THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LEVEL OF DIVORCE ADJUSTMENT OF CUSTODIAL MOTHERS AND THE SELF-CONCEPT OF THEIR CHILDREN

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LEVEL OF DIVORCE ADJUSTMENT OF CUSTODIAL MOTHERS AND THE SELF-CONCEPT OF THEIR CHILDREN

BY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the degree of relationship between the level of divorce or separation adjustment of custodial mothers and the level of self-concept of randomly selected children in their custody.

Twenty-nine pairs of subjects participated in this study. Each pair consisted of a divorced or separated mother and one of the children in her custody, randomly chosen if she had more than one child living with her. Each mother was administered the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale (FDAS) and each child was administered the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (CSCS).

The results of the FDAS and CSCS were analyzed to answer each research question. The Spearman rank-order correlation coefficient was calculated to determine if a significant correlation existed; (i) between the level of divorce or separation adjustment of mothers and the level of self-concept of a randomly chosen child in her custody; (ii) between the level of divorce or separation adjustment of mothers and the level of self-concept of a randomly chosen male child in her custody; (iii) between the level of divorce or separation adjustment of mothers and the level of self-concept of a randomly chosen female child in her custody.

The results obtained indicated that there was no significant correlation between level of divorce or separation adjustment of the mothers in the study and the level of self-concept of selected children.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

The effects of divorce on children and adults has been extensively studied (Despert, 1962; Fisher, 1976; Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980; Kurdek and Berg, 1983). A result of this research is the identification of some of the correlates of children's adjustment to divorce. One factor that has been cited as being positively correlated with children's adjustment is the level of adjustment of the parent. That is to say, the more positively the divorce was handled by the parents, the greater the likelihood that the children would adjust more quickly. Children's adjustment was usually defined in terms of factors such as their attitudes toward parental separation, their understanding of the divorce, their locus of control, and the degree of interpersonal understanding.

Some studies have looked at children's adjustment in terms of self-concept. Hetherington (1972), Young and Parish (1977), and Berg and Kelly (1979) compared the self-concept levels of children from families of divorce to that of children from intact families. Thus, the level of self-concept of one group of children, (those from divorced families) was compared to the level of self-concept of another group of children, (those from families where the parents were still married). A positive correlation between the level of divorce or separation adjustment of parents and the level of children's adjustment to that divorce or separation has been found (Despert, 1962; et.al.). Also researchers have compared the self-concept levels of groups of children of divorce to other groups (Hetherington, 1972; et.al.). However, no studies that directly related the level of divorce or separation adjustment of the mother to the level of self-concept of the children in her custody were found. The purpose of this study was to determine whether

there was a significant correlation between the level of divorce or separation adjustment of a mother and the level of self-concept of her child.

Significance

With the reform of Canada's divorce laws in 1968, the divorce rate climbed dramatically from a rate of 54.8 per 100,000 population in 1968 to 139.8 per 100,000 population in 1970 (Ambert, 1980). By 1982 the rate had risen to 285.9 per 100,000 population (Statistics Canada, 1982). Stated another way, there were 373.9 divorces per 1000 marriages in 1982. Statistics Canada noted that this rate included only those divorces for which a decree absolute had been granted. The actual rate of marriage breakdown was even higher when separations that were not legal divorces were added to this.

Although, the divorce rate for Newfoundland was less than the national rate, it had also increased dramatically from 1968 to 1982. Prior to 1968, Newfoundland's divorce rate per 100,000 population was close to 0. By 1982 it had risen to 120 per 100,000 population. Also in the majority of cases, custody of children was granted to the mother. (Statistics Canada, 1985)

Recent changes to the Divorce Act 1985 (Statutes of Canada, 1986) have simplified the grounds for divorce. A marriage can now be legally ended if the court considers marriage breakdown to have occurred. Breakdown of the marriage occurs, according to the Divorce Act 1985 (Statutes of Canada, 1986) if the spouses have lived separately for at least one year, or adultery has been committed, or one spouse has treated the other spouse with such mental or physical cruelty that living together is no longer possible. If the reform of the Divorce Act that occurred in 1968 was a predictor, recent reforms that make divorce even easier to legally obtain, will likely result in an increase in the rate of divorce.

Glick (1979) predicted that, based on United States data, by 1990, 11% of all children will be living with a divorced single parent and that about one-third of all children will have experienced parental-divorce.

These statistics showed that a significant portion of the population were directly affected by divorce or separation. Although non-antagonistic means of ending troubled marriages were described (Irving, et.al. 1981), divorce and separation is still a traumatic event for most people. According to Fisher (1976), divorce adjustment varied from person to person, ranging from those who viewed divorce as a creative, albeit painful experience, to those never completely adjusted.

Statement of Purpose

Researchers have found a correlation exists between the self-concept levels of children and various factors associated with significant others in their lives (Coopersmith, 1967; Wylie, 1979; Burns, 1979). The purpose of this study was to ascertain the degree of relationship between the level of divorce or separation adjustment of custodial mothers and the self-concept levels of their children. Specifically, this study was intended to answer the following research questions:

1. Does a positive correlation exist between the mother's level of adjustment to divorce or separation, as measured by the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale (FDAS), and her child's self-concept as measured by the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (CSCS)?

2. Does a positive correlation exist between the mother's level of divorce or separation adjustment, as measured by the FDAS, and the level of self-concept, as measured by the CSCS, of a randomly chosen male child in her custody?

3. Does a positive correlation exist between the mother's level of divorce or

separation adjustment, as measured by the FDAS, and the level of self-concept, as measured by the CSCS, of a randomly chosen female child in her custody?

Rationale

Much attention has been given in the literature to self-concept. Researchers and writers have attempted to clarify the definition of self-concept and describe the factors that are correlated with it (Piers and Harris, 1964; Clifford and Clifford, 1967; Callison, 1974; Wylie, 1979; Shavelson and Bolus, 1982). Others, such as Corey (1982) have said that the enhancement of self-concept is a predominant goal in most psychotherapies.

A review of the literature revealed that the self-concept was a complex construct that could be affected by multitude of factors. Coopersmith (1967) looked at several parental characteristics that were correlated with the self-esteem levels of their children. One finding was that trained interviewers rated mothers of children with low self-esteem significantly lower than that of mothers of children with high self-esteem. Zirkel (1972) cited studies which pointed out the importance of significant others in the formation of a healthy self-concept. Thomas (1966) provided evidence of the influential role of parents in the self-concept development of their children. Although she pointed out conceptual and methodological faults in the studies, Wylie (1979) cited research which supported the idea that a child's self-concept was significantly affected by family variables.

Jenks (1973) found an inverse relationship between the amount of change in a student's life and his self-concept. Despert (1962) described divorce as a major and often traumatic change in children's and parents' lives. Organizational and structural change in the family was seen to be confounded with the possibility of communication problems with one or both parents. For example, the custodial

mother may have been preoccupied with her own adjustment while she was dealing with the emotional impact of the divorce or separation (Despert, 1962). The child may have felt rejected by both the parent who had left and by the custodial parent whose time was absorbed by her own efforts to cope. According to Drake (1981), the result could be a lowered self-concept in the child.

Even if the amount of time children spent with their custodial parent remained the same as before the divorce or separation, the quality of that time may have changed. Quality of parent-child relationships was found by Hulls and Wedemeyer (1980) to be a factor that affected children's self-esteem.

Further evidence that the quality of the parent-child relationship may suffer was found by Hetherington (1972). She found that daughters in families where the father was absent due to divorce showed more negative self-judgments than daughters from intact families or daughters from families where the father was absent due to death. Hetherington described the attitude of the divorcee towards herself to be different from the widows in that the divorcee was more anxious and unhappy. These attitudes tended to be reflected in the daughter.

Similar results were found by Young and Parish (1977). In their study, daughters who had lost fathers through divorce or death and whose mothers had not remarried, demonstrated greater insecurity and gave more negative self-evaluations than daughters who had either not lost fathers or daughters whose mothers had remarried.

Seeming to contradict these studies was that by Berg and Kelly (1979). They found that the measured self-esteem of children from divorced families was not

significantly different from that of children from intact, "accepted" families. However, children from intact, but "rejected" families, had lower self-esteem.[1]

The implication was that it was not divorce per se that affected the self-concept level of the child. The previously cited studies (Hetherington, 1972; Jenks, 1973; Young and Parish, 1977; Berg and Kelly, 1979; Wylie, 1979; Drake, 1981) on the effects of divorce on children indicated that the way the parent viewed the relationship with the spouse, i.e., had an emotional divorce occurred if not a legal one, may have had more influence on how the children felt about themselves than the actual divorce itself. The higher self-esteem levels of children whose mothers had remarried in the Young and Parish (1977) study may have indicated that the mothers who had remarried had adjusted to the father absence and continued their lives in a psychologically healthy way.

Fisher (1976) has shown that people who have divorced go through a period of adjustment. During that period of adjustment, their relationships with their children may suffer. Children may be used as weapons to hurt the other partner, or the children may suffer a period of marked decrease in attention from the parents because the parents are attempting to adjust to a traumatic event or process. Children may see the most significant people in their lives go through a period of self-doubt and perceived worthlessness.

The purpose of this study was to see if there was a positive correlation between the level of adjustment to divorce or separation of the custodial parent and the level of self-concept of the child.

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[1]Accepted families were defined as those which were rated positively by the children; rejected families were those that were rated negatively.

Organization of the Remainder of the Thesis

Chapter II of this thesis contains a review of the literature as it pertains to the self-concept, divorce or separation and the child, and divorce or separation and the parent.

Chapter III is a description of the procedure used in the research including sampling techniques, a description of the instruments used and the methodology used in the analysis of the data.

Chapter IV presents the results of the analysis of the data.

Chapter V includes a summary of the results, interpretations, and recommendations for further studies.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of the investigation was to determine the relationship of the degree of adjustment to marital separation or divorce of custodial mothers and the self-concept of their children. Areas that are related to the problem and present a context within which to place the results of the study are explored in this chapter. The first section is concerned with a definition of self-concept, its formation, and how it is affected by interaction with significant others. This is followed by a discussion of the research concerning divorce or separation and children. The final section reviews the literature dealing with divorce or separation and the parent.

Self-concept

A review of the literature on the self-concept revealed a profusion of writings on the subject that was both encouraging and disheartening. Literally hundreds of studies have been done with self-concept as the main focus. There was no dearth of information on the subject. However, much of the research was tentative or confusing because of lack of definition, or agreement about definition, of the basic constructs. Wylie (1979) stated:

> The basic constructs as defined in the writings of self-concept theorists frequently seem to point to no clear empirical referents. Thus it is no wonder that a wide array of "operational definitions" of some of these constructs has been devised by various experimenters. (p. 8)

Burns (1979) in a discussion of the history of the self-concept in psychological theory said,

> ...it is obvious that conceptions of the self system are often considerably vague, occasionally mutually contradictory (especially with regard to terminology), and lacking any definitive or complete statement. (p. 28)

Although there was considerable disagreement with respect to the meaning of the term self-concept, there was some agreement. Burns (1979) extrapolated four consistently appearing elements from the various theoretical approaches:

> (a) Two basic aspects of a global self can be discriminated:
> (i) I or self as knower/process/doer;
> (ii) Me or self as known which can include a variety of subselves, e.g. physical, social, other, ideal;
>
> (b) a person as an entity separate from others and existing over time is experienced;
>
> (c) both knowledge (self-image) and evaluation (self-esteem) appear as two basic elements of any self-concept;
>
> (d) self-knowledge and evaluation are learned through experience, essentially that of social interaction with significant others. (p. 29)

Burns (1979) also made a case for synonomous use of the terms self-concept and self-esteem. He indicated that people who attributed positive descriptions to themselves had high self-concepts and vice versa. Whether an attribute was considered positive or negative depended on the context in which it was perceived.

In a review of theories of self-concept, Brokenshire (1977) found that writers agree that "self-concept was a person's perception of himself, which had developed out of his interpersonal relationships..." (p. 9); Cooley (1966), in discussing the formation of the self-concept, used the analogy of the "looking glass". (p. 184). A person's self-concept was influenced by how he imagined others viewed him. This implied that the individual was aware of himself and that his perceptions of the environment were conscious.

Coombs and Snygg (1959) said that an individual had "literally hundred of thousands of more or less discrete perceptions of self" (p. 126). These perceptions

were organized into a pattern, or Gestalt by the individual. The pattern became his unique way of seeing himself and was called the phenomenal self. According to Coombs and Snygg (1959) there were certain perceptions of self that were vital or important to the individual himself. They called this organization of perceptions, the self-concept. This self-concept was in effect, a subset of the phenomenal self.

Rogers (1951) also defined the self-concept in terms of conscious perceptions. "The self-concept, or self structure, may be thought of as an organized configuration of perceptions of the self which are admissable to awareness" (p. 136).

Raimy (1971), who studied with Rogers, listed three principles that formed the major tenets of self-concept theory.

1. The Self-Concept is a learned perceptual system which functions as an object in the perceptual field.
2. The Self-Concept not only influences behavior but is itself altered and restructured by behavior and unsatisfied needs.
3. It may have little or no relation to external reality. (p. 99)

Shavelson and Bolus (1982) also indicated that self-concept was a person's perception of him or herself. An individual's experience with, and interpretation of his environment helped form these perceptions. They were influenced by "reinforcements, evaluations by significant others, and one's attributions for one's behavior" (p. 3).

The importance of significant others in the formation and development of a child's self-concept has been stated by a number of theorists (Rogers, 1951; Coombs and Snygg, 1959; Cooley, 1964; Thomas, 1964; Coopersmith, 1967; Raimy, 1971; Yamamoto, 1972; Shavelson, et. al., 1976; and Burns, 1979). In an experiment designed to measure factors that raised the self-concept of low achievers, Thomas

(1964) found that only the condition in which the parents were involved, produced significant positive changes in the self-concept of the students. Coopersmith (1967) found that children with high levels of self-esteem had parents who had firm rules and expectations that were consistently applied. Shavelson et. al., (1976) indicated that self-concept was a person's perception of himself and that this perception was especially influenced by environment mental reinforcements and significant others. Piers and Harris (1969) cited research which supported the claim that parental child-rearing attitudes and practices have a considerable influence on the development of a child's self-concept.

In summary, the results of research into self-concept, although seemingly confusing or contradictory at times, indicated that there were factors that were common to most discussion of self-concept. The common themes were that self-concept was based on perceptions of the self, was learned, and was influenced by significant others.

Divorce or Separation and the Child

Although the divorce rate and therefore the number of children who come from families of divorce has increased dramatically in the past few years, children of divorce have been the subjects of clinical attention for at least the past several decades (Ambert, 1980). Despert (1962) described her work with children of divorce in the 1940's and 1950's. She said it was not the divorce itself that necessarily caused disturbance or maladjustment in the children she saw.

> It is not the divorce, but the emotional situation in the home, with or without divorce that is the determining factors in a child's adjustment. A child is very disturbed when the relationship between his parents is very disturbed. This factor, which I came to think of as "emotional divorce" was always present. (p. 8)

She concluded that "emotional divorce" always preceded legal divorce, but that it was not always followed by legal divorce. That is, children whose parents had separated, had without exception gone through a disturbing emotional struggle with each other before the decision to separate or divorce actually occurred. The implication for the child was that the emotional damage caused by the divorce may have begun a long time before the actual separation occurred.

Conversely, a legal divorce may occur without an emotional divorce occurring, usually on the part of one spouse. Fisher (1981) describes the care of a woman who was still wearing her wedding ring four years after her divorce. She had not let go emotionally. Fisher (1981) said that the inability or refusal of the parents to let their relationship end may prolong the adjustment process for the children.

One of the most comprehensive studies of children of divorce was that of Wallerstein and Kelly (1980). In a clinical setting they studied children from nearly sixty families who were in the process of divorce. Besides the initial sessions, families were seen one year and then five years later. Overall, the study lasted from 1971 to 1977. Like Despert (1962), Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) described divorce as a process rather than an event.

> Divorce is a process which begins with the escalating distress of the marriage, often peaks at the separation and legal filing, and then ushers in several years of transition and disequilibrium before the adults are able to gain, or to regain, a sense of continuity and confidence in their roles and relationships. (p. 4)

The period of distress may last two or three years, a period of time relatively longer in proportion to life-span for the child than for the adult. The effect on the child or adolescent, according to Wallerstein and Kelly, was greatest during the actual separation and its aftermath or the period of time immediately following the separation.

Older children were less likely to be sheltered from the anger and bitterness of the divorce. Wallerstein and Kelly, in their study, found that older boys especially, were upset if they felt the father had been "thrown out". The anxiety they felt was significantly linked to the shattered self-esteem of the father. The father's rejection by the mother, and the lowered self-esteem of the father resulting from this rejection, increased the older boys anxiety. A father whom they had previously held in some regard, was rejected by another important person in their lives, the mother. Older children were also more likely to feel a sense of rejection since they were more aware of lapses in parenting brought on by the parent's preoccupation with their own adjustment problems (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980).

Wallerstein (1983) stated that the child of divorce has developmental tasks in addition to the customary, expected ones of childhood. The six tasks, which are sequential, are as follows:

Task 1: Acknowledging the Reality of the Marriage rupture.

Task 2: Disengaging from the Parental Conflict and Distress and Resuming Customary Pursuits.

Task 3: Resolution of Loss.

Task 4: Resolving Anger and Self-Blame.

Task 5: Accepting the Permanence of the Divorce.

Task 6: Achieving Realistic Hope Regarding Relationships.

Wallerstein (1984) stated that children who were very young at the time of marital breakup are likely to be less troubled about the divorce or separation in later years. However, Kalter and Rembar (1981), found no significant relationship between the age of the child during the divorce process and subsequent emotional disturbance.

Hetherington, Cox and Cox (1980) studied children and parents of divorce over a two year period in 1978-79. In addition to looking at the effects on the child, they concluded that the self-concepts of both parents were low in the year or two following divorce, and that the self-concept of mothers with custody of boys remained low longer. An interesting observation made by Hetherington, Cox and Cox (1980) was that in the first year following divorce the emotional stability of children from divorced families was less than that of children from high-discord intact families, but that by two years following divorce the reverse was true. They also concluded that boys had more trouble adjusting to divorce than girls.

A number of other researchers (Gardner, 1977; Rohrlich, et. al. 1977; Magrab, 1978; Kurdek, Blisk, and Siesky, 1981; Burns and Brassard, 1982) have looked at the psychological effects of divorce on children. The common theme that evolved from these studies was that the child was affected by how parents themselves adjusted and coped with the divorce process. Kurdek, et. al. (1981) in a review of research on the correlates of children's positive adjustment to divorce showed that well-adjusted children came from homes where, among other factors, there was low conflict both preceding and following divorce, high agreement between parents on child rearing and discipline, authoritarian discipline from the custodial parent, and a psychologically healthy custodial parent. These findings were in agreement with those of Coopersmith (1967) regarding the antecedents of high self-esteem in children.

Evidence regarding the effect of divorce or separation on self-concept seemed to be conflicting. Hetherington, Camara and Featherman (1981) cited studies which showed that self-esteem levels of children from one-parent families varied from lower than that of children from intact families to, in specific groups, higher than that of children from intact families. They suggested that self-concept

may be mediated by a number of factors. One of these factors may be the adjustment of the parent, as suggested by Berg and Kelly (1979), who found that the children in their sample from divorced families showed no difference in self-esteem than those from intact-accepted families, but that children from intact-rejected families were significantly lower in level of self-esteem. This, in essence, was what Despert (1962) said also. The "emotional divorce" or the negative relationships that existed between parents had as strong a traumatic effect on the child as the divorce itself. In their discussion of children of divorce who receive therapy, Berg and Kelly (1979) pointed out that these may have been children of parents who were having trouble adjusting to divorce. In other words, they hypothesized that the child's adjustment was related to the parents' adjustment.

Parish and Taylor (1979) found that a change in marital status of divorced mothers was correlated with a higher level of self-concept of grade-school and junior-high students. That is, children of divorce whose parents had remarried had higher self-concepts than children of divorce whose parents had not remarried. These findings corroborated those of Young and Parish (1977). The presence of a male figure was suggested as the possible reason for an increase in self-concept. Another possible explanation though, was that the mother had adjusted to the divorce sufficiently to allow the formation of new relationships.

The child from a single-parent family has been found to have more problems in school than his peers from two parent families. According to a study done by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (1980), children from single parent families showed lower achievement and presented more discipline problems than did children from two-parent intact families. This study unfortunately did not differentiate the reasons for the single-parent status.

A more rigid study was done by the National Association of School Psychologists (1983). They looked specifically at the effects of divorce. They concluded:

> ...the present results provide evidence that divorce accounts for a number of negative social and academic effects independent of well defined SES measures, including income, educational and occupational levels of the parents. (p. 319)

They also found that boys from divorced families experienced greater behavioral, social, and academic difficulties than did girls, and that older boys had more difficulties than younger boys. This finding was similar to that reported by Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) who suggested that older children may have felt the effects of divorce more strongly because they were exposed more openly to the conflicts their parents were having.

To summarize, divorce and its effect on children have been studied for at least the past 30-40 years. Despert (1962) described the "emotional divorce" that couples went through before a divorce. Despert felt that it was this emotional situation that was the determining factor in a child's adjustment. Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) did a comprehensive clinical study of children of divorce over a period of 7 years. They attempted to describe age-related reactions to divorce. Self-concept of divorced parents and the adjustment of their children was described by Hetherington, Cox and Cox (1980). They concluded that boys had more trouble adjusting to divorce than girls. The self-esteem of children from divorced families was found to be no lower than that of intact-accepted families in a study by Berg and Kelly (1979). The adjustment of the parents in the divorced families was suggested as a possible reason for this finding. The review of the literature on the effects of divorce or separation on children suggested that the children's feelings about themselves were related to how the significant adults in their lives reacted to the trauma of divorce or separation.

Divorce or Separation and the Parent

A number of writers have described divorce as a process rather than single traumatic event (Despert, 1962; Bohannon, 1970; Fisher, 1976). The parent who is divorced has experienced conflict leading up to the actual separation and continues the process of divorce adjustment long after the decree absolute has been granted. Kolevzon and Gottlieb (1983) described divorce as:

> a painful and traumatic experience reflecting a gradual process characterized by strong emotional, psychological and behavioral reaction to anticipated or impending life changes. (p. 91)

Kolevzon and Gottlieb (1983) went on however, to indicate that divorce could also be viewed as a positive experience. They wrote:

> It has been argued that the ability to adjust to one's marital disruption also can offer the divorcing individual new opportunities for person growth and development, as well as for the reorganization of one's lifestyle. (p. 91)

The implication of the extremes of divorce adjustment described was that individuals may have perceived the divorce or separation as positive or negative or somewhere on the continuum between the two extremes. Individuals may have differed from each other in their levels of adjustment or they may have experienced different levels of adjustment at different times.

Fisher (1976) described divorce as a process that could be broken down into various steps. He stated that the divorce process included a rebuilding process in which the person moved through specific blocks or steps of emotional and social adjustment. He identified these steps as (1) self-acceptance of divorce; (2) symptoms of grief; (3) disentanglement of the love relationship; (4) rebuilding social relationship; (5) feelings of self-worth; and (6) feelings of anger.

The first step had chronological priority since, according to Fisher (1976) this had to be dealt with before some of the other adjustment problems could be overcome. Essentially, it dealt with the resolution of guilt feelings about the divorce. Fisher's (1976) second step was similar to the stages of grief related to death, as observed by Kubler-Ross (1967). A person who had gone through a divorce or separation experienced the same basic steps as a person who experienced the death of a love one, i.e. (1) denial; (2) anger; (3) bargaining; (4) depression; (5) acceptance.

The third step, disentanglement of the love relationship, involved the severing of emotional ties with the so-called love-object person. Failing to do so completely could cause problems from one relationship to be carried to another. Even when affection for the person had dissipated though, feelings of attachment may have persisted (Weiss, 1976).

Many divorced or separated people found they had to rebuild social relationships, the fourth step in the adjustment process described by Fisher (1976). Fisher (1981) said there were four main reasons why old friendships, especially ones with married couples, disappeared after a divorce. The first was that the divorced person had suddenly become an eligible and possible partner for one of the people in a marriage. Thus the divorced person had become a threat to the relationships of married friends and they tended to avoid him or her. The second reason divorced people lost friends was that friends tended to support either the ex-husband or the ex-wife but not both. Friends that supported the former spouse were lost. The third reason was one of fear. Married couples saw the divorced couple as a threat to their marriage security. They thought that if it could happen to a couple close to them, it could happen to them. They therefore withdrew from the divorced couple altogether. The fourth reason stated by Fisher (1981) was that

the divorced person no longer fitted into the couple-oriented mainstream of society. The divorced person had become part of the less acceptable, at least to married people, singles subculture.

Interaction with others had been found to be one of the factors in building self-concept or self worth (Zirkel, 1972; Coopersmith, 1976; Wylie, 1979). During the divorce process, interaction with a significant other may have resulted in negative feedback, thus lowering self-concept and consequently adjustment to the divorce. The divorced or separated person needed to take positive action to improve his or her self-worth.

Fisher (1976) said anger could be a positive factor in the divorce process in that it provided motivation for change. However, anger could also have become excessive and resulted in violence if not handled correctly. It needed to be dealt with in a healthy way. Fisher (1981) said that the divorced person could work through anger positively by looking at it as consisting of 3 phases. In the first phase, the person learned to accept anger as being natural and appropriate. In the second phase, positive ways of expressing anger needed to be learned. Anger should be expressed in ways that were not destructive to divorcing people or to those around them. One spouse preventing the other spouse from visiting the children was an example of destructive anger since the children obviously were caught in the middle. Physical exercise or talking through anger with a trusted friend were examples of positive ways of dealing with anger. The third phase of anger was to learn forgiveness, Fisher (1981) said the divorced person was forgiving himself and herself when the ex-spouse was forgiven. The anger was being recognized as being an emotion the divorced person had and that responsibility for that emotion had to be taken by the divorced person.

Berman and Turk (1981) divided the problems and stresses of the divorced into three major categories; pragmatic concerns, interpersonal and social problems, and family-related stresses. Pragmatic concerns dealt with the sense of being overwhelmed, of not having enough time to do everything. The interpersonal-social problems were similar to Fisher's (1976) concept of rebuilding social relationships. That was, divorced people found themselves without the friends they had when they were married. Conflicting loyalties to the two former spouses caused friends to distance themselves from the divorced couple. The divorced couples themselves changed their attitude and feelings regarding interpersonal relationships. They may have felt a sense of emotional vulnerability or fear of becoming involved in another long time relationship (Berman and Turk, 1981). Family stresses arose as a result of disrupted child-rearing practices and communication. The number of male children present in the family was found to be a predictor of distress in the custodial parent.

Bohannan (1970) said that divorce was a complex process because at least six things were happening at once. He said the six overlapping experiences were: (1) the emotional divorce; (2) the legal divorce; (3) the economic divorce; (4) the coparental divorce; (5) the community divorce; and (6) the psychic divorce. The complexity of the divorce process was also discussed by Hunt (1966) who described the "multitude of connections" that the marriage had produced.

A review of the research on the effects of divorce or separation on the adult clearly indicated that divorce was not a single traumatic event but was a complicated process influenced by many factors. The level of adjustment of the adult concerned could vary from time to time in the divorce process (Fisher, 1976), and was shown in some studies to have a direct effect on the children involved in the marriage break-up. For example, Stolberg and Anker (1983)

discussed divorce in terms of change in the way the newly-single, custodial mother interacted with her children. "Divorced mothers were reported to become more restrictive and to employ negative sanctions" (p. 35). Increased levels of psychological stress faced by the divorced or separated mother resulted in less emotional strength for previously non-demanding situations and for the child.

The literature review indicated that the self-concept of a child was influenced by significant others and that the parents were generally considered to be significant others by the child (Coopersmith, 1967; Shavelson, 1976; Burns, 1979). The literature review did not clearly reveal however, a direct relationship between the level of self-concept of a child and the level of divorce or separation adjustment of the custodial parent.

In summary, the review of the literature indicated that divorce or separation adjustment is a long process. Fisher (1976) divided the process into 6 steps. Working through these steps would help the divorced or separated person become better adjusted to the divorce or separation. Other researchers such as Despert (1962), Hunt (1966) and Bohannon (1970) have also stated that divorce or separation was not an event but a complex process involving a number of factors and networks of people.

Summary

The review of the literature was organized into three categories: (1) self-concept; (2) divorce or separation and the child; and (3) divorce or separation and the parent.

The review of the literature pertaining to self-concept showed that there was a diversity of opinion about the definition and formation of a person's self-concept (Wylie, 1979; Burns, 1979). However, there seemed to be a consensus of opinion

that self-concept was influenced by interaction with significant others (Rogers, 1951; Coombs and Snygg, 1959; Cooley, 1964; Thomas, 1964; Coopersmith, 1967; Raimy, 1971; Yamamoto, 1972; Shavelson et. al, 1976; and Burns, 1979).

A review of the literature regarding the effects of divorce or parental separation on the child indicated that clear "cause and effect" relationships were difficult to establish. However, several studies, (Despert, 1962; Hetherington, Cox and Cox, 1980; Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980; Kurdek, et. al., 1981) indicated that a relationship between how children felt about themselves and how their parents reacted to, or behaved within, the divorce process, did exist. Hetherington, Camara, and Featherman (1981) cited research on children from one-parent families which showed that self-esteem levels of these children varied from lower to higher than that of children from intact families. In other words, being a child of a single parent was not necessarily correlated with lower self-esteem. Other factors such as the adjustment of the parent, may have had a mediating effect on the child (Berg and Kelly, 1979).

Two major studies done in the United States pointed ot some of the school related problems faced by children of divorce or separation. One done by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (1980) found the children from single parent families showed lower achievement and more discipline problems than children from intact families. The other, by the National Association of School Psychologists (1983) found that divorce accounted for a number of problems for children in their social and academic lives.

Finally the literature pertaining to effects of divorce or separation on the parent was reviewed. A number of authors (Despert, 1962; Hunt, 1966; Bohannon, 1970; Fisher, 1976, 1981) indicated that divorce or marital separation was a process rather than a single event and that the level of adjustment varied at different times

throughout the process. Implications for the relationship between the self-concept level of children of divorce or separation and the level of adjustment of the custodial parent were also discussed in this part of the literature review.

Organization of the Remainder of the Study

Chapter III is a description of the procedure used in the research including sampling techniques, a description of the instruments used, and methodology used in the analysis of the data. The results of the analysis of the data are presented in Chapter IV.

Chapter V includes a discussion of the results, interpretations and recommendations for further studies.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURES FOR CONDUCTING THE STUDY

In this chapter are descriptions of the following: (1) the sample surveyed in the study; (2) the instruments utilized to collect the data; and (3) the methodology used in the analysis of the data in this study.

General Statement of Procedure

Data was gathered from 29 pairs of subjects with each pair consisting of a divorced or separated single mother and one of the children in her custody. The mother was given the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale to measure the level of adjustment to the divorce or separation. The child was given the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale to measure his or her level of self-concept. The data was then analyzed to determine the degree of correlation. All subjects completed their scales independently.

For purposes of this study, self-concept is defined as that level of feeling about self as measured by the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale. A low score on the CSCS indicates a low self-concept or poor view of oneself, while a high score indicates a positive view of oneself.

The Sample

Subjects for the study were obtained through a number of sources and as such were representative of the divorced/separated population in the Province of Newfoundland. Specifically, subjects volunteered from the following sources: the Canadian Association for Separated, Divorced and Widowed Catholics; Big Brothers, Big Sisters Organization; those receiving counselling at the Unified Family Court;

undergraduate classes in guidance at Memorial University; and volunteers not associated with any organized group for the divorced or separated. A total of 29 custodial mothers completed the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale (FDAS) and 70 children completed that Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (CSCS). In cases where more than one child per family completed the CSCS, one child was randomly selected for inclusion in the analysis of correlation.

The mothers ranged in age from 26 years to 45 years with a mean age of 35.26 years. The children ranged in age from 8 years to 18 years with a mean age of 12.5 years. The median age of the mother was 35 years. The median age of the children was 12 years. The length of time the mothers in the study had been separated or divorced from their spouse ranged from a low of 1 month to a high of 93 months. The mean separation time was 30.15 months. The median separation time was 30 months.

Table 1 shows the age range and means for the mothers and children used in this study and the range and mean of the numbers of months since the separation or divorce had begun.

TABLE I Age ranges and means: range and mean of length of time since divorce or separation.

	AGE RANGE (YEARS)	MEAN	MEDIAN	DIV/SEP RANGE (MONTHS)	MEAN MONTHS	MEDIAN MONTHS
MOTHERS	26-45	35.76	35	1-93	30.15	30
CHILDREN	8-18	12.5	12	—	—	–

Instrumentation

Two instruments were used in this study. They were the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale (FDAS) and the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (CSCS).

The Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale (FDAS). The level of adjustment of the mothers was measured by using the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale (FDAS). This scale was developed by Bruce Fisher in 1976 and revised in 1978. The FDAS was designed to measure a person's adjustment to the ending of a love relationship. It consists of 100 statements. Respondents to the FDAS must decide how frequently each of the statements applied to them. For each of the 100 statements, there are 5 possible replies. They are: 1. Almost always; 2. Usually; 3. sometimes; 4. Seldom; 5. Almost never.

Results on the FDAS could be given as a total adjustment score and as subtest scores. The 6 subtests of the FDAS are self-worth, disentanglement, anger, grief, social intimacy, and social self-worth. For purposes of this study only the total adjustment score was used. The main reason for using the total adjustment score was that this study was mainly concerned with the mothers' overall adjustment to the separation of divorce and the relationship of that adjustment to her child's self-concept. A second reason was that Fisher (1978) stated that the total adjustment score was statistically, the most important. An Alpha Internal Reliability coefficient of .98 was reported for the FDAS (Fisher and Hart-Fisher, 1984). Subtest reliability coefficients ranged from .87 to .93. No statistical information was provided on the validity of the FDAS. However, Fisher and Hart-Fisher said there were three indications of validity for this instrument: (1) Face validity - Fisher said that people taking the FDAS have reported that the items were accurate. (2) time validity - Scores on the FDAS were highly correlated with time since separation. (3) Seminar members evaluations - Scores on the FDAS correlated with judgments made by members who had completed a divorce seminar.

The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (CSCS). The level of self-concept of the children in the study was measured using the Piers-Harris Children's

Self-Concept Scale (CSCS). This scale was developed during the 1960's and standardized on children from small town Pennsylvania schools. It consists of 80 declarative statements (e.g. I am a happy person) to which the subjects must respond "yes" or "no". According to the authors, it requires approximately a third grade reading level.

Piers (1977) reported Kuder-Richardson reliability coefficients that ranged from .88 for girls in grades six and ten to .93 for boys in grade 10. The manual reported test-retest-reliability coefficients ranging from .71-.77. (Piers and Harris, 1969).

Validity coefficients were reported in the manual (Piers and Harris, 1969) that ranged from .68 when the CSCS was compared to Lipsitt's Children's Self-Concept Scale to around .49 when the CSCS was compared to peer and teacher ratings. Smith and Rogers (1977) found that significant differences in scores on the CSCS were not due to chance responding, thus confirming the scale's validity.

Bentler (1971) reviewed the CSCS and concluded that it possessed sufficient reliability and validity for research purposes. Shieve (1973) evaluated four selected measures of self-concept including the CSCS and concluded that the CSCS was the most nearly satisfactory of the four.

Administration and Scoring of the Instruments

To ensure the anonymity of the respondents, a face to face interview was not used. In some cases the instruments were passed to and received from the subjects by a third party. In other cases, the instruments were mailed to the subjects. The subjects were identified only by number. Mothers' and childrens' forms were matched by using the same number.

Subjects were given a package that included a copy of the FDAS and an FDAS score sheet, enough copies of the CSCS for each child living with the mother, and a covering letter that explained what the subjects were expected to do. The covering letter directed the subject to the instruction at the beginning of the FDAS and the CSCS. The letter also included the thesis writer's telephone number to be called if problems with completing the instruments arose. A sample of the cover letter can be found in Appendix A. Appendix B contains a copy of the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale. Appendix C contains a copy of the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale.

Both the FDAS and the CSCS were scored by hand by this writer. The FDAS could be broken down into sub-scale scores however for purposes of this study only the total score for each subject was used. Fisher (1976) reported that the total score of the FDAS was the most important since it provided an indication of how the person had adjusted to the ending of a love relationship. Also the reliability coefficient for the total score was higher than that for the individual subtests.

Analysis of the Data

Each mother in this study received a single score on the FDAS. Where there was only one child in her custody, that child's CSCS score was paired with the mother's score. In cases where the mother had more than one child in her custody, one child was randomly chosen and that child's CSCS score was paired with the mother's. The result was a "subject pair" with two variables, an FDAS score and a CSCS score.

This study was designed to answer the following research questions: 1. Does a positive correlation exist between the mother's level of adjustment to

divorce or separation, as measured by the FDAS, and her child's level of self-concept, as measured by the CSCS? 2. Does a positive correlation exist between the mother's level of divorce or separation adjustment, as measured by the FDAS, and the level of self-concept, as measured by the CSCS, of a randomly chosen male child in her custody? 3. Does a positive correlation exist between the mother's level of divorce or separation adjustment, as measured by the FDAS, and the level of self-concept, as measured by the CSCS, of a randomly chosen female child in her custody?

The degree of relationship between the two variables was calculated using the Spearman rank-order correlation coefficient.

Organization of the Remainder of the Study

Chapter IV contains an analysis of the data gathered in this study. Chapter V contains a summary of the study, interpretations and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The purpose of this study was to determine the correlation between the level of separation adjustment of divorced or separated mothers and the level of self-concept of a randomly chosen child in her custody. The investigation also attempted to determine whether the correlation between the mother's scores and the children's scores would vary depending on the sex of the child. This chapter is a presentation of the analysis of the data collected.

The data consisted of the mother's scores received on the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale (FDAS) and the children's scores on the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (CSCS). A total of 29 pairs of scores were obtained. However, one pair of scores was rejected because the time that had elapsed since the separation, 202 months, was much greater than the mean or the median for the group, 30.15 months and 30 months respectively. Two pairs of scores were rejected because the time since separation was not recorded by the subjects, thus a total of 26 pairs of subjects constituted the final sample.

The analysis of the data was presented by restating each research question and then calculating a correlation to answer it.

1. Is there a significant positive correlation between the level of divorce adjustment of divorced or separated mothers, as measured by the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale, and the level of self-concept of a randomly chosen child in her custody, as measured by the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale?

The data was first analyzed by plotting scores in each subject pair on a graph. The resulting scattergram is presented in Figure 1. The scattergram indicates a positive correlation although it would not appear to be high. The

scores tend to be widely scattered. The scattergram also shows some scores that are outside the general cluster.

Table 2 shows the range, mean, median, and standard deviation for each group of scores.

TABLE 2 Range, mean, median and standard deviation for mother's FDAS scores paired with child's CSCS scores. N = 26

GROUP	RANGE	MEAN	MEDIAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
MOTHERS (FDAS)	204-477	393.38	401	71.44
CHILD (CSCS)	28-79	62.62	65.5	11.94

The Spearman rank-order correlation was used. Downie and Starry (1977) noted that the Spearman technique was especially useful when the number of pairs was less then 30, as was the case in this study.

Calculations of the Spearman rank-order correlation resulted in a correlation coefficient of r_s = .26 level. Although the correlation was positive no significant correlation was found between the level of divorce adjustment of a separated or divorced mother and the level of self-concept of a randomly selected child in her custody.

2. Is there a significant positive correlation between the level of divorce adjustment of divorced or separated mothers, as measured by the FDAS and the level of self-concept as measured by the CSCS of a randomly chosen male child in her custody.

Figure 2 is the scattergram of the pairs of scores obtained when the selected child was male. The scores do not appear to possess homoscedasticity.

FIGURE 1. Scattergram for mother's score on the FDAS paired with the child's score on the CSCS. N = 26

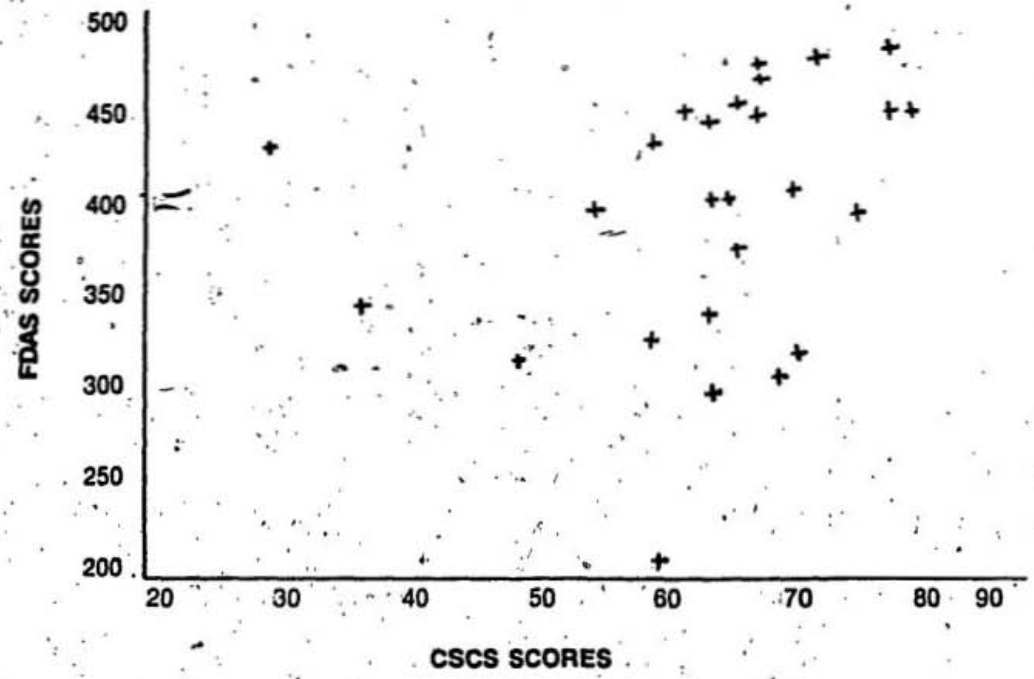

FIGURE 2. Scattergram for mother's score on the FDAS paired with male child's score on the CSCS. N = 16.

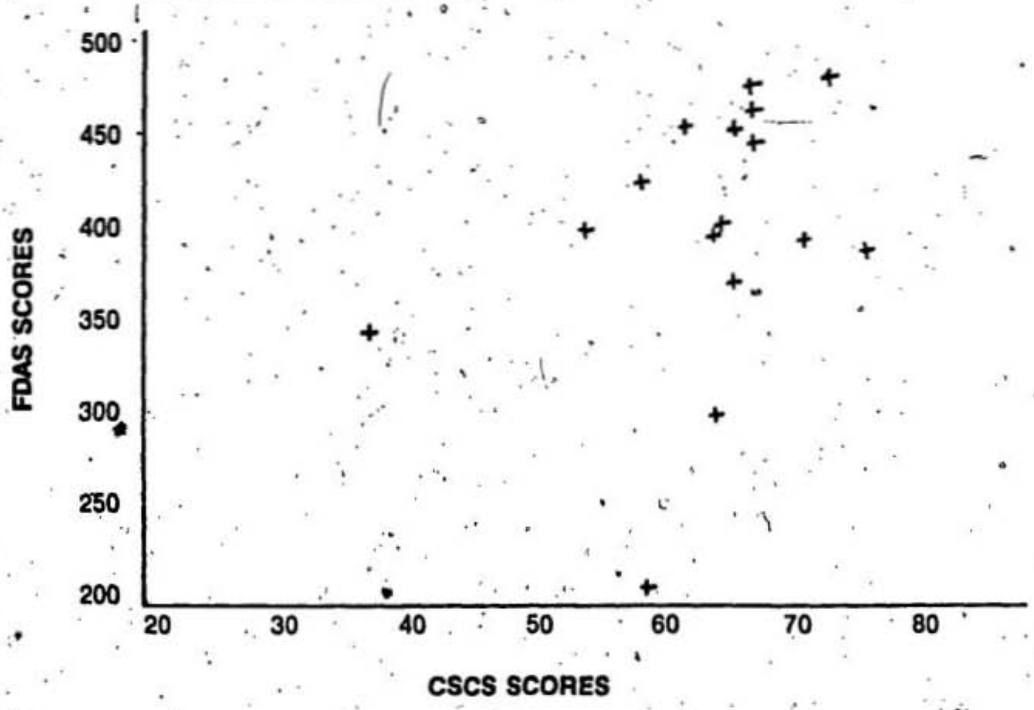

Table 3 shows the range, mean, median and standard deviation for mothers' FDAS and the male children's CSCS scores.

TABLE 3 Range, mean, median and standard deviation for mother's FDAS scores paired with male child's CSCS scores. N = 16

GROUP	RANGE	MEAN	MEDIAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
MOTHERS (FDAS)	204-475	399.19	401	72.88
CHILD (CSCS)	36-75	62.43	64.5	8.88

Calculation of the Spearman rank-order correlation resulted in a co-efficient of $r_s = .35$. This was not significant at the .05 level. No significant correlation was found between the level of divorce adjustment of divorced or separated mothers, as measured by the FDAS and the level of self-concept of a randomly chosen male child in her custody as measured by the CSCS.

3. Is there a significant positive correlation between the level of divorce adjustment of divorced or separated mothers, as measured by the FDAS and the level of self-concept as measured by the CSCS of a randomly chosen female child in her custody as measured by the CSCS.

Figure 3 is the scattergram of the pairs of scores for mother's and a female child in her custody. The scattergram indicates that there was low or no correlation.

Table 4 shows the range, mean, median and standard deviation for mothers' FDAS and the female children's CSCS scores.

FIGURE 3. Scattergram for mother's score on the FDAS paired with female child's score on the CSCS. N = 9.

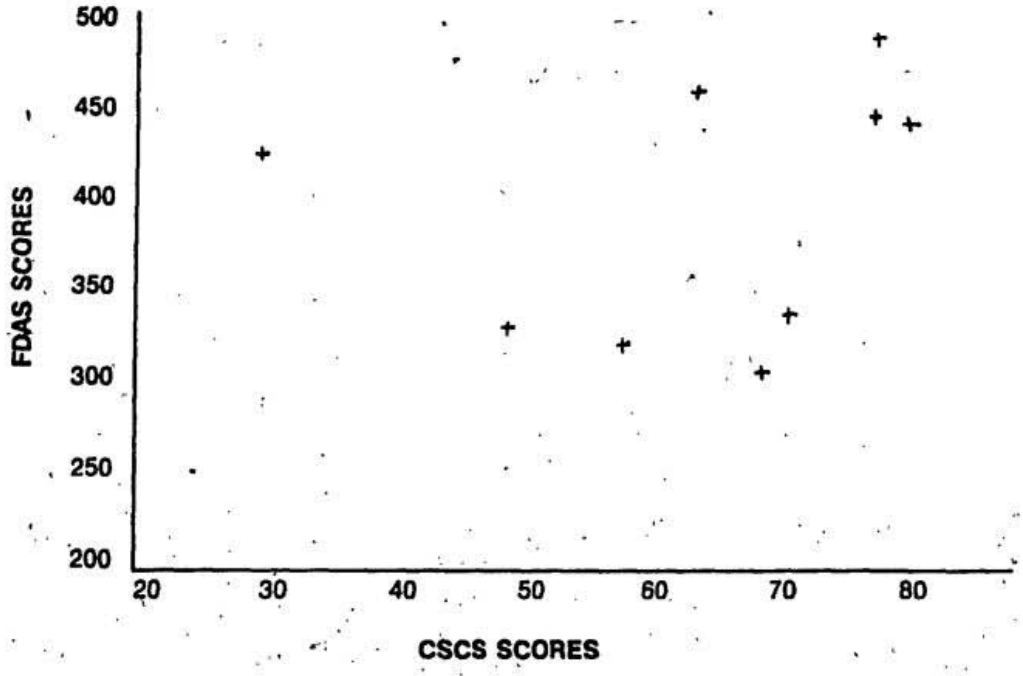

TABLE 4 Range, mean, median and standard deviation for mother's FDAS scores paired with female child's CSCS scores. N = 9

GROUP	RANGE	MEAN	MEDIAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
MOTHERS (FDAS)	298-477	390.67	435	68.62
CHILD (CSCS)	28-79	62.89	68	16.72

Calculation of the Spearman rank-order correlation resulted in a coefficient of $r_s = .39$. This was not significant at the .05 level. No significant correlation was found between the level of divorce adjustment of divorced or separated mothers, as measured by the FDAS and the level of self-concept of a randomly chosen female child in her custody as measured by the CSCS.

Summary

Chapter IV presented an analysis of the data collected in this study. The data consisted of mother's scores on the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale paired with the score of a randomly chosen child in her custody on the Piers Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale.

Three research questions were restated and were answered on the basis of the analysis of the data.

Question 1 asked whether there was a significant positive correlation between the level of divorce adjustment of divorced or separated mothers and the level of self-concept of a randomly chosen child in her custody. No significant correlation was found.

Question 2 asked whether there was a significant positive correlation between the level of divorce adjustment of divorced or separated mothers and the level of self-concept of a randomly chosen male child in her custody. No significant correlation was found.

Question 3 asked whether there was a significant positive correlation between the level of divorce adjustment of divorced or separated mothers and the level of self-concept of a randomly chosen female child in her custody. No significant correlation was found.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUMMARY

In Chapter V a summary of the complete study is presented. The contents of this chapter include a restatement of the problem, and research questions, summary of the procedure, a brief description of the method of data analysis, specific findings, and recommendations for further research.

Restatement of the Problem

A number of researchers have studied the effects of divorce on children and adults (Despert, 1962; Fisher, 1976; Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980; Kurdek and Berg, 1983). A positive correlation between the parents adjustment to separation and their children's adjustment, defined in terms of their attitude towards parental separation, their understanding of the divorce, their locus of control, and their degree of intrapersonal understanding, was found. Other researchers have compared the self-concept level of children from divorced and separated families to that of children from intact families. (Hetherington, 1972; Young and Parish, 1977; Berg and Kelly, 1979). Their studies indicated that the self-concept of the children may have been related to the adjustment of the parents to the divorce or separation. For example, Berg and Kelly (1979) found that children from homes where the parents were divorced or separated had higher levels of self-esteem than children from homes where the parents lived together but were in conflict. However, no research was found which specifically related the level of self-esteem of children of divorce or separation to the level of adjustment of the parent with whom they were living.

The purpose of this study was to determine whether a correlation existed between the level of self-concept of children and the level of adjustment to separation and divorce of the mother's in whose custody the children lived.

Specifically, the investigation attempted to answer three research questions:

(1) Is there a significant positive correlation between the level of divorce adjustment of separated or divorced mothers, as measured by the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale (FDAS) and the level of self-concept of a randomly chosen child in her custody, as measured by the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (CSCS)?

(2) Is there a significant positive correlation between the level of divorce adjustment of separated or divorced mothers, as measured by the FDAS, and the level of self-concept of a randomly chosen male child in her custody, as measured by the CSCS?

(3) Is there a significant positive correlation between the level of divorce adjustment of separated or divorced mothers, as measured by the FDAS, and the level of self-concept of a randomly chosen female child in her custody, as measured by the CSCS?

Summary of the Procedure

A total of 29 separated or divorced mothers completed the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale (FDAS). Seventy children in the custody of these 29 mothers completed the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (CSCS). Where more than one child per family completed the CSCS, one child was randomly selected for inclusion in the analysis of correlation.

Because of incomplete data, 3 pairs of subjects were eliminated from the study. The final analysis, therefore, was based on 26 pairs of mothers and children.

Method of Data Analysis

The method of data analysis was the same for each research question. First, a scattergram was plotted to illustrate the degree of correlation. Then the correlation coefficient was calculated using the Spearman rank-order method of calculation. This method was chosen because of its suitability to small samples.

Research Questions and Discussion

This study attempted to answer three research questions. Each one is restated below and a discussion presented.

Question 1: Is there a significant positive correlation between the level of divorce adjustment of separated or divorced mothers as measured by the FDAS, and the level of self-concept of a randomly chosen child in her custody, as measured by the CSCS?

Calculation of the Spearman rank-order correlation coefficient showed that, in this sample, there was not a significant correlation between the level of divorce adjustment of the mother and the level of self-concept of the child in her custody. However, the correlation that was found was positive.

A number of reasons may account for the results obtained. The most obvious was that there was not a high correlation, or indeed there was no correlation between how a mother has adjusted to a marriage break-up and how children in her custody felt about themselves. Divorce or separation may be a traumatic time for all concerned but perhaps mothers and children each deal with it in their own ways.

Another possible explanation was that both divorced/separation adjustment and self-concept are very complex concepts affected by a diversity of factors. If each was a product of a number of factors, then the common factor of divorce or separation would not necessarily have the same effect on each one.

One further possibility was that the sample used was not large enough. Perhaps in the population of divorced and separated mothers, and their children, there is a significant correlation. The probability that this sample was not representative was increased by its small size.

Research questions 2 and 3 are discussed together since they were designed to ascertain if there existed a correlation between mothers and children depending upon the sex of the child.

Question 2: Is there a significant positive correlation between the level of divorce adjustment of separated or divorced mothers, as measured by the FDAS and the level of self-concept as measured by the CSCS of a randomly chosen male child in her custody?

Question 3: Is there a significant positive correlation between the level of divorce adjustment of divorced or separated mothers, as measured by the FDAS, and the level of self-concept, as measured by the CSCS, of a randomly chosen female child in her custody?

As with Question 1, there was no significant correlation found to answer either of these questions. Since no significant correlation was found, it was assumed that the explanation offered for Question 1 were equally valid for Question 2 and 3.

Interpretation and Implications of Study Findings

The results of this investigation do not support the findings of previous research which suggested that children's levels of self-concept may vary according to the behavior or emotional adjustment of significant others in their lives (Coopersmith, 1967; Wylie, 1979).

The major implication of this study is that self-concept of children and the divorce or separation adjustment of their mothers are not related. Berg and Kelly (1979) found that children who came from families where there was prolonged discord between parents were more likely to suffer from lower levels of self-esteem than those without such discord whether there was separation or not. The amount of fighting between the parents was not a measured factor in this study but it may have had a lingering effect on the children independent of the level of adjustment of the mother. Therefore, the child who indicated a low level of self-concept even though the mother may have shown a high adjustment score may have developed that low self-concept as a result of pre-divorce fighting. Despert (1962) went so far as to say that in some cases the divorce process started before the child was born. The child may have been concerned with the thought that s(he) would save the marriage. According to Despert (1962) having a child to save or improve a marriage rarely works. Instead of improving matters, a baby complicates them. Children born into troubled marriages may have spent their whole lives in conflict. Even if the mother adjusts well to leaving such a marriage, the children may take much longer to improve their concepts themselves.

The child and the mother may have adjusted to the divorce or separation in ways that are unique to each but not related to each other.

Divorce or separation adjustment and self-concept may be far too complex and affected by too many factors, to show a strong correlation with each other. Many people, besides the married couple, are involved in the divorce or separation process. Other relatives such as aunts and uncles, or grandparents may play a significant role in the lives of the divorcing or separating family and may complicate the adjustments or self-concepts of those involved.

Recommendations for Further Research

The following recommendations are made for further research:

1. The relationship between divorce or separation adjustment of mothers and the self-concept of the children should be studied with a much larger sample than was used in this study. Sample size might be increased by gathering data over a longer period of time, thus allowing greater numbers of subjects to be contacted. Such research may result in finding that self-concept and divorce adjustment are related but in more specific ways than were looked at in this study.

2. Research should be conducted to determine how the amount of conflict that preceded a divorce or separation affects the self-concept of the children of the marriage. Much of the literature on children of divorce has been concerned with post-separation adjustment of those concerned. Research should be done to try to determine how the child is affected by the emotional turmoil that precedes a divorce.

3. Research should be conducted to determine the effect of the pre-divorce separation conflict on the eventual adjustment of the partners in the marriage. Divorce is a traumatic process. How are people's personalities and coping abilities affected by this process?

4. In this study, a single child was randomly selected if there was more than one child in the family. Further research should be done to ascertain the effect of siblings on the level of self-concept of children whose parents have divorced or separated. Siblings, although they may fight amongst each other, tend to help each other if it appears that the family is being threatened. Do families where there is more than one child adjust better to the divorce? Are there particular ages or age-gaps between children that optimize or minimalize their support for each other?

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APPENDIX A

COVER LETTER

Dear Parent:

I am a graduate student in Educational Psychology at Memorial University. Under the supervision of my supervisor, Dr. David Watts, I am doing research in the area of divorce/separation and its effects on children. Specifically, I am attempting to find out if there is a relationship between the level of the parent's adjustment to the divorce or separation and the way the child sees himself or herself, that is, the child's self-concept.

To help me in this research, I am asking that you complete the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale (FDAS) contained in this package, and have each of your schoolage children (grade 3 or above) complete the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale. Instructions are given at the beginning of each scale. Younger children may need some help with unfamiliar words, but the form should be completed as independently as possible. Please note again that the child should be at least at the grade 3 level in order to be able to complete the form.

To ensure that you remain anonymous, I have written a number in the space for Name on both forms. The numbers on your childrens' forms correspond to yours. For example, if your FDAS form has number 19, your childrens' form should also have number 19.

If you have any questions, you may call me at 726-2931.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Gerald Warren

APPENDIX B

THE PIERS-HARRIS SELF-CONCEPT SCALE

THE PIERS-HARRIS SELF-CONCEPT SCALE

(THE WAY I FEEL ABOUT MYSELF)

NUMBER _____

AGE ____ GIRL OR BOY _____

GRADE _____

BIRTH ORDER (1st born, 2nd, etc.) _____

NUMBER OF BROTHERS AND SISTERS _____

DATE _____

Here are a set of statements. Some of them are true of you and so you will circle the yes. Some are not true of you and so you will circle the no. Answer every question even if some are hard to decide, but do not circle both yes and no. Remember, circle the yes if the statement is generally like you, or circle the no if the statement is generally not like you. There are no right or wrong answers. Only you can tell us how you feel about yourself, so we hope you will mark the way you really feel inside.

1. My classmates make fun of me . . . . . yes no
2. I am a happy person . . . . . yes no
3. It is hard for me to make friends . . . . . yes no
4. I am often sad . . . . . yes no
5. I am smart . . . . . yes no
6. I am shy . . . . . yes no
7. I get nervous when the teacher calls on me . . . . . yes no
8. My looks bother me . . . . . yes no
9. When I grow up, I will be an important person . . . . . yes no
10. I get worried when we have tests in school . . . . . yes no
11. I am unpopular . . . . . yes no
12. I am well behaved in school . . . . . yes no
13. It is usually my fault when something goes wrong . . . . . yes no
14. I cause trouble to my family . . . . . yes no
15. I am strong . . . . . yes no
16. I have good ideas . . . . . yes no
17. I am an important member of my family . . . . . yes no
18. I usually want my own way . . . . . yes no
19. I am good at making things with my hands . . . . . yes no
20. I give up easily . . . . . yes no
21. I am good in my school work . . . . . yes no
22. I do many bad things . . . . . yes no

23. I can draw well. . . . . yes no

24. I am good in music . . . . . yes no

25. I behave badly at home . . . . . yes no

26. I am slow in finishing my school work . . . . . yes no

27. I am an important member of my class . . . . . yes no

28. I am nervous . . . . . yes no

29. I have pretty eyes . . . . . yes no

30. I can give a good report in front of the class . . . . . yes no

31. In school I am a dreamer . . . . . yes no

32. I pick on my brother(s) and sister(s) . . . . . yes no

33. My friends like my ideas . . . . . yes no

34. I often get into trouble . . . . . yes no

35. I am obedient at home . . . . . yes no

36. I am lucky . . . . . yes no

37. I worry a lot . . . . . yes no

38. My parents expect too much of me . . . . . yes no

39. I like being the way I am . . . . . yes no

40. I feel left out of things . . . . . yes no

41. I have nice hair . . . . . yes no

42. I often volunteer in school. . . . . yes no

43. I wish I were different. . . . . yes no

44. I sleep well at night . . . . . yes no

45. I hate school . . . . . yes no

46. I am among the last to be chosen for games . . . . . yes no

47. I am sick a lot . . . . . yes no

48. I am often mean to other people. . . . . yes no

49. My classmates in school think I have good ideas . . . . . yes no

50. I am unhappy . . . . . yes no

51. I have many friends . . . . . yes no

52. I am cheerful . . . . . yes no

53. I am dumb about most things . . . . . yes no

54. I am good looking . . . . . yes no

55. I have lots of pep . . . . . yes no

56. I get into a lot of fights . . . . . yes no

57. I am popular with boys . . . . . yes no

58. People pick on me . . . . . yes no

59. My family is disappointed in me . . . . . yes no

60. I have a pleasant face . . . . . yes no

61. When I try to make something, everything seems to go wrong . . . yes no

62. I am picked on at home . . . . . yes no

63. I am a leader in games and sports . . . . . yes no

64. I am clumsy . . . . . yes no

65. In games and sports, I watch instead of play . . . . . yes no

66. I forget what I learn . . . . . yes no

67. I am easy to get along with . . . . . yes no

68. I lose my temper easily . . . . . yes no

69. I am popular with girls . . . . . yes no

70. I am a good reader . . . . . yes no

71. I would rather work alone than with a group . . . . . yes no

72. I like my brother (sister) . . . . . yes no

73. I have a good figure . . . . . yes no

74. I am often afraid . . . . . yes no

75. I am always dropping or breaking things . . . . . yes no

76. I can be trusted . . . . . yes no

77. I am different from other people . . . . . yes no

78. I think bad thoughts . . . . . yes no

79. I cry easily . . . . . yes no

80. I am a good person . . . . . yes no

Score: _____

APPENDIX C

FISHER DIVORCE ADJUSTMENT SCALE

FISHER DIVORCE ADJUSTMENT SCALE

HELPFUL HINTS FOR COMPLETING THIS SCALE ACCURATELY

NOTE: Please use No. 2 pencil to fill out computer answer sheet. Your answer sheet is coded with a number to insure confidentiality.

STEP 1. Print your name, address, city, zip code, date, and phone on the answer sheet.

STEP 2. YOUR AGE. Write in your age vertically to the left of the equal signs, and darken the appropriate spaces as shown in the example below.

EXAMPLE:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
=	=	■	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	2
=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	■	9

STEP 3. MONTHS SEPARATED. Decide which of your love-relationships that have ended or are ending that you will be thinking of when you complete this Scale. On the answer sheet write vertically to the left of the equal signs how many months you have been separated from the love-partner. Mark both numbers zero if you are not separated. Darken the appropriate spaces. See examples below.

EXAMPLES: Not separated

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
■	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	0
■	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	0

Separated less than 10 months

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
■	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	0
=	=	=	■	=	=	=	=	=	=	3

Separated over 10 months

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
=	■	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	1
=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	■	9

STEP 4. PERSONAL DATA. Read the following statements and mark your response on the answer sheet by darkening the appropriate space.

A. I am
   1. female
   2. male

B. I am thinking of the following love-relationship that has ended or is ending while I complete this Scale (Recheck **STEP 3** above).
   1. my recent marriage
   2. my recent living-together love-relationship
   3. my recent non-living-together love-relationship
   4. other

C. My legal status in this love-relationship is
   1. no applicable
   2. not separated
   3. separated but no one has filed
   4. one or both of us has filed
   5. legally separated
   6. final decree has been granted

D. I was in this love-relationship
   1. less than one year
   2. one to five years
   3. six to ten years
   4. eleven to fifteen years
   5. more than fifteen years

E. Our yearly joint income was
   1. not applicable
   2. less than $5,000
   3. $5,001 to $15,000
   4. $15,001 to $25,000
   5. more than $25,000

F. We had the following number of children from this love-relationship
   1. none
   2. one
   3. two or more

G. The custody of these children is (mark more than one if necessary)
   1. in my custody
   2. in his/her custody
   3. we have joint custody
   4. children are separated with split custody
   5. children are of legal age
   6. no children

H. I have used these professional services to help adjust to the ending of this love-relationship (mark more than one if necessary)
   1. none
   2. divorce adjustment class
   3. personal growth classes or workshops
   4. individual or group therapy
   5. counseling with minister, priest, or rabbi
   6. other

I. Who decided to end this love-relationship?
   1. I did
   2. S/he did
   3. mutual decision

J. I have been married (include important living-together love-relationships)
   1. once
   2. twice
   3. three or more times
   4. never

K. My parents
   1. did not separate and/or divorce
   2. separated and/or divorced when I was under thirteen years of age
   3. separated and/or divorced when I was a teenager
   4. separated and/or divorced after I became of legal age
   5. other

L. I am presently
   1. remarried
   2. in a living-together love-relationship
   3. in a non-living-together love-relationship
   4. not in an important love-relationship

M. My level of education is
   1. did not complete high school
   2. high school graduate
   3. vocational training and/or attending college
   4. college degree
   5. college graduate degree

N. I belong to the following race
   1. Caucasian
   2. Negroid
   3. Spanish-American
   4. Oriental
   5. Other

STEP 5. The following statements are feelings and attitudes that people frequently experience while they are ending a love-relationship. Keeping in mind the love-relationship you checked in **STEP 3** above, read each statement and decide how frequently the statement applies to <u>your present feelings and attitudes</u>. Mark your response on your answer sheet. Do not leave any statements blank on your answer sheet. If the statement is not appropriate for you in your present situation, answer the way you feel you might if that statement were appropriate.

The five responses to choose from on the answer sheet are:

(1) almost always (2) usually (3) sometimes (4) seldom (5) almost never

(1) almost always (2) usually (3) sometimes (4) seldom (5) almost never

1. I am comfortable telling people I am separated from my love-partner.
2. I am physically and emotionally exhausted from morning until night.
3. I am constantly thinking of my former love-partner.
4. I feel rejected by many of the friends I had when I was in the love-relationship.
5. I become upset when I think about my former love-partner.
6. I like being the person I am.
7. I feel like crying because I feel so sad.
8. I can communicate with my former love-partner in a calm and rational manner.
9. There are many things about my personality I would like to change.
10. It is easy for me to accept my becoming a single person.
11. I feel depressed.
12. I feel emotionally separated from my former love-partner.
13. People would not like me if they got to know me.
14. I feel comfortable seeing and talking to my former love-partner.
15. I feel like I am an attractive person.
16. I feel as though I am in a daze and the world doesn't seem real.
17. I find myself doing things just to please my former love-partner.
18. I feel lonely.
19. There are many things about my body I would like to change.
20. I have many plans and goals for the future.
21. I feel I don't have much sex appeal.
22. I am relating and interacting in many new ways with people since my separation.
23. Joining a singles' group would make me feel I was a loser like them.
24. It is easy for me to organize my daily routine of living.
25. I find myself making excuses to see and talk to my former love-partner.

(1) almost always (2) usually (3) sometimes (4) seldom (5) almost never

26. Because my love-relationship failed, I must be a failure.

27. I feel like unloading my feelings of anger and hurt upon my former love-partner.

28. I feel comfortable being with people.

29. I have trouble concentrating.

30. I think of my former love-partner as related to me rather than as a separate person.

31. I feel like an okay person.

32. I hope my former love-partner is feeling as much or more emotional pain than I am.

33. I have close friends who know and understand me.

34. I am unable to control my emotions.

35. I feel capable of building a deep and meaningful love-relationship.

36. I have trouble sleeping.

37. I easily become angry at my former love-partner.

38. I am afraid to trust people who might become love-partners.

39. Because my love-relationship ended, I feel there must be something wrong with me.

40. I either have no appetite or eat continuously which is unusual for me.

41. I don't want to accept the fact that our love-relationship is ending.

42. I force myself to eat even though I'm not hungry.

43. I have given up on my former love-partner and in getting back together.

44. I feel very frightened inside.

45. It is important that my family, friends, and associates be on my side rather than on my former love-partner's side.

46. I feel uncomfortable even thinking about dating.

47. I feel capable of living the kind of life I would like to live.

48. I have noticed my body weight is changing a great deal.

(1) almost always (2) usually (3) sometimes (4) seldom (5) almost never

49. I believe if we try, my love-partner and I can save our love-relationship.
50. My abdomen feels empty and hollow.
51. I have feelings of romantic love for my former love-partner.
52. I can make the decisions I need to because I know and trust my feelings.
53. I would like to get even with my former love-partner for hurting me.
54. I avoid people even though I want and need friends.
55. I have really made a mess of my life.
56. I sigh a lot.
57. I believe it is best for all concerned to have our love-relationship ended.
58. I perform my daily activities in a mechanical and unfeeling manner.
59. I become upset when I think about my love-partner having a love-relationship with someone else.
60. I feel capable of facing and dealing with my problems.
61. I blame my former love-partner for the failure of our love-relationship.
62. I am afraid of becoming sexually involved with another person.
63. I feel adequate as a fe/male love-partner.
64. It will only be a matter of time until my love-partner and I get back together.
65. I feel detached and removed from activities around me as though I were watching them on a movie screen.
66. I would like to continue having a sexual relationship with my former love-partner.
67. Life is somehow passing me by.
68. I feel comfortable going by myself to a public place such as a movie.
69. It is good to feel alive again after having felt numb and emotionally dead.
70. I feel I know and understand myself.
71. I feel emotionally committed to my former love-partner.

(1) almost always (2) usually (3) sometimes (4) seldom (5) almost never

72. I want to be with people but I feel emotionally distant from them.

73. I am the type of person I would like to have for a friend.

74. I am afraid of becoming emotionally close to another love-partner.

75. Even on the days when I am feeling good, I may suddenly become sad and start crying.

76. I can't believe our love-relationship is ending.

77. I become upset when I think about my love-partner dating someone else.

78. I feel I have a normal amount of self-confidence.

79. People seem to enjoy being with me.

80. Morally and spiritually, I believe it is wrong for our love-relationship to end.

81. I wake up in the morning feeling there is no good reason to get out of bed.

82. I find myself daydreaming about all the good times I had with my love-partner.___

83. People want to have a love-relationship with me because I feel like a lovable person.

84. I want to hurt my former love-partner by letting him/her know how much I hurt emotionally.

85. I feel comfortable going to social events even though I am single.

86. I feel guilty about my love-relationship ending.

87. I feel emotionally insecure.

88. I feel uncomfortable even thinking about have a sexual relationship.

89. I feel emotionally weak and helpless.

90. I think about ending my life with suicide.

91. I understand the reasons why our love-relationship did not work out.

92. I feel comfortable having my friends know our love-relationship is ending.

93. I am angry about the things my former love-partner has been doing.

94. I feel like I am going crazy.

(1) almost always (2) usually (3) sometimes (4) seldom (5) almost never

95. I am unable to perform sexually.

96. I feel as though I am the only single person in a couples-only society.

97. I feel like a single person rather than a married person.

98. I feel my friends look at me as unstable now that I'm separated.

99. I daydream about being with and talking to my former love-partner.

100. I need to improve my feelings of self-worth about being a wo/man.

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"ANSWER SHEET - FISHER DIVORCE
ADJUSTMENT SCALE".