Support systems in the life situation of children of divorce

Diane Braude
Frieda H. Francisco-La Grange

182522532F

The Co-operative Research Programme on Marriage and Family Life is centred within the Group: Social Dynamics of the Human Sciences Research Council. The emphasis in the programme is on the structure and dynamics of family life, the nature of family disorganization and disintegration, and the nature of the changes taking place with regard to family structure and family processes in society. In this report the emphasis is on children of divorce and the social networks and social support systems available to them.

The opinions expressed in the report are those of the authors and should not necessarily be viewed as those of the Main Committee of the Co-operative Research Programme on Marriage and Family Life.

CO-OPERATIVE RESEARCH PROGRAMME ON MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE
Series editor: Ina Snyman, HSRC
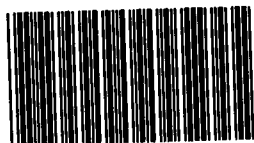
HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL

KnowledgeTec

RAAD VIR GEESTESWETEN- SKAPLIKE NAVORSING

DATE DUE - VERVALDATUM

EKSERP

Daar is 'n baie hoë egskeidingsyfer in Suid-Afrika en duisende kinders is jaarliks by 'n spanningsvolle egskeiding met sy vele implikasies betrokke.

Egskeiding beteken dat kinders, wat alreeds verskeie lewensikluskrisisse of take het om te bemeester, nog een bygekry het. Ten opsigte van die ander take kan die kind gewoonlik op albei ouers se bystand en ander familielede se ondersteuning reken. By egskeiding raak ouers en soms hele families van mekaar verwyderd.

Die vraag is in welke mate die kind op hierdie ongewone taak voorberei is, en op watter steungewers hy kan staatmaak. Die navorsers se bevindinge in hierdie verband was dat die sorggewende moeder, ten spyte van haar eie probleme, die belangrikste bron van ondersteuning was; alle ander bronne van informele steun is onderbenut in die gevalle wat deur die navorsers bestudeer is.

Met die uitsondering van professionele helpers is formele bronne van steun onderbenut. Veral die skool het baie potensiaal as bron van steun in dié verband.

ABSTRACT

South Africa has a very high divorce rate and every year thousands of children are involved in a stressful divorce and its numerous implications.

Divorce constitutes an additional life cycle crisis for children who already have to master several other tasks or problems. For the other tasks the child usually can depend on the support and assistance of both parents as well as other relatives. In the case of divorce the parents, and sometimes entire sets of relatives, become estranged.

The question is to what extent the child is prepared for this unusual task, and on whom he can depend for support. In this respect the researchers found that the custodial mother, in spite of her own stress and problems, was the most important source of support for the child; all other sources of informal support were under-utilized.

With the exception of professional helpers formal sources of support were under-utilized. The school in particular has great potential as source of formal support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS Page

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

In this, the first chapter, the subject of the research is explained. This is followed by an exposition of the motivation for the research and of the researcher-practitioner paradigm, as well as a discussion of the potential usefulness of the study for the social work profession. The aims and objectives of the study and the research questions are listed, the methodology is outlined, the limitations are noted, and key concepts are defined.

1.1   RESEARCH SUBJECT

According to the Central Statistical Service Report of 1991, the number of children involved in divorce in South Africa increased considerably from 1986 to 1990. The number of white children involved in divorce in 1990 was 20 031 as compared to 18 288 in 1986. (Since the respondents in the empirical investigation forming part of this study are white, figures pertaining to the number of children involved in divorce refer only to white children.) Because of this increase the Human Sciences Research Council considers research on divorce to be one of its priorities (Steyn *et al.*, 1987). Trends in South Africa closely follow those in Western countries. In 1979 Paul Glick made some demographic projections based on divorce statistics in the USA. He stated that by the 1990s close to one-third of the children in the USA might be expected to experience a parent's divorce before they reached the age of 18.

There is widespread recognition that divorce represents one of the major causes of stress in modern social experience (Holmes & Rahe, 1967). Divorce not only implies the end of a primary socio-personal relationship, but also impairs the broader social network of which the couple has been part. "Divorce is a life crisis in which social support is simultaneously most threatened and most needed" (Friedman, 1984: 3). Most children experience divorce as a transitional crisis (Ahrons, 1980a; Carter & McGoldrick, 1980; Hetherington, 1979). In most crisis situations, such as death or natural disasters, parents reach out to their children to attend to their children's needs first. In divorce parents focus initially on their own problems resulting in a weakened capacity to parent and less support being given than the children need (Mitchell, 1985; Walczak & Burns, 1984; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). The significance of social support as a buffer against emotional distress in a time of crisis has been emphasised in the literature (Bott, 1971; Gitterman & Shulman, 1986; Van Tilburg, 1985).

Mutual tasks for the individual and the environment occur at every stage of the individual's lifespan and that of the family. Divorce creates additional tasks. The achievement of these tasks is the joint responsibility of society (including professions such as social work), the individual and the family (Carter & McGoldrick, 1980; Hartman & Laird, 1983; Zastrow, 1990). According to developmental and ecological perspectives, problems are not the result of individual difficulties alone but also of shortfalls, discrepancies, conflict and the absence of a "fit" in the environment or in the transactions between systems, for example family and other systems such as economic, educational, medical, legal and social systems. Consequently failure to adjust to divorce can be construed as the result of both a

lack of positive systems in the social environment and individual inadequacy. Research often views the "single-parent" family as a pathogenic family and has failed to focus on how positive family functioning and support systems can facilitate the development of social, emotional and intellectual competence in children of single-parent families (Hetherington, 1979: 857).

It has been estimated that children spend approximately 15 000 hours at school from age five until leaving school (Rutter *et al.*, 1980). Teachers and other school personnel are therefore in a prime position to observe behavioural changes caused by divorce and to offer support. An investigation into the role of the school as one of the support systems theoretically available to children of divorce was therefore considered important for this study.

There is a large gap in our knowledge about the child's view of divorce. The focus has been mainly on adult studies (Walczak & Burns, 1984). For this reason the focus of the present research is the child's view of support systems/networks available to them when their parents divorce. It was also considered important for the sake of completeness to interview the custodial parents. Because the latter are involved with their children on a daily basis they are in a good position to comment on the support available to and used by the children. This is not to suggest that the perceptions of non-custodial parents are not important. These perceptions were however considered to be beyond the scope of the present study. Although she did not focus on support, Silver's master's thesis at the University of South Africa in 1989 investigated non-custodial parents, all fathers. In Silver's study the factors that affected the relationship between the non-custodial father and his children were investigated.

1.2   PERSONAL MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

The notion of investigating the support systems that are available to children of divorce arose out of the researcher's professional experience as a social worker in a private community school during the past nine years. Professional interaction with children of divorced parents has highlighted the need for emotional and social support for such children — support which it would appear from practice is not always forthcoming.

A further impetus for undertaking the research was to gain knowledge related to children of divorce and their support systems for the purpose of refining practice skills. The researcher's experience as a school social worker has been that educationists are inclined to consider the prognosis for children of divorce as poor and that they fail to see that with social and emotional support the outcome could prove more positive for all those involved. The pessimistic view of educationists prompted the researcher to investigate the support systems available to children of divorce.

1.3   RESEARCHER-PRACTITIONER PARADIGM

In the past social work research has been regarded as a process apart from practice, carried out by highly specialised personnel. More recently a new perspective or paradigm, known as the researcher-practitioner paradigm (Duehn, 1985; Francisco-La Grange, 1988) has influenced social workers to use research methods to analyse and evaluate their practice. This paradigm assumes that it is possible for a social worker to be a practitioner and a researcher simultaneously. It assumes further that the

development of knowledge in the field is too critical to be left to those who are not themselves professional social workers. It is the practising social workers who from their struggles with certain social issues become aware of the research needs of the profession. Grinnell (1985) argues that professional social workers are in the best position to formulate and conduct the required research and evaluation.

Research and practice are both viewed as adding knowledge through problem solving, which is achieved by an orderly process consisting of four phases: the identification and specification of the problem, the generation of alternatives, the selection of strategies, and the implementation and dissemination of findings. Adhering to the researcher-practitioner paradigm, that is doing research whilst being a practitioner, is a unique feature of social work research, as compared to social research in general.

For the past nine years the present researcher has been working with children whose parents are divorcing or divorced. During this time she has become aware of the gaps and needs regarding support for these children. From a knowledge of these needs it was possible to formulate the objectives and methodology of the present research. During the research interviews it became apparent that the researcher was intervening therapeutically by providing an opportunity for problem discussion and problem solving. The findings, evaluations and recommendations of the study ought to enhance social work practice, bearing in mind that the techniques and skills emanate from a knowledge base.

1.4   POTENTIAL VALUE OF THIS RESEARCH FOR SOCIAL WORK

Macdonald (1960: 20) states that the "first great need in social work research today is to tackle problems of significance to social work in order to contribute to the knowledge upon which practice is based". Social workers have historically always been concerned with the family and family functioning. The increase in the divorce rate and the large number of minor children involved in divorce have resulted in changes in family structures. To keep abreast with the changes taking place in society and in family life, social workers require new knowledge. Few research endeavours have investigated how children view the divorce of their parents. Mitchell (1985) notes that often only those children who come to the notice of professionals have their feelings recorded. She quotes a sad lonely boy who said "You're the first person who ever bothered to ask me how I felt" (Mitchell, 1985: 81). It is the opinion of the researcher that knowledge of social and emotional support available to children of divorce will have several benefits for social workers dealing with divorce. Improving and increasing the support that is available to children of divorce will help alleviate the effects of divorce trauma and therefore facilitate children's readjustment. It is hoped that this knowledge will stimulate social workers and other members of the helping professions to enlist the support of significant people in the lives of the children of divorce.

1.5   AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general aims of the study are to examine custodial parents' and their children's perceptions of the support systems available to and utilised by children of divorce. The specific objectives are as follows:

(i)   To examine the perceptions of children of divorce with regard to:
- the implications of the divorce for their life situation;
- their preparedness for divorce and its consequences;
- informal/formal support systems/networks available to and utilised by them during and after the divorce.

(ii)   To examine the perceptions of the custodial parents with regard to:
- the implications of divorce for the life situations of their children;
- their children's preparedness for divorce and its consequences;
- informal/formal support systems/networks available to and utilised by their children during and after the divorce.

(iii) To measure the degree of consensus between the perceptions of the custodial parents and their children.

(iv)   To assess the potential use of the eco-map as an independent research tool when studying the support systems of children of divorce.

(v)   To publicise important findings and to make recommendations to both non-professionals and professionals in order to maximise support for children of divorce.

1.6   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions which have directed this study are as follows:

(i)   According to the perceptions of both children of divorce and their custodial parents, what informal support systems are available to and used by children whose parents are divorced?

(ii)   According to the perceptions of both children of divorce and their custodial parents, what formal support systems are available to and used by children whose parents are divorced?

(iii) What specific role do the schools play in providing support to children of divorce?

(iv)   To what extent is there consensus between children and their custodial parents on the implications of divorce for the life situation of the children, the preparedness of children for the divorce of their parents and its consequences, and the support systems available to and utilised by their children during and after the divorce?

(v)   Is an eco-map of the strength of network relationships useful as an additional research tool or can it be recognised as an independent research tool?

1.7   RESEARCH DOMAIN

Children in the sample were pupils of one of the three King David Primary Schools in Johannesburg. The King David schools are Jewish community schools under the auspices of the South African Board of Jewish Education. Educational objectives of this institute are to provide children with a knowledge of the ethics, philosophy and tradition of Judaism together with a secular education which gives the child the opportunity to acquire knowledge beyond the bounds of legislated requirements and which encourages an independent enquiring mind.

1.8 METHODOLOGY

1.8.1 Research design

The design of this study is a combination of the first three of the four knowledge objectives described by Tripodi (1985), namely hypothetical developmental, quantitative-descriptive and associational knowledge. At the lowest level hypothetical-developmental knowledge seeks to describe social phenomena for the purpose of developing general concepts into more specific research questions or hypotheses. At this level the researcher explored constructs such as preparation for divorce, and perceptions of post-divorce life and support systems. Quantitative-descriptive knowledge is quantitative data in the form of empirical relationships between two variables. An example of this is the quantification of parents' responses as to the degree of support they were able to offer according to a Likert-type scale. Associational knowledge indicates through statistical techniques the degree of the relationship. Such knowledge was obtained through cross-tabulations of, for example, responses of both parents and children to items tapping preparation for divorce and perceptions of post-divorce life.

1.8.2 Sample and sampling methods

The original intention was to interview children aged 9-11 years whose parents had been divorced 0-2 years; however, due to the difficulty of finding sufficient children who met these criteria, the time lapse since divorce and the age range had to be extended. The final sample was composed of 63 primary school children and 44 custodial parents (mothers) who had been divorced 0-5 years. There were 19 pairs of siblings. Two fathers who were custodial parents were contacted. However, they did not meet all the specified criteria and were therefore not included in the sample. On reflection the researcher would not have included them in the sample anyway unless an equal number of custodial fathers and custodial mothers could be included, in numbers sufficiently large to validate comparisons. (Further details about the final sample are given in 4.1.)

1.8.3 Measuring instruments

The measuring instruments used for data collection in the empirical research were two interview schedules, one for children and one for custodial parents, and an eco-map. The eco-map was completed by children at the conclusion of the scheduled conversation. It provided a pictorial representation of the strength of the children's relationships in their networks.

1.8.4 Analysis techniques

Following each session with a child the interviewer transcribed the information from the tape-recording, checked and corrected the responses, and rewrote them onto the interview schedules. In the case of the parent interviews, the schedule was completed by the researcher during the interview sessions without using a tape-recorder. Thereafter the content of all questionnaires was analysed to develop relevant categories, according to which responses were coded. On the basis of the coded data,

frequency tables were computed for all items of the questionnaires. In addition cross-tabulations were computed in order to determine the association between responses to various items and, where appropriate, to investigate the degree of consensus between parents' and children's responses to similar items. The significance of these associations was investigated via the Chi-square Test where there were sufficiently-high cell frequencies, and via Fisher's Exact Test for two-by-two contingency tables with low cell frequencies. The commonly adopted 0,05 level of significance was used for all tests of significance. With larger contingency tables with low cell frequencies no tests of significance are presented; instead, the cell frequencies are discussed. The meaningfulness of the significant results was examined via the coefficient of contingency. In order to highlight the more important findings of the present study histograms and pie-charts were used. For the purposes of analysis all figures have been rounded off to the nearest whole number. Percentages therefore do not always total 100 %.

1.9   LIMITATIONS

The following limitations are inherent in the study:

(i)   The researcher is unaware of any research having been conducted in South Africa which has focused either on support systems for children of divorce or on divorce in the Jewish community.

(ii)   The conclusions drawn from this study are based largely on the subjective perceptions of children and their custodial parents (in this case mothers). The responses may be confounded by certain response sets such as social desirability or acquiescence. The latter could particularly apply to children. Moreover, denial is a defence mechanism frequently used by young children, and the existence of denial may have influenced the results.

(iii)   Because of the difficulty in obtaining an adequate sample size of respondents who met the original criteria, the researcher was compelled to extend the time lapse since divorce, and the age range of the children. This had further complications. The time lapse between parental divorce and the interview with some of the children may have influenced the children's memory and changed the perceptions of the respondents. In some instances the age of the children at the time of the divorce resulted in children not remembering aspects of a divorce. Contingency questions were then used and involved a smaller number of respondents than the original sample.

(iv)   Every effort was made to obtain the maximum number of respondents who fulfilled the specified criteria. The sample size, particularly when contingency questions were used, reduced the generalisability of the sample. Furthermore, the sample is representative of one particular socio-economic and cultural group of children which precludes generalisation of the results to the total population (external validity).

(v)   The investigation would have been more meaningful had the perceptions of the non-custodial parents been obtained. As mentioned previously this was however considered beyond the scope of the study.

(vi)   In any design such as this there is a lack of control of extraneous variables such as social background. It is possible for example that divorce in previous generations could affect perceptions. However, by delimiting the sample in terms of socio-economic status, age and length of divorce, nuisance variables were to some degree controlled.

(vii)   A limitation of the eco-map is that questionnaire items were not designed with the specific intention of comparison between the questionnaire and the eco-map. Therefore only certain questions lent themselves to comparison, which limited this part of the study.

1.10   DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

Some of the key concepts used in this study are defined as follows:

-   Divorce: This term refers to the legal dissolution of a marriage. For the purposes of this research divorce is regarded as a process which spans the duration from the time of separation through to the period after the legal divorce. For the child there is often no distinction between the separation and the legal divorce. Both represent a time of stress during which support is needed.
-   Divorced family: A family which has undergone a split as a result of the parents' divorce.
-   Support networks or support systems: These terms are used interchangeably to indicate social interconnections which are considered by the individuals to be socially and emotionally supportive.
-   Social and emotional support: These terms refer to the strength and sustenance that individuals provide for each other through their interactions. There is no clear-cut differentiation between the two expressions and for the purposes of the present study the one often implies the other.
-   Ecology: The science of the adaptive fit of people and their environments and the means by which equilibrium and mutuality are achieved.
-   Life situation: Social circumstances in which a person finds him/herself.
-   Custodial parent: The parent who at the time of the divorce was legally awarded responsibility for the daily care of the child. In the present study all custodial parents were mothers and therefore the terms custodial parents and mothers are used interchangeably in reference to the sample.
-   Non-custodial parent: The parent who has not been awarded legal responsibility for the daily care of the child.
-   Children of divorce: Children whose parents are divorced.
-   Preparation and preparedness: Preparation of children for the divorce of their parents refers to the act of preparing children for the divorce, that is providing children with a reasonable explanation in line with their developmental level. Preparedness implies the children's readiness for the divorce, often as a result of the preparation received.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DIVORCED FAMILY: AN ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

In this study an interactional model is adopted - a model in which responses to situations are viewed "in a framework of multiple feedback mechanisms between the individual and interpersonal/situational factors" (Dreman, 1991: 1). When parents divorce, the child's family life need not disintegrate completely. Marriage is after all a subsystem in family life, and when it is dissolved by divorce the other subsystems in the family - parent-child relationships and sibling relationships - need not collapse. Moreover, in their social life, children theoretically have at their disposal other social networks outside their family, components of which interact with the family. All these relationships in and outside the family form the social environment of the child. It is therefore appropriate to consider the divorced family and the life situation of children of divorce from an ecological perspective, that is a view which perceives the child as child-in-environment. With this perspective in mind, different conceptualisations of the family, the divorced family and the process of divorce are briefly examined in this chapter.

2.1   THE FAMILY AS A SOCIAL INSTITUTION - DEFINITIONS

Many sociologists have attempted to define "family" in terms of composition, function or relationships (Richmond, 1930; Murdock,1949; Keniston, 1978; Elliot, 1986; Zastrow, 1990). No one definition however succeeds in encompassing all the family forms found today, and the diversity of the family is increasingly being recognised.

Because of the lack of agreement about what constitutes a family and the variety of family forms that exist there is a shift from researching "the family" to theorising and researching "families" (Zinn & Eitzen, 1990). The stance adopted in this study is that a divorced family is one of many types of family.

It is important to remain aware of divorce as the accumulation of marital dysfunctioning with resultant changes in the family structure — a phenomenon necessitating emotional and practical support for children of divorce. Society will only give recognition to support systems for children of divorce if divorced families are acknowledged as an acceptable family form.

2.2   THE FAMILY AS A SOCIAL SYSTEM

The view of the family most acceptable to contemporary social work is the one which refers to the family as a social system, a view which corresponds with the emphasis on systems thinking which is inherent in the ecological perspective adopted in this study. Not only is the family itself a social system but the family-in-environment configuration implies the family in contact with other social systems.

Minuchin (1977) emphasises the importance of transactional patterns within the family. These transactions establish patterns of how, when and to whom to relate. Within the family system are

subsystems through which the family carries out its functions. These subsystems are the couple as spouses, the couple as parents, the parent-child subsystem and the sibling subsystem. If the family is viewed as a social system, it follows that in the case of divorce the parental subsystem can be maintained even though the spouse subsystem is dislocated. The composition of subsystems may change. At times other adults can become part of the parental subsystem, for example in a divorced family a grandparent may function in a parental capacity. In some families the parental subsystem may be strengthened by the help of the other children or grandparents.

2.3 LIFE CYCLE OF THE FAMILY

In order to understand the significance of the life cycle of the family a brief look is taken at the concept of life cycle and at Erikson's (1950) psychoanalytic and interactional model of the individual life cycle. Wald (1981: 114) defines "life cycle" as a "longitudinal time frame in which universal and predictable natural sequences of critical events and changes in individual and family life are marked off as stages". Each stage has tasks that the family has to undertake and complete (Beatt & Wahlstrom, 1976; Rhodes, 1977). Developmental tasks represent "psychosocial and cultural demands on individuals or families to master tensions and problems associated with each stage" (Wald, 1981: 115). Through the achievement of developmental tasks individual and family systems acquire skills, knowledge and attitudes that facilitate movement into a next developmental stage. According to Wald each stage is rooted in an earlier stage and builds a bridge to the next. The tasks represent mutuality between the individual and the environment (Beatt & Wahlstrom, 1976; Carter & McGoldrick, 1980; Gitterman & Germain, 1976; Minuchin, 1977; Wald, 1981).

Erikson (1950) postulated eight ego crisis stages which individuals pass through from birth to old age. Several writers on the family have developed Erikson's model of the individual life cycle into the idea of the stages of family interaction (Bossard & Boll, 1956; Rhodes, 1977).

Carter and McGoldrick (1980) propose a six-stage model of the family life cycle, whereby families are perceived as going through a series of stages each necessitating emotional processes of transition. These stages span the years from courtship to post-parental phases. The predictable stages together with the key principles and necessary attitudes which facilitate the transition from one phase to another are identified as:

(i)   The unattached young adult who is leaving home. It is necessary for the young adult to accept emotional and financial responsibility for him/herself. Acceptance of parent-offspring separation will facilitate this transition.

(ii)   The joining of families through marriage, which requires a commitment to a new system and the redefinition of the relationship with extended families and friends.

(iii)   The family with very young children, the principle being that of accepting new members into the system. The spouse system needs to adjust to make space for children.

(iv)   The families with adolescents, in which greater flexibility of family boundaries is necessary so as to allow for the children's independence and for the deteriorating health of grandparents.

(v)   Launching the children and moving on. The couple is required to renegotiate their marital system as a dyad. The family members readjust to include in-laws and grandchildren.

(vi)   The family in later life, which requires acceptance of the shifting of generational roles. In this stage losses of spouse, siblings and other peers have to be coped with and preparation made for one's own death.

According to Carter and McGoldrick (1980), divorce is a dislocation in the family life cycle requiring additional steps for restabilisation and continued development. These additional stages are discussed in the next section when the divorced family is described.

2.4   THE DIVORCED FAMILY

2.4.1   Theoretical basis

Reference has been made to the various family forms. Divorce, the children of which are the subject of this study, is one of these family forms and it is therefore important to define and discuss the divorced family. Each family forms its own system with members acting and reacting to each other in order to maintain the wholeness of the system. Divorce is viewed as a phenomenon which is brought about by factors and conditions in society, and which in turn brings its own further changes to impact on society (Cigler, 1986). Divorce is not the death of a family (Calvin, 1981) but rather creates an alternative family form. One parent, the non-custodial parent, no longer lives together with the custodial parent and the children. Divorce does not imply that the ties between children and parents are or should be severed. The rights and responsibilities of parents continue whether or not a divorce has occurred.

Mental health professionals are urging the acceptance of the divorced family and the cessation of the use of labels and over-generalisations to describe such a family (Brandwein, Brown & Fox, 1974; Burgess, 1970; Carter & McGoldrick, 1980; Ricci, 1980). The contention is that labels such as "unstable", "disorganised" and "broken" create negative attitudes to divorce.

Ricci (1980: 48) suggests that "rosewords", defined as "words that connote confidence and a sense of pride", be used instead of "stinkweed" words, words that are "unpleasant, negative or defensive". Terminology such as "the divorced family" has neutral connotations and should replace terms such as the "incomplete" or "broken" family. The use of positive reframes such as "reorganised family" will help the family view the divorce as a challenge and achieve growth and a more satisfying way of life (Herz Brown, 1989; Morawetz, 1984; Wiseman, 1975). In this connection Ahrons (1980b) and Morawetz (1984) question the use of the term "single-parent family" to describe divorced families because of the implication that the family contains only one parent. They believe that in many divorced families both parents continue to function in parental roles.

2.4.2   Divorce as a process of family transition

From a life cycle perspective divorce is a transitional crisis which results in an interruption of the developmental tasks which the family is negotiating at a particular life cycle stage (Ahrons, 1980a; Carter & McGoldrick, 1980). In their model of family life Carter and McGoldrick outline the additional stages associated with divorce. Robinson (1991) points out that these additional stages are more marital and parental than family-oriented. These stages are:

(i)   The decision to divorce, which necessitates an attitude of acceptance that the marital problems cannot be resolved and acceptance of one's own part in the failure of the marriage.

(ii)   Making arrangements for aspects such as custody, visitation and finances.

(iii) Separation, which requires a disengagement from attachment to the spouse, with however a willingness to continue co-operating as parents.

(iv)   The divorce, which entails working through feelings of anger, guilt, etc., and a continuation of working together as parents. In this regard Ricci (1980) posits that divorced parents should ideally retreat from intimacy, and work towards a good acquaintance or business relationship.

Minuchin (1977) considers that in the event of divorce new systems develop which require greater clarification of boundaries than is necessary in a nuclear family.

Divorce has come to be seen as a process rather than a single event (Ahrons, 1980a; Bohannon, 1970; Golan, 1981; Herz Brown, 1989; Kalter, 1987; Pfeffer, 1981). It is a process involving the dissolution of a marriage, which requires major familial reorganisation. It is a process which affects the individual adults involved, their children, their parents, and the society of which they form a part.

2.4.3   Divorce and children

It is considered beyond the scope of this report to enumerate in depth the short-term and long-term effects of divorce on children. However, some general consequences of divorce for children are examined. No two people experience and respond to divorce in the same way. Research has shown that children from divorced families cannot be treated as a homogeneous group (Mitchell, 1985; Morgan, 1985; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1977). According to Walczak and Burns (1984: 117) "the complexity of the divorce-related experience is such that no statement can be made about the effects of divorce on children with total certainty".

The impact of divorce upon children depends on several factors that most researchers agree upon (Hodges & Bloom, 1984; Morgan, 1985; Oakland, 1984; Rosen, 1977; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). These are: the age and gender of the child when the divorce occurs, the maturity of the child, the personality of the child, the financial situation of the parents, the conditions that led to the divorce, the quality of the relationship the child has with each parent, the parents' negotiation of their own conflicts, the availability of supportive people and the value system of the particular system. Dreman (1991: 16) perceives post-divorce adjustment as multi-dimensional and dynamic. He postulates that while initial adjustment may be largely determined by intrapersonal child-related variables, for example the child's age, sex and temperament, it is the situational and interpersonal variables that determine long-term adjustment. Such variables include post-divorce family structure, post-divorce conflict and co-operation, social support systems including the extended family, peer and community, situational changes in socio-economic status, living arrangements and daily routines as well as attitudes of society towards divorced families. Divorce brings about losses and changes for parents and children alike. Losses experienced are loss of a significant relationship, loss of a significant person (spouses and children), loss of an established position in society, loss of roles, loss of identity, loss of a home, loss of finance, loss of a standard of living and loss of hopes and expectations (Cigler, 1986; Elliot, 1986). While parents are facing these losses they are not so easily able to meet the emotional needs of their children. At a time when children are most vulnerable and need support, their parents

demonstrate a diminished capacity to parent (Mitchell, 1985; Walczak & Burns, 1984; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989).

2.4.4 Some studies of children of divorce

One of the most comprehensive studies of divorce to date has been the Children of Divorce Project which was started in 1970 in the United States by Wallerstein and Kelly (1975; 1976; 1980). There were 60 families including 131 children (ranging in age from 1-22) involved in the study. The greater majority of the children lived with their mothers. The sample was obtained by offering a free counselling service to people filing for divorce in the Californian district of Mann County, excluding families where a child (or children) had a history of psychological difficulty or was currently in psychotherapy for his or her own personal difficulties. Parents and children were seen again at 18 months and at five years after separation. The roles of researcher and counsellor were combined. Data was obtained from well-formed questions. In a divorce-specific assessment of children, Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) focused on three main areas:

(i)   the child's unique response to and experience with his parents' separation and divorce,
(ii)   continuity and change in parent-child relationships,
(iii)   the network of support systems outside the home available to the child.

More specific findings on support from this important study are discussed in Chapter Three. Generally the authors demonstrated that during divorce when a child needs extra support from parents the parents are involved in their own conflict.

This study provides valuable insights into the differential effects of divorce upon children at various ages, and into the progression of post-divorce coping mechanisms. The study confirms the change in children's divorce-related reactions at different periods since the divorce. Because the sample was obtained by offering a counselling service to families going through a divorce, this may have resulted in a somewhat biased sample even though children with a history of psychological illness were excluded. The counselling provided during the six week evaluation period and the therapeutic intervention carried out when necessary may have had an effect on the findings.

Wallerstein's most recent retrospective study (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989), in which she interviewed at least one member of the 52 families from the earlier study, totalling 110 children, has received harsh criticism. Factors criticised are the self-selected sample and the lack of a baseline comparison group of children in nuclear families. The conclusions are pessimistic, asserting that divorce takes a far heavier toll on children's self-image and their capacity to form satisfying male and female relationships than has previously been believed. With regard to support from parents the authors claim:

> In most crisis situations, 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. Divorce is associated with a diminished capacity to parent in almost all dimensions — discipline, playtime, physical care, and emotional support. Divorcing parents spend less time with their children and are less sensitive to their children's needs. At this time they may very well confuse their own needs with those of their children (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989: 7).

The same authors conclude that divorce is the only major family crisis in which social supports disappear. Neighbours think it is none of their business, friends are afraid that they will have to take sides. Clergymen do not offer support. Even grandparents are apprehensive about getting into the conflict. "When a man and woman divorce, many people tend to act as if they believe it might be contagious" (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989: 7).

A British study (Mitchell, 1985) focused on adolescent children and their custodial parents five years after divorce. The study describes children's feelings and experiences in their own words and compares their accounts of separation and divorce with those of their parents. With regard to support from parents, Mitchell found that nearly two-thirds of the children had been upset by the divorce in some way. She concluded that parents were not able to be sensitive to their children's needs and feelings because of their own difficulties. This study did not have the sampling inadequacies present in the work of Wallerstein and Kelly. Mitchell had interesting findings on other sources of support, which are discussed in the next chapter.

In South Africa Rosen (1977) interviewed 92 children of divorce. Fifty-one were in their mother's custody and 41 in their father's custody. In all cases the divorce had taken place between five and ten years earlier. The age range of the sample was nine to 28 years. In addition to the interview each child was examined by means of projective tests. The latter were aimed at measuring the child's adjustment and eliciting emotions in relation to the divorce experience. There were no differences in adjustment between children reared by their mothers and those reared by their fathers.

The majority of children valued free access. The extent to which the divorce was perceived as untraumatic was positively related to free access. Children whose parents were hostile towards each other were significantly less well-adjusted than the rest of the sample. The findings suggest that in terms of general adjustment children of divorce are not inevitably disturbed.

In another South African study Graham (1988), in a master's dissertation, focused her research on experiences of parents and children in remarried family situations. She investigated, in a comparison of two groups, factors pertaining to the pre-divorce household, the divorce process and the post-divorce household which may affect remarried family adjustment, with particular emphasis on interparent hostility. The sample comprised ten non-clinical remarried families and ten clinical remarried families and involved 40 adults and 39 children. Once again, more specific findings from this study are discussed in Chapter Three. In general Graham (1988) found that there was a higher incidence of lack of support during the divorce among parents and children in the clinical group than in the non-clinical group. There was very little support reported from community institutions, and none from the helping professions.

CHAPTER THREE

SOCIAL NETWORKS AS SUPPORT SYSTEMS

The present study aims at an examination of the social support systems available to children whose parents are divorced. Divorce implies transition, accompanied by uncertainty, the collapse of familiar structures and provisions and a change in existing relationships. In Chapter Two divorce was conceptualised as a process, a transition and a crisis and the divorced family was described as a system. It was demonstrated that ideally the ultimate aim of divorce is to reach a solution to a problematic situation, to pass from disorganisation to re-organisation, and from a dysfunctional system to a supportive one. During marital conflict preceding divorce the energies of the spouses have been absorbed and the family as such has been comparatively socially isolated. After the divorce the custodial parent is often the only support in the immediate proximity and her/his own adaptation to a change in status, change in identity and a disorganised home and social environment leave little opportunity to address the needs of children after divorce — hence the significance of other and more stable support systems for children.

From an ecological perspective children are viewed as integral members of many social institutions which influence them and cater to their needs. The functions of the family include providing emotional stability and meeting the physical needs of the child. Other institutions such as the school and recreational and social institutions also play a vital role in meeting their needs. In instances where certain support networks cease to function other systems are required to meet the unmet needs (Guerney & Jordan, 1979).

The underlying assumption of this research is that for the divorced family to become functional, social and emotional support are required. In this chapter definitions and conceptualisations of social networks, social and emotional support and finally social support systems are examined. The importance of support in times of crisis with special reference to divorce is investigated. Actual and potential informal and formal social networks are examined.

3.1 CONCEPTUALISATIONS

3.1.1 Social networks

The term "social networks" was examined and the following definition arrived at: a group of persons who are interconnected, live in organised communities and have a common purpose.

Bott (1966) was one of the first people to investigate social networks. She used the term to mean a collection of individuals including kin and friends all of whom are involved in a social relationship. Speck and Rueveni (1969) emphasise that social networks are of ongoing importance because they fulfil specific human needs. Germain (1979: 14) defines social networks as "a set of communication

paths and relational linkages such that the individual's behaviour is influenced by the connections between individuals in the network, including those to whom he or she may not be directly linked".

Social networks have been variously conceptualised as a set of points joined by lines (Barnes, 1954); a wheel with spokes and a rim (Surra, 1988); and a series of concentric circles (Greenblatt, Becerra & Serafetinides, 1982). However conceptualised, social networks are the linkages between people. The important functions of these networks are that activities are carried out, needs met and behaviour influenced.

3.1.2 Social support

To give support is to nourish, to strengthen and to sustain (Chambers, 1983: 1 300). As such, social support is the strength and sustenance that individuals provide for each other through their interactions. Caplan (1974) stresses the importance of understanding the term "support" not in terms of propping up someone weak but rather increasing a person's strength to facilitate his mastery of the environment.

3.1.3 Social support networks

This section examines whether all social networks are supportive in order to arrive at a definition of social support networks.

Van Tilburg (1985) points out that some networks may have negative consequences. Whilst he considers the family to be an important support network, interacting exclusively with family members may isolate the individual from other members of his network and therefore from potential support.

According to Walker, MacBride and Vachon (1977) the following characteristics correlate highly with support. A network which is dense and homogeneous should provide the members with emotional support. Similarity of experience is an important criterion for determining whether a relationship is supportive. A relatively large heterogeneous network would provide a greater probability of at least one member having had a similar experience. Low dispersion of a network is especially conducive to emotional as well as other forms of help.

Networks that are composed of dense, durable and intense ties are more likely to provide the individual with the provision of services and emotional support. Networks comprising loose ties are more likely to provide new information and to facilitate the development of new social contacts (Maguire, 1983). Maguire claims that a social support network is what friends, good neighbours and relatives provide when they link together for the purpose of helping.

Broderick (1988) differentiated between four types of networks according to cohesiveness and flexibility. These networks differ in the extent of support they provide. There are networks which successfully monitor, sustain and restore the well-being of the individual members and their families. There are networks which are ineffective in the abovementioned function and there are those which

have a negative effect on the individual and the family. Broderick found that networks that are highly cohesive and rigidly structured were the most effective in providing emotional and material support. They are the most resolute in punishing members who violate group rules. Networks that are both highly cohesive and flexible are termed engaged networks. Members valued this network, had a high morale and received a good degree of support. This network is adaptable to changing times and allows for individuality, independence and creativity. The third type of network has little cohesion and much flexibility, having few rules. The structure is loose with permeable boundaries. These networks are the least reliable in times of extended need or crisis. Finally there are those networks which are loose and inflexible. These networks are usually characterised by conflict and are kept together by obligatory relationships. Support is low.

According to Van Tilburg (1985) in order to be supportive a person's network should include at least one person with whom the individual can share daily experiences and problems.

Caplan (1974) emphasises that to be supportive a relationship must provide the individual with a perception of himself as a unique individual, being treated with honesty and respect. Three important elements of support are identified by Caplan: the mobilisation of an individual's psychological resources, the sharing of tasks, and the provision of extra supplies of money, materials, tools, skills and cognitive guidance.

From the aforementioned it is apparent that networks differ in the extent of support that they provide to the individual. There are networks that enhance the functioning of an individual, there are those that are ineffective in providing support and there are those which may prove destructive as a result of the interactions among members. The term "social support network" is used in this study to describe a social network which enhances an individual's functioning through the support it provides.

3.1.4   Social support systems

"Support systems implies an enduring pattern of continuous or intermittent ties that play a significant part in maintaining the psychological integrity of the individual over time" (Caplan, 1974: 7). Caplan uses the term "system" to emphasise that it means more than the occasional relationship. He explains further that support systems promote emotional mastery, offer guidance and provide feedback about an individual's behaviour, in this way confirming the individual's own identity and facilitating improved performance by honest self-evaluation.

Caplan classifies two types of support systems, namely spontaneous or natural, and organised. A spontaneous support system consists of kin, friends, acquaintances, neighbours and informal helpers. Informal helpers are further subdivided into generalists, who are people who enjoy helping others, and specialists, who themselves have experienced certain problems and therefore are regarded as specialists in helping people who are experiencing similar problems. Caplan's "organised support" does not refer to help given by care-giving professionals, but to groups with informal helpers.

Pincus and Minahan (1973: 4) identify three kinds of resource systems that people receive help from: informal or natural (family, friends, neighbours, co-workers); formal (consisting of organisations of

which people are members); and society (which provides help by referring people to appropriate resources).

Brown (1978) makes a simple distinction between informal and formal helpers. Informal helpers are family, friends and neighbours. Formal helpers are physicians, therapists, self-help groups and professional organisations.

Gottlieb (1983) questions the use of the term "support system". According to him people are part of a social network of close associates who are important in the individual's affective life. The network may generate both support and stress at different times.

Maguire (1983) points out the difference between a personal or social support system and a community support system. The social support system includes friends, family, neighbours and colleagues who provide support for a specific individual. Community support systems consist of services provided within a community or neighbourhood for helping persons to meet their own social and emotional needs. This categorisation of support systems has also been referred to by Maguire as formal and informal support systems and is similar to Brown's categories described above.

As stated in Chapter One, for the purposes of this research the terms "social support systems" and "social support networks" will be used interchangeably to indicate social interconnections which are considered by an individual to be emotionally supportive. Emotional support provides the individual with the feeling that he is cared for and loved, thereby enhancing his functioning within his environment.

3.1.5 Social support networks and transitional crisis

Researchers and practitioners acknowledge the importance of both formal and informal support systems in helping individuals adapt to difficult transitions and unexpected crises (Brown, 1978; Caplan, 1974; Colletta, 1979; Ricci, 1980; Wallerstein, 1983; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980).

Ricci (1980) states that the significance of a social support network in time of need cannot be underestimated. When a person facing a crisis is assured of assistance in the form of emotional or practical aid his sense of security and well-being will be enhanced. Should that person be a parent his/ her level of competence as a parent will be raised.

Daniels-Mohring and Berger (1984) explored the social network relationships of divorced persons prior to divorce and up to one year following divorce. Their aim was to identify the network changes which take place and how these affect adjustment to divorce. Their findings revealed that when social networks remain stable there is a better post-divorce adjustment. Moreover, where individuals were able to prepare for divorce by initiating social contacts and establishing supportive social networks there was a better adjustment. When individuals tended to withdraw from social interaction their adjustment was more difficult.

Colletta (1979), in a study of support systems after divorce, examined the support available to 72 one- and two-parent families. The results of the study suggest that families under extreme stress need to be provided with a relatively high degree of support. The amount of support received and the mothers' satisfaction with that support were found to be significantly related to their mothering practices. It was found that when mothers were not satisfied with the support received, harsher, more restrictive relationships between mothers and children resulted. Ricci (1980) substantiates this, stating that the kind of people parents have as friends will affect the child's personal adjustment.

Rands (1988) examined network change after the break-up of a marriage. She found that with courtship and marriage individuals loosen some of their individual ties and develop a shared network. After the dissolution of the marriage the individual's network is likely to resume its pre-marital characteristics. According to this study the post-separation network becomes less kin-centred, less heterosexual, less couple-oriented. Relationships with own relatives are maintained but not with the spouse's relatives or acquaintances.

It is thus evident that social networks change as a result of a transitional crisis such as divorce. Less support may be available from certain sources. Support is needed because of changes in the life style of the individual. Families experiencing high degrees of stress require a high degree of support.

3.2   SOURCES OF SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORKS

In order to examine social support networks or social support systems the researcher utilises the classification adopted by Brown (1978) and Maguire (1983). As mentioned previously Brown makes the distinction between informal and formal helpers. Informal helpers are family, friends and neighbours. Formal helpers are physicians, therapists, lawyers, religious leaders, self-help groups and professional organisations.

3.2.1   Informal social support networks

Family, friends and neighbours are the informal support systems considered in the following subsections.

3.2.1.1 Family as a support network in a divorce situation

The best known and most easily available support system in all societies is the marital and family group. According to Golan (1981: 244) "the family itself probably ranks first among natural support systems". Definite rules are developed by most cultures which determine the reciprocal obligations to keep the family together (Caplan, 1974). Caplan identifies certain elements which must be present for a family group to act as a support system. These elements include attitudes of sensitivity and respect for the needs of all family members and effective communication. Satir stresses the importance of communication in families in giving members a sense of security and of being supported. She compares communication to a "huge umbrella that covers and affects all that goes on between human beings" (Satir, 1972: 30).

It should be noted however that the family of origin may not always enhance family adjustment. Beal (1980) points out that the family that takes sides may promote conflict.

Support from families is discussed under the following headings: divorced parents, consanguinity and affinity, grandparents, and siblings.

(i) Divorced parents as a support network for their children

The most important people in the world to a child, particularly a young child, are its parents. Parents provide for their physical, emotional and social needs. As the child grows up the relationship between parents and child changes but does not decrease in importance. When parents divorce generally one parent becomes a full-time and the other a part-time parent. Goldstein, Freud and Solnit (1979) believed that full custodial control should be awarded to one "psychological parent", namely the adult psychologically viewed as the parent, and that the non-custodial parent should not be involved with the child. However, most studies recognise that both the non-custodial and custodial parent are vitally important potential sources of support for the child of divorce (Bonkowski, Boomhower & Bequette, 1985; Graham, 1988; Hess & Camara, 1979; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980).

The question of whether both parents are able to provide this support has been much researched (Graham, 1988; Mitchell, 1985; Walczak & Burns, 1984; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). This research indicates that, particularly in the initial stages of divorce, parents are less able to parent constructively and provide support for their children. For this reason it is necessary for other family members to step in, provide support and thereby bridge the gap.

(ii) Consanguinity and affinity

Consanguinity refers to relationship by blood as opposed to affinity or relationship by marriage (Chambers, 1983: 266). The bulk of research evidence suggests that support from consanguineal relationships is more forthcoming than support from affines (Anspach, 1976; Spicer & Hampe, 1975).

(iii) Grandparents as a source of support

Many grandparents are uncertain of their rights with respect to their grandchildren after a separation from them due to divorce. "In the absence of vital connections grandparents have no legal or emotional power to affect their grandchild's welfare" (Kornhaber & Woodward, 1981: 191). Ahrons and Bowman (1982) interviewed 78 grandmothers in the USA whose sons and daughters were divorced. Eighty-nine per cent, when asked to give their feelings about recent legislation which granted grandparent visitation rights as part of the divorce proceedings, supported this legislation.

Kalish and Visher (1982) studied grandparents of children of divorce and found that many such grandparents felt a sense of powerlessness and experienced fears and anxieties in relation to their grandparenting. They were faced with a new set of circumstances for which there were no clear prescriptions. They often felt isolated from grandchildren. They found it difficult to watch their

grandchildren being reared by people for whom they had little positive regard. Fears about their inheritance reaching their grandchildren were not uncommon.

Respondents in the Ahrons and Bowman study (1982) reported significantly more contact with and felt emotionally closer to their sons and daughters during the year following divorce than during the marriage. Fifty-nine per cent stated that the divorce had not altered contact with grandchildren. Seventeen per cent reported increased contact, 24 % reported seeing less of their grandchildren following divorce and 11 % indicated substantial loss in contact with the grandchildren following divorce.

According to Kornhaber and Woodward (1981) the relationships between grandparents and grandchildren after a divorce depend very much on the quality of the relationship prior to the dissolution of the marriage. The researchers interviewed more than 300 youngsters between the ages of five and 18. Three kinds of relationships were identified according to the degree of intimacy between grandparents and grandchildren. Intimacy was measured in terms of time spent together. In group one there was frequent contact, in group two there was sporadic contact and in group three there was little or no contact. The authors found that where there was sporadic or little contact grandparents often, as a result of confusion, tended to withdraw further from their children and grandchildren after a divorce.

Mitchell (1985) found that support from grandparents and especially grandmothers was appreciated and that grandmothers were considered the most available adults apart from the parents. She postulated that grandparents were able to serve a vital role as they could remain more objective than parents and serve the needs of their grandchildren.

Dersch (1986) investigated the impact of parental divorce and/or remarriage on the grandparent-grandchild relationship. Eighty female college students whose parents were divorced completed questionnaires. Some parents had remarried; some had not. A group of 80 respondents whose parents' marriages were intact was randomly selected from the same population. The major findings were that one-third of these respondents reported that their grandparents gave them support; one-third reported that they gave support to their grandparents; one-third reported mutual support. The maternal grandmother was overall the closest and most helpful. The maternal grandfather was next closest and helpful. The paternal grandmother was the least helpful. The age of the child at the time of the divorce and the likelihood of grandparental support were inversely correlated.

Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) found from their interviews with children and adolescents that these young people were very much helped by the presence of grandparents. They stated that "several children, when asked about what had helped them the most, told us about loving, devoted grandparents who kept them in mind and provided summer vacations for them, telephone calls at frequent intervals and an ongoing relationship attentive to the needs of the children" (p. 222).

The important role of grandparents, especially if their marriages are stable and intact, is stressed by Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989). Grandchildren learn from their grandparents that relationships can be lasting, reliable and dependable. For those children in the study who could rely on the extended

family the world appeared stable and secure. "The encouragement and friendship of grandparents has special meaning for children of divorce" (p. 111).

All these findings emphasise the importance of grandparental support for children of divorce.

(iv)   Support from siblings

The sibling relationship is seen as a life-long process highly influential throughout the life cycle (Bank & Kahn, 1975: 311). Despite this statement, which reflects the opinions of other mental health professionals (*inter alia* Bossard & Boll, 1956; Levitin, 1979; Minuchin, 1977), there appears to be a relative dearth of literature on the role of siblings in providing support after a divorce.

It appears from research studies available (Bank & Kahn, 1975; Bossard & Boll, 1956; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1977) that there is great potential in the sibling support system after divorce. Siblings often become closer, assume responsibility for the younger ones and turn to each other when there is a divorce or other family reorganisation. The sibling relationship, however, may not always be supportive. Siblings may make life difficult for each other (Bank & Kahn, 1975) and in some situations siblings may become allies of different parents and thereby work against each other (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). Levitin (1979) draws the conclusion that the absence of siblings may increase feelings of isolation but that having siblings does not automatically mean that the negative effects of divorce will be lessened.

3.2.1.2 Friends and neighbours as a source of support

Litwak and Szelenyi (1969: 469) theorise that from a structural point of view friendship peer groups have potentially weaker ties than both kinship and neighbourhood groups, not having the permanence of the former or the face-to-face contact of the latter, and being equally under stress from differential mobility. The major strength of friendship ties is affectivity, and because of modern modes of communication friendship ties can survive breaks in face-to-face relationships. However, friendship ties may be more vulnerable to breaks in face-to-face contact than kin groups because there are no institutional pressures for permanence. Friendship ties, in the last analysis, depend on free choice and bonds of affection in contrast to neighbourhood ties, which depend on face-to-face contact, and kinship structures, which rest on permanent relationships. According to this theory the advantage of neighbourhood or face-to-face contact is speed of reaction. In emergencies it is the neighbours who are likely to respond first (Germain & Gitterman, 1980; Litwak & Szelenyi, 1969). Other advantages are the potential influences neighbours have, to improve services which serve their neighbourhood and the opportunity to learn from observing neighbours in face-to-face situations.

With regard to children of divorce, both Mitchell (1985) and Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) concluded that more girls than boys had used their friends as a support system. Similarly Graham (1988) found that family and friends were the most common source of support for adults. Mitchell (1985) reported that children who had confided in friends found that sharing experiences and being aware of not being alone in their predicament were most helpful. However, according to Wallerstein and Kelly (1980: 221) "the friendship group cannot be thought of as a resource that is likely to help the troubled child" but

rather as a source of support for children who feel safe and secure. These authors found that those children who were able to confide in their friends were the children who lived in conflict-free homes, where their mothers were reasonably satisfied with their life-style and in addition were more comfortable talking things over with them.

It appears therefore that in a time of transitional crisis there is a greater tendency to turn to family members than to friends and neighbours. Moreover, the more secure child who is already able to benefit from support from the parent/s is the one most likely to draw on the support of friends.

3.2.2 Formal support networks

In this subsection mutual-aid groups and support from doctors, religious leaders, lawyers, groups, professional helpers and the school are discussed.

3.2.2.1 Mutual-aid groups

The terms "mutual-aid" and "self-help" groups tend to be used interchangeably (Golan, 1981), equating people helping themselves with people helping each other (Lee & Swenson, 1986).

Mutual-aid groups can be formally or informally organised with or without a hierarchy. Help may include individual help between members, group discussions and seminars. Sometimes voluntary or professional workers may facilitate groups or act as consultants. Weiss (1973: 322), from his observations of meetings and from interviews with members from one chapter of *Parents without Partners*, concluded that the organisation served four needs: a sustaining community, similarly placed friends, support for a sense of worth, and emotional attachment.

Social work practitioners need to be familiar with how self-help groups function so that they can work together with these groups. If there is a need, social workers may serve effectively as consultants to self-help groups without diminishing their independent functioning (Hepworth & Larsen, 1986).

3.2.2.2 Other formal support networks

There are many specialised professional people such as the family doctor, pediatrician, lawyer and religious leader, who are in a position to offer support to children whose parents divorce. It is shown below that support from these professionals is lacking, despite the fact that they would seem to be well-placed to provide such support.

(i) Medical doctors

Various studies (Dubowitz *et al.*, 1988; Mitchell, 1985; Weitzman & Adair, 1988) claim that doctors and pediatricians are well-placed to offer support to parents and children during divorce. However, doctors do not usually ask questions about the children when parents consult them about a marriage

breakdown (Richards & Dyson, 1982). The children themselves·therefore are unlikely to be offered support from doctors and must find support elsewhere.

(ii)   Lawyers

Lawyers are often the first professionals consulted by couples who are divorcing. The weakness of an adversarial divorce system is that it encourages ongoing conflict between the two spouses. "Lawyers who typically finalize divorce through the adversarial system, require training in divorce-related developmental family tasks; the effects of divorce and concomitant custody and access issues on adults and children; and the implications and benefits of joint custody" (Graham, 1988: 424).

The wheels have been set in motion for a more supportive legal system in South Africa and there is a strong belief in many quarters that a counselling system would result in smoother divorces and happier children of divorced parents (Inside South Africa, 1988).

(iii)   Religious leaders

Much of the research indicates a dearth of support from religious leaders. The research of Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) showed that fewer than five per cent of the children were counselled by a church congregation or religious leader. These findings are confirmed by Graham (1988), who reported that no children mentioned having received support from church institutions. Further evidence of this is reflected in a statement by Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989: 7): "(A)lthough half of the families in our study belong to churches or synagogues not one clergyman came to call on the adults or children during the divorce."

(iv)   Professional helpers

"The professional system lies at the far end of the continuum, often chosen when all else fails" (Golan, 1981: 251). Professional intervention may take a number of forms such as direct work with individuals, family therapy, group services and structured educational programmes. The use of groups in dealing with life transitions has expanded over the past few years in professional settings. Some programmes are provided within established agencies as part of ongoing services for groups of divorcing adults or children whose parents are divorced.

It would seem that whether children seek and benefit from professional helpers such as social workers is dependent on the individual. For some, the opportunity of help from a professional person may not be available. In Mitchell's study (1985) five children said that they had at some stage seen a social worker. Two girls opposed the idea of seeing a social worker. Two children who had received social work support at the age of 16, many years after the divorce, appreciated it. In Graham's study (1988) no children mentioned having received support from the helping professions.

3.2.2.3 The school as a support system

Schools are often the one constant at a time when there are many other changes in a child's life (Cantor, 1977; Drake, 1981; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). At school children often have access to helping professionals such as counsellors, psychologists, school social workers and understanding teachers. Moreover, children are involved with school and school-related activities for approximately one-third of their waking hours each week (Drake, 1981). Rutter *et al.* (1980) estimate the time spent in school to be approximately 15 000 hours from the age of five until school leaving. The school therefore is a very appropriate resource for offering support to the child whose parents separate or divorce, in order to enable them to cope with the transitional crisis (Cantor, 1977; Drake, 1981). However, although the school is a natural support network there is often a lack of support from the school (Drake, 1981; Graham, 1988; Mitchell, 1985; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Graham's results showed that none of the children in her sample mentioned having received support from schools. Mitchell (1985) found that only five children in her sample stated that their teachers had given them warm support. More than half the children in Wallerstein and Kelly's study had no support at all from the school. A finding that emerged from Wallerstein and Kelly's study (1980: 278) is that the children who were able to utilise support from parents, siblings and peers were those who could turn to teachers for support and comfort. Moreover, the findings of these authors suggested that the school served as a good support system only to those children who were doing well academically and were relatively well adjusted. They also concluded that a child's ability to utilise the school for support when there is a crisis increases significantly with age.

There are a number of ways in which the school can offer support. Allers (1980) suggests certain methods by which schools could provide support to children who are adjusting to the divorce of their parents. These methods are: teachers to learn about divorce and its consequences, teachers to be alert for signs of stress and maintain close contact with parents especially when signs of stress are recognised, teachers to talk to children privately, children to be taught the words to express feelings, literature about divorce to be kept available in classrooms and libraries, when necessary children to be referred to professional helpers such as school psychologists, social workers, counsellors and other professionals and finally discussions to be held which will enable all children to understand divorce and its effects.

Interventions can be indirect or direct (Drake, 1981). Indirect interventions involve working with those who have direct contact with the child such as parents or school personnel. Direct interventions such as individual or group counselling or classroom discussions are not always allowed in schools and sometimes children are not receptive to these methods. Carlile (1991) makes suggestions for school teachers: know the children and the most important family details, encourage an open expression and acceptance of feelings, use bibliotherapy, that is, read books about divorce to children, demonstrate to children that they are not alone, be tolerant of changes, demonstrate an acceptance of a variety of family structures and modify letters and assignments to demonstrate this, and finally keep communication open with parents. It is important for teachers to be sensitive to the situation of children of divorce without assuming that they will present major problems and without labelling them (Fredericks, Rasinski & Ritty, 1991; Leahey, 1984). Leahey states that "educators are in a position to initiate discussion and to model acceptance of various family life styles".

Group sessions for children of divorce have been advocated by a number of people from the helping professions (Cantor, 1977; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980).

Parents often make it difficult for schools to provide support because they do not inform the school timeously of the divorce. This may be due to embarrassment and shame, a lack of understanding of the effects of divorce on behaviour and performance in school, and the fear that teachers will label the child (Drake, 1981; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Strauss & McGann, 1987).

Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) found that in general teachers' attitudes varied from extreme sensitivity to expecting children to continue to function academically as they had in the past. An important task of the school and the counsellor in a primary school is to clarify for the child what divorce is, what it means and what it does not mean (Wallerstein & Bundy, 1984).

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

In this chapter the findings obtained from the two sets of interviews (one of these with 63 children — selected as described in 1.8.1 — and the other with their 44 custodial parents) are presented.

4.1   BIOGRAPHIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

The proportion of girls and boys was approximately equal with slightly more girls (N = 33/52 %) than boys (N = 30/48 %). The ages of the children ranged from 7-13 years. There were approximately equal proportions of boys and girls in the age groups 7-9 years and 10-13 years. All the children with the exception of four (6 %) lived with one or more sibling.

There were approximately equal proportions of children whose parents had been divorced less than a year, 1-2 years, 2-3 years, 3-4 years and 4-5 years. The average duration of marriages prior to divorce was 10,59 years with a standard deviation of 3,81 years. Although there was a large range of years married (1-17 years), a small number of parents (N = 4/9 %) had been married for five years or fewer prior to divorce.

Three-quarters of the mothers (N = 33/75 %) were between the ages of 31 and 40 years. Nearly all had achieved matriculation (43 %) or a tertiary qualification (45 %). Their occupations were categorised as secretarial, technical/sales and managerial/professional. More mothers (N = 19/43 %) were in technical/sales oriented jobs than in any other category. Just over half of the respondents (N = 25/55 %) were employed full time at the time of the interview. The remainder were in part-time employment. Half of the mothers received an income of between R36 000 and R60 999. Few mothers received less than R20 999 or above R60 999.

4.2   IMPLICATIONS OF THE DIVORCE FOR THE CHILD'S LIFE SITUATION

Much has been written about the short-term and long-term effects of divorce on children (Mitchell, 1985; Morgan, 1985; Rutter, 1971; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1975, 1976). In the present study the implications of the parents' divorce for the children's lives have been assessed from two perspectives: that of the children themselves and that of their mothers. Assessment of the dual perspectives shows the degree of consensus between these parents and their children on the issue of the consequences of divorce for children.

This section covers findings on the children's perceptions of various aspects of the divorce as it affected themselves. In addition, comparisons are made between the perceptions of the parent and those of the (elder) child. In analysing any association between parents and children only the responses of the elder child were considered so as not to bias results in favour of parents with more than one child. Hereby

the responses of all children can be considered to be independent and there were no violations of any statistical assumptions of independence. For the comparisons, cross-tabulations are presented and where possible the Chi-square or Fisher's Exact statistics are provided.

4.2.1 Child's life situation after divorce — Life perceived as easier or more difficult

Children were asked: "Has your life become easier or more difficult since the divorce?" Over half of the children (N = 36/57 %) said that life had become more difficult. Eleven (18 %) said that life after divorce was easier for them. One (2 %) could not answer and 15 (24 %) were ambivalent, saying that in some ways it was easier and in others more difficult.

In order to gain more insight into why children found life more difficult, children were asked to give their reasons for their answer. Of the 36 children who perceived life as more difficult 22 (61 %) said that the reason was that they missed their father. The difficulty involved in sharing time between their mother and their father was given as a reason by five children (14 %), financial problems by four (11 %), conflict of loyalty by three (8 %) and parents' fighting by two (6 %). Loss of a father or non-custodial parent has been cited by many authors as the most difficult outcome for children of divorce (Graham, 1988; Mitchell, 1985; Wallerstein, 1987; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980).

Comparisons were made to establish if there was any correlation between the child's perception of life as easier or more difficult after divorce and certain variables, namely age of the child, gender of the child and length of time since the divorce. No significant relationships emerged for any of these variables.

4.2.2 Positive and negative aspects of the divorce for the children

To gain further insight into their perceptions about their life after the divorce children were asked to elaborate on what was "good" and what was "bad" about the divorce. The words "good" and "bad", although not entertained in academic thinking and writing, were deliberately used by the researcher because she felt that these words would make functional sense to the children. While the expression "positive" and "negative" aspects were not used in the original questions they must be read as equivalent to what was considered "good" and what was considered "bad". Forty-four children (70 %) reported that a positive aspect of divorce was the reduced amount of tension in the home. Thirteen (21 %) did not believe there to be any positive aspects about divorce whilst six (10 %) cited gains such as: "I get the best of both worlds", "I have two bedrooms", "I get to see Mom and Dad alone", and "When you get mad at one parent you can go to the other". The high number of children who said that there was less tension after the divorce confirms the findings of Rosen (1977) and Walczak and Burns (1984).

The responses to the question as to what the children perceived as "bad" about the divorce revealed that the majority of children (N = 38/60 %) considered not having a united family to be a negative aspect. This finding is once again consistent with that of Rosen (1977), who found that the loss of a united family was the most frequently identified negative aspect for children of divorce. Fifteen children (24 %) cited continued fighting between parents as "bad" while two children (3 %) reported

financial difficulties. Eight (13 %) did not know, or considered there to be nothing "bad" about the divorce.

The responses to this question were also analysed further according to the children's gender but again no significant relationship emerged.

4.2.3 Comparisons between parents' and children's perceptions of life after divorce and of positive and negative aspects of divorce

Cross-tabulations of the positive and negative aspects of divorce cited by parents and their children are shown in Table 1 and Table 2.

TABLE 1   **CROSS-TABULATION OF PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTS AND THEIR ELDER CHILDREN ON POSITIVE ASPECTS OF THE DIVORCE (N = 44 PAIRS)**

Children's perceptions \ Parents' perceptions	Less tension	Best of both parents	Don't know	Total
Less tension	16	5	9	30
Best of both parents	2	1	2	5
Nothing	6	0	3	9
TOTAL	24	6	14	44

An analysis of Table 1 reveals that in only 17 cases (39 %) was there consensus as to what parents and children considered to be the positive aspects of the divorce. Of these, 16 (94 %) agreed on less tension as a positive aspect. The consensus is low, revealing that parents are not in touch with what their children are thinking and feeling. This finding confirms what Mitchell concluded, namely that

> children had tended to agree with their parents' accounts of practical changes in family circumstances. But children and parents gave strikingly different pictures of their feelings and of their comprehension of reasons for separation. (Mitchell, 1985: 177)

In Table 2 only 38 pairs of responses are cross-tabulated because in the case of six parent-child pairs either the parent or the child did not cite any negative aspects of the divorce. There was a consensus of 45 % between parents and children. This consensus all occurred in the category of missing father/not having a united family, which were considered comparable responses.

28

TABLE 2 CROSS-TABULATION OF PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTS AND THEIR ELDER CHILDREN ON THE NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF THE DIVORCE (N = 38 PAIRS)

Parents' perceptions / Children's perceptions	Miss father	Parental fighting	Loyalty conflict	Financial	Total
Not united	17	1	0	3	21
Parental fighting	8	0	1	2	11
Don't know or nothing	4	0	0	1	5
Financial	1	0	0	0	1
TOTAL	30	1	1	6	38

Eleven children (25 %) believed that parental fighting was "bad" compared to only one parent (2 %). The clinical experience of the present researcher is that parental conflict during separation and divorce is a major problem of divorce which inhibits the smooth adjustment of the child to the divorce. It is possible that so few mothers cited parental conflict as "bad" because they may not have wanted to admit to the continued conflict, or there may be a tendency to overlook the extent of children's feelings and stress concerning parental dissension. The low consensus between parents and children is borne out by the literature. Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) found that parents had not appreciated just how upset their children had been at the marital breakdown. Similarly Mitchell (1985) found that parents frequently misjudged their children's reactions to divorce as they were often in too much emotional turmoil themselves to appreciate what the divorce was doing to their children.

A cross-tabulation of the responses of parents and their children on life as easier or more difficult after divorce is presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3   CROSS-TABULATION OF RESPONSES OF PARENTS AND THEIR ELDER CHILDREN ON LIFE AS EASIER OR MORE DIFFICULT AFTER DIVORCE (N = 43 PAIRS)

Children's perceptions \ Parents' perceptions	Easier	More difficult	Same	Total
Easier	4	0	3	7
More difficult	5	12	8	25
Same	6	1	4	11
TOTAL	15	13	15	43

One child was not able to provide a clearcut response, hence 43 pairs of responses were analysed. Parental responses were fairly evenly distributed according to the degree of difficulty of post-divorce life. Over half of the children considered post-divorce life to be more difficult as compared with under one-third of parents. There was a consensus rate of 47 %. According to Goode (1956) mothers tend to believe that their children have better lives after divorce than if the conflict continues. Children do not always agree with this.

4.2.4 Children's feelings upon realising that parents were to divorce

Children were asked to describe their feelings when they realised that their parents were getting divorced. Forty-one children cited one feeling and 20 cited two feelings. Thus 81 feelings were expressed. The feeling most frequently remembered by the children was sadness (65 % of the feelings expressed).

4.3   PREPAREDNESS OF CHILDREN FOR THE DIVORCE

The extent to which parents prepare children for divorce is considered to constitute a measure of support for that child. Preparation includes providing the child with a reasonable explanation of the divorce according to his developmental level as well as the consequences for that child. Preparedness of children for the divorce is their readiness for the divorce of their parents. Clinical experience has shown the researcher that children are not adequately, if at all, prepared by parents for the divorce and for its outcome. The inadequate preparation on the part of parents contributes to children feeling insecure, abandoned, confused and overwhelmed, resulting in a lack of clarity about the immediate future, a tendency to fantasise and an inability to accept and communicate their feelings. Through an analysis of the responses of the children their preparedness for the divorce of their parents and their understanding of the meaning of divorce and its consequences were explored. Parents' perceptions of

the preparedness of their children for divorce and its consequences were explored in order to measure the degree of consensus between parents' and children's perceptions on this issue.

4.3.1 Children's understanding of the meaning of the term "divorce"

The explanations of the term "divorce" provided by children were many. In decreasing order of frequency, it was conceptualised as: separation (75 %), when parents do not have a good marriage (16 %), when one parent did not live with them (3 %) and sadness (2 %). Three children (5 %) could not answer the question.

4.3.2 Children's reactions upon realising that parents were to divorce

Children were asked: "Were you surprised when you realised that your parents were going to get a divorce?" Approximately two-thirds reported having been surprised. Reasons given for being surprised were that they knew their parents were fighting but did not think that it would result in divorce, and that they did not know that their parents were fighting. Reasons given for not being surprised were that they had heard their parents fight and that there had been talk about divorce. It appears from the findings that often even when children are aware of the conflict between parents they do not anticipate divorce occurring. Parents therefore cannot assume that the child's knowledge of conflict between them is an assurance for the expectation of divorce.

4.3.3 Providing information to the child prior to the divorce

The children were asked if they had been told about the divorce of their parents before the divorce. Only one-third of the children (N = 21/33 %) said that they had been told prior to one parent moving out. Comments from children who had not been told before included "I started looking for Dad's clothes and discovered that they were not there", and "My mother fetched me from school and told me that Dad had gone to live somewhere else". Identification of the person who told the child about the divorce provides the researcher with a measure of the source of support at the time. Twenty-one children (33 %) said that they had been told about the divorce by their mothers as compared with only nine (14 %) who said that they had been told by their fathers. Eight children (13 %) claimed to have been informed by both parents. The remaining children did not remember or did not know.

4.3.4 Preparing the child for the consequences of the divorce

The mother featured more often than the father in communication of the consequences of divorce. Sixteen children (25 %) said that their mother had communicated with them about the consequences of the divorce whilst only five children (8 %) cited the father in this regard. For the vast majority (93 %) of the children, being prepared for the consequences meant being told when and how often they would see their father.

4.3.5 Comparisons between the perceptions of parents and children concerning the children's preparedness for the divorce

In analysing any association between parents and children the responses of the parent and the elder child were considered so as not to bias results in favour of parents with more than one child.

Responses on certain items were cross-tabulated. The responses are shown in Tables 4, 5 and 6.

TABLE 4: CROSS-TABULATION OF PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTS AND THEIR ELDER CHILDREN OF WHETHER CHILDREN WERE SURPRISED BY THE DIVORCE (N = 44 PAIRS)

Children's perceptions / Parents' perceptions	Yes	No	Don't know	Total
Yes	18	10	1	29
No	5	6	0	11
Don't remember	4	0	0	4
TOTAL	27	16	1	44

From Table 4 it can be seen that there is consensus in 24 cases (55 %). Eighteen pairs of parents and children (41 %) agreed that the divorce came as a surprise while six pairs agreed that there was no surprise. In ten cases parents did not think that their children were surprised; their children, however, said that they were surprised.

Children were asked: "Who told you about the divorce?" Parents were asked: "Who explained to the child that his/her parents were getting divorced?" The responses are presented in Table 5:

TABLE 5: CROSS-TABULATION OF PARENTS' AND THEIR ELDER CHILDREN'S RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ELICITING WHO TOLD THE CHILDREN ABOUT THE DIVORCE (N = 44 PAIRS)

Children's perceptions \ Parent's perceptions	Mother	Both parents	Father	Mother & Psycho-logist	No-one	Total
Mother	9	5	0	0	1	15
Both parents	4	2	0	0	0	6
Father	4	2	1	0	1	8
No-one	3	1	1	1	0	6
Don't remember	3	4	0	1	1	9
TOTAL	23	14	2	2	3	44

From Table 5 it is evident that there was little agreement between parents and the elder child on the person who explained about the divorce. There was consensus in only 12 cases (27 %). In only two pairs (5 %) was there agreement that both parents had told the children of the divorce. From the perceptions of both the mother and the elder child it is evident that children were told most frequently by the mother. However, more mothers (N = 23/52 %) perceived themselves as having told their children about the divorce than their children perceived them to have done (N = 15/34 %). This discrepancy may be due to a social desirability factor in the responses of mothers.

In Table 6 the consensus on the child's understanding of the divorce is presented.

TABLE 6: CROSS-TABULATION OF PARENTS' AND THEIR ELDER CHILDREN'S RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS REGARDING CHILD'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE TERM DIVORCE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS (N = 44 PAIRS)

Children's perceptions \ Parents' perceptions	Yes	No	Don't know	Total
Yes	4	14	2	20
No	3	8	1	12
Don't remember	3	8	1	12
TOTAL	10	30	4	44

According to the findings from this table there was little agreement between the parents and the children. Almost half of the children believed that they understood the explanations compared with ten parents (23 %) who believed that their children understood. In 14 cases (32 %) the parents did not think the children understood but the children believed that they did.

4.4 CHILDREN'S PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR USE OF INFORMAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Informal support systems in the present research implies support from family, friends and neighbours. Support from family is discussed under the headings Support from parents, Support from grandparents and Support from siblings. Support from friends includes children's own friends as well as their parents' friends. Throughout this section it must be borne in mind that all children in this sample were living with their mothers. A change in custody arrangements could alter perceptions, particularly about support from parents.

4.4.1 Support from parents

4.4.1.1 Confidant of the children at the time of the divorce

The children were asked with whom they shared their feelings when they realised that their parents were getting divorced. The responses to the question are found in Figure 1.

From Figure 1 it can be seen that as many as 18 children (29 %) did not share their feelings with anyone. The most frequent response was "mother" (N = 20/32 %). Only six children (10 %) spoke to

34

both parents and none spoke only to the father. An analysis was made of the relationship between the gender of the child and his/her confidant. A similar proportion of boys and girls named their mother as their main confidant (nine boys 30 %, and ten girls 30 %). Irrespective of gender, therefore, more of the children who confided in someone confided in their mother than in any other person.

FIGURE 1 PIEGRAPH SHOWING RELATIVE FREQUENCY OF CONSULTATION OF CONFIDANT (N = 63)

Parents and Others
10%

Friends
3%

Don't Know
8%

Other Family
3%

Psychologist/
Social Worker/ Doctor
6%

Mother
32%

Mother & Father
10%

No-one
29%
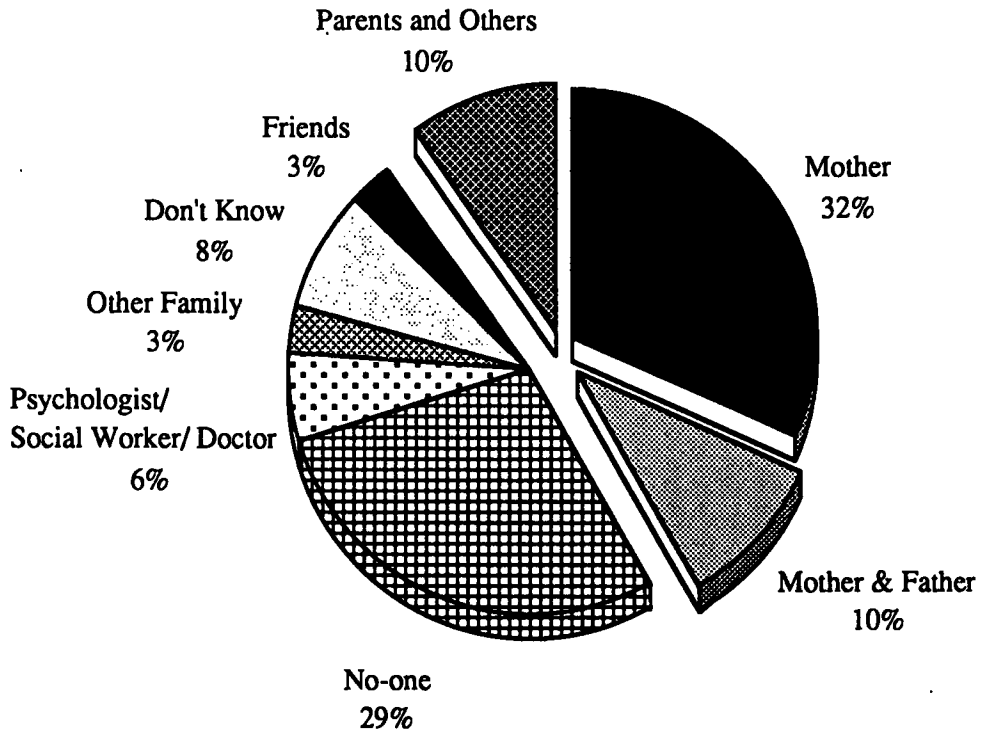
4.4.1.2 Children's perceptions of whether they have been able to discuss their feelings about the divorce with their parents

Over two-thirds of the children (N = 43/68 %) were able to talk to their mothers about their feelings about the divorce. Under half of the children (N = 31/49 %) were able to talk to their fathers about their feelings. The majority of these children found it helpful to talk to mothers and fathers (N = 40/93 % and N = 24/80 % respectively). Slightly more girls (74 %) than boys (68 %) said that they could talk to their mothers and fathers about their feelings.

4.4.1.3 Family member most easily conversed with as a confidant

The mother featured much more frequently than the father as the family member most easily conversed with (cited by 38 children (60 %) and five children (8 %) respectively).

35

4.4.1.4 Person or persons considered to be the most helpful

The children were asked to specify the person who had helped them the most since the divorce. The responses are categorised and presented in the form of a pie chart (Figure 2).

FIGURE 2   PIEGRAPH OF THE RELATIVE FREQUENCY OF THE PERSON WHO HELPED THE MOST (N = 63)
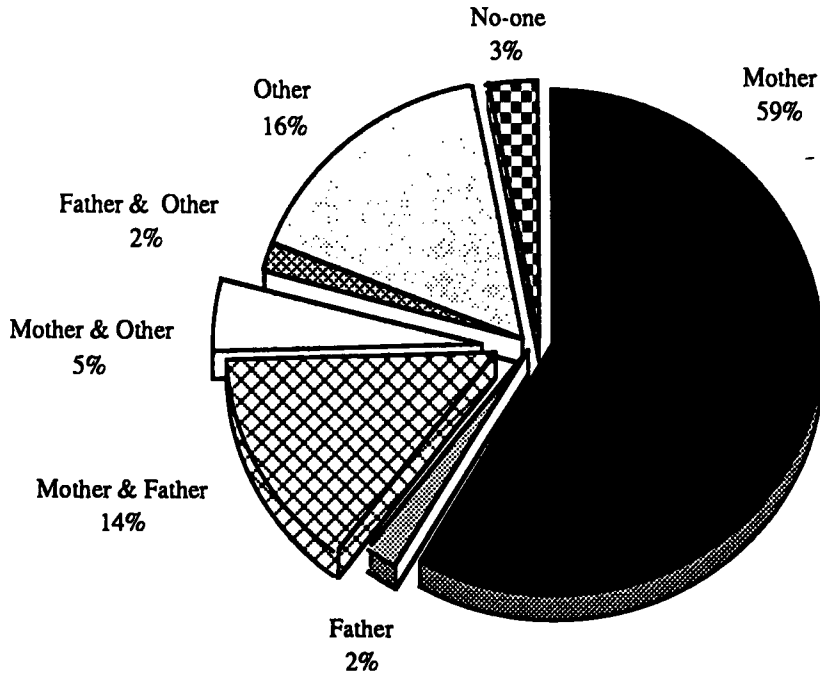
From an examination of Figure 2 it can be seen that the mother was to a large extent the person whom the child considered to have been most helpful. Over three-quarters of the children (N = 49/78 %) cited their mother alone or in combination with others. Eleven children (18 %) considered their father alone or in combination with others to have been the most helpful.

4.4.1.5 Supportive role of the custodial and non-custodial parent in the school life of the child

The role of the school in providing support to the child of divorce was investigated. The children were asked questions regarding the family member who provided them with emotional support on school issues.

The mother was reported by the children to be the major source of information to the teacher at the time of separation and divorce. Of the 26 children who said that the teacher knew of the divorce 50 % said that the mother told the teacher. There was no-one who reported that the father alone told the teacher and only two children (7 %) said that both parents did.

Of the 57 children who reported that their present teacher knew about the divorce, 16 (28 %) said that the teacher had been told by the mother. Only one child (2 %) said that the father told the teacher. Similarly, more children reported that their mother had informed the principal about the divorce than their father (N = 18/45 % and N = 4/10 % respectively).

An examination of the mothers' involvement either separately or with others in the children's school activities demonstrates that in most cases the mother supported the child (N = 60/95 %). However, for 39 children there was involvement from the father, either alone or with others, which is a higher proportion than in some of the other areas investigated.

Virtually all the responses to the question of to whom the school report was shown involved the mother, either alone or with others (N = 62/98 %). However, two-thirds of the children (N = 42/67 %) also showed their fathers their school report. It may be that going to concerts and being shown a report are more passive and easier ways for the father to support a child than for example discussing the divorce with a teacher.

4.4.2   Support from grandparents

The researcher has found that in practice grandparents are often in a position to play a vital role in providing support to children and their divorced parents. The supportive role of maternal and paternal grandparents when parents get divorced was therefore investigated.

4.4.2.1 Number of grandparents still alive, living near or far

Table 7 shows the numbers of children with at least one grandparent of each pair alive and whether these grandparents live near or far.

TABLE 7   FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF GRANDPARENTS LIVING NEAR OR FAR

Proximity	Maternal		Paternal	
	n	%	n	%
Near	50	85	37	69
Far	9	15	17	31

There was a slightly higher percentage of deceased paternal grandparents than deceased maternal grandparents (14 % as against 6 %). This difference may be due to fathers being older than mothers (and therefore having older parents) or it may be merely an idiosyncrasy of the sample. All distances within an hour's travelling time by car from the child's home were considered to be near. Most grandparents lived near to their grandchildren. More maternal grandparents (N = 50/85 %) lived near than did paternal grandparents (N = 37/ 69 %).

The researcher expected the maternal grandparents, being the custodial parent's own parents, to provide more support. The fact that more maternal grandparents lived near added weight to this expectation.

4.4.2.2 Communication about the divorce between grandparents and grandchildren

Approximately three-quarters of the children (N = 46/73 %) reported that they had not talked to their grandparents about the divorce. Of the 17 who had spoken to grandparents about the divorce, 15 (88 %) had spoken to a maternal grandparent. Most often the maternal grandmother was confided in rather than the maternal grandfather (11 out of 15/ 73 %). In order to gain insight into the role that the grandparents play in providing emotional support, the children were asked the kinds of things that they found helpful to discuss.

Over half of the children who had confided in grandparents found it helpful to discuss their problems and feelings. The girl who said that it was not helpful, gave as a reason that her grandmother "takes sides".

4.4.2.3 Grandparent perceived to be the most helpful

The relative importance of maternal and paternal grandparents was considered via the children's responses to whether there was one grandparent or grandparents who helped the most. Of the 46 (73 %) who said there were, 34 (74 %) specified the maternal grandparents as the most helpful.

4.4.3 Support from siblings, friends and neighbours

Some researchers have claimed that the strength of the sibling relationship is particularly apparent when there is a fundamental change in the structure of families (Bank & Kahn, 1975; Minuchin, 1977; Wallerstein, 1985; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). Wallerstein and Kelly (1977) state that the presence of siblings is more comforting than it is destructive. According to these authors, "only children" were found to be more vulnerable to the stresses of divorce. However, there are studies which have not found a positive relationship between the presence of siblings and post-divorce adjustment (Landis, 1960; Rosen, 1977). The present research aims at an investigation of the emotional support of siblings.

Nearly two-thirds of the children had not spoken to their siblings about the divorce. Reasons included: "It's hard to get on with him or her", "I hate my brother — my ex-brother", "She feels different from me", and "He will tell others".

Thirteen children (21 %) stated that no siblings were involved in help with homework.

One-third remembered having confided in a friend about the divorce at the time of the divorce, whilst over half of the children (N = 34/54 %) reported having confided in a friend since the divorce. In other words, more children confided in a friend since the divorce than at the time of the divorce.

Most children (92 %) said that they knew other children whose parents were divorced. Of these, almost three-quarters found this helpful. However, only just over one-third (N = 21/36 %) had discussed their experiences with others.

Many more children perceived the friends of their mothers as available to provide support than the friends of their fathers (N = 30/48 % and N = 6/20 % respectively). Of those children who perceived their parents' friends as available to them, few utilised the support (N = 6/20 % for mothers and N = 3/25 %, for fathers).

Although the majority of children (N = 43/68 %) stated that they or their family were on friendly terms with their neighbours, only 23 (37 %) stated that they could request help from them. Half of the 40 children who did not believe that they could approach a neighbour for help thought that it would have been helpful if they could have.

4.5   CHILDREN'S PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR USE OF FORMAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Investigation of formal support systems included religious leaders, medical doctors, discussion groups, single-parent organisations and professional helpers.

Religious leaders and medical doctors were hardly ever consulted by the children concerning the divorce of their parents. Only three children (5 %) consulted a religious leader and only four (7 %) a medical doctor. Six children (13 %) belonged to a formal group where divorce was discussed. Only three children (5 %) reported that they and their parents had ever belonged to a single-parent organisation. Professional helpers however were seen much more frequently. Over two-thirds (68 %) said that they had spoken to a professional helper (psychologist or social worker). Forty out of the 43 children (93 %) considered that talking to a psychologist or social worker had been helpful. These 40 children were requested to specify what kinds of things they found helpful to discuss. The majority (N = 31/78 %) said they found talking about their feelings helpful, six (15 %) said that talking had helped to clarify issues and three (8 %) did not know.

4.6   CUSTODIAL PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF INFORMAL AND FORMAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Some aspects of the mothers' perceptions are highlighted.

4.6.1 Extent to which mothers were able to provide emotional support to their children

The mothers were asked to indicate on a six-point Likert scale the degree of emotional support they were able to give to their children at the time of their divorce. Most of the mothers (N = 38/86 %) indicated that they were able to provide support either a good part, most, or all of the time. These findings are not in accord with those of previous studies (Graham, 1988; Walczak & Burns, 1984; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980) which claim that at the time of the divorce the parents are preoccupied with their own difficulties and are not able to provide emotional support to their children. Such reasons were cited by only six mothers (14 %) who claimed that their limited support to their children was the result of emotional strain. The responses of the other mothers — those who claimed that they were well able to provide support — may have been tainted by social desirability. However, their children confirm having received support from their mothers.

4.6.2 Extent to which children received support from others in their social system

Mothers were asked to rate to what extent they perceived the children to have received support from significant others. According to the mothers the children received more support from maternal relatives and friends than paternal relatives and friends. Although not measured in an identical way, the responses indicated that mothers tended to perceive the support from their friends to be greater than it was perceived by the children (compare Section 4.4.3). There was however agreement between parents and children that support from maternal grandparents was greater than from paternal grandparents (see Section 4.4.2).

Mothers were then asked about siblings, and about formal support systems. By far the highest number of responses was recorded in respect of siblings (64 %). This degree of support, as perceived by the mothers, was far greater than indicated by the children (see Section 4.4.3).

4.6.3 Factors or people considered important for the social and emotional well-being of a child of divorce

Mothers were given the opportunity to make comments about social and emotional support for a child of divorce. Each mother had two comments. In total there were 62 comments and they are presented in Table 8.

TABLE 8 FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF ASPECTS CONSIDERED BY MOTHERS TO BE IMPORTANT FOR SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN OF DIVORCE (N = 62 COMMENTS)

Aspects considered important	n	%
Co-operation of both parents	12	19
Professional help	14	23
Stable home	10	16
Single-parent group	7	11
Support from father	5	8
Education of teachers	4	6
Family and friends	3	5
After school day centre	2	3
Improved legal system	2	3
Active role of grandparents	1	2
Existence of single friends	1	2
Jewish organisation	1	2

The three categories mentioned most frequently were: increased professional help (N = 14/23 %), the need for co-operation of both parents (N = 12/19 %) and the importance of a stable home life (N = 10/16 %).

4.7 THE SCHOOL AS A SUPPORT SYSTEM

Although children are involved with school and school-related activities for a considerable part of their waking hours (Keniston, 1978; Rutter *et al.*, 1980; Drake, 1981) the supportive role of the school has not been researched. Instead research has been focused on the home environment at the various stages of divorce. The impact of the home life on the child should not be understated but it is precisely when there is a breakdown in the home that the school becomes a valuable resource. In the wake of a transitional crisis the school is often the one constant in children's lives providing structure when the other major structure in their life is weakening. A focus of the present research is the assessment of the

supportive role of the school from the perspective of the children and from that of their custodial parents.

4.7.1   Perceptions of children on the school as a support system

4.7.1.1 Interaction between teacher and child on the issue of divorce

Of the reduced sample size of 51 children (all at one of the three schools at the time of the divorce), just over half (51 %) reported that the teacher knew about the divorce. All the children were asked if the teacher had spoken to them about the divorce. Approximately a quarter (26 %) remembered the teacher having talked to them. Of these, most (85 %) felt comfortable about this. Three-quarters of the children whose teachers did not speak to them preferred it that way.

It appears that children expect that they would not like their teachers talking to them about the divorce. However, when their teachers do, a high percentage feel comfortable.

Over two-thirds of the children said that the present teacher knew about the divorce. Of these, only a quarter stated that the teacher had spoken to them. Most of these children (86 %) claimed that the discussion had been helpful.

4.7.1.2 Interaction between principal and child on the issue of divorce

Almost two-thirds of the children said that the principal knew about the divorce and most (90 %) felt comfortable about the principal knowing. Very few children (10 %) acknowledged that the principal had discussed the divorce with them. All of these children found the discussion helpful.

4.7.1.3 Adults in the school whom the children perceived as able to help

Almost two-thirds of the children (N = 41/65 %) said that they could approach an adult in the school to discuss problems and feelings. In most cases (N = 33/81 %) the adult cited as a confidant was the school social worker or psychologist. Most (81 %) believed that the person they could approach was available whenever they needed him or her.

4.7.1.4 Divorce as part of the school curriculum

In the 1990s educationists emphasise the need for affective education, meaning the emotional preparation of the child. Included in affective education is the understanding and acceptance of different kinds of families, for example the divorced family. Clarification of the divorced family facilitates an understanding, acceptance and tolerance of this family. Less than half of the children (N = 28/45 %) said that it had been discussed at school. Of those who indicated that there had been a discussion only ten (36 %) believed that the lesson on divorce had been of help to them. The reasons

cited were the facilitation of a better understanding and the realisation that others experienced similar problems.

4.7.1.5 Source of support when children's work and behaviour deteriorate

Only a few children reported involvement from the school when work or behaviour deteriorated (N = 3/20 % and N = 1/17 % respectively).

4.7.1.6 Suggestions as to how the school could be helpful to a child of divorce

Of the 63 children, 21 were unable to provide any suggestions, again possibly because of the abstract nature of the question. The 42 responses are presented in Table 9.

TABLE 9 FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF CHILDREN'S SUGGESTIONS OF HOW SCHOOLS COULD PROVIDE SUPPORT TO CHILDREN OF DIVORCE (N = 42)

Suggestions	n	%
Emotional support	29	69
Discussion groups	7	17
Educating others	2	5
Keep confidentiality	1	2
Should not help	3	7

Of the 42 children who made suggestions, most (N = 29/69 %) suggested increased emotional support. Suggestions included "talk to children", "have a social worker explain to children" and "calm them down". The discussion groups suggested included discussion groups for children alone and those in which parents and children could have discussions together. The two children who suggested educating others said: "Teach others to have understanding — friends can help if they have understanding" and "Have a section in the library devoted to divorce." The one suggestion (2 %) that the school could be helpful by not spreading information touches on the very important point of maintaining confidentiality. One child who did not feel the school should help, remarked: "When your parents get divorced, I don't think you should expect special care."

4.7.2 Perceptions of the custodial parents on the supportive role of the school

Because the mothers have daily contact with the school through the child it was considered important to assess their perceptions of the support provided by the school to a child of divorce.

4.7.2.1 Supportive role of the teachers

Only parents who had had a child or children at King David Schools at the time of the divorce were included in this analysis. The responses of ten mothers were thus omitted, and the responses of 34 mothers analysed. Most parents (N = 31/91 %) had talked to the teacher about the divorce at the time of the divorce. Of these over three-quarters (N = 24/77 %) believed that the teacher had understood what divorce meant to the child. Three-quarters of these mothers perceived that the teacher conveyed that understanding to the child.

Most of the parents (N = 24/71 %) perceived the teacher as having provided positive support, that is a good part, most, or all of the time (according to the categories of the six-point Likert scale).

4.7.2.2 Supportive role of the school in general

Mothers also rated the extent of support from the school on the six-point Likert scale. Over half of the mothers perceived the support from the school as positive, that is they felt there to be support a good part of the time, most of the time, or all of the time.

The respondents who reported positive support from the school were asked to specify who provided the support. Twenty-three respondents gave two responses, and six gave three responses. A total of 72 responses were provided and they are presented in Table 10.

TABLE 10   FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF MOTHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF SOURCES OF SUPPORT IN THE SCHOOL (N = 72 RESPONSES)

Source of support	1st Response	2nd Response	3rd Response	Total	%
Principal	12	3	-	15	21
Teacher	12	10	1	23	32
Peer	12	1	-	13	18
Social worker/Psychologist	7	8	4	19	26
Other	-	1	1	2	3

It can be seen from this table that there is a fairly even distribution of support from principal, teachers, peers, social workers and psychologists. Minimally more parents stated that the teacher offered support as compared to the social worker (N = 23/32 % and N = 19/26 % respectively).

The attitude of the school towards the parents is considered important since it is only in an atmosphere of acceptance that parents will feel free to present problems and to be honest about their own and their children's reactions. The majority of the mothers (N = 35/80 %) described the attitude of the school as accepting. Four parents (5 %) said "indifferent" and three (7 %) said "critical".

4.7.2.3 Approach made by the custodial parent for support

Parents were asked if they had approached the school for help and support for their children. Almost two-thirds said that they had. The majority of mothers had approached either the principal or the principal and teacher. It is possible that the parents first approach either the principal or teacher and are then referred to the social worker or psychologist. Over two-thirds of these parents expressed satisfaction with the support rendered.

4.8   ANALYSIS OF THE ECO-MAP

The eco-map is used in social work practice to trace the social networks between the children and their families as well as the networks between the children and their immediate environment such as school, friends, professional helpers and religious institutions. It provides a pictorial representation of the children's social relationships according to their own perceptions. In this study the eco-map was administered as part of the interview with each of the children in the sample. The analysis of these eco-maps served to assess their potential use as independent research tools. The strength of relationships within a child's social networks was assessed according to four indicators: "strong", "tenuous", "stressful" and "no relationship". "Strong" referred to a meaningful, supportive and helpful relationship. "Stressful" and "conflicted" are used interchangeably. Because the study has focused more on the support of mother, father and school than on any other support system the attempt at validation of the eco-map was restricted to these three aspects.

4.8.1   Children's reactions

It was obvious to the researcher that the children enjoyed doing the eco-map exercise. They appeared to experience and enjoy a sense of importance when instructing the interviewer which connecting lines to draw. Furthermore the working relationship that had been established during the course of the interview between interviewer and interviewee was strengthened.

4.8.2   Example of a typical eco-map

One example of a completed eco-map is presented in Figure 3 to demonstrate how an eco-map is analysed and interpreted.

In this eco-map a boy aged 11 described his relationship with his mother and brother with whom he lives as "strong". His relationship with his father, in contrast, was described as "stressful". Ties with his maternal grandparents (MGP) were strong but those with his paternal grandparents (PGP) were weak. His relationship with his mother's friends was described as "weak" and with his father's friends as

"non-existent" — hence no line. It seems logical to expect that where the relationship between a child and the mother is stronger than between the child and the father the child's relationships with the maternal grandparents and mother's friends will be stronger than those with the paternal grandparents and father's friends. This has been borne out by the eco-map under discussion.

FIGURE 3   ECO-MAP OF BOY AGED 11
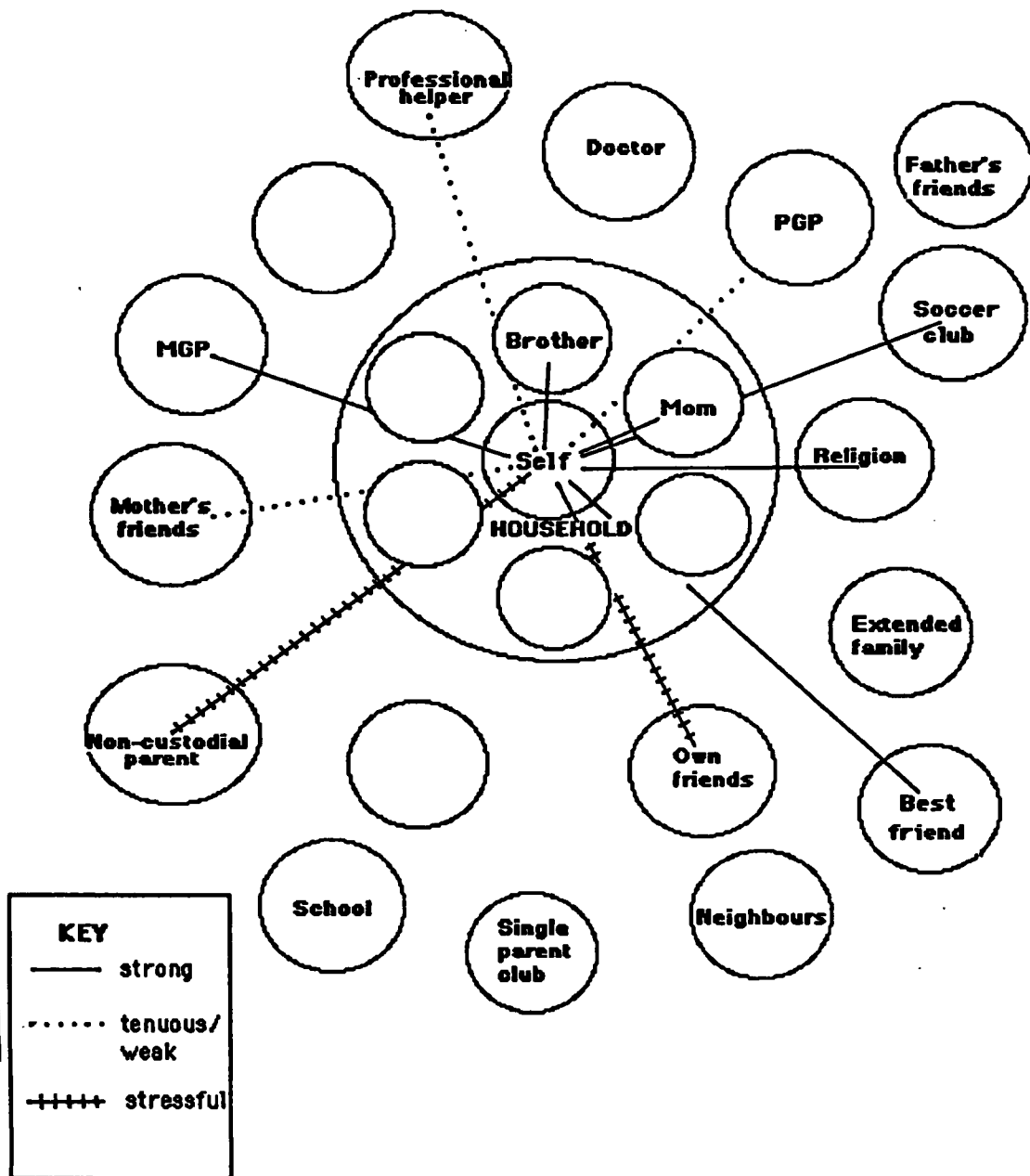
Other relationships considered strong or supportive were religion, a best friend and the soccer club. Although the boy described his relationship with a best friend as "strong", relationships with his other friends were described as "stressful". There was no relationship with the medical doctor, neighbours or a single-parent organisation — hence no line.

4.8.3 Potential use of the eco-map as an independent research tool

The objective was to measure whether the eco-map is a valid research tool and whether it can be used independently of a questionnaire or interview. In order to contain the scope of this part of the study the eco-maps are compared to the questionnaire responses only on the most important aspects of the questionnaire, that is mother, father and the school. The strength of these three relationships as indicated for the eco-maps was compared with the responses to the following questionnaire items:

-   "Since the divorce have you been able to talk to your Mom about how you felt about the divorce?" (Item 3.3a)
-   "Since the divorce have you been able to speak to your Dad about how you felt about the divorce?" (Item 3.4a)
-   "Is there an adult in the school whom you could talk to about the divorce?" (Item 3.16a)

The three questionnaire items chosen are the most direct indicators of the relationship between children and the mother, father and school respectively. The responses (Yes or No) to these questions were dichotomised into either "strong" or "not strong" relationships. Similarly the responses to the eco-map have been dichotomised into either "strong" or "not strong" (conflicted, weak or non-existent).

Validity was at its best (consensus = 79 %) when the relationship with mother on the eco-map was strong. There was an overall consistency rate of 73 % for the mother. In the case of the relationship with the father the overall rate of consistency was lower (60 %). The validity rate was even lower in the case of the school (36 %). The majority of the responses of children to school on the eco-map are therefore invalid.

The researcher concludes that the eco-map is inadequate as an independent research tool, although it proved to be useful in strengthening the respondent-researcher relationship. The eco-map responses are considered invalid rather than the questionnaire responses as, firstly, the interview schedule was more of an in-depth research tool and, secondly, the researcher is satisfied that the responses to the questionnaire items were consistent, after a thorough check of the more indirect responses to mother, father and school against the three direct questionnaire items.

4.9   SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In brief summary, the main findings were that children were ill-prepared for divorce, that there was lack of communication between parents and children, that custodial mothers were the strongest source of support to such children despite their own stress, and all other sources of informal support were underutilised. Formal sources of support other than professional helpers were underutilised. The school was found to be an important potential source of support in need of development. Lastly, it was found that the eco-map is invalid as an independent research tool.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Social work research is never complete without recommendations for prevention and intervention relevant to the research subject. A major objective of this research is to make important findings known and to make recommendations to professionals and non-professionals for maximising support for children of divorce.

In this chapter conclusions are made in respect of the major variables and recommendations, specifically for the helping professions.

5.1   IMPLICATIONS OF THE DIVORCE FOR THE LIFE SITUATION OF CHILDREN OF DIVORCE

The majority of children who perceived a change in either their mother or father indicated that these changes were associated with less support than prior to the divorce. Over half of the children in the sample believed that their lives during and after the divorce were more difficult than prior to the divorce. Of these, nearly two-thirds cited missing their father as the reason. The most frequent reason given for life being easier was that there was less tension. When asked to enumerate the positive aspects of divorce almost three-quarters of the children cited reduced tension at home. Conversely 60 % perceived the lack of a united family as a negative aspect. In other words even those children who claimed that post-divorce life was more difficult cited less tension as a positive aspect of divorce. The most commonly cited feeling in connection with the divorce was sadness.

RECOMMENDATION 1: **All those involved with children of divorce should encourage frequent contact with the non-custodial parent.**

The exception to this would be a parent who has abused a child or suffers from manifested personal pathologies which negatively affect the well-being and development of the child.

RECOMMENDATION 2: **Professionals working with divorcing and divorced parents should encourage them to maintain a co-operative relationship in the best interests of the child.**

(See 5.10 below on counselling and mediation services for an elaboration of this topic.)

RECOMMENDATION 3: **Parents should be made aware of the impact of divorce as a transition and informal and formal support systems for their children should be explored and utilised.**

RECOMMENDATION 4: **Children should be assisted in their sadness through, amongst other intervention modes, being brought to the understanding that to be sad because of parental divorce is to be expected, therefore natural.**

5.2 COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN

Two aspects of communication are discussed here. The first is the preparation with which the parents provide their children before the divorce, that is deliberate communication. The second refers to the degree to which parents are in touch with their children's emotions and perceptions at the time of and subsequent to the divorce.

5.2.1 Preparation

Approximately two-thirds of the children reported having been surprised by their parents' divorce even when they were aware that their parents were fighting. Parents therefore cannot assume that the child's knowledge of conflict between them will necessarily lead the child to expect divorce. Only one-third of the children said that they were told about the divorce prior to one parent moving out. Under half of the children said that they had been prepared for the consequences of divorce. These findings confirm a general impression which has been gained from social work practice as well as from other researchers (Mitchell, 1985; Rosen, 1977; Walczak & Burns, 1984; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980), namely that children are ill-prepared for divorce. It is paradoxical that at times when communication is most necessary it is most difficult to effect.

RECOMMENDATION 5: **Parents should prepare the children for divorce before major changes take place such as one parent moving out.**

RECOMMENDATION 6: **During such preparation particular attention should be given to future living arrangements, including those of the non-custodial parent; frequency and locality of contact with the non-custodial parent; the financial position of the family; and how to tell and explain the divorce to the child's friends and other significant others.**

Reassuring children that their parents are doing their best to consider them and their needs and that they are not responsible for the separation/divorce of their parents is also essential.

5.2.2 Degree of consensus between perceptions of parents and children

The consensus between parents and children on identical issues reflects the degree of communication between parents and children. The majority of the parents and their children did not concur on most issues. Consensus was lowest (between a quarter and approximately a third) on the issues of changes in school work, the person that told the children about the divorce, and whether the children understood what was being told. A slightly higher consensus rate (between a third and a half) was obtained for what parents and children considered positive and negative aspects of divorce for children. Only for the question as to whether the divorce had come as a surprise to the children and for perceived changes in behaviour was there consensus in the majority of the cases (over half and nearly two-thirds respectively.)

With regard to preparing the child, more mothers (over half) perceived themselves as having told their children about the divorce than their children perceived them to have done (one-third). Almost half of the children believed that they understood the explanations, as compared with ten parents (23 %) who believed that their children understood. In one-third of the cases the parents did not think the children understood the explanations of divorce but the children believed that they did. From the findings it can be concluded that the degree of consensus is mostly low and indicative of a need for improved communication prior to, during and after the divorce.

RECOMMENDATION 7: Parents should keep channels of communication open and be sensitive to feedback from their children about their understanding of, and feelings about, the divorce.

RECOMMENDATION 8: Parents should offer repeated explanations to their children, when the opportunities arise, to ensure that their children have taken in and understood what they have been told.

The use of books to facilitate the understanding of divorce is considered valuable. Parents may find talking to a child while reading a book easier than finding their own words to clarify issues.

5.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MOTHER IN THE CHILD'S LIFE

In looking at the relative importance of mothers and fathers it is important to be reminded that mothers in this sample were in all cases custodial parents and fathers non-custodial parents. It cannot be assumed that non-custodial mothers or custodial fathers would be regarded by their children in the same light vis-à-vis support as was found in this study.

A review of the literature had led the researcher to expect that the parents would be too preoccupied with their own emotional problems to offer support (Walczak & Burns, 1984; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Contrary to this expectation, in this investigation the mother emerged as a strong source of support. The mothers were asked to indicate on a five-point Likert-type scale the degree of emotional support they were able to give to their children at the time of the divorce. Most of the mothers indicated that they were able to provide support a substantial amount, most or all of the time. Although there may be an element of social desirability contributing to the high figure, in the main the strong support from mothers was borne out by the children's perceptions.

The first indication of this was provided by the answers to the questions about preparedness for the divorce. The mother featured more than any other person in informing the child that there would be a divorce and in explaining to the child the consequences of the divorce.

The mother also emerged as the person with whom the children were most able to discuss their feelings. When the children were asked to specify the person with whom they shared their feelings when they realised that their parents were getting divorced, the most frequent response was "Mother". One-tenth spoke to both parents and none spoke only to the father. Over two-thirds of the children were able to talk to their mothers about their feelings about the divorce; under half of the children were able to talk to their fathers about their feelings.

The majority (60 %) of the children specified the mother as the person most easily conversed with as a confidant, whereas only eight per cent mentioned the father. Particularly revealing is the fact that when children were asked to identify the person who had helped the most since the divorce, the mother featured over three-quarters of the time, either alone or in combination with others.

According to the children many more mothers informed the school personnel about the divorce than fathers. Mothers were therefore the supportive liaison figure in this regard.

The majority of grandchildren did not confide in grandparents about the divorce. However, for those who did, it was the mothers' parents who were confided in most often. Approximately three-quarters of the children specified the maternal grandparents as more helpful.

With regard to their parents' friends, many more children perceived the friends of their mothers as available to provide support than they did the friends of their fathers. However, few utilised the support of either. Mothers perceived their friends to be much more supportive to their children than the children perceived them to be. It could be that mothers themselves experienced strong support from their friends and imagined that this extended to their children also. However, it could be that children receiving adequate support from their mothers did not need to turn to their mothers' friends.

RECOMMENDATION 9: Professionals and non-professionals should provide support to divorcing and divorced mothers to enable them to continue to fulfil the important task of providing support to their children without suffering from burnout.

5.4   THE DEGREE OF SUPPORT FROM FATHERS

According to the children's perceptions the fathers were less prominent as supportive figures in the lives of the children than the mothers. As detailed in the previous section fathers were less involved in preparing the children for divorce or as emotional confidants. In this regard, when mothers were asked to specify what they considered important for the social and emotional well-being of children of divorce, 19 % mentioned the co-operation of both parents. This was the second most frequently made of all suggestions.

The fathers were also shown to be less active in the school life of the child. There was slightly more involvement with regard to watching sports or cultural functions and being shown a school report than for example liaising with teachers or principals. That fathers were found to be less involved than mothers in the school life of their children is not surprising given, firstly, that they are not custodial parents and, secondly, that according to the professional experience of the researcher fathers play a less active role than mothers do in the day-to-day school activities of the child in the community under consideration.

RECOMMENDATION 10: Professionals and non-professionals should provide support to fathers to enable them to fulfil their important supportive role.

RECOMMENDATION 11: Professionals should work with both parents to increase their awareness of the importance for their children of receiving ongoing emotional support from both parents.

RECOMMENDATION 12: Both parents together should be involved with the preparation of children for the divorce, and with the explanations of arrangements, etc. If this proves too difficult they should agree as to what each parent will say. This precludes two versions of the reasons for divorce being given and also serves to assure the children of the support of both parents.

5.5 UNDERUTILISATION OF ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF SUPPORT

Detailed investigation of several other possible informal and formal support systems revealed that on the whole children made relatively little use of such other emotional support. For example, with regard to grandparents, children claimed to have received more practical than emotional help from the most helpful grandparent. Only a quarter of the children had spoken to a grandparent about the divorce. It appears that they do not perceive it as the role of grandparents to offer emotional support.

Slightly more use was made of sibling support. Just over a third of the children had spoken to a sibling about the divorce. However, such support was not utilised as much as mothers perceived it to be.

Similarly a third of the children had spoken to friends about the divorce at the time of divorce. Just over half reported having spoken to friends by the time of the interview. It therefore appeared that as time progressed children were more able to utilise the support of their peers. This could have been a result of age or of time since the divorce. Almost three-quarters of the children who said that they knew other children whose parents were divorced found this therapeutic or helpful. However, only one-third of these children had shared their feelings or experiences with such children.

A general finding that emerged, particularly with regard to grandparents and friends, is that when children did discuss their experiences of divorce they considered it helpful. (One child who did not find it helpful to discuss the divorce with a grandparent gave as the reason that the grandparent "took sides".) Moreover, when asked to give suggestions for support over half of the children proposed talking to someone either individually or in groups. It appears that the need for such support is recognised.

Neighbours, religious leaders and medical doctors were all underutilised. Only five per cent of the children consulted a religious leader and only six per cent a medical doctor. Only ten per cent of the children reported belonging to a formal group where divorce was discussed and only five per cent reported that they and their parents had ever belonged to a single-parent organisation.

RECOMMENDATION 13: Grandparents should be made aware that grandchildren could well use additional emotional support from them if they were in a position to offer such support and could maintain neutrality.

RECOMMENDATION 14: "Non-custodial grandparents" who experience difficulty with access to grandchildren should be encouraged to make use of organisations such as *Grandparents are Forever*, a support group for grandparents.

RECOMMENDATION 15: Medical doctors and religious leaders should be trained in order to sensitise them to the needs of children of divorce and to increase awareness of ways in which they could offer support.

5.6   SUPPORT FROM PROFESSIONAL HELPERS

The only alternative source of support relatively well utilised by children was that of professional helpers. Over two-thirds of the children said that they had spoken to a professional helper (psychologist or social worker). Almost all of these children considered that talking to a psychologist or social worker had helped them. Talking about feelings and clarifying issues were mentioned as helpful. This finding is consistent with the children's suggestions referred to in the preceding section. Only one-third of the mothers rated professional help received by their children as positive. However, when asked to specify what they considered important for the social and emotional well-being of children of divorce, 23 % mentioned professional help. This was the single suggestion made most often. It is evident that this source of support is utilised and at the same time could well be further developed.

RECOMMENDATION 16: Parents should be made aware that the contributions made by professional helpers are welcomed and appreciated by the vast majority of children and that this source of emotional support should be pursued.

5.7   SUPPORTIVE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL

The perceptions of both children and mothers are discussed first, followed in 5.7.3 by all the recommendations pertaining to the school.

5.7.1 Children's perceptions

Over half of the children perceived that their teachers knew about the divorce at the time of divorce while almost all stated that their teachers knew at the time of the interview. In each instance one-quarter of the children said that their teachers had spoken to them about the divorce. When the children's teachers had spoken to them, the vast majority of children were comfortable with this and found it helpful. The few children to whom the principal had spoken about the divorce found it helpful. It thus emerged from the findings that children who had received direct emotional support from teachers and principals appreciated it. With regard to how the children felt about approaching someone in the school for emotional support, almost two-thirds said that they could, and of those over 80 % cited the school psychologist or social worker. Moreover, most (81 %) felt the person was available when needed.

Almost half of the children said that divorce had been discussed as part of a lesson. Of those, only one-third considered such lessons to have been helpful. There was little involvement from the school when schoolwork and behaviour deteriorated. When asked to make suggestions as to how the school could offer support to children of divorce the suggestion most frequently made was for emotional support. Other suggestions were: "educate others", "discussion groups", and "keep confidentiality".

5.7.2 Mothers' perceptions

Nearly all the mothers whose children were already at school at the time of the divorce said that they had spoken to the teacher about the divorce. Of these, three-quarters indicated that the teacher had understood the implications of the divorce for the child and of this group three-quarters believed that the teachers had conveyed these implications satisfactorily to the child. Two-thirds of the mothers stated that they had at some time approached a member of staff at school for support for the children and of these two-thirds expressed satisfaction with the support received. A general question about support from the school elicited a positive response from just over half of the mothers. Over three-quarters of the mothers described the attitude of the school towards divorced parents to be one of acceptance. When asked for suggestions as to how the school could offer support, the most frequent suggestion was for emotional support and for groups for children and parents. This echoes the suggestions made by children. Another suggestion made was to educate teachers and peers, and a few wanted an after-care centre.

All these findings regarding children's and parents' perceptions indicate that the school is an important source of support and potential support.

It does not appear that the school to any great extent involved non-custodial parents in the school life of their children. However, a quarter of the mothers stated that the school had contacted the father concerned. Almost two-thirds of these mothers approved of this practice. Of the few who said the school report was sent to the father, most expressed approval. The most frequently cited reason for the father not being contacted was that there was no need because mothers involved fathers or fathers involved themselves.

5.7.3 Recommendations for schools

Many of the recommendations made in this section pertaining to schools have been influenced by a handbook for parents and teachers in which Susan Arnsberg Diamond (1985) provides guidelines for dealing with the special needs of children of divorce.

RECOMMENDATION 17: Teachers should be made aware that children nearly always appreciate their teachers' speaking to them about the divorce, and that they can and should provide support within the limitations of their available time and training.

RECOMMENDATION 18: Schools should employ the services of a social worker or psychologist; children of divorce and their families should be enabled to make use of such professionals, and teachers should be trained to recognise the symptoms that require a referral to such professionals.

RECOMMENDATION 19: The social worker or psychologist should be used to train teachers and other school personnel to understand and meet the needs of the divorced population, both adults and children.

RECOMMENDATION 20: Teachers should be made aware of the importance of remaining neutral and objective, and not over-identifying with the pain of one parent.

RECOMMENDATION 21: Teachers should be made aware that the divorced family is a contemporary phenomenon, one of the various forms of the family today, and they should give recognition to it in their teaching and lesson planning. For example, activities such as making a gift for mother's day or father's day can engender embarrassment or sadness in children of divorce, which could perhaps be overcome if the teacher broadened the category to include 'a special someone'.

RECOMMENDATION 22: All school personnel should cultivate an attitude of acceptance towards divorced parents and their children, and so encourage openness and facilitate communication. They must learn to be non-judgemental and caring, and cautious in their use of language (for example, the negative term "broken families" can be replaced by the neutral term "divorced families").

RECOMMENDATION 23: All school personnel should be made aware of the need to respect confidentiality, so that parents willingly divulge all the important details about the child's situation that the school needs to know (for example when the divorce or separation occurred; who the child lives with; address of both parents; who should be contacted in case of emergencies, etc.).

RECOMMENDATION 24: School personnel other than principals, teachers, social workers and psychologists should realise that they can also offer support, mostly by the caring non-judgemental attitude referred to above.

Secretaries are often the first people with whom parents come into contact. Moreover, secretaries are sometimes more available to children than other staff members.

Librarians can offer children appropriate books on divorce. A display of books featuring families or life changes (birth, death, illness, moving, etc.) could include books on divorce and serve to educate others about these important transitions.

Staff such as sports coaches can also offer support. Participating in sport and other extra-curricular activities often provides a child with a sense of belonging and a valuable outlet at times of crisis and accompanying insecurity.

RECOMMENDATION 25: Efforts should be made on the part of the school to involve non-custodial parents in their children's lives.

This recommendation is difficult to implement and requires systematisation. To be most supportive school staff should make it clear that they are neutral and that they believe that in most cases it is in the interests of the child to have contact with both parents. The school could discuss with both parents whether they wish to be informed together or separately about school progress, and school events.

In some cases there is such extreme conflict between parents that it is not possible for them to discuss anything together in a civil manner. In such situations each parent should be contacted separately and the policy regarding school reports, etc. discussed. If schools routinely sent non-custodial parents copies of reports, newsletters and information about forthcoming functions both parents would be encouraged to involve themselves in the school life of their children.

5.8   UTILISATION OF THE ECO-MAP

The observation of the researcher was that the children enjoyed doing the eco-map exercise. The working relationship that was established during the course of the interview between interviewer and interviewee was strengthened.

RECOMMENDATION 26: Professionals should consider using the eco-map as a facilitator in the establishment of the respondent-researcher relationship.

RECOMMENDATION 27: The eco-map should be used at the beginning of an interview with a child to establish rapport and to gain a general impression of the child in relation to his/her social networks.

The validity of the eco-map was not considered to be high. Only when the relationship with the mother on the eco-map was strong was there moderately high consensus with responses to the questionnaire. In all other cases the consistency ranged between 36 % and 67 % between the eco-map and corresponding questionnaire responses.

RECOMMENDATION 28: The eco-map should not be used as an independent research tool.

As mentioned in Chapter One a limitation of this part of the research investigation was that questionnaire items were not designed with the specific intention of comparison with the eco-map.

RECOMMENDATION 29: Further studies with the primary objective of attempting to validate the eco-map should use questionnaire items more directly comparable to eco-map dimensions.

5.9   COMMUNITY EDUCATION

RECOMMENDATION 30: Social workers should work towards increasing the awareness of the broader community, including other professionals, as to the needs of children of divorce and the importance of support for these children.

This recommendation covers a wide spectrum of activities including writing articles for the media, creating programmes for radio and television, producing videos for educational use, facilitating parenting programmes, giving lectures, participating in panel discussions and devising brochures for waiting rooms of medical, paramedical and legal practitioners.

5.10 COUNSELLING AND MEDIATION SERVICES

RECOMMENDATION 31: Counselling and mediation services should be made available to every divorcing couple.

Mediation is an alternative dispute resolution technique and has been accepted as a service in this country since the promulgation of the Mediation Divorce Proceedings Act (Act 63 of 1986). This alternative to the adversarial system enhances the support from both parents. Underlying mediation is the basic tenet that divorce is not the end of a family and that continuing to be parents is possible for most couples. Social workers in the different welfare fields could encourage parents that the best way to facilitate a smooth readjustment of their children to the divorce is to work together co-operatively on central issues surrounding the children and the divorce.

5.11 THE LEGAL SYSTEM

RECOMMENDATION 32: Family advocates and family counsellors attached to the Department of Justice should give serious consideration to enforcing the use of support systems in the legal proceedings.

The introduction of family advocates and family counsellors into the legal system of divorce has been a major breakthrough in divorce proceedings. These advocates for the child protect the rights of children at all times and family counsellors advise divorcing parents on how to interact for the sake of their children. Ongoing divorce counselling, psychological help for their children or ongoing contact with maternal and paternal grandparents are examples of conditions which could be laid down in the divorce agreement to increase the support networks of the child.

RECOMMENDATION 33: A bill of rights of children should be promulgated in our legal system.

The whole world is acknowledging the rights of individuals — socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically. Yet in South Africa we do not have a children's bill of rights. The child therefore has no rights to regular contact with all his/her family, such as an "illegitimate father", a non-custodial parent and other members of a non-custodial parent's family. Denial of contact is usually a result of conflict between adults.

5.12 EDUCATION

RECOMMENDATION 34: The implications of divorce for family should be included in the tertiary education of many professionals such as social workers, psychologists, medical doctors, teachers, lawyers and religious leaders.

5.13 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study is viewed by the researcher as an exploratory one. Further research in this area could:

- investigate perceptions of parental support, matching a sample of fathers who are custodial parents with mothers who are custodial parents. This will further increase insight into and knowledge of the supportive role of mothers and fathers whether they are custodial or non-custodial parents;
- measure differences of perceptions according to the gender of the child. This can be achieved by matching the same number of boys living with mothers as girls living with mothers (and similarly for boys and girls living with fathers);
- investigate perceptions of support using a homogeneous group in terms of age, for example seven to nine years or ten to thirteen years, and with regard to years since divorce, preferably up to two years as this is the most crucial period;
- investigate perceptions of support for population groups other than that investigated in this study;
- focus on stepparents as a potential support system;
- investigate the supportive role of other schools;
- compare the perceptions of support of parents and children who utilised mediation services and those who did not.

5.14 CLOSING STATEMENT

Underlying this study is the development and ecological perspective that adjustment to a transitional crisis such as divorce is a dynamic process which involves an ongoing interaction of intrapersonal, interpersonal and situational components. Problems are considered to be the result not only of individual difficulties but also of shortfalls, discrepancies, conflict and the absence of a fit in the environment or in the transactions between systems. This study has focused on the potential positive outcome of family functioning after divorce given the support from informal and formal support systems.

It is hoped that the findings as well as the recommendations outlined in this chapter will help all those involved either professionally or personally with children of divorce toward the primary goal of maximising support and hence facilitating the reorganisation of the family. In applying these recommendations, it is vital at all times to be aware of individual differences in responses and perceptions to any given set of circumstances and to respect the uniqueness of each family when considering application of guidelines and recommendations.

REFERENCES

AHRONS, C.R. 1980a. Divorce: A crisis of family transition and change. *Family Relations*, 29(4), 533-540.

AHRONS, C.R. 1980b. Redefining the divorced family: A conceptual framework. *Social Work*, 25(6), 437-441.

AHRONS, C.R. & BOWMAN, M.E. 1982. Changes in family relationships following divorce of adult child: Grandmother's perceptions. *Journal of Divorce*, 5, 49-68.

ALLERS, R.D. 1980. Helping children understand divorce. *Today's Education*, November-December, 26-29.

ANSPACH, D.F. 1976. Kinship and divorce. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 38, 323-330.

ARNSBERG DIAMOND, S. 1985. *Helping children of divorce: A handbook for parents and teachers.* New York: Schocken Books.

BANK, S. & KAHN, M. 1975. Sisterhood-brotherhood is powerful. *Family Process*, 14, 311-337.

BARNES, J. 1954. Class and committees in a Norwegian island parish. *Human Relations*, 7(1), 39-58.

BEAL, E.W. 1980. Separation, divorce and single-parent families. In: E. Carter & M. McGoldrick (Eds), *The family life cycle.* New York: Gardner Press.

BEATT, B.H. & WAHLSTROM, B.B. 1976. A developmental approach to understanding families. *Social Casework*, 57, 3-8.

BOHANNON, P. 1970. *Divorce and after.* New York: Doubleday.

BONKOWSKI, S.E., BOOMHOWER, S.J. & BEQUETTE, S.Q. 1985. What you don't know can hurt you: Unexpressed fears and feelings of children from divorcing families. *Journal of Divorce*, 9(1-4), 33-37.

BOSSARD, J.H.S. & BOLL, E.S. 1956. *The large family system: An original study in the sociology of family behaviour.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

BOTT, E. 1966. Conjugal roles and social networks. In: N.V. Bell & E.F. Vogel (Eds), *The family.* Toronto: Collier-Macmillan.

BOTT, E. 1971. *Family and social networks* (2nd ed.). New York: Free Press.

BRANDWEIN, R.A., BROWN, C.A. & FOX, E.M. 1974. Women and children last: The social situation of divorced mothers and their families. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 36, 498-514.

BRODERICK, C.B. 1988. Healing members and relationships in the intimate network. In: R.H. Milardo (Ed.), *Families and social networks.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

BROWN, B.B. 1978. Social and psychological correlates of help-seeking behaviour among urban adults. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 6(5), 425-439.

BURGESS, J.K. 1970. The single-parent family: A social and sociological problem. *Family Co-ordinator*, 19, 137-144.

BURMAN, S. & FUCHS, L. 1986. When families split. In: S. Burman & P. Reynolds (Eds), *Growing up in a divided society*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press.

CALVIN, D.A. 1981. Joint custody as family and social policy. In: I.R. Stuart & L.E. Abt (Eds), *Children of separation and divorce: Management and treatment*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.

CANTOR, D.W. 1977. School-based groups for children of divorce. *Journal of Divorce*, 1(2), 183-187.

CAPLAN, G. 1974. *Support systems and community mental health*. New York: Behavioral Publications.

CARLILE, C. 1991. How teachers can help ease the pain: Children of divorce. *Childhood Education*, Summer, 232-234.

CARTER, E.A. & McGOLDRICK, M. 1980. *The family life cycle: A framework for family therapy*. New York: Gardner Press.

CENTRAL STATISTICAL SERVICE. 1991. *Statistical news release* (PO 307), Pretoria.

CHAMBERS, 1983. *Chambers 20th Century Dictionary*. Edinburgh: Chambers.

CIGLER, E. 1986. *Mediation: Its significance, technology and feasibility in social work services related to divorce issues*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Rand Afrikaans University, Johannesburg.

COLLETTA, N.D. 1979. Support systems after divorce: Incidence and impact. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 41, 837-846.

DANIELS-MOHRING, D. & BERGER, M. 1984. Social network changes and the adjustment to divorce. *Journal of Divorce*, 8(1), 17-33.

DERSCH, V.J. 1986. *An investigation of social support: Grandparents and grandchildren under the impact of parental divorce*. Unpublished doctoral thesis, The Johns Hopkins University, USA.

DRAKE, E.A. 1981. Helping children cope with divorce: The role of the school. In: I.R. Stuart & L.E. Abt (Eds), *Children of separation and divorce: Management and treatment*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.

DREMAN, S. 1991. *Children in transition and crisis*. Paper presented at Research Seminar on Children and Families, Human Sciences Research Council, Pretoria.

DUBOWITZ, H., NEWBERGER, C.M., MELNICOE, L.H. & NEWBERGER, E.H. 1988. The changing American family. *The Pediatric Clinics of North America*, 35(6), 1291-1311.

DUEHN, W.D. 1985. Practice and research. In: R.M. Grinnell (Ed.), *Social work research and evaluation* (2nd ed.). Itasca, Illinois: Peacock.

ELLIOT, F.R. 1986. *The family: Change or continuity?* London: Macmillan.

ERIKSON, E.H. 1950. *Childhood and society*. New York: Norton.

FRANCISCO-LA GRANGE, F.H. 1988. Die navorser-praktisynparadigma. *Die Maatskaplikewerk-Navorser-Praktisyn*, 1(1), 8-15.

FREDERICKS, A.D., RASINSKI, T.V. & RITTY, J. 1991. Working with parents: Single-parent families: Tips for educators. *The Reading Teacher*, 44(8), 604-606.

FRIEDMAN, L.F. 1984. *Social support and the stress of divorce.* Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of California, USA.

GERMAIN, C.B. 1979. Ecology and social work. In: C.B. Germain (Ed.), *Social work practice: People and environments — An ecological perspective.* New York: Columbia University Press.

GERMAIN, C.B. & GITTERMAN, A. 1980. *The life model of social work practice.* New York: Columbia University Press.

GITTERMAN, A. & GERMAIN, C.B. 1976. Social work practice: A life model. *Social Service Review,* 50, 601-610.

GITTERMAN, A. & SHULMAN, L. 1986. *Mutual aid groups and the life cycle.* Itasca, Illinois: Peacock.

GLICK, P.C. 1979. Children of divorced parents in demographic perspective. *Journal of Social Issues,* 35(4), 170-182.

GOLAN, N. 1981. Passing through transitions. New York: Free Press.

GOLDSTEIN, J., FREUD, A. & SOLNIT, A. 1979. *Beyond the best interests of the child.* New York: Free Press.

GOODE, W.J. 1956. *Women in divorce.* New York: Free Press.

GOTTLIEB, B.H. 1983. *Social support strategies: Guidelines for mental health practice.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

GRAHAM, J. 1988. *Remarried family adjustment.* Unpublished master's thesis, University of South Africa, Pretoria.

GREENBLATT, M., BECERRA, R.M. & SERAFETINIDES, E.A. 1982. Social networks and mental health: An overview. *American Journal of Psychiatry,* 139(8), 977-984.

GRINNELL, R.M. 1985. *Social work research and evaluation* (2nd ed.). Itasca, Illinois: Peacock.

GUERNEY, L. & JORDAN, L. 1979. Children of divorce — A community support group. *Journal of Divorce,* 2(3), 283-299.

HARTMAN, A. & LAIRD, J. 1983. *Family-centred social work practice.* New York: Free Press.

HEPWORTH, D.H. & LARSEN, J. 1986. *Direct social work practice: Theory and skills* (2nd ed.). Chicago: Dorsey Press.

HERZ BROWN, F. 1989. The postdivorce family. In: B. Carter & M. McGoldrick (Eds), *The changing family life cycle: A framework for family therapy* (2nd ed.). New York and London: Gardner Press.

HESS, R.D. & CAMARA, K.A. 1979. Post-divorce family relationships as mediating factors in the consequences of divorce for children. *Journal of Social Issues,* 35, 79-96.

HETHERINGTON, E.M. 1979. Divorce: A child's perspective. *American Psychologist,* 34(10), 851-858.

HODGES, W.F. & BLOOM, B.L. 1984. Parents' reports of children's adjustment to marital separation: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Divorce*, 8(1), 33-50.

HOLMES, T.H. & RAHE, R.H. 1967. The social re-adjustment rating scale. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 11, 213-218.

Inside South Africa. 1988. Cover Story: Divorce lawyers: Do they add to the trauma — and the costs — of divorce? 2(10), 9-15.

KALISH, R. & VISHER, E. 1982. Grandparents of divorce and remarriage. *Journal of Divorce*, 5, 127-140.

KALTER, N. 1987. Long-term effects of divorce on children: A developmental vulnerability model. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 57(4), 587-600.

KENISTON, K. (and the Carnegie Council on Children). 1978. *All our children: The American family under pressure.* New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

KORNHABER, A. & WOODWARD, K. 1981. *Grandparents and grandchildren: The vital connection.* New York: Anchor Books.

LANDIS, J.T. 1960. The trauma of children when parents divorce. *Marriage and Family Living*, 22(1), 7-13.

LEAHEY, M. 1984. Findings on research on divorce: Implications for professionals' skill development. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 54(2), 298-317.

LEE, J. & SWENSON, C.R. 1986. The concept of mutual aid. In: A. Gitterman & L. Shulman (Eds), *Mutual aid groups and the life cycle.* Itasca, Illinois: Peacock.

LEVITIN, T.E. 1979. Children of divorce: An introduction. *Journal of Social Issues*, 35(4), 1-25.

LITWAK, E. & SZELENYI, I. 1969. Primary group structures and their functions: Kin, neighbours and friends. *American Sociological Review*, 34, 465-481.

MACDONALD, M.E. 1960. Social work research: A perspective. In: N.A. Polansky (Ed.), *Social work research.* Chicago: University Chicago Press.

MAGUIRE, L. 1983. *Understanding social networks.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

MINUCHIN, S. 1977. *Families and Family Therapy.* London: Tavistock.

MITCHELL, A. 1985. *Children in the middle: Living through divorce.* London: Tavistock.

MORAWETZ, A. 1984. The single-parent family: An author's reflection. *Family Process,* 3(23), 571-577.

MORGAN, S.R. 1985. *Children in crises: A team approach in the schools.* San Diego: College-Hill.

MURDOCK, G.P. 1949. *Social structure.* New York: Macmillan.

OAKLAND, T. 1984. *Divorced fathers: Reconstructing a quality life.* New York: Human Sciences.

PFEFFER, C.R. 1981. Development issues among children of separation and divorce. In: I.R. Stuart & L.E. Abt (Eds), *Children of separation and divorce: Management and treatment.* New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.

PINCUS, A. & MINAHAN, A. 1973. *Social work practice: Model and method*. Itasca, Illinois: Peacock.

RANDS, M. 1988. Changes in social networks following marital separation and divorce. In: R.M. Milardo (Ed.), *Families and social networks*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

RHODES, S.L. 1977. A developmental approach to the cycle of the family. *Social Casework*, 58(5), 301-311.

RICCI, I. 1980. *Mom's house/Dad's house: Making shared custody work*. New York: Macmillan.

RICHARDS, M.P.M. & DYSON, M. 1982. *Separation, divorce and the development of children: A review*. University of Cambridge: Childcare and Development group.

RICHMOND, M. 1930. *The long view*. New York: Russell Sage.

ROBINSON, M. 1991. *Family transformation through divorce and remarriage: A systemic approach*. Tavistock: London.

ROSEN, R. 1977. *An investigation into the effects of varying custody and access arrangements upon the emotional adjustment of children of divorce*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Cape Town, Cape Town.

RUTTER, M. 1971. Parent-child separation: Psychological effects on the children. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 42, 9-15.

RUTTER, M., MAUGHAN, B., MORTIMORE, P. & OUSTON, J. 1980. *Fifteen thousand hours: Secondary schools and their effects on children*. London: Butler & Tanner.

SATIR, V. 1972. *Peoplemaking*. Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior Books.

SILVER, D. 1989. *The post-divorce non custodial father-child relationship*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of South Africa, Pretoria.

SPECK, R.V. & RUEVENI, U. 1969. Network therapy: A developing concept. *Family Process*, 8, 182-191.

SPICER, J.W. & HAMPE, G.D. 1975. Kinship interaction after divorce. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 30, 113-119.

STEYN, A.F., STRIJDOM, H.G., VILJOEN, S. & BOSMAN, F.J. 1987. *Marriage and family life in South Africa: Research priorities*. Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council.

STRAUSS, J.B. & McGANN, J. 1987. Building a network for children of divorce. *Social Work in Education*, Winter, 96-105.

SURRA, C. 1988. The influence of the interactive network in families and social networks. In: R.M. Milardo (Ed.), *Families and social networks*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

TRIPODI, T. 1985. Research designs. In: R.M. Grinnell (Ed.), *Social Work Research and Evaluation* (2nd ed.). Itasca, Illinois: Peacock.

VAN TILBURG, T. 1985. Supportive relationships and loneliness: Suggestions for the improvement of support networks as guidelines for research/policy. In: J.A. Yoder, J.M.L. Jonker & R.A.B. Leaper (Eds), *Support networks in a caring community*. Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff.

WALCZAK, Y. & BURNS, S. 1984. *Divorce: The child's point of view.* London: Harper & Row.

WALD, E. 1981. *The remarried family: Challenge and promise.* New York: Family Service Association of America.

WALKER, K.N., MacBRIDE, A.H. & VACHON, M. 1977. Social support networks and the crisis of bereavement. *Social Science and Medicine,* 11, 35-41.

WALLERSTEIN, J.S. 1983. Children of divorce: The psychological tasks of the child. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry,* 53(2), 230-243.

WALLERSTEIN, J.S. 1985. Children of divorce: Preliminary report of a ten-year follow up of older children and adolescents. *Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry,* 24(5), 545-553.

WALLERSTEIN, J.S. 1987. Children of divorce: Report of a ten-year follow up of early latency-age children. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry,* 57(2), 199-211.

WALLERSTEIN, J.S. & BLAKESLEE, S. 1989. *Second chances: Men, women and children a decade after divorce.* New York: Ticknor and Fields.

WALLERSTEIN, J.S. & BUNDY, M.L. 1984. Helping children of disrupted families: An interview with Judith S. Wallerstein. *Elementary School Guidance and Counseling,* 19, 19-29.

WALLERSTEIN, J.S. & KELLY, J.B. 1975. The effects of parental divorce: Experiences of the preschool child. *Journal of American Academy of Child Psychiatry,* 14(4), 600-616.

WALLERSTEIN, J.S. & KELLY, J.B. 1976. The effects of parental divorce: Experiences of the child in later latency. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry,* 46(2), 256-269.

WALLERSTEIN, J.S. & KELLY, J.B. 1977. Divorce counseling: A community service for families in the midst of divorce. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry,* 47(1), 4-22.

WALLERSTEIN, J.S. & KELLY, J.B. 1980. *Surviving the break up: How children and parents cope with divorce.* New York: Basic Books.

WEISS, R.S. 1973. The contributions of an organisation of single parents to the well-being of its members. *The Family Co-ordinator,* 22, 321-326.

WEITZMAN, M. & ADAIR, R. 1988. Divorce and children. *The Pediatric Clinics of North America,* 35(6), 1313-1323.

WISEMAN, R.S. 1975. Crisis theory and the process of divorce. *Social Casework,* 56, 205-212.

ZASTROW, C. 1990. *Introduction to social welfare, social problems, services and current issues.* CA: Wadsworth.

ZINN, M.B. & EITZEN, S.D. 1990. *Diversity in families.* New York: Harper Collins.

BRN: 400918
ORDER: 93.863.
COPY: PB 92271

R 35,00