become more prevalent, in the legal and administrative sense it has become easier to obtain, and family law has changed its emphasis. What have these changes meant for children?

1.3 Children in the Divorce Setting

The twofold increase in the annual number of divorces granted has been paralleled by an equivalent increase in the number of children involved.

TABLE 1.2 Children of Divorcing Couples Under 16 Years in England and Wales 1971-1980 (Thousands)

1971	1973	1975	1977	1979	1980
82	127	145	149	155	163

Adapted from Social Trends 12 (1982) and O.P.C.S. Monitor FM2 82/1

Six out of every ten couples divorcing in 1980 had children under sixteen years of age. Just under half of the children involved were aged between five and ten years, twenty four percent were under five years, and the remainder were aged between eleven and sixteen years. Thus, large numbers of children are affected by divorce each year. What efforts are made to protect the interests of such children?

1.4 Children and the Divorce Courts

The Royal Commission on Marriage and Divorce of 1956 proposed that a divorce decree should not be made absolute unless the court was satisfied that the arrangements made for the children of a marriage were the best that could be devised in the circumstances. This proposal was adopted and given statutory force by section 2 of the Matrimonial Proceedings (Children's) Act, 1958 and was restated in section 41 of the Matrimonial Causes Act, 1973. Thus some 'protection' was given to all children of the family; a child of the family being defined as 'a child of both parties to the marriage and any other child, other than a foster child, who has been treated by both parties as a child of their family' (Matrimonial Causes Act, 1973, section 52(1)). The age limit is sixteen years but anyone under eighteen years of age who is in receipt of instruction at an educational establishment or undergoing training for a trade, profession or vocation can be included.

Current procedure is that where a petitioner reveals that there is a 'child of the family' the petition must be

accompanied by a written statement indicating the circumstances of each relevant child and what arrangements for their care are proposed in the event of a decree being granted. The statement has to be signed by the petitioner or their solicitor. Respondents are served with both the petition and the petitioner's statement of proposed arrangements for the children.

When returning the acknowledgement of service the respondent may ensure that their wishes concerning the children are before the court by filing a written statement of their views about the petitioner's proposals. The respondent may also attend the court for this purpose. If the respondent is dissatisfied with the proposed arrangements the judge may discuss the proposals with both parties. If the matter is not resolved in this way it becomes a contested case and will require a full court hearing.

Despite the statutory provisions made to protect children's interests, the effectiveness of the courts in this regard has been criticised. Elston, Fuller and Murch (1975) found that the majority of petitioner parents they interviewed considered that there should have been earlier, more thorough enquiries about the children. As it was, in over half the cases investigated in their study where there were dependent children the judge asked no questions about them. Eekelaar (1977) concluded that it appears that very little information beyond that provided in the 'statement of arrangements' is elicited from a petitioner who attends a hearing. He found

that the majority of petitions sought the approval of existing arrangements, with only five percent of his sample suggesting anything different.

Similarly, Maidment (1976) found that in a sample of eighty nine cases in which a custody order was made eighty seven percent of the orders merely confirmed the existing arrangements. Ninety eight percent of these orders were made on the basis of the proposed arrangements being 'satisfactory' or 'the best in the circumstances'. Maidment also found that where further information about arrangements for children is elicited it is of the most general and superficial nature; for example, 'Are the children happy?'

In seeking further information where matters affecting children are at issue the court may receive assistance from welfare officers who will, when requested to do so, inquire and report as to the welfare of children. They can also be directed to supervise children following the granting of a decree absolute. Welfare Officers are members of the Probation and After-care Service and are available to all courts dealing with divorce.

However, it has been argued that insufficient use is made of welfare officers and their reports. In expressing her concern at the effect the extension of the Special Procedure may have on the approving of arrangements for children Judge Hall (1977) said:

"There must be an increased use of welfare reports to enable the judge to have sufficient information to certify that he is satisfied with the arrangements

for the children of the family, whether or not custody and access are in dispute."

(Hall, J.G., 1977, p.102)

Maidment (1977) summarised dissatisfactions with the welfare report system as follows: (a) that judges and registrars do not order sufficient welfare reports; (b) that they do not order them on clear and definable criteria; and (c) that welfare reports are in some case not ordered when they ought to be.

Eekelaar (1977) found considerable variation in the practice of requesting welfare reports. In a sample of custody orders made by the courts in ten geographical areas he found that the percentage of custody cases in which welfare reports were ordered varied between 3.1% and 18.4% with the mean being 11.3%. He also found that a report was requested in 8.2% of uncontested cases but in 53% of contested cases. Maidment (1976) found that welfare reports were requested in 18% of a sample of ninety five custody cases. She also found that more reports were ordered in contested cases than were in uncontested cases. In her sample reports were ordered in only 50% of contested cases.

In their studies both Eekelaar and Maidment found it difficult to discern any clear criteria on which welfare reports were ordered. The former suggested that there was some association between the requesting of a welfare report and the presence of factors such as large families, changes in a child's

circumstances between parental separation and the presentation of a petition, the presence of adults other than parents in the child's place of residence, and where children were living with a father rather than a mother. Maidment found that reports were more frequently ordered when the following circumstances existed: where there were difficulties over access; where custody was contested; where children were already in care; where a parent was in prison; when siblings had been separated; and when there were doubts raised about the capabilities of a parent.

As regards the absence of reports when they would appear to be desirable, Eekelaar (1977) examined eight uncontested cases where the residential status of a child was changed by a custody order. In only two of these cases were welfare reports requested. More importantly, only two of these changes in a child's place of residence were the result of court intervention rather than voluntary action by the parents. He also looked at five contested cases where the residential status of a child changed. Even in these circumstances in one case out of the five a welfare report was not requested. In one other case a report was available but its recommendations were ignored. Maidment (1976) was less specific with her findings in this regard but did conclude that there were cases in which a reading of the petitions and supporting documents suggested that a welfare report was desirable but had not be requested.

Several authors have noted that only a very small proportion

of children involved in divorce proceedings come into contact with a welfare officer, and that when they do it is usually several months after the parents have separated (Bamford, 1975; Murch, 1980; Wilkinson, 1981). They have called for earlier and more frequent intervention.

Murch (1975, 1980) reported the results of interviews with a sample of forty two couples who had had divorce court welfare reports prepared on their children's circumstances. His conclusions were that, in general, parents welcomed rather than objected to the welfare officer's intervention in their case. They sometimes took advantage of the officer's intervention to arbitrate between them where they were in conflict about the children, and they usually regretted that they had not met the welfare officer earlier. Murch went on to suggest that being able to read welfare reports about themselves and their children can assist parents in coming to an understanding and acceptance of a decision about custody or access.

Dissatisfaction with the way in which the existing system deals with issues concerning children has added weight to the case for the establishment of Family Courts with their own specialist welfare service (Finer Commission, 1974; Law Society, 1979; Murch, 1980; Wilkinson, 1981). A new system might be desirable but in arguing their case some authors have made questionable assumptions.

For example, in the Law Society Report A Better Way Out (1979) the authors say that 'the staff would need to be specially

trained' and that they 'should have knowledge of the effect of marital breakdown on spouses and children' (p.59). The assumption that there is a body of knowledge about the effects of divorce might be justified in the case of spouses, but with regard to children that this assumption can be made is less certain. The lack of evidence as to the effects of divorce on children has already been remarked upon and criticism of the knowledge base from which 'expert' witnesses operate is one of the indicators of the need for research in the area.

1.5 The Need for Research

The increase in the size of the divorced population, and the consequent number of children involved, has been one of the main reasons that attention has been drawn to their circumstances. The Home Office report Marriage Matters (1979) recommended research in the area of marital conflict in general, and in their report Torn Lives? (1979) the Family Action Group of the Order of Christian Unity have called for 'an official inquiry to ascertain the effects of marital breakdown on children'.

However, the prevalence of divorce alone is not sufficient justification for research and it is because family conflict and divorce present adults and children with 'a problem' that they have become the focus of attention. In the United States divorce and its impact has been viewed from a mental health perspective (Bloom, Asher and White, 1978; Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980). When placed in this context and regarded as a potential life stressor the importance of, and direction for,

research is more apparent. If divorce is a stressful event which can have detrimental effects on the mental health of adults and children one can attempt to identify those conditions which place individuals at risk and begin to think about preventive intervention strategies.

Of more immediate concern are those interventions which are already being made. As has been indicated in the previous section the future of some children whose parents divorce is determined by judges, often advised by 'expert' witnesses. The claim that decisions are made 'in the best interests of the child' has become part of the rhetoric of the divorce courts. But given the current state of knowledge one has to be sceptical about that criterion always being met.

King (1981) is highly critical of the way in which poorly based psychological theories have been allowed to influence the legal process. He directs much of his attention to Goldstein, Freud and Solnit's book Beyond the Best Interests of the Child (1973). The book, he says:

"...has proved highly influential in the United States and it would appear... that there are many people in this country who consider the work sufficiently serious for judges and legislators to be swayed by its argument."

(King, 1981, p.151)

In their book Goldstein, Freud and Solnit present a critical examination of the concept of 'the best interests of the child' and recommend that 'the least detrimental alternative for

safeguarding the child's growth and development' be adopted as the guideline for child placement. They consider this to be a more desirable guideline for two major reasons; firstly, it suggests that the child in question is already the victim of his environmental circumstances, that he is greatly at risk, and that speedy action is necessary to avoid further harm being done to his chances of healthy psychological development; and secondly, because 'the best interests of the child' has, in the legal and administrative context, come to mean less than what is in the best interests of the child. The child's interests are often balanced against, and frequently made subordinate to, adult interests and rights. Many decisions are 'in name only' for the best interests of a specific child. They are fashioned primarily to meet the needs and wishes of competing adult claimants or to protect the general policies of a child care or other administrative agency (p.54).

Goldstein, Freud and Solnit derived their main argument from psychoanalytic theory. It can be summarised as follows:

- (1) Every child needs an unbroken, continuous, affectionate and stimulating relationship with an adult.
- (2) The only relationship that matters to a child is that with a psychological parent who has developed a psychological relationship through day to day attention to the child's needs for physical care, nourishment, comfort, affection and stimulation.
- (3) An absent parent cannot be a psychological parent as

they cannot enjoy the day to day interaction, companionship and shared experiences.

- (4) An undisturbed emotional relationship with at least one 'psychological parent' is important to the developing personality of a child.
- (5) This relationship should not be allowed to be disturbed by changes in custody or by the imposition of disruptive relationships from outside.
- (6) Visits by an 'absent' parent can cause harm to the child as children have difficulty in relating positively to, profiting from, and maintaining contact with, two psychological parents who are not in regular contact with one another.

They have related this argument to children whose parents divorce and have concluded that; (i) decision making about custody and access should be rapid so that the continuity of the relationship with a psychological parent will not be disturbed for too long, and so that the child's sense of time is taken into account; (ii) the child's custodial parent must be his psychological parent, and once that has been determined a custody order which is final and not subject to change should be made; (iii) once it has been decided who the custodial parent is to be, it is that parent, not the court, who must decide under what circumstances he or she wishes to raise that child. Thus, the non-custodial parent should have no legally enforceable right to visit the child and the custodial parent should have the right to decide whether it is desirable for the child to have

such visits and under what conditions they should take place.

These conclusions are controversial but King's criticisms are of both the theoretical assumptions made by Goldstein, Freud and Solnit as well as the practical implications of their conclusions. He points out that the authors expect the reader to accept psychoanalytic theory uncritically but that 'it is no more and no less valid a framework for analysing and predicting human social behaviour than any other value system, be it religious, political, philosophical, or psychological' (p.154).

He found the additional evidence they presented to support their basic theory unconvincing. Further, he argues that by focusing exclusively on interpersonal relationships Goldstein, Freud and Solnit ignore all the other factors which might affect a child's welfare and development, such as money, housing conditions, the extended family and educational opportunities.

With regard to their conclusions, King points out that the authors' call for expediency in decision making could be counter productive in that the 'fact finding' efforts of the court should necessarily be long and thorough if they are to ensure that the needs of children are to be adequately provided for. Further, he raises the question of how one identifies a psychological parent and finds that Goldstein, Freud and Solnit do not provide an answer. Again, this is not something that could be determined quickly and would require

investigation over a period of time.

Finally, he raises the issue of enforcement; that is, if custody orders are final and irreversible and custodial parents are to be the decision makers in matters such as access, courts will no longer be empowered to ensure that the needs of children are met once orders have been made. What happens if there is a clash between a child and a new step-parent or a custodial parent is preventing access taking place because of their bitterness towards a non-custodial parent?

King's criticisms of Beyond the Best Interests of the Child have been quoted at length because they represent an organised analysis of that book. The present author shares his scepticism about the validity of Goldstein, Freud and Solnit's theoretical position and the practical implications of their argument. Having been an expert witness in child custody cases, and faced cross-examination by members of the legal profession who appear to have made Beyond the Best Interests of the Child their only reading in the field of child development, the author is well aware of the practical difficulties that arise out of the uncritical acceptance of such theoretical works. Questions such as 'Who is this child's psychological parent?' are more easily posed than answered, and replies such as 'What is a psychological parent?' do not satisfy the legal profession or ensure that decisions are made in the child's best interests.

In this author's experience the most frequently cited argument from Beyond the Best Interests of the Child was that which advocates that custodial parents should have exclusive control over access arrangements. It was invariably used as 'evidence' by solicitors who were applying on behalf of custodial parents to have the access arrangements of a non-custodial parent altered or terminated. As such applications are often motivated by a custodial parent's needs rather than the needs of their children. Reliance on seemingly authoritative statements which have not been supported by research findings does little to ensure that courts act in a child's best interests.

King's argument is not that psychological evidence has no role to play but that the limits of genuine psychological knowledge should be clearly defined. However, one of the points he does miss is that the climate in which Beyond the Best Interests of the Child appeared possibly contributed to its popularity as it was one of the very first to tackle the issues it covers. Wallerstein and Kelly's Surviving the Break-up (1980), which is a report of their five year clinical study and which will be discussed in Chapter II, has been greeted with similar enthusiasm despite its limitations. The popularity of that book can be construed as a comment on the state of divorce research as well as a reflection of its merits.

Parents, judges, lawyers, social workers and psychologists will only be able to act in the best interests of children, or establish the least detrimental alternative, when they have

before them clear scientific evidence as to the consequences of divorce for children. In particular they need to know how their actions can minimise any negative consequences, and their knowledge will only be broadened by the findings of systematic research.

However, trying to answer such general questions as 'What are the consequences of divorce for children?' will not suffice. General questions lead to general answers and, therefore, are misleading when talking about individuals. As Longfellow (1979) points out the questions should 'be phrased to discover what it is about divorce that troubles children' in contrast to other things that trouble them.

Levetin (1979) has written that some of the questions which need to be answered are: Which children? What are their ages and gender? What are their personality characteristics? What was the divorce like? What was the pre-divorce family like? What post-divorce custodial and access arrangements have been made? What formal and informal support systems are available to parents and children? She also suggests that questions about the effects of divorce on children are specifications of more general questions and problems in developmental and social psychology; that is, questions about the nature of parenting, about children's perceptions of the family and about attitudes towards the family and divorce in general. Given such a brief it is surprising that the subject has been ignored by researchers for so long. At the same time the researcher is presented with a somewhat daunting array of

questions and issues to be investigated.

1.6 Summary of Chapter I

- (1) The subject of this dissertation is the impact of divorce on adolescents. Interest in this topic developed out of the author's experience of working with children of divorce and the realisation that it is an under-researched area.
- (2) Since 1971 when the new divorce laws were introduced there has been a twofold increase in the number of couples divorcing and the number of children involved as a result. This has led to calls for more research in the area.
- (3) The efforts made by the divorce courts to protect the interests of children and the knowledge base from which they operate have been criticised. This criticism indicates that there is a need for systematic research into the consequences of divorce for children, particularly the kind of research that can identify those conditions which account for the variation in response amongst children.

CHAPTER II

2. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES OF DIVORCE FOR CHILDREN

The existing literature on the subject of children and divorce embodies two main approaches; what might be called the 'divorce related' and the 'divorce specific'. There are difficulties with both approaches, and a discussion of these difficulties is a necessary preface to a description of their main findings.

2.1 Divorce Related Literature

The divorce related literature is that which is primarily concerned with analogous situations such as illegitimacy, parent absence, bereavement, adoption and one parent families; that is, those situations in which children have lost contact with at least one parent from which conclusions about the effects of divorce on children are extrapolated. The departure of one parent, often the father, is 'a salient aspect of divorce and is an obvious starting point for the search for effects of divorce on children' (Longfellow, 1979). It would seem natural, therefore, to consider the findings of research into analagous situations.

Further, the examination of the family backgrounds of dysfunctional groups such as the delinquent and the emotionally disturbed sometimes reveals unusual family structures or marital discord. Thus, studies of such groups might also provide insights into the impact of divorce upon children. However, the reliance on such literature can create two

problems; firstly, that of over-generalisation through the assumption of homogeneity; and secondly, the creation of negative stereotypes.

2.1.1 One Parent Families as a Homogeneous Group

The similarity between families in which a parent has died, deserted, or in which there has never been two parents, is obvious. However, the circumstances through which they achieve the status of a one parent family are quite different. There seem likely to be as many differences between the various situations as there are similarities. For example, the child who loses a parent through divorce and the child who loses a parent through death both experience a loss, but the circumstances of that loss are quite different. As Rimmer points out:

"Today, one in nine single parents is a lone father; one in seven is an unmarried mother; one in six is a widowed mother; one in three is a divorced mother; and a further one in five is a 'separated' mother. It would be wrong therefore to view one parent families as a homogeneous group, and the circumstances through which parents and children enter a one parent family can have an important impact on their experience of life in this type of family."

(Rimmer, 1981, p.40)

Thus, the extent to which one can generalise the findings of research into analagous situations to the divorce situation must be limited. Further, it is possible that such generalisation can disadvantage children by the creation of negative stereotypes. However, the conceptualisation of one parent families as a homogeneous group has been one of the features of studies which have purported to show the detrimental effects of divorce on children (see Levetin, 1979; Blechman, 1982, for reviews and critiques).

2.1.2 Teacher Expectations and the One Parent Family

A recent American report from the National Association of Elementary School Principals and the Institute for the Development of Education (1980) which describes some of the disadvantages faced by children from one parent families has aroused fears among parental pressure groups that children whose parents divorce will suffer as a result of stereotyping (Cookson, 1980).

In response to this report Clay (1981) conducted a survey of lone parents' perceptions of their relationship with schools. She found evidence of negative stereotyping by teachers and concluded that there is a need for teachers to be made more aware of their attitudes and expectations. Similarly, Santrock and Tracy (1978) found that teachers rated an eight year old boy lower on happiness, emotional adjustment, and ability to cope with stress, when told that his parents were divorced than when told he was from a two parent home despite the fact that their ratings were based on the same sample of his video recorded social behaviour.

In contrast, Edgar (1979) found a group of teachers to be 'open and sympathetic' in their attitudes to children from one parent families. However, he did find that teachers underestimated the numbers of children from one parent families in their schools because their judgement was often based only on the number of 'troublesome' children. He called for greater communication between teachers and lone

parents because he believes that if the former are not made aware of children from one parent families until they create or have problems in school, negative attitudes and expectations may follow.

Teacher expectations are important in that, as Pilling (1978) points out in her extensive review of the literature, an increasing amount of evidence is accumulating to show that they do influence their behaviour and their pupils actual performance. Pilling concludes that:

"The implication of this research for educational policy cannot be doubted. Teachers must be made aware of the non-intellectual factors which may bias their judgements of a child; or possible differences in their behaviour towards those for whom they have different expectations; and of their power to influence children's attainments."

(Pilling, 1978, p.237)

The risk of negative stereotyping would seem even greater when evidence from studies of dysfunctional groups such as the delinquent or the emotionally disturbed is used to form conclusions about the impact of divorce on children.

Statements such as 'many juvenile delinquents come from divorced homes' are too easily construed as 'many children from divorced homes are juvenile delinquents'. An examination of the family backgrounds of delinquents might justify the former but certainly not the latter.

2.2 Divorce Specific Literature

The divorce specific literature is comprised of clinical studies, the observations and opinions of practitioners, and surveys. As will be seen in the ensuing literature

review, such studies have contributed to a greater understanding of the impact of divorce on children. However, they are often based on small skewed samples, employ different approaches to measurement, a variety of theoretical orientations with the psychoanalytic perspective not uncommon, and they are not easily replicated. Bernard (1981) has suggested that because of methodological difficulties and experimenter bias, research has supported and perpetuated the cultural belief that divorce has the inherent power to make people unhappy; that is the divorce myth. Each of the kinds of study found in the divorce specific literature has its own particular problems, but those of over-generalisation and the creation of negative expectations are also apparent.

2.2.1 Clinical Studies

In reviewing the five year clinical study of Wallerstein and Kelly, which is summarised in their book Surviving the Break-up (1980), Bloom (1981) remarks that there 'is no substitute for the richness of a clinical investigation'. However, he goes on to point out that 'whereas a clinical study can determine whether a particular behaviour ever occurs it cannot assert how often it occurs or, more importantly, what factors are associated with the probability of that occurrence' (p.195).

By definition clinical studies describe only pathological reactions to the divorce experience; that is, those which require the intervention of mental health specialists. Anthony (1974) estimated that in the United States only fifteen percent of all children of divorce were seen in child

guidance clinics. He described these children as being 'generally disturbed' and maintained that their disturbance is usually associated with some form of post-divorce turbulence, a third of which is parent centred. Similarly, in presenting the results of a clinical study Westman (1972) admitted that 'because of the frequency of the divorce experience one can assume that most children are not adversely affected in a clinical sense', and thus clinical studies do not present the total picture. The findings of such studies should not, therefore, be generalised beyond their sampling frame.

A further problem with clinical studies is that they submit children to a microscopic evaluation which, depending on the theoretical orientation of the investigators, might over-emphasise the significance of certain responses. Wallerstein and Kelly employed a psychodynamic framework for their evaluation of children and it is possible that their perceptions of how children had been affected by divorce would differ from those of researchers using an alternative framework. For example, behaviourally orientated researchers, with their focus on overt behaviour, might have found less of concern than did Wallerstein and Kelly. The question of theoretical orientation is particularly important when clinical studies include some kind of therapeutic intervention. In expressing concern about their overall findings Wallerstein and Kelly assert that the children in their sample probably emerged 'better off' than children from a non-studied divorcing population. This is a speculative judgement and one which is

contingent upon their method of evaluation, which is in turn a function of their theoretical orientation. Further, it illustrates the need for control groups with which a clinical sample can be compared, and which are generally not available.

2.2.2 Theoretical Studies

Some of the problems inherent in the literature which takes the form of expert pronouncements and is based on clinical and practical experience have been mentioned in the discussion of Goldstein, Freud and Solnit's Beyond the Best Interests of the Child (section 1.5). The authors' reliance on a controversial theoretical orientation, and their failure to define concepts central to their argument such as 'a psychological parent', raise doubts about the extent to which such studies expand our knowledge about the impact of divorce upon children.

With regard to the 'knowledge' Goldstein, Freud and Solnit lay claim to, King (1981) comments:

"The most that can be said for this 'knowledge' is that it represents the views of three wise and experienced people. Apart from that, it is no more and no less valid than the views of any other wise and experienced people."

(King, 1981, p.154)

This comment could be applied equally well to other studies which rely on theory and applied experience, however, the previously mentioned report Torn Lives? relied heavily on such 'knowledge'. The opinions of teachers, probation officers, social workers, psychiatrists and various interested groups are presented in the report as evidence. They conclude that children's reactions to divorce can be summarised under

the heading of 'stress' and they say:

"The evidence in this book shows the results of too much stress; school phobia is often mentioned, withdrawal from social contact, inability to make secure relationships with adults, finding compensating affection elsewhere in the family."

(Torn Lives?, 1979, p.151)

Such a statement is no doubt valuable in illustrating the ways in which children might react to the divorce of their parents. However, it does suggest that the experts consulted have chosen to dwell on those children who, in their experience, have been negatively affected. By not pointing out that only some children react in these ways such a statement may have the same effect as the over-generalisation of research findings into analagous situations; that is, it may create negative expectations.

Furthermore, the emphasis of negative reactions ignores the possibility of crisis events having, given certain circumstances, positive consequences. For example, the above statement from Torn Lives? is in sharp contrast with that of Westman (1972) when he wrote:

"It is likely that the experience of divorce constitutes stress and frustration that can strengthen coping skills, the capacity to master stress, and the general course of personality development."

(Westman, 1972, p.55)

These contrary views might simply be a function of the aims of researchers. If one is attempting to direct attention and financial resources to a particular issue the emphasis of negative findings might be more successful than the emphasis of positive ones. However, there is a point at which

emphasis becomes bias. For example, one of the 'findings' cited in Torn Lives? is:

"One of the most serious psychological effects that is mentioned constantly is the development of an ingrained cynicism about the possibility of marriage being a permanent relationship."

(Torn Lives?, 1979, p.151)

It is serious as far as the Order of Christian Unity is concerned, but probably less serious to adherents of Cooper's (1971) belief that 'the only evil of divorce is the prior evil of marriage'. Bias is apparent in more ways than the selective reporting of results, and even the language used in reports is sometimes suggestive of it. Supposedly objective writers use emotive phrases such as 'broken homes' and 'intact families' (Burchinal, 1964; Berg and Kelly, 1979; Raschke and Raschke, 1979). Recent book titles such as Breaking Up (Burns, 1980) and Surviving the Break-up (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980) have a somewhat negative tone, and the term 'Saturday parent' has been used to refer to the non-custodial parent (Rowlands, 1980). One wonders what term should be used to refer to the parents of some 120,000 children in England and Wales (D.E.S., 1981) who attend boarding schools. Some kind of descriptive terminology is necessary but 'divorced homes' instead of 'broken homes', 'non-divorced homes' instead of 'intact homes', and 'non-custodial parent' instead of 'Saturday parent' provide equally efficient descriptions without the negative connotations.

2.2.3 Surveys

A number of studies have employed survey techniques to assess

the impact of parental divorce on aspects of a child's development.

There have been two general approaches to surveys; firstly, those which rely on the reports of significant adults in a child's environment, particularly parents and teachers (Santrock, 1977; Hammond, 1979; Burns, 1980). The other approach has been to use uni-dimensional or multi-dimensional measures with readily accessible populations such as school children. Children from divorced homes in these populations are identified and their scores compared with those of children from non-divorced homes (Landis, 1960; Kelly and Berg, 1978; Berg and Kelly, 1979; Raschke and Raschke, 1979; Desimone-Luis, O'Mahoney and Hunt, 1979).

The main difficulty with the first kind of survey is that it is not easy for researchers to isolate the adult's own attitudes to divorce from their reports of a child's behaviour and this compounds the results. Bernard (1981) regards Hammond's study as a good example of the kind of confusion that can result from this kind of approach. Hammond(1979) used both objective measures (performance in maths and reading and scores on a self-concept scale) and subjective measures (teacher reports of classroom behaviour). Comparisons were made between children from divorced and non-divorced homes and whereas there was no difference between the groups on the objective measures, the subjective measures found boys from divorced homes significantly higher in 'acting out' and 'distractability'. However, Hammond goes on to recommend interventions based on the subjective results only.

A difficulty with surveys which use readily accessible child populations is that researchers are often unable to incorporate all the variables which could have a significant bearing on the results. For example, Berg and Kelly (1979) looked at the difference in self-esteem ratings between children from divorced and non-divorced homes by administering a scale to several hundred school children. They found that there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups, which would suggest that parental divorce has no impact on a child's self-esteem. While this might be the case, the divorced group was identified by the use of school records and no reference was made to the length of time that their parents had been divorced. As this is a possible factor in determining a child's adjustment one does have to be guarded about the implications of such a study. For example, it is possible that a child's self-esteem is initially lowered by the divorce of their parents but that it improves over time. A more reliable assessment of the impact of parental divorce on a child's self-esteem might be gained by reducing the sample of children from divorced homes to several sub-samples based on the length of time that had elapsed since the divorce.

2.2.4 Divorce as a Process

The failure to control for variables such as 'time may be the result of a view of divorce which Hetherington (1979) maintains has led to much confusion; that is, the perception of divorce as a single event rather than 'a sequence of experiences involving a transition in the lives of children'. Smiley and Goldsmith (1981) have argued that there are two processes involved in divorce, dismantling and restructuring, by which a family proceeds through separation and divorce to the establishment of a new family form; be it one parent family or re-married nuclear family

Hetherington says:

"The point at which we tap into the sequence of events and changing processes associated with divorce will modify our view of the adjustment of the child and the factors which influence that adjustment."

(Hetherington, 1979, p.151)

The legal act of divorce is only part of a process. It would, therefore, seem important to go beyond classification as 'divorced' when planning research and describing its outcome.

2.3 The Findings of Research

Sorosky (1977) suggests that it is important to look at the effects of divorce on children at different stages of their development because divorce rates peak at different stages of child rearing. However, several authors (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980; Magrab, 1978; Hetherington, 1979; Longfellow, 1979) have argued that there is another more important reason for adopting a developmental approach. That is because 'the developmental level of a child is the best predictor of his or her response to separation and divorce' (Leupnitz, 1981). For this reason the ensuing description of research findings is organised within a developmental framework.

2.3.1 Infancy and the Pre-School Years (0-5 Years)

In a survey of 335 divorced men and women Burns (1980) found that nineteen percent of parents believed that their pre-school children had not been affected at all by the divorce, and that the majority of these described the children as being 'too young at the time to know what was happening'. Similarly, Jozan (1981) found in a survey of 684 men and women that children less than six years of age were described as being

the least affected by their parents' divorce. One does have to be cautious about such judgements because, as Fulton (1979) has demonstrated, they are related to factors such as whether they are made by a custodial or non-custodial parent, and the social and emotional adjustment of that parent.

However, if these parental assessments are accurate it could be that young children are less vulnerable than older children in the divorce situation. In contrast, it has been argued that young children are the most vulnerable and that the younger the child the more negative are the effects of parental divorce (Gardner, 1977; Toomin, 1974; Longfellow, 1979). This vulnerability is thought to stem from the young child's inability to comprehend the changes in the family situation which occur and their consequent dependence on the response of the adults in their lives to these changes. Magrab (1978) argues that if the custodial parent is unable to provide the kind of love, warmth, and affection that is necessary for the infant, and is unable to meet the infant's need for gratification because of their own emotional state, then there may be long term consequences.

This is consistent with the findings of the research into one parent families which suggests that the social and emotional circumstances of the custodial parent following divorce might be the most important determinant of a child's reaction to it (Ferri, 1976; Rutter, 1977; Pilling, 1978). It is also consistent with the results of studies of the effects of parent absence. For example, Hetherington (1972) found that

separation in early childhood was more disruptive to the personality development of adolescent females than later separation. Similarly, Santrock (1977) found that whereas boys whose fathers left the family during their school age years developed socially accepted forms of aggression such as 'yelling at siblings', boys whose fathers left during their pre-school years were more inclined to develop anti-social types of aggressive behaviour such as disobedience, stealing, cheating and lying.

Attachment theory would also support the view that the young child is particularly vulnerable in the divorce situation. Bowlby (1969) has argued that there is conclusive evidence which shows that all children develop strong attachments to their parents, particularly their mothers. Whilst agreeing that attachment is an important aspect of the mother child relationship, Rutter (1972) argues that attachment is a characteristic shared with other relationships. He cites evidence which shows that the intensity of the contact between a child and an adult is one of the more important determinants of attachment behaviour and that the breadth of a child's attachments is determined by the social setting. Thus, given certain circumstances a child can be equally or more attached to its father. The first two years of life are thought to be crucial in the formation of attachments (Tizard and Tizard, 1972), although the evidence on the comparative strength of attachments formed during this period of a child's life and those formed in later childhood is equivocal.

The significance of attachment theory in relation to the divorce situation is that the notion of an 'unbroken relationship' with adults with whom attachments have been formed is a central concept. Evidence from studies of children in hospital, children in institutions, and studies of one parent families, is used to show that a break in the parent-child relationship during a child's early years can have both short term and long term negative consequences for a child. Attachment theory and the concept of 'parental deprivation' is fundamental to the argument of Goldstein, Freud and Solnit's Beyond the Best Interests of the Child, which has previously been discussed (section 1.5). The evidence presented by authors such as Bowlby (1969) and Rutter (1972) is convincing and the 'importance of the early years' has been one of the touchstones of developmental psychology.

However, as with the findings of many 'divorce specific' studies, attachment theory raises as many questions as it provides answers. Rutter says:

"That 'bad' care of children in early life can have 'bad' effects, both short-term and long-term, can be accepted as proven. What is now needed is a more precise delineation of the different aspects of 'badness', together with an analysis of their separate effects and of the reasons why children differ in their responses."

(Rutter, 1972, p.128)

The infant might, therefore, be particularly vulnerable but one can visualise situations in which family disruption is minimal and the emotional climate unchanged or improved. In such situations it could be that the infant is less vulnerable

than older children; as long as their needs are being met. they would be unaware of any change. It is also possible, depending on which adults a child is attached to, that divorce might not interrupt the parent-child relationship.

Toomin (1974) places a different construction on the vulnerability of the young child. She interprets children's reactions to divorce within the framework of loss and grief and argues that such children suffer a number of losses. The loss of faith and trust; the loss of the triadic child-mother-father relationship; the loss of the pre-divorce mother as her life style changes; the loss of the pre-divorce father as his life style changes; the loss of environmental supports, by moving house etc.; and the pre-divorce child (him or herself as he or she was before the divorce). One could add the possible loss of sibling relationships and the loss of relationships with members of the extended family; for example, grandparents.

Toomin believes that children experience, and need to experience, a mourning process which young children do not have the resources for and which is complicated by the fact that they have difficulty in discerning the exact nature of their losses. Failure to mourn these losses successfully, according to Toomin, can lead to regression, withdrawal, repression, projection and leaves a reservoir of painful memories experienced as an undercurrent of depression. However, Toomin's use of terminology reflects clearly her psychodynamic orientation and her interpretation is based

in theory and owes little to the systematic observation and measurement of such behaviours and feelings in children.

What Toomin and Magrab's interpretations have in common is the notion that infants have difficulty discerning the changes that are going on around them. This would seem to render infants both vulnerable and relatively invulnerable depending on the circumstances surrounding and ensuing from their parent's divorce. However, the older pre-school aged child is aware of changing circumstances and is required to make adjustments to them. Whether they perceive these changes accurately is another matter and several studies have found feelings of self blame amongst pre-school aged children (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1975; McDermott, 1968; Kelly and Berg, 1978). Longfellow (1979) attributes this attitude to the fact that pre-school age children think egocentrically and that their explanations of changing family circumstances are apt to centre on themselves; that is, 'they conceptualise the divorce as if it happened between them and their parents, or as a result of their own wrongdoing' (p.299).

The most frequently cited systematic studies of the reactions of pre-school aged children to parental divorce are those of McDermott (1968) and Wallerstein and Kelly (1975, 1980). In the former direct observation and teacher records were used to study sixteen children. McDermott described their reactions as being characterised by shock and depression and noted that boys in the sample displayed more aggressive and destructive behaviour than girls. He found that the children most

seriously affected were those for whom there was a more long standing disturbance in the family situation. Wallerstein and Kelly's work deserves particular mention because it represents a unique attempt to observe children's reactions to divorce over a five year period. As has been indicated previously, this is a clinical study and the authors employed a psychodynamic framework in their interpretation of children's behaviours, thus the extent to which their findings can be generalised to the divorced population as a whole is limited.

Further, to obtain their sample they advertised a counselling service for divorced parents and their children. They grouped the parents into three groups based on an assessment of their level of psychological functioning. Approximately one third of the parents were classified as functioning adequately, half were classified as being moderately troubled, and the remainder were classified as being severely troubled, some having a history of mental illness. If, as has been suggested, children's reactions to divorce are in part a function of the way in which their parents adjust to it one could immediately expect the children of two thirds of the parents in the sample to be showing some kind of negative reaction. Moreover, if Fulton (1979) is correct, and parents' perceptions of the way a child responds to divorce are determined by the way they themselves are adjusting to it, even the parents' acceptance of counselling assistance for their children provides further evidence of sample bias.

There were thirty four pre-school aged children in Wallerstein

and Kelly's sample, nineteen boys and fifteen girls. In the immediate post-divorce period there was evidence of regression in toilet training, whining, crying, general fearfulness, acute separation anxiety, sleep problems and irritability. They found variation amongst the children in the amount of aggression displayed and concluded that it seemed most frequent in those children who had not been given an explanation for their father's departure. Like McDermott they found that children's play was impaired and that this hampered the successful resolution of anxiety and depression.

However, at the one year follow up Wallerstein and Kelly found that the majority of the children had improved and that most of the aggression, regression and fretfulness was no longer evident. Those still vulnerable came from families where the intensity of the family disruption had been maintained. At the five year follow up it was found that, despite their initial vulnerability, the younger children in the original sample had made better adjustments than their older siblings. One of the factors the authors believed to account for this was that they found non-custodial parents to be more inclined to remain involved with younger children than with older children and that this involvement facilitated the child's adjustment.

Hetherington, Cox and Cox (1979, a,b) studied the play and social interaction of forty eight children from divorced and non-divorced homes (twenty four from each) over a two year period. They too found a deterioration in children's play

behaviour during the year following the divorce and a parallel deterioration in family interaction. Play patterns became more fragmented and less cognitively and socially mature in those children from divorced homes than those from non-divorced homes, and both boys and girls showed less freedom and imagination. There was also evidence of immature, ineffective and negative social behaviours often involving dependency. In the second year following the divorce a marked improvement was noticed in all these areas, with some difference in the rate of improvement for boys and girls.

In contrast to these studies which report negative findings, when Hodges, Wechsler and Ballantine (1979) used direct observation and parent and teacher ratings to compare twenty eight pre-school aged children from divorced homes with the same number from non-divorced homes on several dimensions they found very few significant differences between the two groups. Among the areas that they investigated were aggression, play, social interaction, activity level, acting out behaviours and help seeking behaviours. Divorced parents did report their children to be less co-operative than did non-divorced parents, and observation indicated that children from divorced homes withdrew more in social situations than did their peers from non-divorced homes, but no other statistically significant differences were found.

Being aware of the contrast between their findings and those of other studies the authors suggested a number of factors

that might have influenced their results, including sample bias. However, they do allow for the possibility of their results being representative and suggest that, if this is the case, the negative consequences of divorce for pre-school aged children might have been over stated. Further, they found some evidence to support the theory that stressors are cumulative. In particular, for young children parental divorce in conjunction with having younger parents, less financially able parents and being in a geographically mobile family did lead to relatively greater maladjustment.

Similarly, Jacobson (1978 a,b,c) studied the behaviour of fifty one children, of whom twenty two were in the pre-school age group, in the twelve month period following parental divorce. The members of her sample came from both a clinic situation and from the divorce court records so that the obvious bias inherent in clinical samples was not present. Using a combination of interview techniques and behavioural checklists she examined correlations between child adjustment and parental behaviour. Jacobson found significant associations between the amount of time a child spent with the non-custodial parent and their adjustment; that is, the more time spent with the non-custodial parent the better the adjustment.

However, the association was not as strong for the younger age group as it was for the older age group. There was also a significant correlation between exposure to inter-parent hostility and a child's adjustment; the less exposure the

better the adjustment. Other factors which were associated with a child's adjustment were the amount of attention they received from parents and the extent to which they were encouraged to discuss their feelings with parents; and the extent to which they actually discussed their problems with parents. More attention, more encouragement and more discussion led to better adjustment.

In summary, therefore, pre-school aged children whose parents divorce are vulnerable and there is evidence to suggest that they may display aggressive and regressive behaviours, and that their play and social behaviour may be impaired. This vulnerability would seem to be a function of the level of their cognitive and emotional development. However, there is also evidence which suggests that these negative reactions to divorce are mitigated over time. Further, the common theme that emerges from different studies is that the pre-school aged child's adjustment to divorce is a function of the post-divorce adjustments of their parents, and the custodial and visitation arrangements that are made.

From whatever theoretical perspective one adopts the least vulnerable pre-school aged child would seem to be the one who remains with the parent with whom they have enjoyed the closest relationship prior to the divorce, and who remains in regular contact with the non-custodial parent; providing that the behaviour of both parents towards the child and each other is conducive to a minimum of disruption and disharmony.

2.3.2 School Aged Children (6-12 Years)

In their surveys of divorcing parents both Burns (1980) and Jozan (1981) found that where reports of children reacting negatively to divorce were made they mainly concerned children between the ages of six and twelve years. Burns says:

"Boys and girls of all ages were described as being affected, but the child most commonly affected was a boy of primary school age who had been devoted to his father. The father had generally left the family to live with another woman and his visits were infrequent, irregular or cancelled or postponed."

(Burns, 1980, p.146)

Magrab (1978) argues that because of the school aged child's increased understanding of time, history and events they are more aware of the long term significance and meaning of divorce than are younger children. Social-cognitive developmental theory describes the school aged child as being capable of understanding that other people have subjective perspectives distinct from their own, and capable of reflecting on their own thoughts and behaviour from another's point of view. This enables them to see interpersonal relationships in terms of subject evaluations of other peoples' actions and in terms of reciprocal attitudes and actions. Thus, they are inclined to blame individual parents for the divorce, particularly the absent parent. However, they may also feel divided in their loyalties because they blame the custodial parent for sending the non-custodial parent away, at the same time not wanting to displease the custodial parent (Longfellow, 1979).

Whilst trying to develop a psychometric instrument to measure

children's reactions to divorce, Kelly and Berg (1978) surveyed one hundred and seventy seven children of divorce who were of school age and found evidence of fears of abandonment, unrealistic hopes for the re-unification of parents, the attribution of blame to one or both parents, and feelings of embarrassment and shame. Further evidence of such feelings was found amongst the seventy nine school aged children in Wallerstein and Kelly's sample (thirty seven boys and forty two girls).

Wallerstein and Kelly (1976 a,b) divide school aged children into two groups; early latency (7-8) and later latency (9-10). They found children in the younger group to be aware of their feelings and often able to express sadness and insecurity. There was little evidence of self blame, but some did express hopes for the re-unification of their parents. Despite being aware of their feelings they were unable to resolve them and crying was prevalent in boys. In this group boys also showed evidence of missing their fathers and felt rejected by, but unable to express anger, towards their parents.

At the one year follow up half of the twenty six children had maintained earlier developmental achievements or had improved. Ten of them were either worse or maintained their negative post-divorce reaction. The children in later latency were described as being self assured and as having an understanding of the realities of the divorce. They were better able to deal with their feelings than were the younger group, but showed anger towards one or both parents and embarrassment

about their situation. Half of the children in this group showed a decline in both school performance and the ability to relate to peers. However, one year after the divorce the majority of these had returned to their prior levels of performance. Fifteen of the thirty one children in this group had lost the initial feelings of fear, shame and anxiety at the one year follow up, and in some cases the children were feeling happy and content with their new family situation. The remainder showed more distress, sometimes with depression and lower self-esteem. The authors placed significance on parent behaviour in determining the outcome for children in both groups, in particular parents' attempts to have the children align with themselves against the other parent were related to negative reactions.

In their follow up five years after the separation Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) do not provide a breakdown of findings according to the age of a child. However, their comment about the importance of frequent and regular visits by the non-custodial parent applies to children up to the age of eight years. Further, they remark that the importance of a good father-child relationship does not diminish and may, in fact, increase as the child approaches adolescence.

As the majority (60%) of the children in their total sample were in the school age range at the commencement of Wallerstein and Kelly's study, this is an appropriate place to describe their overall findings at five years after the separation. They found thirty four percent of the children to be doing

'especially well', with high self esteem, and coping well with the tasks of home, school and playground. Twenty nine percent were described as being within the middle range of adjustment; that is, generally age appropriate in their overall ego functioning, learning at the appropriate school grade level, and showing appropriate social behaviour and judgement in their relationships with adults and children.

However, they judged thirty seven percent of the children to be moderately to severely depressed, their depression being shown as intense unhappiness, sexual promiscuity, delinquency, poor learning, intense anger and apathy. Further, twenty seven percent of all the children in the sample expressed feelings of intense loneliness, complaining of coming home to an empty house when parents were working, and parents who were too busy with their own new social life or new spouse.

In another clinical study Desimone-Luis, O'Mahoney and Hunt (1979) studied twenty five children from divorced homes and identified five of them as being deviant in their behaviour. Significantly, all five were in the school age range and in each case the family income had been reduced by fifty percent as a result of the divorce.

In contrast, several studies have employed survey techniques to make uni-dimensional or multi-dimensional comparisons between children from divorced and non-divorced homes. Hammond (1979) investigated one hundred and sixty five children in the school age range (82 from divorced homes and

83 from non-divorced homes), and looked for differences in self concept, reading achievement, and attitudes. On several measures- self concept, reading achievement, immaturity and peer relations - there were no significant differences between children from divorced and non-divorced homes. However, there were sex differences, with boys from divorced homes having lower ratings in mathematics, expressing more unhappiness and exhibiting more acting out behaviours and distractability in school than boys and girls from non-divorced homes and girls from divorced homes.

Similarly, Berg and Kelly (1979) also found no significant difference between the self concept of children from divorced homes and those from non-divorced homes. They did, however, find that the self concept rating of children from non-divorced homes in which there were reports of conflict were lower than those of children from divorced homes and those from non-divorced homes in which conflict was not reported. Again, in a survey of two hundred and eighty nine school aged children Raschke and Raschke (1979) found no difference in self concept between groups of children from divorced and non-divorced homes. However, they did find lower self concepts in children from non-divorced homes in which there were reports of family conflict.

As has been remarked earlier, one of the major weaknesses of such studies is that no effort is made to control for variables such as the length of time since the separation and divorce.

In Hammond's study the average length of time that had elapsed since separation was five and a half years. One has to ask, therefore, if it is truly a study of the reactions of school age children to divorce as many of the children would have been of pre-school age at the time of separation. Further, Wallerstein and Kelly's work indicates that the initial twelve months following the divorce are crucial, and that many children show a considerable improvement after this period has elapsed. Hammond's results are not, therefore, necessarily in conflict with those of Wallerstein and Kelly, and may have important implications for the long term consequences of divorce for children.

As with pre-school children, parental behaviour and the social circumstances of the family following the divorce appear to be important factors in determining the way in which school age children react to divorce. As well as affecting the behaviour of the custodial parent, changes in social and financial circumstances would be of more significance to the school age child because they are aware of such changes and are susceptible to feelings of embarrassment. Further, in Jacobson's study (Jacobson, 1978 a,b,c) it was found that the associations between maladjustment in children and lack of contact with the non-custodial parent, degree of exposure to inter-parent hostility, and the extent to which children were able to discuss their feelings and problems with parents, were stronger for children of school age than for younger children.

The importance of post-divorce social and economic circumstances,

and custodial and visitation arrangements is a recurring theme. From a comparison of two groups of school aged children, sixteen from divorced homes and sixteen from non-divorced homes, Hess said Camara (1979) concluded that; (i) the family relationships that emerge after divorce affect children as much as the divorce itself; (ii) children's relationships with each parent are more important with respect to adjustment than the level of discord between the parents; (iii) a child's relationship with the non-custodial parent is of equal importance to his or her well being and separate from the relationship with the custodial parent.

Similarly, Santrock and Warshack (1979) studied sixty children from divorced and non-divorced homes, thirty three boys and twenty seven girls. They found significant differences between boys and girls from divorced homes when compared with boys and girls from non-divorced homes. For example, they found boys who lived with their fathers to be more socially competent than boys from two parent homes. Whereas girls who lived with their fathers were less socially competent than girls from two parent homes. Further, they found boys living with their mothers to be less anxious and to have higher self concept scores than boys from two parent homes, and girls living with their mothers to be more anxious and to have lower self concept scores than girls from two parent homes. Santrock and Warshack conclude that:

"The effects of divorce on children are mediated by a host of complex factors that include the custody disposition, sex of the child, aspects of the custodial parent-child relationship, and the

availability of, and reliance on, family support systems."

(Santrock and Warshack, 1979, p.146)

Additional evidence on the importance of the social, emotional and economic circumstances in determining a child's adjustment to divorce comes from studies of father absence and one-parent families. In her extensive review of the father absence literature Pilling (1978) concludes that the lack of a father-child relationship has relatively little effect on a child's social, cognitive and emotional development when the material deprivations are taken into account. Further, she argues that, where adverse effects are reported, they are connected with the family disruption, including the tension and conflict prior to the family breakdown, difficulty in maintaining a harmonious relationship after the event, negative attitudes of the mother, and feelings of 'differentness' in the child rather than the absence of the father as such.

Similarly, in her analysis of data from the National Child Development Study Ferri (1976) found significant differences between children from one parent families and those from two parent families in aspects of educational attainment and social adjustment. However, when an allowance was made for background factors such as social class, income and housing the differences were no longer statistically significant.

In discussing the effects of being brought up in a one parent family Rutter (1977) concludes that:

"...the effects are probably less uniform and less severe than is widely assumed. In general the number

of parents in the home is probably less crucial to the child's development than the relationship and behaviour provided by whoever is present. Furthermore, family life is determined not only by the particular characteristics of the individual family members but also by the social circumstances and environment within which the family live."

(Rutter, 1977, pp.63-64)

In summary, therefore, whilst there is evidence which suggests that the school age years can be a particularly difficult period for children whose parents divorce, the evidence is equivocal. Moreover, as with pre-school aged children it appears that such factors as the social and economic circumstances in which parents and children find themselves following divorce, the custodial and visitation arrangements that are made, and the parents' behaviour towards the child and each other, are crucial in determining the outcome for a child in this age group.

2.3.3 Adolescents (13-18 years)

In the context of the present study the findings of research into the consequences of divorce for adolescent children are the most important. Further, because the questions researchers ask are often derived from a theoretical perspective it is necessary to place research findings against a framework of normal adolescent development. To some extent the selection of such a framework is an act of faith since the empirical basis of many theories is uncertain. Thus, an eclectic approach provides a compromise which avoids the justification of one theoretical position as opposed to another.

Havighurst (1951) provides just such an approach in his description of the developmental tasks of adolescence where a 'task' is defined as skills, knowledge, functions and attitudes which an individual has to acquire at a certain point in their life. Successful mastery of these tasks will result in adjustment and prepare the individual for the harder tasks ahead. Failure in a given development task results in a lack of adjustment, increased anxiety, social disapproval and the inability to deal with the more difficult tasks to come. Muuss (1968) describes Havighurst's position as being an eclectic one which combines the previously developed concepts of Rank (1945), Freud (1948), Lewin (1948) and Erikson (1950).

The developmental tasks of adolescence according to Havighurst are:

1. Accepting one's physique and accepting a masculine or feminine role.
2. New relations with age mates of both sexes.
3. Emotional independence of parents and other adults.
4. Achieving assurance of economic independence.
5. Selecting and preparing for an occupation.
6. Developing intellectual skills and concepts.
7. Desiring and achieving socially responsible behaviour.
8. Preparing for marriage and family life.
9. Building conscious values in harmony with an adequate scientific world picture.

One important feature of Havighurst's theory is that it is hierarchical in the same sense as is Maslow's (1970) theory of

motivation; that is, successful mastery of one task is a necessary pre-requisite for mastery of the next.

No single researcher has adopted Havighurst's position when investigating the effects of divorce on adolescents but a concern with the developmental tasks he describes is implicit in several studies. For example, Task 1. has been the central concern of much of the research into parent absence, particularly that which assumes that identification with the same sexed parent is a necessary precursor to the development of appropriate sex roles. However, the evidence is equivocal and although both Hetherington (1972) and Burns (1980) found evidence of 'an obsession with males' in adolescent girls, it appears that the development of inappropriate behaviours is generally associated with parent absence in the early years.

The tasks of developing new relations with age mates of both sexes, but particularly heterosexual relationships, and preparing for marriage and family life are the concern of several studies. There were twenty one adolescents in Wallerstein and Kelly's sample, and in the long term this was the group least affected by the divorce (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980). At the initial interview stage (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1974) they found divorce to be an 'acutely painful experience' for adolescents. They were openly upset and expressed feelings of anger, shame and embarrassment. Those who were best off were the ones who had been able and allowed to maintain some distance from the parental crisis, and the earlier this distancing took place the better off they were. The divorce

had forced them to consider their parents as individuals and to examine their own attitudes to relationships and to marriage. Wallerstein and Kelly found an 'enormous concern' amongst adolescents about their future as marriage partners and noted two different responses to this concern. One was a decision never to marry and those who had not ruled out marriage completely resolved to marry later than their parents had done and to be wiser and more selective in their choice of partner.

Similarly, in a retrospective study Landis (1960) found that adults whose parents had divorced during their adolescence reported that they had come to believe that their parents marriage had been a mistake in the first place and should never have occurred. Further, they believed that their own attitude towards marriage had been seriously affected and they demonstrated little confidence in their ability to have a successful marriage.

Sorosky (1977) considers that protestations about intentions to marry later and to be more selective in the choice of a partner are manifestations of a fear of marriage failure which can serve as a self-fulfilling prophecy if and when they do marry. Further, that adolescents whose parents divorce are provided with poor models on which to base relationships and that, as a result, experience difficulties in courtship and ultimately in marriage. Wallerstein and Kelly (1974) argue that there is little evidence to show that the expressed intent of adolescents to be more careful actually eventuates

in more compatible marriages for them. They too attribute this to the fact that such adolescents have very little experience of alternatives to 'bad marriages' on which to base their relationships.

In contrast, Rosen (1977) questioned ninety two children of divorce ranging in age from nine to twenty eight years of age. One of the questions she asked was whether the divorce of their parents had affected their attitude towards marriage. Only six percent said that it had given them a negative attitude, sixteen percent were unable to give an opinion, while the remainder, seventy eight percent, said that it had no effect on their attitude towards, or desire to, marry.

Rosen also asked the question 'Should parents stay together for the sake of the children?', to which seventy nine percent replied that they would not have chosen to have their parents stay together in conflict. Further, when asked how they felt the divorce had affected them generally, forty six percent said that they did not feel it had affected them adversely, thirteen percent said that it had done so initially but they felt that they had made a quick recovery, whereas twenty three percent said that they felt they had benefited by becoming more mature and more understanding of human emotions than their peers. Amongst the children who said that they felt that the divorce had affected them negatively there was a high incidence of pre-divorce conflict.

The question of the acceleration of maturity has been dealt

with by several authors (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1974; Weiss, 1979; Gardner, 1976). Children in one parent families are often required to make greater contributions to the functioning of their families than are other children. Adolescents might be more involved in family decision making, expected to adopt a partnership role in the management of the household, and often serve as substitute parents for their younger siblings. Further, they may be encouraged to develop relationships with their custodial parent which are more that of confidant and friend than the ordinary relationship between parent and child.

Weiss (1979) interviewed adolescent children from divorced homes and their custodial parent. He does not provide any statistical analysis but concludes that the adults generally felt that their children had benefited from the additional responsibilities they had taken on but sometimes regretted that their children had not had a more carefree childhood.

Similarly, the children interviewed generally agreed that it had been beneficial but had mixed feelings about the value of being forced 'to grow up more quickly'. Their awareness of financial problems had increased anxiety and made them feel insecure and, although they felt that the development of a more realistic view of their parent's capabilities and limitations had made them self reliant and increased their self esteem, it had made them feel somewhat insecure as they realised that they could not always rely on their parents for guidance and advice. Weiss concludes:

"It would seem accurate to say that most children

from single parent families, though they may be pleased that they proved able to meet the challenges of new expectations, also regret having to do so."

(Weiss, 1979, p.107)

Becoming more aware of, and sensitive to, the feelings of others would seem to be desirable but, as Wallerstein and Kelly (1974) point out, being forced to come to grips with the issues of morality raised by divorce and made aware of the problems experienced by their parents, it is possible that normal adolescent anxieties about matters such as sexuality might be aggravated. Two girls in Wallerstein and Kelly's sample accused their mothers of 'making them frigid'. Adolescent anxieties about sexual behaviour can be further aggravated by what Magrab (1978) refers to as 'the temptation of divorcing parents to revert to more adolescent behaviours themselves' as it deprives the adolescent of mature models of heterosexual behaviour.

Sorosky (1977) has suggested that, as well as a fear of marriage failure, adolescents whose parents divorce can suffer from fears of abandonment and rejection and that the resolution of typical adolescent conflicts may be interfered with. However, several studies of non-clinical samples have revealed little evidence of emotional disturbance. Nye (1957) compared selected characteristics of several groups of adolescents, including those from divorced homes, those from happy two parent homes, and those from unhappy two parent homes. He found no significant difference between adolescents from divorced homes and non-divorced homes in the areas of school and social relationships and delinquent

behaviour. Further, adolescents from divorced homes showed better adjustment than those from unhappy non-divorced homes in relation to psychosomatic illness, delinquency and parent child relationships.

Burchinal (1964) carried out a survey of fifteen hundred parents whom he organised into groups representing 'unbroken, broken and reconstituted families'. Using information obtained from these parents by questionnaires he made comparisons of personality and social relationship scores between the groups. There were no significant differences in personality scores, social relationship scores, school performance and attitudes towards school. The only significant differences were in absenteeism, with children from 'unbroken homes' being absent the least number of days. His overall conclusion was that evidence of emotional or behavioural disturbance amongst adolescent children whose parents had divorced was uniformly absent.

Reinhard (1977) used a questionnaire to assess the reactions of forty six (eighteen boys and twenty eight girls) adolescents whose parents had divorced within the three year period prior to the study. One of his aims was to establish if there were any differences between the responses of boys and girls; however, he found that this was not the case. Despite finding that over half the sample were unhappy about their parents' decision to divorce, there was a general opinion that, in the circumstances, their parents had done the sensible thing. Reinhard does not provide a statistical breakdown but indicated

that the majority of the adolescents had denied feelings of being rejected, of embarrassment and felt that they had coped well with their parents' divorce.

In summary, therefore, the findings of research into the consequences of divorce for adolescent children are, like the findings for children of other age groups, equivocal. The overall behaviour of parents again seems to be an important factor in determining an adolescents response to divorce; however, the dimensions of the parents' behaviour which seem important are different. This may simply be a function of the questions that researchers have chosen to ask subjects of different ages, however, they do relate to the concerns of adolescents generally; that is, parental behaviour in heterosexual relationships seems important in the development of the adolescents own heterosexual relationships and in the formation of their attitudes towards marriage.

Further, the extent to which parents confide in their adolescent children about their relationships and their problems, and the extent to which they allow the adolescent to take on responsibilities in the home which other adolescents from non-divorced homes do not normally take on, affects their maturation and their feelings of security. If Havighurst is correct and an adolescent's failure to master a developmental task at a particular time does lead to maladjustment and failure to master other tasks in the hierarchy, then it would seem that adolescents whose parents divorce are 'at risk' of failing to become mature adults.

2.3.4 Children of Divorce as Adults

The concern about the attitudes of adolescents whose parents divorce towards marriage is a theme that has been carried on into studies of the long term effects of divorce on children; that is, researchers have concerned themselves with the question of whether adults who experienced parental divorce during their childhood are more inclined to become divorced than adults who did not. Hart (1976) in her study of single parent families claimed that there was a tendency towards this which she accounted for in terms of there being 'a positive sanction for divorce' in families where there had already been a divorce. However, as shown in Table 1.1 divorce as a mass phenomenon is only a recent development in the United Kingdom and it will, therefore, be some time before evidence which supports or refutes what has been called 'the transmission hypothesis' is available. This was confirmed by the study of divorcing adults carried out by Thornes and Collard (1979) in which only two percent of the five hundred and twenty divorced participants had parents who were divorced.

In the United States several studies have supported the transmission hypothesis (Gurin, Veroff and Feld, 1969; Landis, 1962; Bumpass and Sweet, 1972). However, the evidence is not strong and there is debate about interpretation of the findings. For example, whilst one explanation is that divorced parents provide inadequate role models or do not socialise their children appropriately for marriage, Pope and Muller (1976) have argued that the greater incidence of divorce amongst the offspring of divorced couples is a function of poor mate selection

due to the circumstances created by marital instability. Kulka and Weingarten (1979) argue that their analysis of a representative sample of over two thousand adults provides some support for the transmission hypothesis but that when variables such as age and educational level are controlled the difference between adults from divorced backgrounds and those from non-divorced backgrounds is not significant.

Perhaps the most one can conclude is that the experience of parental divorce might predispose an individual to marriage failure in a number of ways, be it through role modelling, the creation of 'a positive sanction' for divorce, or the creation of circumstances which lead to poor mate selection. However, in a review of the literature on marital disruption as a life stressor Bloom, Asher and White (1978) noted a shift away from the emphasis of predisposing factors in mental health research and a move towards a focus on current life events as precipitating factors. Similarly, in a review of the literature relating childhood behaviour to adult mental health, Kohlberg, LaCrosse and Ricks (1972) commented:

"Early childhood maternal deprivation, parental mistreatment, separation, incest - all seem to have much slighter effects upon adult adjustment (unless supported by continuing deprivation and traumas throughout childhood) than anyone seemed to anticipate."

(Kohlberg, LaCrosse and Ricks, 1972, p.1233)

Kulka and Weingarten (1979) also note this shift in research trends but also point to the methodological problems inherent in those studies which have claimed to support the notion that there is a relationship between the experience of

parental divorce in childhood and an adult's adjustment, including marriage failure. The problems they identify are that researchers have often failed to distinguish between different kinds of separation; that is, they have regarded one parent families as homogenous groups. Secondly, they have studied 'impaired populations' without the use of controls; and thirdly, researchers have failed to control for other variables which are known to be related to adult adjustment, for example, sex, age, social class and other childhood background factors. In their own analysis of survey data they controlled for such variables as these and concluded that there is little evidence for the existence of any long term effects of coming from a divorced home and that what evidence there is suggests that the long term effects are both minimal and, at least, potentially modifiable.

In the same vein, it is worth noting that although Rosen (1977) does not specify how many adults there were in her sample of ninety two offspring of divorcing couples, most of the participants she quotes were adults.

In summary, therefore, whilst there is some evidence which shows that divorcing and maladjusted adults do often come from divorced homes, it seems that the actual separation and divorce of the parents of such adults is of less importance than other events and circumstances which have directly precipitated their current behaviour.

2.4 Directions for Research

Many of the studies referred to in the forgoing literature survey have described the potentially negative consequences of divorce for children. However, potentially positive consequences have been referred to, and in a sample of 335 divorced parents surveyed by Burns (1980) three quarters felt that their children were better off than they would have been had the marriage continued. It seems, therefore, that one could order the reported reactions of children to divorce on a spectrum ranging from 'negative' to 'positive'. However, it is also important to try and identify those factors which are related to this variation in response.

From the studies presented here, for example, it seems that the social and economic situation in which 'white western' families find themselves, and the behaviour of parents following divorce, are important factors in determining how the children cope with it. This lends some support to the argument advanced by Gettleman and Markowitz (1974) who have suggested that divorce, like many of the crises children face, is, in itself, a 'neutral experience' for them which can be made into a 'good' or a 'bad' experience depending on how the significant adults, particularly parents, cope with it.

In the most recent description of their five year study Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) provide a summary of the variables they found to be related to child adjustment following divorce. In doing so they encapsulate the themes present in other studies; notably that of Jacobson (1978 a,b,c).

These variables are:

- (1) The extent to which parents had been able to resolve and put aside their conflicts and angers and to make use of the relief from conflict provided by the divorce;
- (2) The course of the custodial parent's handling of the child and the resumption or improvement of parenting in the home;
- (3) The extent to which the child did not feel rejected in their relationship with the non-custodial parent, and the extent to which this relationship had continued on a regular basis and kept pace with the child's growth;
- (4) The range of personality assets and deficits which the child brought to the divorce, including his or her history within the pre-divorce family and the capacity to make use of his or her resources within the present; particularly intelligence, the capacity for fantasy, social maturity and ability to turn to peers and adults;
- (5) The availability to the child of a supportive human network;
- (6) The absence of continuing anger and depression in the child;
- (7) The age and sex of the child.

In effect Wallerstein and Kelly have provided a list of indicators which should alert parents and professionals to the children who are 'at risk'. However, theirs was an American sample and was not representative of the total divorced population. It should not, therefore, be regarded as the definitive work.

It has already been argued in Chapter I that there is a need for further research, particularly that which investigates British samples. The literature described in this chapter shows that approaches to research have been diverse in their theoretical orientation and use of measurement techniques. It does not, therefore, provide an adequate basis for the construction of a theoretical model against which the findings of research can be understood. However, the work of authors such as Wallerstein and Kelly does provide guidelines as to the form research might take, the issues it might cover, and the associations between aspects of divorce and the outcome for children that might usefully be explored.

Some of the guidelines that can be derived from the literature presented in this chapter are as follows:

(1) Divorced populations, rather than single parent families, need to be studied so as to differentiate between the effects of divorce and other events which create single parent families. Where possible children from divorced homes should be compared with control groups of children from non-divorced homes and this might include children from other kinds of single parent families. Whether this can be achieved depends, not only on the co-operation of subjects, but also on the nature of the instruments used in measurement; some instruments, for example interviews, do not lend themselves as easily to such comparisons as do psychometric tests. A range of measuring instruments seems desirable.

(2) Where possible representative samples of the divorced population should be studied so as to provide a balanced view of the impact of divorce. In the absence of such samples this might be achieved by a diversity of approaches. For example,

clinical samples can provide valuable insights, provided that the limits of the extent to which the findings of such studies can be generalised are made clear.

(3) The time at which a researcher begins to study children of divorce is an important factor. Several studies have reported that some of the adverse effects of parental divorce are mitigated over time, and the length of time that has elapsed since divorce related events should at least be controlled for. Moreover, divorce should be seen as a process rather than a single event and, where time, resources, and subject participation permit, studies should be longitudinal in nature.

(4) Childrens' age is an important determinant of the way in which they react to parental divorce, and thus researchers should study children from different age groups.

(5) Certain variables emerge consistently as factors which appear to have an effect on the way in which children react to parental divorce, and information about these variables should be collected by researchers. These include:

- (i) The social and economic circumstances of families following divorce.
- (ii) The extent to which conflict between parents persists, and the conduct of parents more generally with respect to their personal relationships.
- (iii) The extent to which children maintain a meaningful relationship with their non-custodial parent, and the quality of that relationship.
- (iv) The availability to, and use of, support networks by parents and children.

By following such guidelines researchers might eventually provide an account of the impact of divorce on children which is not only descriptive but also suggests ways in which the potentially negative effects can be mitigated. On the basis of such an account the framework of the legal process could be adapted so as to minimize the risks to children. Further, those professionals working with divorcing families might be provided with a better set of indicators for those children who are at risk than is now available.

2.5 Summary of Chapter II

- (1) Insights into the impact of parental divorce on children have been provided by studies which have been specifically directed to this question and by studies of groups of children in situations analagous to that created by divorce; for example, bereavement and one parent families in general.
- (2) There are methodological difficulties in both approaches which can lead to unjustifiably negative expectations; these include the treatment of one parent families as a homogeneous group, the investigation of 'deviant' groups without reference to controls, and the failure to control for variables which could be factors in determining a child's adjustment - such as the length of time since divorce and the emphasis of negative findings.

- (3) The results of research studies of both kinds suggest that parental divorce can have negative consequences for children of all ages. However, they also suggest that these negative consequences are a function of, and are mitigated by, parental behaviour, social circumstances, economic circumstances and by factors such as the age of the child at divorce.
- (4) There is a need for further research, particularly that which attempts to account for the reported variation in children's reactions to divorce. Such research should be undertaken with representative samples or with a variety of samples to provide a more balanced view of the consequences of divorce for children than has been hitherto available. In planning research it is possible for researchers to obtain guidelines from the existing literature, particularly with regard to the form their studies should take and the issues it should cover.

CHAPTER III

3. DESIGN AND PROCEDURE

3.1 Aims of the Project

In the absence of adequate working models for research into the consequences of divorce for children, the final design of this project varied from the planned original. It began with what proved to be the somewhat ambitious intention of providing a representative account of the experiences and feelings of adolescent children whose parents had recently divorced. The adolescent age group was selected for two reasons: (a) In an effort to avoid adopting the theoretical assumptions on which psychometric instruments are based and maintain an eclectic position, interview techniques were to be used and these require verbal and cognitive skills younger children might not possess; (b) It is consistent with an ongoing interest in the Department of Educational Enquiry at the University of Aston into the contexts surrounding school life and with current research into programmes intended to support parents in their tasks and in preparing adolescents for marriage and parenthood.

The original intention was to provide what would be a unique account, in Britain at least, of the impact of divorce on adolescents, by allowing them to speak for themselves rather than through their parents. It was anticipated that somewhere between one hundred and two hundred recently divorced parents and their adolescent children would be interviewed. No highly specific hypotheses were pre-formulated but the aims of the study were stated as follows:

- (1) To describe the biographic, demographic and economic characteristics of a sample of families which have recently



experienced divorce.

- (2) To describe the parents' perceptions of their children's reactions to the divorce.
- (3) To describe the social, psychological and educational characteristics of the adolescent children in these families and their perceptions of the divorce experience.
- (4) To explore possible associations between aspects of the divorce and the adolescents reactions to and perceptions of it.
- (5) To attempt to identify the needs of the adolescents and their parents with regard to intervention.

These aims were retained but the final sample of families was much smaller than was originally intended. This was the result of three factors: Firstly, there were difficulties in gaining access to records through which families could be contacted; (b) Secondly, as access was available to only one of the two sources through which families could be contacted, it seemed unlikely that a sample which was representative of the divorced population would be obtained; simply enlarging the sample would not necessarily have made it more representative; (c) Finally, only a small number of families who could be contacted seemed willing to be interviewed. The actual size of the final sample was a post-hoc decision, with access to, and the co-operation of subjects being a central factor.

In anticipation of the sample of families being much smaller than intended, two further dimensions were added to the overall project. Firstly, one of the more frequent criticisms to be levelled at studies in this area is that they lack comparison groups. To counter this criticism to some extent the self-concept scores of children from the divorced homes were compared with those of children from non-divorced homes. The second dimension added was an investigation of the expectations of teacher trainees with regard to children of divorce. There is some evidence to suggest

that teachers do hold negative expectations of such children but it is not an area which has been much explored, particularly in Britain. The intention was that results of an investigation of expectations could be compared with those of the interviews and the self-concept study.

The aims of the research can, therefore, be re-stated as follows:

(1) To describe the results of interviews with a sample of recently divorced parents and their adolescent children with regard to the following:

- i. Their biographic, demographic and economic characteristics.
- ii. The parents' perceptions of their children's reactions to divorce.
- iii. The adolescents' perceptions of the divorce experience.

(2) To compare the self concept scores of adolescent children from the interview sample with those of children from non-divorced homes.

(3) To investigate the expectations of a sample of teacher trainees with regard to children of divorce as compared with their expectations of other groups of 'disadvantaged' children; viz. physically handicapped children, educationally sub-normal children and adopted children.

(4) To contrast the findings of the expectation study with the results of the interview study with a view to determining if there is support for the existence of 'the divorce myth'; that is, the underlying cultural belief that divorce has the

inherent power to make people unhappy.

(5) To explore possible associations between aspects of the divorce of the parents in the sample interviewed with their adolescent children's perceptions of it.

(6) To attempt to identify the needs of the adolescents and their parents with regard to intervention.

3.1 The Interview Study

This represents the main part of the overall project and was originally the sole component. The aim was to provide a representative account of the experience of parental divorce for adolescent children and to attempt to account for any variation in response that might be found. For reasons which will be explained here, the goal of obtaining a representative sample of families became unattainable and, thus, the overall project was modified.

3.2.1 Instrumentation

Decisions about the way in which a researcher collects data should be based on the nature of the information sought and the characteristics of the respondents. The idea of an 'informal chat', perhaps using a tape recorder, was initially attractive. However, the data obtained in this way is not easily analysed and, more importantly, it seemed likely that respondents who have experienced a crisis might wish to concentrate on their own unique problems and that the interviews might become case work rather than a systematic study. Thus, it was decided that the interviews should be structured so as to cover different aspects of the divorce.

Further, it was anticipated that some of the respondents might have difficulty expressing their feelings because of the sensitive nature of the issues to be discussed. In the case of the adolescents this might be aggravated by the extent of their skills in self expression. Consequently, it was decided that the interviews should include both open-ended and pre-coded questions. The latter would also facilitate data analysis in that associations between variables could be more easily explored.

The interview schedule devised consists of two parts; Part A for parents, and Part B for adolescents. The issues covered and the questions included were derived from the literature referred to in Chapter II. For example, questions in Part A about social, biographic, economic and demographic information were derived from the British study of divorced adults by Thornes and Collard (1979). The issues covered by Part B were those which were mentioned frequently in the literature, such as access, school behaviour, peer relationships and parental behaviour. Several questions were taken literally from studies of adolescents. For example, general questions such as 'Do you think parents should stay together for the sake of the children?' were originally used by Rosen (1977).

The original schedule was piloted with fourteen families (fourteen adults and twenty five children) selected from the records of the Probation and After-Care Service and contacted by being sent the letter described in this chapter. (Section 3.2.3.). Following these interviews the respondents were asked for their comments about the range of issues covered and the questions asked. None of the parents or the adolescents found it necessary to go beyond

the issues covered by the schedule and had no difficulty responding to the questions when they were relevant to their particular case. Further, the adolescents interviewed ranged from being highly articulate to being monosyllabic in their responses. The former suggested that there could be more scope for open-ended questions and the latter that the pre-coded questions were a desirable inclusion if one were to gain much in the way of a response from some adolescents.

The final schedule (Appendix A) varied little from the original in terms of its content. However, the need to allow those adolescents who were able to express their feelings and personal viewpoints articulately was catered for.

3.2.2 The Sampling Frame

As has been indicated in Chapter I, there are two routes through which divorces concerning children proceed. Those in which the circumstances of the children are deemed satisfactory proceed through the County Courts without further ado, and those in which the circumstances of the children, or the arrangements proposed for them, have been deemed unsatisfactory only proceed after the provision of welfare reports.

Theoretically the latter cases should be the ones in which children are most at risk. However, dissatisfactions (Maidment, 1976; Hall, 1977; Murch, 1980) with the welfare report system indicate that this is not strictly the case. Nevertheless, it was believed that an attempt to obtain a representative sample of divorcees and their children in the West Midlands should reflect these two situations. Eekelaar (1977) estimated that welfare reports were available in fourteen percent

of cases in the West Midlands; thus, the intention was to interview one 'unsatisfactory' case for every seven 'satisfactory' cases.

To achieve this an approach was made to the West Midlands Probation and After-Care Service, and after due discussion, they allowed access to their records. Further, they were confident that it would be possible to gain access to the records of the County Court, and undertook to use their familiarity with the administration of that court to seek the permission of the Registrar. Thus, it was anticipated that it would eventually be possible to use the records of the County Court to contact suitable families. However, after six months deliberation the Registrar decided that he would not allow access to the records. It is possible to appeal against such decisions through the Office of the Lord Chancellor, but it was decided that such a course of action should not be pursued as it might cause resentment at the local level. Further, if an appeal were to take as long to be processed as did the local deliberations, there would have been little time left in which to conduct the interviews.

It is perhaps worth noting at this point that in the light of the hostile reaction of some parents contacted in this study, and consideration of the developments in other countries - particularly Australia - with regard to protecting the privacy of parents, the Registrar's decision now seems quite proper and such records should not be used to contact families since they are confidential. However, his refusal of an alternative strategy does seem unreasonable. That is, he was asked if a letter to all parents petitioning for divorce could be distributed through the court. This letter would have invited parents of adolescent children to contact the author, and would not have required access to the records for its distribution.

By the time the Registrar had refused access to the County Court records the design of the interview study had been decided upon. The sampling frame was inevitably reduced to the some fourteen percent of families who came into contact with the Probation and After-Care Service. Whilst this precluded the possibility of obtaining a sample which was representative of the total divorced population, it did not preclude the possibility of obtaining valuable information about the impact of divorce upon children and the processes which aggravate or mitigate their response.

Further, the impression gained from the pilot sample was that the study was attracting a group of parents and children who had 'coped' rather well with the divorce and the reporting of positive findings would seem to be at least as valuable as reporting negative findings, and certainly if the factors which facilitated their adjustment to the divorce could be identified. This is consistent with Levetin's (1979) call for a diversity of approaches to divorce research. Moreover, the literature on disadvantage in childhood (Rutter and Madge, 1976; Blaxter, 1981) suggests that studying both those who have overcome such disadvantage and those who have not are equally important priorities for social and educational research.

3.2.3 Procedure

Appropriate families were selected from the records of the Probation and After-Care Service. The criteria for selection were: that they were white families; that there was at least one adolescent child in the family; that the divorce was an adolescent experience - that is, it had occurred during a child's adolescent years; and that it was a recent experience. In general this meant that the divorce had occurred within the

three years prior to the interviews, and to this end the records for the years 1978 to 1981 were used.

Once families had been selected efforts were made to enlist their co-operation. There are no British studies in which researchers have attempted to interview children about their experience of divorce, but several studies have involved interviews with divorced adults. Elston, Fuller and Murch (1975) wrote to one hundred and forty five divorced adults giving a time when they would call for an interview. This approach produced a response rate of seventy percent overall, and of those seventy seven percent were interviewed.

In contrast, Chester (1975) and Mitchell (1981) have used a doorstep approach to enlist the participation of divorced adults in surveys. Chester used records to locate three hundred and twenty four female divorce petitioners and went to their homes to seek interviews. He was successful in sixty seven percent of cases. Similarly, Mitchell compared the 'written approach' and the 'doorstep approach' to contacting the divorced. She concluded that the latter was the more successful method, with ninety four percent of people approached agreeing to be interviewed as compared with seventy seven percent when the former method was used.

The question of whether the doorstep approach is an ethical method does not appear to have been considered. The characteristics of the respondents and the nature of the information to be obtained must be considered when decisions are made about the

technique one is to use to contact potential respondents. Mitchell was interested in the sources of support divorcees had used and their satisfaction with the support provided. Thus, her questions were as much about other people as they were about the respondents themselves. When children are involved one has to be careful about the way in which potential respondents are approached. One is not just seeking the parents' co-operation but the child's as well, and the child should be given the opportunity to make up their own mind about whether they wish to be interviewed; particularly if they are being asked to recount what might have been a painful experience.

It is significant that one of the features of the Australian Family Law Act, 1975 is that divorce has now become a more private matter and access to the courts and court records is not possible. Thus, researchers in Australia now have to advertise for participants in studies, a technique which, by enlisting the support of the media, Burns (1980) has used with some success.

In the present study it was judged that the doorstep approach was not a suitable technique for contacting potential respondents. This judgement was based on a consideration of the nature of the information sought and the fact that children were involved.

Using the names and addresses provided by the Probation and After-Care Service records letters were sent to custodial

parents inviting their participation. It was a formal letter (Appendix B) as it was felt that it might provide the study with more credibility than if it described the research as a student project. With the letter was enclosed a stamped addressed envelope and a form for return (Appendix C) which provided the opportunity for parents to nominate the most convenient time for an interview. The letters were sent out in batches of ten or twenty in order that the delay between contact and interview would not be too long. It also included a section asking parents who did not wish to participate why this was so.

Refusal and non-replies were accepted at their face value and no further approaches were made. Those parents who were prepared to participate were contacted by telephone or letter and an appointment for an interview was made in accordance with their preference, where possible.

3.3 The Self-Concept Study

The absence of comparative data has been one of the main criticisms of studies which have looked at the impact of divorce upon children. For example, even generally favourable reviews of Wallerstein and Kelly's work (1980) such as that by Bloom (1981) have pointed to their failure to use a comparison group of children from non-divorced homes. However, the researcher is at a disadvantage when they are investigating children's reactions to divorce in that they are dealing with a unique population. The issues covered and the questions raised by the interview schedule used in the present research

are only suitable for parents and children who have experienced divorce. One can hardly ask children from non-divorced homes about issues such as access.

This problem of providing a basis for comparison can only be overcome by the introduction of objective measures which can be used with children from both divorced and non-divorced homes. Thus, in order to anticipate this criticism such a measure was introduced. The choice of self-concept as the dimension on which children from the two situations would be compared was based on the fact that it has been used in several such studies (Hammond, 1979; Berg and Kelly, 1979; Raschke and Raschke, 1979) and to some extent this part of the overall project can be regarded as being a replication.

3.3.1 Instrumentation

The most frequently used instrument in studies such as those cited above is the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale (1964). Wells and Marwell (1976) describe it as being one of the best known scales of its type. It was originally based on Jersild's (1952) collection of statements of what children liked and disliked about themselves.

The present scale, 'The Way I Feel About Myself', is a wide range self-concept scale designed to give a measure of the general self-concept. It consists of eighty items grouped in seven areas; that is, home and family, health and personal appearance, recreation and sports, school performance and attitudes, special talents, personality and emotional

tendencies, and relations with peers. Farls (1967) argues that, even though the authors do not acknowledge it, the structure of the scale reflects the developmental perspective of Gessell, Ilg and Ames (1956). The authors' intention was to design a scale for research purposes as opposed to clinical use. It was standardised on 1,183 American school children and in a review of the scale Bentler (1972) maintains that it possesses sufficient reliability and validity for use as a research instrument. Further, it is easily administered in group situations, taking 15-20 minutes to complete.

For these reasons, and the fact that it has been used in similar studies, the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale appeared to be a suitable instrument for use in the present study. However, some minor modifications to the published form were necessary to remove the more obvious 'Americanisms' in the vocabulary; that is, 'smart' was changed to 'clever', 'dumb' to 'stupid' and 'pep' to 'energy' (Appendix D).

3.3.2 The Sampling Frame

The sample of children from divorced homes was drawn from sixty four adolescents who had been located through the records of the Probation and After-Care Service. The sample of children from non-divorced homes was drawn from a population of adolescents from two comprehensive schools in the West Midlands. The choice of the schools used was influenced by the need to have a varied population of pupils in terms of their social class origin and their accessibility through contacts within the Department of Educational Enquiry.

3.3.3 Procedure

Adolescents in the divorced sample were requested to complete the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale during the course of visits to their homes. They were asked to fill them out independently whilst their parents were being interviewed. The Deputy Headmaster at each of the comprehensive schools was contacted and asked to select four classes containing children of mixed abilities across the age span of thirteen to sixteen years. For the purpose of analysis they were asked to identify from school records those children who were from one parent homes and those who were not from white families.

3.4 The Expectation Study

As already indicated, this study was added to the overall project in an attempt to place it in context. The studies by Clay (1981) and Santrock and Tracy (1978), referred to in section 2.1.2, suggest that, in the United States at least, there is evidence to show that teachers hold negative stereotypes of children from divorced homes. It is not an area that has received much attention in Great Britain despite the recognition that teacher expectations are an important influence on the behaviour and performance of children (Pilling, 1978).

Thus, it seemed that the collection of some data on this question might be a valuable adjunct to the interview study and place the results of these interviews in perspective. However, a full investigation of this question was beyond the scope and limited resources of the overall project. Consequently,

this study is exploratory rather than confirmatory and could be considered to be an exercise in hypothesis generation.

3.4.1 Instrumentation

There are no ready made instruments for measuring expectations of children of divorce and it was, therefore, necessary to develop one using an appropriate model. Techniques such as the repertory grid developed by Kelly (1955) were considered but it was decided that the semantic differential technique, originally developed by Osgood, Succi and Tannenbaum (1957), was the most suitable for the task. The semantic differential is a double stimulus rating technique on which an individual is asked to rate a concept by locating it on a numerical scale whose verbal meaning is specified by a pair of descriptions defining the opposite poles of the scale (Wells and Marwell, 1976). It has been used to measure attitudes in a variety of situations, including attitudes towards minority groups (Prothro and Keehn, 1957; Williams, 1964, 1966) and it is regarded as being a valid measure of attitudes in these contexts (Heise, 1977).

In this study the scales consisted of adjectives and their opposites selected from both the children of divorce and the semantic differential literature. The concepts to be rated were categories of children. Obviously, the main aim was to obtain ratings of the category 'children of divorce'. However, to avoid socially desirable responses and to allow ratings of 'children of divorce' to be placed in context, other categories of children were included. 'Low' ratings for children of

divorce would not necessarily be meaningful unless there was some criterion against which they could be judged. If respondents rated other groups of children higher or lower than children of divorce one would be in a position to comment about these differences and to make some judgement about the respondents expectations.

The original instrument, which was piloted with eleven post graduate students who were all experienced teachers, consisted of eight categories which suggested some kind of atypicality in a child's development or family structure; that is, deaf children, illegitimate children, adopted children, blind children, physically handicapped children, educationally sub-normal children, and children of divorce. The scales were twenty adjectives and their opposites separated by a seven point continuum. The number of steps or points one should include in such a continuum is an issue in scale construction. However, Guilford (1954) has suggested that the reliability of a scale tends to increase rapidly as the number of steps is increased from two, whilst Nunnally (1967) has noted that this gain becomes minimal beyond seven steps.

Further, Osgood, Succi and Tannenbaum (1957) have indicated that most people cannot discriminate their feelings beyond a seven point classification. The twenty adjectives in the original instrument were: happy, sociable, calm, good, secure, trusting, strong, well adjusted, optimistic, healthy, relaxed, successful, affectionate, mature, competent, unemotional, self confident, compassionate, stable and independent.

This instrument was piloted in a group situation and, as well as completing the scales, the post-experience students provided comments about it and its suitability for use with teacher trainees. The first thing revealed by this piloting was that the instrument was too long. The aim, as with most attitude questionnaires, was to obtain an instant, rather than a reflective, judgement. But, despite being asked to give their initial response to the categories, some of the respondents took a considerable length of time to complete it. Further, members of the pilot group suggested that some of the adjective pairs were inappropriate and the scoring of their responses revealed that the neutral mid-point had been checked consistently for certain adjectives; in particular, the 'good-bad' and 'strong-weak' scales did not appear to be suitable.

Consequently, the final instrument (Appendix E) consists of only four categories of children; two of which relate to a child's family structure, the others relating to congenital dysfunction. The number of scales was reduced to eighteen, with 'good-bad' and 'strong-weak' being omitted. Respondents to this instrument were finally asked to provide information about their age, sex, marital status, teaching experience, and experience of children from the four categories; the intention being that this information might be used to account for any variations in response which arose.

3.4.2 The Sampling Frame

One might anticipate that teachers' expectations of children

from any group would be modified by their experience of those children and this is a variable which should be controlled for in any study of expectations. In this study this variable was controlled for by administering the semantic differential to a group of student teachers. Teacher trainees represent individuals who will hold a significant position in children's lives in the near future, but whose experience of atypical children or children from atypical homes is likely to be minimal. Further, they are more readily accessible in group situations which maximises the response rate. The potential sample was the total first year enrolment of one hundred and twenty students at a voluntary controlled Anglican College.

3.4.3 Procedure

The semantic differential was distributed at the final term meeting of all first year students. The cover sheet contained written instructions and provided an example of how they were to complete the scales, which were read out to them. The semantic differential was described as an instrument being used to study the use of rating scales. The question they were asked to respond to was 'What in general seem to be the characteristics of an average child from the group named?'. The students were asked to provide their initial response rather than ponder on each scale. The completed forms were collected at the end of the session.

3.5 Summary of Chapter III

The research described here contains three separate but related elements.

- (1) The use of an interview schedule to gather data about the way divorced adults and their adolescent children perceive the experience of divorce.
- (2) The use of the Piers-harris Self-Concept Scale to make comparisons between the self-concept scores of adolescents from divorced and non-divorced homes.
- (3) The use of a semantic differential to gather data on teacher trainees' expectations of children of divorce as compared with other groups of children.

CHAPTER IV

4. PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE DIVORCE EXPERIENCE FOR THEMSELVES AND THEIR CHILDREN

4.1 The Sample

A total of one hundred and sixty three custodial parents were contacted. The response to the invitation to participate in the study is shown in Table 4.1.

TABLE 4.1 Response to Invitation to Participate
in the Study (N=163)

	Number	Percentage
Acceptances	41	25
Refusals	19	12
Non-Replies	88	54
Returned to Sender	15	9

The letters were sent out in batches of ten or twenty over a period of some fifteen months and this did allow some experimentation in an effort to improve the rate of acceptance. Reminders were sent out to some people who had not replied within a fortnight, and a shorter less formal letter was used for one group of twenty. However, these trials did not produce any increase in the number of acceptances and were not continued.

The section of the form for return (Appendix C), which asked people not wishing to participate to indicate why this was so, was deleted part of the way through the process of data

collection as it was thought that it might be providing prospective interviewees with reasons as to why they should not participate. Again, this did not improve the acceptance rate and its use was not re-continued. The reasons given by the nineteen parents who did return this section are, nevertheless, worth recording and are shown in Table 4.2

TABLE 4.2 Reasons Given for Non-Participation (N=19)*

	Number
I haven't the time to spare	5
It might upset me	3
It would be an invasion of my privacy	8
It might upset my children	7
Other	2

*The total number of responses is greater than the number returning the form as some parents gave more than one reason.

The two parents who checked 'other' as a reason provided verbal responses and these are recorded here because their tone is such as to suggest that some parents can be upset by being approached. They said:

"I want to forget that I was ever married to the rotter who ruined two lives. Don't bother me again."

"I really do not want to go back over this period of my life."

The forty one custodial parents who had expressed their willingness to be interviewed were contacted by letter or telephone and were in fact interviewed. This final sample includes the group of parents and children with whom the interview schedule was

piloted as they were selected on the same criteria and recruited in the same way.

4.2 Characteristics of the Sample

4.2.1 Sex of Custodial Parents

Of the forty one custodial parents interviewed, thirty three (81%) were mothers and eight (19%) were fathers. The Office of Population Census and Statistics does not provide a breakdown of the numbers of custodial fathers and custodial mothers, but estimates have been made on the basis of studies which have investigated custody disposition after divorce. The comparison of the sample with those of two such studies shown in Table 4.3 indicates that custodial fathers are over represented in this sample.

TABLE 4.3 Comparison of the Proportion of Custodial Fathers and Mothers in the Sample and in Two Studies of Custody Orders

	Sample	Eekelaar (1977)	Maidment (1976)
Mothers	85%	73%	80%
Fathers	19%	10%	11%

Note: Eekelaar (1977) and Maidment (1976) included categories such as 'joint custody' in their analysis which are not relevant in the present study. Thus, the sum of the percentage of mothers and fathers shown for these studies does not equal one hundred percent.

4.2.2 Age of Parents

The age of the parents in the interview sample ranged from

34 to 52 years, with the mean being 40.4 years (s.d. 5.4). Table 4.4 compares the ages of the sample members with those of all parents divorcing in England and Wales in 1980.

TABLE 4.4 Age of Sample Members Compared with All Divorces Involving Children (England and Wales 1980)

Age Range	Sample		England and Wales	
	Men %	Women %	Men %	Women %
30-34	12	12	23	21
35-39	25	55	16	16
40-44	38	12	12	10
45-49	25	6	9	7
50-59	-	15	10	7

Source: O.P.C.S. Monitor FM2 82/1, Table 3, p.4

The proportion of men and women in the sample between the ages of 35 and 44 years is considerably larger than for England and Wales. However, when one of the criteria for selection was that there must be at least one adolescent child in the family, this discrepancy could be expected.

4.2.3. Occupation and Income

Only two of the parents in the sample of forty one had re-married and a further four were living in a common law marriage. Of the remainder twenty seven (66%) described themselves as being unattached, and eight (19%) as having a steady relationship. Seven mothers were in full-time employment, as were four fathers. Eleven mothers had part-time occupations, with fifteen describing their occupation as 'home duties'. The latter were relying on a combination of social security and

maintenance payments for their income. Surprisingly few (27%) were actually receiving maintenance payments from their ex-spouse for themselves, but 61% were receiving payments for the maintenance of their children.

For the majority of the sample, particularly mothers, the divorce had resulted in a transition in their economic situation. Thus, the rating of their social class on the basis of, in the case of females, their ex-husband's occupation was not considered to be appropriate. Ratings for the males only would not have been meaningful in terms of the whole sample, particularly as four of the eight males were unemployed and in receipt of social security payments. The absence of information about the occupation of the interviewee's ex-spouse makes comparison of the sample with national statistics difficult. However, with some eighty percent having an annual net income of less than £4,000 one could regard the sample as representing the lower end of the scale in terms of their current socio-economic status.

4.2.4. Accommodation

Almost as many parents had been able to remain in the marital home (51%) as had needed to find alternative accommodation (49%). Further, thirty two percent were living in what they regarded as their own home, either mortgaged or unmortgaged. Some twenty four percent were living in privately rented accommodation, and the remainder (44%) were living in accommodation rented from the local authority.

Table 4.5 shows how these statistics compare with those for Great Britain and indicates that the proportion of people living in privately owned accommodation is lower in the sample than for the nation and consequently the proportion of people renting accommodation privately and from local authorities is considerably higher.

TABLE 4.5 Tenure of Accommodation: Sample and Great Britain, 1981

	Sample %	Great Britain %
Private Rental	24	10
Council Rental	44	34
Private Ownership	32	56

Source: O.P.C.S. Monitor GHS 82/1, Table 7, p.5

4.2.5. Number of Children

The forty one parents in the sample had between them a total of one hundred and twenty three children, the average number per family being three. Table 4.6 shows the number of children per family in the sample as compared with the number of children per divorcing couple in England and Wales in 1980.

TABLE 4.6 Number of Children Per Couple: Sample and England and Wales, 1980

Number of Children	Sample %	England and Wales (1980) %
1	12	39
2	27	41
3	24	14
4 or more	37	6

Source: O.P.C.S. Monitor FM 82/1. Table 8, p.7

The proportion of parents in the sample with one or two children is considerably less than for England and Wales, whilst the proportion of parents with three or more children is greater than for England and Wales. Thus, larger families are over-represented in the sample.

4.2.6 Duration of Marriage

The average length of marriage for the parents in the sample was 14.3 years; the lower limit being 13 years and the upper limit being 24 years. Table 4.7 shows the duration of marriage for the sample and for all divorces in England and Wales, 1980.

TABLE 4.7 Duration of Marriage: Sample and All Divorces involving Children in England and Wales, 1980

<u>Length of Marriage (Years)</u>	<u>Sample %</u>	<u>England and Wales, 1980</u>
Less than 10	0	44
10-14	21	27
15-19	64	18
20-24	15	8
More than 24	0	3

Source: O.P.C.S. Monitor FM2 82/1. Table 4, p.4.

The average duration of marriage for couples divorcing in 1980, with children under 16 years, was 11.2 years and is lower than that of the sample. Further, Table 4.7 shows that couples whose marriage ended in divorce after 15 to 19 years are over-represented in the sample. However, this is inevitable when one of the criteria for selection was the presence of adolescent children in a family.

4.2.7 Grounds for Divorce

As one of the criteria for inclusion in the sample was that the separation and divorce must be a recent event, the 'five year separation' test of irretrievable breakdown was not applicable to members of the present sample. Table 4.8 shows the proportion of parents in the sample fulfilling the remaining conditions necessary to prove irretrievable breakdown of marriage and those for all divorces in England and Wales, 1980.

TABLE 4.8 Grounds for Divorce: Sample and England and Wales in 1980

<u>Grounds</u>	<u>Sample %</u>	<u>England and Wales, 1980</u>
Unreasonable Behaviour	51	32
Adultery	37	30
2 Years Separation	12	26

Source: O.P.C.S. Monitor FM 82/1. Table 9, p.7

The majority of parents in the sample fulfilled the 'unreasonable behaviour' condition and the proportion is greater than for all divorces in England and Wales. The proportion in the sample fulfilling the 'adultery' condition is comparable with that for England and Wales. However, the proportion in the sample fulfilling the 'two year separation' condition was only half that for England and Wales. Thus, irretrievable breakdown proved by unreasonable behaviour is over-represented in the sample and irretrievable breakdown proved by two years separation is under-represented.

4.3 Background to the Divorce

4.3.1 Conflict in the Marriage

The facts cited to prove irretrievable breakdown of marriage do not always reflect the conditions that existed within a household prior to divorce. For example, irretrievable breakdown proven by two years separation may suggest that separation and divorce was by mutual consent without a great deal of conflict or it might hide the fact that such conflict existed. However, as shown in section 4.2.7, the greatest proportion of parents in the sample cited unreasonable behaviour on the spouse's behalf as proof of irretrievable breakdown of marriage, and this does suggest that in the majority of cases there was pre-divorce conflict. Further evidence of this conflict was provided by the period that had elapsed between the time at which the informants perceived difficulties to have arisen in the marriage and divorce.

TABLE 4.9 Length of Time Between Difficulties
Arising in Marriage and Divorce

Time (Years)	Proportion of Parents %	Mean length of Marriage (Years) for Parents in each Group
1-5	44	17.0
6-10	20	16.0
11-15	28	15.0
16-20	8	21.4

More than half the sample reported difficulties arising over five years prior to the divorce. The least time had elapsed in those cases where adultery had been the fact cited as proof of irretrievable breakdown; that is, those situations in which

a spouse had left for a third party and the 'injured party' had sued for divorce. Obviously, when the information is based on an interview with one of the parties concerned the perspective is likely to be distorted, and a husband or wife who has left the matrimonial home for a third party may construe difficulties as having arisen much earlier in the marriage.

4.3.2 Attempts at Reconciliation

In the majority (76%) of cases the informant's spouse had been the first to leave the matrimonial home. However, it was the informant who initiated divorce proceedings in the majority of cases (78%). More than half (56%) indicated that some kind of post-separation reconciliation had taken place. However, often this meant a spouse had returned to the matrimonial home before deciding to make the separation permanent. This pattern was particularly prevalent amongst cases involving adultery. For example:

"He came back after two months and said he wanted to stay - he went away again 'to think' and phoned to say he wouldn't be back."

(Mrs. L. Aged 38. Two children)

"My husband returned after leaving for another woman - he had been away three weeks - he only came back for two weeks and then went again. He says he still wants a reconciliation because he misses the children."

(Mrs. D. Aged 35. Two children)

Fathers whose wives had left for another man seemed rather less willing to forgive.

"She said she wanted to come back and that it was all

over - but I knew it wasn't and wouldn't let her."

(Mr. J. Aged 34 Four children.)

Equally unforgiving were wives who had sought divorces on the basis of their husband's unreasonable behaviour.

"He has tried - he promised that we would go on holiday to start again - but it was the usual false promises."

(Mrs. R. Aged 48. Two children.)

"He has asked if he can come back but I am just not interested."

(Mrs. K. Aged 34. Three children.)

The impression given by women such as these was that, after years of conflict, they were relieved to be free of it finally, and that having their husband return would be a backward step.

4.3.3 Use of Counselling and Support Networks

Forty six percent of informants had received some kind of formal counselling, with the National Marriage Guidance Council being the main source. However, only twenty one percent of those attending such an agency said that they felt it was helpful. In the main this was attributed to the fact that their partner had not been prepared to attend more than once, if at all. Those who still found it helpful in some way related this to their own personal development.

"The counsellor - a woman - helped me understand my own feelings and to realise my own potential - we also covered the sexual side of things which had been a problem."

(Mrs. M. Aged 38. Three children.)

Some forty percent of the sample said that they had found their family supportive and helpful. This included financial and emotional support. There were those cases in which 'in laws' had been seen as a positive hindrance in the way they had taken sides, but this was not always the expected support of a parent for a child. For example, Mr. P. who had custody of one of his three children pointed out that his own parents had taken his wife's side and now refused to visit him or his daughter.

There were also those who had deliberately not involved their parents and this also applied to their friends. The thirty percent of the sample who had turned to friends had primarily used them as someone to talk to. Mrs. Y (aged 39 with two children) said:

"They have given moral support - they didn't know the details but seemed to boost my confidence - I haven't lost any friends."

Several parents spoke about the way they had been able to make new friends and new sources of support by joining the Gingerbread group for single parent families.

4.3.4 The Marriage and Divorce in Retrospect

When asked what they now saw as being the main cause of the breakdown of their marriage the majority of parents focused on recent events. In particular they emphasised the behaviour of their spouse which suggests that they did not believe themselves to be responsible for what had happened.

TABLE 4.10 Informants View of the Cause of Marriage Breakdown

<u>Cause</u>	<u>Percentage of Informants</u>
Adultery	32%
Alcohol	32%
Lack of Communication	29%
Instability	5%
Other	2%

Those interviewees who gave their spouse's adultery or drinking as the main reason for the breakup of their marriage were the most inclined to focus on recent events. The possibility of their own behaviour having contributed to their spouse's adultery or drinking did not appear to have been considered, with only one woman adding '...and my inability to cope with it' as a causal factor.

Similarly, despite there being thirteen (32%) cases where the women had been pregnant at the time of marriage, only one saw this as a contributing factor. The majority of interviewees saw themselves as having been ready for the responsibilities of marriage (63%) and parenthood (76%) at the time it occurred, but some were less certain about the preparedness of their spouse.

Twenty nine percent of parents saw 'lack of communication' as being the main cause of the breakdown of their marriage. However, 'communication' often seemed to mean some kind of one way process. This was most clearly shown by those parents who said that divorce

was still avoidable even after difficulties had arisen in the marriage.

"He wanted to come back - but I couldn't forget that he had been with another woman - we couldn't have made things like they were before."

(Mrs. T. Married at age 19, divorced on grounds of husband's adultery.)

"I didn't want it to happen - but my husband wouldn't accept the responsibility and change."

(Mrs. M. Married at age 24, divorced on grounds of husband's unreasonable behaviour.)

"Only if he had been able to change his behaviour completely."

(Mrs. K. Married at age 18, divorced on grounds of husband's unreasonable behaviour.)

In general, parents who believed that divorce could have been avoided saw this as being contingent upon some change in their spouse's behaviour. Similarly, those who saw divorce as being inevitable following difficulties arising in their marriage generally regarded this as being a function of their spouse's inability or unwillingness to change their behaviour.

4.3.5. Advice Parents Would Give to Adolescents About Marriage

In contrast to their protestations about their preparedness for marriage, when the parents were asked what advice they would give to their children about marriage, timing and readiness featured strongly.

"Wait until you are older - I didn't have enough experience myself."

(Mrs. L. Married at age 19, divorced on grounds of husband's adultery.)

Don't rush into an early marriage - see life first - don't get married too early."

(Mr. F. Married at age 26, divorced on grounds of wife's unreasonable behaviour.)

In all, sixty percent of parents included age and length of courtship as part of the advice they would give their own children about marriage.

There were those parents who believed that one could not give advice to children about matters such as marriage.

"None - you can't give advice about something like that. People can talk until they are blue in the face but you don't listen."

(Mrs. D. Married at age 20, divorced on grounds of husband's adultery.)

However, there were also those who would want to do more than admonish their children about the timing of marriage and attempt to provide insights into the nature of the marriage relationship.

"Marriage is about give and take - it is a partnership where you need to work together and adapt to each other."

(Mrs. M. Married at age 26, divorced on grounds of 2 years separation.)

"Show consideration for each other's feelings - share experiences."

(Mr. F. Married at age 22, divorced on grounds of wife's unreasonable behaviour.)

Whether such advice would outweigh the influence of the model of marriage that the parents in the sample had provided for their children is one of the interesting questions that could be pursued by longitudinal studies.

4.4 Problems Since the Divorce

4.4.1. Source of Problem

The majority of parents (54%) reported that their main problems since the divorce had been financial ones. Twenty four percent described their main problems as having been emotional ones, and ninepercent as having been related to their children.

TABLE 4.11 Chief Problem Since the Divorce (N=41)

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Proportion of Parents %</u>
Financial	54
Emotional	24
Child Related	9
Other (Including more than one of the above)	13

The category 'other' included three parents who said that they had not had any problems at all, and two parents who had experienced financial, emotional and child related problems.

The most frequently cited emotional problem was loneliness, but two parents had suffered what they described as nervous breakdowns at the time of the marriage breakup from which they had not fully recovered.

Only two of the parents who had cited child related problems described these as behavioural problems, the remainder being matters relating to legal custody and access arrangements.

4.4.2 Assistance with Problems

The majority (80%) of parents had been unable to discuss their

problems with their ex-spouse, and in some cases deliberately avoided this as it resulted in further arguments. The minimal use of agencies such as the National Marriage Guidance Council has already been mentioned (section 4.3.3) and only thirty four percent of parents indicated that they had sought assistance from welfare agencies generally. Inevitably, all the parents had been in contact with the Probation and After-Care Service, however, this was seen as being part of the legal process rather than a source of support and advice. Obviously, most parents had made contact with the Department of Health and Social Security, but this was with regard to financial benefits rather than counselling help. There was no regular pattern in the sources of assistance used with regard to emotional problems, but general practitioners and social workers were mentioned.

The satisfaction with the assistance provided was low, with only twenty five percent of those seeking such assistance describing it as being adequate. This, of course, includes those who were referring to financial assistance and this was described as being 'insufficient to live a normal lifestyle'. However, there were those who had found social workers and probation officers helpful. For example, one custodial father had found the probation officer 'very helpful and supportive' in a difficult custody and access dispute, saying that 'he won me the case'. At the same time, there were those who expressed dissatisfactions with probation officers being described as 'too young' or in one case 'biased'.

4.4.3 Perceived Needs Regarding Assistance

Despite the minimal use of welfare services, nearly half the sample said that they had felt in need of some kind of assistance at one stage or another in the divorce process. This included personal counselling at the time the initial separation took place, advice with regard to financial entitlements and rights, and advice on how to explain matters to their children and cope with child related problems. Several members of the sample belonged to the support group for single parents 'Gingerbread' and had found this to be a reliable source of information as well as providing a social outlet, particularly one in which they could meet others who had experienced similar difficulties.

However, there were also two parents who felt such groups were a waste of time as the members seemed more interested in having a good time than helping people deal with their problems. One parent was highly critical of the Citizens Advice Bureau because she had found it embarrassing. She felt that they could be a valuable source of advice, but the office she had been to was small and cramped and she had felt inhibited by the apparent lack of confidentiality.

Two parents were aware of the developments that have taken place in other countries with regard to family courts and said that their experience of the divorce process had led them to believe that this system should be introduced in Great Britain. In particular, they believed that the conciliation counselling that takes place in such courts could have been valuable in

their own case in helping to resolve such matters as custody and access.

4.5 Perception of Children's Reactions to Divorce

4.5.1 School Behaviour, Peer and Sibling Relationships

The general impression conveyed by the parents in the sample was that their children's schoolwork had not been affected by the separation and divorce. Table 4.12 shows the proportion of parents who believed their children's schoolwork had improved, worsened, or remained consistent in both the pre-separation and post-divorce period.

TABLE 4.12 Perception of Children's School Performance in the Pre-Separation and Post-Divorce Period

<u>Rating</u>	<u>Pre-Separation %</u>	<u>Post-Divorce %</u>
Improve	29	49
Worse	29	22
No Change	42	29

The majority of parents saw little change in school performance during the immediate pre-separation period. This could, of course, be a function of their own pre-occupation at the time and, as a retrospective judgement, could be self justificatory. Similarly, the greater proportion of parents believed that their children's school performance had improved in the post-divorce period, but this could again be what they wanted to believe. However, some parents did provide verbal comments to support their judgement.

"Until I told the teachers they had no idea that

there had been any problems at home."

(Mrs. Y. Two children. Divorced on grounds of husband's adultery.)

"He has always been a good scholar and has maintained his record."

(Mrs. K. Two children. Divorced on grounds of husband's unreasonable behaviour.)

"He was in the 'B' stream - now he has moved into the 'A' stream and is taking ten 'O' levels."

(Mrs. D. Three children. Divorced on grounds of husband's adultery.)

"It didn't seem to make much difference - he was more settled after my husband went and he does seem to try harder now."

(Mrs. W. Two children. Divorced on grounds of husband's unreasonable behaviour.)

There were those parents who believed that their children's school performance had deteriorated in the pre-separation period but had improved since.

"It did go down for a while - but he has come good now."

(Mrs. W. Five children. Divorced on grounds of husband's unreasonable behaviour.)

However, there were also those who believed that their children's school performance had declined in the pre-separation period and had not improved again.

"She doesn't care as much as before - she was in the top class but has moved down."

(Mrs. M. Four children. Divorced on grounds of husband's adultery.)

"Her school work has gone down a lot - she won't co-operate - and rebels a lot - she only went to school one and a half days last week."

(Mrs. Q. Five children. Divorced on grounds of husband's unreasonable behaviour.)

Twenty six percent of the parents in the sample believed that their children were happier since the separation and divorce. Only seven percent (three parents) felt that their children were any less happy, the remainder perceived no difference in their children's general state of happiness between the pre-divorce and post-divorce period. In each of the three cases in which parents saw their children being less happy than before, they related this to the absence of the other parent.

"They miss their mother and would still like us to get back together again."

(Mr. J. Four children. Divorced on grounds of wife's adultery.)

Those parents who believed their children to be happier related this to the tensions that existed in the pre-divorce home having been removed.

"There were lots of rows in the home which affected them - he was a strict disciplinarian."

(Mrs. K. Two children. Divorced on grounds of husband's unreasonable behaviour.)

"My husband was a tyrant - they have more freedom now - he didn't like them having friends here."

(Mrs. D. Three children. Divorced on grounds of husband's adultery.)

" When my husband was here Lisa was always out -

she would stay with friends - now she stays home more."

(Mrs. Q. Five children. Divorced on grounds of husband's unreasonable behaviour.)

"She could never talk to her father - she used to clam up about things - she has been more honest with me and can be herself - she seems more confident in herself."

(Mrs. M. Four children. Divorced on grounds of husband's adultery.)

It should be noted that two of the above quotes come from parents who were divorced on the grounds of adultery rather than unreasonable behaviour as might be expected; that is, even in homes where there had not been a great deal of conflict parents believed that their own relationship with their children had improved. This also applied to peer and sibling relationships, with forty four percent of parents believing that their children had more friends than before. In particular, they believed that the nature of their relationship with friends had changed, with several parents referring to the fact that their children brought friends home to stay which they had not felt able to do before. Further, the majority of parents (52%) who had more than one child believed that their children had become closer to one another since the divorce, with one mother quoting her teenage son as saying 'We are a team now!'

4.5.2. Access

Fifty six percent of parents reported that their children still had contact with their non-custodial parent, which means that almost as many had children who no longer did. However, the

majority (70%) of parents were in favour of the concept of access when this met with the children's needs and wishes. Those parents who reported that their children were no longer in contact with their non-custodial parent all believed that it was because the children had not wished to maintain such contact, but there were also two cases in which the non-custodial parent had refused to keep in contact with the children.

The main reason that parents seemed to believe in the principle of access was so that the children would not regret having had no choice later in life. Two mothers did express the view that their sons needed a man's influence, but others felt that access was a poor substitute.

"He will never have a relationship with his father as a father - they were good friends - so he has really lost his father as a friend."

(Mrs. R. Three children. Divorced on grounds of husband's adultery.)

As well as those parents who believed that their children should not see their non-custodial parent because it was against their wishes, there were four who were against the idea because they believed it would provide their ex-spouse with the opportunity to turn the children against themselves. However, they still maintained that the children did not see the non-custodial parent by choice.

4.5.3 Positive Versus Negative Effects

Forty six percent of parents believed that their children had

not been disadvantaged at all by the breakup of their marriage. The remaining fifty four percent believed that it had resulted in some negative consequences. The latter includes those already mentioned in the previous sections who perceived changes in school performance, but also includes parents who perceived more subtle reactions. For example, parents who felt that their children had come through the experience very well still made comments about what their children had lost.

"She was close to her father - she gets upset if he doesn't contact her regularly - I think she feels rejected."

(Mrs. L. Two children. Divorced on grounds of husband's adultery.)

"She has lost the closeness she had with her mother and her two sisters - she doesn't see her grandparents either."

(Mr. C. Three children. Divorced on grounds of two years separation.)

"It did hurt him - his father left for another woman - he felt mixed up because he loved him and didn't like him leaving."

(Mrs. D. Three children. Divorced on grounds of adultery.)

Perhaps inevitably the majority (72%) of parents who divorced on the grounds of unreasonable behaviour believed that their children had been suffering because of the tension in the home prior to the separation. At the same time ninety percent of parents believed that their children had benefited, regardless of the reason for the separation and divorce; that is, they believed that whilst their children had suffered in some ways they had benefited overall.

"My children have gained from each other - they are a lot closer now - we are closer as a one parent family - the children have become more responsible."

(Mrs. B. Two children. Divorced on grounds of adultery.)

"I think she has grown up - but perhaps too soon - she does look for a lot of re-assurance."

(Mrs. L. Two children. Divorced on grounds of adultery.)

"They have more freedom now - they have more understanding of other people's problems and feelings."

(Mrs. D. Three children. Divorced on grounds of husbands adultery.)

Apparent improvements in self confidence, maturity, and sensitivity, were common themes in the comments made by parents who felt that their children had benefited in some way. The impression gained from parents was that they believed that their children had gained more than they lost through the separation and divorce. Thus, it was not surprising to find that there had been little use of child welfare facilities. Only three children had attended Child Guidance Clinics and the parents had been satisfied with the assistance that they had received there. Consequently, the parents in the sample saw little need for formal support systems for children of divorce, but the general notion of them 'having someone to talk to' was seen as being desirable.

The question of whether the adolescents in the sample shared their parents' views on the kind of experiences divorce had presented them with, and the way these experiences had affected them, will be answered by the results of the interviews with these adolescents presented in Chapter V.

4.6 Summary of Chapter IV

(1) A 'letter approach' to custodial parents resulted in interviews with a sample of forty one. The sample was unrepresentative of the population of divorced parents in several ways, including the proportion of custodial fathers; the proportion in the older age group; the proportion with three or more children; the proportion obtaining a divorce on grounds of 'unreasonable behaviour' and 'two years separation'.

(2) The members of the sample reported a high incidence of conflict in their marriage which, in general, they attributed to the behaviour of their spouses. There had been few serious attempts at reconciliation and minimal use of counselling facilities.

(3) The majority of the sample reported their main problems since divorce as being financial ones, followed by emotional and child related problems. However, few had sought the assistance of welfare agencies but there had been some reliance on parents and friends for support. Where the assistance of welfare agencies had been sought, the level of satisfaction with the assistance provided was low.

(4) The general impression provided by the interviews was that parents felt that although their children had been disadvantaged in some ways by the separation and divorce they had gained more than they had lost. This was particularly the case for those situations in which there had been open conflict in the marriage, but was not necessarily so.

5. ADOLESCENTS AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF THE DIVORCE
EXPERIENCE

All the statistics in the ensuing analysis were calculated by the use of sub-programs of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (Nie et al, 1975). The majority of items on the questionnaire were answers to questions rather than quantifiable variables, and many of these simply require descriptive reporting compatible with the aims of the study as described in Chapter III (pp.68-69).

It was stated in Chapter III (p.67) that no specific hypotheses were pre-formulated. These were not seen as being helpful at the design stage of the study. However, one of the aims of the study was to explore possible associations between aspects of the divorce of the parents in the sample with their adolescent children's perceptions of it. A number of such possible associations were explored, but only those which were considered to be conceptually valid and found to be statistically significant, are reported. The decision about which associations to explore was not simply a random one, but was based on the findings of the literature described in Chapter II, and the author's own experience of working with children of divorce.

Further, thirty of the adolescents have been directly quoted, some more than once. Not all the adolescents in the sample made comments, beyond answering the direct questions, but it was still necessary to be selective in the use of quotations. However, in their selection an effort was made to achieve a balanced view of a particular issue.

5.1 The Sample

5.1.1 Age and Sex

A total of sixty four adolescents were interviewed, twenty

four boys and forty girls. The average age was 14.7 years, with the lower limit being 13 years and the upper limit being 17 years.

TABLE 5.1 Age and Sex of Adolescents in the Sample

Age	Boys		Girls	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
13	5	21	6	15
14	7	29	11	28
15	5	21	12	30
16	7	29	10	25
17	-	-	1	2
	(N = 24)		(N = 40)	

The sub-program 'BREAKDOWN' of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences was used to analyse responses to all items on the interview schedule according to the sex of the adolescents. One-way analysis of variance revealed no statistically significant difference between the means for boys and girls on any of the items. Thus, except where specifically mentioned, differences between the response of boys and girls is not a feature of the analysis.

5.1.2 Family Composition

None of the adolescents in the sample were adopted children and all were natural children of the marriage to which the divorces referred to in Chapter IV related. The majority (82%) were living with their mothers, with only one of the boys living with his father. Six of the adolescents were 'only children', the majority having siblings younger than themselves. Forty eight percent were the eldest child in the family.

5.1.3 Education

Consistent with the information gained from parents about change in accommodation, almost equal numbers of the adolescents reported that they had moved house since the separation and divorce of their parents. However, the majority (64%) had been able to maintain some kind of stability in that they had not needed to change schools. Nineteen percent of the sample - that is the older adolescents - had just left school and eight of them had already found work, with four still being unemployed. Ninety four percent of those still at school were receiving a State education, with the remainder being at private schools.

5.2 Family Life Prior to Separation

5.2.1 Inter-parent Conflict

Seventy six percent of the adolescents reported that there had been a degree of conflict between their parents prior to them separating. The majority of these (60%) construed this as being verbal conflict; two percent construed it as being primarily physical conflict; with thirty eight percent of those reporting inter-parent conflict saying that it had been both verbal and physical. Where conflict of either kind was reported it had been quite frequent, with fifty four percent describing it as being a weekly occurrence and forty two percent describing it as occurring monthly. In only one case did an adolescent see conflict as being about themselves, with the majority (80%) seeing it as being about their estranged parent's behaviour, particularly drinking and affairs with other women. There were no cases in which adolescents regarded their parents as having stopped speaking to one another.

5.2.2 Reaction to Inter-Parent Conflict

Despite the fact that the majority of adolescents reported the existence of conflict between their parents in the pre-separation period the actual separation came as a surprise to many of them. Almost half (31) of the sample said that it had been a surprise when one of their parents actually left. Whether they were surprised or not was related to the extent to which they felt they had been kept informed by their parents as to what was happening. There was a statistically significant association between adolescents construing the separation as being a surprise and their believing that they had not been told sufficient about what was happening.

TABLE 5.2 Association Between Separation Being a Surprise and Adolescents Being Kept Informed

	Informed	Uninformed
Surprised	15	15
Not Surprised	27	7

1 degree of freedom
 $\chi^2 = 3.39$ $P < .05$
 $C = .22$

The number of adolescents who said that their parents' separation had come as a relief to them (32) was the same as the number saying that it had not been a relief (32). The separation being a relief was associated with there being conflict in the pre-separation home.

TABLE 5.3 Association Between Conflict in the Home and the Separation Being a Relief

	Relief	Not a Relief
Conflict	31	17
No Conflict	1	15

2 degrees of freedom
 $\chi^2 = 16.34$ P < .001
C = .45

Some of the adolescents attributed their relief to the removal of conflict.

"I was glad - I have been able to do my work better since."

(Tracey. Aged 15 years)

"Because we didn't get hit anymore."

(Lisa. Aged 15 years)

"I didn't like the arguments, the fighting, the shouting."

(Paul. Aged 13 years)

"Because I knew that there wouldn't be any more arguments."

(Patricia. Aged 16 years)

Similarly, a statistically significant association was found between the existence of conflict in the home and adolescents coming to believe that the separation and divorce of their parents was, in retrospect, a good idea.

TABLE 5.4 Association Between Conflict in the Home and Separation/Divorce Being Desirable

	Desirable	Undesirable
Conflict	41	7
No conflict	9	7

1₂ degree of freedom
 $\chi^2 = 4.39$ $P < .05$
 $C = .25$

There was also a statistically significant association between construing the separation as a relief and as having been desirable.

TABLE 5.5 Association Between Separation Being a Relief and Separation/Divorce Being Desirable

	Desirable	Not Desirable
Relief	32	0
Not a Relief	18	14

2₂ degrees of freedom
 $\chi^2 = 17.92$ $P < .001$
 $C = .46$

Whilst the associations shown in Tables 5.2 to 5.5 are statistically significant, the contingency coefficients (C) shown suggest that these associations are not particularly strong. However, the values of the contingency coefficients must be considered relative to the size of the contingency table, and for a 2 x 2 table the maximum value of C is .707.

5.3 Contact with Estranged Parent

5.3.1 Adolescents with Contact

Only forty percent of the adolescents had maintained some kind of contact with their non-custodial parent and this was consistent with the information provided by the parents.

TABLE 5.6 Association Between Parents' and Adolescents' Information About Access

		Parent	
		Yes	No
Adolescent	Yes	20	5
	No	13	26

4 degrees of freedom

χ^2 15.26 $p < .01$

C = .43

In the majority of cases where access was taking place it was on a regular basis, with sixty eight percent seeing their non-custodial parent at least once a month. The remainder had less formal arrangements and saw their non-custodial parent infrequently. However, only half of those having regular access stayed at their non-custodial parent's home and spent part of their school holidays with them. Seventy percent of those still seeing their non-custodial parent said that they enjoyed the time they spent with them, the remainder did so grudgingly.

5.3.2 Adolescents Without Contact

In the majority of cases (60%) the adolescents no longer had contact with their non-custodial parent and this was usually by their own choice. Paul (aged 16), whose father left home

for another woman, said:

"I don't want to see him - he left at a time when I needed him most - during my exams - and because he let Mum down."

Some non-custodial parents were still living in the same locality and this meant that meetings were inevitable, but this was not always a satisfactory arrangement. Vicky (aged 15), whose parents had divorced on the grounds of unreasonable behaviour, said:

"Unfortunately I run into him as he only lives around the corner - I try to avoid him."

There was evidence to suggest that girls in particular found their father's adultery difficult to accept. Helen (aged 15) said:

"I can't forgive him for going off with another woman - I feel indifferent about him - he doesn't come into my thoughts at all."

The 'other woman' was seen as a hindrance to re-establishing a relationship in such cases. Suzette (aged 14) said:

"I visited him once but didn't go again because of his girlfriend - I knew her and liked her before but I can't forgive her - I refused to apologise for nasty things I said to her."

The non-custodial parent was re-married or living with someone else in fifty six percent of cases, but only half of the adolescents said that they felt that this interfered with them being able to continue seeing that parent. It was not possible to determine the extent to which this was a function of an adolescent having aligned themselves with their custodial parent.

5.3.3 Access, Whose Decision?

The majority (72%) believed that the choice as to whether they saw their non-custodial parent or not was their own, and in the eighteen cases where adolescents said that they did not have a choice - that is, where there was an enforceable access order - they went on to say that they would wish to continue access even without such an order. Being able to keep in contact with their non-custodial parent was something those adolescents who had such contact saw as being positive, and none regarded it as being a hindrance to their relationship with their custodial parent or their peers, or as impinging on their lives. Having the choice as to whether they should be able to continue their relationship with their non-custodial parent was seen as a child's right by the overwhelming majority of the adolescents (88%) in the sample. This was summed up by a comment from one sixteen year old girl who said, 'They had the divorce not me'. Five adolescents argued that it should be a child's decision but that the custodial parent should have some say in the matter as well, the remainder placed the responsibility on the non-custodial parent with one saying, 'He must want to see me too'.

5.4 School Performance and Peer Relationships

5.4.1 School Performance

There was agreement between parents and adolescents on the way in which their school work had been affected by the divorce; that is, fifty percent felt that their work had improved; thirty eight percent felt it had not been affected; and the remainder (nine adolescents) believed it had deteriorated. However, the validity of the judgements made by both parents and adolescents cannot be established without reference to school records.

TABLE 5.7 Association Between Parents' and Adolescents' View of How Schoolwork had been Affected

<u>Parents' View</u>	<u>Adolescents' View</u>		
	Improved	Worse	Same
Improved	15	2	10
Worse	4	6	4
Same	12	1	10

4 degrees of freedom

$$\chi^2 = 12.66 \quad P < .01$$

$$C = .31$$

The proportion of adolescents reporting that their concentration on, and interest in, schoolwork had improved was much the same as for general school performance. However, a greater proportion (thirteen adolescents) believed that their concentration had been negatively affected since the divorce. One fourteen year old girl believed that her work had suffered because she had spent 'a lot of time at home helping Mum'. Another believed that her work had gone down because the family had needed to move, but that it was improving now she had 'got used to living in a new house'. Those who believed that their work had improved sometimes related it to the fact that they now had more peace and quiet. The boy whose mother is quoted in Chapter IV (p.105) as saying 'he is taking ten 'O' levels' spoke with equal pride of his achievement saying that he was now able to work better and harder.

Few felt that their relationship with their teachers had deteriorated or that they were less self-confident. The majority (63%) saw no difference in their relationship with their teachers, but thirty three percent did believe that

this had improved. Two of the girls mentioned that their teachers had been sympathetic and had spent time talking to them about their family situation.

5.4.2 Peer Relationships

The majority of the adolescents said that they did not feel any different to their friends now that they were members of a one parent family. Some were quite assertive on this point.

"Why should I - I am no different from anyone else."

(Suzette, aged 14)

For others it had made little difference as it was an experience some of their friends had shared.

"None of them ask - some of my friends are in the same situation."

(Angela. Aged 14)

"My best friend's Mum and Dad are divorced - there are four of us in a group and three of us have divorced parents."

(Jane. Aged 16)

Twenty seven percent said that they did feel different from their friends in some ways, with the change in economic circumstances precipitated by the divorce being a feature of their responses.

"At first - when Mum started to say we can't afford things."

(Carol. Aged 16)

"Sometimes I feel a bit jealous when they're getting things from their Dad."

(Michael. Aged 14)

One fourteen year old girl who was living with her father said that she did feel different to her friends now, but believed that she had gained in some ways.

"I get on better with my friends - my Mum is a snob - she used to tell me not to go out with some of my friends because they were working class - she used to brainwash me - friends have said 'you are a nicer person now' so my social life is better now."

There was evidence that some of the adolescents felt embarrassed about the divorce of their parents as twenty five percent of them did not tell their friends about it. This does not mean that they hid the fact as several were keen to point out, but one sixteen year old boy said that he 'had kept it a secret in case his father changed his mind'. The majority of the sample (75%) did tell their friends about what was happening but in several cases this was 'after a bit'. One unfortunate girl said that she had told her friends only to have them make a joke of it so she had 'learned to keep her mouth shut'. However, this was the exception and generally the adolescents believed that their parents' actions had made little difference to the way in which their friends reacted to them. Half of those who had told their friends what was happening believed that this had been helpful, some because 'then they don't talk about it and leave you to get on with it', and others because 'it was good to get it off my chest'.

Of the twenty four adolescents who said that they had a particular boyfriend or girlfriend the majority said that this had helped them to cope with events at home.

"He has given me someone to talk to and be close to."

(Suzette. Aged 14)

"He was supportive - I always had him to fall back on."

(Deborah. Aged 15)

Several had a boyfriend or girlfriend who 'had been through it themselves'. Paul (aged 16) said that his girlfriend 'understands because she is from a one parent family too'. Similarly, Karen (aged 14) said 'he is from a one parent family too - we just help each other'.

5.5 Views on Marriage and Parenthood

5.5.1 Attitude to Marriage

Despite their experiences the majority of the adolescents in the sample said that they intended to marry and believed that they would have a happy marriage. The same proportion (84%) expressed a desire to get married, said that they intended to marry, and believed that they would have a happy marriage. Similarly, the majority (64%) believed that it was unlikely that they themselves would get a divorce. However, thirty six percent would not rule it out as a possibility, with a number indicating that they would divorce rather than put up with some of the things their parents had put up with.

Those who were able to specify what they would do to ensure that they had a happy marriage often based their ideas on what they had learned from their parents' experiences.

"I won't get married because I am going to have a baby - I would be very choosy and make sure he was the right man - I will be over twenty."

(Tracy. Aged 14)

"I would try not to argue - if you get married under twenty you have no life of your own - I would get married in my twenties."

(Carol. Aged 16)

"My dad went out drinking a lot - I would make sure I went too- make sure the money goes into the home - I wouldn't let him hit our children."

(Lisa. Aged 13)

"I wouldn't behave like my father - I wouldn't drink and smoke - I would take my wife with me when I went out."

(David. Aged 16)

In general, this group of adolescents seemed to believe that age was an important factor in ensuring that a marriage was successful, with 'the twenties' representing the ideal time. 'Getting to know' their prospective partner was seen as being equally important, but few appeared to have learned how a marriage that had started off well by being entered into at the right age and after a 'proper' courtship could be maintained.

5.5.2 Attitude to Parenthood

The same proportion of adolescents (84%) who said they intended to marry said that they intended to become parents. There was no evidence to suggest that they believed children were a source of stress and conflict, but the timing of parenthood was seen as being important.

"I would have children later in life than mum and dad did - I would wait until we had the things we wanted."

(Nicola. Aged 15)

"You should have time together on your own - to get to know each other properly."

(Angela. Aged 17)

Despite their experiences the majority of the adolescents believed that it was important for children to live with two parents (61%). However, some of these saw it as being more important for younger children than 'for children of my age'. The actual number of parents was seen as being less important than their role.

"You get more support from two - dads can help their sons."

(Ian. Aged 13)

"I would have a father to turn to when I need him."

(Paul. Aged 16)

"There are more people to look after you - I would like my Dad back still."

(Terry. Aged 14)

It is perhaps significant that the above quotes are all from boys who were living with their mothers. The last of them is from a boy whose father's excessive drinking had made his mother's life fairly miserable for several years. However, to Terry his behaviour had seemed less important than the fact that he was 'his Dad'. Many of those adolescents who gave reasons as to why two parents were important related this to economic security.

Those who gave reasons for saying that living with two parents was not important implied that this was contingent upon what each parent was like.

"We hardly saw him anyway - it was like having only one parent - he was like a lodger."

(Lisa. Aged 15)

To some, living with two parents only seemed important in that it avoided embarrassment, and that while they felt happy and secure it made little difference to them. The girl referred to earlier who had said that her friends had joked about her parents divorce said that it was better to have two parents 'because you don't have the mickey taken out of you'.

5.5.3 Attitude Towards Family Life Education

Three quarters of the adolescents in the sample believed that some kind of course at school directed towards preparing them for marriage and parenthood would be a good idea. However, few were able to say what form it should take or what such a course should include. One fifteen year old girl said 'someone, somewhere should provide more information'. Another felt that her sex education had been poor as she had learned more from friends than any other person.

Some of those who thought that courses at school would have some merit expressed reservations about it as they were not sure that one could be taught about relationships or marriage. Similar reservations were expressed by those who

had said that there should not be such courses at school. One actually used the phrase 'experience is the best teacher', and another said 'it is up to the way you react - you learn as you go along'. There was little to suggest that either those who said such courses would be a good idea or those who disagreed based their judgement on their parents' experiences. This is not particularly surprising when one considers that, like their parents, they were inclined to blame the recent behaviour of one or other of their parents for the divorce rather than see it as being a function of their lack of preparedness for marriage.

5.6 Needs Regarding Support and Guidance

5.6.1 Information

Sixty seven percent of the adolescents believed that they had been kept sufficiently well informed about what was going on and the statistically significant association between the extent to which they felt they had been kept informed and their not being surprised when their parents separated has already been mentioned (section 5.2.2).

However, there were those who felt that they had been well informed about what was happening in the post-separation period but not before. Consequently, they had been surprised at the separation. This was particularly the

case for those situations where a parent had left the marital home for someone else. In such situations the adolescents may have found that they were no more well informed than their custodial parent and thus the extent to which these parents could keep their children informed was limited.

The majority of the sample (81%) believed that their own views had been given sufficient consideration. However, there were those who had been left feeling uncertain about the future.

"I didn't know about custody - I wanted to stay with my father but thought I would have to go with my mother because the court said so - someone should have told us who we could live with - I didn't know if I could choose."

(Karen. Aged 16)

One would not expect adolescents to know much about court procedures and their ignorance of this did leave several feeling uncertain. Books, films and television programmes which explained the law to them and described what happens to children were among the suggestions they made about the way in which children in their situation could be helped to understand what was happening. However, one of the girls did hasten to add that 'films should show that there can be happy results for children too' as those she had seen which showed divorcing families always made it look worse than it was. Few responded

favourably to the suggestion that they might participate in a group discussion with children from similar situations, but did recognise that contacts they had made through single parent associations such as Gingerbread had been helpful. One sixteen year old girl was guarded about being in a group with other children from divorced homes because this might mean she was regarded as being different when she wanted to be treated 'just like anyone else'.

5.6.2. Counselling and Advice

Only seventeen (27%) of the adolescents had discussed their feelings about the divorce with relatives and found it helpful. Grandparents were only mentioned once, but several had found aunts to be a source of support.

"My Aunty came and lived here - she was like a sister to me."

(Karen. Aged 14)

"My Mum's sister is good to talk to - she knows what my Mum is like."

(Tracey. Aged 14)

Twenty five (39%) had discussed problems and feelings with someone outside their family. Only nine had discussed them with a probation officer. This figure may seem inconsistent with the families being selected from the records of the Probation and After-Care Service, however, it can be explained in two ways. Firstly, the probation officer's enquiries were often about younger children in the family and the adolescents had only minimal contact with them. Secondly, the adolescents who spoke to a probation officer saw their role as being that of

investigator rather than counsellor and did not feel that they could discuss problems with them. Eleven adolescents (17%) had talked to teachers about their problems and in the main they had found them helpful and sympathetic. However, Vicky (aged 15) said that one of her teachers 'had made it his business and tried to talk to her' when he discovered her parents had separated, but that 'he had made it more obvious and I wished he hadn't'. The remainder of those (6 adolescents) who had confided in someone outside the family had talked to their 'best friend' from whom they had received sympathy and support.

Of those who had not talked to anyone about their problems or feelings only ten (16%) thought that, in retrospect, it could have been helpful. However, they were unable to specify who they might have talked to or in what way it might have proved helpful.

5.7. Retrospective Feelings About the Divorce Experience

5.7.1 Factors which Caused Unhappiness

Forty four percent of the adolescents felt that they had been the most upset by events which occurred prior to their parents' separation. Thirty three percent said that the time during which the transition from two parent family to one parent family was taking place was the unhappiest time for them. Twenty three percent said that the post-divorce period had been the most upsetting for them. Those (84%) who said the pre-separation period had been the most upsetting related this to the conflict which had existed in the home.

"I was upset because there were arguments - because they were unhappy, and because I knew they were going to split up."

(Paula. Aged 16)

"The fighting - Dad not coming home until very late - he used to pick on me all the time."

(Mark. Aged 13)

Several of the adolescents who said that the post-separation period had been the most upsetting related this to seeing their custodial parent struggling financially and emotionally. Others related it to adjustments they themselves had needed to make to new schools and new homes.

"We had to move to a new house but were in a women's shelter for a while - It was horrible - Andrew (younger brother) was very upset and this upset me."

(Vicky. Aged 15)

Some had found that they had apparently been rejected by their non-custodial parent and had found this difficult to cope with regardless of their feelings about that parent's behaviour.

"My Dad has disowned me - he never writes at all - I know he was upset by the things I said to his girlfriend but he is my father."

(Suzette. Aged 14)

Suzette was in a particularly difficult position because she had been unable to forgive her father for running off with another woman but was also resentful because her mother, with whom she was living, had become pregnant to another man who she did not marry. Suzette now had a baby step-sister for whom she was responsible while her mother worked.

However, she was not alone as several adolescents expressed resentment about their parents having relationships with new partners. In some cases it seems parents had been rather indiscreet.

"I didn't like her going out with other men - I thought she was a tramp. I walked in on her when she had a man in bed - she should go out but not sleep with them."

(Michelle. Aged 15)

Michelle was still hoping that her parents would somehow get back together again. Her younger brother Mark (aged 13) was more accepting in that he said his mother having boyfriends had upset him at first but that he had now got used to it.

One other source of dissatisfaction with custodial parents related to their actions in situations where brothers and sisters had been separated. For example:

"He hasn't done enough about getting to see my sisters - he has been too soft - he seems scared of upsetting Mum."

(Tracey. Aged 14)

Adolescents expressing dissatisfaction with their custodial parent were, however, in the minority and most were grateful for the support and security that parents had been able to provide. In particular, efforts that parents had made in talking to their children and explaining their feelings were appreciated.

In contrast, only five of the adolescents said that their non-

custodial parent had helped them by explaining their side of things. One other said bitterly that her father had helped 'by staying away from us'. The main source of dissatisfaction with non-custodial parents was the behaviour which had precipitated the separation in the first place. This was the case for most of the adolescents regardless of the time at which they had been the most upset.

"He went off with someone else - the first two times I saw him it upset me - but it has got easier as I have seen him more."

(Annette. Aged 16)

"He drank and abused my Mum - he gets on my nerves at times - he still tells me what to do - he is not my father now."

(Susan. Aged 14)

"He lived with someone else - he left on my birthday you know."

(Helen. Aged 15)

"He hit us - he got drunk and shouted a lot - it upset me most when he hit our Mum. I didn't mind him hitting me - I stood up for myself."

(Lisa. Aged 15)

However, the non-custodial parent's post divorce behaviour had been upsetting for some of the adolescents.

"We used to write to him and ask him to get us things we needed - he used to write back and say nasty things like we only love him for his money - which isn't true."

(Claudia. Aged 15)

"He wouldn't let it die - he keeps coming around - it would be better if he left us alone."

(Michael. Aged 14)

These last two quotes reflect two contrasting post-divorce situations. It is easy to recommend that children should keep in contact with their non-custodial parent. However, there are clearly situations which are outside the control of the custodial parent or any other third party; that is, those in which a non-custodial parent does not wish to continue their relationship with the children and those in which the children do not wish it to continue.

5.7.2 Divorce Versus Staying Together

Seventy eight percent of the adolescents had come to believe that the course of action taken by their parents had been the correct one. That there was a statistically significant association between responses to this item and there being conflict in the pre-divorce home has already been mentioned (section 5.2.2). This was reinforced by comments made by some of the adolescents.

"I wouldn't have liked to see them going on the way they were."

(Darren. Aged 15)

"Because they would only be arguing and he would be seeing the other woman."

(Patricia. Aged 16)

"It was making a misery of everyone's lives - all five of us."

(Nicola. Aged 15)

Similarly, to the question 'Do you think parents should stay together for the sake of their children?' eighty percent replied that they should not.

"If the relationship is that bad no - but they (the children) should keep in contact with their other parent as much as possible."

(Suzette. Aged 14)

"Your Mum gets hammerings for your sake - you should learn to stand on your own feet."

(Angela. Aged 14)

"Not if they are still going to be fighting and unhappy - some people think it is better to stay but if you have one parent and are happy its alright."

(Patricia. Aged 16)

There were those who believed that parents should stay together regardless of their own unhappiness.

"I think parents should put the children first."

(Karen. Aged 14)

"I am not sure - I think so because it is hard for the children - they feel that it is their fault."

(Paula. Aged 16)

Three of the adolescents who said that parents should stay together for the sake of the children did qualify their answer by adding conditions about the age of the children concerned; that is, they felt that parents should stay together where young children were involved but that it was less important for children of their own age.

5.7.3 Advice from Adolescents

The final question asked of the adolescents in the sample was about the advice they would want to give to parents, teachers, judges, lawyers, probation officers and other children whose parents were divorcing in the light of their own experience.

There was a good deal of variation in the issues raised here but some common themes did emerge. Firstly, there were those who wanted to direct their advice to parents.

"Its upsetting - not a very nice thing to happen. If people were thinking about having a divorce I would tell them not to - but it depends on how unhappy they are."

(Carol. Aged 16)

"It is a good thing to do not a bad thing - it is better to be happy than living the rest of your life unhappy."

(Lisa. Aged 15)

"If you are getting on really bad its better to get a divorce because you will make your children more upset mentally by not getting one."

(David. Aged 16)

"If they haven't got a happy marriage and think they might get a divorce the last thing is to do it as there is no use hanging on - but they should think about the children and what they are going to feel like."

(Claudia. Aged 14)

A second theme was that of putting divorce in perspective; that is, the adolescents in the sample would want to re-assure others, particularly other children, that it is not as bad an experience as is often thought.

"Make the best of it and look on the bright side - keep an interest in something - don't think the world has fallen in."

(Michael. Aged 14)

"It is just there and it can't be helped - its not the children's fault - its not anyone elses fault."

(Tina. Aged 13)

"I would want to tell them how divorce affects children differently - some break down, others

survive. My friends have been through it too - some have coped others have broken down."

(Helen. Aged 15)

"It does change your character and your views about marrying and having children - you can understand other peoples situations if you have been in them yourself."

(Linda. Aged 15)

Finally, some of the adolescents would want to advise parents who are divorcing on how to behave towards their children.

"Parents should let you know what is happening and not let you go on blind - they should sit down together and discuss it - not just leave you to find out. They should ask you what you think. You feel in the middle - like you are trapped in the middle - I still feel that."

(Annette. Aged 16)

"The most important thing is not to brainwash - Dad has never said bad things about Mum but she has about him - I have my own opinions. Both parents should always be honest."

(Tracey. Aged 14)

"Children should be told that they have a choice about who they live with - and if they see their Dad or not - it is not a parents choice."

(Helen. Aged 15)

"Let the kids know what is happening all the time - tell them both sides. Why they argue and fight. I used to wonder what it was all about and think 'Christ why don't they tell me'."

(Linda. Aged 15)

Thus, the collective advice of this sample of adolescents would encourage a diversified view of divorce, honesty and openness in parents, and encourage parents who were desperately unhappy to divorce for their own and their children's sake. The latter piece of advice would not, however, be given without reservations.

5.8 The Self Concept Study

5.8.1 The Sample

The inclusion of adolescents with whom the interview schedule was piloted in the final sample and a delay in commencing the use of the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale meant that self-concept scores were only available for thirty four of the otherwise sampled sixty four adolescents from divorced homes.

Further, the two comprehensive schools only provided completed scales for adolescents in the age range thirteen to fifteen years. Table 5.8 shows the number of children in each age group for the two schools.

TABLE 5.8 Number of Adolescents from Two Schools,
Broken Down by Age

	School A	School B	Total
13	30	28	58
14	26	29	55
15	22	27	49
	N = 78	N = 84	N = 162

In total there were scores for one hundred and sixty two adolescents and of these one hundred and thirty eight were from two parent homes.

5.8.2. Analysis

Exclusion of sixteen year olds from the divorced group

reduced the sample to twenty eight. In order that each child in the sample could be regarded as coming from a different environment, only one child per family was included; that is, the eldest child. This further reduced the divorced group to twenty adolescents; seven boys and thirteen girls. Each adolescent in the divorced group was paired with one from the comprehensive schools who came from a non-divorced home on the basis of their age, sex, race, position in the family and the number of children in the family. This was done by an examination of the information provided by each adolescent. Where more than one of the adolescents from the comprehensive schools could have been paired with an adolescent from the divorced group the decision of which one to include was made in an unbiased way and without reference to their score on the Piers-Harris Scale. However, calculation of the correlation between the matched pairs on the basis of their self-concept scores showed them to be highly correlated ($r = .81$).

The sub-program BREAKDOWN of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences was used to calculate the mean and standard deviation of the self-concept scores for the two groups and conduct a one-way analysis of variance to establish whether there was a statistically significant difference between the means.

Table 5.9 shows the means and standard deviations for the two groups as compared with the normative sample used in the development of the Piers-Harris Scale, and Table 5.10 shows the results of the analysis of variance.

TABLE 5.9 Means and Standard Deviations for Divorced,
Two Parent and Normative Groups

		Mean	s.d.
Divorced	(N=20)	59.4	8.95
Two Parent	(N=20)	58.1	7.29
Normative Group	(N=1183)	51.8	12.05

Note: Possible scores on the Piers-Harris Scale range between 0 and 80, with the latter indicating high self concept. On the basis of their normative data the authors consider 'average' scores to be those between 46 and 60.

TABLE 5.10 Analysis of Variance: Difference Between
Means of Divorced and Two Parent Groups

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square
Between	18.23	1	18.23
Within	2529.75	38	66.57
Total	2547.98	39	F = 0.2338

The critical values of F at the one percent and five percent levels with one and thirty eight degrees of freedom are 7.35 and 4.10 respectively.* Thus, with the computed value of F being .2338 one can conclude that there is no statistical difference between the means of the two groups.

*The tables used were those reproduced in G.A. Ferguson Statistical Analysis in Psychology and Education. New York: McGraw-Hill.

5.8.3. Interpretation

The results of studies which have examined the difference between the self-concept scores of children from divorced homes and those from non-divorced homes, notably those of Hammond (1979), Berg and Kelly (1979) and Raschke and Raschke (1979), suggest that no such difference exists. However, these studies are all based on American populations and their findings should not be generalised to British children. But their results do indicate that it is reasonable to hypothesise that studies of British children would reveal no statistically significant difference between the mean self-concept scores. In this study self-concept was defined operationally as being that which is measured by the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale, as it was in the American studies. There is some data on the factorial structure of the Piers-Harris Scale, however, the authors recommend that this be used only in research directed towards the scale itself, and not as a basis of comparison between groups.

The results presented here demonstrate that, on the basis of their overall score on the Piers-Harris test, there is no statistically significant difference between the mean self-concept scores for a sample of children from divorced homes and a sample of children from non-divorced homes. The two samples of children were selected in an unbiased way from populations of children from divorced and non-divorced homes. However, there was a high correlation between the two groups on the basis of their self-concept scores, which might account for there being no statistically significant difference between their mean scores. Further, only a small number of children from each

population was included in the analysis, and they were not necessarily representative of the total population of children from divorced and non-divorced homes. Thus, the extent to which these results can be generalised is limited.

5.9 Summary of Chapter V

- (1) Sixty four adolescents in the age range thirteen to seventeen were interviewed with regard to their perceptions of their experience of parental divorce.
- (2) A statistically significant association was found between the existence of conflict in the pre-separation home and the adolescents' view of the separation and divorce being a sensible course of action by their parents, and the extent to which their parents' separation had been a relief to them.
- (3) Less than half the sample had maintained some kind of contact with their non-custodial parent, the majority of those adolescents who had not maintained such contact having chosen not to. Further, the majority expressed the view that the decision as to whether such contact is maintained should be left to the children involved.
- (4) The adolescents' perception of the way their school work had been affected by the divorce of their parents coincided with that of their parents. The majority believed that their work had not suffered, with a considerable proportion describing it as having improved. The latter was related to the fact that they now lived in homes in which there was much less conflict. However,

a minority did believe that their school work had suffered as a result of having to move house or change schools. The majority had not been made to feel different from their friends because of their parents' divorce, but some had and this was often because of the change in economic circumstances.

(5) The majority of the adolescents had remained optimistic about marriage and parenthood despite the experience of their parents. Further, a majority also believed that some kind of family life education was desirable but were not able to specify what form this should take.

(6) The adolescents had few complaints about the way in which their parents had kept them informed about what was happening. However, there was a general recognition of the need for children to be kept informed and to be told what would happen to them after divorce, particularly with regard to court procedures and custody. Minimal use had been made of support networks, including teachers, probation officers and relatives, but in those situations where adolescents had made use of such networks they had been found helpful.

(7) Generally the adolescents were uncritical of their custodial parents but some had been upset by parents having new relationships. Criticism of non-custodial parents focused primarily on the behaviour which had precipitated the separation. However, post-divorce behaviour, specifically that of not maintaining a relationship with the adolescents, was mentioned.

(8) The majority of the adolescents had come to believe that their parents had acted wisely when they separated because it had ended the overt conflict where this had existed. Further, the majority believed that parents should not stay together for the sake of the children, in their age range at least, as they believed that the pre-separation period had been an unhappier time for them than the post-separation period.

(9) The themes that emerged from the advice the adolescents in the sample would want to give based on their own experience were: that parents should separate if they are very unhappy as this is bad for children, but that they should consider the children's point of view and tell them what is happening at all times; that divorce affects different people in different ways and it does not have to be a bad experience.

(10) Comparison of the self-concept scores for a sub-sample of the adolescents from divorced homes with those of a paired group of adolescents from two parent homes revealed no statistically significant difference between their mean scores.

CHAPTER VI

6. THE EXPECTATIONS OF TEACHER TRAINEES WITH REGARD TO CHILDREN OF DIVORCE

6.1 The Sample

Seventy four students completed and returned the semantic differential. Of these, fifty seven (77%) were females and seventeen (23%) were males. The average age of the respondents was 19.7 years (s.d. 2.1). Only three were married (4%), the majority being single (96%). None were themselves divorced. Experience of children from the four categories of disadvantage was minimal. Only two respondents were themselves adopted and only two had divorced parents. One respondent had an educationally sub-normal family member; five had an adopted family member; one had a physically handicapped family member; eight had family members who were divorced. None of the respondents had worked as teachers prior to commencing their current course.

The proportion of males and females in this sample of teacher trainees is comparable with that of males (27%) and females (73%) in the total population of teacher trainees in the United Kingdom. The background information obtained from the respondents did not allow further comparisons with national statistics. Thus, it was not possible to determine the extent to which the sample represents the population of teacher trainees. However, in terms of the respondents' ages, teaching experience and, probably, experience of children from the various categories, the sample is certainly not representative of teachers as a whole.

6.2 Results and Analysis

6.2.1 Means and Standard Deviation

Responses on the scales were allocated a score ranging from one to seven, with a score of one representing the negative pole of a scale and a score of seven representing the positive pole. A score of four was allocated to the mid-point of a scale, thus, scores of less than four indicate a generally negative scale response to the category of children and scores greater than four indicate a generally positive scale response to the category of children. Table 6.1 shows the means and standard deviations for the respondents on the eighteen scales for each of the categories of children.

TABLE 6.1 Scale Means and Standard Deviations
for Four Categories of Children

Scale	Children of Divorce		Adopted Children		Physically Handicapped Children		E.S.N. Children	
	Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.
Happy	2.84	1.21	4.89	1.39	5.14	1.50	3.97	1.32
Sociable	4.04	1.15	4.77	1.35	5.24	1.40	3.80	1.32
Calm	2.96	1.10	3.82	1.42	4.27	1.42	3.08	1.14
Secure	2.22	0.95	3.72	1.50	3.50	1.34	2.57	1.10
Trusting	2.85	1.26	3.81	1.56	4.77	1.64	3.69	1.60
Well Adjusted	3.89	1.35	4.35	1.16	4.50	1.56	3.26	1.34
Optimistic	2.95	1.26	4.05	1.51	4.72	1.70	3.42	1.60
Healthy	4.36	1.20	4.85	1.43	3.30	1.51	4.00	1.33
Relaxed	2.96	1.16	3.96	1.24	4.01	1.37	2.96	1.25
Successful	3.77	1.24	4.38	1.06	4.00	1.17	3.12	1.56
Affectionate	3.50	1.48	4.34	1.43	5.71	1.29	4.90	1.35
Mature	4.68	1.47	4.24	1.23	4.09	1.62	3.03	1.25
Competent	4.38	1.38	4.53	1.15	3.51	1.67	3.47	1.24
Unemotional	3.08	1.50	3.35	1.35	2.86	1.48	2.76	1.27
Self Confident	3.28	1.54	3.91	1.55	3.77	1.52	2.86	1.37
Compassionate	3.51	1.46	4.03	1.49	4.90	1.56	3.73	1.56
Stable	3.22	1.32	4.20	1.31	4.04	1.30	3.11	1.45
Independent	4.39	1.73	4.36	1.59	3.36	1.93	3.94	1.51

Examination of the mean scores in Table 4.1 suggests that there is a variation in response to the scales, both within each category and between the categories. For example, mean scores for 'Children of Divorce' range from 2.22 on the 'security' scale to 4.68 on the 'maturity' scale; that is, the average response to the category 'Children of Divorce' was towards the negative pole or 'insecurity' on the first of these, and towards the positive pole or 'maturity' on the second.

Cross category comparisons on the basis of mean scores alone suggest that whilst respondents expectations of 'Children of Divorce' and 'Educationally Sub-normal Children' are generally negative, their expectations of 'Adopted Children' and 'Physically Handicapped Children' are generally positive.

The forgoing description of the sample indicates that in terms of their age, teaching experience and experience of children from the four categories the respondents represented a relatively homogeneous group. Thus, an analysis which attempted to account for the variation in response shown by the mean scores in Table 4.1 in terms of these characteristics would not be appropriate.

Heise (1977) has argued that the basic goal of the semantic differential study is to obtain measurements on the three basic dimensions of response which a number of studies have shown to account for most of the covariation in ratings; that is, Evaluation, Potency and Activity (E.P.A.).

In his thesaurus study Osgood (1957) maintained that this E.P.A. structure was clearly evident and that it accounted for more than two thirds of the common variance. Further research has shown the E.P.A. structure to hold up with a wide variety of subjects, concepts and scales and with languages other than English and other cultures (Heise, 1977). These dimensions are characterized by typical adjective contrasts; that is, 'Evaluation' is defined by adjective contrasts such as 'good-bad', and 'nice-awful'. 'Potency' is defined by adjective contrasts such as 'strong-weak' and 'big-little'. 'Activity' is defined by adjective contrasts such as 'fast-slow' and 'noisy-quiet'. Consequently, the next task in the analysis was seen to be that of obtaining measurements on the E.P.A. dimensions for the four categories of children.

6.2.2 The Factors

To achieve these measurements the sub-program 'FACTOR' of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (Nie et al. 1975) was used to apply factor analytic techniques to the data. The principal factoring technique (PA1) was used to extract factors, and consistent with the E.P.A. model the number of factors specified for extraction was three. Osgood's original notion of the E.P.A. dimensions were based on an orthogonal solution. Thus, in this analysis the varimax method of orthogonal rotation was used to obtain a solution.

Table 6.2 shows the Varimax Rotated Factor Loadings of the eighteen scales for the category of 'Children of Divorce.'

TABLE 6.2 Varimax Rotated Factors: Children of Divorce

Scales	Rotated Factor Loadings			Communality (h ²)
	I	II	III	
Happy	74	19	10	5969
Sociable	-01	-05	40	1631
Calm	69	07	04	4849
Secure	61	-23	44	6178
Trusting	44	-24	58	5833
Well Adjusted	64	04	-36	5379
Optimistic	60	-11	30	4601
Healthy	22	72	-12	5718
Relaxed	70	04	27	5699
Successful	53	34	26	4629
Affectionate	53	07	-06	2930
Mature	-02	69	10	4846
Competent	-09	75	08	5813
Unemotional	07	10	65	4372
Self Confident	61	45	29	6633
Compassionate	58	34	18	4818
Stable	31	30	57	5191
Independent	24	48	-18	3240
Eigen Value	5.2250	2.2310	1.3768	8.83277
Percentage of Variance	29.0	12.4	7.6	49.1

(Decimal Points omitted)

The Burt-Banks Formula was used to calculate significance levels for the factor loadings. To satisfy the one percent level of significance the minimum loadings were: Factor I = .31; Factor II = .33; Factor III = .35.

Theoretically Factor I should correspond with Osgood's evaluation

factor. Substantial loadings were found for the following adjectives: happy, calm, secure, trusting, well-adjusted, optimistic, relaxed, successful, affectionate, self-confident, compassionate, and stable. However, only some of these adjectives can be interpreted as being 'evaluative'; that is, as lying along a dimension of good-bad. Clearly, adjectives such as happy, optimistic, successful and stable can be and these had high loadings in Osgood's original study. However, the adjectives 'calm' and 'self confident' had high loadings on the Activity and Potency factors respectively in Osgood's study.

Factor II purportedly corresponds to Osgood's Potency factor, the adjectives with substantial loadings were healthy, successful, mature, competent, self confident, compassionate and independent. All of these would be used in describing a powerful personality and when taken together the picture is one of 'potency'. Thus, Factor II could be interpreted as the Potency Factor.

On Factor III, which should correspond to Osgood's 'Activity' factor, six adjectives had substantial loadings; that is, sociable, secure, trusting, well adjusted, unemotional and stable. Both 'sociable' and 'well adjusted' are usually associated with the evaluative factor, or Factor I. However, 'unemotional' and 'stable' have been associated with Osgood's 'Activity' factor. Thus, to a limited extent, Factor III can be interpreted as the Activity Factor.

Table 6.3 shows the Varimax Rotated Factor Loadings of the eighteen scales for the category of 'Adopted Children'.

TABLE 6.3 Varimax Rotated Factors: Adopted Children

Scales	Rotated Factor Loadings			Communality (h ²)
	I	II	III	
Happy	35	05	46	3350
Sociable	28	07	71	5921
Calm	27	05	82	7376
Secure	77	03	11	6046
Trusting	79	22	06	6754
Well Adjusted	56	05	19	3583
Optimistic	82	07	06	6800
Healthy	03	25	63	4679
Relaxed	66	05	17	4614
Successful	27	60	04	4400
Affectionate	69	31	08	5858
Mature	17	61	02	4541
Competent	16	75	15	6122
Unemotional	23	68	01	5121
Self Confident	50	32	37	4957
Compassionate	58	38	26	4872
Stable	68	35	14	6081
Independent	14	01	33	1285
Eigen Value	5.7750	1.8071	1.6539	9.2360
Percentage of Variance	32.1	10.0	9.2	51.3

(Decimal Points omitted)

Substantial loadings on Factor I were found for the adjectives happy, secure, trusting, well adjusted, optimistic, relaxed, affectionate, self-confident, compassionate and stable. Thus, the high loadings on Factor I were for the same scales as were found for children of divorce. The only exception was 'calm' which is usually associated with Factor III (Activity). In this case the loading for 'calm' on Factor III was very high (.82).

Adjectives with high loadings on Factor II in Table 6.3 are successful, mature, competent, unemotional, compassionate and stable. With the exception of the adjectives healthy, self confident and independent, Factor II for adopted children corresponds with Factor II for children of Divorce. Further, maturity, success, competence and compassion all suggest potency and have been associated with Osgood's Potency Factor.

Only one adjective with a high loading on Factor II for adopted children corresponds with Factor II for children of divorce; that is, sociable. However, it has already been mentioned that this adjective is traditionally associated with the evaluative factor. There were high loadings for calm, healthy and self confident on Factor III. It has already been shown that 'calm' is usually associated with Factor III; that is, the activity factor. Both 'healthy' and 'self confident' have been traditionally associated with Factor II, (Potency).

The Varimax Rotated Factor Loadings for the category 'Physically Handicapped Children' are shown in Table 6.4. For the category Physically Handicapped Children substantial loadings on Factor I were for the adjectives well adjusted, optimistic, relaxed, successful, self confident, compassionate and stable. The first four of these correspond with high loadings on Factor I for children of divorce and adopted children. However, there were also substantial loadings on self confident, compassionate and stable for which high loadings were found on Factor II or Factor III with the categories children of divorce and adopted children.

TABLE 6.4 Varimax Rotated Factors: Physically Handicapped Children

Scales	Rotated Factor Loadings			Communality (h ²)
	I	II	III	
Happy	08	73	21	5418
Sociable	-30	68	07	5556
Calm	30	47	-17	3392
Secure	16	69	-05	5044
Trusting	02	65	37	5552
Well Adjusted	62	23	-13	4528
Optimistic	33	60	21	5108
Healthy	19	41	-30	2979
Relaxed	40	45	00	3648
Successful	54	17	08	3309
Affectionate	06	16	79	6548
Mature	72	11	11	5429
Competent	72	10	15	5443
Unemotional	02	27	65	5016
Self Confident	65	20	35	5865
Compassionate	32	22	66	5938
Stable	64	15	-03	4388
Independent	59	-02	18	3907
Eigen Value	4.5981	2.2280	1.8798	8.7068
Percentage of Variance	25.5	12.4	10.4	48.4

(Decimal Points omitted)

Further, on Factor II high loadings were found for happy, calm, secure, optimistic and relaxed, all of which were associated with Factor I for children of divorce and adopted children. Only the adjective 'healthy' had a high loading on Factor II for physically handicapped children and children of divorce.

Similarly, high loadings for the adjectives affectionate and compassionate were exclusive to Factor III for physically handicapped children. However, there were high loadings for 'trusting' and 'unemotional' on Factor III for both children of divorce and physically handicapped children.

The Varimax Rotated Factor Loadings for the category 'Educationally Sub-normal Children' are shown in Table 6.5

TABLE 6.5 Varimax Rotated Factors: Educationally Sub-Normal Children

Scales	Rotated Factor Loadings			Communality (h ²)
	I	II	III	
Happy	46	20	20	2959
Sociable	46	06	35	3360
Calm	13	55	30	4135
Secure	51	43	33	5466
Trusting	66	-01	13	4570
Well Adjusted	05	50	-04	2515
Optimistic	75	16	-15	6071
Healthy	13	-18	08	0564
Relaxed	21	05	70	5308
Successful	14	71	-15	5542
Affectionate	66	-11	-25	5122
Mature	-36	62	32	6220
Competent	-00	02	63	4011
Unemotional	-08	-01	72	5190
Self Confident	36	49	28	4514
Compassionate	63	13	-04	4131
Stable	26	64	15	5000
Independent	36	34	44	4412
Eigen Value	3.8017	2.6089	1.4985	7.9091
Percentage of Variance	21.1	14.5	8.3	43.9

(Decimal Points omitted)

Substantial loadings on Factor I for the category educationally sub-normal children were on the adjectives happy, sociable, secure, trusting, optimistic, affectionate, mature (negative), self confident, compassionate and independent. Five of these were common to Factor I for children of divorce and adopted children, but 'independent' was exclusive to this factor for educationally sub-normal children. However, the adjectives calm, self confident, sociable and trusting had high loadings on Factors II and III for other categories of children.

Similarly, the high loadings on Factor II for calm, secure, well adjusted and stable were not common to Factor II for the other categories of children. This was also the case for Factor III as none of the adjectives with high loadings - that is, sociable, relaxed, competent, unemotional and independent - were exclusive to Factor III for any of the categories of children.

Efforts to obtain a clearer solution for each category of children were made by oblique rotation of the factors. However, comparison of the obliquely rotated matrices for each category revealed an equally confusing picture, with high loadings on the three factors extracted for different scales in each case.

6.2.3 Scale Construction

The results of the factor analysis are summarised in Table 6.6, in which only high loadings, exclusive to one factor for each category of children have been included. On the basis of Table 6.6 it would be possible to construct scales which would provide measurements of the E.P.A. dimensions for each category of children. Osgood et. al. (1957) has proposed that in measuring attitudes only the evaluative dimension of the semantic differential need be considered. However, more recently Heise (1977) has argued that all three dimensions, evaluation, potency and activity, should be included in order that measurements paralleling those on traditional attitude scales are obtained. Thus, a scale designed to measure attitudes towards children of divorce would include those adjectives with substantial loadings on the E.P.A. factors.

Table 6.7 shows the adjectives which would be included in such a scale.

TABLE 6.7 Attitude Towards Children of Divorce Scale

Factor I (Evaluation)	Factor II (Potency)	Factor III (Activity)
Happy	Healthy	Sociable
Calm	Mature	Unemotional
Secure	Competent	Stable
Affectionate	Independent	
Optimistic		
Relaxed		

Note: Adjectives with substantial loadings on more than one factor have been excluded.

Similarly, a scale designed to measure attitudes towards adopted children would include the adjectives shown in Table 6.8

TABLE 6.8 Attitude Towards Adopted Children Scale

Factor I (Evaluation)	Factor II (Potency)	Factor III (Activity)
Secure	Successful	Sociable
Trusting	Mature	Calm
Well Adjusted	Competent	Healthy
Optimistic	Unemotional	
Relaxed		
Affectionate		

Note: Adjectives with substantial loadings on more than one factor have been excluded.

The adjectives which would be included in a scale designed to measure attitudes towards physically handicapped children and

educationally sub-normal children are shown in Table 6.9 and Table 6.10 respectively. Again, adjectives with high loadings on more than one factor have been excluded in each case.

TABLE 6.9 Attitude Towards Physically Handicapped Children Scale

<u>Factor I</u> <u>(Evaluation)</u>	<u>Factor II</u> <u>(Potency)</u>	<u>Factor III</u> <u>(Activity)</u>
Well Adjusted Successful Mature Competent Stable Independent	Happy Sociable Calm Secure Trusting Optimistic Healthy	Affectionate Unemotional

TABLE 6.10 Attitude Towards Educationally Sub-Normal Children Scale

<u>Factor I</u> <u>(Evaluation)</u>	<u>Factor II</u> <u>(Potency)</u>	<u>Factor III</u> <u>(Activity)</u>
Happy Trusting Optimistic Affectionate Compassionate	Calm Well Adjusted Successful Stable	Relaxed Unemotional

While such scales would provide absolute measures of the E.P.A. dimensions for each category of children, the obvious differences in their structure would not allow comparison across the categories.

Osgood et al (1957) presented considerable evidence to show that the semantic differential is not completely comparable across concepts; that is, that the meanings of scales and their relation to other scales vary with the concept being judged, a process they described as concept-scale interaction. They hypothesised that 'in the process of human judgement, all scales tend to shift in meaning towards parallelism with the dominant or characteristic attribute of the concept being judged' (p.187).

The example they provide is that of ratings of the concept 'athletes' for which they assume the dominant attribute to be active-potent dynamism, and they argue that all scales should display a tendency to rotate towards this dominant dimension. However, in the present context it is difficult to discern any such tendency and there is, therefore, little support for their hypothesis.

6.3 Conclusions

The aim of the present study was to make cross concept comparisons; that is, to examine the difference between ratings for the four categories of children in order that a judgement might be made about respondents' expectations of children of divorce. However, scores obtained on the basis of the scales shown in Tables 6.7 to 6.10 would not allow such a comparison and were not, therefore, computed.

The question teacher trainees were asked to respond to was 'What in general seem to be the characteristics of an average

child from the group named?'. Although factor analysis did not provide a means by which the responses to this question for each category of children could be compared statistically, it did show that there is a difference in the way the respondents perceive children from the four categories. If the scales shown in Tables 6.7 to 6.10 are construed as being an indication of what the categories mean to the respondents then the content of the scales suggests that there is considerable variation in their meaning. Further, if expectation and meaning are regarded as being equivalent terms in this context one can argue that teacher trainees do have different expectations of children from the four categories.

There is no way of establishing the direction of these differences on the basis of the scale content. However, careful examination of the means and standard deviations shown in Table 6.1 does provide some clues. A score of seven was allocated to the positive pole of the original scales, a score of four to the neutral mid-point, and a score of one to the negative pole. There are thirteen mean scores of less than four within the category of 'children of divorce' and sixteen within the category 'educationally sub-normal children'. In contrast there are only six mean scores of less than four with both 'physically handicapped children' and 'adopted children'. This does suggest that the overall response to children of divorce and educationally sub-normal children was more negative than the overall response to physically handicapped children and adopted children. Thus, one might conclude, albeit tentatively, that teacher trainees do have more negative expectations of

children of divorce than they have of physically handicapped children and adopted children.

One can take this further and, by the use of one-way analysis of variance to determine if the mean scores on a particular scale are statistically different, provide descriptions of children of divorce in comparison with other categories of children. The results of a one-way analysis of variance comparing ratings on all adjectives across the categories of children is presented in Table 6.11.

TABLE 6.11 Difference Between Scale Means for Children of Divorce, E.S.N. Children, Adopted Children and Physically Handicapped Children

Scale	Children of Divorce v. E.S.N. Children	Children of Divorce v. Adopted Children	Children of Divorce v. Phys. Hand. Children
Happy	p < .05	n.s.	n.s.
Sociable	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Calm	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Secure	p < .05	n.s.	n.s.
Trusting	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Well Adjusted	n.s.	p < .01	n.s.
Optimistic	p < .05	p < .05	n.s.
Healthy	p < .01	n.s.	n.s.
Relaxed	p < .01	n.s.	n.s.
Successful	p < .05	p < .01	n.s.
Affectionate	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Mature	n.s.	p < .01	n.s.
Competent	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Unemotional	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Self Confident	n.s.	p < .01	n.s.
Compassionate	p < .01	n.s.	n.s.
Stable	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Independent	n.s.	n.s.	p < .05

Note: n.s. = Not Significant

On the basis of those scales for which there is a statistically significant difference between the means and an examination of Table 6.1 to determine the direction of these differences, it seems that the teacher trainees in the sample would expect children of divorce to be less happy, less secure, less relaxed, less compassionate, but healthier and more successful than educationally sub-normal children. Further, they would expect children of divorce to be less well-adjusted, less optimistic, less relaxed, less successful, less self-confident, but more mature than adopted children. Also they would expect children of divorce to be more independent than physically handicapped children. These descriptions of children of divorce are clearly more negative than those of educationally sub-normal children and adopted children. The relative difference between the description of children of divorce and adopted children is possibly the most interesting as such children are identified as a group on the basis of family structure rather than a congenital handicap.

This study of expectations was intended to be exploratory rather than confirmatory but there is some evidence to suggest that the sample of teacher trainees do have more negative expectations for children of divorce than they have for educationally sub-normal children and adopted children. However, it is an area that does require further investigation and the results of the present study suggest that the hypothesis that should be tested is that expectations of children of divorce are more negative than they are for other categories of children.

6.4 Summary of Chapter VI

(1) Distribution of a semantic differential designed to measure expectations of children of divorce as compared with other categories of children provided the responses of seventy four student teachers who formed a relatively homogeneous group in terms of their age, marital status and experience of children from the categories of children.

(2) Factor analysis enabled the construction of scales which would provide measurements along the E.P.A. dimensions of meaning described by Osgood. However, the content of these scales showed considerable variation amongst the four categories of children and did not allow cross-category comparisons.

(3) Examination of the mean scores on the original scales for each category of children did suggest that teacher trainees do hold more negative expectations for children of divorce than they do for other categories of children, particularly educationally sub-normal children and adopted children.

CHAPTER VII

7. DISCUSSION

7.1 Issues of Methodology

The most obvious limitation of the research described here is the failure to obtain a representative sample of divorced parents and their adolescent children. This raises two separate but related issues; that is, the enlisting of parents' co-operation in research, and the importance of representative samples.

7.1.1 Enlisting Parents' Co-operation in Research

The nature and size of the sample described in Chapters IV and V was a product of two factors. The unwillingness of the County Court Registrar to allow access to records meant that only a small proportion of divorced parents could be contacted through the records of the Probation and After-Care Service, which immediately biased the sample towards the situations in which some question had been raised about the welfare of children. One could not possibly claim that a sample based on these records alone would be representative of the local or national population of divorced parents and their children.

Further, given the very low response rate to the letters sent to parents one cannot claim the sample interviewed to be representative of the population of families which come into contact with the Probation and After-Care Service. Thus, even with access to the records of the Country Court, the sample of families

interviewed might not have been representative of all divorces involving adolescent children in the West Midlands.

This does not mean that the situation could have been improved by access being granted to all records of divorces involving children and a more assertive approach to contacting suitable families. However, there are ethical issues involved. An appeal to the Lord Chancellor's Office might have resulted in access to records being granted, but one does need to consider the question of whether such access should be granted to researchers.

Divorce is still a matter of public record in the United Kingdom but this does not mean that it should be. It has already been mentioned that one of the features of the Australian Family Law Act, 1975 is that divorce has been made a more private matter and that only officers of the Court have access to the records. This does seem a desirable step as it protects the privacy of parents and children and, if the growing lobby in favour of Family Courts in this country meets with success, it might be a feature of future divorce reform here.

Consequently, the County Court Registrar's refusal now seems appropriate. This view has been reinforced by the fact that the Senior Divorce Court Welfare Officer, who had initially been enthusiastic about the research and had arranged access to the records, has expressed misgivings about having done so. It seems that there have been instances in which parents who

were invited to participate in the research have complained to their local Probation and After-Care Service officer about their name and address having been provided to a researcher. Their complaints have been passed on by the local office and this has led to a questioning of the practice of allowing access to records.

Such complaints also indicate that one needs to be careful about the way in which one approaches parents to seek their participation in research. In this case the approach could have been made more assertive by following up 'non-replies' with visits to homes or with telephone calls, where the numbers of parents could be located. However, the tone of the replies which indicated why parents were unwilling to participate in the research suggests that further approaches to these parents would have been resented. One can only speculate as to how those parents who did not reply at all would have reacted to further approaches. However, one does have to consider the question of whether the risk of causing distress is worth taking for the sake of data collection, particularly where children are concerned.

Given that these ethical issues are important, it might not be possible to obtain representative samples of divorced parents and their children. The alternatives which are available - such as advertising or approaching parents through groups such as Gingerbread or the National Council for One-Parent Families - do not guarantee such samples as one may find that subjects contacted in this way might be those 'with an axe to grind'.

Membership of such groups does suggest that subjects contacted in this way would have certain needs and it might be difficult to discern what these needs are and how they bias the sample obtained. The question which remains is whether representative samples are important in divorce research.

7.1.2 Representative Samples: Are They Important?

The importance of basing research on representative samples in the Social Sciences generally is that they allow the researcher to make estimates of the extent to which findings based on the sample differ from those that might have been found by studying the population from which the sample was drawn. This would seem to be a desirable goal in the investigation of the consequences of divorce for children if one is to present an accurate, balanced view. However, as has been seen, there are practical difficulties in obtaining representative samples of divorced parents and their children.

This does not mean that one cannot gain insights into the impact of divorce upon children, it merely limits the extent to which one can generalise the findings of research to the total population of such children. Moreover, using national statistics it is possible to describe the extent to which one's sample is typical or a-typical of the population.

In the present research it was possible to make such comparisons based on age, sex, income, accommodation, number of children, duration of marriage and grounds for divorce. Variables such as parental education and spouse's occupation would have allowed further

comparisons and the omission of the latter could be a criticism of the interview schedule used as it does not allow classification on the basis of social class. However, it is arguable that an ex-spouse's occupation does indicate a parent's current social class status.

On the basis of these comparisons it is possible to show that the sample of parents interviewed is atypical of the population of such parents in certain ways. Some of the differences between the sample and the population, such as age and duration of marriage, are simply a function of the decision to study adolescent children. However, the sample was shown to be over-representative of custodial fathers, of parents with three or more children, of individuals living in rented accommodation, and of couples obtaining a divorce on the grounds of unreasonable behaviour. These are all factors which might have a bearing on the outcome of divorce for children, and the description of the sample in this way does allow for the exploration of associations between the outcome and such factors.

Consequently, basing research on samples which are representative of the population is possibly of less importance than a full and accurate description of the sample on which one's findings are based. This might mean that one cannot generalise findings to the population of children of divorce, but does not mean that one cannot reach conclusions about the way in which divorce affects some children. In a field in which there is evidence of stereotyping, this would seem to be a valuable contribution, particularly if it produces a differentiated view.

7.2 Implications of Findings

7.2.1 Adolescent Development

The results of the interviews with parents and adolescents described in Chapters IV and V do have implications for the psychological development of adolescents and the way in which this might be enhanced or retarded by parental divorce. The interpretation of these findings can be placed against Havighurst's theoretical framework, which is described in Chapter II. The tasks of adolescence, according to Havighurst, are re-stated here as follows:

1. Accepting one's physique and accepting a masculine or feminine role.
2. New relations with age mates of both sexes.
3. Emotional independence of parents and other adults.
4. Achieving assurance of economic independence.
5. Selecting and preparing for an occupation.
6. Developing intellectual skills and concepts.
7. Desiring and achieving socially responsible behaviour.
8. Preparing for marriage and family life.
9. Building conscious values in harmony with an adequate scientific world picture.

The aspects of the interviews which most clearly relate to Tasks 1 and 2 are those which covered the effect the divorce had on peer relationships. The results of the self concept study are also relevant in that the Piers-Harris Scale includes items about health, personal appearance and relations with peers.

The interviews provide little evidence which suggests that the adolescent's sex role identification had been interfered with, and the results of the self concept study would suggest that there was no difference between the sex role identity of those adolescents who were included in that study and the children from two parent homes with whom they were paired. The results of the self concept study also suggest that peer relationships had not been interfered with.

Further, the results of the interviews with both parents and adolescents suggested that the quality of relationships with peers had improved. For example, a number of parents and adolescents reported that since the separation and divorce the atmosphere in the home had improved and adolescents who had previously been loathe to bring friends home now did so. Peer relationships, particularly those with a special boyfriend or girlfriend, had also been important in providing some of the adolescents with a source of emotional support. Only in a minority of cases had adolescents been alienated from peers because of their parents's separation and divorce.

One aspect of Havighurst's Task 3, achieving emotional independence of parents, certainly applied to the adolescents' distance from one parent in the majority of cases as some sixty percent had discontinued contact with their non-custodial parent, usually by choice and without regret in the short term at least. However, there was evidence to suggest that adolescents had become more dependent on their custodial parent and felt closer to them. They now saw their custodial parent as being their main source of emotional and economic support.

Further, the majority of adolescents in the sample had taken their custodial parent's side in disputes and were very much involved with the problems of the family. There was, however, a positive aspect to this as several adolescents reported that they now felt more mature, independent and socially responsible, which relates to Havighurst's Task 7 of desiring and achieving socially responsible behaviour.

The information obtained from, and about, the adolescents which can be most directly related to Havighurst's Tasks 4, 5 and 6 - that is, achieving economic independence, selecting and preparing for an occupation, and developing intellectual skills and concepts - is that which concerns school performance. Both the parents and the adolescents believed that this had not been affected by divorce, and in many cases the removal of conflict from the home was perceived to have resulted in an improvement in school performance. Thus, the divorce had not interfered with mastery of Tasks 4 to 7, and in some cases had enhanced successful mastery of these tasks. The Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale includes items on school performance and the results of that study would suggest that, for those adolescents included, school performance had not been affected negatively. However, these subjective judgements of the adolescents and their parents were not substantiated by an examination of school records and might not be a reliable assessment of the way in which school performance was affected.

The overwhelming majority of the adolescents in the sample had remained optimistic about marriage and parenthood and

their chances of having a successful marriage. Many also believed that their parents' experiences had taught them lessons which would enhance their chances of having a happy marriage; the most frequently cited lesson being that of the timing of marriage. On the basis of the adolescents' views at least it would be difficult to construe mastery of Havighurst's Task 8, preparing for marriage and parenthood, as having been interfered with. This is consistent with the findings of Rosen's (1977) study in which the majority of respondents interviewed said that the divorce of their parents had not affected their attitude towards marriage. However, the question raised by Sorosky (1977) and Wallerstein and Kelly (1974) - whether adolescents expressing such views do actually heed the lessons they have professed to learn - can only be answered by longitudinal research.

It is difficult to know which aspects of the adolescents' responses do relate to Havighurst's Task 9 of building conscious values in harmony with an adequate scientific world picture. However, the results of the interviews do at least suggest that the adolescents had developed a more realistic view of human relationships, divorce and one-parent families than might have been the case if they had not been provided directly with the experiences associated with separation and divorce. If this is true, then it might have important implications for the kind of activities that could be included in educational programmes designed to prepare adolescents for relationships and marriage. For example, the simulation of family conflict through role playing might provide insights into the dynamics of relationships.

Thus, for this sample of adolescents, the separation and divorce of their parents does not seem to have been an experience which has provided barriers to their mastery of the tasks of adolescence as described by Havighurst. The major risk would seem to be their being able to achieve emotional independence from their custodial parent. However, there is evidence to suggest that this process is often enhanced by increased maturity and social responsibility.

It should be remembered that the families in this study do represent those in which questions had been raised earlier about the welfare of children. These questions might not have been about the adolescent children and there are situations in which welfare reports are ordered which do not imply major difficulties in families. For example, reports are sometimes ordered simply because there is insufficient information available about the circumstances of a child. However, they also represent a sample of families in which the frequent occurrence of pre-separation conflict was reported.

7.2.2 Parents in Conflict

If parents encountering difficulties in their marriage, particularly verbal and physical conflict, were to follow the advice of the adolescents interviewed in this study, they should separate rather than allow the difficulties to persist. The majority of the adolescents had come to believe that their parents had acted sensibly in ending the conflict by separating and believed that living in a one-parent home was preferable to continuing to live with conflict. This is not to

say that the adolescents would recommend separation and divorce as a panacea for marital difficulties, but that the conflict should be resolved for their benefit.

Adolescents would not generally be aware of the possibility of resolving conflict in other ways and the parents in this sample of adolescents made minimal use of counselling facilities in an effort to resolve conflict. Thus, as their lives had been improved by separation and divorce one might expect the adolescents to suggest it as a successful way of resolving conflict. However, parents with adolescent children who are contemplating separation might take some comfort from the views expressed by the adolescents in this sample.

A second piece of advice that parents experiencing marital difficulties might do well to heed is that they should keep their children informed as to what is happening. This applies to the pre-separation and post-separation period as adolescents in the sample reported that they had wondered and worried about the source of the conflict between their parents. The adolescents would have felt less worried had they been reassured by parents explaining what conflict was about and being told by their parents that they were contemplating separation. Those adolescents whose parents had been in open conflict were able to anticipate the separation to some extent; the worst situations seemed to be those in which a parent had left suddenly for another partner. Difficult as it might be, it would seem desirable that parents who are planning to leave the matrimonial home for another partner

might make the situation less painful for their children if they give them some forewarning.

Other advice to parents from the adolescents in the sample would be: do not denigrate your ex-spouse; try to ensure that your children see your ex-spouse if they wish to do so; be discreet and sensitive about entering into new relationships and your conduct in those relationships; and try to ensure that your children maintain some stability by staying in the same house or locality so that they do not have to change schools.

7.2.3 Marriage, Divorce and the Family

Although the parents interviewed focused on the recent events which had precipitated the separation and divorce, when asked what advice they would give to their children about marriage issues such as age at marriage and length of courtship did arise. Similarly, the adolescents focused on such issues when asked how they would ensure that they had a happy marriage. It is possible that parents had discussed such issues with their children but there is no evidence to support this. If these views are based on experience then one might conclude that the implications of the findings for marriage are that it is something that should not be entered into until one is over twenty and until one has known a partner long enough to be able to anticipate that the marriage will be successful.

There is nothing new in these ideas but it would be interesting to know in several years time how many of the adolescents interviewed had followed this advice. The apparent intensity of the

relationship with a boyfriend or girlfriend that had been established in some cases would suggest that the probability of them ignoring their own advice is quite high.

As has already been seen, the findings of this project suggest that in the majority of cases parental separation and divorce had not interfered with mastery of the tasks of adolescence. However, this should not be construed as implying that, where adolescents are concerned, the decision to separate and divorce can be taken lightly. The majority of adolescents did believe that their parents had acted wisely in separating, but this does not mean that they wanted it to happen. The question was not asked specifically but the impression given was that they wished it had not been necessary. Their judgement was based on a reaction to a situation that already existed and in response to the action of their parents having ended conflict in many situations. Adolescents had experienced bitterness, anger and unhappiness following the separation and if this had been avoided by parents resolving conflict in other ways it would have been preferable.

However, the interviews with parents revealed that there were those marriages in which separation was the only way that conflict would be resolved. The collective views of the parents and adolescents would suggest that, in such situations, separation and divorce should be seen as a desirable alternative to living with conflict and as a course of action that parents should feel able to pursue without being made to feel guilty or that they are disadvantaging their children.

The findings of this study support the contention that it is better for adolescents to live with one happy parent than to remain in a home which is fraught with conflict. Further, they point to some advantages of one-parent families. Both parents and adolescents reported that they felt closer to one another and even in situations where there had been little pre-separation conflict adolescents believed they had gained. In particular, adolescents whose parents had disagreed about matters such as which friends their children could see and bring home felt that their social life and peer relationships had improved with the departure of one parent. However, one does need to ask questions about the nature of the parents' pre-separation relationship even though there was no overt conflict.

The issue of access raises a fundamental question about family life, particularly as it relates to adolescent children. The majority of the adolescents had discontinued contact with their non-custodial parent, and a considerable proportion had come to believe that their emotional needs were being met adequately by one parent. Consequently, there is some support for the notion of the one-parent family as a viable alternative family form. Further, parents who divorce are often urged to create a situation whereby their children are still in regular contact with both parents. The fact that several adolescents in the sample indicated that they felt rejected by their non-custodial parent, and that others had themselves rejected their non-custodial parent, is of concern

as the long term implications of such rejection for adolescent and adult development are not known. Consequently, it would seem desirable to encourage adolescents to maintain contact with their non-custodial parent. However, the natural distancing of adolescents from both their parents as they become more independent, self reliant, and involved in peer group activities must be recognised. Coercing adolescents into situations which would not have occurred naturally might prove to be counter productive.

7.2.4 Policy and Professional Practice

(a) Financial Support

The results of the interviews with parents would suggest that an important policy implication is related to the financial support provided for one-parent families. The majority of the parents indicated that their main problems since the divorce had been financial ones, and there was also some evidence that the adolescents had felt the effects of this as it was their main reason for feeling 'different from friends'.

The obvious solution to financial problems is money, but the way in which this could be provided is well beyond the scope of this project. However, a related policy issue is that of the attitudes towards one parent families inherent in the conditions which entitle parents to financial support. Since separating from their ex-spouse the parents in the sample had attempted to provide their children with a degree of stability and security. It is probable that their actions prevented their children from experiencing further distress. Perhaps, therefore,

they should not be discriminated against and be provided with financial support which would enable them and their children to live their lives without having to face considerable economic hardship.

(b) Counselling and Advice Services

The parents in the sample made little use of counselling and welfare facilities for themselves or their children. Those who had used the facilities of the National Marriage Guidance Council often felt that it had failed because of the lack of co-operation by their spouse. In such situations the counsellor is faced with a difficulty as they cannot compel parties to attend and their role can only be that of helping the party seeking help with their own adjustment. The Australian Family Law Act has made provisions for compulsory counselling orders in certain situations; however, the author's subjective impression is that this is not very satisfactory as unmotivated clients do not respond easily to counselling.

However, one of the more attractive features of the Australian Family Law Act is the introduction of conciliation counselling over matters concerning children. Edgar (1981) reported that there has been a move away from the traditional welfare officer role in the Australian Courts in favour of increased use of conciliation counselling; that is, where disputes exist over matters such as custody or access the parties to the dispute are compelled to attend jointly so that these disputes can be discussed and, hopefully, resolved. This has resulted in an increase in the number of such disputes being resolved by mutual consent. The results of the interviews

described here do suggest that this would be a desirable feature of future divorce reform in Britain.

One of the disappointing aspects of the interviews with adolescents was that so few had discussed their feelings with the probation officer who had been in contact with their family. Talking to the adolescents was beyond the brief of the probation officer in many cases and the adolescents did often see the officer's role as being that of investigator rather than counsellor. However, it does seem to be a missed opportunity. In his description of the probation officer's role in divorce court welfare work, Wilkinson (1981) suggests that there is room for interpretation by an individual officer. This should allow officers to concern themselves with members of a family not specified in an order for a welfare report. However, it might be necessary to encourage probation officers to make the welfare of a whole family the subject of their investigations rather than just those children specified in a court order. Wilkinson does suggest that the probation officer's role is as much that of conciliator as that of reporter, and in their former role they might ensure that adolescents have the opportunity to discuss their feelings.

Few of the adolescents had discussed their family situation with their teachers, but those who had done so found this helpful. At least one of the girls in the sample felt that the advice given to teachers about how to deal with children of divorce was 'to mind their own business'. The impression provided by the interviews with both the parents and the adolescents suggests, in the main, divorce should rarely concern teachers as they believed it did not affect school performance.

The most one might conclude from these interviews with regard to the role of the teachers, therefore, is that they should be sympathetic when they are aware of changes in family circumstances but that they should not intrude or expect that adolescents' school performance will be negatively affected.

7.3 The Divorce Myth: Does it Exist?

The divorce myth as described by Bernard (1981) is 'the underlying cultural belief that divorce has the inherent power to make people unhappy'. Evidence of its existence might be provided by contrasting the results of the study of teacher expectations with those of the results of the interviews with parents and adolescents.

The results of the expectation study are not conclusive. However, they do show that there is variation in the characteristics teacher trainees expect to find in children from different categories. Further, they suggest that teacher trainees expect children of divorce to show more negative characteristics than educationally sub-normal children and adopted children.

In contrast, the interviews with parents and adolescents suggest that separation and divorce can result in adolescents being happier than when living in a home in which there is extensive conflict, may lead to improved school performance, and may improve peer and some family relationships.

This contrast would suggest that there is evidence to show that the divorce myth does exist, however, this conclusion does have to be qualified in several ways. Teacher trainees were asked to rate 'children' without any age level being specified and it is possible that their ratings might have been different had they been asked to rate 'adolescents'. Thus, a comparison of the results of the two studies might not be legitimate.

Further, one might ask whether the expectations of teacher trainees will be modified by the time they complete their courses, whether they will carry these expectations into their work as teachers, and whether these expectations are communicated to the children in some way. However, one could also ignore the fact that they are teacher trainees and simply regard them as representing an educated sample of the population and ask why it is that they do seem to expect children of divorce to have more negative characteristics than other groups of children. For example, why do they expect children of divorce to be less well-adjusted than adopted children when their experience of children from both categories is equally limited? When viewed in this way it does seem that something of the divorce myth might exist.

7.4 The Need for Further Research

The research presented here is based on small samples and has focussed on adolescents. Further, the sample of parents and adolescents is not representative of the population and is biased towards those families in which there had been considerable

pre-separation conflict and which had necessitated the investigation of welfare officers. The low response rate to the invitation to participate in the study would suggest that the sample is also biased in other ways which are less easily identified. There are a number of possible reasons for parents being willing to participate in such a study, including a genuine desire to share their experience in order that others may benefit from it, the need for 'someone to talk to', and the need to gain approval of their actions. An attempt to ascertain why parents did participate in the study would have provided further information on sample bias. It might also have provided further information on ways in which the co-operation of parents could be enlisted for similar studies. Similarly, a follow up of people who did not participate might suggest ways in which the difficulty in enlisting parents' co-operation could be overcome. In both cases the question of agreement between parents and children would be a central issue. It is possible that there were situations in which a parent was willing to be interviewed, but their children were reluctant, and this might have been a major factor in determining the response rate.

The low response rate could simply have been a function of the fact that people were contacted by letter. However, both Chester (1975) and Mitchell (1981) had much greater success when contacting divorcees in this way. This calls into question the style of the letter used but, as mentioned in Chapter IV, (p.86), an experiment with a different letter did not improve the response rate. It might be, therefore, that one of the main reasons for the low response rate was that the present author sought to interview children whereas Chester and Mitchell were only interested in interviewing adults. A more satisfactory approach might be to contact and interview parents first and

seek their permission to interview their children during the course of that interview. However, in this particular study the fact that families were being contacted through the records of the Probation and After-Care Service might have had a significant bearing on the response rate; such families have already been 'under investigation' and might be suspicious of the motives of anyone else contacting them about family matters. Letters to families randomly selected from the County Court records might have produced a higher response rate.

It is unfortunate that the Home Office does not seem to have taken an interest in divorce research. Researchers working within the County Courts and the Probation and After-Care Service could include research instruments as part of the paperwork involved in petitioning for divorce. Further they would have access to records and would be in a position to contact families and conduct interviews within the framework of the present divorce process.

The difficulties involved in obtaining representative samples of children from divorced homes have already been discussed. In their absence, as Levetin (1979) has argued, a diversity of approaches to research is needed. The value of research depends to some extent on its purpose, and the aim of the present author, in attempting to provide a representative account of the impact of divorce on adolescents themselves, was to contribute to a more balanced view than has been available. The results of the interviews are not representative, but they do present additional perspectives to much of the research which has

been conducted using clinical samples and deviant groups of children. Such interviews might do something towards reducing the kind of negative stereotyping of children of divorce which the expectation study described here revealed. This is particularly important if teachers transmit their expectations to children and evaluate them on the basis of their family background rather than solely on their school work and behaviour. Whether this does happen in practice is one of the questions which could be investigated by further research. The results of such research would have important implications for teacher training.

The results of the interviews with parents and adolescents suggest that the impact of parental divorce on school performance might have been over-estimated. However, the subjective judgements of the respondents were not compared with school records or interviews with teachers. Future studies in this area could include such comparisons to validate the subjective judgements and, where there was a discrepancy between the two, pursue questions about the factors that operate to bring about this situation. In a number of cases it was reported that there had been a change in school performance between the pre-separation and post-divorce period and this illustrates the need to pursue divorce research on a longitudinal basis. There may be particular times at which children are more vulnerable, for example in the immediate post-separation period, and it could be important for teachers to be aware of this.

The need for the longitudinal investigation of other issues was also made apparent by some of the responses of the adolescents. These are obvious issues such as the impact of parental divorce on an adolescent's future as a marriage partner and a parent. It would be interesting to know how the adolescents in the sample described here were getting on in several years time. This research should not simply ask questions such as 'How many are married?' and 'How many are divorced?' but should examine the interaction within their relationships to establish if such things as patterns of conflict resolution have been modelled on those of their parents.

Another issue that requires longitudinal investigation is that of access. The majority of the adolescents in the sample had discontinued contact with their non-custodial parent and the long term implications of this are important for those working with children of divorce. The non-custodial parent's relationship with a child following divorce through access arrangements is one of the most complex issues that judges, lawyers and probation officers have to deal with. It has been suggested earlier that conciliation counselling might be one way of improving this situation, and this point has also been made by Richards (1982). However, this is an issue that requires investigation rather than assertion.

The initiatives at the Bristol Courts' Family Conciliation Service are being evaluated and have shown conciliation to be an effective way of resolving disputes by mutual agreement

(Parkinson, 1982). It might be more expedient than the legal process and there does seem to be something more satisfactory about parents reaching an agreement than having a decision imposed on them. However, it would seem important to establish whether, in the long term, it is a more effective way of ensuring that children maintain a relationship with their non-custodial parent than a court imposed decision. Richards has also suggested that joint custody orders, which would affirm that parental duties persist despite divorce, might be a more effective way of ensuring that non-custodial parents keep in contact with their children than orders which award custody to one or other parent. The relative merits of the two kinds of order will only be established by longitudinal studies.

Only six of the parents interviewed in this study were living with a new partner, but a greater number had started to have new heterosexual relationships. The new relationships of both custodial and non-custodial parents were raised as a source of difficulty for adolescents, and the long term impact of such relationships requires investigation. Longitudinal studies which examine the impact of parental re-marriage on children should include the comparison of those whose parents do and do not remarry.

The sample described in this study is over-representative of families in which there was pre-separation conflict, and one of the main conclusions was that, in retrospect at least, adolescents would prefer their parents to separate than live

with ongoing conflict. This raises the issue of the stage of the divorce process at which one should begin research. If it is the pre-separation conflict that children find the most disturbing it might be that it is this conflict which results in maladjustment rather than parental separation. This issue could be tackled by research which begins prior to separation. For example, one might contact parents who approach organisations such as the National Marriage Guidance Council or the Citizens Advice Bureau with enquiries about separation and divorce proceedings and trace the progress of their children over time, comparing the children of those who proceed through to divorce and those who do not.

Finally, the expressed needs of the adolescents with regard to being kept informed about the intentions of their parents and what is involved in the divorce process suggests that materials and activities which provide advice on how parents should behave towards their children, and which would explain the divorce process to children, should be developed. Materials and activities developed should be evaluated in terms of their impact on children to both assess their effectiveness and ensure that they are not counter-productive. The reservations about group discussions expressed by one of the girls in the sample - 'I want to be treated just like anyone else' - should be heeded by those planning to organise such groups. Such activities require sensitivity, and some of the risks involved can be overcome by systematic planning and evaluation.

7.5 Summary of Chapter VII

(1) The research described here raises two methodological issues which are of particular importance to divorce researchers. One is that of the way in which researchers obtain samples of divorced parents and children. It has been suggested that the ethical issues involved might make it difficult to obtain samples which are representative of the divorced population. The second issue is that of the importance of obtaining representative samples and it has been argued that this is less important than describing the samples obtained accurately.

(2) The findings of the research presented here suggest that parental divorce does not necessarily interfere with adolescent development and for some adolescents the removal of conflict from the home might enhance normal development.

(3) The findings of the research presented here suggest parents of adolescents should separate rather than stay in marriages when there is conflict which cannot be resolved any other way, but that parents should keep their adolescents informed as to the subject of the conflict and their intentions with regard to separation and divorce.

(4) The results of interviews with parents and adolescents suggest that age at marriage and length of courtship are

important factors in determining the success of a marriage. Further, they suggest that adolescents would prefer to live in a one parent family rather than remain in a two parent family which is fraught with conflict, and that they believe that their psychological needs can be adequately met by one parent.

(5) The parents interviewed in this sample perceived their main need following divorce as that of being provided with the economic resources which would enable them to live without a struggle. It has been suggested that divorce should be seen as a positive action which helps some children and that parents taking such a course of action should not be discriminated against. Further, there is a need for conciliation counselling facilities which would enable parents to resolve disputes about matters involving children, and attendance at which should be obligatory.

(6) A comparison of the results of the parent and adolescent interviews with those of the expectation study suggest that the divorce myth does exist; that is, that there is an underlying cultural belief that divorce does lead to unhappiness.

(7) There is a need for more research which, in the absence of representative samples, should be diverse in its approach so as to provide a balanced view of the consequences of divorce for children. This should include longitudinal studies of both the impact of parental divorce on children and the legal procedure and counselling interventions which follow divorce.

APPENDICES

Note: Material reproduced in Appendices A, B, C, and D has been photo-reduced and is half its original size. Appendix E was presented in booklet form and the reproduction shown here is actual size.

APPENDIX A

Children and Divorce Interview Schedule

Children and Divorce Interview Schedule

PART A: Parent

1. Background Information

a. Identifier Case Number _____

b. 1. Male 2. Female

c. Age _____ Years

d. Occupation. 1. F/T 2. P/T 3. Home Duties 4. Unemployed

Name of Occupation _____

e. Receiving maintenance from spouse. 1. For children

2. For self 3. For both 4. Neither

f. Total annual income 1. £1000 to £2000
2. £2000 to £3000
3. £3000 to £4000
4. £4000 to £5000
5. £5000 +

g. Living in marital home 1. Yes 2. No

h. Type of accommodation 1. Rented house (private)
2. Own house
3. Rented flat
4. Own flat
5. Council Accommodation

i. Number of children: With informant
With ex-spouse
In care
With relatives
Living on their own
Total

j. Present marital status 1. Re-married 2. Common law relationship
3. Engaged 4. Steady relationship 5. Unattached

Office
Use
Only

1 2 3

4

5 6

7

8

9

10

11

12
 13
 14
 15
 16
 17

18

2. Causes of Divorce

a. Age at first marriage _____ Years

19 20

b. Age of spouse at first marriage _____ Years

21 22

c. Length of courtship _____ Months

23 24

d. Age at first child _____ Years

25 26

e. Parent, or expecting at first marriage 1. Yes 2. No

27

f. Age at which major difficulties arose in marriage _____ Years

28 29

g. Age at first separation _____ Years

30 31

h. Age at divorce _____ Years

32 33

- i. Grounds for divorce
1. 2 years separation
 2. 5 years separation
 3. Unreasonable behaviour
 4. Adultery
 5. Other

34

j. Who left matrimonial home first? 1. Informant 2. Spouse

35

k. Who initiated divorce proceedings? 1. Informant 2. Spouse

36

l. Was a reconciliation attempted? 1. Yes 2. No

37

What form did it take? _____

m. Once problems arose in the marriage was divorce inevitable or could it have been avoided? 1. Inevitable 2. Avoidable

38

Why was it inevitable, or how could it have been avoided?

(Sect. 2 cont.)

n. Did you receive any formal marriage counselling from anyone?

1. Yes 2. No

From whom: _____

39

o. Counselling didn't save your marriage, but was it helpful in any other way? 1. Yes 2. No 3. N/A

How? _____

40

p. Did relatives help in any way? 1. Yes 2. No

How? _____

41

q. Did friends help in any way? 1. Yes 2. No

How? _____

42

r. What do you now see as the main causes of the breakdown of your marriage? _____

43

44

3. Problems Following the Divorce

a. Identifier Case Number _____

b. What has been your main problem since the divorce?

1. Financial 2. Emotional 3. With children

4. Other _____

45

c. Have you been able to discuss your problems with your ex-spouse?

1. Yes 2. No

46

d. Have you received any assistance from welfare agencies with your problems? 1. Yes 2. No

Which? _____

47

(Sect. 3 cont.)

e. Has this assistance been satisfactory? 1. Yes 2. No 3. N/A
If yes, why? If no, why not? _____

48

f. Have you felt in need of any assistance? 1. Yes 2. No
What kind of assistance? _____

49

g. How could this best be given? _____

h. Do you think you were adequately prepared for marriage?
1. Yes 2. No

50

i. How could you have been better prepared? _____

j. Do you think you were adequately prepared for parenthood?
1. Yes 2. No

51

k. How could you have been better prepared? _____

l. What advice would you give to your children about marriage?

4. Perception of Children's Reaction to Divorce

- a. Since the divorce has your children's schoolwork improved, got worse, stayed the same? 1. Improved 2. worse 3. Same

52

Comments: _____

- b. During the period of difficulties when divorce seemed imminent did your children's school work improve, get worse, or stay the same? 1. Improve 2. Worse 3. Same

53

Comments: _____

- c. In general, do they seem happier, less happy, same as before? 1. Happier 2. Less happy 3. Same

54

Comments: _____

- d. Have they more friends now, fewer, or about the same number? 1. More 2. Fewer 3. Same

55

Comments: _____

- e. If more than one child have they become closer to each other? 1. Yes 2. No 3. N/A

56

- f. Do your children still see your ex-spouse? 1. Yes 2. No

57

g. If not, why? _____

- h. Do you think they should? 1. Yes 2. No
Why? _____

58

- i. Do you think your children have suffered as a result of the divorce? 1. Yes 2. No
How? _____

59

(Sect. 4 cont.)

j. Do you think your children suffered before the divorce?

1. Yes 2. No.

How? _____

60

k. Do you think they have gained as a result of the divorce?

1. Yes 2. No.

How? _____

61

l. Have your children had any special help from outside the family since the divorce seemed likely? 1. Yes 2. No.

From whom? _____

62

m. Has this been valuable? 1. Yes 2. No 3. N/A

Comments: _____

63

n. Could they have been helped in any way? 1. Yes 2. No

o. What sort of help do you think they should have? _____

64

General Comments: _____

Children and Divorce Interview Schedule

Office
Use
Only

PART B: Child

1. Background Information

- a. Identifier _____ Case Number _____
- b. 1. Male 2. Female
- c. Age _____ Years
- d. 1. Private School 2. Govt. School 3. Work 4. Unemployed
- e. Living with 1. Mother 2. Father 3. Both
- f. Siblings: Older _____
Younger _____
Total _____
- g. Change in school since divorce 1. Yes 2. No
- h. Change in residence since divorce 1. Yes 2. No
- i. Adopted 1. Yes 2. No

CARD NUMBER:

2. Family Life Prior to Separation/Divorce

Identifier

- a. Was there conflict between your parents before the separation/
divorce? 1. Yes 2. No
- b. Was this conflict 1. Verbal 2. Physical 3. Both 8. N/A
- c. How often did it arise? 1. Daily 2. Weekly 3. Monthly
4. Annually 8. N/A

65

66 67

68

69

70

71

72

73

74

75

80

1 2 3

4

5

6

(Sect. 2 cont.)

d. What was the conflict mainly about? 1. Money 2. Alcohol
3. Children 4. Other (specify) 8. N/A _____

7

e. Did your parents speak to each other prior to the separation/
divorce? 1. Yes 2. No

8

f. For how long did they not speak to each other? _____ Months

9 10

g. Did your parents' separation come as a surprise? 1. Yes 2. No

11

h. Did the separation come as a relief to you? 1. Yes 2. No

12

3. Contact with Estranged Parent

a. Do you still have contact with your mother/father? (i.e. parent
child is not living with). 1. Yes 2. No

13

b. If no, why? _____

c. If yes, how often? 1. More than once a week? 2. Weekly?
3. Fortnightly? 4. Monthly? 5. Other _____
8. N/A

14

d. For how long do you see him/her? 1. Half day 2. Whole day
3. Two days 4. Other _____
8. N/A

15

e. Do you spend part of your school holidays with them?
1. Yes 2. No 8. N/A

16

(Sect. 3 cont.)

- f. Do you stay overnight with him/her? 1. Yes 2. No
8. N/A
- g. Where do you see them? 1. Your home 2. Their home
3. Outings 8. N/A
- h. Do you enjoy this time with your other parent? 1. Yes
2. No 8. N/A
- i. Do you have a choice as to whether you see them?
1. Yes 2. No
- j. If you had a choice would you continue to see them?
* 1. Yes 2. No. 8. N/A
- k. Who should have the final say as to whether such contact
should take place?
1. Child 2. Custodial parent 3. Non-custodial parent
4. Judge 5. Social worker
- l. Does contact with the other parent interfere with your
relationship with custodial parent? 1. Yes 2. No
8. N/A
- m. Does it interfere with your relationship with friends?
1. Yes 2. No 8. N/A
- n. Does it interfere with, enhance, or have no effect on your
hobbies and interests? 1. Interfere 2. Enhance
3. No effect 8. N/A
- o. Do you think you will always keep up contact with your other
parent? 1. Yes 2. No 8. N/A

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

(Sect. 4 cont.)

p. If you don't have such contact now would you like to in the future? 1. Yes 2. No 3. N/A

27

q. Is you (non-custodial parent) re-married or living with someone else? 1. Yes 2. No

28

r. Does this interfere with your relationship with them? 1. Yes 2. No 3. N/A

29

How? _____

4. School Performance, Behaviour and Peer/Sibling Relationships

a. Since the divorce my school work is better, worse, or about the same? 1. Better 2. Worse 3. Same

30

b. My concentration on school work is better, worse, same as before the divorce? 1. Better 2. Worse 3. Same

31

c. I am now more interested, less interested, just as interested in school work than before the divorce? 1. More 2. Less 3. Same

32

d. Since the divorce I get along better, worse, the same with my teachers? 1. Better 2. Worse 3. Same

33

e. I now find it easier, less easy, no different to participate in classroom discussions? 1. Easier 2. Less 3. Same
Any comments about school situation: _____

34

f. Do you feel different from your friends because they live with two parents? 1. Yes 2. No

35

(Sect. 4 cont.)

- j. Did you tell your friends about your parents' divorce?
1. Yes 2. No
- h. Do you now have more or fewer friends than before the divorce?
1. More 2. Less 3. No change
- i. Do you think your friends became more or less accepting of you
as a result of the divorce? 1. More 2. Less
3. No change
- j. Do you think your friends' parents became more or less accepting
of you because of the divorce? 1. More 2. Less
3. No change
- k. Did talking to your friends help you accept the divorce?
1. Yes 2. No 3. N/A
- l. Do you have a particular boyfriend/girlfriend? 1. Yes 2. No
- m. Do you think that has helped you adjust to the divorce?
1. Yes 2. No 3. N/A
How? _____

36

37

38

39

40

41

42

5. Views on Marriage and Parenthood

- a. Do you think that you will get married one day? 1. Yes
2. No
- b. Do you want to get married one day? 1. Yes 2. No
- c. Do you think you will have a happy marriage? 1. Yes 2. No
- d. Do you think that it is likely that you will ever get divorced
yourself? 1. Yes 2. No

43

44

45

46

(Sect. 5 cont.)

e. What things will you do to try to ensure that you have a successful marriage? _____

f. Do you think that you will ever have children?

1. Yes 2. No

47

g. Do you think it is important for children to have two parents?

1. Yes 2. No

48

h. Do you think that you should be taught about marriage at school?

1. Yes 2. No

49

i. Do you think you should be taught about being a parent at school? 1. Yes 2. No

50

j. Do you think that you should be taught how to get on with other people generally? 1. Yes 2. No

51

Comments: _____

6. Needs Regarding Support and Guidance

a. Do you think you were told sufficient about the divorce?

1. Yes 2. No

52

b. What things would you like to have been told? _____

(Sect. 6 cont.)

c. Do you think your views were given sufficient consideration?
1. Yes 2. No

53

d. Were any of your relatives helpful in discussing your feelings?
1. Yes 2. No
If yes, who? _____

54

e. Did you talk to anyone outside your immediate family about your feelings and problems?
1. Yes 2. No

55

f. Who did you talk to? Probation Officer 1. Yes 2. No
Teacher 1. Yes 2. No
Other 1. Yes 2. No

56

57

58

g. Do you think it was helpful to do so? 1. Yes 2. No
8. N/A

59

h. Do you think it might have helped to do so? 1. Yes 2. No
8. N/A

60

i. Were there any things you did relevant to issues about the divorce which you found helpful? e.g. reading, groups, TV.
1. Yes 2. No

61

j. What? _____

k. What things would you have found helpful? _____

7. Feelings about the Divorce Experience

a. What has been the most upsetting time for you?
1. Before 2. During 3. After

62

b. What two or three things have generally been most
upsetting? _____

c. Did your mother/father (custodial parent) do anything which
particularly upset you? 1. Yes 2. No

63

d. What? _____

e. Did your mother/father (custodial parent) do anything which
particularly helped you? 1. Yes 2. No

64

f. What? _____

g. Did your mother/father (non-custodial parent) do anything which
particularly upset you? 1. Yes 2. No

65

h. What? _____

i. Did your mother/father (non-custodial parent) do anything which
particularly helped you? 1. Yes 2. No

66

(Sect. 7 cont.)

j. What? _____

k. In retrospect, do you think it was a good idea for your
parents to get a divorce? 1. Yes 2. No

67

l. Do you think parents should stay together for the sake of
their children? 1. Yes 2. No

68

m. If you were writing a book about how divorce affects children,
what is the most important thing you would want to say? _____

APPENDIX B

Letter to Custodial Parent

THE UNIVERSITY
OF ASTON
IN BIRMINGHAM

Gosta Green, Birmingham B4 7ET, Tel. 021.359.3611 Ex. 6100

The Department of Educational Enquiry

Dear

I am writing to you to seek your assistance with a study I am undertaking under the supervision of Professor Richard Whitfield, and with the cooperation of the West Midlands Probation and After-Care Service. The subject of the study is the consequences of divorce for parents and children which you will no doubt agree is important but, unfortunately, is a topic about which too little is known.

As a former Divorce Court Welfare Officer, I know a little about the kind of problems that result from divorce, but am interested in trying to find out more than is generally known by asking the people that divorce affects most directly, that is, parents and children themselves. Thus, I am talking to a number of parents and children in the West Midlands and, if possible, would like to include, among the people I talk to confidentially, yourself and your:

The results of these discussions will provide a better understanding of the problems faced by parents and children who experience divorce, and may help improve the support services available to people who need them, since our findings will be passed on to those who are responsible for providing such services.

All that would be involved from your point of view is my coming to your home at a convenient time and discussing your experiences and feelings with you and your . The information you provide will be treated in the strictest confidence and will only be seen by myself and Professor Whitfield. Names and addresses will not be used in the report produced at the end of the study.

Your name and address has been provided by the West Midlands Probation and After-Care Service, and if you are interested in being included in the study, thus making your views known to us, I would be grateful if you could complete the attached form and return it to me in the envelope provided as soon as possible.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely

David McLoughlin, BA, Dip App Psych, MA, MAPsS

ENCLOSURE

Telex 3.6697

APPENDIX C

Form for Return from Custodial Parent

To: Mr D McLoughlin
Department of Educational Inquiry
The University of Aston in Birmingham
Gosta Green
Birmingham B4 7ET

PART A

Name: _____
Address: _____
_____ Tel. No. _____

I am interested in being included in the University of Aston study of the consequences of divorce for children and parents, and am willing for myself and my children to be interviewed.

Date _____ Signature _____

Most convenient time for interview. (Please tick ✓ as appropriate)

Day of week

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday

Friday Saturday Sunday

Time of day

Morning Afternoon Evening

.....
PART B

I am not interested in being included in the University of Aston study for the following reasons (Please tick ✓ as appropriate)

1. I haven't the time to spare.
2. It might upset me to talk about my experiences.
3. It would be an invasion of my privacy.
4. It might upset my children.
5. Other. (Please specify below)

<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>

Please return in the postage paid envelope to the above address as soon as possible.

APPENDIX D

Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale

THE WAY I FEEL ABOUT MYSELF

Name

Age

Girl or boy

Class

Write here the number of brothers and sisters you have who are
older than you are

Write here the number of brothers and sisters you have who are
younger than you are

Here are a set of statements. Some of them are true of you and so you will circle the YES. Some are not true of you and so you will circle the NO. Answer every question even if some are hard to decide. There are no right or wrong answers. Only you can tell us how you feel about yourself, so we hope you will mark the way you really feel inside.

- | | | | |
|-----|--|-----|----|
| 1. | My classmates make fun of me | YES | NO |
| 2. | I am a happy person | YES | NO |
| 3. | It is hard for me to make friends | YES | NO |
| 4. | I am often sad | YES | NO |
| 5. | I am smart | YES | NO |
| 6. | I am shy | YES | NO |
| 7. | I get nervous when the teacher calls on me | YES | NO |
| 8. | My looks bother me | YES | NO |
| 9. | When I grow up, I will be an important person | YES | NO |
| 10. | I get worried when we have tests in school | YES | NO |
| 11. | I am unpopular | YES | NO |
| 12. | I am well behaved in school | YES | NO |
| 13. | It is usually my fault when something goes wrong | YES | NO |
| 14. | I cause trouble to my family | YES | NO |
| 15. | I am strong | YES | NO |
| 16. | I have good ideas | YES | NO |
| 17. | I am an important member of my family | YES | NO |
| 18. | I like being the way I am | YES | NO |
| 19. | I am good at making things with my hands | YES | NO |
| 20. | I give up easily | YES | NO |
| 21. | I am good in my schoolwork | YES | NO |
| 22. | I do many bad things | YES | NO |
| 23. | I can draw well | YES | NO |

24.	I am good in music	YES	NO
25.	I behave badly at home	YES	NO
26.	I am slow in finishing my schoolwork	YES	NO
27.	I am an important member of my class	YES	NO
28.	I am nervous	YES	NO
29.	I have pretty eyes	YES	NO
30.	I can give a good report in front of the class	YES	NO
31.	In school I am a dreamer	YES	NO
32.	I pick on my brother(s) and sister(s)	YES	NO
33.	My friends like my ideas	YES	NO
34.	I often get into trouble	YES	NO
35.	I am disobedient at home	YES	NO
36.	I am unlucky	YES	NO
37.	I worry a lot	YES	NO
38.	My parents expect too much of me	YES	NO
39.	I usually want my own way	YES	NO
40.	I feel left out of things	YES	NO
41.	I have nice hair	YES	NO
42.	I often volunteer in school	YES	NO
43.	I have a pleasant face	YES	NO
44.	I sleep well at night	YES	NO
45.	I hate school	YES	NO
46.	I am among the last to be chosen for games	YES	NO
47.	I am sick a lot	YES	NO
48.	I am often mean to other people	YES	NO
49.	My classmates in school think I have good ideas	YES	NO
50.	I am unhappy	YES	NO
51.	I have many friends	YES	NO
52.	I am cheerful	YES	NO
53.	I am stupid about most things	YES	NO

54.	I am good looking	YES	NO
55.	I have lots of pep	YES	NO
56.	I get into a lot of fights	YES	NO
57.	I am popular with boys	YES	NO
58.	People pick on me	YES	NO
59.	My family is disappointed in me	YES	NO
60.	I wish I were different	YES	NO
61.	When I try to make something, everything seems to go wrong	YES	NO
62.	I am picked on at home	YES	NO
63.	I am a leader in games and sports	YES	NO
64.	I am clumsy	YES	NO
65.	In games and sports I watch instead of play	YES	NO
66.	I forget what I learn	YES	NO
67.	I am easy to get along with	YES	NO
68.	I lose my temper easily	YES	NO
69.	I am popular with girls	YES	NO
70.	I am a good reader	YES	NO
71.	I would rather work alone than with a group	YES	NO
72.	I dislike my brother (sister)	YES	NO
73.	I have a bad figure	YES	NO
74.	I am often afraid	YES	NO
75.	I am always dropping or breaking things	YES	NO
76.	I cry easily	YES	NO
77.	I am different from other people	YES	NO
78.	I think bad thoughts	YES	NO
79.	I can be trusted	YES	NO
80.	I am a good person	YES	NO

APPENDIX E

Semantic Differential

We are interested in making a study of the use of rating scales as a way of understanding people's perceptions of different groups of children . To do this we want to ask your cooperation in filling out the attached scales . Please follow the directions as carefully as possible .

On each of the following pages you are asked to describe an average child from a particular group of children . We realise that there are differences between different children from one group . We also recognise that you may not be acquainted with many children from each group . Therefore, we are only asking for your impressions . That is, asking you to answer the question, 'what in general seem to be the characteristics of an average child from the group named?'

On each page you will find the name of a group of children and beneath it a set of scales . You are asked to describe an average child from the group named on each of the scales by placing a tick (✓) on one of the seven lines between the adjectives at the ends of the scales .

Example

"Delinquent Children"

Good ___ : ✓ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ Bad

Or

Good ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ✓ : ___ : ___ Bad

"Educationally Sub-normal Children"

Sad	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Happy
Sociable	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Unsociable
Calm	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Nervous
Secure	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Insecure
Trusting	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Suspicious
Maladjusted	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Well-adjusted
Optimistic	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Pessimistic
Unhealthy	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Healthy
Relaxed	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Tense
Unsuccessful	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Successful
Affectionate	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Cold
Immature	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Mature
Competent	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Helpless
Unemotional	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Emotional
Self-confident	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Unsure
Compassionate	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Detached
Unstable	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Stable
Dependent	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Independent

"Children of Divorce"

Sad	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Happy
Sociable	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Unsociable
Calm	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Nervous
Secure	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Insecure
Trusting	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Suspicious
Maladjusted	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Well-adjusted
Optimistic	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Pessimistic
Unhealthy	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Healthy
Relaxed	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Tense
Unsuccessful	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Successful
Affectionate	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Cold
Immature	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Mature
Competent	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Helpless
Unemotional	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Emotional
Self-confident	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Unsure
Compassionate	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Detached
Unstable	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Stable
Dependent	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Independent

"Physically Handicapped Children"

Happy	__ : __ : __ : __ : __ : __ : __	Sad
Unsociable	__ : __ : __ : __ : __ : __ : __	Sociable
Nervous	__ : __ : __ : __ : __ : __ : __	Calm
Insecure	__ : __ : __ : __ : __ : __ : __	Secure
Suspicious	__ : __ : __ : __ : __ : __ : __	Trusting
Well-adjusted	__ : __ : __ : __ : __ : __ : __	Maladjusted
Pessimistic	__ : __ : __ : __ : __ : __ : __	Optimistic
Healthy	__ : __ : __ : __ : __ : __ : __	Unhealthy
Tense	__ : __ : __ : __ : __ : __ : __	Relaxed
Successful	__ : __ : __ : __ : __ : __ : __	Unsuccessful
Cold	__ : __ : __ : __ : __ : __ : __	Affectionate
Mature	__ : __ : __ : __ : __ : __ : __	Immature
Helpless	__ : __ : __ : __ : __ : __ : __	Competent
Emotional	__ : __ : __ : __ : __ : __ : __	Unemotional
Unsure	__ : __ : __ : __ : __ : __ : __	Self-confident
Detached	__ : __ : __ : __ : __ : __ : __	Compassionate
Stable	__ : __ : __ : __ : __ : __ : __	Unstable
Independent	__ : __ : __ : __ : __ : __ : __	Dependent

"Adopted children"

Happy	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Sad
Unsociable	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Sociable
Nervous	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Calm
Insecure	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Secure
Suspicious	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Trusting
Well-adjusted	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Maladjusted
Pessimistic	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Optimistic
Healthy	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Unhealthy
Tense	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Relaxed
Successful	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Unsuccessful
Cold	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Affectionate
Mature	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Immature
Helpless	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Competent
Emotional	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Unemotional
Unsure	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Self-confident
Detached	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Compassionate
Stable	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Unstable
Independent	___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___	Dependent

We would be grateful if you could answer the following questions:

How old are you? _____ Years

Are you Male Female (Please tick (✓) as appropriate)

What is your marital status? Married Single Widowed
 Divorced Separated

Are you adopted? Yes No

Are your parents divorced? Yes No

Are any members of your immediate family:

Educationally Sub-normal Yes No

Adopted Yes No

Physically handicapped Yes No

Divorced Yes No

Were you a teacher prior to attending this college? Yes No

For how long were you a teacher? _____ Years

REFERENCES :

- Anthony, E.J. (1974) 'Children at Risk from Divorce: A Review'. In E.J. Anthony and C. Koupernik (Eds.) The Child in his Family: Children at Psychiatric Risk. New York: Wiley.
- Bamford, M. (1975) 'Comment: Need for a Family Court Welfare Service'. Social Work Today. 6 (11) 321.
- Bentler, P.M. (1972) 'The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale'. In O.C. Buros The Seventh Mental Measurements Yearbook. New Jersey: The Gryphon Press.
- Berg, B. and Kelly, R. (1979) 'The Measured Self-Esteem of Children from Broken, Rejected and Accepted Families'. Journal of Divorce. 24 (4) 363-369
- Bernard, J.M. (1981) 'The Divorce Myth'. The Personnel and Guidance Journal. 6 (2) 67-71
- Blaxter, M. (1981) The Health of the Children: A Review of Research on the Place of Health in Cycles of Disadvantage. London: Heinemann
- Bloom, B.L., Asher, S.J. and White, S.W. (1978) 'Marital Distruption as a Stressor: A Review and Analysis'. Psychological Bulletin 85 (4) 867-894.
- Bloom, B.L. (1981) 'Coping with Divorce: The Clinical View'. Contemporary Psychology. 26 (3) 195-196.

- Bowlby, J. (1969) Attachment and Loss: I Attachment.
London: Hogarth.
- Bumpass, L. and Sweet, J. (1972) 'Differentials in Marital Stability'.
American Sociological Review.
37 754-766.
- Burchinal, L.G. (1964) 'Characteristics of Adolescents from
Unbroken, Broken and Reconstituted
Families'. Journal, Marriage and
the Family. 26 44-51
- Burns, A. (1980) Breaking Up.
Melbourne: Thomas Nelson.
- Central Statistics Office (1982) Social Trends 12. London: H.M.S.O.
- Chester, R. (1975) The Adjustment of Women to Divorce
Final Report to S.S.R.C. (HR 703).
- Chester, R. (1977) Divorce in Europe. Leiden: Martinus
Nijhoff.
- Chester, R. (1981) 'Divorce and its Consequences for
Society'. Paper presented to XIXth
International CFR Seminar on Divorce
and Re-marriage. Leuven, Belgium.
- Clay, P. (1981) Single Parents and the Public
Schools. How Does the Partnership
Work? Maryland: National Committee
for Citizens in Education.
- Cookson, C. (1980) 'Controversy on "broken homes"
Report'. Times Education Supplement
(19.9.80)

- Cooper, D. (1971) The Death of the Family. London: Penguin.
- Davis, G. and Murch, M. (1977) 'The Implication of the Special Procedure in Divorce'. Family Law 7 (13). 71-78
- Department of Education and Science (1981) Education Statistics. London: H.M.S.O.
- Department of Education and Science (1981) Statistics of Education Vol. 4. London: H.M.S.O.
- Desimone-Luis, J., O'Mahoney, K., and Hunt, D. (1979) 'Children of Separation and Divorce: Factors Influencing Adjustment'. Journal of Divorce. 3 (1) 37-41
- Edgar, D. (1979) 'One-Parent Families and Educational Disadvantage'. Paper presented to Annual Conference of the National Marriage Guidance Council of Australia. Canberra.
- Edgar, D. (1981) 'The Australian Family Law Act'. Paper presented to XIXth International CFR Seminar on Divorce and Re-marriage. Leuven, Belgium.
- Eekelaar, J. (1971) Family Security and Family Break-down. Middlesex: Penguin.
- Eekelaar, J. (1977) Custody after Divorce. Oxford: Centre for Socio-legal Studies.
- Elston, E., Fuller, J. and Murch, M. (1975) 'Judicial Hearings of undefended Divorce Petitions'. The Modern Law Review. 38 (6) 609-640.

- Erikson, E.H. (1950) Childhood and Society. New York: Norton.
- Farls, R.J. (1967) High and Low Achievement of Intellectually Average Intermediate Grade Students Related to the Self-Concept and Social Approval. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Pittsburgh. (DA 28: 1205A).
- Ferguson, G.A. (1981) Statistical Analysis in Psychology and Education. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Ferri, E. (1976) Growing Up in a One Parent Family. New Jersey: Humanities Press.
- Finer Commission (1974) Report of the Committee on One Parent Families, Vol. 1 and Vol. 2. London: H.M.S.O.
- Freud, A. (1948) The Ego and the Mechanism of Defence. New York: I.U.P.
- Fulton, J.A. (1979) 'Parental Reports of Children's Post-Divorce Adjustment'. Journal of Social Issues. 35 (4) 126-139.
- Gardner, R.A. (1976) Psychotherapy with Children of Divorce. New York: Aronson.
- Gardner, R.A. (1977) 'Children of Divorce: Some Legal and Psychological Considerations'. Journal of Clinical Child Psychology. 6, 3-6-
- George, V. and Wilding, P. (1972) Motherless Families. London: Routledge and Keegan Paul.

- Gessell, A., Ilg, F.L.,
and Ames, L.B. (1956) Youth: The Years from Ten to Sixteen.
New York: Harper and Row.
- Gettleman, A. and Markowitz,
R. (1974) Divorce and After. Illinois: The
Free Press.
- Goldstein, J., Freud, A.,
and Solnit, A.J. (1973) Beyond the Best Interests of the
Child. New York: The Free Press.
- Guilford, J.P. (1954) Psychometric Methods. New York:
McGraw-Hill.
- Gurin, G., Veroff, J., and
Feld, S. (1960) 'Americans View their Mental Health'.
New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Hall, J.G. (1977) 'The Future of the Divorce Court
Welfare Service'. Family Law
7 (4) 101-104.
- Hammond, J.M. (1979) 'Children of Divorce: A Study of
Self-Concept, Academic Achievement
and Attitudes'. The Elementary
School Journal. 80 (2) 55-62
- Hart, N. (1976) When Marriage Ends. London:
Tavistock.
- Havighurst, R.J. (1951) Developmental Tasks and Education.
New York: Longmans.
- Heise, D.R. (1977) 'The Semantic Differential and
Attitude Research'. In G.F. Summers
(Ed) Attitude Measurement. London:
Kershaw.
- Hess, R.D., Camara, K.A.
(1979) 'Post-Divorce Family Relationships
as Mediating Factors in the Conse-
quences of Divorce for Children'.
Journal of Social Issues. 35(4) 79-95

- Hetherington, E.M. (1972) 'Effects of Father Absence on Personality Development in Adolescent Daughters'. Developmental Psychology. 7 (3) 313-326.
- Hetherington, E.M. (1979) 'Divorce: A Child's Perspective'. American Psychologist. 34 (10) 851-858.
- Hetherington, E.M., Cox, M., and Cox, R. (1979a) 'Play and Social Interaction in Children Following Divorce'. Journal of Social Issues. 35(4) 26-49.
- Hetherington, E.M., Cox, M., and Cox, R. (1979b) 'Family Interactions and the Social, Emotional and Cognitive Development of Children Following Divorce'. In V.C. Vaughan and T.B. Brazleton The Family: Setting Priorities. New York: Science and Medicine Publishers.
- Hodges, W.F., Wechsler, R.C. and Ballantine, C. (1979) 'Divorce and the Pre-School Child. Cumulative Stress'. Journal of Divorce. 3 (1) 55-67.
- Home Office (1979) Marriage Matters. London: H.M.S.O.
- Hunt, M.M. (1975) 'Review of Marital Separation by R.S. Weiss'. New York Times Book Review. 30.11.75 p.4.
- Jacobson, D.S. (1978a) 'The Impact of Marital Separation/ Divorce on Children: I. Parent-Child Separation and Child Adjustment'. Journal of Divorce 1 (4) 341-360.
- (1978b) II. Interparent Hostility and Child Adjustment'. Journal of Divorce 2 (1) 3-19.
- (1978c) III. Parent-Child Communication and Child Adjustment, and Regression Analysis of Overall Study'. Journal of Divorce. 2 (2) 175-194.

- Jersild, A.T. (1952) In Search of Self. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Jobling, D. (1975) 'Children of Divorce - A Summary of Research Findings'. Highlight. Number 13. London: National Children's Bureau.
- Jozan, P. (1981) 'The Impact of Divorce on the Life and Conditions of Divorcees and their Children.' Paper presented to XIXth International CFR Seminar on Divorce and Re-marriage. Leuven, Belgium.
- Kelly, G.A. (1955) The Psychology of Personal Constructs London: Norton.
- Kelly, R., Berg, B. (1978) 'Measuring Children's Reactions to Divorce'. Journal of Clinical Psychology. 34 (1) 215-221.
- King, M. (1981) 'The Limits of Law and Psychology in Decisions Concerning the Welfare of Children'. In S. Lloyd-Bostock (Ed) Psychology in Legal Contexts: Applications and Limitations. London: MacMillan.
- Kohlberg, L., LaCrosse, J., and Richs, D. (1972) 'The Predictability of Adult Mental Health from Childhood Behaviour'. In B. Wolman (Ed) Manual of Child Psychopathology. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Kulka, R.A. and Weingarten, H. (1979) 'The Long Term Effects of Parental Divorce in Childhood on Adult Adjustment'. Journal of Social Issues. 35 (4) 50-77.

- Landis, J.T. (1960) 'The Trauma of Children when Parents Divorce'. Marriage and Family Living. 22 7-13.
- Landis, J.T. (1962) 'A Comparison of Children from Divorced and Non-Divorced Unhappy Homes'. Family Life Co-ordinator. 11 61-69.
- Law Society (1979) A Better Way Out. Crosham, Wilts: New Chapter Press.
- Leupnitz, D.A. (1981) 'Review of Surviving the Breakup by Wallerstein and Kelly'. Journal of Marriage and The Family. 43 (4) 1019-1021.
- Levetin, T.E. (1979) 'Children of Divorce: An Introduction'. Journal of Social Issues. 35 (4) 1-25.
- Levin, H. (1959) 'Some Meanings of Myth'. In H.A. Murray (Ed) Myth and Mythmaking. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Lewin, K. (1948) Resolving Social Conflict. New York: Harper.
- Lipsitt, L.P. (1958) 'A Self-Concept Scale for Children and its Relation to the Children's Form of the Manifest Ansuety Scale'. Child Development. 29 463-472.
- Longfellow, C. (1979) 'Divorce in Context : Its Impact on Children'. In G. Levinger and O.C. Moles (Eds) Divorce and Separation. New York: Basic Books.

- Magrab, P.R. (1978) 'For the Sake of the Children': A Review of the Psychological Effects of Divorce'. Journal of Divorce. 1 (3) 233-245.
- Maidment, S. (1976) 'A Study in Child Custody'. Part 1 Family Law. 6 (7) 195-200. Part 2 Family Law. 6 (8) 236-241.
- Maidment, S. (1977) 'The Future of the Divorce Court Welfare Service - An Alternative View'. Family Law. 7 (6) 246-249.
- Maslow, A.H. (1970) Motivation and Personality. New York: Harper and Row.
- McDermott, J. (1968) 'Parental Divorce in Early Childhood'. American Journal Psychiatry. 124 1424-1432.
- Mitchell, A.K. (1981) Someone to Turn To. Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press.
- Morton Commission (1956) Report of Royal Commission on Marriage and Divorce. London: H.M.S.O.
- Murch, M. (1975) 'Divorce Court Welfare Reports - Should Parents See Them'. New Law Journal. July, 736-739.
- Murch, M. (1980) Justice and Welfare in Divorce. London: Sweet and Maxwell.
- Muuss, R.E. (1968) Theories of Adolescence. New York: Random House.

- National Association of Elementary School Principals (1980) The Most Significant Minority: One Parent Children in the Schools. Arlington: N.A.E.S.P.
- Nie, N.H., Hull, C.H., Jenkins, J.G., Steinbrenner, K., and Bent, D.H. (1975) Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (2nd Edition). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Nunnally, J.C. (1967) Psychometric Theory. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Nye, F.I. (1957) 'Child Adjustment in Broken and Unhappy Unbroken Homes'. Marriage and Family Living. 19 356-61
- Office of Population Census and Statistics (1982) Monitor FM2. London: H.M.S.O.
- Office of Population Census and Statistics (1982) Monitor GHS. London: H.M.S.O.
- Order of Christian Unity (1979) Torn Lives? Oxford: Beckett
- Osgood, C.E., Suci, G.J., and Tannenbaum, P.H. (1957) The Measurement of Meaning. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Piers, E.V., Harris, D.B., (1969) The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale. Nashville: Counsellor Recordings and Tests.
- Pilling, D., Kellmer-Pringle, M. (1978) Controversial Issues in Child Development. London: Paul Elek
- Pope, H., Mueller, C.W. (1976) 'The Intergenerational Transmission of Marital Instability: Comparison by Race and Sex'. Journal of Social Issues. 32 49-66.

- Prothero, E.T., Keehn, J.D. (1969) 'Sterotypes and Semantic Space'. In J.G. Snides and C.E. Osgood (Eds) Semantic Differential Technique. Chicago: Illinois.
- Rank, O. (1945) Will Therapy, Truth and Reality. New York: Knopf.
- Raschke, H.J., Raschke, V.J. (1979) 'Family Conflict' and Children's Self-Concepts: A Comparison of Intact and Single Parent Families'. Journal of Marriage and the Family. 41 361-374.
- Reinhard, D.W. (1977) 'The Reaction of Adolescent Boys and Girls to the Divorce of their Parents'. Journal of Clinical Child Psychology. 6 21-23
- Rimmer, L. (1981) Families in Focus. London: Study Commission on the Family.
- Rosen, R. (1977) 'Children of Divorce: What they feel about Access and other Aspects of the Divorce Experience'. Journal of Clinical Child Psychology. 6 24-26
- Rowlands, P. (1980) Saturday Parent. London: Allen and Unwin.
- Rutter, M. (1972) Maternal Deprivation Re-Assessed. Middlesex: Penguin.
- Rutter, M. (1977) Child Psychiatry: Modern Approaches. London: Blackwell.
- Rutter, M, Madge, N. (1976) Cycles of Disadvantage. London: Heinemann.

- Santrock, J.W. (1977) 'Effects of Father Absence on Sex Typed Behaviours in Male Children: Reasons for the Absence and Age of Onset of the Absence'. Journal of Genetic Psychology. 130 3-10.
- Santrock, J.W., Tracy, R.L. (1978) 'Effects of Children's Family Structure Status on the Development of Stereotypes by Teachers'. Journal of Educational Psychology. 70 (5) 754-757.
- Santrock, J.W., Warshak, R. (1979) 'Father Custody and Social Development in Boys and Girls'. Journal of Social Issues. 35 (4) 112-125.
- Smiley, G.W., Goldsmith, A. (1981) 'The Effects of Divorce on Children'. Australian Journal of Sex, Marriage and Family. 2 (1) 5-16.
- Sorosky, A.D. (1977) 'The Psychological Effects of Divorce on Adolescents'. Adolescence. 12 (45) 123-136.
- Steinzor, B. (1970) When Parents Divorce. New York: Pantheon.
- Study Commission on the Family (1980) Happy Families? London: Study Commission on the Family.
- Thornes, B., Collard, J. (1979) Who Divorces? London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Tizard, J., Tizard, B. (1972) 'The Institution as an Environment for Development'. In M.P. Richards (Ed) The Integration of a Child into a Social World. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Toomin, M.K. (1974) 'The Child of Divorce'. In R.E. Hardy and J.G. Cull (Eds) Therapeutic Needs of the Family: Problems, Descriptions and Therapeutic Approaches. Illinois: C.C. Thomas.
- Triandis, H.C. (1971) Attitude and Attitude Change. New York: Wiley.
- Wallerstein, J.S., Kelly, J.B. (1974) 'The Effects of Parental Divorce: The Adolescent Experience'. In E.J. Anthony and C. Koupernik (Eds) The Child in his Family: Children at Psychiatric Risk. Vol. 3. New York: Wiley.
- Wallerstein, J.S., Kelly, J.B. (1975)q 'The Effects of Parental Divorce: The Experiences of the Pre-School Child'. American Academy of Child Psychiatry. 14 (4) 600-616.
- Wallerstein, J.S., Kelly, J.B. (1976) 'The Effects of Parental Divorce: Experiences of the Child in Early Latency'. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry. 46 (1) 20-32
- Wallerstein, J.S., Kelly, J.B. (1976) 'The Effects of Parental Divorce: Experiences of the Child in Later Latency'. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry. 46 (2) 256-269.
- Wallerstein, J.S., Kelly, J.B. (1980) Surviving the Breakup. London: Grant McIntyre.
- Weiss, R.S. (1979) 'Growing up a Little Faster: The Experience of Growing Up in a Single Parent Family'. Journal of Social Issues. 35 (4) 97-111.

- Wells, L.E., Marwell, G. (Eds) (1976) Self Esteem. London: Sage.
- Westman, J.C. (1972) 'Effects of Divorce on a Child's Personality Development'. Medical Aspects of Human Sexuality. 6 (1) 38-55.
- Wilkinson, M. (1981) Children and Divorce. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Williams, J.E. (1964) 'Connotations of Colour Names Amongst Negroes and Caucasians'. Perceptual and Motor Skills. 18 721-731.
- Williams, J.E. (1966) 'Connotations of Racial Concepts and Colour Names'. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology. 3 531-54.
- ADDITIONAL REFERENCES:
- Blechman, E.A. (1982) 'Are Children with One Parent at Psychological Risk? A Methodological Review.' Journal of Marriage and the Family. February pp. 179-195.
- Parkinson, L. (1982) 'Divorce and Families'. Concern 44 Summer pp. 7-11.
- Richards, M.P.M. (1982) 'Post-Divorce Arrangements for Children: A Psychological Perspective'. The Journal of Social Welfare Law. May pp.133-151.

LEGISLATION

Australian Family Law Act, 1975. Canberra: Government Printer.
Divorce Law Reform Act, 1969. London: H.M.S.O.
Matrimonial Causes Act, 1973. London: H.M.S.O.
Matrimonial Proceedings
(Children's Act), 1958. London: H.M.S.O.
