EFFECTS ON ADULT CHILDREN WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED PARENTAL DIVORCE AS AN ADULT

BY

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A Master’s Research Project in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to research the effects of parental divorce on children when experiencing the parental divorce as an adult.

Based on a sample study of adults, individuals who experienced parental divorce as adults were compared to research done on the effects on minor children who have experienced parental divorce. Respondents from disrupted families of origin were measured for psychological, social, and marital well-being but not on measures of socioeconomic adequacy. Divorces that entailed a decline in parent-child relations appeared to be particularly problematic.

A descriptive approach was used to examine the effects and perceptions of some adults who have experienced a parental divorce as an adult within the prior five years before this study. Several similarities between adult children and minor children are observed in this study.
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Introduction

The effects of parental divorce on children is well documented. The theoretical and empirical work on divorce has been formidable (Faravelli et al., 1986). As a result, counselors are prepared to assist children to cope with this experience. There has also been a reasonable amount of research done on the association between lower levels of parental involvement with children at the earlier stages of the family life and the kinship interaction in later life of children who had experienced parental divorce.

The more typical approaches have been to examine the outcomes of divorce on young children (Faravelli et al., 1986), predictors of adjustment to divorce (Gilligan, 1982), the economic and social consequences of divorce (Demo and Acock, 1988) and kinship interaction immediately following the divorce (Aponte and Van Deusen, 1981). Yet, little information is available regarding the effects on adult children experiencing a parental divorce while an adult.
This study will research the effects on adult children who have experienced parental divorce as adults in five specific area.

**Background of the Issue**

People consider divorce for many reasons. Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) suggest in their book, *Men, Women and Children: A Decade After Divorce* that people considering divorce may be eager to escape a relationship that has become stressful, demeaning, or intolerable. At least one of the partners may feel trapped in the marriage by law, economic need, guilt or for the sake of the children. They conclude that the only solution to their unhappiness is divorce.

The notion of divorce has been with mankind since the beginning of time. The Bible makes many references to divorce such as Deuteronomy 24:1.

> If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, he shall write her a certificate of divorce, give it to her and send her from his house (NIV).

There are no references however to what happened to the children in such cases in the Bible. Yet, the man's
possessions all belonged to him leaving us to assume the
children remained in the father's household.

Parents who claim they would do anything for the
children they love so much are often totally unaware of how
much it hurts their children when they insist on expressing
their anger, revenge, or victim status toward an ex-spouse,
the other parent (Kline and Pew, 1992). These are only some
of the reasons which cause effects on the children of
divorce.

**Objective of the Study**

The topic of children and divorce has generated a
substantial body of research. The majority of literature
reviewed in this study involve the effects reported for
minor children still in the home when the parental divorce
occurs. In contrast, relatively few studies have researched
the consequences and effects on adult children experiencing
parental divorce while adults. Therapists having more
understanding of these effects could increase the potential
of healing power for their adult clients who are
experiencing parental divorce as adults.
Research Question

What are the effects on adult children who have experienced parental divorce as adults?

Significance of the Study

Little information is available regarding the effects on adult children experiencing a parental divorce while an adult. Therapist could benefit from a study on the effects of parental divorce on their adult clients. Perhaps many adults are coming into therapy with classic symptoms of effects of parental divorce which may be overlooked by therapists as the root problem if the parental divorce occurred in the client's adult life time.

Operational Definition of Terms

Adult Client: A married or single adult 18 years or older who has experienced a parental divorce while an adult.

Impasse: Impasses are typically multilayered and mult-leveled phenomena, with elements of the impasse occurring at three levels: external, interactional, and intrapsychic.

External-social level: significant others who have
formed coalitions or alliances with the divorcing couple.

Interactional level: the dispute can either be a continuation of a conflictual marital relationship or ambivalent separation between parents. Also may be generated by a child's emotional and behavior coping strategies in response to divorce conflict.

Intrapsychic level: intolerable feelings engendered by the divorce (humiliation, sadness, helplessness, and guilt) in psychologically vulnerable parents.

Parental Divorce: The separation/divorce of an individual's biological parents.

Triangles: attempt to form an alliance with the child against the other parent.

Assumptions and Limitations of the Selected Research Design

Some possible disadvantages of selecting this design may include: No predictions can be made or conclusions drawn from this type of research. There is no randomization in selection of the sample population. It cannot be assumed that the resulting information from this study is generalizable to therapists working with adult clients.
Some possible advantages of selecting this design may include: The nature of parental divorce allows for a high degree of subjectivity and since the purpose of this study is to examine this intensely subjective experience this may be an advantage to the selection of this design. The questionnaire method of data collection makes data easy to manipulate and categorize for data analysis and easier to establish generalizability.

Disadvantages of the questionnaire method of data gathering include the dependence on the "goodness" of the initial research question and the quality of the questionnaire questions. The questionnaire is also dependent upon the honesty of those providing the data. It is the assumption of the researcher that the sample chose to participate in this research were honest and open in their responses.

Organization of the Remainder of the Study

The remainder of this study contains four additional chapters. The first, Chapter 2, contains the literature review of information specifically related to effects on children who have experienced parental divorce. Chapter 3
includes an overview of the chosen methodology, the sample population, and the data collection procedures that were used. Chapter 4 includes the findings of the study and report of the data content from questionnaire data. Chapter 5 is an overview of the study with the researcher's speculations on its impact and implications, and a discussion of the literature reviewed. Additionally this chapter addresses the conceptual structures applicable to this work and some recommendations for future research in relation to this subject.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The effects of parental divorce on children is well documented. Typical approaches have been to examine the outcomes of divorce on young children (Faravelli et al., 1986), predictors of adjustment to divorce (Gilligan, 1982), the Economic and Social consequences of divorce (Demo and Acock, 1988) and kinship interaction immediately following the divorce (Aponte and Van Deusen, 1981). The lack of literature on effects on adult children who have experienced divorce as adults forces the researcher to review literature studying the effects of parental divorce on young children.

The first section speaks of children's closeness to each parent after experiencing parental divorce. The second section addresses the conflicts of loyalty to parents that effect children of divorced parents. The third section examines the effects on family rituals for children who have experienced parental divorce. The fourth section deals with the effects of depression and anxiety on children who have
experienced parental divorce and finally the fifth section will look at the interruptions of personal life created for children from divorced parents.

Closeness in Relationships

It is likely that the timing of divorce determines whether divorce will have a solutory effect on parent-child relationships (Smetana et al., 1991). Many adult children describe themselves as loners. They recluse to a private world, removing themselves emotionally and physically (Berman, 1991).

When there is a death in the family, people come running to help. But not so with divorce. Wallenstein and Blakeslee (1992) say it well:

In most crisis situation, such as an earthquake, flood, or fire, parents instinctively reach out and grab hold of their children, bringing them to safety first. In the crisis of divorce, however, mothers and fathers put children on hold, attending to adult problems first. (p. 25)

According to Bulcroft and Bulcroft (1991) the timing of divorce will be critical factor in determining levels of parental interaction. They predict that the relationship between timing of divorce and later-life interaction with
adult children have significant bearing.

Gryth and Booth (1992) suggest that parents may be less available to their children while under greater duress because of their own need to cope with new burdens and difficulties adapting to their own new life.

Bulcroft and Bulcroft (1991) make reference to the interaction patterns which seem to differ widely by gender following divorce. Furthermore he states that older divorced men will have lower levels of interaction with adult children than will men with only original marital relationships or widowed. On the other hand their study also indicates that older divorced women will have higher rates of interaction with adult children than will women with long-term marital relationships and widowed. The final hypothesis of the study states that the timing of divorce will affect interaction with adult children for men but not women.

Men who divorce typically visit less with their children and have fewer contacts with them through the mail or telephone. Also, this particular negative effect on later life parent-child interactions from the remarriage of a parent was shown as significant in this same study.
(Bulcroft and Bulcroft, 1991).

Gryth and Fincham (1992) suggests that parents react more positively to signs of distress from girls and are more supportive of their coping efforts. Furthermore, children who exhibit externalizing problems, such as aggression, make parenting more difficult and may be more likely to become involved in coercive exchanges with parents than children who are sad or withdrawn.

Gilligan's (1982) study indicates boys are more likely to be caught in parent's conflicts where girls are more often concerned with maintaining harmonious interpersonal relationship, which might cause girls to be more vulnerable to feeling caught emotional between parents than boys.

 Mothers do seem to remain closer to their children than fathers do. Smetana et al., (1991) hypothesized that divorced mothers and their children may have experienced transformation in their relationships in the process of adjustment to divorce.

Another aspect of closeness is how children are affected by a parental divorce in relationship building. This occurs when children from divorced families exhibit difficulties in social interaction. Grych and Fincham
(1992) suggest that children from divorced families display lower levels of prosocial skills that children from intact families.

The children of divorce soon discover that promises can be broken and that all relationships are conditional. They begin to protect themselves by placing a protective shell around their feelings. (Berman (1991) states, "the lack of security develops a need to perform to earn love" (p.89).

Some children will act out in ways they perceive as closeness. Berman (1991) suggest that some adult children of divorce engage in sex with many partners in an attempt to find love where others play the field in order to avoid a close relationship.

Distance between parent and child also occurs as the child experiences a sense that the generation gap has been violated as they witness their parents dating and possible re-marriage (Wallenstein and Blakeslee, 1989).

Parental divorce effects the closeness of parent-child relationships. One of the tragedies of divorce is that the breaking of the marriage bond reverberates into the parent-child relationship. "Children are almost inevitably feel less cared for" (Wallenstein and Blakeslee, 1989, p. 189).
Conflicts of Loyalty

Parents who claim they would do anything for the children they love so much are often totally unaware of how much it hurts their children when they insist on expressing their anger, revenge, or victim status toward an ex-spouse, the other parent (Kline and Pew, 1992).

Berman (1991), interviewed several children of divorce. Several adult children describe parental divorce as something their parents did to them. Berman goes on to suggest the fact that children of divorce should react to their turbulent childhoods by wanting, as adults, to take total command and control of their own lives is not surprising. Furthermore, Berman (1991) states, "Turbulence increases following divorce; conflict between the couple grows even sharper; negative statements multiply" (p. 143).

The child's sensitivity to parental relationship, and fear of negative repercussions of loyalty to one or the other parent, would also be expected to increase with the level of parental conflict. The greater the animosity between parents, the more likely parents will triangulate children, potentially drawing children into what should be

Conflict may have direct effects on children. Hetherington, Cox and Cox (1982) report that boys from families in which a high level of interparental conflict continued 2 years after the divorce exhibited more acting out and aggressive behavior than boys from intact families but that boys from low-conflict divorced families were less aggressive than those from conflictual intact families.

The increase in stress and conflict between parents that occurs immediately following parental separation and divorce may exacerbate parent-child conflict (Smetana et al., 1991).

When divorce settlements are reached through an adversarial process that produces a "winner" and a "loser," one parent may feel that he or she has been taken advantage of or treated unfairly. The resulting resentment and bitterness may adversely affect both interparental and parent-child relations (Gryth and Fincham, 1992).

Even when children are encouraged not to take sides, they often feel that they must. However, Wallenstein and Blakeslee (1989) suggest when they do take sides to feel
more protected and closeness to a parent, they also feel
despair because they are betraying one parent over the
other. If they do no takes sides, they feel isolated and
disloyal to both parents. There is no winning solution to
their dilemma.

Loyalty conflicts, sometimes flipping from one parent
to the other and back again is a common experience according
to Wallenstein and Blakeslee (1989). They found that
children often conceptualize divorce as a fight between two
teams, and will root for different teams at different times.

Some children are obsessed with being fair to both
parents, while others try to withdraw and keep their
feelings and preferences hidden. They seem on guard,
watchful, and extremely careful about what they say lest it
be used in some way against the other parent or themselves
in retaliation (Johnson and Campbell, 1991).

Wallenstein and Blakeslee (1989) believe when children
willingly play an active role in the battle between parents,
they see themselves as fighting to restore family unity, to
right perceived wrongs, or to soothe the injured parent.
They think children may take the part of the parent who is
not present, actively representing his or her interest. In
this, the child becomes in his own mind guardian of the family honor. Wallenstein and Blakeslee (1989) write that children are driven by loyalty to the marriage that was or by a "quixotic impulse to rescue the parent" (p. 192) who is identified sometimes mistakenly by the child as the victim and the other parent as the bad guy.

Wallenstein and Blakeslee (1989) states, "Children of divorce are often furious at the parent whom they blame for the divorce" (p 184). They suffer grief, anxiety, and acute sense of loneliness and sense of powerlessness.

According to Johnson and Campbell (1992) the older the child is at the point of divorce the more they tend to develop different patterns of coping and defensive response to disputing parents. They typically become more involved, even enmeshed, in the parental conflicts and play a significant role in the drama, "thereby creating family impasse" (p. 151). (see operational term definition)

Some children actively try to please both sides by carrying stories about the mother to the father and vice versa, exaggerating or fabricating the negatives in each home (Johnson and Campbell, 1992).

Older children are less likely to be passive
bystanders. Parents perceiving their children as mature, draw them into the dispute, burdening their children with request for support, comfort, and reassurance of their own troubled emotions causing a classic role-reversal (Johnson and Campbell, 1992).


Johnson and Campbell (1992) suggest that children make several different attempts to cope with the loyalty conflicts, none of which provided any real or lasting solutions to their dilemma. Gryth and Fincham (1992) also believe the process of resolving divorce disputes may affect children by influencing the degree of conflict and cooperation between their parents, but the content of the divorce settlement also has important consequences for children’s lives after divorce in their opinion.

In Buchanan, Maccoby and Dornbusch (1991) study, they ask the question, "If loyalty conflicts are, in fact, predictors of negative adjustment outcomes, do they help explain associations between various post-divorce circumstances and adjustment outcomes" (p. 214)? They also
suggest that boys were more likely to be caught in parents' conflict but girls are more often concerned with maintaining harmonious interpersonal relationships which might cause girls to be more vulnerable to feeling caught emotionally between parents.

Both family systems and the divorce literature suggest that the extent to which a child feels caught between parents, practically and or emotionally, may predict difficulty in adjusting to the divorce. Specifically, with triangulation parents try to form alliances with a child against the other parent, children are likely to be drawn into parental conflicts in becoming a confidant to one or both parents, or carrying messages between parents or even become an informant (Aponte and Van Deusen, 1981).

"Some parents place a child in the role of informant" says Wallenstein and Blakeslee, 1989, p. 197). Furthermore, Buchanan, Maccoby and Dornbusch (1991) support these findings in their study indicating the difficulties observed for children who feel love for and allegiance to both parents, and yet fear the consequences of loyalty to both. These children try to maintain fair, equitable relationships with both parents, but given the nature of the interparental
relationship they experience guilt and anxiety as a result.

Buchanan, Maccoby and Dornbusch (1991) feel that adolescents in particular feel the need to hide emotions or information regarding one parent from the other. Such hesitancy suggests fear that expressions of loyalty for one parent in front of the other, or merely providing information could cause rejection by one or the other parent.

Individual differences in adjustment to parents' conflict may in part be explained by how children respond to that conflict in their tendency to form alliances, to try to mediate the conflict, or to withdraw. As children get older, parents may become more willing to act in ways that may make them feel caught in the middle (Buchanan, Maccoby and Dornbusch, 1991).

Perhaps parental conflict alters parent-child relationships so that the child is more likely to be caught between parents, which in turn predicts other negative outcomes (Emery, 1988).

The feelings of being caught between parents would be associated with high parental discord, lack of parental communication and cooperation, and high levels of closeness
to both parents (Buchanan, Maccoby and Dornbusch, 1991).

Therefore, Buchanan, Maccoby and Dornbusch (1991) expected that higher parental cooperation would lessen the likelihood of feeling caught in the middle between parents. If parents are actively cooperating with one another, there is less need for parents to use children to achieve objectives of the parents or to use children to achieve objectives of the parent-parent relationship.

Finally, research by Brodzinsky, Clarke and Smith (1993) suggest that children are often less affected by parental separation and divorce per se than by the conflict and heightened stress that precede and follow the breakup of the family.

The universal truth for all children is the necessity to trust their parents for security. The lack of security develops a need to perform to earn love (Berman, 1991).

**Family Rituals**

Many children feel rejected or abandoned as each of their parents move on, wrapped up in their own lives. There is a sense that the generation gap has been violated as they witness their parents dating and possible re-marriage
(Wallenstein and Blakeslee, 1989).

Sustaining relationships with both parents requires children to manage a number of family situations with a certain amount of diplomacy. Certain matters that are routinely handled in the intact family take on a different significance when parents no longer live together such as open house at school, signing report cards, etc. But it is the special occasion that is likely to cause special anxiety, if only because of heightened expectations around a birthday, graduation, holidays or the child's wedding. Where children in intact families look forward to family gatherings, children of divorced families face them apprehensively (Berman, 1992).

Holidays indeed become a major time of stress for children of divorce. Both parents usually want the children to spend the holiday with them. So the children feel torn between them and there is another form of still more conflict. Holidays usually become a source of depression and anxiety for children of divorce (Kline and Pew, 1992). Holidays are a big deal for most people. Most children of divorce face the dilemma of who to spend them with (Sanetana et al., 1991).
Depression and Anxiety

Children from divorced families evidence a higher rate of referral for mental health services than those from intact families. These higher referral rates do not only but also reflect parents' reaction to adjustment problems commonly seen during the stressful months after the divorce (Grych and Fincham, 1992). One study found that children had been referred an average of 5 years after the divorce (Kliewer and Sandler, 1993). The higher rate of referrals suggests that many children of divorce experience significant adjustment problems (Gryth and Fincham, 1992).

Rather than a discrete event, divorce is seen as a process that requires a child to cope with many different types of stressors. Children display a range of mental health and behavioral problems following divorce (Kliewer and Sandler, 1993).

Grych and Fincham (1992) suggest that children who experience divorce have been found to exhibit a range of depression problems, particularly in the first 2 years after the divorce. Their study found that children from divorced families evidenced higher levels of anxiety.
Hetherington, Cox and Cox (1982) wrote in their paper on the effects of divorce on children used a term "encapsulated conflict" to describe a situation where parents engage in frequent quarreling when alone but do not battle in front of the children. The children are in shock when the separation and divorce is announced because there is no preparation. They suggest that small dozes of sadness and anxiety can strengthen them for possibly larger, more unexpected and uncontrollable assaults to come.

According to Grych and Finch (1992) "Children exhibit a variety of signs of disturbances in the months after the separation, including anxiety, sadness, anger, aggression, noncompliance, sleep disturbances, and disrupted concentration" (p. 79).

Studies have found men and women from divorced families of origin were more likely than adults from intact families of origin to report anxiety and other signs of psychological distress (Amato and Booth, 1991). In addition, studies of adult clinical populations suggest that parental divorce is a predisposing factor in psychiatric illness (Faravelli et al., 1986). The internalizing of problems contribute to the depression, anxiety, and withdrawal which have been reported
in children from divorced families as well (Grych and Fincham, 1992).

Children of divorce are often furious at the parent whom they blame for the divorce. They suffer grief, anxiety, and acute sense of loneliness, and sense of powerlessness. Pressures of divorce on children can overburden them to the point that they become psychologically depicted and their own emotional and social existence crippled (Wallenstein and Blakeslee, 1989).

During adolescence and young adulthood, the theme of loss of identify also is common. These various losses have the potential for altering cognitive self-concept, leaving the individual feeling confused, different, incomplete, abandoned, and unwanted, which, in turn, can increase their sensitivity and vulnerability to other, more current forms of loss, such as parental divorce (Brodzinsky et al., 1993).

The consequences of being caught between parents are negative: anxiety, guilt, depression, and confusion may result (Buchanan, Maccoby and Dornbusch, 1991). The conflict of loyalty for children who have experienced parental divorce will follow in a later section.

Many adult children of divorce describe themselves as
loners. Berman (1991) stated, "When a child's world becomes a wounding place, it is not unusual for them to seek sanctuary in a private world" (p. 104) removing themselves emotionally and physically from everyone.

The Johnson and Campbell (1992) study also indicates that many children demonstrate some kind of somatic symptom of exacerbation of a physical illness at the time of the transition. Accounts of frequent cold, fevers, allergy reactions, diarrhea, headaches, stomachaches, vomiting, asthma and eczema seems strikingly evident of the degree of stress they experience.

Buchanan, Maccoby and Dornbusch (1991) suggest that levels of interparental stress are related to somatic complaints. Gryth and Fincham (1992) states, "Older children express greater anger about the divorce, and may develop somatic symptoms" (p. 142). Wallenstein and Blakeslee (1992) also wrote, "Children of divorce often complain of somatic symptoms" (p. 128).

Amato and Keith (1991) clarifies in their study a pessimistic point in that parental divorce appears to have negative consequences that persist well into adulthood. They suggest that parental divorce increases that risk of
psychological, social, and marital difficulties in later life.

**Interruption of Personal Life**

At each stage in the life cycle, children and adults face predictable and particular issues that represent the coming together of the demands of society and a biological and psychological timetable. Just as humans physically learn to sit, crawl, walk, and run, they follow an equivalent progression in our psychological and social development. Humans can succeed or fail in mastering them, in varying degrees, but everyone encounters the tasks. They begin at birth and end at death.

Wallenstein and Blakeslee (1989) states the following in her book.

I propose that children who experience divorce at any age face an additional set of tasks specific to divorce. The psychological tasks of children begin as difficulties escalate between the parents during the marriage, continue through the separation and divorce and throughout the post-divorce years. (p. 97)

According to Wallenstein and Blakeslee (1989) "Children get angry at their parents for violating the unwritten rules of parenthood—parents are supposed to make sacrifices for
children, not the other way around" (p. 244).

Divorce disrupts children's life in varied ways. Some may appear minor, where as others involve major changes. Berman (1991) suggest that children of divorce inherit a different kind of family history, one of marital instability, which they too are likely to repeat in their own adult lives and relationships. A consistent finding of studies has been that divorce rates are higher for children who grew up in divorce families than for children raised in intact families based on data from the National Survey of Families and Households, involving thirteen thousand respondents.

Berman (1991) states, "When children learn that a vow can be broken they face life with uncertainty" (p. 279). Many parents want to believe that what is good for adults will be good for their children. But, children lose something that is fundamental to their development and security (Wallenstein and Blakeslee, 1989).

The stress of parental divorce on children are associated with increased risk for childhood emotional, behavioral, and academic problems. These stressors are thought to have not only an immediate impact on the child's
life but, in many cases, long-term consequences as well (Brodzinsky, Clarke and Smith, 1993).

The study done by Amato and Keith (1991) predict that divorce will be most disruptive for those who experience parental divorce at a later age, rather than an earlier age, because time brings about a gradual recovery from stress.

Numerous studies have examined the adjustment of children after divorce. Gryth and Fincham (1992) discuss externalizing problems which perhaps the most consistent finding regarding children's post-divorce adjustment is that, on average, include higher levels of aggression and conduct disorder than children from intact families.

In Claire Berman's book (1991) she states, "The divorce of one's parents is an event that play an integral part in shaping the psyche. It is woven into ones values, emotional processes, sexuality, self-esteem, sense of trust, everything. We live with it always" (p. 152).

The devastation children feel at divorce is similar to the way they feel when a parent dies suddenly, for each experience disrupts close family relationships (Wallenstein and Blakeslee, 1989).

In keeping with previous research, Amato and Keith
(1991) predicted that children from nonintact families would show higher levels of adjustment problems than would children from intact families.

Yet, another interruption for children of divorce often manifest itself in more academic problems than those from intact families (Grych and Fincham, 1992).

Loss due to death is final. The finality is not present in the same way in divorce. "Both parents are still there to deal with, only, now, separately" (Wallenstein and Blakeslee, 1989, p. 83).

As mentioned before, the child of divorce discovers that promises can be broken and that all relationships are conditional. So they begin to protect themselves by placing a protective shell around their feelings. Children of divorce experience difficulty with trusting others as well as his capacity for developing a hopeful attitude as well as love and trust in people will be disturbed (Berman, 1991).

Berman (1991) through many interviews says that adult children of divorce describe themselves as loners. "When a child’s world becomes a wounding place, it is not unusual for them to seek sanctuary in a private world, removing themselves emotionally and physically" (p. 164).
Gryth and Fincham (1992) suggest that children's temperament may also affect their adjustment to divorce. Few studies examine this hypothesis directly, but existing findings suggest that temperament is correlated with children's adjustment under certain conditions (Hetherington, Cox and Cox, 1982).

Berman's (1991) studies indicate another interruption of personal life for some adult children of divorce is that they engage in sex with many partners in an attempt to find love while others play the field in order to avoid a close relationship.

Children, especially older children are less likely to be passive bystanders. They are often put into and accept the classic role-reversal with their parents (Johnson and Campbell, 1992).

Yet another way children's personal lives are interrupted by parental divorce include the fear of repeating their parents' mistakes. Wallenstein and Blakeslee (1989) suggest that older children are often terrified that they will repeat their parents' failures. "Will their own marriages fail?" is their question (p. 162).

As children go into their own adult lives, often they
struggle in making commitment to a place or person (Berman, 1991). As so in Kline and Pews' (1992) study where they discovered in their research that in spite of real concern about making a matrimonial commitment, most children say they would consider divorce if they found themselves in an unhappy marriage.

Another study done by Glenn and Kramer (1987) found that adult children of divorce are more likely to have their own marriages end in divorce than are adults from intact families of origin.

Amato and Booth (1991) also agree that marital difficulties in later life are significant among children who have experienced parental divorce.

Data suggest that family processes, rather than genetic or biological factors, are primarily responsible for the often-reported sex differences in children’s adjustment (Grych and Fincham, 1992).

Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) found that children’s adjustment 5 years after the divorce was linked most closely to the quality of post-divorce family functioning. In particular, the nature of relationships between the former spouses and between parents and children have been
emphasized in basic research.

Longitudinal and cross-sectional studies suggest that the effects of divorce are strongest during the first year or two after parental separation. However, even after several years, children from disrupted families continue to reveal more problems than children from intact families.

In this chapter the researcher first reviewed literature dealing with the closeness to each parent in relationship following a parental divorce. Secondly, the researcher examined the conflicts of loyalty to parents and how this affects children of divorce. The third section examines the effects on family rituals for children who have experienced parental divorce. The fourth section reviewed the the effects of depression and anxiety and finally the last section examines interruptions of personal life created for children from divorced parents.

The more typical approaches of these studies have been to examine the outcomes of divorce on young children. This study researched the effects on adult children who have experienced parental divorce as adults.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Objective of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects reported by adult children who have experienced parental divorce as adults. The potential for increasing therapists' awareness and understanding of these effects may increase the therapeutic healing for adult clients going through a parental divorce.

Research Design Selected and Methodology

A descriptive design was selected for this research project. Data have been gathered regarding the performance and interaction of people who have experienced parental divorce. The sample population responded to a written questionnaire planned to elicit information needed to complete this project. The advantages of the descriptive design is its ease of use and its allowance for the researcher to study relationships or events as they happen in human life situations. A limitation is the lack of
predictive power and inability to generalize future effects (Merriam and Simpson, 1984).

A cross-sectional descriptive design of inquiry was chosen in order to use a survey process to describe the effects on adult children who have experienced parental divorce as adults.

Sample Population

The sample population includes adult individuals within the United States in which the researcher knows have experienced a parental divorce as an adult in the past 5 years. Also other participants are individuals who have been referred by therapists in the Phoenix area. These individuals are 18 years of age or older and were not residing with their parents when the parental divorce occurred. The parental divorce must have occurred within the past 5 years (1990-1995).

Validity and Reliability of Instrumentation

The selected type of inquiry and data collection subjects itself to content validity. The questionnaire was designed by the researcher for adult children who have
experienced parental divorce as adults. The questions were based on information in the literature reviewed of the effects on young children of parental divorce. Construct validity was established by both logical and empirical means. A pilot test was administered to a small group of adults checking for construct validity and content validity and was examined for criterion validity.

The reliability of this form of data gathering is subject to the interpretation of the researcher. The researcher has attempted to provide controls for bias in interpretation by devising a questionnaire to collect data which is explicit, preserving the data, and by making the assumption that the participants are truthful in their answers.

No predictions can be made or conclusions drawn from this study since there are no studies to support any predictions or conclusions the researcher may personally have.

There could also be a generation effect hampering the internal validity. The sample population vary in age and culture. There is no randomization in the selection of the sample population. The sample comes from the frame of
reference of individuals experiencing parental divorce as adults which causes this sample to be group specific. In addition, in relation to external validity, it can not be assumed that the resulting information from this study is generalizable to adult children experiencing parental divorce as adults.

Data Collection and Other Procedures

A closed (or forced-choice) questionnaire was designed by the researcher to assist the researcher in easier analysis of the data gathered. The items on the questionnaire represent factors surrounding the sections of Chapter 2 literature which include, closeness to parents, conflicts of loyalty, effects on family rituals, depression and anxiety, and interruption of personal life. The researcher guided participants along pertinent lines of thought associated with parental divorce.

The questionnaire was pretested and was checked for leading questions or psychologically threatening questions. Steps were taken to contact nonrespondents and how many ultimately responded is included.

In analyzing the gathered data, the researcher looked
for the perceived experienced effects on adult children who have experienced parental divorce as adults. The researcher checked for similarity and difference of effects of parental divorce on adult children compared to effects on younger children reported in the literature chapter. The sample population is referred to by psuedonymmn corresponding to the order in which the questionnaires were returned to the researcher.
Findings

This chapter presents the data collected by the researcher through the survey instrument described in Chapter 3 and reproduced as Appendix A. The purpose of the study was to examine the effects reported by adult children who have experienced parental divorce as adults. The researcher provided a questionnaire to fourteen people selected for the sample population. Eight responses were received and attempts to have the nonrespondents return the questionnaire were made. Findings and results of the survey are presented in six tables. Table 1 represents the personal data of the respondents. Table 2 through Table 6 represents the factors surrounding the sections in Chapter 2 literature which include closeness to parents, conflicts of loyalty, family rituals, depression and anxiety and interruption of personal life.

Table 1 represents the responses to the six items in Part 1 of the survey. The data identify the eight
respondents by a pseudonymn. The demographic data requested in this section were limited to age, married or single, year married or divorced if applicable, date of parents separation and divorce. Table 2 compares data, questions 1-10, closeness to parents. These ten items are divided between part (a) after the divorce and part (b) before the divorce. Table 3 compares data, questions 11-15, conflicts of loyalty. Table 4 compares data, questions 16-19, family rituals. Table 5 compares data, questions 20-26, depression and anxiety. Table 6 compares data, questions 27-30, interruption of personal life. Level of agreement to items in each table are listed by respondent.

Part 1 - Personal Data

All respondents, four women and four men, were in the 20 to 32 age range. Two males and one female were married and one male reported being separated. Three females and one male reported being single at the time the questionnaire was completed. Their parents' divorce occurred within five years prior to this research.
Table 1
Questionnaire Part 1 - Personal Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 1 - Personal Data</th>
<th>Amy</th>
<th>Sue</th>
<th>Kim</th>
<th>Sam</th>
<th>Tom</th>
<th>Bob</th>
<th>Jef</th>
<th>Ann</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sex</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Age</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Married or Single</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M-S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Married (what year)</td>
<td>'84</td>
<td>n\a</td>
<td>n\a</td>
<td>'88</td>
<td>'86</td>
<td>'92</td>
<td>n\a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Year Parents</td>
<td>'93</td>
<td>'94</td>
<td>'91</td>
<td>'93</td>
<td>'93</td>
<td>'94</td>
<td>'94</td>
<td>'94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Year Parents</td>
<td>'94</td>
<td>'94</td>
<td>'91</td>
<td>'93</td>
<td>'94</td>
<td>'94</td>
<td>'94</td>
<td>'95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part 2 - Closeness to Parents

Statements 1-10 of Part 2 pertained to the closeness they experience from their parents. The respondents checked the level of agreement they felt with twenty statements. Statements 1-5, Part A were in regard to the closeness experienced with their mother and 5-10, Part A were in regard to the closeness experienced with their father. Part B of all ten statements ask the same statement in regard to prior to their parents divorce. Choices for level of agreement included strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree. The eight respondents levels of agreement are shown in Table 2.
### Table 2

**Questionnaire Part 2 - Closeness to Parents**

**Before and After Parental Divorce**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Amy</th>
<th>Sue</th>
<th>Kim</th>
<th>Sam</th>
<th>Tom</th>
<th>Bob</th>
<th>Jef</th>
<th>Ann</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part 2 - Closeness to Parents</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1a. I talk openly with my mother.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b. Before the divorce I talked openly with my mother.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a. I feel comfortable admitting doubts and fears to my mother.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2b. Before the divorce I felt comfortable admitting doubts and fears to my mother.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a. My mother expresses affection or liking for me.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3b. Before the divorce my mother expressed affection or liking for me.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4a. My mother knows what I am really like.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4b. Before the divorce my mother knew what I was really like.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5a. My mother is interested in the things I do.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5b. Before the divorce my mother was interested in the things I did.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6a. I talk openly with my father.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6b. Before the divorce I talked openly with my father.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7a. I feel comfortable admitting doubts and fears to my father.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

7b. Before the divorce I felt comfortable admitting doubts and fears to my father.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

8a. My father expresses affection or liking for me.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

8b. Before the divorce my father expressed affection or liking for me.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

9a. My father knows what I am really like.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

9b. Before the divorce my father knew what I was really like.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>3</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

10a. My father is interested in the things I do.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

10b. Before the divorce my father was interested in the things I did.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Part 2 - Conflicts of Loyalty**

Statements 11-15 of Part 2 focused on the conflicts of loyalty they experienced following their parents' divorce. For the purpose of this study the results only reflect their feeling of being caught between their parents following their parents' divorce. The respondents checked the level of agreement they felt with five statements. Choices for level of agreement included strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree. The eight
respondents levels of agreement are shown in the following Table 3.

Table 3

Questionnaire Part 2 - Conflicts of Loyalty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5 Strongly Agree</th>
<th>4 Agree</th>
<th>3 Undecided</th>
<th>2 Disagree</th>
<th>1 Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part 2 - Conflicts of Loyalty</td>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>Sam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I feel caught in the middle between my mother and father.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. My mother ask me about my father's life.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. My father ask me about my mother's life.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. When my mother is around or on the phone, I hesitate to talk about things concerning my father.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. When my father is around or on the phone, I hesitate to talk about things concerning my mother.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part 2 - Family Rituals

Statements 16-19 of Part 2 were concerned with differences and conflicts with family rituals they experienced following their parents divorce. The respondents checked the level of agreement they felt with
four statements. Choices for level of agreement included strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree. The eight respondents levels of agreement are shown in the following Table 4.

Table 4
Questionnaire Part 2 - Family Rituals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5 Strongly Agree</th>
<th>4 Agree</th>
<th>3 Undecided</th>
<th>2 Disagree</th>
<th>1 Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part 2 - Family Rituals</td>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>Sam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I experience apprehension regarding family gathering now.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. I experience pressure and expectations from my mother regarding where to spend holidays.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I experience pressure and expectations from my father regarding where to spend holidays.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. I celebrate birthdays and other special occasions differently now.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part 2 - Depression and Anxiety

Statements 20-26 of part 2 were concerned with depression and anxiety participants may have experienced immediately following their parents' divorce and possibly since. The respondents checked the level of agreement they felt with five statements. These statements include somatic effects and psychological effects. Choices for level of
agreement included strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree. The eight respondents levels of agreement are shown in the following Table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 2 - Depression and Anxiety</th>
<th>Amy</th>
<th>Sue</th>
<th>Kim</th>
<th>Sam</th>
<th>Tom</th>
<th>Bob</th>
<th>Jef</th>
<th>Ann</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20. Following my parents divorce, I felt lonely, abandoned or isolated.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Following my parents divorce, I felt disillusioned regarding relationships and the institute of marriage.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Following my parents divorce, I experienced an increase in headaches, stomach problems or other physical symptoms.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Following my parents divorce, I experienced a change in my appetite. (loss or gain)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Following my parents divorce, I began or increased the use of alcohol, drugs or smoking.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Following my parents divorce, I found it more difficult to function at work.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Following my parents divorce I found home life routine more difficult.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part 2 - Interruption of Personal Life

Statements 27-30 of Part 2 dealt with interruptions of personal life they experienced following their parents' divorce. The respondents checked the level of agreement they felt with five statements. Choices for level of agreement included strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree. The eight respondents levels of agreement are shown in the following Table 6.

Table 6
Questionnaire Part 2 - Interruption of Personal Life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 2 - Interruption of Personal Life</th>
<th>Amy</th>
<th>Sue</th>
<th>Kim</th>
<th>Sam</th>
<th>Tom</th>
<th>Bob</th>
<th>Jef</th>
<th>Ann</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27. Following my parents divorce I found home life routine more difficult.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Following my parents divorce, I experienced more conflict within my friendships.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Following my parents divorce, I have experienced more conflict with my relationships with my children.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Following my parents divorce, I experienced more conflict within my relationships with authority figures.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of Data

Each table contents are presented below. Table 1, Personal Data and Table 2, Closeness to Parents are presented in a narrative analysis of the results. Each question for Table 3, Conflicts of Loyalty; Table 4, Family Rituals; Table 5, Depression and Anxiety; and Table 6, Interruption of Personal Life are listed below with a narrative analysis of what the responses imply for each table.

Table 1 - Narrative Analysis - Personal Data

All respondents, four women and four men, were in the 20 to 32 age range. Two males and one female were married and one male reported being separated. Three females and one male reported being single at the time the questionnaire was completed. Each respondent indicated their parents' divorce had occurred within four years prior to the time of this research.

Table 2 - Narrative Analysis - Closeness to Parents

Table 2 included statements regarding the respondents closeness to their parents. Statements 1-5 ask about their
experienced closeness to their mother and statements 6-10 ask the identical questions regarding their father. Each statement, 1-10 included part (a) present closeness to parents and part (b) closeness to parents prior to their parents' divorce.

Sue and Kim experienced no change in their closeness to either parent. Before and after their parents' divorce they felt close to their mother and lack of closeness with their father. Both agreed they talk openly with their mother and disagree they are able to with their father. Sue admits doubts and fears to her mother and Kim was undecided. Both disagree they are able to admit doubts and fears to their father. Both strongly agreed their mothers and fathers express affection or liking for them before and after the divorce. Both agreed both sets of parents are interested in them now and prior to the divorce. Both women felt their mothers know what they are really like but disagree their fathers do.

Jeff indicated no change in his experienced closeness with either parent and all his answers were (2) disagree with the exception of question 4, answered (1) strongly disagree that his mother knows what he is really like. Jeff
answered question 8 - my father expresses affection or liking for me - with agree but with all other statements being answered negatively regarding closeness, this expressed affection from his father may not be experienced as closeness by Jeff.

Amy and Tom indicated their closeness to their mother and father had changed after their parents' divorce. Amy and Tom agreed they talked openly to their mothers prior to the divorce and disagreed they are able to talk openly now. Both agreed they could admit doubts and fears before and disagree that they are able to now with their mothers. Both agreed their mothers expressed affection or liking for them before the divorce and Tom's mother continued to where Amy's mother did not. Both agree their mothers knew them before and were undecided now. Both agreed their mothers showed interest in their lives before the divorce and Tom's mother has continued, but Amy's mother has not.

Interestingly, Amy and Tom both disagreed they could talk openly or admit doubts and fears to their fathers before the divorce where now they both agreed they are able to. Both agreed their fathers expressed affection or liking for them before and after the divorce. Both Amy and Tom
disagreed their fathers knew them or showed interest in them before their parents' divorce where now both their fathers show interest in them and they both felt their fathers know what they are really like.

Bob's answers to all ten statements, a and b parts regarding closeness to parents indicated negative closeness before and after the divorce.

The last two respondents indicated change in closeness with one parent and no change with the other parent. Sam's closeness with his mother prior to his parents' divorce did not change after the divorce. The disagreement regarding closeness with his father prior to the divorce changed to positive agreement in closeness experienced with his father after the divorce.

Ann's responses indicated disagreement regarding experiencing closeness with either of her parents prior to their divorce. She indicated no change in closeness with her father but and increase in closeness with her mother.

Table 3 - Narrative Analysis - Conflicts of Loyalty

Statements 11-15 are included in Table 3. These questions were designed to indicate conflicts of loyalty.
The researcher did not ask these questions in regard to before the parental divorce although these conflicts of loyalty may have existed prior, the researcher focussed on after the respondents parents’ divorce.

**Question 11** I feel caught in the middle between my mother and father.

Two strongly agreed (5) they feel caught in the middle between their parents. Three agreed (4) they feel caught in the middle. One felt undecided (3), one disagreed (2) and one strongly disagreed (1). Both of the respondents who disagreed (2) or strongly disagreed (1) are the married respondents with children.

**Question 12** My mother ask me about my father’s life.

Three respondents strongly agreed (5) their mothers ask about their fathers’ life. Three respondents agreed (4) their mothers ask and two disagree (2) their mothers ask about their fathers’ life.

**Question 13** My father asks me about my mother’s life.

All respondents agree (4) their fathers ask them about their mother’s life.
Question 14  When my mother is around or on the phone, I hesitate to talk about things concerning my father.

Four respondents strongly agreed (5) they felt a hesitate to discuss their fathers with their mothers. Two respondents agreed (4), one was undecided (3) and one disagreed (2).

Question 15  When my father is around or on the phone, I hesitate to talk about things concerning my mother.

Three respondents strongly agreed (5) they hesitate to discuss their mothers with their fathers. One respondent agreed (4) and four were undecided (3) if they hesitate to discuss things concerning their mother with their father.

Table 4 - Narrative Analysis - Family Rituals

Statements 16-19 of Part 2 ask questions about feelings regarding experiences around family rituals.

Question 16  I experience apprehension regarding family gatherings since my parents' divorced.

Four respondents strongly agree (5) they now experience apprehension regarding family gatherings. Three other
respondents agreed (4) and only once was undecided (3).

**Question 17**  I experience pressure and expectations from my mother regarding where to spend holidays.

Three respondents strongly agreed (5) and all the other respondents agreed (4) they experience pressure and expectations from their mother regarding where to spend holidays.

**Question 18**  I experience pressure and expectations from my father regarding where to spend holidays.

Two respondents strongly agree (5) and two agree (4) they experience pressure and expectations from their father regarding where to spend holidays. Two respondents were undecided (3), one disagree (2) and one strongly disagree (1).

**Question 19**  I celebrate birthdays and other special occasions differently now.

One respondent agree (4) and one was undecided (3) regarding how they celebrate special occasions. Five
respondents disagree (2) and one strongly disagree (1) that they celebrate birthdays and other special occasions differently.

Table 5 - Narrative Analysis - Depression and Anxiety

Statements 20-26 ask questions regarding the depression and anxiety experienced following the respondents parents divorce.

Question 20 Following my parents' divorce, I felt lonely, abandoned or isolated.

One respondent strongly agreed (5) and three respondents agree (4) they experienced loneliness, abandonment and isolation following their parents divorce. Two respondents were undecided (3), one disagreed (2) and one strongly disagreed (1).

Question 21 Following my parents' divorce, I felt disillusioned regarding relationships and the institute of marriage.

Three respondents strongly agreed (5) and two agreed (4) they felt disillusioned regarding relationships and the
institute of marriage. Two respondents were undecided (3) and one strongly disagreed (1).

**Question 22** Following my parents’ divorce, I experienced an increase in headaches, stomach problems or other physical symptoms.

One respondent strongly agreed (5) and four respondents agreed (4) that they experienced increased headaches, stomach problems or other physical symptoms following their parents’ divorce. One respondent disagreed (2) and one other strongly disagreed (1).

**Question 23** Following my parents’ divorce, I experienced a change in my appetite. (loss or gain)

One respondent strongly agreed (5) and four others agreed (4) that they experienced a change in appetite following their parents’ divorced. Two respondents were undecided (3) and one strongly disagreed (1).

**Question 24** Following my parents’ divorce, I began or increased the use of alcohol, drugs or smoking.

Only one respondent strongly agreed (5) and two others
agreed (4) they began or increased the use of alcohol, drugs or smoking following their parents divorce. One respondent were undecided (3) and the other four strongly disagreed (1).

**Question 25** Following my parents' divorce, I found it more difficult to function at work.

Six respondents agreed (4) they had more difficulty functioning at work following their parents' divorce. One respondent was undecided (3) and one strongly disagreed (1).

**Question 26** Following my parents' divorce, I found home life routine more difficult.

Six respondents agreed they found home life routine more difficult following their parents' divorce. One respondent disagreed (2) and one strongly disagreed (1).

**Table 6 - Narrative Analysis - Interruption of Personal Life**

Statements 27-30 of Part 2 of the Questionnaire ask the respondents if they experienced interruptions in their own personal life associated to interpersonal relationships following their parents' divorce.
Question 27  Following my parents' divorce, I experienced more conflict within my relationships with the opposite sex. Two respondents strongly agreed (5) and three agreed (4) they experienced more conflict within opposite sex relationships following their parents' divorce. One respondent was undecided (3) and two strongly disagreed (1).

Question 28  Following my parents' divorce, I experienced more conflict within my friendships.

Only one respondent agreed (4) she experienced more conflict within her friendships. Four were undecided (3) and two disagreed (2) and one strongly disagreed (1).

Question 29  Following my parents' divorce, I experienced more conflict with my children.

Four respondents did not have children at the time of answering the questionnaire. Three respondents with children disagreed (2) and one strongly disagreed (1) their parents' divorce caused experienced conflict with their own children.
Question 30  Following my parents' divorce, I experienced more conflict with authority figures.

Three respondents agreed (4) they experienced more conflicts with authority figures. Three were undecided (3) and one disagreed (2) and one strongly disagreed (1).
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of the study was to examine the effects reported by adult children who have experienced parental divorce as adults. Descriptive method was selected to explore the experiences of adult children whose parents had divorced within the past five years using a 30 item questionnaire to survey these adults.

The data collected by the researcher through the survey instrument were presented in Chapter 4 and described how some adult children experienced their parents' divorce in the areas of closeness to parents, conflicts of loyalty, family rituals, depression and anxiety and personal interruption.

Conclusion

Conclusions may be drawn from the results of the survey despite the limited number of respondents. There were several distinctions and similarities between the responses given.
The results of the research indicated that the experienced closeness to parents may drastically change after a parental divorce regardless of the age of the child. As the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, indicated mothers tend to remain close to their children. The majority of respondents were in agreement that they continued to experience closeness with their mother. Two respondents experienced distance from the experienced closeness with their mother and a new closeness with their father following their parents’ divorce.

The results also indicated that the majority of adult children experienced conflicts in loyalty with one or both parents after their parents’ divorce. This is in agreement with the research regarding minor children’s conflict of loyalty as well.

A majority of the respondents felt that family rituals have become a source of stress and conflict also was found to be true for minor children experiencing parental divorce researched.

The results regarding experienced depression and anxiety was not as strong of an agreement as the researcher suspected but the majority did indicate that some depression
and anxiety was experienced.

The final area of research involved the interruption of personal life for the respondents following their parents' divorce. The majority of respondents disagreed they experience much interruption of their personal life. Not living with either parent could contribute to this conclusion.

The majority of researched areas regarding effect on children experiencing parental divorce as adults resulted in the conclusion on the part of this researcher that adult children experience very similar effects as adults as minor children do following a parental divorce.

Recommendations

Future study might reveal that more emphasis should be placed on the effects of parental divorce on adult children as well as minor children. Therapists could benefit from further research on the effects of parental divorce on adult children experiencing parental divorce while an adult. Therapists having more understanding of these effects could increase the potential of healing power for their adult clients who are experiencing parental divorce as adults.
The researcher suggests that therapists need to be sensitive to the impact and effects of a parental divorce on their adult clients, and to explore this as a possible cause or contributing factor to a client’s concerns. This would be a valuable addition to professional counselor training.


APPENDIX A

EFFECTS OF PARENTAL DIVORCE ON ADULT CHILDREN
EFFECTS OF DIVORCE ON ADULT CHILDREN

PARENTAL DIVORCE AS ADULTS WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED

PART 1

NUMBER __________

AGE _____ SEX ______ SINGLE ( ) MARRIED ( )

IF EVER MARRIED: WHAT YEAR ____________________________

IF EVER SEPARATED: HOW LONG ____________________________

IF EVER DIVORCED: WHAT YEAR ____________________________

OR: RECONCILED ____________________________

DATE PARENTS SEPARATED ____________________________

DATE PARENTS DIVORCED ____________________________
PART 2

INSTRUCTIONS: Below each of the following statements, please circle the appropriate number indicating whether you Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree or Strongly Disagree considering your experiences following your parents' divorce.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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1a. I talk openly with my mother.

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1b. Before the divorce I talked openly with my mother.

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2a. I feel comfortable admitting doubts and fears to my mother.

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2b. Before the divorce I felt comfortable admitting doubts and fears to my mother.

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3a. My mother expresses affection or liking for me.

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<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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3b. Before the divorce my mother expressed affection or liking for me.

4a. My mother knows what I am really like.

4b. Before the divorce my mother knew what I was really like.

5a. My mother is interested in the things I do.

5b. Before the divorce my mother was interested in the things I did.

6a. I talk openly with my father.

6b. Before the divorce I talked openly with my father.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
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7a. I feel comfortable admitting doubts and fears to my father.

5 4 3 2 1

7b. Before the divorce I felt comfortable admitting doubts and fears to my father.

5 4 3 2 1

8a. My father expresses affection or liking for me.

5 4 3 2 1

8b. Before the divorce my father expressed affection or liking for me.

5 4 3 2 1

9a. My father knows what I am really like.

5 4 3 2 1

9b. Before the divorce my father knew what I was really like.

5 4 3 2 1

10a. My father is interested in the things I do.

5 4 3 2 1
<table>
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<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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10b. Before the divorce my father was interested in the things I did.

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11. I feel caught in the middle between my mother and father.

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<th>Agree</th>
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12. My mother ask me about my father’s life.

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13. My father ask me about my mother’s life.

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14. When my mother is around or on the phone, I hesitate to talk about things concerning my father.

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15. When my father is around or on the phone, I hesitate to talk about things concerning my mother.

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16. I experience apprehension regarding family gatherings since my parents divorced.

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<th>Agree</th>
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</table>
17. I experience pressure and expectations from my mother regarding where to spend holidays.

18. I experience pressure and expectations from my father regarding where to spend holidays.

19. I celebrate birthdays and other special occasions differently since my parents’ divorce.

20. Following my parents’ divorce, I felt lonely, abandoned or isolated.

21. Following my parents’ divorce, I felt disillusioned regarding relationships and the institute of marriage.

22. Following my parents’ divorce, I experienced an increase in headaches, stomach problems or other physical symptoms.
23. Following my parents' divorce, I experienced a change in my appetite. (loss or gain)

24. Following my parents' divorce, I began or increased the use of alcohol, drugs or smoking.

25. Following my parents' divorce, I found it more difficult to function at work.

26. Following my parents' divorce I found home life routine more difficult.

27. Following my parents' divorce, I experienced more conflict within my relationships with the opposite sex.

28. Following my parents' divorce, I experienced more conflict within my friendships.
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29. Following my parents' divorce, I experienced more conflict with my children.

| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

30. Following my parents' divorce, I experienced more conflict within with authority figures.

| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |