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I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Cheryl Malone Robinson entitled "The Perceived Impact of Childhood Parental Divorce on Young Adults." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Human Ecology.

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THE PERCEIVED IMPACT OF CHILDHOOD PARENTAL DIVORCE ON YOUNG ADULTS

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"The flower that blooms in adversity is the most rare and beautiful of all."

Completing a dissertation is not an individual effort. It is a collaborative effort and I have been very fortunate to have a number of people with whom to collaborate. I would like to thank my children, Frank, Gini, and Ryan, all of whom are young adult children of divorce, for understanding my interest in this topic and for being open about their feelings before the study was even begun. I also want to thank my stepchildren, Pam Scott, for proofreading and talking through ideas, and Lane Robinson, for just being Lane.

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Abstract

This qualitative study examines perceptions and meanings of childhood parental divorce and its impact through the eyes of adult children of divorce. There were three primary objectives in this study. They include (a) capturing the retrospective childhood meaning of parental divorce through the eyes of the young adult participants, (b) describing how they believe the process of divorce is influencing their views of themselves in terms of the roles of husband or wife, and father or mother, and (c) understanding the meaning of parental divorce as it is perceived currently by young adults.

In-depth interviews were conducted with 21 young adults between the ages of 20 and 30 whose parents divorced when they were 10 years old or younger. From these interviews, seven themes emerged: retrospective perception of parents' relationship with each other, current perception of parents' relationship, perceptions of marriage and parenthood, perceptions of single-parent families; perceptions of remarriage, perceptions of sibling relationships, and perceptions of extended family relationships. Results indicated that three crucial factors seemed to influence the effects of the divorce experience of the participants: first, the quality of life experienced in the single-parent family; second, the quality of the relationship with the non-custodial parent; and third, the way in which parental remarriage is experienced.

In addition, a particularly intriguing finding was that often siblings were separated and reared in separate households. Sometimes this physical separation precipitates an emotional distancing as well. This finding has not been noted in earlier studies. Further,

because of the tremendous within group variation of the divorce experience, there is no consistent method of characterizing the child of divorce. Additionally, participants' perceptions of their own marital roles and their roles as parents yielded striking results in that they had the added task of turning away from the marital behavior modeled by their parents and often from the parenting model as well.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Few would argue with the conclusion that American families have undergone great change in the past couple of decades. Divorced, remarried, and single-parent families are family structures that have become very familiar to both children and adults (Emery, 1988; Furstenberg & Teitler, 1994). Radical changes in family life, such as a divorce, seem to have a ripple effect on families, changing not only the husband, wife and children, but affecting also extended family and friends, in some cases drastically redefining these relationships (Johnson, Klee, & Schmidt, 1988; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1990).

Both men and women experience divorce as a stressor in their lives (Applewhite, 1997; Elkind, 1994; Emery, 1988). They may have made the decision to divorce for a variety of reasons; however, both partners hope to make a better life for themselves and their children, once they have weathered the immediate storm of divorce (Applewhite, 1997; Emery, 1988; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1990). Because people typically view divorce as a life event (i.e., a "one time happening") rather than a process (i.e., continuous and ongoing), many are surprised by their growing awareness that divorce indeed is not an event, but rather a process that continues to influence the activities, hearts, and minds of those involved for a lifetime (Emery, 1988; Franklin, Janoff-Bulman, & Roberts, 1990; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1990).

Research concerned with divorce has addressed often the problems of the children in a divorcing family as the divorce takes place or in the year or two following the divorce (Chase-Lansdale, Cherlin, & Kiernan, 1995; Emery, 1988). Described as the "crisis period" by Chase-Lansdale and Hetherington (1990), the first year or two after parents separate is a time of intense upset for children and is often a time when difficult transitions are negotiated. Factors such as the absence of a parent (e.g., father no longer lives in the home), continuing parental conflict and multiple transitions (e.g., financial difficulties, cohabitors in the home, remarriage) are all areas in which some research has been conducted (Cherlin, 1996). Less work has been done in examining the long-term effects of parental divorce on children as they become adults and make decisions about marriage and becoming parents themselves (Chase-Lansdale et al.). A complete picture or description of long-term effects of divorce on children has not yet emerged; however, some of the negative effects (e.g., dropping out of school, having a child as a teenager) that are beginning to emerge are worthy of concern (Cherlin, 1996). As the children of parental divorce experience the structural changes in their family (sometimes reluctantly, sometimes with relief), social scientists need to explore how they have come to make sense of their family and world in the aftermath of divorce. Further, the implications that these perceptions may have for their lives as they become young adults preparing to make decisions concerning marriage and parenthood also should be explained.

Importance of the Topic

In decades past, society viewed divorce as a relative rarity and researchers viewed it from a deviance perspective (Coleman & Ganong, 1990; Kitson, 1992). Couples who

remained married were seen as normal and healthy, while those who divorce were thought to be abnormal or unhealthy in some way (Kitson, 1992). Kitson explained that we are strongly influenced by our culture and that we may actually view ourselves as deviant when experiencing divorce. Divorce rates began to increase in the mid-1960s, and in 1974 the number of marriages ended by divorce surpassed those ended by death (Martin & Bumpass, 1989). Currently, newly married couples in their first marriage have a 50% to 60% projected probability of marital dissolution through divorce (Martin & Bumpass, 1989). Some researchers have suggested that Americans have lost their belief in the permanence of marriage (Glenn, 1991), and other researchers have added that divorce has carved out a place in the American family as a reality and as a force influencing many families and individuals (Furstenburg & Cherlin, 1991).

Children in divorcing families often have little input into the arrangements made for their lives (e.g., custody, visitation). Divorcing parents commonly are embroiled in their own emotional turmoil and may not give the extent of explanation and reassurance that children need. Many parents are so anxious and uncomfortable that they make a general announcement about the divorce with no time for children's questions or expression of feelings (Price & McKenry, 1988). Often parents gloss over the true reasons for divorce and give little explanation about how divorce will affect the family, leaving children to contemplate the things they fear most (Price & McKenry, 1988). Children are often confused as to their role in the family, and this confusion may be carried into adulthood. Much of the research in the literature that deals with the effects of divorce on children focuses only on the young child. However, some recent studies that include long-term effects of divorce on adults who experienced parental divorce as

children have been conducted (Amato, Loomis, & Booth, 1995). Emery (1988) and Teyber (1992) pointed out that as we examine the multiple changes brought on by divorce we begin to see the patterns of reorganization of family relationships that occur after divorce. Emery cautioned researchers to remember that children's divorce experiences are diverse and that we must be careful in extrapolating from our own experiences to those we are studying. He also warns about labeling divorce or single parenthood as negative because we may stigmatize those in our society for whom these events create what are now modal family structures (Emery, 1988).

As the number of children of divorce continuously grows, the need for more information about the long-term effects of divorce on children is of even greater import. Rather than viewing divorce as an event that occurs and then is over, researchers need to study the process that is experienced over the years following parental divorce. Studying this process could provide professionals with information needed to work effectively with adult children of divorce in order to lessen the likelihood of intergenerational transmission of divorce and to enhance the likelihood of healthy relationships being established and maintained.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore and examine perceptions and meanings of parental divorce and the impact it has had on their lives through the eyes of adult children of divorce.

Research objectives. There were three primary objectives in this study. They included (a) capturing the retrospective childhood meaning of parental divorce through the eyes of the young adult respondents, (b) describing how they believe the process of divorce is influencing their views of themselves in terms of the roles of husband or wife and father or mother, and (c) understanding the meaning of parental divorce as it is perceived currently by young adults.

Rationale. There is a burgeoning literature discussing the effects of divorce on children at the time of separation and within two years following divorce (Emery, 1988). Recently, Amato and Keith (1991a) examined a number of studies concerned with adults who had experienced parental divorce as children compared with those from intact families. Their results indicated a greater incidence of poor psychological adjustment, lower socioeconomic attainment, and greater marital instability (Amato & Keith, 1991a). Addressing these broad outcomes is certainly relevant; however, describing the processes that may lead to these outcomes also warrants further investigation.

This study added to the growing body of literature addressing the unique issues often encountered by adult children of divorce. It provided another lens through which to view the experience of these individuals, that is, telling their stories and identifying themes that emerge.

Theoretical Perspective

Although there is no definitive theoretical framework being used consistently to study immediate and long-term effects of divorce on children, there are two family

science theories that often are applied in research in this area: symbolic interactionism and family stress theory.

Symbolic interactionism, according to Blumer (1969), involves how individuals act toward things on the basis of the meaning they have assigned to those things. "Things" include physical objects, human beings, institutions, situations--generally everything humans note in their world (Blumer, 1969). According to Blumer, meaning is derived from interactions between individuals and through self-reflection. In qualitative research, researchers assert that meaning is both individual and shared and further that meaning is also contextual (Taylor, 1994). A central idea in this perspective is that the clarity of expectations associated with a new familial role influences how easily an individual can move into that role (Day, Gilbert, Settles, & Burr, 1995). Thus, the unrealistic expectations of children as they assume their role in a single parent family or take on the role of a stepchild in a remarried family can be interpreted as being difficult to negotiate in these transitions at best. Another proposition of symbolic interactionism indicates that the more strongly individuals value something, the more influence it has on them (Day et al.,1995). Therefore, we can see that the more children value their family, the more the disruption of their family could influence how they think and feel.

Symbolic interactionism has made some unique contributions to family studies. One such contribution is that this theoretical perspective emphasizes that families are social groups (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). Through the lens of the symbolic interactionist observing parental divorce, we can see how a shared sense of beliefs may be dramatically shifted or at best somewhat altered. Viewing the family as a social group allows

researchers to look at the interconnectedness of the group members and explore their interactions through stressful events and processes such as divorce.

A second assertion and contribution of symbolic interactionism is that individuals construct a self-concept and identity through social interaction (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). Looking through the lens at parental divorce, we often see conflictual interaction among family members as well as dramatic shifts in family activities and routines. Symbolic interactionism provides the underpinnings for understanding how interactions are interpreted and definitions are derived. Symbolic interactionism also provides a framework to capture the retrospective meaning assigned to parental divorce through the eyes of the young adult respondents as well as the current meaning assigned to parental divorce and how these interpretations influence their views of themselves in spousal and parental roles.

Family stress theory also is often used as a framework in looking at children and divorce. Although researchers may differ in their findings concerning children and divorce, a common thread seems to be the evidence of stress experienced through the divorce process. McCubbin and Patterson's (1983a, 1983b) Double ABC-X Family Stress Model is an important way of examining postcrisis behavior in divorcing families. This model allows researchers to look at four precrisis factors (ABC=X) and four postcrisis factors (aA,bB,cC=xX): (a) A is the stressful event; aA is the accumulation of stressors or hardships associated with efforts to cope with the event; (b) B represents the family's resources available for addressing the event; bB represents the family's adaptive resources developed in the efforts to cope; (c) C is how the event is perceived; cC is family definition and meaning assigned to the stressor event as the process of coping is

experienced, and (d) X represents the outcome in regards to degree of stress; xX represents the adaptation outcome, or whether it is good or bad (Day et al., 1995). For example, the impact of divorce will vary among families depending upon the perception of divorce precrisis and the definition and meaning assigned to the divorce postcrisis. In addition, the impact of divorce also will vary among families depending upon the availability of resources precrisis and the adaptive use of those resources and the development of new resources postcrisis. Adaptation is a core concept in this model and implies that families use effective coping strategies to resolve the crisis and restore balance in the family (Dilworth-Anderson, Burton, & Johnson, 1993). Through application of this model it is possible to explain not only how a family manages divorce but how well they manage the divorce process (Day et al., 1995). Boss (1987) has stated that perhaps the most crucial, the least studied, aspects of family stress are the C and cC factors that represent the initial and on-going meanings families give to stressors. The present study is an attempt to more fully describe these processes for children who experience parental divorce.

Nominal Definitions

Child of divorce. A child of divorce is defined as an individual in a family whose parents made the decision to divorce and followed through on their decision.

Young adult children of divorce. Adult children of divorce are defined as individuals between the ages of 20 and 30 whose parents divorced when they were 10 years old or younger.

Intergenerational transmission. The passing on of a particular trait or behavior from one generation to another.

Cohort. A cohort is described as a group of people born at about the same time and therefore subject to the same sociohistorical events (Lemme, 1995).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Statistical Incidence Related to Divorce

The divorce rate in the United States is the world's highest (Rice, 1996). In 1994, 1.2 million divorces were granted according to the National Center for Health Statistics (Clark, 1996). Sixty-five percent of these divorced couples had minor children. There are differences in the risk of divorce depending upon the ages and number of children in the family (Rice, 1996). As the number of children rises to a maximum of four, the risk of divorce decreases; however, if a couple has five or more children, the risk of divorce increases (Rice, 1996). Divorce rates are relatively low when the youngest child is under age three. However, rates of divorce rise sharply as the child reaches mid-adolescence and again decline as the child reaches age seventeen (Rice, 1996).

Experts link divorce to a number of social problems. Among these problems are poverty, father absence, and maladjustment (Clark, 1996). Children of divorce experience a 30% drop in household income and are two to three times as likely to drop out of school and have out-of-wedlock births than their counterparts in intact families (Blankenhorn, 1995; Popenoe, 1997). Of concern, as well, are the findings by many experts that children of divorce are more susceptible to divorce themselves, partly because they seem to view divorce as a viable alternative to an unhappy marriage (Greenberg & Nay, 1982).

As divorced families have increased in number, the experience of being a child of divorce has become more the norm. In order to understand the experience of this growing

population, more information is needed on the stories of these children and how they make sense of the world as adults reflecting on parental divorce.

Cohort Effect

Lemme (1995) defined cohort effect as "the effect of one's year of birth and subsequent sociohistorical experience on development" (p. 463). It is important to consider the context in which a cohort group was reared when a study samples a particular cohort group. This study involved 20 to 30 year olds who were born between 1968 and 1978. Sheehy (1995) labeled those individuals born between 1966 and 1980 as the "Endangered Generation." Sheehy described this cohort group as "pragmatic, skeptical, unwilling to be pinned down, and desperately, secretly, longing to belong and to believe in something" (p. 43). She suggested that their motto, "Whatever," is merely a mask designed to conceal their true feelings. Because they have experienced so many disappointments, they may believe it is safer to appear indifferent. Safety and protection are important issues for this generation. Sheehy addressed the difficulty with which members of the Endangered Generation make commitments. She suggested that growing up with higher rates of parental divorce than any previous cohort, with the fear of HIV/AIDS and the increased risk of violence at home and in the streets, has shaped the lives of the individuals in this cohort group by fostering a deep-seated insecurity. It was important to keep in mind the sociohistorical context of this cohort group as the current study was conducted.

Qualitative Research on Parental Divorce

It has been difficult to define qualitative research because it is often referred to merely as research that is not quantitative. However, by employing qualitative methodology, one is afforded the "opportunity to step into the mind of another person, to see and experience the world as they do themselves" (McCracken, 1988, p. 9). The qualitative approach allows the researcher to experience reflection on the issues at hand with the study participant. Rich descriptions of feelings and attitudes can provide the researcher with a greater understanding of how adult children of divorce make sense of their world and how their parents' divorce has influenced their lives thus far. Moreover, there is some evidence of the growing acceptability of qualitative research by virtue of its mention in regards to tenure for college professors and additional research time being granted to qualitative researchers. There are several professional journals devoted primarily to qualitative research, and occasionally a "call for papers" specifically will request qualitative work. However, in reviewing literature for the current study, I found there was an overwhelming amount of quantitative research and much less qualitative research. Much of the qualitative work is in the form of empirically based books rather than journal articles. Because of the amount of quantitative research available, the review of quantitative work will be illustrative rather than exhaustive. The qualitative review will include many books as well as articles.

Judith Wallerstein, a pioneer in longitudinal research on parental divorce, began her work on this topic with the California Children of Divorce Project, which was established as a counseling service for divorcing couples and their children (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Wallerstein was the first researcher to examine children's reactions to

parental divorce in relation to developmental stages and tasks. She was also first to conduct longitudinal research in this area and to begin building a bridge between quantitative and qualitative methods. In regards to the California Children of Divorce Project, it was made clear to the 60 families who volunteered for the project that, although the researchers were a source of immediate help, during sessions researchers also were collecting data that would enable them to learn about the experience of divorce as seen through the eyes of both adults and children (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). The original study expanded and continued with interviews and questionnaires not only at one year, but also at five, ten, and fifteen years (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1990). Out of these interviews a number of "lessons" emerged. Wallerstein's findings have been reinforced by many other researchers, while still others disagree vehemently with some of her conclusions. Following are the salient findings of both qualitative and quantitative researchers relevant to this study and organized around issues often mentioned in their work.

Divorce Is Not An Event, But A Process

Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1990) described divorce as a process, somewhat of a family systems theory notion. They explained that it begins with an unhappy marriage and continues through separation, divorce and often through remarriage and second divorces. Stewart, Copeland, Chester, Malley, and Barenbaum (1997) agreed that the notions of trauma or catastrophe are often associated with a loss and that is how many people view divorce; however, the image of trauma has only limited application when referring to divorce. More consistent with findings is the typical pattern of unhappiness,

conflict, and adaptation (Stewart et al., 1997). In terms of family stress concepts, in most instances divorce creates moderate levels of stress rather than trauma (Boss, 1987).

Furstenberg and Teitler (1994) suggested that often divorce is looked at as a "crash" because of the sharp decline in economic and social resources that takes place; however, they suggested that a more accurate way of looking at divorce may be as "a gradual disintegration of a fragile family system" (p. 174) or as the crystallization of longstanding family problems. Kitson (1992) described divorce as "a process that often does not move quickly to a conclusion" (p. 14). Kitson went on to say that it is a process that can last a lifetime particularly for those families that include children. Emery (1988) spoke to the fact that many earlier authors conceptualized divorce somewhat simplistically, seeing it as a "uniform psychological event rather than a process" (p. 13). However, contemporary research reflects an increased concern with the process of divorce and the multiple transitions faced by each family (Emery, 1988). Nelson, Allison, and Sundre (1992) suggested that divorce is a process with several stages and the effects of divorce on each individual involved may require considerable time for resolution. Constance Ahrons (1994) perceived the process of divorce as somewhat less stressful because she believed that "the process of divorce is predictable--it can be charted" (p. 249). She agreed that initially divorce is full of turmoil and that accepting the onslaught of powerful emotions accompanying the divorce situation is a start at managing these emotions (Ahrons, 1994). Ahrons also suggested that having the knowledge that these initial emotions are temporary and common to most people involved in the divorce process allows one to predict and plan for a calmer, more reasonable future involving former spouses and children.

Contemporary research clearly suggests that the process of divorce is established and predictable both in American culture and in the lives of millions of adults and children. This is a process that requires more knowledge and understanding. Most research, however, has considered only the earlier phases of this process. Much more data about the later and more long-term aspects of this process is needed.

Divorce Is Stressful for Both Adults and Children

In addition to the emotional trauma of divorce (e.g., anger, depression) for adults, most often women with custody of children also face an array of other stressors associated with the divorce process (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). For many women with children, the impact of a drastically changed financial situation with the accompanying anxiety over mounting expenses, uncertainty of regular child support payments, and frustration about their own employment contribute to increasing stress (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Of the families interviewed by Wallerstein and Kelly, two-thirds of the women reported feeling good about their jobs; however the remaining third derived no satisfaction from their jobs, with a small percentage (8%) of that number bitterly resenting that divorce had imposed upon them the necessity to work (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). For these women, employment is particularly stressful. Often women seek to increase their earning power by enrolling in vocational training or educational programs (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Coupled with their work schedule, household chores, and meeting the needs of their children, stress is greatly increased by the time and energy required to develop marketable skills.

Changes in child care arrangements were also a source of stress for many mothers. Most fathers in Wallerstein and Kelly's (1980) study refused to "babysit" (their

term) their own children viewing a request from the mother "as a manipulative exploitation" (p. 25). The attitude that ultimately almost all of the responsibility for child care and parenting falls on the mother was often overwhelmingly stressful for them (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Hetherington, Cox, and Cox (1982) reported that one mother described herself as "trapped in a world of children," which aptly describes the demands and resulting social isolation experienced by many divorced mothers. McKenry and Price (1994) described the clustering of stressor events (e.g., divorce, economic deprivation, change in employment, change in child care, emotional isolation) as stress pileup, a term which appropriately describes the lives of many divorced mothers. With parents' hostility high toward one another and mothers involved in learning to effectively balance the increased array of responsibilities with little or no support, it is sometimes easy for children to feel the loss of both parents, either emotionally or physically or at times perhaps both.

Stewart et al. (1997) spoke to the notion of loss as a relevant concept for describing divorce as do many other scholars (Blankenhorn, 1995; Emery, 1988; Kitson, 1992; Popenoe, 1997) Stewart et al. described the loss of a parent through divorce for a child as precipitating sadness or grief; but, the authors are quick to point out that focusing on this loss may obscure some positive gains reported by participants in the study. Specifically, she suggested that looking at divorce exclusively as loss makes it difficult to explain the sometimes reported experience of relief as the strains of the immediate situation are lessened, and further, it also interferes with the optimism and hope experienced as new opportunities emerge for both adults and children.

Hozman and Froiland (1977) specified five stages of emotional reaction to the losses that children experience in the process of adjusting to parental divorce. In stage 1, Denial, the child chooses not to accept reality, but instead views the world and their situation as they would like for it to be. In Stage 2, Anger, the child strikes out at those around him in an attempt to engage both parents and to create the opportunity for a reconciliation. In Stage 3, Bargaining, the child basically attempts to "make a deal" in order to overcome loss. In Stage 4, Depression, the child realizes that he/she cannot control the situation and becomes depressed. In Stage 5, Acceptance, the child embraces reality whether or not he/she likes it (Hozman & Froiland, 1977). Often the emotional responses experienced by children through the process of divorce overlap or regress and usually do not occur in distinct linear order as indicated by this application of Kubler-Ross's conceptualization of response to loss (Price & McKenry, 1988).

Teyber (1992) and other researchers (Hetherington, 1981; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980) described divorce as being stressful in different ways for children according to their age and stage of development. He explained that preschoolers react to parental divorce with both anger and sadness and often exhibit regressive behavior. Anxiety, insecurity, and fear are also common when preschoolers experience parental divorce. Teyber suggested that school-aged children are most often very sad and cry easily. They feel rejected and long for the absent parent. Often, six to eight-year-olds academic performance declines and they set about trying to reunite their parents. Teyber also stated that nine to twelve-year-olds are sad and intensely angry. They feel powerless and overwhelmed by the changes taking place in their lives. In a qualitative study of 60 respondents with an average age of 22.6 years, it was found that those who experienced

parental divorce between the ages of 6 and 11 reported siding with one parent against the other (Duran-Aydintug, 1997). These respondents also reported childhood fantasies about their parent's reconciliation which lasted for some time. Adolescents often feel betrayed by the divorce of their parents, and they are very fearful in regards to their own future (Teyber, 1992); however, they often had a better understanding of why the divorce occurred, and this was helpful in dealing with their own sense of loss (Duran-Aydintug, 1997). Regardless of the age of the child when parental divorce occurred, being kept in the dark about details caused stress for the children (Duran-Aydintug, 1997; Swartzman-Schatman & Schinke, 1993).

Teyber (1992) went on to address the stress experienced by parents through the process of divorce. He emphasized the guilt many parents feel associated with the divorce and suggested that this contributes to some common adjustment problems seen in children such as depression, issues of parental loyalty, confusion, and emotional instability. Teyber also indicated that parents who experience exaggerated guilt often have difficulty talking with their children about the divorce even when the children need them to do so. Consequently, when children do not receive the assurance and explanations they need, they may have more difficulty dealing with the divorce.

Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1990) devoted much effort to describing the pain felt by both children and parents from a divorced family. They conclude that although it is a "wrenching experience for many adults and almost all children, it is almost always more devastating for children than for parents" (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1990, p. 297). Kitson (1992) added that although the numbers of children who are affected by the stress of parental divorce long-term may be more questionable than those affected early in the

divorce process, children may be subject to long-term difficulties in regards to developmental progress.

Divorce Has Long-Lasting Effects, Sometimes Subtle, Sometimes Devastating for Children

Price and McKenry (1988) indicated that, while many researchers conclude that the majority of children adjust to divorce within two years when looking at developmental and behavioral indicators, others suggest that often there are long-term reactions sometimes extending into adulthood that are not captured in research. Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1990) summarize the effects of parental divorce after 10 years through the eyes of 116 participants in their original study. They were struck by the strong feeling of sadness and the way these adolescents and young adults seem to feel that they belong to a special group who are survivors of tragedy (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1990). Further, the research participants explained in numerous ways that growing up is harder for children of divorce, that parental divorce was a defining occurrence and the subsequent years have been years of deprivation in terms of both economic and psychological support (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1990). Memories of the day that the family separated are vivid and detailed and, although they are hopeful about heir own marriages, there is a "sorrowful sense that they are unlikely to achieve their goals of an enduring love and marriage" (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1990, p. 24).

Amato, using data from the 1987-88 National Survey of Families and Households, concluded that disruption of the family by divorce during childhood has long-term effects for the well-being of adult men and women (Amato, 1991a). Amato found that experiencing separation from a parent during childhood was associated with

increased depression in adults. Another finding of particular interest in Amato's study was that those adults from single parent families were less likely to be in an intact marriage and more likely to be divorced or never married. Amato suggested that being divorced or never married is associated with somewhat higher levels of depression. Stewart et al. (1997), in their longitudinal study of 100 divorcing families with school-age children, concluded that although the painful experiences of these children and families cannot be ignored, it is obvious that the divorce process served to free family members from the stress in the pre-separation family and provided opportunities to renegotiate some relationships with family members. In contrast to what the authors refer to as myths, Stewart et al. found that, typically, divorcing parents are concerned with their children's well-being, that changes that come with divorce after an initial chaotic period often result in some aspects of enhanced positive well-being. Economic vulnerability in single-parent mother-child households is a concern, but by itself, should not dissuade those wanting a divorce. In addition, Stewart et al. suggested that maintaining a sense of security for family members is the overriding factor to be considered when making changes in how family problems are resolved. These authors also found that parental conflict that created loyalty choices for children "was the single most consistent predictor of worse adjustment for children" (Stewart et al., 1997, p. 236). This conclusion has also been supported in Wallerstein's longitudinal research studies. Stewart's et al. findings also highlighted the importance of a quality relationship with the non-custodial parent as well as the importance of the custodial parent establishing an atmosphere where children could openly express their critical views and feelings from their own perspective and thereby come to terms with those perceptions and feelings.

In a longitudinal study by Amato, Loomis, and Booth (1995) which focused on parental divorce in context of marital conflict and offspring well-being in early adulthood, data strongly supported the perspective that long-term effects of divorce depended upon the degree of interparental conflict before separation. Young adults whose parents had divorced during childhood and who were exposed to low levels of conflict prior to the divorce showed the lowest levels of well-being in early adulthood. On the other hand, young adults whose parents had divorced during childhood and who were exposed to severe, excessive conflict prior to the divorce, reflected high levels of well-being in early adulthood (Amato et al., 1995). Relief for these children from a stressful home environment seemed to help balance losing other resources and resulted in more positive long-term outcomes (Amato et al., 1995). In a similar study that examined family structure, interparental conflict and long-term effects on young adults, Garber (1992) found that interparental conflict does have long-term effects on the well-being of adult children of divorce but should not be perceived as the primary factor affecting well-being. In addition, Garber cautioned that one should not view divorce as an unimportant factor in the lives of young adults; but, rather as a life experience which has presented children with inevitable challenges and demands. Further, Garber suggested that as researchers we should not assume as predetermined the emotional responses embodied in the divorce process.

Both Stewart et al. (1997) and Ahrons (1994) addressed interparental conflict following divorce. Although Ahrons and Stewart et al. approached interparental conflict following divorce in different ways, the results of their analyses are similar. Both authors (Ahrons, 1994; Stewart et al., 1997) created typologies of conflict management styles

exhibited by parents following divorce. Stewart et al. labeled one group "Allied Parents" and Ahrons labeled a group with similar characteristics "Perfect Pals." Parents in these groups had a "good friends" type of relationship. They put parenting above any differences they might have and communicated often and well. In both studies, these groups were the smallest proportion of divorced parents (Ahrons, 1994; Stewart et al., 1997). Another group labeled "Cooperative Colleagues" by Ahrons and "Negotiating Parents" by Stewart et al. were by far the largest segment of parents with 38% in Ahrons' study and 50% of Stewart's et al. group This group was the most diverse and all had some areas of conflict. Many of these couples were able to separate parenting and making decisions concerning the children even though they may have little understanding or caring for each other (Ahrons, 1994; Stewart et al., 1997).

The last group of parents were labeled "Angry Associates" and "Fiery Foes" by Ahrons (1994) and "Battling Parents" by Stewart et al. (1997). "Angry Associates" and "Fiery Foes" each made up 25% of Ahrons sample and "Battling Parents" made up 33% of the Stewart et al. sample. These couples were characterized by intense anger and conflict. While "Angry Associates" might occasionally agree, they were generally tense, hostile and conflictual (Ahrons, 1994). "Battling Parents" seemed to stay in the throes of divorce, stuck in chaos, sometimes for years (Stewart et al., 1997). They often had heated arguments, continued court involvement, and were the group most likely to involve their children in their arguments (Stewart et al., 1997). Ahrons included one further group which she labeled "Dissolved Duos." This group consisted of couples who entirely discontinued contact. Total withdrawal was seen as the only way of coping with the

stressful situation (Ahrons, 1994). Because of the criteria for inclusion in the study, Ahrons had no "Dissolved Duos" in her study.

Holdnack (1992) examined the long-term effects of parental divorce on family relationships and on adult children's self-concept. Results from this study suggested that parental divorce has a long-term effect on family relationships which indirectly affects the self-concept of these young adults (Holdnack, 1992). Holdnack explained that parental divorce often interrupts the emotional closeness between children and one and/or both of their parents. This interruption of closeness negatively influences the self-esteem of children. The results also indicated that although it was not the norm, there were some subjects who reported a cohesive relationship with both parents after the divorce. Parents who maintain emotional closeness and an active relationship with their children post-divorce make positive contributions to their children's self concept over the long-term (Holdnack, 1992).

Franklin et al. (1990) conducted to studies involving college-aged children of divorce. In the first study, the Janoff-Bulman's World Assumptions Scale, the Zung Self-Rating Depression Scale, and other items added by the authors were used to measure the "vulnerability-related beliefs about the benevolence and meaningfulness of the world and one's own self-worth" (Franklin et al., 1990, p. 744) as well as to measure beliefs about interpersonal relationships. The last portion of the questionnaire was completed only by those students who had experienced parental divorce and addressed issues specifically related to their divorce experience. Franklin et al. suggested that if parental divorce is associated with depression and low self-esteem, they are more likely to occur immediately after the divorce and may not characterize college-age children of divorce, a

finding that is inconsistent with other studies (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1990). However, Franklin et al. also found that parental divorce is related to college-age students' beliefs that their future marriages will be less successful. This finding is consistent with Wallerstein and Blakeslee and others.

One particularly interesting finding in this study was the recognition of the factors emphasized in terms of marital outcome (Franklin et al., 1990). Following parental divorce, these adult children of divorce became aware of the role a marital partner plays in determining the outcome of the marriage relationship (Franklin et al., 1990). The group of students from intact families did not focus on the role of the marriage partner, but suggested that their marriages would be successful if they were "good and worthy" (p. 746) regardless of the traits of their partner (Franklin et al., 1990).

In their second study, Franklin et al. (1990) looked at generalized trust (benevolence of other people, of the world), interpersonal trust in the context of marriage and interpersonal trust in close relationships outside of marriage. There were not significant differences on generalized trust between the group of students whose parents had divorced and the group of students from intact families (Franklin et al., 1990). The two groups differed on several items measuring interpersonal trust; however, differences were noted only on the measures specifically associated with the marriage relationship (Franklin et al., 1990). The two groups did not differ in how much they trusted current dating partners or love interests or in how successful their future love relationships may be; however, significant differences appeared when these relationships were specified as marriage (Franklin et al., 1990). These results led the researchers to conclude that although the immediate effects of parental divorce may be considerable and far-reaching,

as time passes the effects of parental divorce seem to narrow and focus on beliefs about marriage, the area in which the two groups under study had different perceptions (Franklin et al., 1990).

There Is a Gender Difference in Response to Divorce for Children

Price and McKenry (1988) and other researchers (Hetherington, 1979; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980) agreed that the impact of divorce is both more traumatic and persistent for boys than for girls. Teyber (1992) addressed gender differences in children in response to divorce and indicates that boys living in the care of divorced custodial mothers in contrast to girls in the care of divorced custodial mothers and children in intact homes, seem to have more long-term adjustment problems. Teyber attributed these differences to three factors: (a) that parents do not discipline boys as effectively as girls, because custodial mothers tend to continue disciplining their same-sex daughters as they had before the divorce, and fathers are usually absent from the home which often means inconsistent discipline for boys contributing to aggressive and disobedient behavior; (b) boys are criticized more often and receive more anger from both parents than girls do which contributes to lower self-esteem and increased aggression in boys, and (c) parents differentiate according to gender in their response to children's needs for nurturing following divorce with girls receiving greater nurturance (Teyber, 1992). Shook and Jurich (1992) looked at gender-based differences among college students from divorced families. Specifically, the variables considered were self-esteem, feelings of closeness to the non-residential father, contact with the non-residential father, social status of the post-divorce family, remarriage of the custodial mother and age of the respondent at the time of parental divorce. They found that self-esteem in males is related to age at the time of

parental divorce and self-esteem in males is greater the longer they are exposed to the positive influence of their fathers. Feelings of closeness with the non-residential father had a strong relationship with self-esteem for the total sample, but an unexpected finding was that this relationship was associated with lower self-esteem in males (Shook & Jurich, 1992). However, females in this study were not significantly affected in terms of self-esteem by the early departure of their fathers by divorce suggesting that age at the time of divorce was not a significant issue for females (Shook & Jurich, 1992). Contact with the non-residential father was strongly associated with female self-esteem, while feelings of closeness for the non-residential father was also associated with female positive self-esteem (Shook & Jurich, 1992).

Weiss (1979) indicated that young children, especially boys, often mask depression over the loss of a parent through divorce, with hyperactivity. He noted that girls also react to parental loss by attempting to ingratiate themselves with possible parent substitutes (Weiss, 1979).

Other responses noted by researchers (Stewart et al., 1997) included increased reported illnesses by girls and disruptive behavior in the classroom by boys. Although most of the reported responses indicated distress, Stewart et al. clearly stated that, regardless of divorce, these types of behaviors, namely "externalizing" problems for boys (e.g., disruptive behavioral problems) and "internalizing" problems for girls (e.g., depression, anxiety) are often thought of as gender specific. Emery (1988) suggested that there is significant documentation establishing that divorce has consistently been found to be associated with externalizing problems for both genders but with greater frequency and intensity for boys. Further, Emery also stated that research with regards to

internalizing problems is much more ambiguous. Research concerned with externalizing problems is somewhat easier to conduct because externalizing problems are presented in measurable ways; however, internalizing problems are much more obscure and more difficult to measure. Although a very clear, consistent pattern for internalizing problems has not been described, Emery stated it would be unfair to conclude that children of divorce do not suffer from a sense of loss, sadness, loneliness, embarrassment and particularly depression. Finally, Emery suggested that in focusing on the more obvious externalizing behaviors more commonly found in boys, researchers may tend to overlook the more subtle effects of divorce more common to girls. However, in a study by Huntley, Phelps, and Rehm (1987), data suggested that boys who have lost a father through divorce may be at a higher risk for depression than girls. Obviously, there are many unanswered questions in this arena and further information is needed.

In contrast to many researchers, Mott, Kowaleski-Jones, and Menaghan (1997) in a study using data from the 1979-1990 rounds of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, found that although both boys and girls are affected by father's absence from the home, the effects are modest and distinctions between genders are not significant. In a longitudinal study of 100 families with school-age children, Stewart et al. (1997) indicated that their findings did not support the notion that boys have a harder time with divorce than girls.

In a study addressing differences in marriage role expectations of college students which compared students from divorced and intact families by gender, there was revealed a difference in male and female reactions to parental divorce (Marlar & Jacobs, 1992). Males from divorced families favored more traditional marriage role expectations than

did the males from intact families. Females from divorced families favored more of a companionship style of marital role expectations than did females from intact families (Marlar & Jacobs, 1992). It is important to look at gender differences in a variety of ways as they are viewed through the lens of parental divorce.

The Process of Individuation in Adolescence May Precipitate Issues Associated with Earlier Divorce

Several studies have addressed some of the long-term effects of divorce on children in regards to adolescent development and the developmental tasks associated with that time in life (Chase-Lansdale et al., 1995; Cooney, 1988; Furstenberg & Teitler, 1994; Gabardi & Rosen, 1992; Nelson, Allison, & Sundre, 1992). Divorce and the accompanying changes in family structure occur during some point in a child's earlier psychological development. In adolescence and young adulthood specifically, two developmental transitions are faced according to the work of Erik Erickson, namely identity and intimacy (Nelson et al., 1992). Identity formation includes defining a sense of self and feelings of value, adequacy and dignity as an individual (Nelson et al., 1992). In addition, forming a capacity for intimacy involves having the ability to be empathetic and in learning to give oneself to another (Nelson et al., 1992).

In a family that has experienced divorce, adolescence can be more complex and painful (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1990). Adolescents living with a single parent have little opportunity to gradually detach from that parent because of the centrality and exclusiveness of the relationship (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1990). Yet, it is during adolescence and young adulthood that the task of integrating feelings of value,

competency and dignity from the past and present, and making plans for the future with a sense of self that is whole and reflects one's true identity is undertaken (Elkind, 1973).

Because adolescents strongly identify with role models and use imitation of others as a way of unifying their identity, successful identity formation is often influenced strongly by the relationship the child has with his or her parents (Elkind, 1973). Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1990) also speculated that children who seem to have adjusted well to changes brought on by parental divorce may suffer from a "sleeper effect" that is activated by the challenging tasks of adolescence and young adulthood. Likewise, Amato and Keith (1991a) gave credence to the short-term emotional and social problems of children in a divorce situation, but conclude that the long-term effects of divorce may increase problems in adolescence and early adulthood that seriously affect overall quality of life. Amato and Keith (1991a) based this conclusion on several findings. Specifically, parental divorce was associated with broad negative effects manifested primarily in consequences such as depression, low life satisfaction, low marital quality, low educational attainment, low income, low occupational status, and poor physical health (Amato & Keith, 1991a). The developmental challenges of adolescence and young adulthood may highlight the vulnerabilities (e.g., sense of parental loss, parental conflict, absence of appropriate role models) experienced immediately after divorce (Chase-Lansdale et al., 1995). Adolescents from divorced families involved in the task of identity formation are less likely to complete high school, less likely to attend college and more likely to be neither employed nor in school (Furstenberg & Teitler, 1994). All of these behaviors point to their difficulty in identity formation.

Establishing intimate relationships is developmentally meaningful to adolescents and young adults (Gabardi & Rosen, 1992) and is a part of individuation. Parental divorce as well as the quality of intimate relationships exhibited by parents plays a significant part in how adolescents and young adults approach the dilemma of intimate relationships (Gabardi & Rosen, 1992). Timing seems to be a critical factor in the transition to adulthood (Cooney, 1988). Often it is difficult for adolescents and young adults to competently address the issue of intimacy if they have a parent who is struggling with intimacy issues of their own. Research shows (Furstenberg & Teitler, 1994) that children of divorce initiate sexual activity earlier and are more likely to become pregnant while still in the adolescent years. In addition, children of divorce are more likely to cohabit but do not marry earlier (Furstenberg & Teitler, 1994). These behaviors are often attempts at establishing intimacy although perhaps not always in constructive ways.

Adolescents and young adults who have lost their intact family through divorce realize that divorce is always a possibility in their relationships, and they often delay marriage or jump prematurely and anxiously into dependent relationships (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1990). For them, the ability to form intimate relationships involves being able to turn away from their parental model. This difficult task is at the core of adolescence and young adulthood and the successful negotiation and resolution of the intimacy crisis is the pathway to psychological freedom from the past (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1990).

The Quality of Relationship Between Divorced Parents Is Associated with Their Children's Adjustment

Relationships between divorced parents vary greatly in quality. Popenoe (1997) quoted Furstenberg in an extreme illustration of former spouse and child relationship:

"many men view marriage and child care as an inseparable role-set. Accordingly, men often sever ties with their children in the course of establishing distance from their wives" (p. 32). Popenoe stated further that the effect of this attitude on children's feelings in regards to their father may be carried into adulthood.

Blankenhorn (1995) summarized the pattern in most divorcing families. He suggested that in most divorcing families the marriage comes to an end with bitterness, guilt and pain. The children are in the custody of the mother and the father moves out. Although the father does not intend to divorce his children, he gradually drifts away from his former life, including his children (Blankenhorn, 1995). Blankenhorn described these fathers who may visit their children, usually according to a set schedule, as no longer belonging to the parental team, feeling like strangers to their children, almost like imposters. Eventually, they may stop making the effort to visit their children and, agreeing with other researchers, Blankenhorn stated one major reason for this is because he wants nothing to do with his former spouse. Further, he suggested that the former wife feels the same way (Blankenhorn, 1995).

These relationships may or may not include high conflict (i.e., verbal and physical abuse) over time, although Hetherington et al. (1982) found that 72% of interactions between parents in the first year following divorce was conflictual. However, the quality of the parental relationship is often very poor across time if not openly conflictual. In these triangulated situations children may interpret their parents' difficulties as their fault and responsibility (Ahrons, 1994). When a child feels thrown into a loyalty conflict, adjustment is more difficult.

Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) suggested that children do not halt development so that parents can address their own issues and integrate their own lives. Further, they stated that as parents address children's problems on a daily basis and time passes, real changes begin to become obvious in parent-child interactions. A smoothness in the flow of daily activities and events occurs and parenting becomes more pleasurable. As parents received more gratification from the parenting role, they became better-functioning parents and, after the initial crisis had passed, most of the children in their study did not evidence significant development delays (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980).

In the postdivorce context, when immediate issues have been settled and rationality in dealing with the children is of prime importance, precluding or restricting conflict for some parents is at the heart of creating a positive, stable relationship for the children with both parents. Many fathers conclude that maintaining parental access is more important than continuing conflict with their former spouse even if they do not see arrangements concerning the children as being fair (Arendell, 1995).

Some researchers suggested a co-parenting or limited partnership agreement for divorced parents (Ahrons, 1994). In such agreements, rules for interaction and boundaries are clearly defined. Ahrons suggested that cooperation and communication between parents is imperative for children's adjustment. Applewhite (1997) elaborated on the importance of maintaining family rituals (e.g., birthdays, graduations) in helping children to adjust. Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1990) indicated that adjustment for children, particularly if there is a joint custody arrangement, is not related to a specific formula but reflects the quality of parenting by both parents, as well as the amount of conflict and cooperation exhibited between parents. In addition, the situations faced outside the home

play a part in adjustment (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1990). However, Blankenhorn (1995) suggested that this behavior on the part of the parents is the ultimate irony.

> The "better" a divorce looks, the more it looks like, well, marriage. Living near each other. Cooperating. Communicating. Sharing the joys and responsibilities of parenthood. Making sacrifices and compromises for the sake of the family. Reproducing for children what exists in intact families. It all begins to sound like a good-enough marriage, minus the sex. Yet a good-enough marriage is precisely what these couples have decided is no longer possible for them. They have decided to end their marriage–not simply part of the marriage but all of it, or at least as much of it as possible (p. 169).

Family Studies Scholars Debate the Effects of Divorce

Amato and Keith (1991a) conducted a meta-analysis of 180 quantitative studies concerned with the well-being of children of divorce. Their analysis suggested that parental divorce appears to lower the well-being of children. The effect sizes between the two groups studied (children from divorced families and children from intact families) were weak (Amato & Keith, 1991a). Amato and Keith concluded that either parental divorce affects children in relatively minor ways or the existing studies have not yet exposed the serious effects. One possibility for this may be that researchers have not yet sufficiently explored effects in a longitudinal manner (Amato & Keith, 1991a).

In addition, Amato and Keith (1991b) conducted a meta-analysis of 37 quantitative studies concerned with long-term consequences of parental divorce for adult well-being. Their analysis suggested that parental divorce has far-reaching effects on the

quality of life in adulthood. The outcomes associated with parental divorce concluded from this analysis included "psychological well-being (depression, low life satisfaction), family well-being (low marital quality, divorce), socioeconomic well-being (low educational attainment, income, and occupational prestige), and physical health" (Amato & Keith, 1991b, p. 54). Although Amato and Keith painted a pessimistic picture of the link between parental divorce and adult well-being, they also concluded that in earlier studies the association was much stronger than the effects they found.

Amato and Keith's (1991b) work evoked opposing responses from several researchers. Demo (1991) found troubling Amato's basic premise that parental divorce is associated with lowered well-being among adult children of divorce. Demo challenges Amato's way of viewing divorce and suggested viewing divorce from a normative-adaptive perspective. He advocated seeing divorce as a normal lifestyle choice rather than as a social problem (Demo, 1991). In addition, Demo also suggested following children and their families over time rather than comparing those from divorced and intact families.

Allen (1991), in responding to the meta-analysis on children's well-being, shared Demo's (1991) focus in devaluing the importance or superiority of the traditional nuclear family and advocates looking at children's circumstances and the variety of components included in those circumstances. Allen took issue with the term "children of divorce" and objected to "punctuating children's lives by one kind of parental experience, as if this social category was the defining feature of life" (p. 49). Further, she alluded to researcher bias in regards to Amato's perspective on children and divorce and encouraged his further

research in this area include "more realistic and inclusive ways of understanding children's adjustment to divorce" (Allen, p. 49).

Amato (1993) answered Allen (1991) and Demo (1991) and pointed out the problematic nature of being so inflexibly committed to a perspective that acknowledgment of alternative perspectives is intolerable. He addressed the major points of disagreement in both Allen and Demo's reviews and concluded by reiterating the most salient points in his own work (Amato, 1993). Further, he summarized that the data support a moderate position: "Divorce does not ruin the life of every child it touches, but we cannot assume that its consequences are always benign" (Amato, 1993, p. 53). Amato (1993) closed his response by challenging readers to determine the rationality of the represented views "to decide whose views are distorted by ideology" (Amato, 1993, p. 53). This ongoing debate captures the overall feeling of the literature addressing childhood parental divorce and adult children. At the November, 1997 Annual Conference of the National Council of Family Relations held in Washington, DC, the importance of this debate was noted and time was scheduled for the presentation of differing perspectives.

Trade Book Contributions

Much of the research done on the long-term effects of childhood parental divorce on adult children has been the foundation for self-help information in a number of trade books written for the general public. These books use the findings of researchers to present a clear picture of the challenges faced by adult children of divorce and offer suggestions for coping with these challenges. The trade books are written so that readers

can easily understand the points being made and apply the suggested methods of coping or "pathways to healing" in their own lives.

Several of these books list a number of characteristics often thought to be common to adult children of divorce (Berman, 1991; Fassel, 1991; Hart, 1991). Among these characteristics are: a need to control; problems with self-esteem; an overdeveloped sense of responsibility; a fear of conflict; a feeling of abandonment; a feeling of helplessness; unrealistic expectations for relationships and marriage; and, repetition of parents' behavior including divorce (Berman, 1991; Fassel, 1991; Hart, 1991).

Hart (1991) addressed the reasons why adult children of divorce may have difficulty with low self-esteem, fear of failure and taking risks in love and work. Among those reasons, Hart cited the collapse of the family structure, exposure to interparental conflict, diminished parenting, divided loyalties, a bleak and uncertain future, separation of children from their fathers, asking children to assume adult roles too soon and sustaining more losses than can be handled appropriately. He offered insight into ways of recovering from the effects of parental divorce and made suggestions for resolving emotional issues (hurt, anger, guilt, shame) (Hart, 1991). Hart spoke to how gender issues play a part in response to parental divorce and compared how divorce affects boys and girls. In addition, he offered suggestions for breaking the cycle of intergenerational transmission of divorce.

Fassel (1991) and Berman (1991) addressed many of the same issues addressed by Hart. Fassel added information on abuse and addiction often seen in adult children of divorce. Berman concluded by addressing the intergenerational transmission of divorce

and specifically how to make peace with the past. Each author offered his/her own reassurances and encouragement for living a life beyond divorce.

Summary of Young Adults' Experiences from the Literature

In summary, numerous studies have addressed educational attainment, income, occupational prestige, marital quality, health (Amato, 1991b), and intergenerational transmission of divorce in young adult children of divorce (Greenberg & Nay, 1982). Results of these studies often vary greatly and sometimes were conflicting making the general overview of the effects of parental divorce on young adults somewhat ambiguous. Some scholars emphasized the resiliency and adaptative skills of children of divorce as well as the importance of being good parents through the divorce process (Ahrons, 1994); however, most researchers agreed that children of divorce bring to adulthood a different perspective than do young adults from intact families (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1990).

Data comparing young adults form divorced families and intact families are plentiful; however, longitudinal studies that look at the social and emotional indicators seen in young adult children of divorce are few. Wallerstein and Blakeslee have extended their data collection to a 25 year follow up of their initial participants; however their data are not yet available. Some studies have used secondary data in order to take advantage of the longitudinal aspect of the study (Chase-Lansdale et al., 1995). Many more studies are needed to explore the social and emotional aspects of childhood parental divorce over time and the effects on young adults.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Qualitative Research Method

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods have been used to study children of divorce. Although there is a substantive body of quantitative work, more recently research in this area has employed qualitative methods of inquiry.

In contrast to quantitative research with an ultimate goal of using a hypothetico-deductive model to revise and support theories of social and behavioral phenomena through the results of hypothesis testing, "qualitative inquiry seeks to understand human and social behavior from the insider's perspective . . . as it is lived by participants in a particular social setting" (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 1990, p. 445). Qualitative family research focuses on experiences within families as well as experiences between families and systems outside the family (Gilgun, Daly, & Handel, 1992). In contrast to quantitative research which focuses on specific measurement of discrete variables, qualitative data are words or pictures and are "conceptualized, collected, analyzed, and interpreted qualitatively" (Gilgun et al., 1992, p. 24). Most often, those who participate in qualitative family research think of themselves as belonging to a family, having committed relationships and a sense of shared personal history (Gilgun et al., 1992). A qualitative approach to the study of the meaning of divorce to young adult children of divorce seems appropriate for this study because this approach provides the opportunity

to "step into the mind of another person, to see and experience the world as they do themselves" (McCracken, 1988, p. 9).

In reviewing the literature on adult children of divorce, there is a lack of research pertaining to how their understanding of parental divorce influences their own lives as adults. As a researcher, having firsthand knowledge of the parental divorce experience as well as experiencing divorce as an adult in my own marriage, it has been important to me to identify my own personal agenda and to separate it from the research agenda. Listening to the responses of participants may stir memories of my own and could possibly affect questioning. However, as this study has taken shape, hours have been spent in self-reflection in order to identify and deal with any difficult area of inquiry. In addition, great care was taken by the researcher to remain nonjudgmental and neutral affectively in regards to the experiences of the young adults interviewed. Coming from a similar background does not give license to interject personal feelings and biases and form opinions; however, it does provide a foundation of interest and curiosity. Having a co-investigator from a dissimilar background adds a different perspective and balances interpretation of the data safeguarding bias. The research objectives undertaken for this study could best be explored using qualitative methods designed specifically to provide insight into the thoughts and feelings of these young adults. Furthermore, qualitative research allows for the development of detailed descriptions, for describing process, for learning how events are interpreted, and for bridging intersubjectivities (e.g., a kind of "you are there" approach) (Weiss, 1994).

Some of the limitations of the qualitative method include (a) lack of generalizability, findings are applicable only to the group under study although there may

be some transferability of findings (Marshall & Rossman, 1989); (b) the dynamic nature or propensity to change of qualitative research rules out step-by-step instruction (Taylor, 1994); and (c) hesitancy on the part of publishers to include findings in publications because qualitative research lacks the status with academics of quantitative methods. However, for the purposes of the current study, the strengths of qualitative research far outweigh the limitations; therefore, for these reasons, a qualitative approach was used for this study.

Research Objectives

As previously stated, there were three primary objectives in this study. They included (a) capturing the retrospective childhood meaning of parental divorce through the eyes of the young adult respondents, (b) describing how they believe the process of divorce is influencing their views of themselves in terms of the roles of husband or wife and father or mother, and (c) understanding the meaning of parental divorce as it is perceived currently by young adults.

Participants

For the proposed study, individuals were recruited who are between the ages of 20 and 30 whose parents divorced when they were 10 years old or younger. This is the only criteria for inclusion. This range of ages was chosen for several reasons. First, the decade between 20 and 30 is traditionally the time when many life decisions are made concerning marriage, children, and careers. Sheehy (1995) termed this developmental period currently as being a phase of "provisional adulthood." Further, this is also a time when adult relationships with parents are being defined. Secondly, a particular decade

was chosen in an attempt to control for cohort and developmental effects. It is important to ensure that participants have had similar historical experiences and developmental tasks normally assigned to young adulthood are undertaken at similar ages. Lastly, adults between the ages of 20 and 30 whose parents had divorced when they were 10 years old or younger were chosen because sufficient time had passed and development had taken place so that the respondents could thoughtfully reflect on their experiences and communicate them in an understandable way.

Recruitment. Twenty participants will be recruited for participation in this study. Initially participants will be recruited through flyers posted on The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, campus asking for persons meeting the criteria and interested in participation. In addition, recruitment announcements will be made in university classes. The "snowballing" technique of having some respondents refer other potential respondents (Taylor, 1994) may also be used for this convenience sample. Incentives will not be offered; however, a final copy of the findings of the study will be offered to the participants at their request.

Description of sample. The 21 participants recruited included eight males and 13 females. There were two African-American participants, both male. Eighteen participants were Caucasian. Six of the participants were currently married and two of the participants had married and divorced. One of the divorced participants had remarried and was included in the total number married. Two participants each had one child.

The average age of the participants was 24.65 years. There were three participants who were only children, having no biological sibling. Five participants were the oldest

child in their family, 10 participants were the youngest child in their family, and two participants were middle children. One participant was a twin.

Ten of the participants were pursuing undergraduate degrees and seven participants were involved in graduate studies. Four participants worked at full-time careers which included a variety of occupations, social worker, firefighter/paramedic, teacher, bank manager.

Procedure

If a potential participant responded to an announcement or campus flyer, he/she contacted the interviewer by phone. Potential participants referred to the interviewer by other participants were contacted by phone by the interviewer. Upon contact, all potential participants were told of the nature and focus of the study and how it would be conducted. If the potential participant made the decision to participate and met the criteria for inclusion, the interviewer and the interviewee agreed upon a mutually acceptable time and location to conduct the interview. An effort was made to balance the sample by gender and to include respondents of more than one race.

Upon meeting for the interview, the participants received more detailed information about the purpose of the study and a written informed consent form for participation in the study. If consent was obtained, two copies of the form were signed, one of which was retained by the participant and the other retained by the researcher and kept in a locked file cabinet. The participants were given specific information prior to beginning the actual interview. The information included a request for permission to tape the interview with assurance that real names would not be used in writing the report. General guidelines were given explaining that the respondents should feel free to express

any thoughts or feelings they might have, that the researcher was not looking for "right" answers, and that the researcher wanted to understand the experience of parental divorce from the unique perspective of the respondent.

In-depth interviews were chosen as the specific method of inquiry for a number of reasons. According to Taylor (1994), when there are time constraints, research interests are clear and the researcher chooses to focus on personal human experience, in-depth interviews may be seen as a wise choice for data collection. The interviews were planned to last from 1 to 2 hours. An interview guide was constructed (see Appendix C) beginning with a broad open-ended question and appropriate prompts (McCracken, 1988). The guide progressed towards final and more specific questions. The taped interviews were transcribed word for word.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis involves a commitment of time and intense familiarity with the data. Data must become a part of the researcher's life. Van Manen (1990) explained that the "purpose of phenomenological reflection is to try to grasp the essential meaning of something" (p. 77) and that this could be both easy and difficult. He wrote that insight into the heart of a phenomenon "involves a process of reflectively appropriating, of clarifying, and of making explicit the structure of meaning of the lived experience" (p. 77). Weiss, in his book Learning from Strangers (1994), speaks of several approaches that qualitative researchers may use to interpret, clarify, and organize the meaning of a particular experience. For this study, Weiss's issue-focused analysis was used, which is a method of describing what has been learned from all respondents about particular issues, events, or processes (Weiss, 1994). Within the issue-focused approach

there are four distinct analytic processes. They are: (a) coding, through which the researcher looks for key words in the participants' responses from interview to interview; (b) sorting, or making files or excerpts from interviews with commonalities or in a common category; (c) local integration, or a way of summarizing, then organizing and integrating the files into each section of the study; and, (d) inclusive integration, which paints an overall picture by weaving areas of analysis into a coherent story (Weiss, 1994). Each of these processes was a part of the analysis data from this study.

For the current study, participants were recruited and interviewed as explained. Upon completion of each interview, the interview tape was given to a transcriptionist to be transcribed. After receiving a typed a copy of each interview, the researcher read and reread the copy reflecting on the content of each interview. After the first three interviews had been read several times, the researcher began to code the participant's responses according to common ideas, key words or phrases, similar experiences.

Each coded interview was copied onto colored paper. Each study participant was assigned a different color paper and a swatch of that colored paper was attached to the individual consent forms of each participant and returned to a locked file. The interviews, now on the colored paper, were cut apart according to the codes and placed in separate file folders. The researcher then read the contents of each folder many times in order to become very familiar with the responses of each participant and to think about each response in regards to how they were similar to or different from each other. Specific themes that emerged from the data were recorded. After studying each theme and integrating the information in each theme, the researcher then arranged data, usually in the form of participant quotes, so that an overall picture or story could be related.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

The 21 young adult children of divorce who participated in this study saw childhood parental divorce as a defining occurrence in their lives. Each individual interpreted his/her divorce experience and applied the "truths" learned from that experience in unique ways. Although being an adult child of divorce was the primary criterion for inclusion in the present study, the lives of the participants were complex and diverse and often the remarriage of one or both parents was experienced as being as stressful as the divorce process itself.

When asked to define divorce in the context of their own personal experiences, respondents gave a variety of definitions. Many respondents used phrases like "living separate lives," "a marriage dissolved legally," and "when your parents are no longer married." Yet others gave answers like Lee, "What divorce means to me, I think it's probably the last point where there's no hope at all and the end of the relationship." Caryn said, "It means bad and good; I think that a lot of times divorce is a good thing for certain people. A lot of times it can be a bad thing. Happiness and sadness, a lot of sadness like a death almost. "Penny responded, "divorce is the breaking of the vows that you take so . . . I guess I just see it as giving in, giving up. . . ." Rick stated, "Divorce . . . is like my family just being torn apart. . . ."

The respondents also had a variety of reactions to their parents' separation. Adam said, "I was three-years-old and I still, to this day, vividly remember. It's kind of one of those first real vivid memories that I do have of when they brought me in and told me. I don't know how long I cried. . . ." Scott had a similar response:

> I remember the day my dad moved out, I remember just crying and crying and crying and crying and crying and him trying to let me know that he would continue to be there, just not in the house, and me not really understanding that at all. That actually is one of my earlier vivid memories.

Brooke who was only two-years-old at the time of her parents' separation, remembered the feeling that she had when her mother took her and her sister from their beds, still in their pajamas, and left their home. Brooke said, "I remember feeling scared when we left. I still, to this day remember that feeling, being afraid." Ann, who was 3, when her parents divorced, responded in a somewhat different way:

> I had temper tantrums . . . I was a very hard headed and stubborn person, but it was enhanced by the fact . . . that Dad wasn't around. Mom said, she said I was a little more angry, harder to calm down and I went through a phase as any child would of having imaginary friends except that I had five imaginary friends.

Terri had a difficult time partially because of the time when her dad left the home. Terri recalled the night her father left:

> My sister was 8 and I was 4 and when they divorced . . . I really wasn't told what was going on . . . my Dad packed up on Christmas Eve and left and so I didn't understand why . . . I felt like it was my fault because . . . I wanted this little white pony . . . a rocking horse pony . . . my Mom kept saying that I was too old for it . .

> . my Dad . . . bought it and that just started the argument . . . I thought it was my fault.

Nita, who was 10 years old at the time of her parents' divorce, had memories of a conversation she overheard:

> I remember my bedroom was right beside the living room and I remember waking up one morning and I could hear them talking in the living room and I remember laying there almost crying because I could hear them talking about getting a divorce and, of course, I knew what that meant.

Hal, whose mother overdosed when his parents separated, tried to reverse roles with his parents. Hal said, "We kind of turned it into a reversal of roles . . . I think me and my brother took care of our parents in a lot of ways . . . dealing with it with a lot of humor . . . didn't really talk or anything that much."

Some respondents had no memory of their feelings or immediate response to their parents' separation or divorce. Each respondent dealt with his/her memories and even though the responses were very diverse, the overall stories did overlap and clear, consistent, themes did emerge. There were seven major themes that emerged from the data.

After brief descriptions of the interviewer's perceptions of each of the 21 individuals who participated in the study, each of the emergent themes will be examined thoroughly. Most of the identifiable demographic information has been omitted and the names of the participants have been changed for their protection. Passages from the interviews are quoted extensively to illustrate the information.

Perceptions of Individuals

The names of the participants have been substituted with fictional names. Major identifying characteristics have also been omitted to protect the identity of the participants.

Adam. Adam was a soft-spoken young man. He was obviously very intelligent and coupled with that intelligence was a very caring, compassionate nature. Although he lived with his father until he was 12 years old, he described a very close relationship with his mother. He was adamant about being cautious in regards to marriage and very determined to be devoted as a father. Adam is 22 years old and is a student in medical school. He has a younger sister.

Ann. Ann is a soft spoken, but lively woman. She answered each question in the interview thoroughly, but there still seemed to be some mystery about her feelings on several issues. She is bright, articulate, and creative. She had a positive attitude about what she had learned in her past role as a wife in a marriage that took place soon after she completed high school. She seemed resilient about her future role as a wife and mother. Ann is 23 years old and is in graduate school. She is an only child.

Brooke. Brooke is a very straightforward, gregarious woman. She gives the impression of being able to take care of herself well; yet, she spoke of a great fear of having children–not just a physical fear, but of her difficulty in thinking about bringing a child into the world who may have to confront the issues with which she has been faced. Divorce has played a major role in how she sees herself as a mother. Although she is in her second marriage, she is quick to point out that she learned a lot about making her second marriage better through the difficulties of her first. Brooke seems strong and

determined to make this marriage work. Brooke is 26 years old, an undergraduate student in Family Studies, works part-time, and has one older sister.

Caryn. Caryn was a bright, articulate, professional woman. She spoke candidly of her need to be in control in relationships and how she had tried to overcome this to some degree. She mentioned her current relationship and the good feelings she had about it because it was based on equality. She spoke of her close relationship with her sister and how she had always been very protective of her sister even though they are now both adults. Caryn is 27 years old and works full-time in banking. She is the oldest of two sisters.

Debra. Debra was a quiet interviewee. She and her older sister were reared primarily by her father; however, she did visit her mother regularly. She emphasized how fortunate she was to have two stepparents that she loved and with whom she enjoyed spending time. She was particularly close to her stepmother whom she considered her mother for many years. She knew that her parents had married young and she had deliberately stayed single until she completed her college education and worked several years. She had recently married at age 27. She is an elementary school teacher.

Erica. Erica was a very outgoing, animated interviewee. She was very candid as she talked about the many divorces and marriages in their family. She spoke of feeling somewhat isolated even, to some degree, from her own husband and son; she attributed this feeling to continuously having to cope with being hurt emotionally and sometimes physically. She spoke with intensity about keeping her marriage healthy primarily for the protection of her son. Erica is 27 years old. She is an undergraduate student in Child

Development. Although she has a half brother to whom she is close, she is the only child of her biological parents.

Farah. Farah was very proud of her parents' ability to get along with each other in the years following their divorce. She spoke with difficulty about the custody battle that took place some eight years after her parent's divorce. One of her most vivid recollections of her childhood was of the judgmental attitudes of church members concerning divorce, and she spoke with candor about how these attitudes had colored her feelings about religion. She was a quiet, almost shy woman with very intense feelings. She recently married and is 28 years old. She is in graduate school and she has a younger sister.

Ginny. Ginny was one of the youngest interviewees. She had a very sunny disposition and was quick to smile. Although she answered all of the questions she was asked, she seemed a little guarded in her responses, even commenting that she did not want to make her mom look bad. She seemed genuinely pleased with her mother's recent marriage. Ginny is 20 years old, an undergraduate studying Early Childhood Education. She has an older sister.

Hal. Hal was open and very talkative. He answered questions with remarkable directness. He seemed sincerely interested in the experiences of other children of divorce and planned to do some research of his own in this area. He spoke of his role as peacemaker in his family, and it was easy to envision him in that role. He was very straightforward about his fear of spousal commitment, but it was obvious that he spends much time in thought in regards to the subject of marriage and family. Hal is 25 years old, has a Master's degree, and works full-time as a social worker. He has an older brother.

Ian. Ian was a quiet, seemingly even-tempered, practical interviewee. He related memories of being embarrassed by his parents' divorce, but realizing, long before it happened, that it was inevitable. He was insightful about problems in his own marriage and how they were linked to his parents' divorce. He mentioned several times how often he thought of his parents' difficulties and how determined he was to have a successful marriage and be a good father to his young daughter. Ian attended college but did not complete his degree. He is 29 years old and works full-time as a firefighter and paramedic. He is a middle child. He has an older sister and a younger sister.

Jessica. Jessica was a lively, enthusiastic, busy woman. she seemed to cherish her close relationship with her older sister and spoke lovingly of the pride they have in their three-year-old half sister. She spoke with candor particularly about her great need for exposure to truly healthy role models modeling male/female relationships. Jessica is 21 years old and is an undergraduate student.

Kaitlin. Kaitlin was bright and impulsive. Her colorful descriptions of childhood temper tantrums and the rage she felt through her adolescent years were very direct. Her ability to be confrontational on issues that were unclear to her as a young child was rather unusual. There seemed to be remnants of anger still present in her personality. Kaitlin is 21 years old and is an undergraduate nursing student. She is the only child of her biological parents.

Lee. Lee was an intense individual. He spoke fondly of an athletic background and of the support he and his brother received from his mother and stepfather. He described a conflictual situation with his father concerning how his stepbrothers and stepsisters were being reared. Lee had a more conservative view of parenting than his

father did which is somewhat unusual. He described himself as competitive and he seemed very socially active. Lee is 22 years old and is an undergraduate majoring in Business. He has an older brother.

Marty. Marty was a very pensive respondent. It was obvious that he had spent a lot of time in thought concerning his parents' divorce and the ramifications of the divorce. He had a calm and easy-going nature; however, he was quick to mention his most difficult dilemmas, first of loyalty to each parent, then to understanding his older brother's response to his parents' divorce about even dating relationships. Marty is 23 and a graduate student in Family studies.

Nita. Nita was an upbeat, well-spoken respondent. She has a twin brother and stated that although they are close now, as children, they "fought like cats and dogs." She was a self-described "daddy's girl." Her family relationships were very strong and her maturity in talking about her experience was striking. Nita is 23 years old, a teacher, and in graduate school. Other than her twin, she has no other biological siblings.

Penny. Penny seemed sad and even though she spoke of being happy, there seemed to be a reticence in her smile. She spoke candidly of her rebellious teenage years and of her difficulty with intimate relationships. She was a mature 21 year old who had drawn many conclusions from her experience. Penny is an undergraduate student. She has two younger brothers.

Rick. Rick was an athletic man who had an unusually strong, and sincere concern for his younger brothers and sisters. He was outgoing and talkative, yet there seemed to be a gentleness in his attitude and nature. Rick is determined to set a good example and to approach marriage and fatherhood prepared to be successful. He was the youngest

participant having just had his 20th birthday. He is an undergraduate student in Child and Family Studies. He is the oldest child in his family.

Scott. Scott was a very direct, intelligent participant. He spoke of how he idolized his older brother and how close they have remained now that they are both adults. He is married to a woman whose parents remained married, and Scott has thought quite a lot about the differences in their perspectives on marriage and the roots of those differences. Scott is also quick to point out the importance of the presence of God in his marriage. He is 25 years old, works part time and is in graduate school.

Terri. Although Terri had a pleasant, somewhat happy attitude, there was an obvious deep sadness that ran through her divorce experience. Terri had received counseling for the abuse she suffered as a child, but a basic difficulty with intimate relationships remained. She spoke openly of her love of children, but marriage was not a relationship she could envision. Terri is 20 years old and is majoring in Elementary Education. She works in a daycare center and she has an older sister.

Valecia. Valecia was a cheerful participant who spoke fondly of both of her parents. Even though she described her parents' divorce as good, she reflected on the undertones of bitterness that she did not understand as a child. She planned to marry at some point, but believed that couples should spend years together before marrying. Valecia is 22 years old, is a graduate student in Child Development, and has an older sister.

Will. Will was a humorous, talkative man. He described himself as being somewhat impulsive and strong-willed. Although his parents had been divorced for 11 years, he was still wrestling with the fact that he had never had the reasons for the divorce

explained. He was adamant about helping children understand what was happening during a divorce. Will is 21 and a Psychology major. He has an older sister and a younger sister.

Retrospective Perceptions of Parents' Relationships with Each Other: Parental Divorce as a Shock, Versus Resignation or Relief

As the young adult respondents reflected on their parents' early marital relationship, they recalled varied experiences. These experiences present young adult children of divorce with challenges. Almost half (8) of the respondents viewed their parents as having a relatively happy marriage before divorce. Often they were shocked by their parents' separation. Shock was the response voiced most often by the study participants. Other respondents knew, because of the continuous fighting between their parents, that separation was inevitable. Some participants learned of their parents' discontent by overhearing conversations or discovering evidence of extramarital affairs. Although many of the participants perceived their parents' marriage as happy prior to the separation, 17 reported that they made no attempt to get their parents to reconcile after separation.

Rick, who was six-years-old when his parents divorced, was intense and specific about his parents' relationship before the divorce.

> Perfect! That's why I was like, Gosh!! I mean, I remember us going to the mall, like taking pictures together, doing all types of things together, and anywhere he went, she went, or I would go and when my brother came into the world, it was the same, you know. It was a total . . . she would cook, he would take us out, put us in his lap, drive the car . . . It was perfect and all of a sudden BOOM!

Nita, for example, said:

> I always remember them being really close and being fun and we come from a family that's a very touchy family, and very, you know, we love to hug and sit on laps and stuff like that and my whole family's like that, aunts, uncles, cousins, everybody . . . we like to go out and have a good time, we would always go to friends or cousins or aunts and uncles houses and you know have Christmas parties and stuff like that so I remember it being a very positive relationship, I don't ever recall them getting in an argument in front of me, or I mean, I'm sure they did from time to time but it wasn't so severe that it stuck in my memory. So I remember it being a very positive relationship.

Although some witnessed parental fighting, the respondents most often perceived their parents as being in a happy marriage before the divorce. Brooke, who was just two years old when her parents divorced, reflected on vague memories, pictures, and things she had been told. She stated:

> I apparently was a real happy baby. And we lived in a nice house, and daddy was real comfortable with his job and even when he came home every night and had been drinking, the drinking wasn't bad then . . . my mother was happy there. She said it was real comfortable and an environment where people were most friendly. She felt like she was fitting in and it was just a really good time.

Other respondents took an almost philosophical attitude. (Scott) ". . . when I look back at it now, I feel like they got along well . . . I guess they're very different, but they always seemed to be pretty happy around one another," (Valecia) "I think it was a strong

relationship for a certain time period, obviously in the end it wasn't a strong relationship or it wouldn't have. . . ."

Some of the respondents had little memory of their parents relationship "I remember doing a few things together, but I don't really remember how their relationship was. I remember some fights, but I don't really have any recollection of any other time," Farah stated. Debra, even though she was five years old at the time of her parents divorce, said, "No, I have no memory at all."

Still other respondents remembered the fighting and embarrassment of their parents early relationship. Hal for example, said:

> I guess a lot of my remembrance from childhood is of them fighting, extreme fighting . . . yelling screaming, throwing things . . . I remember being up with my brother in our room and hearing them fight and knowing that it was going to happen and knowing this was the way it was going to be. . . I knew it was very embarrassing when my friends would come over . . . I guess I thought that other families fought a lot . . . I didn't think they did as bad as they did because they were really unhappy with each other."

Other respondents stated: (Ian) "Oh, it was quite obvious that they just didn't get along . . . they couldn't agree on, you know, the color of the whatever . . . It was painfully obvious for a long period of time" (Penny) "I just remember my Mom was . . . real emotional, you know she cried a lot . . . they still had a lot of growing up to do . . . they just couldn't communicate with each other. . . ."

Although many respondents viewed their parents as being in a happy relationship before the separation and divorce, the majority of respondents (17) made no attempt to

get their parents to reconcile. (Valecia) I'm glad they were married therefore, I wouldn't exist . . . but, I've never desired for my parents to be married. I think that they're two different people . . . ." (Scott) "No. I think even when I was a young child, when I saw them fight, I thought, I didn't want to see that if that's the way it was going to be, I didn't want to see that." (Marty) "I saw how lonely she (my mom) was at times, and I thought . . . it would be great if Dad would come back, but in the back of my mind . . . I knew that probably wasn't going to happen." (Ian) ". . . it was always peaceful at home when they weren't together, so I kind of felt like that was best for us."

Several respondents were adamant in their brief responses. (Ann) "Oh, no. I didn't even think about it;" (Erica) "Lord no!! No, no, no;" (Ginny) "No, not really . . . I knew how they worked with each other, like at that time, and I just didn't even try." One respondent fantasized about the reconciliation of her parents after her mother had remarried. (Kaitlin) "Oh, I thought about it constantly, especially after I hit age ten and didn't like either one of them, I thought what would happen if they had stayed together, you know, what could happen if I could get them back together 'cause at this point I really don't like my stepdad at all.

Only one respondent followed through on his fantasies of reconciliation for his parents.

> (Hal) I remember making, they had their sixteenth wedding anniversary, I think that's how long they were married, I remember making them a little construction paper cake . . . and sixteen candles and trying to make it all special. I didn't realize what I was doing but, looking back on it, I was trying to make things cool

and content . . . I guess I was just trying to keep the peace, you know, and trying to experience the calm.

Current Perception of Parents' Relationship: Hostility, Civility, or Cordiality

Respondents perceived their parents' current relationship with each other in several ways. Some respondents saw their parents as being friendly towards each other, but with some degree of superficiality. Some saw their parents as genuinely cordial to each other, talking on the phone and remembering birthdays and holidays. Other respondents spoke of the hostility that remains in their parents' relationship and often, if there was no visible hostility, there was a cold, uncomfortable feeling if their parents interacted. Several respondents said emphatically that their parents' relationship was nonexistent. Most of the participants did not see their parents as good role models for marriage or parenthood.

Erica spoke of the obvious superficiality in her parents' relationship. (Erica) "My mom is friendly when they are forced to be together, like at my graduation . . . they will speak casually, but that is it. There is no depth of conversation." (Lee) ". . . at my brother's wedding, . . . at the rehearsal dinner my stepdad approached my dad and congratulated him . . . and then very casually my mother walked up and told my dad congratulations and I think those were the only words spoken."

Other respondents spoke of a genuinely cordial relationship. (Jessica) ". . .it's wonderful, they call each other on their birthdays . . . My father still says she's the prettiest thing . . . he tells his friends, man, I've got a foxy ex-wife." (Scott) "The way I see it now they should have stayed friends and never gotten married in the first place . . .

they are just very different people . . . basically good people and they get along very well now and have for years." (Ann) "They are total opposites, but it is really weird, they are constantly inviting my mom to come stay at their house in Georgia . . . and when they come through Knoxville they will come see my mom and they will come by to see me." Nita described her parents relationship before her father remarried.

> . . . they used to be very good friends, I mean we would all go to parties together and hang out and you know, have good times together, I mean my mom would throw us a birthday party and my dad would come . . . but when my dad got remarried, his new wife didn't think that was the norm for a divorced couple to still be so close.

Valecia also described a close current relationship between her parents:

> . . . a friend of my mom's needed a favor from my Dad . . . so my Mom called my Dad to help out her friend and my Dad did this . . . favor because it was his ex-wife's friend's problem. And so, they have a relationship so that they can call each other if they need to and this gets very twisted, but my Dad is currently going through a divorce . . . he went over to Mom's house and talked to her about it and he kind of depended on her.

Some of the respondents characterized their parents' current relationship as hostile or uncomfortable. Terri said, "they (my parents) don't talk. Well, okay. They talk through my Dad's secretary. It's never a one-on-one communication with my Mom or my Dad . . . they play a lot against each other through my sister and me." (Debra) "(My parents are) not cordial at all . . . once my dad got remarried, it was mainly my stepmom

and mom who did the communicating. So there was not very much communication at all between my dad and my mom."

There were also respondents whose parents had no current interaction. (Caryn) "There is no relationship . . . it's probably been ten years since they talked, but it could have been longer than that. Hal said, in regards to his parents' relationship, "It's . . . there's not one . . . it's just null and void . . . they can talk if they have to . . . but, otherwise, they don't communicate. Not at all!!" Often such a breach or cut-off of interaction is reflective of unresolved hostility and these respondents seemed to think that there was much unresolved hostility in their parents' relationship.

Perceptions of Marriage and Parenthood: Survivors with Few Models

The majority of the young adult children of divorce who were interviewed had no positive role model for a marital relationship. In fact, many of the respondents saw their parents' relationship as a negative model.

> (Marty) "I'm very worried at times about getting married because of what could happen as far as a divorce and I don't want that to happen at all, so much so, that I would rather remain single . . . what I experienced, as good a divorce as it was in a sense, I still know that it was hard.

Debra felt that her parents married when they were too young. She said, "I probably actually saw the influences before I got married . . . because it made me not want to get married very young . . . it made me want to finish college and work a few years before I got married."

Valecia had similar thoughts: "I will not rush into a marriage and I feel at twenty-two . . . I'm too young to get married and I think it's because my parents married around that age and look what happened to them."

Ian described his feelings: "Everyday, I have to take time to step back and think–how did my father react–how am I going to react to this situation? He added that sometimes his wife would accuse him of acting like his dad to which he answered, "No, I'm not! I'm trying not to!"

Kaitlin said:

> I'm so paranoid about everything, it's hard for me to trust people that I date and if they do something that breaks my trust, it's really hard for me to forgive them . . . I know that it's going to be tough for me to ever get married because I don't have a positive relationship role model anywhere!

Rick felt that the answer for him was in planning. "I don't think they really knew what they wanted when they got married . . . they looked like a good couple and loved each other, but . . . marriage is way more than that." Penny saw more specific characteristics that she did not want to emulate: ". . . my Mom has a tendency to nag a lot . . . she just runs it into the ground if something's bothering her . . . and it drives me crazy and she's done it . . . with my father and I think it drove him crazy." Hal gave a statement that summarized what he learned from his experience. "I think it really taught me that to really work on yourself before you, I want to be totally cool with me, who I am, before I get involved with someone else . . . it definitely has impacted, I'm very scared of commitment, extremely afraid of commitment."

Adam and Nita made similar statements:

(Adam) I see myself getting married and not getting divorced, making sure, to the best of my ability, that the person that I marry is who I want to stay with for the rest of my life. I want to try to be aware of my wife's needs and think more about her than my Dad did about my Mom. (Nita) I think if anything it's made me more cautious and looking for, you know, what I think is going to be the perfect one for me . . . I guess my standards are really high . . . I'm very picky and I'm concerned about what their beliefs are about marriage and if they take it seriously . . . I look at marriage, to this day I still think it should be forever, I think it should be a lifetime commitment no matter what and I look for that in the guy I'm gonna marry.

Scott confessed that he could not model his spousal behavior after his father "because I don't remember him being a husband, to tell you the truth, so I'm kind of making it up as I go, just dealing with things in my own way." On the other hand, Terri stated that she could not envision herself in a marital relationship, "I see a man coming into my life and I don't even see him staying around . . . I honestly see myself either having kids and then passing away at a young age and leaving them with their daddy or, I see myself raising my kids on my own."

In addition to having no positive marital model, the majority of the young adult children of divorce interviewed saw one or both of their parents as modeling negative parental behavior. Although the young adults were very appreciative of the efforts their parents made to care for them as they reflected on their upbringing they saw so many problems and situations not handled in a positive way.

Marty, for example, said:

> . . . when I think of this it just sounds horrible, but . . . it's what I've got. I look at it as I know what not to do. From my father . . . I've kind of got the model, the bad model to follow . . . I know that he wasn't very involved in my life as a child and I know that I . . . want to do that with my children. I longed for being in that relationship of going out and throwing the ball and things like . . . going to games and seeing them play, or going to . . . ballets with my daughter, just being there for my child.

Kaitlin had similar thoughts:

> I want to be the type of mother that is always there at the ball games, 'cause I did a lot of stuff in high school, was a cheerleader, and I did a lot of school activities, I graduated like 20th in my class and stuff, mom was never there for anything for me . . . it's kind of like I had to really work to get her attention . . . so I decided that I would always be there for my kids.

Rick felt that, because his father was uninvolved, he had to, in a sense, be a father to himself. "It (the divorce) helped me to realize and to see the man's role in a family as being . . . the authority . . . the father figure is like the strong figure in the family and that is something that a kid needs. And when that figure is taken away, the kid has to find someone else . . . most of the time . . . I had to play that role myself."

Ian, who has a daughter, recalled a time when he and his wife separated. He remembered spending mostly weekends with his dad and how important those times were to him. (Ian) "I make it a real effort to try to do that (pick his daughter up) and spend as much time with her as I can. Because there were times that I would have to go to school

and come home and there was nobody there . . . I try to do much more than my parents did."

Penny, who had two younger brothers, spoke of the struggles her mother seemed to have in being a parent:

> I think I won't be as lenient as my Mom with me. I think it was hard on her because she probably was trying to please us at the same time . . . and discipline us because I think she didn't want to be seen as the bad person . . . so she was easier on us than I thought she should have been because I got away with murder.

Hal, although he was very fearful of a marital commitment, felt that being aware of his parents' mistakes in rearing him and his brother helped him lay a solid foundation for being a good father. Hal said:

> I think I definitely learned from my parents' mistakes and I think I'd be a great dad. I think I'm actually more comfortable with being a dad than with being a husband . . . I could see myself, like if I didn't find that person, I could adopt and be very comfortable being a dad and committing to a child.

Lee remembered having fun with his dad, but as an adult realized that he would have had more respect for his father if he had not been "just the fun guy, be also the dad as well." In addition, Lee stated that if he became a father he would "probably be a little more responsible . . . more of a parent rather than just a friend."

Terri focused on honesty and love. "I hope that I can be honest with my kids about everything that happens in my life and theirs . . . I want them to know . . . my Mom

says there's no such thing as unconditional love . . . so I want to love my kids unconditionally, I guess is basically the bottom line."

Will focused on parents keeping their promises to their children. He remembered his dad saying, "I'm going to come and get you." He also recalled, ". . . Just looking out the window . . . he would never show up . . . he would just lie . . . and that just kind of messed up our relationship now, you know." Will has little to do with his father now.

With different views, Nita and Scott saw their parental role models as positive. Nita, who is very close to her mother, believed that the divorce had brought her and her mother closer. In the early relationship she said:

> Well, I think if anything it's gonna make me a better mother . . . my mom has been such a positive person in my life and the way she handles things, I mean she . . . didn't get mad at me for getting mad at her, she just let it go and you know, we talked about it and I said to her, I can't believe I ever blamed you . . . we've had a very open relationship my whole life and so I think because of her openness to me and her positive attitude, that's the way I'm gonna be with my children.

Scott felt that, because his father was not in the home, he could play a more relaxed role by being somewhat free of the day-to-day discipline that he and his brother needed. Scott related his feelings:

> I'm going to try to be everything my dad was because I feel like, even though he wasn't there in the house with us, he was a super dad because he really was always around. I mean I don't think I played a single basketball game that he wasn't there or football or baseball for that matter . . . I guess not being in the

house gave him the opportunity and the leniency because he wasn't the disciplinarian, gave him the opportunity to be more of a friend and do those "guy" things.

Debra, whose parents divorced when she was five-years-old and, at age six, she was placed in the primary custody of her father, saw her stepmother and father as good role models. "Because, even though they divorced, they remarried . . . within a few years and I still felt like we had a family unit, a consistent family unit. And even though it wasn't my biological mother, there was a mother there."

Perceptions of Single-Parent Families: Appreciation, Loss, and Anger

Living in single-parent families yielded a variety of experiences for these young adult children of divorce. Although many of the participants had both happy and sad memories, each one shared those that were most memorable and there appeared to be two distinctly different perceptions--happy and rather normal, or sad. Participants feelings, in regards to their mothers during the single-parenting period, ranged from anger and resentment to pity and confusion. A few respondents had protective feelings towards their mothers and made a special effort to "be good".

In regards to fathers, participants valued time spent with their dads. However, some had an underlying feeling of insecurity in their relationship with their father. Many of the participants experienced the same emotions with their fathers that they had, usually to a lesser degree, with their mothers--anger, resentment, and pity. One other emotion was specific to fathers, the feeling of betrayal.

Several respondents saw their situation as normal fluctuations in the family temperament. Adam, for example, said: "I remember having a good time and being pretty

happy, . . . but I did miss my mother and wanted to see her more than I did . . . I was just a kid and I was just happy and that was my situation and I guess I was going to do the best I could with it." Lee responded similarly: ". . . we lived above my grandmother, so I'd have to say that since I was so young when I first started, it was kind of like I didn't know any different . . . it was just kind of like this is the way this is supposed to be so nothing's wrong with the situation."

Marty spoke of the fact that his mother did her best to down play the divorce and often people would not know that his parents were divorced.

"My Mom did a really good job . . . she always made sure that we had, you know, like the clothes that were in style, the shoes that you needed to have, you know, she always made sure that we would fit in as much as possible and as much as she was capable of doing."

Valecia had similar memories. She spoke of living in a large house with her mother and of living a comfortable life.

> I really don't think I was ever deprived of anything. I mean I was always well-dressed, well-taken care of, well-fed, and with my Mother, and my Father, we always traveled . . . I guess we were nice and comfortable.

Hal worded his response in a little different way, but basically came to the same conclusion:

> My Mom did a very good job raising me . . . I am very well-educated, I made great grades in school, did not get in a lot of trouble . . . my Mom was in my business to see what I was doing, kicking my butt, and would tell me what was right from wrong and what she expected from me.

Ginny spoke of the busy lives she and her sister lived and the involvement that her mother had in their lives. "We're always on the go . . . usually we have, like, a bunch of activities, like school . . . after school, outside cheerleading or basketball . . . she was part of that . . . helped out with that."

Brooke, although she had some problems with other areas in her upbringing, admired the efforts and spirit of her mother as she reared her and her sister:

> . . . she always struggled and child support was always late and it was never enough . . . but we were always dressed perfect, our hair was done, we had bows. My mother did not want anyone to feel sorry for her . . . she just stood right up and stood strong and I have . . . so much respect for her for that and how hard she worked.

For a few of the respondents, the experience of living with a single-parent was very sad. Some tried to pull from their experience lessons they had learned as a direct result of living through this experience.

Terri, who started out as a four year old in the custody of her mother, was given to her father at age six. She lived with her father, a respected professional, for about a year. She has tried to repress the memories of that year but was able to share a few of her memories:

> I vaguely remember some things . . . the drugs, the women and the partying, but . . . I don't remember being clean . . . I remember one time going to school in my pajamas. I remember my teacher actually sitting me down and brushing my hair and trying to make me have a little self-confidence about myself . . . it was an emotional roller coaster . . . I probably did give my Dad a hard time with my

> school work, but he was extremely violent . . . abusive emotionally, mentally, and physically. I can't remember specifics, but I do remember not having any toys or seeing my sister . . . she was really the one closest to me at that time . . . who really supported me, emotionally as a . . . basically a baby . . . because obviously my Mom didn't want to have anything to do with me. . . .

Terri's mother eventually decided to take back custody of her after an incident concerning an illness. "I was in the first grade . . . my Mom decided finally that she did want to take me back [because] whenever I got sick, my Dad wouldn't take me to the hospital and my head was full of lice so they had to like cut my hair completely off." Terri shared some further insights about being returned to her mother's custody:

> I don't know if I was happy or not to go with her . . . I was relieved because I knew that I'd be taken care of physically, but I knew emotionally that I wouldn't be taken care of. But I think it was more of . . . being with somebody who was clean-cut.

Rick, who often stayed with his great-grandmother, spoke of feeling more responsible because he was the oldest child:

> It was wild because I saw her struggling, trying to go to school and get extra jobs because the bills had to be paid and mostly not seeing her around a lot . . . it helped me to be more responsible because I was the oldest, but I could see my brother and sister needing her around.

Penny's sadness was based not in being economically deprived or in violence, but in the damage done to her self-esteem. ". . . growing up she (my mother) always told me that I was really spoiled and that I was really self-centered . . . my brothers were angels,

they still are . . . and I was always compared to them . . . towards the end of high school, I just stopped caring."

Although most young adults clearly loved their mothers through the early years of the divorce process, there was also a clear indication of feelings of anger, resentment, pity, and confusion in regards to their feelings towards their mothers during this period.

Terri, who had no understanding of why her father was no longer in the home shared her feelings. "I wanted to be with my Daddy and so she (my mother) packed my bags when I was six years old and left me there for a year, didn't talk to me or anything. I have a lot of . . . anger toward her because she took my Daddy away . . . that's the most traumatic winter of my life."

Kaitlin, at the curious age of ten, discovered love letters written by her stepfather to her mother while her parents were still married. She confronted her mother about the contents of the letters and was not satisfied with her mother's explanation.

> So then after that, I was just angry at her, I was like, how can you do this . . . and that's when my whole life went downhill for like the next eight years. I was very rebellious, I was very mean, had a temper like crazy. . . .

Erica expressed anger and resentment towards her mother for somewhat different reasons:

> I guess toward my mom, at times maybe I felt resentment because we were poor. We were very poor, and my father had money, lots of money. Well, what I perceived as a child and I guess I resented the fact that I did without a lot of things that I saw him giving to his other kids. And I kind of took that out on my mom because she was there, not so much that she did anything wrong, but just because she was there.

Lee expressed feelings that are seen as typical in a divorce situation when the mother has custody and the father has weekend visitation:

> . . . so Dad was like the fun guy . . . we were always doing fun things 'cause we're only with each other for a short period of time so I always kind of resented my mother a little bit 'cause she was always the one, oh you have to go to school, you have to do your chores, your homework, . . . punishments, and so basically growing up, probably until I was in high school, I pretty much resented my mom. . . .

Nita blamed her mother because her father moved out and she questioned her often:

> I would talk to her . . . well, why did you make him move out? . . . I was very sad and I think because my dad and I were so close . . . to this day, I still sleep with . . . a little stuffed bunny . . . I think he gave it to me right at the time of the divorce, like the Easter, around that time . . . I think I still sleep with it because of the attachment, because I felt like I needed something to keep me with him . . . I remember being very sad and hurt . . . I was very mad at her because I didn't understand why she made him move out.

Valecia's feeling was one of confusion:

> I've always loved my Mother, but in hindsight, I didn't think she was the person then that she is today. She was a very good parent, I don't want to take anything away from her, but . . . I could sense that she was bitter, that she was unhappy and my Dad had a girlfriend who was in our lives when we were growing up and so it could have been jealousy or animosity towards her . . . but I sensed that she was

unhappy and sometimes angry and bitter towards us. I didn't understand . . . why she acted that way, and especially toward the children. . . .

Scott was very straightforward in his feelings towards his mother. Scott said, "Oh, I was pissed at the least, I was very mad at first . . . just didn't know what else to feel but mad and I guess I don't know if I was as upset with my mom because she's who I lived with but I was very angry."

A few respondents had protective feelings towards their mothers. They also felt that their behavior was important and so they tried to "be good," thereby hoping to cause fewer problems.

(Brooke) You want to protect her. I felt like trying to be protective and trying to be good. You wanted to be real good so she wouldn't have to deal with you being bad or anything. So I remember trying to be real good . . . I just remember trying to not upset her.

Marty's feelings were similar:

Mom did a lot of stuff with us . . . both me and my brother . . . she was always there . . . she was primarily at home most of the time with us . . . she would play with us and do things with us, watch TV with us . . . so we were real close with her and to see her upset like that and see her crying a lot made me feel bad . . . so I tried to do what I could . . . maybe I tried to be too good . . . I didn't want to see her cry and yet, and yet I wanted to see my Dad too, so it was kind of like I felt caught.

Some respondents felt worried for their mothers and sometimes tried to think of ways that they could make their lives a little more like the lives of their friends.

(Penny) I guess sometimes I felt sorry for her because she didn't have my Dad there . . . I always thought good things with him because every time I saw him, everything was good, but he wasn't there . . . it wasn't fair that my parents were divorced and I had all these friends that had parents that were together . . . their parents made dinner every night and my Mom was so exhausted by the time she got home . . . when I got old enough, I made dinner for me and my brothers . . . I guess sometimes I would resent having so much responsibility for being my age, you know?

Ian, who was the middle child between two sisters, also had some sympathetic feelings for his mother:

I kind of felt sorry for her because she really didn't have any job skills and she had to get out and start work and everything and I kind of felt like I was the man of the house now, but I couldn't provide for her at nine years old . . . I had really a lot of sympathy for her.

During the same period of time when these young adults remembered the array of feelings that they had for their mothers, they often said that they valued the time spent with their dads and usually enjoyed doing fun things with him.

(Valecia) I really had . . . had a strong attachment to my Father . . . My Father was always very active, always engaged with his sports . . . in game playing and fun activities. He played . . . He spent quality time with us . . . the interactions with my Father were . . . more leisurely and fun.

Kaitlin and Penny had similar feelings: (Kaitlin) ". . . he was the best you know, he was the greatest, he was like a big kid, you know . . . I was daddy's little girl, whatever

I wanted, I got, you know, he spoiled me rotten." (Penny) ". . . every time he came and got us . . . he was always real excited and . . . we always . . . had a good time."

Both Adam and Debra were in the custody of their fathers and their feelings went a little deeper than feelings expressed by some of the other participants. (Adam) "I guess he was kind of like my support person, since he was the person I lived with. He always took good care of me from what I could understand. I think he loved me . . . so my feelings toward him were good." (Debra) ". . . my father always knew everything, my father was right . . . I admired him very much . . . when I realized that very few dads did have the custody that he did . . . I admired him for being willing to do that for us. . . ."

Nita, who described herself as a "daddy's girl" spoke of her feelings being good, but having an underlying insecurity:

> . . . I would say that I became more, I guess kind of more insecure about our relationship and I really wanted to be with him more . . . we're supposed to visit him every other weekend, but I would go over there every weekend, you know, because I wanted to be with him and I think I sought more attention from him.

Some of the participants felt anger, resentment, or betrayal in regards to their father.

> (Caryn) . . . [I felt] a lot of resentment towards him, just because he went on with his life. He had remarried, had 3 stepdaughters, and my father has always been very well off. You know, my mom has always struggled so it has always been, I think that has always been like a major issue with me. And I think that he didn't want to help my mother out because helping us out would help my mother out and she initiated the divorce.

Scott questioned the whole divorce and could never quite make sense of what had happened:

> (Scott) I don't know if betrayed would be the word, but a little bit betrayed, not so much in that he was betraying us because he was always still around . . . I was mad, I just questioned the whole thing . . . because I never remembered seeing them fight ever until they were separated . . . so I didn't understand.

Hal, to some degree, assigned blame to his father for his parents' divorce and felt resentment towards him. (Hal) "I was just going to see him every weekend, but then it got a little more resentful because he was the kind of person that . . . in my opinion . . . at that time he was the person that cheated and did everything that led up to that." Ian also assigned blame to his father and expressed this in anger and sadness for loss of the closeness that they once had. (Ian) "I was kind of angry with him . . . I kind of blamed him for running off and leaving me and we couldn't do the things we had done before . . . we didn't get along for a long period of time."

Brooke, who was two years old at the time of her parents divorce, had hostile feelings towards her father, but she felt like these feelings, although they turned out to be her true feelings as she matured, were, in the beginning, modeling the feelings of other family members.

> Unfortunately, I had a family that talked about my father badly . . . I think that was probably a real bad mistake on everybody's part because they talked about my dad like he was a dog. And he was, but it never allowed me to form my own opinions about my father . . . everybody talked about him, so I just assumed he

was bad. Well, and he was, but I didn't ever get to, I wasn't old enough and didn't have the opportunity to form my own opinion.

One respondent expressed a feeling that is often assumed to be typical; however, in the current study, it was discussed only once. Farah, who shared that the emotional dispositions of her parents seemed to be reversed, with her mother being strong and somewhat stoic and her father being more open and tearful, expressed her feelings towards her father. (Farah) "I felt very sorry for him. I remember feeling so-o-o sad for him because he was going to be alone."

Perceptions of Remarriage: Difficulty, Ambivalence or Acceptance

Of those participants whose parents remarried, there appeared to be two distinctly different perceptions of stepparents. The majority (13) of young adult children of divorce interviewed seemed to have more difficulty with stepmothers than stepfathers. In feelings for stepfathers, six respondents expressed dislike and difficulty with them, and six respondents expressed liking or loving their stepfathers. Participants also recalled their best and worst memories as they grew up. Most often their best memories included recollections of holiday celebrations, vacations which sometimes included extended family members, and special family traditions. Most often the worst memories recalled by participants centered around parental separation and difficulty with parental remarriage.

Brooke, who was somewhat fearful of her father, eventually began to visit him. When asked about how she felt about being in a household with a stepmother, she said:

(Brooke) Horrible! . . . Her one desire was to get pregnant. And I think my father was her sperm bank, I think that is the reason they got married. And she had a

child, and after she had the child, I didn't exist anymore . . . they had a very quiet house . . . a very nice house . . . I didn't feel like I could touch anything or walk around . . . it never felt like home. And my dad never stood up for me, he never stood up for me and I will never forget that!

Hal had similar thoughts; however, his stepmother and dad did not have children together, and he felt like not having children of her own caused a great communication problem between him, his brother and their stepmother.

I didn't like her for a long time. I didn't care for her . . . she didn't have children . . . she didn't know how to react with us and we didn't know how to react with her so we just basically didn't . . . me and my stepmother get along well now because that's what my father wants.

Nita also felt that problems stemmed from the fact that her father and stepmother did not have children together and that her stepmother had never had children.

. . . she's 39 and she doesn't have children and I think that was another issue because she doesn't know what it's like to have children and my brother even told me that he remembers overhearing a conversation between them and she said, you know I'm, not coming into this marriage with any extra baggage, he does have extra baggage and he didn't want to get rid of it . . . he wouldn't shut us out of his life like that . . . she came from a very different family and like I said we were a very close family . . . we like to hug, to hug and touch . . . that was normal for us. When she came in . . . a nineteen year old still hugging and kissing her father . . . she didn't think that was normal . . . that kind of changed, I don't hug

and kiss him as much as I used to . . . she's coming around to understand . . . we've talked and we're both making an effort.

Marty voiced a number of difficulties that he had with his stepmother, but basically described her as a very controlling person.

I don't really like her very much and I never have because she's a very controlling person . . . she was working at the time that they got married . . . she quit as soon as they got married . . . I think a lot of it is because my dad makes pretty good money . . . There's times when my brother and I would send my Dad like Father's Day cards or a birthday card and she would hold it and put it away until after the fact and we would call him . . . did you get your card? He would always say, well, no I didn't . . . and as soon as he would say that, she would always go, Oh, I have it! I just wanted to put it away until the time . . . it always puzzled us . . . why would she do that . . . it was addressed to him . . . She would always try and make me eat everything on my plate . . . growing up . . . I was a very picky eater . . . still am . . . she would make me cry . . . because I wouldn't eat everything . . . she would just get so mad . . . I just did not like her . . . I do what I can, just to get by with her.

Penny resented being disciplined by her stepmother, even though she did like some things about her.

. . . I didn't like her telling me what to do . . . especially when my Mom was the one I was living with so . . . I would come home and I remember telling my Mom . . . she's not my mother, she can't tell me what to do . . . my Mom would be like, yeah, but she's your friend. My Mom was real supportive of it . . . when I

was little, I think I resented her . . . it kind of made me mad that she was with my Dad and not my Mom.

Adam felt some competition with his stepmother. She had no children and he felt that she was, to some degree, jealous because he was in his father's custody and took his time away from her.

I guess I was always a quiet person. I'm not outspoken in most cases. I would come home and maybe I wouldn't say "Hi" or like be an outgoing person, so . . . she would just get mad at me and say that I was being mean to her. I'm just a little kid. I'm not trying to be mean to you. I'm just in the situation that I'm in . . . like I said, I think she was insecure and jealous . . . I was always mad at my dad for marrying her . . . she just wasn't nice.

Erica interpreted her relationship with her stepmother as a partial source for the feelings of inferiority that she developed during adolescence.

At first I thought she was really nice . . . she is going to take me . . . to buy me clothes . . . to dress me up . . . then the older I got, I started to feel inadequate because she did these things . . . I am not good enough the way I am. She was always really good at telling me what her children had done and I was an honor student in school . . . basically I was the American girl . . . I did the cheerleading. I did the drama club, I did the beta club. And I think I did a lot of it just trying to please, not because I was interested . . . just because I thought I had to fit . . . now that I am older, I see her as being self-centered, insecure, and manipulative. Well actually, you know that wicked witch . . .

Jessica described her relationship with her stepmother humorously on the surface. However, she expressed concern over some of the underlying issues.

> You don't want to be in the household with them. Let me tell you, she's 27 years old, we get along great 'cause, heck, we're about the *same age*! . . . we're pals . . . she's of another ethnic group . . . she's from Puerto Rico, she's very, very manipulative, very, very set in her ways . . . actually she pretends to [get along] but as soon as [my sister] and I come down there she becomes very jealous, but you know, she's getting a little bit better, but she still plays sick every time we come down, to get attention and she always does something to get attention, she has to have it.

One respondent had a very positive relationship with her stepmother.

Debra, who grew up in her father's custody had positive things to say about her stepmother.

> . . . I think of her as my mom because she was my mom except for giving birth to me . . . I mean we call her mom . . . she disciplined, and she did everything, she sewed us dresses, she taught us to cook . . . everything that a woman would do . . . I don't really perceive that as having a stepmom . . . she didn't have any previous kids . . . so we were her kids in a sense.

Some (6) of the young adult respondents had difficulty with their stepfathers, while an equal number (6) got along well with their stepfathers.

> (Penny) It was awful! It was so bad because he . . . is very strict and he had already raised two girls of his own because he had a previous marriage. He's a little bit older than my Mom and . . . he wouldn't put up with anything and I just

was not used to that . . . I was always fighting with Mom or threw a tantrum and he wouldn't take it . . .

Brooke remembered a very controlling stepfather who fought constantly with her mother.

. . . I was thirteen and so I was . . . a little rebellious if you can believe that . . . it was awful, we fought a lot. I mean literally, we would sit at the table at dinner and if I said something he didn't like he would throw tea in my face. It was a very dysfunctional family, didn't get any better . . . he was very much a disciplinarian . . . a controller, and if you weren't doing exactly what he thought you were supposed to be doing, you got it.

Valecia also had a difficult relationship with her stepfather, however, for very different reasons:

Well, I've always just loved my Father and I hated . . . that there was another man. Not that he was in my Mom's life, but that there was another man that may have been an authority figure to me. . . . I didn't mind that my Dad had a new girlfriend . . . it could have been attributed to who they were. Not to demean anyone, but this man did not have a college education . . . I did not feel like he was nearly as worthy as my Father was.

Valecia continued her recollections of her stepfather by explaining a specific incidence concerning her sister that was particularly striking. In explaining her sister's early departure from their household, she said:

. . . this is why my sister moved out, because she was a 4.0 student in high school and he would always complain that she didn't have a job, that she should be making money and supporting herself . . . .my Father's philosophy has always

been, do well in school . . . it's our responsibility as a parent to provide for you . . . his (stepfather) philosophy was that if she wasn't working at McDonald's making four dollars an hour, then she wasn't accomplishing anything . . . my Mother eventually divorced him, whereas my sister went on to become a medical doctor . . . I've always had a deep respect for education and I didn't respect him.

Scott, who after several years of turmoil made peace with his stepdad, spoke candidly about the reasons for their difficulties.

[My stepdad] and I just didn't get along . . . he was a good bit younger than my mom, right at ten years, so I feel like he didn't understand . . . me and my brother as much as an older man would have . . . I can't imagine being 25 and getting 10 and 12 year olds as my kids . . . there was some real disagreement and hostility I think from me toward him because I felt like we could just get along fine without him I mean, I guess I just didn't feel like it was necessary for them to get married. We were doing okay, we didn't need him or his cash and I think knowing that he was much younger than mom made me angry.

There were also respondents, as I mentioned earlier, who got along well with their stepdads. Some spoke of their love for their stepfathers and of good memories of their relationship.

Terri, who had a very abusive relationship with her father and a somewhat distant relationship with her mother, spoke of how important her stepfather was to her.

. . . I remember Mom having one other boyfriend prior to my Stepdad . . . I remember [my stepdad] was always around, he was a good guy . . . I liked . . . I

> loved [my stepdad] he's the kind . . . he was a daddy to me. You know what I mean? He was a Daddy.

Lee also spoke fondly of his relationship with his stepfather:

> Well, they got married when I was . . . seven and [he's] been like a dad to me ever since they got married. They met, they started dating when I was four, so he was around for three years before they got married . . . we moved in with him like a year before they got married . . . he was always the more understanding one, like as far as when we'd do something wrong, he'd sit down and listen, you did this, you did that, whereas my mother would fly off the handle . . . but when . . . we did something wrong, I mean, he put the fear of God in us, but it was just natural . . . I mean, he's [my stepdad], but I've always pictured him as my father. . . .

Farah told of a military stepfather who was cold and distant but who had an encouraging nature.

> He had never had children of his own, so he had an automatic family. And he was nice and he was a Marine, so he was very cold and distant . . . but he was very, you gotta be good in school, you gotta do good, you know . . . and I did that. I always did well in school, and I never got in trouble . . . I never really had any conflict with him. . . .

As respondents reflected on their best memories, they often spoke of holiday celebrations that sometimes included extended family members, vacations, and special family traditions. Their most salient memories of bad times frequently included the time around parental separation and difficulties with parental remarriage.

Nita recalled special Sunday nights:

I remember Sunday nights, we would go down to my grandmother's just almost every Sunday night and my Mom's mom and everybody would go down there and she would fix a huge dinner, huge, fattening, every good thing, fried chicken and mashed potatoes and green beans and . . . like 20 different things on the table and we would all just sit there and eat and all the kids would go outside and play and I have a lot of fond memories of my grandmother's house.

Marty spoke of beach vacations and holiday celebrations being cherished memories for him.

I think that it would be, probably a couple [of memories] would be our vacation . . . that my Mom and I and my brother went on. We would always go with my grandparents and a couple of my aunts and my uncles. So, it was a big trip. I mean there were a lot of people . . . we would always have a great time. Another good time would be when we would go over to my great-grandparents' house or to my grandparents' house at . . . Christmas or Thanksgiving . . . Those were always very special times and important times because in my mind . . . I've always had a family emphasis presented to me . . . I always had what it felt like to be in a family and I never lost that and I always considered my Mom and my brother and I a family, too . . . it was smaller . . . but we were still a family . . . special holidays . . . vacations, just spending time with one another, was just really neat.

Caryn recalled special childhood memories at her grandparents' house.

I just think being out of school in the summertime and playing at my grandparents' house. You know, just being little. I mean, there are still days that I

> wish I could just live with them. There are days when I think I wish I could go back . . . you know, just going outside and playing until you are so tired you just come in and go to bed.

Debra remembered similar experiences; however, her memories included her father, sister, and stepmother. She spoke of the best of times being . . . "just hanging out together. We had a nice backyard and had a garden and [we] played crochet together. You know, they had parties once in a while in the summer time, we traveled really quite a bit as a family, got to see a lot of neat things and places."

Adam, who lived with his father until he was 12 years old, recalled how, especially as a young child, he missed his mother so much. He explained a nightly ritual that he and his mother had was one of his very best memories.

> . . . some of the closest times I think I had with my Mom, which to me were my best times, because I missed out on being with her. I guess me and my Dad were close, but . . . for me, my best times were when I was close to my Mom. When I was with my Dad, I had to be in bed by 9:00 or 9:30 . . . and he never knew this, still doesn't know it to this day, but I had a phone in my room, and so pretty much every night when I would go to bed, I would call her. We would talk about what we did that day. I think that was a way for us to stay close and it was very important times for me. When we were getting off the phone, at the end, we would always say a little prayer. I never wanted to get off the phone . . . she was an adult and she realized it was going to be okay and the next day was going to come . . . she would do things like say, Well, okay, for the next minute when we get off the phone . . . I'll be thinking about you and you think about me." So, it

made it easier. Those were some of the closest times and happiest moments in my life.

Respondents also shared many of their bad memories. Many of the memories shared focused on the time around the separation of their parents and remarriage. Rick remembered the economic deprivation of the divorce experience.

> You know, [we] had to live with different relatives . . . because [my mother] couldn't make the rent . . . we had to move so much, we moved 22 times in 18 years . . . just moving and my Mother's working different jobs and not seeing her and also not seeing my Father . . . my family members really not understanding why they divorced and trying to blame one or the other, my Mother or my Father, and trying to get us to understand when they really don't understand . . . just the other kids in my family looking at us as divorced children different, because their parents were still married . . . a divorce is a bad experience, it really is.

Scott was very forthcoming with his response in regards to the worst of times in his family. He said, "The worst of times was the separation, without a doubt. To this day that's the most traumatic thing in my whole life, I'm sure of it. I'm sure that affected me more deeply than anything ever has."

Hal was also very direct in his response as he recalled his worst memories. Hal explained, "The day my Dad left, my Mom overdosed . . . begging Dad not to leave. . . ." Hal's memories about Christmas and other holidays were much different than most other respondents.

> You were just having to put on a performance . . . going from place to place. Mom being depressed. Having to worry about–am I spending enough time at this

house or should I go back here–I need to hurry back and get to my Mom, she's by herself . . . having to get up in the morning and open presents and get in the car and go . . . just kind of gets old, you know, . . . it gets old real quick.

Marty, who was four-years-old when his parents divorced, spoke often of the care his parents took in parenting he and his brother. However, he recalled a particular incident that evoked fear and confusion in him as a young boy:

. . . one time, I remember, when I was little and it just stands out in my mind so clearly . . . it was when my parents were separated . . . my Dad had just brought my brother and I back from being with him on the weekend and we were back at our house and my Mom was just so mad because my Dad did something . . . I can't remember the exact details . . . I just remember standing in the doorway to my bedroom looking down the hall and seeing my Mom just pound the door frame . . . of their bedroom . . . I'd never seen my Mom do that before and it was just a side of my Mom I never saw and it just really startled me . . . I was in shock . . . It was like, Oh, no! . . . It's that feeling of what's going to happen next? . . . I felt very scared at that time . . . I didn't like that time at all.

Farah, whose parents got along well for a number of years after their divorce, recalled a time when, because of her mother's remarriage to a Marine, she and her sister had to move away from the town in which they had spent most of their lives. Her father, who was very attentive and even fought for custody to keep them from moving, came to tell them goodbye.

. . . he was real touchy-feely . . . not afraid to cry in front of you . . . And then I remember the day we moved away, we said we were going to be leaving at like 6

o'clock in the morning, and Dad got up and came at, like 5:30 a.m., and you know, that was hard.

Adam's mother remarried for about a year and divorced before her current marriage. Adam remembered that year very vividly.

I'd say that the year she was married to her second husband was probably the worst of times. He was a seriously abusive person. He was an alcoholic. I don't know if he ever physically abused my mom or my sister . . . mentally, he abused them probably everyday . . . every now and then, she [my mom] would sleep with my sister, just to comfort her . . . he would do things like come into the room and shine flashlights in their eyes. Just weird, weird things. He was very abusive. For one reason or another, he liked me . . . and I felt like I was doing something wrong because he did like me. That was probably the worst . . . year or so for me and for my mom and my sister . . . He actually ended up killing himself a couple of years ago.

Erica, who had several stepfathers, also recalled a time of abuse. The abuse that she experienced was both mental and physical and she remembered many incidences of abuse, but one was particularly painful and she described it vividly.

And my mom worked nights, so she was gone a lot of the time . . . she worked nights, but she worked days, too. She always worked a lot, and she was always gone a lot, and there was one time that it snowed, and we were, [my brother] and I were outside next door playing, and I came in. And for some unprovoked reason, my stepfather beat the tar out of me . . . I remember him slinging me up against . . . I had those little coat racks that were hung, so I could hang my own clothes

> up . . . he slung me up against them and it punctured my back and I passed out . . . that is the only time I remember passing out, and that is about the only time I remember crying.

Perceptions of Sibling Relationships: Together or Separate

While siblings were sometimes close as children, often, at some point in their childhood or adolescence, they were placed in the custody of different parents or other relatives facilitating a physical separation and sometimes an emotional distancing. Of those respondents who experienced being separated from their siblings (11), some viewed the separation as actually bringing them closer together and others saw the separation as widening the gap in their relationship.

Terri, whose household was filled with violence, spoke of a very physically violent relationship with her sister when they were young girls. However, when Terri returned to her mother's home after being in the custody of her father for a year, their relationship began to be more loving. Terri explained their relationship today:

> We support each other emotionally . . . it's like if I need something, I don't call Mom. I call my sister and if she needs something, she doesn't call our Mom. She calls me. She and I support each other. Basically, we are extremely close.

Nita, who has a twin brother, described their childhood relationship as being somewhat difficult. "We fought like cats and dogs and I don't remember going to him for comfort or anything like that. When we lived together . . . I mean we literally . . . fist-fought . . . we didn't get along." She went on to explain the change in their relationship when her brother went to live with her father and she moved to a new apartment with her mother. ". . . we became much closer . . . and I think it's because we didn't see each other

much so when we saw each other, we didn't want to fight." Nita describes their current relationship as very close . . . "we talk pretty much everyday . . . we see each other 2 or 3 times a week and we go out together . . . have a lot of the same friends, . . . hang out together . . . It's a very close . . . very good relationship. Very positive . . . He's a good brother."

Hal, who chose to live with his mother, spoke of his relationship with his brother, who chose to live with his father after the divorce.

> . . . we were real tight before the divorce . . . and then when . . . we were typical teenagers . . . we weren't real close after that . . . we kind of drifted apart. People I went to school with . . . didn't even know we were related because he lived with someone else and no one . . . ever really saw us around or connected that we were brothers.

Further, Hal added that his current relationship with his brother is good, but probably could be better. "It's good. It could be better just because he lives out-of-state . . . we can get along . . . we can have conversations . . . and we get along okay."

Brooke, whose older sister 'had terrible tantrums and . . . acted out formally," explained that, at the age of 10, her sister went to live with her aunt and uncle. Brooke spoke of their sister's upbringing and the environment in which she was reared as being somewhat lavish and much more upper middle class than her own.

> . . . my sister was raised in Charleston with an attorney as a father figure, she went to The College of Charleston . . . she was in a sorority and didn't have to work and here I am . . . my husband and I are paying for our own college. We work full-time . . . it is just a very different lifestyle . . . we try very hard to have a

relationship . . . we just don't meet the mark . . . she is a corporate person . . . we just are very, very different . . . we can talk and we enjoy each others company . . . we just are not there yet. But, we both are trying.

Adam and his sister were also reared primarily in different households. He spoke of the ups and downs in his relationship with his younger sister.

I think our relationship probably would have been a lot different if we had been living in the same home. We grew up together, but not the same as being there everyday growing up together. Which is sad to me . . . when we were younger, I guess we did the normal kind of things I guess I was mean to her. She was my little sister. I guess I feel bad about that now . . . she was very outgoing, but at the same time she was very "hyper", very hard to discipline . . . my Mom is just too much of a sweetheart, too much of a nice person, no fault of her own (to be a strict disciplinarian) . . . at some point . . . when she got in school . . . and didn't do as well as she could have . . . and she was kind of in trouble . . . I started worrying about her . . . I tried . . . to get her to do the right thing . . . We got into . . . pretty awful fights.

Adam explained further that as his sister began to date, he had problems with her choices of friends. "I mean she dates the . . . thug, drug dealing, whatever type of gang member type of person that, you know . . . and she seems to be in a terrible cycle. She just can't get out of it." In regards to his current relationship with his sister, Adam shared: "I think we are not as close as we have been in the past. I think we could be, but, of course now she has a baby."

Will, who was not separated from his siblings, spoke of the special relationship he had with his older sister.

> . . . my sister was really the parent, you know after my Dad and Mom divorced . . . she cooked. She made sure we had our clothes, you know for the next day of school and she taught me how to tie my shoes, how to read and if I had problems with homework or anything, I would ask my sister . . . I wouldn't ask my Mom because she wasn't there . . . I remember my Mom coming and going, but she was always at work . . . I remember my sister being there.

Perceptions of Extended Family Relationships: Closeness or Distance

Often after or during divorce, extended family (grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins) played a larger role in the lives of the children involved in the divorce. Grandparents, particularly, offered their love and support in many ways and children grew close to them as a result of the more vital role played by them. Of the young adult respondents interviews, a closeness to maternal extended family was expressed more often (13) than a closeness to paternal extended family.

Caryn was very forthcoming in her description of her relationship with her maternal extended family.

> I am extremely close with my grandparents. My grandparents, to me, are like my second set of parents. When I was little, I thought they would be, you know, the wisest people in the world. And I mean I still do, but, at this point, you know, you think I can ask them anything and they would know the answer . . . very close to my grandmother and grandfather, my mom's family I am very close to. She doesn't have a very big family, but we are very tight knit and close and do things

together . . . if I didn't have anything, I would have my family . . . on her (my mom's) side.

Ann, who acted out often as a young child, recalled her relationship with a special aunt and with her grandmother.

You know, my Aunt Susie, she could have been my mom, I would have gotten along great with her. I have a great relationship, they helped raise me. That is how I looked at it, they were there the years when I had temper tantrums and I would sit in the green chair at Granny's house and I sat there probably three-fourths of my childhood. You know, so we are all very close, they have seen me at my very worst.

Nita expressed similar feelings about her mother's family.

My relationship with my mother's family is really the family that I call family. They're the ones we usually go do Christmas things with . . . birthday parties, very close and it's just like brothers and sisters, my cousins are, I mean, it's the same kind of relationship.

Brooke spoke of moving back to the city in which her grandparents live and the closeness that developed from their contact.

It (my relationship with my grandparents) is very good. . . . it is very good because when my mother and father divorced, she (my mother) moved back to Charlotte, where my grandparents lived . . . my grandmother picked us up from school everyday so we stayed with her every afternoon . . . until I was fourteen, I saw . . . my grandparents on a weekly basis . . . so it was very good.

Some of the respondents (11) had good relationships with their paternal extended family. However, the majority felt closer to their mother's family. Jessica's father was an only child and she and her sister were the only grandchildren. She spoke fondly of her grandparents and their continued relationship with them as well as their relationship with their mother after the divorce.

> He's the only child, so we're the only grandkids. Spoiled rotten. But, no, I love my grandparents, they have been wonderful . . . I know that my father's mother has still been there for my mother, they're still very, very close, calls, my mother calls them Mamaw and Papaw . . . always bakes her a cake on her birthday, doesn't miss one, so they've been wonderful. They would take me down to see my father every other weekend in Atlanta. So they were there for us.

Caryn spoke of the help her aunt provided when her dad would not provide some of the things she and her sister needed.

> My dad's sister is like a second mom to me, she and her husband, she would do anything for me . . . She has done things for me that my father wouldn't do . . . And I remember one time that my mom didn't have the money for winter coats, my dad wouldn't send her the money, my aunt bought us winter coats . . . we were always taken care of.

Ian spoke of his paternal grandmother, who is no longer living, with fondness. (Ian) "So . . . you know, I could always go out to her house when mom and Dad were fighting and . . . she was very special." He went on to explain her special remedy for anxiety. "Always a Reese's Cup and a ham sandwich and a coke . . . it's funny how you remember things like that."

Erica, who only has a relationship with her paternal grandmother, spoke of issues that had to be settled before the relationship could be somewhat successful. Their relationship also had some physiological implications for Erica.

> The only person in my father's family that I have a relationship with is my grandmother . . . she just recently married and it is not like a grandmother-granddaughter type of relationship, it is more like we are friends, but we are really close friends . . . It is a lot better now that we accepted the fact that we don't talk about my father, that we don't talk about a relationship with my father that I don't have and I don't want . . . But she still makes my blood pressure go up . . . My blood pressure will go up and I will get an upset stomach if I stay (at her house) for long periods of time. I guess I have always been that way with her and I don't know why.

Summary

In summary, the diversity of experience of these young adult children of divorce makes characterizing the typical adult child of divorce almost impossible; however, the current study did address similar concerns among many of the respondents. Reflectively, they often remembered their parents as having a happy relationship prior to learning of their plans to separate. Currently, almost half (8) of the respondents saw their parents as having an amiable relationship, while an equal number (8) saw their parents' current relationship as hostile and uncomfortable, with the remaining respondents (4) seeing their parents' current relationship as non-existent.

Overwhelmingly, these young adult respondents (18) perceived they had no positive role model for the marital relationship, and, in addition, half of the respondents (10) viewed one or both of their parents as negative role models for parenting.

Young adults perceived their experiences living in a single-parent household in a variety of ways; but, most saw their experience as somewhat normal. Half of the respondents had happy memories and half of the respondents had a variety of unhappy memories. Anger, resentment, pity, and confusion mixed with love were feelings expressed by respondents for their mothers through the early years of divorce. Respondents also valued and often enjoyed the time spent with their fathers during the early years of divorce.

In regards to relationships with stepparents, those respondents whose parent or parents had remarried reported more difficulty with stepmothers than stepfathers. Reflectively, the respondents had the most vivid recollections of holidays, vacations, and special family times as being their most cherished memories; while their worst memories centered around parental separation and remarriage.

Over half of the respondents in the current study were separated from their sibling or siblings during the course of their childhood. This separation brought about two distinctly different responses. One response was a longing for the sibling who was no longer in the home and a closeness when they were together, another response was a drifting apart emotionally in addition to the physical separation that was sometimes not healed even as adults.

Another finding was that young adults seemed to be closer to their maternal extended family than to their paternal extended family. Relationships with grandparents were the relationships spoken of most often.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Introduction

The sample of participants involved in this study appear to have developmental goals appropriate for the age 20 decade. Sheehy (1995) described these individuals between the ages of 20 and 30 as often being on the threshold of adulthood and remaining there for an extended period. The Endangered generation, those born between 1966-1980, entered the decade between 20 and 30 with hesitation and often extended the behaviors of adolescence. These young adults sometimes delayed central developmental tasks such as establishing emotional and economic independence from their parents until they have reached or passed age 30. The Endangered Generation as a whole, according to Sheehy (1995), appear to remain in higher education longer, struggle economically, and marry later than previous cohort groups. These tasks, salient to the age 20 decade, seem to be enhanced and sometimes defined by childhood parental divorce according to the current study.

Demographically, 20% of the participants involved in this study were currently involved in full-time work, 35% of the participants had already obtained or were pursuing graduate degrees, and 60% of the participants have already obtained or are pursuing graduate degrees. Often in a university-based convenience sample (such as the current study), a sampling bias may occur. Indeed, the educational level of participants in this study is high. However, Sheehy (1995) reported that this cohort group is generally more

highly educated. In addition, Sheehy noted a particularly high educational level for women in this cohort and 13 of the participants in this study are women. It can, therefore, be concluded that the high educational level of the participants may be attributed to their membership in the Endangered Generation rather than strictly an outcome of the university-based sample.

Six of the participants were married. Two participants married and divorced and one of them remarried. The remaining 15 participants remained unmarried. The median age for marriage among eligible singles is 26.7 years for men and 24.5 years for women (Saluter, 1994). The median age for those married in the current study was 27 years, further endorsing Sheehy's findings of a tendency of members of the Endangered Generation to marry at a later age. Of the 21 interviewees, only two had a child.

Further, of those participants employed full-time, most occupations represented are generally considered entry level and may warrant economic difficulty to some degree. The remaining participants held part-time jobs and had the expense of college tuition and fees often adding to their economic struggles, again endorsing Sheehy's findings of economic difficulty among members of the Endangered Generation.

It should be noted that, as in other social science research, there was a volunteer bias in the current study. Sometimes those young adults with the most painful experiences would not volunteer for such a study, and this might be true in the current study. Similarly, young adults who have had an unusually uneventful experience might feel that their recollections and perceptions do not warrant study. Of possible relevance is the fact that almost half (8) of the participants were recruited from the Department of Child and Family studies of a university in the Southeast. Participants who were Child

and Family Studies (CFS) majors or who were enrolled in a course in the department, may have a greater understanding of their own life experiences and expanded awareness of how parents and children relate. These participants seemed to be very insightful and somewhat philosophical about the divorce process in their lives. It should be understood that these young adults who volunteered or were recruited brought to the study diverse experiences, backgrounds, and personalities; however, even with this diversity, they might still have differed from those young adult children of divorce who chose not to volunteer for the current study. It would be difficult to generalize many of the findings of this study primarily because of the diversity of the individual interpretations and perceptions of the participants in regards to the divorce experience of their family.

Conclusions

Several general conclusions can be drawn. First, the study participants were often separated at some point during their childhood from their sibling(s) and reared in different households. This separation either served to draw them closer to their sibling(s) and establish a closeness that they had not had before the separation, or the separation widened the gap in their sibling relationship. Secondly, because of the tremendous within group variation of the divorce experience, there is no consistent method of characterizing the adult child of divorce. A particularly striking feature of the current study was that experiences of the participants were not distributed across a continuum, but rather seemed to be somewhat bipolar.

Intimate involvement with the data through the interview and analysis processes rendered impressive findings embodied in each of the seven themes.

1. Retrospective Perception of Parents' Relationship with Each Other. This theme contained the participants' memories of their parents' marital relationship. There were three general responses. The largest number of participants remembered their parents as having a good relationship and their separation was a shock. Other participants experienced relief when their parents separated because the fighting they either witnessed or were at least aware of was very stressful. Still other participants either had no memory of their parents' marital relationship or they expected the break up and were resigned to its taking place.

2. Current Perception of Parents' Relationship. This theme described how the participants currently see their parents' interactions with each other. Again, there were three general responses. Some of the respondents related that their parents were cordial to each other, others related that they were civil but rather uncomfortable. Still others discussed that open hostility was still present or the relationship was totally non-existent which, as mentioned earlier, is also a symptom of unresolved hostility. Although eight of the participants reported a currently amiable, somewhat positive relationship between their parents, the remaining participants reported negative relationships.

3. Perception of Marriage and Parenthood. This theme described how the participants perceive their own current or future roles as spouses and parents. All of the participants overwhelmingly related that they had no positive marital models. In addition, although participants saw some good things in their parents' parenting styles, they often saw much of their parents' parenting behavior as not worthy of imitation.

4. Perceptions of Single-Parent Families. This theme elaborated on the participants recollections of their lives in a single-parent home. Participants related both

happy and sad memories with an equal division of the two. In addition participants related the array of feelings tied to both parents during this period.

5. Perception of Remarriage. This theme explored the stepfamily relationships. Further best and worst memories of family life were related by the participants, and many of these memories focused on the remarried family. Almost two-thirds (13) of the participants discussed their dislike for their stepmothers and a few (6) participants spoke of their dislike for their stepfathers. Transferring loyalties to stepfathers seemed to be somewhat easier than transferring loyalties to stepmothers. Further, the majority of participants (11) recalled their worst memories focusing on parental separation and remarriage.

6. Perceptions of Siblings Relationships. This theme examined the relationships between siblings through the divorce process. The majority of siblings (11) in this study were separated at some point and reared in separate households. Both physical separation and emotional separation were related by participants.

7. Perceptions of Extended Relationships. This theme explored the relationships between young adult children of divorce and, primarily, their grandparents. Participants expressed a greater tendency to be closed to maternal extended family rather than paternal extended family.

Three crucial factors seemed to influence the effects of the divorce experience of participants. The first factor is the quality of life experienced in the single-parent family. The relationship of the participant with the parent with whom they lived and the perception of life in a single-parent home were important factors in shaping their perceptions. Second, the quality of the relationship with the non-custodial parent was also

influential. Frequent interaction with the non-custodial parent was of primary importance in creating less negative views of parental divorce. Third, the way in which parental remarriage was experienced was indicative of the positive or negative perceptions of the divorce experience. Parental remarriage and the inclusion of stepparents in the family unit was an important transition in the experience of these young adult children of divorce.

Discussion

Many published studies concerned with young adult children of divorce have been quantitative and have linked divorce to a number of social problems such as poverty, father absence, and maladjustment (Amato & Keith, 1991a; Blankenhorn, 1995; Popenoe, 1996). Other studies have focused on issues concerned with psychological health such as self-esteem and emotional adjustment (Amato, 1991; Amato & Keith, 1991b; Furstenberg & Cherlin 1991, Garber, 1992). Still other studies have addressed developmental tasks and the resolution of those tasks for young adults having experienced parental divorce as children (Chase-Lansdale & Hetherington, 1990; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1990). While the design of the current study was qualitative which often allows for a more in-depth view than most quantitative studies, a few parallels can be found between the findings of the quantitative studies and the current study. Amato and Keith (1991) concluded in their study that the long-term effects of divorce might increase problems in adolescence and young adulthood that seriously affect the overall quality of life. The current study served to give voice to some of the constricted elements of quantitative studies such as this. However, consistencies are more frequent when comparing the current study with other qualitative studies such as those conducted by Judith Wallerstein et al. (1990).

Consistent with Wallerstein and Blakeslee's (1990) findings, the present study highlighted the ripple effect of divorce. Extended family, particularly grandparents, feel the effects of divorce and play a vital role in the lives of children of divorce. Findings from this study supported previous findings that divorce often seems to encourage a tendency towards a closer matrilineal relationship and engenders distant to paternal kin.

Further, the current study also reinforced Carter and McGoldrick's (1988) finding that remarriage is a very difficult transition. Stepfamily integration, the blending of the old and new, is often a process that requires years of work and is sometimes never accomplished. Carter and McGoldrick (1988) stated that our society offers stepfamilies a choice of two conceptual models: first, a superficial television family; and, second, the wicked stepparents frequently seen in fairy tales. The present study agreed with Carter and McGoldrick that neither of these models is a workable alternative. In addition, Johnson et al. (1988) stated that the integration of stepmothers into a new family structure is more problematic than the integration of stepfathers. Likewise, the current study found that introducing a new stepmother into the family often meets with much opposition, much more than including a stepfather.

Although there were no previous studies found focusing specifically on the retrospective childhood meaning of a parental divorce through the eyes of young adults, the present study was consistent with much of Wallerstein's (1990) work. Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1990) described divorce as a process and Kitson (1992) added that "divorce is a process that does not move quickly to a conclusion" (p. 14). The current study supported the notion that divorce is a process in that, for all of the study participants, parental divorce occurred more than 10 years ago and many issues surrounding the

divorce continue to be ongoing and felt intensely. Consistencies were found concerning the vivid memories and sadness surrounding the participants' memories of their parents' divorce.

Several previous studies addressed the long-term effects of divorce on children in regards to adolescent development and the developmental tasks associated with that time in life (Chase-Lansdale et al., 1995; Cooney, 1988; Furstenberg & Teitler, 1994; Garbardi & Rosen, 1992; Nelson, Allison, & Sundre, 1992). According to the work of Erik Erikson, two developmental dilemmas are faced specifically during adolescence and young adulthood. Those dilemmas are focused on processes involved with identity and intimacy (Nelson et al., 1992). Identity formation includes defining a sense of self and feelings of value, adequacy and dignity as an individual (Nelson et al., 1992). In addition, forming a capacity for intimacy involves having the ability to be empathetic and learning to give oneself to another (Nelson et al., 1992). During adolescence and young adulthood, the process of integrating feelings of value, competency, and dignity from past and present, and making plans for the future with a sense of self that is whole reflecting one's true identity is undertaken (Elkind, 1973). Results of the current study were consistent with previous findings in regards to the resolution of these developmental processes in that less than one-third of the participants (6) had married and two participants had married very early and divorced. Apprehension about intimate relationships and fear of commitment were frequently talked about by the young adults in the current study. Although each participant's experience was unique, collectively they seemed to have a feeling of incompetence when dealing with the realm of intimate relationships. Those participants who had already married seemed to protect their marriage with a

determination that was almost overwhelming; a determination that may, in some cases, be interpreted as a fear of failure or a defense against an anxious sense of incompetence.

Consistent with the findings of Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1990) and Chase-Lansdale et al. (1995) the developmental challenges of both adolescence and young adulthood seemed to reinvoke certain vulnerabilities in the participants' lives arising from their perceptions of the divorce process. Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1990) labeled this vulnerability the "sleeper effect." In contrast to Ahrons' (1994) findings, even among those participants who termed their parents' divorce as "good" (i.e., free from intense hostility, willingness to work together), the same vulnerabilities are present when faced with forming intimate relationships and making commitments as were present in the participants whose parents' divorce was viewed as most difficult. In addition, once married, these young adults appear to have a distinct determination, almost an obsessive desire, to have a successful marriage and to shield any children that they may have from going through the divorce process.

No previous research addressed specifically how young adults believe the process of childhood parental divorce influences their views of themselves in terms of the roles of husband or wife and father or mother. Although all of the study participants agreed that, once past the hurdle of marriage, they were willing to give more than 100% to a marital relationship, none of the participants saw their parents as giving them positive role models for marriage and few saw their parents as good models for parenthood. In addition to the tasks of identity formation and forming intimate relationships, these young adults saw the importance and difficulty of the task of turning away from their parental models. In agreement with Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1990), participants in the current

study hope to fall in love and find commitment in concert with turning away from the marital model provided by their parents.

Understanding the meaning of parental divorce in the context of their lives today seems to be a continuing process of discovery and adaptation or as one participant expressed it, "I'm kinda making it up as I go . . . " (Scott). Some of the young adult participants stated that the study interview was somewhat of a cathartic experience. Consistent with Furstenberg and Teitler (1994) and Wallerstein and Blakeslee's (1990) findings, most of these study participants seem to feel that their lives have been compromised in some ways and they must put forth extra effort in their lives today to be sure the divorce experience is not revisited in their marital as well as parental roles. Amato's (1991) study on the impact of childhood separation from a parent on adult depression indicated that parental absence during childhood was associated with adult depression among whites and African Americans of both sexes. Further, Keil (1998) found that study participants whose parents had divorced were twice as likely to exhibit symptoms of depression as those participants from intact families. The present study supported these findings in that, as participants share their feelings, they often spoke of having intense sadness, unresolved anger and feelings of resentment and betrayal, all components of depression. In addition, consistent with the findings of Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1990), some participants reported a relatively happy childhood but experienced psychological difficulties when faced with adult decisions, particularly those associated with marriage and intimate relationships.

These concerns seem to be echoed in trade books and magazines as evidenced in a recent article in *Newsweek (1998)*. The unique challenges faced by young adult children

of divorce has become a cutting edge issue and has invoked innovative efforts in the young adult population to look at marriage and parenthood more closely. The Newsweek (1998) article titled, "Down the Aisle," addressed the realistic approach that many members of the Endangered Generation (also referred to as Generation X) are taking when it comes to marriage. While many young adults have feelings of doubt and anxiety when thinking about marriage, the article highlights the fears these young adults may have if they come from divorced families and the difficulty with which they contemplate marriage perhaps stemming from reflection on their parents failed marriage. One respondent in the Newsweek (1998) article, in explaining her vulnerabilities when contemplating her own marriage, stated," it's as if all the ghosts rise from the basement . . . the nagging questions: Will I be abandoned? Will I be able to succeed where my parents failed" They're terrifying" (p. 57). It seems as if they have no reality based sense of what marriage involves. As more young adults face these problems, the issue of long-term effects of parental divorce on children and how these effects are played out in the lives of young adults will become more salient in the research arena as well as the public forum.

Implications

Research and theory. This study contributed to theory through its consistencies with symbolic interactionism in that the young adult participants studied act toward things (i.e., parental divorce) on the basis of the meaning that they have derived from interactions from individuals and through self-reflection. In addition to the assertion that meaning is both individual and shared, qualitative researchers believe that meaning is

contextual. This study provided an in-depth view of these children of divorce and the context of their lives. Further, symbolic interactionism indicates that the more strongly individuals value something, the more influence it has on them. Therefore, we can see that because most of the participants seemed to value their family; the disruption of their family influenced how they think and feel both past and present. This theoretical aspect was particularly valuable in learning how the retrospective and current views of the participants influence their views of themselves in spousal and parental roles.

This study also contributed to theory through applications of McCubbin and Patterson's (1983a, 1983b) Double ABC-X Family Stress model. The diversity of experience of the participants and the positive or negative outcomes may be linked to both the perception of divorce precrisis and the definition and meaning assigned to the divorce postcrisis. In addition, the ability of the family to adapt is at the core of understanding long-term effects. However, this study postulated that no amount of adaptation can totally erase the negative outcomes stemming from the divorce experience.

More research should be directed to the relationship of siblings during the divorce process. A striking result of this study which has not been noted in earlier studies was the frequent practice of separating siblings. Exploring the reasons most common for separating siblings and the emotional impact the separation may have on a child who is already grieving the loss of a parent, deserves more inquiry and description. Disruption of attachment relationships may extend to sibling relationships for substantial numbers of children experiencing parental divorce. This disruption, though not noted previously, when explored specifically, may contribute heavily to adaptation and coping behavior on the part of children in regard to parental divorce. Research focused on sibling

relationships in divorced families across the lifespan is an area that is virtually untouched and deserves extensive examination.

Additionally, more longitudinal studies of the effects of parental divorce are needed. Studies that look at the effects of childhood parental divorce on adults as they grow older and attempt to resolve the tasks of Erikson's stages of "generativity vs. self-absorption" and "integrity vs. despair" would give a lifespan view of the effects of divorce. Currently, no data extends into these cohort groups.

Further, Emery (1988) found that boys in the divorce process most often exhibit externalizing behaviors while girls seem to internalize their feelings. However, the present study found that internalization is not gender specific. Both male and female participants had internalized behaviors. This finding implies that more study is in order concerning the internalization of difficulties derived from the divorce experience that may surface not only in the age 20 decade, but also across the lifespan. In addition, further research may include the use of genograms as a way of gathering data on patterns of divorce both within and across generations.

Lastly, research that looks at the marriages and parenting practices of these children of divorce is important. If we are to meet the needs of these children of divorce through education and therapy, we must understand how they use the lessons they learned through the experience of parental divorce.

Application of family life education. As the number of children of divorce reaching adulthood increases, there is a great need for learning to establish healthy intimate relationships that can be met perhaps to some degree through family life education programming. Although there are many programs that address how to establish

these relationships, the perspective of the young adult child of divorce has been largely neglected. It is often assumed that their needs parallel the needs of young adults from intact families. While there are many commonalities, there are also many issues, as identified in this research, that are specific to young adults from divorced families. Specific issues addressed might include: healthy communication patterns in intimate relationships; learning to resolve anger in appropriate ways; personal growth and adjustment in attitudes towards dating; budgeting for the couple; overcompensation in relationships; and, generally, developing a healthy, functional marital relationship. These content areas should be approached from the perspective of overcoming the models exhibited by the parents of these young adult children of divorce. Further programming on sibling relationships should also be developed.

In addition, family life education programming would be a good avenue for teaching healthy parenting skills to these young adult children of divorce most often reared in single-parent or remarried families. Practitioners could serve these individuals well by offering and implementing programs that would give them insight into the parental unit and how it functions in an intact family.

Further, family life educators could serve single-parents well by presenting information and skills that would facilitate an environment in which children involved in the divorce process could feel valued, competent, and encouraged. Making single-parents aware of the needs of their children is important. It is recommended that a family life education program geared to increasing optimal outcomes for the children of divorced parents include the advice given by the young adults in the current study:

1. Talk to your children. Let them know of changes that will take place so that they will not be surprised by a change and will feel comfortable that they can count on the stability of many things in their home. Do not overwhelm them, but give them enough information so that they do not fear the unknown. Keep lines of communication open.

2. Assure your children that they are loved and the divorce was in no way their fault. Be available to them and give them extra hugs and extra time if possible.

3. Allow children to form their own opinions of the other parent. Do not belittle the other parent even when the children are grown and have children of their own. This was the advice emphasized most by participants.

4. Get past your differences with your ex-spouse and focus on what is best for the children. Have civil conversations and never fight in front of the children.

5. Allow the children to have open access to the non-custodial parent if possible.

6. Do not use the children as message carriers or in ways to get back at your ex-spouse.

7. Follow through on your promises to your children.

Furthermore, these young adult children of divorce advised that if there is any way for the marriage to be saved and a reasonable degree of happiness maintained, do not divorce. They seemed to think that parents often did not try hard enough to keep their marriage together and that barring abuse and total incompatibility, many of their parents' marriages might have been saved.

Limitations

As mentioned earlier, there is a volunteer bias in the current study. In addition, it is also potentially relevant that this study used a university-based sample and that almost half (8) of the participants were recruited from the Department of Child and Family Studies at a Southeastern university. Two participants were African-American, while 19 participants were Caucasian. This imbalance constitutes a racial bias. In addition, this convenience sample, by virtue of being drawn primarily from university students, also has a class bias in that the majority of university students are considered part of the upper or middle socio-economic level.

Further, qualitative research, particularly in-depth interviews, are time-consuming for the interviewees and the researcher. Expertise in transcription and hours spent in reflection and interpretation of the interview content add to the lengthy process. Because of the time constraints of this study, the sample was small. A larger sample may have allowed for the recruitment of a greater number of ethnicities and an even richer collection of experiences.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Research on Adult Children of Divorce

1. What is the aim of this research? The aim of this research is to learn about how young adult children of divorce understand the meaning of divorce and how they perceive parental divorce has and is influencing their lives as adults. I hope to learn about both the positive and negative aspects of being reared in a divorced family.

2. How were participants chosen? About 20 young adults whose parents divorced when they were 10 years old or younger will be interviews. I am recruiting participants using several methods, such as posting flyers around campus, making announcements in UTK classes, and from referrals made by people who were aware of the study.

3. What will be involved in participating? I will schedule one interview with you (this will be your only interview for this study) at a time that is mutually convenient. Interviews will take place in a room in the Jessie Harris Building (possibly 235) or in the Graduate House (possibly 302) on the campus of The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Ordinarily the interview will last between one and two hours and completion of the interview would end your involvement in the study. The interview will be audiotaped and transcriptions will be made from the tapes. Care will be taken to enure that your name will appear only on the consent form. An identification number of names and the correspondence numbers.

4. Who will know what participants say Only the staff of the study will have access to your tapes and transcripts. The staff includes myself, Dr. Priscilla Blanton, and transcribers who will read and sign a statement of confidentiality. Only Dr. Blanton and I will have access to the consent forms.

5. What risks and benefits are associated with participation? One potential risk to participants is possible stress brought on my reflecting on difficult times in their childhood and the adaptations made in the years since their parents' divorce. a referral will be made from counseling for any participants if needed. Another potential risk is the identification of participants' identities although efforts will be made to maintain confidentiality. Participant names will not appear on the transcripts. In publication or public presentation of this study, all names or other potentially identifying information will be omitted or changed. Tapes will be destroyed after the dissertation is complete. Although transcripts, information sheets, and a list of participant's identities will be archived indefinitely, your name will not appear on your transcript. I have chose to archive the list of participant's identities in the event that I choose to do a follow-up study and would need to contact the participants to ask if they would be interested in participating.

Often people find that participating in an interview is rewarding to them insofar that it allows them to talk about things that are important to them and to clarify some of their

own feelings. Hopefully, the information gathered from this study will help family scientists to understand and better serve the growing number of adult children of divorce.

6. What are my rights as a participant? Participants questions regarding the research procedures are welcomed and encouraged. Every effort will be made to give full and complete answers. Participation in this study is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Participants may also request that portions of their taped interview be erased.

7. What will be published? The findings will be published through my dissertation. I anticipate some public presentations at professional conferences and possibly the publications of one or more articles in a professional journal. Confidentiality will be protected by using false names for participants and by changing any identifying markers int he stories of the participants.

8. If I want more information, whom can I contact? This study has been approved by The University of Tennessee, Knoxville Institutional Review Board. Participants may contact me, Cheryl M. Robinson, at UTK, (423) 974-5316, or by e-mail at cherobin@utk.edu, at any time during the course of the study. My advisors and co-investigator, Dr. Priscilla White Blanton, also may be contacted by phone at (423) 974-6270 or by mail at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 115 Jessie Harris Building, Knoxville, TN 37996-1900.

****

I have read the information contained on this form. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered. I am voluntarily agreeing to participate in this study by signing below.

Date:_____

Participant name (printed): _____

Participant signature_____

Principal Investigator name:__Cheryl Malone Robinson_____

Principal Investigator signature:_____

APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE FORM

Participants # _____
Date of Interview_____

Please answer the following questions by circling or filing in your response:

1. Gender: M F

2. Age_____ Age at time of parents' divorce _____

3. Ethnicity: African American
Asian
Latino
Native American
White/Caucasian
Other_____

4. Relationship Status: never married
married (first marriage)
separated
divorced
remarried
other_____

5. Do you have children? No Yes: If you have children, how many?_____

6. Highest level of education completed: Some college
Associate's Degree
Bachelor's Degree
Graduate Degree

7. Occupation_____If student, major_____
Classification_____

8. Religious affiliation_____

9. Biological Parents' Marital Status:

MOTHER:	FATHER:
remarried	remarried
Remained divorced	remained divorced
Divorced for the 2nd time__ 3rd__	Divorced for the 2nd time__ 3rd__
Widowed	Widowed
Other_____	Other_____

10. If you would like a copy of the findings of this study, please check here:

_____

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Tell me what divorce means to you.

2. What are your recollections of how you responded to the separation of your parents?
   How did your parents explain their separation? How did you learn about it?
   Who initiated the separation?
   What were your feelings towards your mother?
   What were your feelings towards your father?

3. What are your memories of how you perceived your parents' relationship before you were aware that they were going to separate? During the separation? During the divorce process? For a couple of years after the divorce?

4. Did you attempt to get your parents to reconcile? If so, what strategies did you use?

5. Were you asked anything about your preferences concerning the divorce? For example, about custody or visitation?

6. How do you perceive your parents' relationship now?

7. With whom did you live after the divorce?
   Did your siblings live with you?
   If not, how was it decided which children would live where?

8. Where are you in the birth order?

9. Tell me about your relationship with your siblings at the time of the divorce--how about now?

10. Tell me about your relationship with your mother's family. Your father's family.

11. What advice would you give to divorcing parents of young children today?

12. What advice would you give to the custodial parent of young children?

13. What advice would you give to the noncustodial parent of young children?

14. What advice would you give to parents in a joint custody arrangement?

15. How do you perceive the experience of parental separation and divorce influencing your role as husband/wife or father/mother?

16. What was it like living with your mother in a single-parent family? with your father in a single-parent family? in a family with a stepmother? in a family with a stepfather? with stepsiblings?

17. What were the best of times in your family? The worst of times in your family?

18. If you could rewrite your family's script, how would you rewrite it?

VITA

Cheryl Malone Robinson was born in Reidsville, Georgia. She was educated in the public schools in Savannah, Georgia and graduated from Savannah High School. She attended Armstrong Atlantic State University and in 1993 graduated from Western Carolina University with a Bachelor of Science in Education degree with a concentration in Family and Consumer Sciences Education. She continued her education at Western Carolina University and received her Master's degree in Family and Consumer Sciences in December of 1995. While working on her Master's degree she implemented a program in Fashion Merchandising at Southwestern Community college and was also employed by the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill working as the Evaluation Coordinator for Region A for the North Carolina Smart Start Early Childhood Initiative. She entered The University of Tennessee, Knoxville in the Fall of 1995 and worked as a Graduate Teaching Associate in the department of Child and Family Studies. She also worked as training coordinator for the Resource and Referral Office through a Levi Strauss & Co. Child Development grant. The doctoral degree in Child and Family Studies was completed in December of 1998.

She is currently working as Assistant Professor at The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga in the Department of Human Ecology, the College of Education and Applied Professional Studies.