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**Siblings' perceptions of their divorce experiences and
the qualities of the sibling relationship**

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A Thesis

in

The Department

of

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ABSTRACT

**Siblings' perceptions of their divorce experiences
and the qualities of the sibling relationship**

Melissa Jennings

This study looks at the qualities of the sibling relationship in divorced families, by examining the questionnaire and interview data of children and custodial parents. The data is studied both quantitatively and qualitatively in order to obtain a richer portrait of the sibling relationship. Conclusions are drawn cautiously due to the small sample size, and to other methodological considerations. However, it appears that children from divorced families report a wide range of experiences. Additionally, children in the same family tend to report different experiences, and it seems that developmental issues have an important impact on the sibling relationship. Further research in this area should be conducted before definite conclusions are made.

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Siblings' perceptions of their divorce experiences
and the qualities of the sibling relationship

Statement of the problem

Although divorce is prevalent in today's society and is associated with major changes in the family system, the impact of divorce on sibling relations has not been studied thoroughly by social scientists. Some studies have focused on comparisons of sibling interactions in divorced and married families (Hetherington, 1988; MacKinnon, 1989a). Generally, these studies have demonstrated that sibling interactions in divorced families are more negative than those in intact families. However, other studies have demonstrated that siblings can act as a buffer against some of the effects of parental divorce (Wallerstein, Corbin, & Lewis, 1988; Hetherington, 1989). Although some investigators have probed the causes of these findings (MacKinnon 1989b), more research is needed to explain the processes that take place within the sibling relationship in families of divorce.

Research has shown that siblings within the same family have quite different experiences (Daniels & Plomin, 1985). Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that siblings experience a divorce differently (Monahan, Buchanan, Maccoby, & Dornbusch, 1993). However, studies of siblings' differential experiences have not examined whether these experiences are associated with the quality of sibling interactions. In an attempt to explain the processes that mediate the quality of sibling interactions in divorced families, the present investigation studied siblings' differential divorce experiences and the quality

of their interactions. More specifically, it was hypothesized that the similarity of siblings' divorce experiences would be associated with closer sibling relations.

Overview of the study of sibling relations

The systematic study of the sibling relationship was only begun a few decades ago. However, the intricacies of the sibling bond have been expressed by authors and playwrights for centuries. In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, feelings of rivalry and jealousy are found in Claudius, who kills his brother to become king. Conversely, a compassionate relationship exists between Ophelia and her brother Laertes. In addition, biblical characters such as Cain and Abel, and Esau and Jacob, demonstrate the complexity of sibling relations. In these accounts, sibling rivalry or jealousy were also the main themes. For better or worse, the sibling relationship is often the longest lasting relationship an individual will have in his/her lifetime.

Despite this fact, the study of sibling relations has not been as extensive as the study of parent-child relations or the marital relationship (Bowerman & Dobash, 1974; Furman & Buhrmester, 1985). However, the importance of sibling relations has been acknowledged for some time by social scientists. Irish (1964) suggested that the bonds between siblings are important, and that they are second in strength after parent-child ties. He also stated that siblings can turn to each other when parents lack understanding or seem indifferent. Moreover, he viewed siblings as "associates" who provide each other with emotional security. Although these statements may seem simplistic and even idealistic, they do indicate that the uniqueness of the sibling bond was beginning to be

examined a few decades ago.

Studies of sibling relationships have had various foci throughout the past few decades. Alfred Adler (as cited by Schultz & Schultz, 1994) devised a personality theory based in part on the birth order of an individual in a family. For instance, he postulated that a second-born child will tend to be competitive with his or her first-born sibling, and that this trait may become a component of this individual's personality. The research on siblings that followed Adler's work also focused on variables such as ordinal position and age spacing. These variables have become known as family constellation or structural variables. Rosenberg and Sutton-Smith (1964, 1966, 1969) examined these variables in terms of their relationship to siblings' cognitive abilities. Generally, the results of these studies demonstrated that first-born children had superior cognitive abilities to second-born children. More specifically, in their study of two-child families, Rosenberg and Sutton-Smith (1969) found that first-born males who were several years older than their sibling showed greater cognitive abilities. Conversely, females showed greater cognitive abilities when they had a same-sex sibling and when there was a small age gap between them. The participants in these studies were college students, and cognitive abilities were measured with college entrance examinations.

Zajonc and Markus (1975) were also interested in the relationship of birth order and family size with the intellectual abilities of family members. They developed a theory or model known as the confluence model to explain these relationships. Their model was based on the findings of a study conducted in the Netherlands at the end of the

second World War. The study showed that the intellectual performance of each participant declined as his or her family size increased. Additionally, it was found that intellectual abilities also declined with the birth order of the individuals. The confluence model tries to explain these findings with fairly complex mathematical equations.

Despite the narrow focus of these studies, later studies also investigated the sibling relationship in terms of family constellation variables. However, the focus of these investigations shifted from siblings' cognitive abilities to the qualities of the sibling relationship. Bowerman and Dobash (1974) studied the relationship between structural variables and adolescents' affect towards a sibling. One of their findings was that females were more likely to feel close to a sibling of either sex than were males. They also found that siblings were closer in two-child families than in larger families.

Furman and Buhrmester (1985) were also interested in the qualities of sibling relationships. They devised a questionnaire, the Sibling Relationship Questionnaire (SRQ), which measures four factors of sibling relationships. The four factors assessed by this questionnaire are: warmth/closeness, relative status/power, conflict, and rivalry. Furman and Buhrmester (1985) examined the relationship between the qualities of sibling relations measured by the SRQ and family constellation variables. The participants in this study were elementary school-aged children. One finding of their study was that siblings who were close in age exhibited the most conflicts, antagonism, and quarreling. Additionally, they found that same-sex siblings were closer than opposite-sex siblings.

In a more recent study, Buhrmester and Furman (1990) examined whether sibling relationship qualities change throughout children's development. Their cross-sectional investigation included children and adolescents in Grades 3, 6, 9, and 12. Generally, the authors found that relationships between siblings became more egalitarian as they grew older. Also, as children grew older, their sibling relations became less intense in both positive and negative terms. And finally, they found that the development of relationship qualities depended on the child's status in the family (i.e., being an older or a younger sibling). According to Buhrmester and Furman (1990), research done on sibling relations and family constellation variables have revealed fairly consistent findings. However, they add that these variables account for little of the variance in sibling relationships. Similarly, Daniels and Plomin (1985) found that family constellation variables accounted for only 1% to 10% of siblings' differential experiences in the same family. Stocker, Dunn, and Plomin (1989) also sought to study the sibling relationship beyond constellation variables. The younger siblings in their study ranged between 3 and 6 years of age, while older siblings ranged between 5 and 10 years of age. The investigators examined the role of maternal behaviours, the siblings' temperament, the siblings' age, and structural variables, in explaining the variance in sibling relationships. The results demonstrated that family structure variables were less important in accounting for the variance in sibling relationships than the three other predictors. More specifically, in terms of maternal behaviours, this study found that mothers' differential behaviour towards the siblings was associated with more conflictual sibling relationships.

Maternal behaviours were also studied by Dunn, Plomin, and Nettles (1985) who examined the consistency of mothers' behaviours with their infant children. Mothers' and their infants were observed when each of the two infants were 12 months old. The investigators found that mothers' behaviours with the children were strikingly consistent. Dunn, Plomin, and Daniels (1986) conducted a follow-up of the previous study when each of the infants was 24 months old. Again, the study showed that mothers' were consistent in their behaviours towards each child, especially in terms of affection and verbal responsiveness. However, differences in maternal behaviours were found in terms of controlling behaviours. In addition, the study demonstrated that mothers' behaviours with the same child differed at 12 and 24 months. It was argued that the developmental changes in a child elicited a change in parents' behaviours towards that child. The consistency of maternal behaviours observed in these studies may be due to the young age of the children. It would be interesting to find out if this consistency would be found when the children are older (e.g., 8 years old), when individual differences are more apparent. These findings seem to indicate that the differential treatment of siblings may be due, in part, to the developmental differences between them.

Additional work has examined parents' differential treatment towards siblings and their influence on the sibling relationship (McHale, Crouter, McGuire, & Updegraff, 1995; Brody, Stoneman, & McCoy, 1992). These studies, which included children between 4 and 11 years of age, also showed that parents' differential treatment of siblings was associated with negative sibling behaviour. In addition, McHale et al. (1995) found

that parents' complementary patterns of differential treatment towards siblings (i.e., one parent favours one child, while the other parent favours the other child) were indicative of parent-child coalitions, which in turn reflected marital distress.

These studies indicate that sibling relationships are influenced not only by family constellation variables, but also by a number of other factors. The intricacies of family relationships, and family functioning in general, seem to have a considerable influence on sibling relations. Thus, more recent studies on sibling relationships have focused on the ways sibling relations are associated with family processes. Rather than focusing uniquely on the structural features of the family, researchers are becoming interested in the way in which the dynamics of family relationships influence sibling relations (Hinde & Stevenson-Hinde, 1987; Aquan-Assee, 1992). In other words, siblings are increasingly being viewed as forming a subsystem within the family unit.

The family system

The view that the family functions as a system is not new. According to Napier and Whitaker (1978), the idea first emerged in the United States in the 1950's, where researchers in a psychiatric hospital noticed that each time the mother of a schizophrenic patient visited him, the patient reacted in a similar manner. Upon studying the families of schizophrenic patients more closely, researchers found that there was often deep-seated conflict between the parents. Thus, families of schizophrenic patients seemed to have certain characteristics in common.

Progressively, the family was seen as being more than a group of individuals; the

family was beginning to be compared to an organized system that functioned as a whole. Since this time, the concept of the family system has been adopted by many social scientists interested in studying the family. This view has also been adopted by clinicians who are interested in family therapy (Nichols, 1986).

Minuchin (1974) has worked with, and expanded the concept of the family system. He summarized the functioning of the family system in these words: "The system maintains itself. It offers resistance to change beyond a certain range, and maintains preferred patterns as long as possible" (p. 52). According to Minuchin (1974) and others (Nichols, 1986), the family system is composed of many subsystems such as the parental subsystem, the marital subsystem, and the sibling subsystem. According to Minuchin (1974): "each individual belongs to different subsystems, in which he has different levels of power and where he learns differentiated skills" (p. 52).

Thus, a child is at once a son or daughter, as well as a brother or sister. The functioning of the child in one subsystem may influence his or her functioning in the other subsystem. Dunn (1988a) studied the mother-child relationship and its influence on the quality of sibling interactions. More specifically, she studied the nature of the mother-first-born relationship at the birth of the second child, and the quality of sibling interactions over time. One of the findings was that a close mother-first-born relationship at the birth of the sibling was associated with the development of a hostile sibling relationship. However, it was also found that when the mother discussed the second-born with the first-born, and when she promoted the sibling relationship, friendly interactions

were observed between the siblings.

The influence of the parent-child relationship on sibling relations has also been demonstrated by Brody et al. (1992) and Volling and Belsky (1992) who found that a conflictual parent-child relationship was often associated with a conflictual sibling relationship. More specifically, Volling and Belsky (1992) found that mother-child conflict predicted sibling conflict, while prosocial sibling relations were predicted by features of the father-child relationship. Additionally, the study showed that mother-first-born attachment insecurity in infancy predicted antagonistic sibling relations five years later. At the outset of the study, the average age of the older siblings was 72 months, while the average age of the younger siblings was approximately 40 months.

The functioning of a family subsystem may also influence the functioning of a separate subsystem. For example, studies have found that the quality of the marital relationship may influence the quality of sibling relations. MacKinnon (1989b) reported that the quality of the spousal relationship significantly predicted differences in negativity between siblings: it was argued that siblings may model the conflictual relationship between the parents.

Minuchin (1974) emphasized that clear subsystem boundaries are important to good family functioning. In terms of the sibling relationship, it is said that the subsystem boundaries should: "protect the children from adult interference, so that they can exercise their right to privacy, have their own areas of interest, and be free to fumble as they explore" (p.59). Minuchin (1974) also argued that the sibling subsystem is important

because it is the first relationship in which most children learn about peer relationships. As such, during childhood, the sibling subsystem allows for the exploration of the social world. In other words, a child's immediate family is where he or she will learn about social rules and expectations. Dunn (1988b) conducted research to understand the processes by which a child learns about his or her social world. It was found that siblings play a role in a child's socialization. More specifically, in families in which the first-born child acted cooperatively with his or her 18-month-old sibling, over time, the sibling was more likely to act cooperatively than children whose older sibling rarely acted cooperatively. This seems to indicate that children's very early social experiences can have a lasting impact on their social behaviours. This view is supported by Mendelson (1990) who said: "A model of the early sibling relationship must account for the origins and development of children's interactive skills -both general skills for any social encounter and specific ones for interacting with babies" (p. 201).

The present study adopted a family systems perspective. That is, the sibling relationship was not studied as an independent entity within the family unit. Instead, the sibling relationship was viewed as being part of, and influenced by, the family system. In this investigation of the sibling subsystem, parents' participation was also sought in order to obtain a more complete picture of sibling relations.

Siblings and divorce

Over the past few decades, divorce has become a major issue for families and society as a whole. According to Lamb, Ketterlinus, and Fracasso (1992), approximately

50% of children born in the 1990's will experience their parents' divorce before they are 16-years-old. Lamb et al. (1992) also suggested that divorce can have a number of effects on children's psychological and emotional health. Many studies have investigated the adjustment of children to their parents' divorce (Wallerstein, 1984; Hetherington, Stanley-Hagan, & Anderson, 1989), however, few studies have examined the influence of parental divorce on the sibling relationship.

It is important to study the effects of marital separation on sibling relationships because children in a family share many experiences prior to, and after the divorce. As Eno (1985) says: "For better or worse, siblings are bound together by their common family background and their shared experience of the separation" (p. 141). Thus, parental separation or divorce leads to major changes in the family system. In keeping with a family systems perspective, it is believed that parental divorce influences the functioning of the sibling subsystem. The following is an overview of the literature on sibling relations and divorce.

The sibling relationship as a potential buffer. Some investigators have been interested in studying the role of siblings as potential buffers against the effects of parental divorce. Kempton, Armistead, Wiersen, and Forehand (1991) investigated whether the presence of a sibling can protect children against the effects of divorce. The adolescents in their study were either from a married or a divorced family, and had either only one sibling or no sibling. To investigate the presence of a sibling as a buffer, adolescents' internalizing and externalizing behaviour problems were measured.

According to Kempton et al. (1991), internalizing problems are "those that cause distress for the individual" (p.435). These problems were assessed by giving the adolescents the Children's Depression Inventory (CDI). Internalizing problems were also assessed with the Anxiety-Withdrawal subscale of the Revised Behavior Problem Checklist (RBPC), which was completed by the adolescents' social studies teacher. Externalizing behavior problems were defined as those that "disrupt the environment" (p.435). These problems were measured with the Conduct Disorder subscale of the RBPC, and were completed by the participants' social studies teacher.

In terms of externalizing behaviour problems, the investigators found that adolescents from divorced families showed more problems than adolescents from married families. In addition, it was found that adolescents without a sibling from a divorced family demonstrated more problems than all other adolescents. The authors concluded that the presence of a sibling can act as a buffer following parental divorce.

This investigation has a few weaknesses. First, in terms of externalizing problems, the teacher's knowledge or feelings about each adolescent may have influenced the assessments given. It is unclear why the investigators did not obtain parental ratings to supplement the teacher ratings. Second, it is not clear how a teacher can assess internalizing behavior problems since these are distressing to the particular individual. Third, it is also unclear whether other factors, besides the presence of a sibling, operated in this study. Finally, no information was gathered on the quality of the sibling relationship itself.

A longitudinal study by Wallerstein, Corbin, and Lewis (1988) produced similar findings to Kempton's et al.'s (1991) investigation. They found that a subgroup of siblings were able to form "a powerful supportive network with the capacity not only to buffer the family ordeal, but also to provide the significant nutrients of family relationships and to actualize for these young people their otherwise battered conceptions of fidelity, enduring love, and intimacy" (p. 210). Additionally, it was found that sisters, compared to other sibling dyads, were better able to act as buffers against the effects of divorce, and to give each other emotional support.

Similar findings were reported in an investigation by Kurdek and Fine (1993) that examined the extent to which nonparental family members acted as providers of warmth and supervision to 6th- and 7th-grade children in two-parent families, divorced-single-mother families, and in stepfather families. Girls in single-mother families reported more frequently than boys in all families, and girls in two-parent families, that nonparent family members, including siblings, were providers of warmth and supervision. It was suggested that in divorced families, girls may be particularly protected from the effects of divorce because of the warmth and supervision provided by other family members (e.g., siblings, stepparents, and grandparents).

In a 6-year follow-up of a longitudinal study, Hetherington (1989) found that positive sibling relationships were more effective as a buffer for older children than younger children. Perhaps this is because older children are better able to seek comfort and help from siblings than younger children are able to do so. It was also found that

sibling relationships tended to act as a buffer in the advanced rather than the early stages of divorce. This may be due to the acute stress that immediately follows the divorce, which may strain the sibling relationship. However, over time, the stress caused by the divorce may lessen, and the quality of sibling relations may improve. In fact, Hetherington (1989) reported that during the first two years following the divorce, most of the children and parents in her investigation experienced emotional distress and problems on a variety of levels. In addition, she reported that family members usually recovered from the initial disruptions caused by the divorce after two or three years.

This view finds some support in the framework outlined by Morawetz and Walker (as cited by Shapiro and Wallace, 1987). They identified four phases of adjustment in the post-divorce period. First, there is the *aftermath*, which is a time of intense emotions and confusion. At this phase, children must cope with the sudden instability of their world. This is a time when parents may become less available to their children, which may cause young children to fear abandonment. Some children may even worry about a parent's emotional or psychological breakdown. Second, there is the *realignment* period in which family members must adjust to major changes caused by the divorce, such as a drop in the income of the family. The third phase is the *reestablishment of social life*. At this point, the family members begin to adapt to their new status as a divorced family. Finally, in the *separation* phase, children feel they can separate themselves from their parent(s), and that both parent and child can cope.

Within this framework it is clear that children's preoccupation with the divorce

may deter their attention from their sibling(s). In addition, the major changes that the family must deal with may place temporary stress on the sibling relationship. However with time, children may be better able to focus on the relationship and to offer each other support.

Taken together, these studies indicate that in certain cases, the sibling relationship can protect children from some of the negative effects occasioned by divorce. The portrayal of the sibling relationship as a potential buffer following parental divorce is certainly ideal. However, these studies have not investigated the specific aspects of siblings' interactions that may influence the buffering process. Some studies have shown that divorce can have a wide range of effects on sibling interactions.

Divorce and the quality of sibling interactions. Some investigators have been interested in examining sibling interactions in divorced families. MacKinnon's (1989a, 1989b) work focused on assessing the quality of the sibling relationship in divorced and intact families. The assessments of relationship quality were made through observations of the sibling dyad in play situations. In one study (1989a), sibling dyads who were from intact or divorced families were observed playing a structured and an unstructured game. The older siblings in this study were between 6.5 and 10 years old, while the younger siblings were between 4.5 and 8 years old. Children's behaviours were coded for initiating behaviours and responses, and also for positive and negative actions. Results showed that interactions between the siblings from divorced families were more negative and less positive than those of siblings from intact families. Interestingly, it was also

observed that siblings from divorced families demonstrated more caretaking behaviours than siblings from intact families. MacKinnon (1989a) contended that this finding was in accordance with the view that the decline in parental availability occasioned by divorce may lead to more caretaking behaviours between siblings, but also to more negative interactions.

In an extension of the aforementioned study, MacKinnon (1989b) gave the mothers of the children questionnaires that assessed the quality of the various relationships within the family, including the sibling relationship. It was found that the older male-younger female dyads from divorced families exhibited the most negative behaviour. Also, older boys from divorced families were more negative than older boys from non divorced families, and more negative than older girls from divorced families. Thus, these findings seem to indicate that in divorced families, negative interactions are most likely to be found in sibling relationships in which there is an older brother. MacKinnon (1989b) postulated that the negative interactions observed in the older male-younger female dyad may be due to the siblings' modeling of the conflictual relationship between the parents. It was also suggested that sibling conflict in divorced families may be enhanced by parents' punitive and insensitive behaviours. In other words, the divorce may bring about changes in the family that increase the parents' stress. For instance, one or both parents may have to work more to compensate for a drop in income occasioned by the divorce. Parents may also be preoccupied with their own emotional adjustment to the marital separation. In addition, parents may be trying to reestablish their social

relationships, to meet new people. The stress caused by these factors may lead parents to have less patience with their children, and to treat them unfairly or differentially. In turn, these insensitive behaviours may lead to tensions and jealousies in the sibling relationship. This contention finds some support in the findings by McHale et al. (1995) and Brody et al. (1992) that were previously mentioned.

Children's perceptions of the sibling relationship. In studies of the sibling relationship in divorced or intact families it is important to assess the siblings' perceptions of their relationship. The importance of perceptions in relationships has been expressed by Hinde and Stevenson-Hinde (1987):

When two individuals interact on successive occasions over time, each interaction may effect subsequent ones, and we may speak of them as having a relationship. Their relationship includes not only what they do together, but their perceptions, fears, expectations, and so on that each has about the other and about the future course of the relationship, based in part on the individual histories of the two interactants, and the past history of their relationship with each other (p. 2).

MacKinnon (1989a, 1989b) collected information on the sibling relationship through observations of the siblings and a questionnaire given to the mother. Other studies have also gathered information from the siblings themselves, in order to obtain a more complete picture of their relationship. As mentioned previously, Furman and Buhrmester (1985) devised the Sibling Relationship Questionnaire (SRQ). This measure was designed to assess children's perceptions of their sibling relationships, and has been

used in several investigations.

Hetherington (1988) conducted a longitudinal study that examined the long-term effects of divorce on parents and children. The study included married families, divorced non-remarried families, and stepfamilies, in which both parents and siblings completed the Sibling Relations Inventory (SRI), were interviewed, and were observed in a variety of problem-solving tasks. Two hypotheses were formulated regarding the effect of divorce on the sibling relationship. The first hypothesis was that the siblings would show more hostility and rivalry due to the competition for diminished parental attention and availability. The alternative hypothesis that was offered was that siblings would turn to each other for support and comfort because they viewed relationships with adults as untrustworthy and unstable. Two of the findings of the study were that: sibling relationships involving a boy were more troubled than relationships with only girls; children in intact and divorced non-remarried families showed more warmth towards their siblings, and were more involved with their siblings, than children in stepfamilies.

Based on the findings of the study, Hetherington (1988) established a system for describing four different types of sibling relationships. She found that fewer than 10% of sibling relationships were categorized as "enmeshed". Enmeshment tended to occur in families in which there was a lack of parental involvement. Approximately 33% of sibling relationships were categorized as "companionate-caring", but were found mainly in married families. Third, 35% of relationships were labeled "ambivalent", because there were competitive and coercive behaviours, as well as loyalty and protective behaviours.

This kind of relationship was found about equally in all types of families. Finally, 22% of sibling relations were categorized as "hostile alienated"; these relationships were found most often in relations involving boys in divorced non-remarried families, and also in relations involving girls in remarried families. The author concluded that the results of the study confirmed the first hypothesis that was postulated, specifically, that divorce creates a strain on the quality of sibling relations.

Hetherington's findings appear to be in accordance with MacKinnon's (1989b) finding that in divorced families, sibling relationships involving boys are more prone to negative interactions. The two studies were also similar in that sibling relations in divorced families were found to be characterized by more negative behaviours than sibling relationships in intact families. These two investigations demonstrate that sibling relationships are complex, and that several factors can have an impact on the quality of the interactions between the siblings.

In addition to Hetherington's (1988) longitudinal study, other studies have also assessed children's perceptions of the qualities of their sibling relationships in divorced families. Amato (1987) conducted interviews with adolescents and children in middle childhood. Interviews with the children's parents were also conducted. The families that participated in the study included mother-custody single parent families, mother-custody remarried families, and intact families. Several components of family functioning were assessed, including sibling relationships. The study found that adolescents from single-parent families and stepfamilies rated their relationships with their siblings more

negatively than children from intact families.

A longitudinal study spanning 26 months was conducted by Hetherington and Clingempeel (1992). This study focused on family relationships and children's adjustment following remarriage. Three types of families were included in the study: mother-custody stepfamilies who were in the first months of remarriage, non-remarried mother-custody families, and intact families. Family members were given a battery of questionnaires and tests, were interviewed, and were observed in a problem-solving task. The quality of the sibling relationship was measured in terms of positive and negative behaviours. Positive behaviours included empathy, support, involvement, and teaching, while negative behaviours included avoidance, aggression, and rivalry. Based on the findings, the investigators concluded that children in intact families had better sibling relationships than children in other types of families, as defined by more positive and less negative behaviours.

A similar qualitative study was conducted by Shapiro and Wallace (1987), although a smaller sample was used. Family members from divorced non-remarried families and intact families were interviewed. Each family in the study had two same-gender children, who ranged in age from 8 to 17 years. The authors found that the parents and the children perceived the sibling relationship as being characterized by both positive and negative features. The authors found negligible differences between the perceptions of sibling relationships in divorced and non divorced families. However, children in divorced families viewed relations with siblings as "somewhat" less close and loving.

Springer and Wallerstein (1983) conducted interviews with adolescents from divorced families. When asked about the impact of divorce on their sibling relationships, all participants reported increased conflict with siblings after the divorce. However, the adolescents also recognized the "security and continuity" offered by their sibling relationships (p. 21).

These investigations indicate that generally, sibling relationships in divorced families are characterized by more negative interactions than sibling relationships in non divorced families. For the most part, the quality of the interactions have been assessed by questionnaires and interviews given to the siblings' themselves and also to the parents.

Factors that may influence the quality of sibling relations in married or divorced families

From the studies discussed so far it is clear that parental separation influences the sibling relationship. However, there are a number of other factors that have an impact on the quality of sibling interactions in divorced and intact families. Some of the factors that have already been examined are: family constellation variables, parents' differential treatment of siblings, parents' promotion of the sibling relationship, and the quality of spousal/ex-spousal relations. However, there are a number of other factors that influence sibling relations, and a few of these are noted below.

Temperament. Research by Thomas and Chess (1977) has shown that children can usually be described as having one of four temperamental styles: easy, slow-to-warm-up, average, and difficult. Easy children are able to adapt well to change, are persistent,

flexible, and have a positive mood. Conversely, difficult children do not react well to changes, and tend to be irritable. In a study with children between the ages of 3 and 10, Stocker et al. (1989) found that aspects of children's temperament were correlated with the quality of sibling interactions. For example, older siblings' shyness was associated with less controlling and less competitive sibling relationships. According to Hetherington et al. (1989), temperamentally difficult children are less able to cope with the changes and challenges occasioned by divorce. In contrast, temperamentally easy children can cope well with moderate levels of stress caused by divorce, especially if they have support systems. Thus, if children in the same family have different temperaments, it may influence their adjustment to the divorce, and also their sibling relationships.

Socio-economic status of the family. The economic status of the family has been found to be related to the quality of the sibling relationship. MacKinnon (1989a) found in her observational investigation that sibling interactions in both divorced and married families were more positive in higher SES families than in lower SES families. This may be caused by the increased stress that is often associated with low SES (e.g., the siblings may have to live in cramped quarters in a small apartment or house), this stress may cause sibling relations to be strained.

Children's developmental status. Children of different ages have different responses to their parents' divorce (Hetherington et al. 1989). A recent British study by Kier and Lewis (1993) found that infants, ranging in age from 11 to 45 months, from

married and divorced families, did not show any differences in terms of security of attachment, temperament, cognitive ability, or sibling relationships. This is probably due to the very young age of the children at the time of the divorce; older children do experience their parents' divorce more strongly. According to Hetherington et al. (1989), preschool children may find it difficult to understand the divorce and consequently, may blame themselves for its occurrence. They also may fear abandonment, and fantasize about their parents' reconciliation. However, their young age at the time of the divorce means that they remember the experience less vividly when they grow older than older children do. Elementary-school-age children and adolescents show pain and anger when their parents divorce, however, their greater cognitive maturity enables them to understand better the changes that the divorce entails, and to seek support outside of the family.

It is assumed that the age of the children at the time of the divorce has an impact on the sibling relationship. For example, if at the time of the divorce the younger sibling is an infant, and the older sibling is five years old, their different experiences of the divorce may have an impact on their relationship.

Cumulative stress. In both married and divorced families, cumulative stress can have an impact on the quality of the sibling relationship. Hetherington et al. (1989) said that children can usually cope with a moderate stressor in their lives. However, when there are several stressors, the adverse affects are much greater. Divorce is often associated with a number of stressors that children must deal with, such as: parental

conflict, adjustment to the absence of the non custodial parent, diminished economic resources, decrease in parental availability, and changes in household routines. It is assumed that this cumulative stress places more strain on the sibling relationship.

Thus, there are many factors that can influence the quality of sibling interactions in divorced and intact families. The variables presented here demonstrate that like any relationship, the sibling relationship is complex and unique, especially in divorced families. However, the aforementioned variables represent only a small portion of the factors that may have an impact on sibling relations. To date, it has not been determined whether siblings' different experiences are associated with the quality of sibling interactions.

Siblings' differential experiences

Monahan et al. (1993) conducted a thorough investigation of sibling differences in divorced families. The participants, who were between 10 and 18 years old, were interviewed and their perceptions of family processes were assessed. The results showed that differences between the siblings, in terms of their perceptions of family processes, were associated with differences in the siblings' adjustment. In other words, siblings living in the same household perceived their home differently, and also reported different adjustment. Adjustment was determined by reports of feelings of depression, school deviance, substance use, and antisocial behaviour, to name but a few. They also found that siblings who lived in the same household after the divorce were more similar than siblings who lived in different homes after their parents' divorce. Unfortunately, this

investigation did not examine whether differences in perceptions were associated with the quality of the sibling relationship. Perhaps larger discrepancies in perceptions of experiences would have been associated with poorer relationship quality.

The study by Monahan et al. (1993) demonstrated that siblings in the same family do not experience a parental divorce in the same way. This finding is consistent with other research that has shown that siblings in the same family have quite unique experiences. Daniels and Plomin (1985) conducted a study in which each participant was asked to compare his or her experiences with those of his or her sibling. Additionally, the researchers were interested in determining the origins of siblings' differential experiences. That is, they wanted to find out if these experiences were genetically or environmentally based. Generally, the results demonstrated that differences in siblings' experiences were primarily environmental in origin. This result is in accordance with Monahan et al.'s (1993) finding that siblings who lived in the same environment after the divorce were more similar than siblings who lived apart.

Parental perceptions of sibling relationships

Few studies have assessed parents' views of their children's sibling relationship. However, Kramer and Baron (1995) devised a measure that assesses parents' views of sibling relationships, namely the Parental Expectations and Perceptions of Children's Sibling Relationships Questionnaire (PEPC-SRQ). Kramer and Baron (1995) found that mothers were most concerned with the presence of agonism and rivalry/competition in the sibling relationship. However, they also thought that warmth between siblings was

the most difficult feature to increase. The mothers also reported observing less warmth in their children's sibling relationship than they would like to see. However, warmth between siblings was believed to occur more frequently than agonism or rivalry/competition.

Differences have been found between parents' and children's views of sibling relationships. For instance, Monahan et al. (1993) found that parents perceived siblings' experiences to be more similar than the siblings did. Similarly, Rinaldi (1995) found that parents and siblings disagreed about levels of conflict in the sibling relationship. However, she also found that there was agreement in terms of the warmth expressed by the siblings. Shapiro and Wallace (1987) found that children in one-parent families viewed their sibling relationships as somewhat less positive than children in non divorced families. However, the single parent viewed the sibling relationship as encompassing both positive and negative features. Shapiro and Wallace (1987) argued that these findings indicated that perceptions of family relationships must be gathered from all family members, since family members' views may differ. Thus, in the present study, custodial parents' views of their children's sibling relationship and divorce experiences were obtained in order to compare them with the children's perceptions.

The present study

Bank and Kahn (1982) suggested that perceptions of sameness or difference are very important in pulling siblings together or pushing them apart. If siblings mutually view each other as similar in a positive way, it will usually bring them closer. However,

if siblings see each other as similar in negative ways, they may not have a close relationship. Conversely, if siblings perceive that they have nothing in common, they will not be close. Bank and Kahn (1982) also suggested that perceptions of similarity may change as children develop; perceptions of being the same often diminish as siblings reach adolescence. This may in part explain the differences in siblings' experiences obtained by Monahan et al. (1993) and Daniels and Plomin (1985), since the participants in these studies were no younger than 10 years old.

Dunn and Plomin (1990) reported that their Cambridge study revealed that siblings often have very different perceptions of each other and of their sibling relationship. In one instance, a child praised her brother's kindness, while the brother claimed he liked "nothing" about his sister (p. 88). Thus, a sibling relationship can be experienced quite differently by the two children involved. The investigation by Daniels and Plomin (1985) provides support for the view that siblings in the same family can have quite different perceptions of their experiences. As mentioned, Monahan et al. (1993) did not examine the relationship between siblings' differential divorce experiences and the quality of sibling interactions. As such, the present investigation examined the relationship between the similarity/difference in siblings' divorce experiences and the qualities of their relationship. More specifically, it was hypothesized that siblings who reported similar divorce experiences would also report feeling closer than siblings who reported less similar divorce experiences.

This investigation was undertaken to provide some much needed information on

the factors that influence the quality of sibling interactions in divorced families.

Information about siblings' divorce experiences and the qualities of their relationship might help psychologists and parents support the sibling relationship, and consequently, strengthen sibling bonds. In turn, these sibling bonds may help children cope with parental separation. As previous studies have demonstrated, sibling interactions in divorced families seem to be characterized by more negative interactions. However, other studies have demonstrated the power of the sibling relationship to buffer children against some the effects of parental divorce. The present study was conducted in order to shed some light on the complexity of sibling relations in divorced families.

The following hypotheses were investigated in the present study:

1. Research has shown that siblings have different experiences and even different perceptions of each other. Although Bank and Kahn (1982) suggested that perceptions of sameness can pull siblings together, investigators have not systematically studied the relationship between siblings' differential experiences and sibling warmth/closeness. It was therefore hypothesized that similarities in siblings' divorce experiences would be associated with perceived sibling warmth/closeness.

2. Some studies have shown that the sibling relationship involving a boy, particularly an older brother, is more negative than the relationship between sisters (MacKinnon, 1989b; Hetherington, 1988). In addition, research has shown that sisters are better able to act as buffers against the effects of divorce than other sibling dyads (Wallerstein et al., 1988). Given these findings, it was hypothesized that sisters would

report more shared experiences and warmer/closer relations than relationships involving boys.

3. To date, studies have not assessed whether mothers and fathers have different perceptions of their children's sibling relationships and/or divorce experiences. Given the changes that occur in divorced families with regards to the time that parents spend with their children, it was hypothesized that mothers and fathers would have different perceptions of their children's sibling relationship and divorce experiences.

4. Studies have found that parents and children have different views of the sibling relationship (Rinaldi, 1995; Shapiro & Wallace, 1987). In their study of divorced families, Shapiro and Wallace (1987) found that parents tended to view the sibling relationship more positively than the children did. Thus, it was hypothesized that parents would view the sibling relationship as being warmer/closer than the siblings themselves would. In their study of siblings and divorce, Monahan et al. (1993) found that parents perceived siblings' experiences to be more similar than the siblings perceived their experiences. Thus, in the present investigation, it was postulated that parents would report siblings' divorce experiences to be more similar than the siblings would report.

METHOD

Participants

The present study included 12 divorced, English-speaking families, from the Eastern Townships in Quebec and the Montreal area. Each family in the study consisted of the custodial parent and two children. One of the children was in the 5th - or 6th-grade

and was known as the target child. The mean age of the target children was 11 years, 3 months. Six of the target children had a younger sibling ($M = 8$ years, 7 months), while the remaining target children had an older sibling ($M = 14$ years, 1 month). In the study there were five sister-sister pairs, two brother-brother pairs, three older sister-younger brother pairs, and two older brother-younger sister pairs. The average age difference between the siblings was 2 years, 11 months. The sibling dyads in the study were not necessarily from two-child families. That is, in the present investigation there were five 2-child families, three 3-child families, and four 4-child families. In addition, some families included stepsiblings. To summarize, the participants in the investigation included 12 target children, 12 siblings, and 10 custodial parents, because two parents did not return the questionnaires that were sent to them.

In all families one parent had custody of the children, and in all but one family the mother was the custodial parent. On average, the parents had been separated or living apart for 3 years, 3 months at the time the children were interviewed. However, across families there was a wide range in the time since the parents began living apart. The most recent separation had occurred five months prior to data collection, while the least recent separation occurred over 6 years previously. There was a wide range in the amount of contact the children had with the non custodial parent. In one family, the children had not had any contact with the non custodial parent for about two years. Another arrangement included visitation every second weekend, and in some families, this was coupled with a visit one night during the week. Other children only visited their non custodial parent a

few times a year.

The socio-economic status for each of the families was calculated using the Hollingshead Four Factor Index (1975). An index for single income families was calculated taking into account the occupation and educational attainment of the custodial parent. The socio-economic scores ranged between 22 and 61 ($M = 41$). Although socio-economic status varied widely, generally, the families were in the middle class range.

Considerations in participant selection. It should be noted that not all interested families were chosen for participation in the present investigation. When parents returned the consent forms they were also asked to return an information form asking questions about the family situation. Families in which the separation/divorce occurred many years ago were not chosen to participate in the study. It was thought that the children would have been too young at the time of the separation/divorce to recall accurately their experiences. Thus, the age of the children at the time the parents began living apart and the number of years since the separation were taken into consideration when recruiting participants. As mentioned previously, the period immediately following a divorce is usually a time of stress and uncertainty for all family members. Therefore, the present study included families in which the parents had been separated for at least a few months, to control for the immediate effects that the separation/divorce may have had on family members.

Procedure

The children in this study were recruited through various English-speaking elementary schools in the Eastern Townships and the Montreal area. The principals of schools within three school boards were approached regarding the study and were asked if letters and information forms could be distributed to the parents of 5th- and 6th-grade children (see Appendix A). All parents were asked to complete the information form and to return it to their child's school. Children with siblings, who were from divorced families, were identified by the completed information forms. Interested parents were also asked to complete a consent form indicating whether or not they would allow their children to participate in the study. Based on the information provided by parents, families who met the requirements of the study were chosen to participate. Parents who had given consent for their children to participate, but who did not meet the requirements of the study, were sent a letter thanking them for their cooperation.

The children were met individually and privately at their school and were administered two questionnaires (the Sibling Relationship Questionnaire and a divorce questionnaire). In addition, they were interviewed regarding their perceptions of the divorce. The questionnaires were administered first, then the interview was conducted. Before the questionnaires were administered, some time was spent talking with each child in order to develop rapport. During the administration of the measures each question was read to the child so that he or she could be helped if a question was not understood.

In addition to questioning the children, two questionnaires (the Sibling Relationship Questionnaire and a divorce questionnaire) were sent home to the custodial parent. Each parent was provided with a stamped self-addressed envelope to be returned to the investigator with the completed questionnaires.

Measures

Perceptions of sibling relationship qualities. Both children and parents were asked to complete the Sibling Relationship Questionnaire (SRQ) developed by Furman and Buhrmester (1985). There are child and parent versions of the SRQ and both have 48 items that assess four factors. The items pertaining to the warmth/closeness factor were used to assess the warmth/closeness between siblings. However, the entire questionnaire was given to parents and children in order to obtain a more complete picture of sibling relationship qualities. The three other factors assessed by this questionnaire are: relative status/power, conflict, and rivalry. Each factor is composed of a number of subscales containing three items each. For the purposes of the present study, the response choices of the original SRQ were slightly modified (i.e., the "Hardly at all" option was replaced by "Not at all"). A copy of the SRQ (child and parent versions) can be found in Appendix B.

According to Furman and Buhrmester (1985), the psychometric properties of the questionnaire are good. When the questionnaire was administered to 5th- and 6th- grade children, the internal consistency coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) for the composite scale scores were all in excess of .70 (M = .80), except for the competition scale (.63). In

addition, test-retest reliabilities for the scales ranged between .58 and .86 (mean $r = .71$).

In the present investigation, the internal consistency of the SRQ (child version) was assessed by calculating a Cronbach's alpha for each of the four factors: warmth/closeness (alpha = .94), relative status/power (alpha = .78), conflict (alpha = .85), and rivalry (alpha = .88). A Cronbach's alpha was also calculated for each of the four factors in the parent version of the SRQ: warmth (alpha = .93), relative status/power (alpha = .38), conflict (alpha = .82), and rivalry (alpha = .70). Since the alpha for the relative status/power factor (parent version) is quite low, interpretations involving this factor should be made with caution.

Perceptions of the divorce.

(a) **Children's Beliefs About the Parental Divorce Scale (CBAPS).** The children in the present investigation were given the Children's Beliefs About the Parental Divorce Scale (CBAPS), which was developed by Kurdek and Berg (1987). The CBAPS consists of 36 items that can be divided into six subscales consisting of six items each (peer ridicule and avoidance, paternal blame, fear of abandonment, maternal blame, hope of reunification, and self-blame). Kurdek and Berg (1987) gave the CBAPS to a group of children (M age = 11 years), and found its psychometric properties to be moderately high. The item-total correlations ranged from .15 to .65 (Mr = .46). The alphas ranged between .54 and .78 (M alpha = .70), while the Cronbach's alpha for the total score was .80. The test-retest correlations were obtained for the six subscales: peer ridicule and avoidance ($r = .41$), paternal blame ($r = .72$), fear of abandonment ($r = .52$), maternal

blame ($r = .51$), hope of reunification ($r = .51$), and self-blame ($r = .43$); all p 's $< .01$. The test-retest correlation for the total scale was .65 ($p < .01$).

After the construction of the CPABS, its internal consistency was verified by the investigators with a principal components analysis with Varimax rotation. The self-blame subscale was the only subscale that was not found to be an independent factor. Due to this finding, and because the self-blame items are sensitive in nature, this subscale was not used in the present investigation. Thus, the children in the proposed study were given the following five subscales of the CBAPS: peer ridicule and avoidance, paternal blame, fear of abandonment, maternal blame, and hope of reunification. Two items from the paternal blame and maternal blame subscales were deleted because they were deemed to be somewhat sensitive (i.e., "My father is more good than bad" and "My mother is more good than bad"). In addition, the original CBAPS questionnaire consisted of a "yes/no" format that forced children to answer dichotomously. To give children more choice in their answers, a five-point Likert format was devised ("really true" to "not true at all") for each item. Cronbach alphas for the five CBAPS subscales used in the present investigation were: Peer ridicule and avoidance (.73), paternal blame (.95), fear of abandonment (.73), maternal blame (.14), and hope of reunification (.86). The CBAPS items can be found in Appendix C (items 1-28).

(b) Structured Divorce Questionnaire. Since the CBAPS did not ask children about their emotional reactions to the divorce, additional questions that were devised by Reinhard (1977), were administered to the children. Reinhard (1977)

developed the Structured Divorce Questionnaire which consists of 10 subscales that assess various aspects of adolescents' divorce experiences. Two of the subscales that were used in the present investigation were: Reaction to the News of the Divorce, which consisted of nine items, and Emotional Responses, which consisted of 14 items. One item was removed from the first subscale because it was very similar to another item. One item was also removed from the second subscale because it did not seem particularly pertinent (i.e., "My respect for what adults say has decreased since my parents' divorce"). Since the questionnaire was designed for use with adolescents, some of the items were reworded to be more suitable for younger children (e.g., "My first reaction when I heard that they were going to get a divorce was sadness" was changed to "When I heard that my parents were going to get separated/divorced I felt sad"). Additionally, the items in the original questionnaire employed a Likert format that ranged from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree", however, in order to make the response options the same as the CBAPS items, the Likert scale was modified to "really true" to "not true at all". The SDQ items can be found in Appendix C (items 29-49).

According to Reinhard (1977), the reliability of the Structured Divorce Questionnaire was determined by the split-half method using the Spearman-Brown Prophecy Formula. The reliability coefficient obtained through this method was $r = .83$. This formula was also used to determine the reliability of each of the subscales. The reliability coefficient for the Reaction to the News of the Divorce subscale was $r = .31$, while the coefficient for the Emotional Responses subscale was $r = .39$. In the present

study, a Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each of the Reinhard subscales: reaction to news of the divorce (.95), and emotional responses (.73).

(c) **Divorce interview**. In addition to being given the questionnaire items, the children were interviewed about their divorce experiences. The first 13 questions that were posed in the open-ended interview were developed by Kurdek (1986) and probed the same areas as the CBAPS. For the purposes of the present study, three questions pertaining to the sibling relationship were added to the interview ([1] Do you and (sibling) talk about the divorce?; [2] Do you think there are any differences in how things are now with (sibling) compared to before the separation/divorce?; [3] Do you feel closer, less close, or about the same to (sibling) since the divorce?). The response categories created for each question were based on the categories developed by Kurdek (1986), although other categories had to be created in order to fit the wide range of children's responses. Thus, each response could be coded according to one or more categories. For example, for the interview question: "What does it mean when two people get divorced?", one of the response categories was "physical separation". In the coding scheme, this category was accompanied by an example in order to help the coders detect this particular type of response. Once the coding scheme for the interviews was developed, two coders independently categorized each response for 18/24 or 75% of the transcripts. The overall agreement between the two raters was 82%, while disagreements were resolved through discussion. See Appendix D for the interview questions and the coding scheme.

(d) Parent Separation Inventory. Kurdek and Berg (1983) developed the Parent Separation Inventory (PSI), which is composed of two parts. The first part contains questions that pertain to mothers' divorce experiences, while the second part contains questions that pertain to the child's divorce experiences. When given to parents of children averaging about 10 years of age, eight scores were derived from the PSI, one of which is Children's Attitudes Toward Divorce. This score was obtained by summing the individual scores of six items. These six items each represent one of the six CBAPS subscales (peer ridicule and avoidance, fear of abandonment, hope of reunification, paternal blame, maternal blame, and self-blame). Kurdek and Berg (1983) found the Cronbach's alpha for this score to be .79.

For the purposes of the present investigation, the six PSI items were expanded, and 12 items were developed. This was done because some of the original items seemed to contain more than one question; these items were broken down into separate questions. For instance, one of the original items was: "My child feels that divorce of his parents is something to be ashamed of. He/she tends not to talk to his friends about the fact that his parents have separated or divorced and seems to interact with other children less now than before the separation." This particular item was divided into three different questions. Thus, these 12 items were given to parents to assess their perceptions of their children's divorce experiences. (see items 9 to 20 in Appendix E).

In addition to the items described above, parents responded to PSI items that pertained to their child's emotional reactions to the divorce. In fact, another of the eight

scores derived from the PSI was Children's Emotional Reactions to the Divorce.

According to Kurdek and Berg (1983), the Cronbach's alpha for this score was .81 (see item 7 in Appendix E). Items from the PSI that deal with children's general reactions to the divorce were also included and can be found in Appendix E. All of the items from the PSI described above were assembled into one questionnaire. The custodial parent was asked to complete one of these questionnaires for each child. The custodial parent was also asked to complete a short questionnaire seeking general information concerning the time of the actual separation/divorce, the custodial arrangement, and the children's visits with the non custodial parent (also see Appendix E).

RESULTS

Plan of analysis

Due to difficulties recruiting participants for the study, the sample size was smaller than expected. Also, once participant recruitment began, it was decided that only the custodial parent's participation would be sought in order to avoid possible problems with the non custodial parent. As such, the hypotheses that were formulated could not be tested statistically as was planned. Instead of conducting multivariate analyses, whenever possible, comparisons between groups were made using t-tests. For example, comparisons were made in terms of the gender of the children (i.e., males versus females), and also in terms of the relative age of the children (i.e., younger versus older). Despite the limitations of the present study, the questionnaire and interview data contained rich information that was worth examining. Descriptive statistics were

calculated for the questionnaire data; t-tests were conducted in order to make comparisons between siblings' scores, and between the children's and the parents' scores. In addition, bivariate correlations were calculated to ascertain the relationship between the children's SRQ and Divorce Questionnaire scores, as well as between the parents' SRQ and Divorce Questionnaire scores. An alpha level of .05 was used for all statistical tests. The interview data were analyzed in a more qualitative fashion, although frequencies of responses were also calculated. The response to each interview question was categorized with the help of a coding scheme, and general patterns were also examined. Additionally, non statistical comparisons of the siblings' responses were made. Whenever possible, links were drawn between the findings and the original hypotheses.

Quantitative analyses

Divorce Questionnaire (child version). To begin, means for each of the subscale scores were calculated for the target children and the non target children. See Table 1 for means and standard deviations.

To test the hypothesis that similarity in siblings' experiences was associated with sibling closeness, t-tests were conducted to find out if there were any differences between the responses of the target child and the sibling on the Divorce Questionnaire subscales. No significant differences were found between the children's subscale scores. Although this finding seemed to indicate that siblings experienced the divorce similarly, the small sample size may have contributed to the non significant findings. Given the similarity in

the perceptions of the two children concerning the divorce, their scores on the divorce questionnaire were combined to create dyadic scores.

Upon inspection of the dyadic scores, there appeared to be a difference between the mean of the paternal blame subscale ($M = 13.13$) and the mean of the maternal blame subscale ($M = 6.63$). A t-test revealed a significant difference between the groups, $t(46) = 4.36$, $p < .05$. This result indicated that children placed more blame on the father than on the mother for the divorce. However, this finding should be interpreted with caution because of the low Cronbach's alpha that was obtained for the maternal blame subscale.

(a) Age and gender differences. In addition to verifying for differences in responses between target and non target children, the older siblings were compared with the younger siblings. Again, t-tests revealed no significant differences between the two groups for each of the Divorce Questionnaire subscales. Although the small sample size did not make it possible to test the hypothesis that sisters would report more shared experiences than other dyads, t-tests were conducted in order to check for gender differences in the responses given on the questionnaire. No differences were found between males and females in terms of the subscale scores. See Table 2 and Table 3 for means and standard deviations.

(b) Individual items. Responses to individual items in the Divorce Questionnaire were also examined and some interesting findings were revealed. First, all of the children responded "really true" to item 18 ("I feel that my parents still love me"). Similarly, all of the non target children answered "really true" to item 26 ("I feel my

parents still like me”). All of the non target children answered “not true at all” to items 8 and 19 (“It’s possible that both my parents will never want to see me again” and “My mother caused most of the trouble in my family”, respectively). Finally, all of the target children responded “really true” to item 5 (“My parents will always live apart”). More generally, it was interesting to note that two-thirds of the children said they wished their parents would get back together, at least to a certain extent (i.e., item 37: “I sometimes secretly wish my parents would get together again”). Although many of the children wished for the reunification of their parents, most children did not think that this reunification would take place. As reported earlier, the mean of the hope of reunification subscale was quite low for both the target children and the non target children. The highest possible score on this subscale was 30 while the lowest possible score was 6. A higher score reflected a higher hope of reunification, while a lower score reflected a lower hope of reunification. Also, half of the children claimed they did not fear, to any extent, being abandoned by their parent(s). Again, the mean of the fear of abandonment subscale was also quite low for both siblings. This demonstrates that the children in the study did not, for the most part, think they would be abandoned by their parent(s). Generally, the children in the study tended to report having had strong reactions to the news of the divorce, and of having strong emotional responses to the divorce. Children’s initial reactions to the news of the divorce included feeling angry, scared, and sad. Emotional responses included feeling like crying when thinking about the divorce and having to care for oneself more after the divorce.

Divorce Questionnaire (parent version). Custodial parents completed the Divorce Questionnaire for each child. Means of the subscale scores were calculated for the target children and the non target children. See Table 4 for means and standard deviations.

To test the hypothesis that parents would view the siblings' experiences as being more similar than the children would report, t-tests were conducted to compare the parents' perceptions of the target children with the parents' perceptions of the non target children. No significant differences were found between parents' perceptions of target and non target children for any of the subscales. Since the target and non target children's views also did not differ, it appeared that parents did not perceive the siblings' divorce experiences to be more similar than the children reported.

Upon inspection of the subscale means it seemed that there was quite a large difference between the overall mean of the paternal blame subscale ($M = 5.20$) and the overall mean of the maternal blame subscale ($M = 3.25$). Indeed, a t-test revealed a significant difference between the two subscale means, $t(38) = 3.15$, $p < .05$. In other words, parents' thought their children tended to blame their father for the divorce more than they blamed their mother.

(a) Age and gender differences. In order to verify for differences in parents' perceptions of older versus younger children's divorce experiences, t-tests were also conducted for the two age groups on all of the subscales. Again, no significant differences were revealed. See Table 5 for means and standard deviations. Parents'

Table 1

Means and standard deviations of the Divorce Questionnaire subscales for the target and non target children

Subscales	Target			Non target		
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>
Peer ridicule	12.00	6.16	12	11.08	4.52	12
Paternal blame	13.83	6.81	12	12.42	7.68	12
Fear of abandonment	8.83	4.93	12	7.33	1.77	12
Maternal blame	7.17	1.99	12	6.08	.90	12
Hope of reunification	8.17	3.49	12	9.00	6.45	12
Reaction to news	28.25	10.42	12	27.50	9.49	12
Emotional responses	34.58	10.70	12	31.50	8.35	12

Table 2

Means and standard deviations of the Divorce Questionnaire subscales for the relative age of siblings

Subscales	Younger			Older		
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>
Peer ridicule	11.08	3.75	12	12.00	6.73	12
Paternal blame	12.67	6.98	12	13.58	7.56	12
Fear of abandonment	7.50	2.24	12	8.67	4.79	12
Maternal blame	6.58	1.51	12	6.67	1.77	12
Hope of reunification	8.92	6.45	12	8.25	3.52	12
Reaction to news	27.33	10.40	12	28.42	9.50	12
Emotional responses	32.83	7.43	12	33.25	11.58	12

perceptions of girls' and boys' experiences were also compared and revealed no significant differences for any of the subscales. See Table 6 for means and standard deviations.

(b) Individual items. Interesting findings emerged from individual items in the parent divorce questionnaire. First, parents reported that being upset was the most common initial reaction to the news of the divorce: 65% of children were said to have had this reaction. The next most common reaction was anger: 35% of children were said to have exhibited anger upon hearing of their parents' divorce. Other reactions included surprise, relief, fear, and happiness.

There was a wide range in the extent to which parents and children discussed the divorce. In terms of children's eagerness to discuss the divorce, parents reported that 55% of the children sometimes talked about the divorce with them voluntarily. On the other hand, parents reported that 35% of the children discussed the divorce with them only if pushed to do so. Similarly, parents said that 80% of the children talked to them about the divorce at least sometimes, while 20% of the children talked to their parents "seldom" or "never". Parents reported knowing some or most of the thoughts of 85% of the children.

In terms of time spent with their children after the divorce compared to before the divorce, 40% of custodial parents reported spending more time with their children since the divorce, 40 % reported spending the same amount of time, and 20% reported spending less time. On the other hand, 60% of custodial parents reported that their

former spouses spent less time with their children since the divorce, 20% reported they spent the same amount of time, and 20% said they spent more time.

Sibling Relationship Questionnaire (child version). To begin, means and standard deviations were calculated for each of the factor scores for the target children and the non target children and can be found in Table 7. The means of the target and the non target children's scores were compared with a t-test. The t-tests revealed no significant differences between the factor scores of the target children and their siblings.

(a) **Age and gender differences**. Younger and older siblings' responses on the SRQ factors were also compared employing t-tests and revealed no significant differences. In order to test the hypothesis that sisters would report warmer/closer relations than other dyads, a t-test was conducted between the warmth/closeness scores obtained by sisters, and the warmth/closeness scores obtained by children in other dyads. There was no significant difference between the means of the two groups; that is, sisters did not report more warmth/closeness than children in other dyads. T-tests were also conducted for the scores on the other factors and no significant differences were found between sisters and children in other dyads. See Table 8 for means and standard deviations. T-tests were also calculated in order to check for general gender differences in the responses given on the SRQ. It was found that there was a significant difference in the SRQ warmth/closeness factor scores for males and females, $t(22) = 3.37$, $p < .05$. That is, females rated the sibling relationship as being characterized by more warmth/closeness than males did. There were no other gender differences in the SRQ

Table 3

Means and standard deviations of the Divorce Questionnaire subscales for the gender of siblings

Subscales	Males			Females		
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>
Peer ridicule	13.00	6.63	9	10.67	4.44	15
Paternal blame	12.11	8.04	9	13.80	6.88	15
Fear of abandonment	7.00	1.41	9	8.93	4.40	15
Maternal blame	6.44	1.67	9	7.27	2.46	15
Hope of reunification	9.11	7.22	9	8.20	3.59	15
Reaction to news	24.33	10.57	9	30.00	8.92	15
Emotional responses	30.67	5.59	9	34.47	11.19	15

Table 4

Means and standard deviations of the parent Divorce Questionnaire subscales for the target and non target children

Subscales	Target			Non target		
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>
Peer ridicule	6.30	1.70	10	6.70	3.16	10
Fear of abandonment	3.70	1.83	10	4.00	2.11	10
Hope of reunification	3.40	1.43	10	4.80	2.25	10
Paternal blame	5.20	2.57	10	5.20	2.53	10
Maternal blame	3.20	1.23	10	3.30	1.34	10

Table 5

Means and standard deviations of the parent Divorce Questionnaire subscales for the relative age of siblings

Subscales	Younger			Older		
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>
Peer ridicule	6.80	2.15	10	6.50	2.99	10
Fear of abandonment	3.70	1.95	10	4.00	2.00	10
Hope of reunification	4.10	1.73	10	4.10	2.28	10
Paternal blame	5.00	2.58	10	5.40	2.50	10
Maternal blame	3.10	1.37	10	3.40	1.17	10

Table 6

Means and standard deviations of the parent Divorce Questionnaire subscales for the gender of children

Subscales	Males			Females		
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>
Peer ridicule	6.71	1.60	7	6.38	2.90	13
Fear of abandonment	3.29	1.50	7	4.15	2.12	13
Hope of reunification	4.29	1.89	7	4.00	2.08	13
Paternal blame	3.86	1.35	7	5.92	2.69	13
Maternal blame	3.00	1.15	7	3.38	1.33	13

factor scores. See Table 9 and Table 10 for means and standard deviations.

Sibling Relationship Questionnaire (parent version). The means and standard deviations for the parent version of the SRQ can be found in Table 7. In order to test the hypothesis that parents would view the sibling relationship as being warmer/closer than the children would perceive it, the responses of the parents on the SRQ factors were compared with the target children's responses, and with the non target children's responses. Again, t-tests revealed no significant differences between the factor scores of the parents and the target children, nor between the parents and the non target children. These findings seemed to indicate that there were no differences in how the parents and the children viewed the sibling relationship. The similarity in the target children's, non target children's, and the parents' perceptions of the quality of the sibling relationship was quite striking.

Correlational analyses.

(a) Relationship between SRQ factor scores (child version). Pearson product moment correlations were calculated between the SRQ factor scores. A significant positive relationship was found between the conflict scores and the relative status/power scores, $r(23) = .65$, $p < .01$. That is, as reports of conflict in the sibling relationship increased, so did reports of negative status/power issues. No other significant correlations were found.

(b) Relationship between Divorce Questionnaire subscales (child version). Correlations were calculated between the Divorce Questionnaire subscales. A positive relationship was found between the emotional responses subscale and the fear of

abandonment subscale, $r(23) = .60, p < .01$. This finding indicated that as negative emotional responses to the divorce increased, so did fears of abandonment. Additionally, a positive relationship was found between the emotional responses subscale and the reaction to the news of the divorce subscale, $r(23) = .70, p < .01$, indicating that negative emotional responses to the divorce were associated with negative reactions to the news of the divorce.

A positive relationship was also found between the fear of abandonment scores and the peer ridicule and avoidance scores, $r(23) = .41, p < .05$. That is, as fear of abandonment increased, so did perceptions of peer ridicule, and avoidance of peers. Paternal blame scores were found to be negatively associated with reaction to news of the divorce scores, $r(23) = -.49, p < .05$. This finding seemed to indicate that as paternal blame increased, negative reactions to the news of the divorce decreased. No other significant associations were found.

(c) Relationship between SRQ factors and Divorce Questionnaire

subscales. Pearson product-moment correlations were also calculated between the SRQ factor scores and the Divorce Questionnaire subscales. It was found that the emotional responses subscale was positively correlated with the relative status/power factor, $r(23) = .57, p < .01$. This finding indicated that as negative emotional responses increased, so did negative issues of status/power between the siblings. A positive relationship was also found between the conflict factor and the maternal blame subscale, $r(23) = .46, p < .05$, indicating that as perceived conflict increased, so did maternal blame. Paternal blame was found to be positively associated with perceptions of rivalry, $r(23) = .54, p < .01$.

Table 7

Means and standard deviations of the SRQ factor scores for the target children, non target children, and parents

Factors	Target			Non target			Parents		
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>
Warmth	61.00	18.29	12	60.42	13.47	12	61.70	11.13	10
Relative Status	34.58	5.74	12	34.67	7.73	12	37.00	4.45	10
Conflict	24.25	7.70	12	26.58	6.05	12	26.80	6.39	10
Rivalry	15.17	3.64	12	14.67	3.08	12	15.70	3.43	10

Table 8

Means and standard deviations of the SRQ factor scores for sisters and other dyads

Factors	Sisters			Other dyads		
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>
Warmth	64.40	11.39	10	58.07	18.13	14
Relative Status	32.20	8.31	10	36.36	4.78	14
Conflict	24.40	8.41	10	26.14	5.78	14
Rivalry	14.00	3.71	10	15.57	2.95	14

Table 9

Means and standard deviations of the SRQ factor scores for the relative age of siblings

Factors	Younger			Older		
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>
Warmth	60.83	12.77	12	60.58	18.79	12
Relative Status	32.25	8.01	12	34.75	6.78	12
Conflict	24.75	6.86	12	26.08	7.13	12
Rivalry	16.08	2.97	12	13.75	3.33	12

Table 10

Means and standard deviations of the SRQ factor scores for the gender of siblings

Factors	Males			Females		
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>
Warmth	49.11	14.47	9	67.67	12.15	15
Relative Status	36.00	3.54	9	33.80	7.98	15
Conflict	25.33	5.39	9	25.47	7.82	15
Rivalry	15.11	3.48	9	14.80	3.32	15

That is, as paternal blame increased, reports of sibling rivalry also increased. Warmth/closeness factor scores were negatively correlated with peer ridicule and avoidance scores, indicating that as perceptions of peer ridicule and avoidance increased, perceptions of sibling warmth/closeness decreased, $r(23) = -.52, p < .01$. Warmth/closeness factor scores were also positively associated with reaction to news of the divorce scores, $r(23) = .44, p < .05$. That is, as negative reactions to the news of the divorce increased, perceptions of sibling warmth/closeness also increased.

(d) Relationship between SRQ factor scores and age and gender.

Bivariate correlations were calculated for the SRQ factor scores and the gender of the children, and the SRQ factor scores and the age of the children. There were no significant correlations between age and any of the SRQ factor scores. However, a significant correlation was obtained between the warmth/closeness factor score and the gender of the children, $r(23) = -.58, p < .01$. This finding indicated that girls tended to report more warmth/closeness in the sibling relationship than boys tended to report.

(e) Relationship between Divorce Questionnaire subscales and age and gender. Bivariate correlations were also calculated between the Divorce Questionnaire subscale scores and the age and gender of the children. No significant associations were found.

(f) Relationship between SRQ factor scores (parent version). Pearson product-moment correlations were conducted between the parent SRQ factors scores. A significant negative correlation was found between the conflict factor scores and the

warmth/closeness factor scores, $r(9) = -.71, p < .05$. This seemed to indicate that as perceived conflict in the sibling relationship increased, perceptions of warmth/closeness also increased.

(g) **Relationship between Divorce Questionnaire subscales (parent version)**. Correlations were also calculated between the Divorce Questionnaire subscale scores for all the children combined (i.e., target children and non target children). A significant positive correlation was obtained between the fear of abandonment subscale and the hope of reunification subscale, $r(19) = .55, p < .05$, indicating that as parents' perceptions of fear of abandonment increased, so did perceptions of hope of reunification. The fear of abandonment subscale was also positively associated with the paternal blame subscale, $r(19) = .61, p < .01$, and also with the peer ridicule and avoidance subscale, $r(19) = .46, p < .05$. These findings showed that as parents' perceptions of fear of abandonment increased, so did perceptions of paternal blame and of peer ridicule. Finally, perceptions of hope of reunification were positively correlated with peer ridicule, $r(19) = .60, p < .01$.

Qualitative analyses.

The interview transcripts, for the most part, were analyzed in a qualitative fashion. Before proceeding with the details of the analysis, it should be noted that there was a wide range in the children's responses to the interview questions. Nevertheless, some patterns emerged from the data. To aid in the detection of response patterns, the frequency of each response category was tabulated. It should also be noted that children frequently gave more than one answer to a question, consequently, responses were often placed in more than one category. Upon the examination of the frequency of responses,

some noteworthy findings emerged.

The first set of interview questions sought to find out about the children's general understanding of divorce, and also about of their views concerning their parents' divorce. The questions addressed children's views concerning the causes of the divorce, and about positive and negative outcomes of the divorce. To begin, only one child was unable to provide a general definition or explanation of divorce. When defining divorce, 46% of children mentioned the incompatibility of the parents (e.g., "Well, I think it's because they don't get along anymore"), 33% mentioned the physical separation of the parents (e.g., "They don't live together anymore"), and 33% mentioned the loss of love (e.g., "They don't love each other anymore"). Similarly, only one child was unable to give a reason for his parents' divorce. Incompatibility was the reason most often given by the children for their parents' divorce (58%). Also, none of the children thought their parents would be getting back together and only one child was unable to justify this belief. Thirty-eight percent of the children mentioned the remarriage of one or both parents as a reason for their parents not reuniting. About 46% of the children thought that someone was to blame for the divorce. The father or both the parents were the most often blamed, and none of the children put the entire blame on the mother. When asked to name at least one bad thing about their parents being divorced, 42% of the children mentioned circumstances associated with the absence of the non custodial parent. When asked to name at least one good thing about their parents not living together anymore, 50% of the children mentioned the absence of parental conflict.

A second set of questions addressed issues that were not directly related to the divorce. Children were asked to describe each of their parents, and to discuss their relationships with their friends and their non custodial parent. In their description of their mother, 79% of the children mentioned one or more positive personality characteristics, on the other hand, 38% of the children mentioned their father's positive personality characteristics. Similarly, 21% of children described their mother's negative personality characteristics, whereas 42% of children described their father's negative personality characteristics. In terms of positive and negative parental behaviors, the descriptions provided by the children were similar for mothers and fathers. Two-thirds of the children said they told many of their friends about their parents' separation/divorce. Seventy-five percent of these children mentioned positive reasons for sharing their experiences with their friends, such as to obtain social/emotional support or to share common experiences. When asked if they thought there were any ways in which they were different from their friends, 46% of children thought they were different from their friends in at least one way. Most children mentioned differences in terms of abilities, personality characteristics, physical appearance, or tastes, while only two children mentioned divorce-related differences. Sixty-three percent of children said they thought there were differences in their relationship with their non custodial parent compared to before the divorce, and the differences mentioned varied widely. For instance, one child responded: "Yeah. He used to call me a nickname... and now he just calls me Brian". On the other hand, another child answered: "I find that we are a bit farther away from each other than

we used to be”.

A final set of questions addressed the sibling relationship in the context of the divorce. Eighty-three percent of children said they did not talk to their sibling about the divorce, although 30% of these children said they used to talk about it but did not at the present time. When asked why they did not talk to their sibling about the divorce, some of the children said they did not want to talk about it, while others said they or their sibling were too young at the time of the divorce to talk about it. Other children said they did not talk about the divorce simply because they did not think about it. In the past or in the present, the topics of discussion with the sibling included the causes of the divorce, hopes of reunification, and general thoughts and feelings. Fifty-four percent of children mentioned differences in their relationship with their sibling since the separation/divorce. However, the differences mentioned were most often development-related rather than divorce-related. For example, when asked about differences in her relationship with her sibling, one child responded: “My brother goes out a lot more than he used to, he doesn’t spend as much time with me”. In answer to the same question, another child answered: “I think since I was younger then, Peter would be nice to me and everything, but I would be jealous of him sometimes because he would get lots of things that I didn’t get because I wasn’t old enough yet”. When asked if they feel closer, less close, or about the same to their sibling since the divorce, 46% of children mentioned they felt the same as before, 29% children said they felt closer, and 21% of children said they felt less close. Again, developmental reasons were given for changes in the closeness of the relationship. For

example, one child answered: “Maybe a bit less... I think it’s because like I’m older now and he’s older now”. On the other hand, another child answered: “More close because he’s older now and he’s more really protective of me”. See Appendix E for table containing percentages of interview responses.

Comparing siblings’ responses to interview questions. One of the original hypotheses of this study involved comparing siblings’ experiences and determining if similar experiences were related to sibling warmth/closeness. Although it may be difficult to ascertain this relationship, comparisons of siblings’ responses were attempted nevertheless. It was somewhat difficult to assess whether siblings tended to agree or disagree in their views of the divorce and of their relationship. In many cases, the siblings agreed on only one part of a response to a question, and each gave additional information that the other did not mention. For example, when asked why she thought her parents would not live together again, one child answered: “Well, she [mother] loves a different guy, and my mom doesn’t like, my mom doesn’t love my dad anymore”. When asked the same question, this child’s sister answered: “Well because my mom already has a boyfriend and they are very happily together, so my mom and dad will never get back together”. In this case, both children mentioned that the parent was dating someone else, but only one child mentioned the parents’ loss of love. When a child did not mention a detail that the sibling discussed, it could not be considered a disagreement because it was not clear if the child simply did not think of mentioning the information or if he or she actually did not perceive the situation in that way. It seemed that the siblings tended to

have similar views when the events surrounding the divorce were clear. For example, two sisters agreed that their father was to blame for the divorce because he was violent and controlling. This type of parental behavior was less likely to be overlooked by a child than a subtler scenario.

On a few occasions, siblings gave strikingly different responses to questions that were posed. For instance, when asked if she and her sister talked about the divorce, a child responded : “Me and my sister we don’t talk about it, it really bothers her”. However, when the sister was asked the same question she responded: “We blame ourselves on it usually, and we talk about why my mom and dad got divorced”. Another interesting difference in siblings’ responses was noted when two sisters were asked whether they thought they were closer, less close, or about the same since the divorce. The oldest sister answered: “Probably closer. Because like now we’re like together all the time with our mother or our father”. On the other hand, the youngest sister responded: “Less, when I was a little kid she used to play with me so much”. In this family, one of the siblings perceived that she and her sister spent more time together since the divorce, while the sister perceived that they spent less time together. In this case, there was probably some truth to both of their answers. Since the oldest sibling was now an adolescent, it was quite likely that she and her sister do not play together as much as they used to. However, it was also likely that they actually spent more time together now, since they both spend time together during visits with their father. As demonstrated, in some cases it appeared that siblings viewed the same situation from different angles.

There are instances where siblings' views were quite similar. When asked to name at least one bad thing about her parent's divorce one child answered: "I don't think there's bad things really. I think our lives are better now that we are not living with my father". When asked the same question, the child's sister responded: "I don't think there's any bad thing. It's better like that." For some of the questions it was clear that the siblings' responses should differ. For instance, one question asked about individual differences (e.g., "Are there any ways in which you think you are different from your friends?"). It is likely that answers to such a question would vary because each child has his or her own friends. As such, the questions that did not ask the children about perceptions of the parental divorce or the sibling relationship were not compared.

DISCUSSION

Due to the small sample size of this study, caution is used in drawing definite conclusions from the data. The study would need to be replicated with a larger sample before generalizations could be made to other samples and/or the larger population.

Children's divorce experiences

Surprisingly, most children were quite candid regarding their views of their parents' divorce. It was also interesting to note that the children had a certain understanding of divorce in general, and of their parents' divorce in particular. That is, almost all the children were able to define divorce in their own way, and were also able to provide a reason for their parents' divorce. The reasons provided by the children included parental behaviors such as alcoholism and violence, the incompatibility of the

parents, and parents' loss of love for each other. Surprisingly, none of the children thought their parents would be getting back together, and almost all the children were able to give a reason for their point of view. This finding seemed to indicate that the children had a fairly realistic view of the state of their parents' relationship. Although none of the children thought their parents would reunite, many children wished they would reunite. It was interesting that even the youngest children were able to separate the reality of their family situation from what they wished would occur. It was also interesting to find that the children generally felt quite secure in their relationship with their parents. That is, all the children strongly believed their parents' love for them had not changed since the divorce.

One of the clearest findings in the present study showed that children tended to blame the father for the divorce more than they blamed the mother. Interestingly, the custodial parents also perceived that the children tended to blame the father more than the mother. In addition, the interviews showed that children tended to describe the father in negative terms, while the mother tended to be described in positive terms. These findings may be due to the fact that in all but one family, the custodial parent was the mother. Children may have been exposed to mothers' discussions of the father and of the circumstances that precipitated the divorce. Since the children had less contact with their father, they were not exposed to his point of view as much as they were to their mother's point of view. Thus, children may have formed opinions of the divorce based on what they heard around them. If this was the case, it is possible to see how the family functions

as a system, and how the perceptions and views of one family member influences the views of other family members. As Minuchin (1974) mentioned, a subsystem within the family can influence a different subsystem. Thus, in the present study, the marital subsystem may have influenced the parental subsystem. In other words, the quality of ex-spousal relations could have influenced the quality of relations between the non custodial parent and the children. However, it should be noted that in some families, the father's behavior (e.g., violent behavior) apparently was a contributing factor leading to the divorce, at least according to child reports. In such cases, the children were probably able to form their own views about the causes of the divorce. However, the degree to which the children were influenced by maternal views remains a question for further study.

Generally, the children did communicate with their friends about their parents' divorce and they did so for a variety of reasons. The most common reason was to obtain some kind of support from their friends. It should be noted that when the children were asked if they thought it mattered to their friends that their parents no longer lived together, some children interpreted the word "matters" positively, and others interpreted the word negatively. That is, some children said that it mattered to their friends because their friends cared about them, while others said it did not matter to their friends because it was none of their business. Generally, the children in the study did not report feeling different than their friends because of their parents' divorce. This might be because parental divorce is so widespread in today's society, and most children probably have at least one friend who is from a divorced family. It is also possible that children value

characteristics in their friends other than the structure of their family (e.g., similarity of interests).

The correlations seemed to show that negative responses to the divorce in one area were associated with negative responses in another area. For example, it was found that negative emotional responses to the divorce were associated with fear of abandonment and also with negative reactions to the news of the divorce. Thus, it seemed that a child's negative experiences were not restricted to one area of his or her life. The custodial parents' perceptions of the children's divorce experiences also demonstrated the same pattern. For instance, parents' perceptions of fear of abandonment were associated with hope of parental reunification, and also with paternal blame. It would have been interesting to know if children's negative experiences were associated with parental negativity. That is, if parents' divorce experiences were more negative, the children might also have reported more negative thoughts and feelings regarding the divorce. In other words, family members do not live in isolation; they are influenced by the experiences of other family members.

Children's perceptions of the sibling relationship

Although sisters were not found to report more warmth/closeness than other sibling dyads, it was found that girls perceived more warmth/closeness in their sibling relationship than boys. A similar finding was reported by Bowerman and Dobash (1974), that is, females were more likely to report feeling close to a sibling of either sex than were males. Also, Kurdek and Fine (1993) found that girls in single-mother families

reported most frequently that non-parent family members, including siblings, provided them with warmth and supervision. Taken together, these findings suggest that females tend to perceive more warmth or closeness in their sibling relationships than boys. It is not clear why girls reported more warmth/closeness in their sibling relationship, although it is possible that the difference originates in a biological predisposition or learned condition that facilitates nurturing behaviors in females.

The sibling relationship in divorced families.

Some interesting findings were noted regarding the sibling relationship. It was surprising to find that the divorce was not a topic of discussion for most of the siblings in the study. There seemed to be a number of reasons why siblings did not discuss the divorce. First, the time that had elapsed since the divorce seemed to influence how much siblings talked about it. It appeared with time that the siblings felt less of a need to discuss their parents' divorce. The age of the children at the time of the divorce may have also influenced how much they discussed it. If one or both siblings were quite young at the time of the divorce, they may not have been able to recall the divorce or to discuss it at the present time. The age difference between the siblings may also have influenced how much they discussed the divorce. If there was a large age difference between the siblings, it might have been difficult for them to talk about it because they might have had very different understandings or perceptions. This would be a good question to study in future research. The interview findings appeared to suggest that developmental changes contributed significantly to changes in the sibling relationship. Furman and

Buhrmester (1990) also found that development influenced the qualities of the sibling relationship; for instance, relations with siblings tended to be less intense as the children grew older. Nevertheless, it is difficult to untangle the effects of the divorce with those of development since these occurred simultaneously. Therefore, it was not possible to determine whether the sibling relationship was influenced by developmental issues, by the divorce, or by other events.

Despite the divorce, the sibling relationship appeared to be a fairly constant relationship in the lives of the children in the study. There were several reasons for this conclusion. First, almost all the children said they did not discuss the divorce with their sibling at the present time. Also, it seemed that the divorce was more likely to be a topic of discussion in the early stages of divorce rather than in the later stages. It makes sense that the divorce was discussed more by the siblings at the time of parental separation, since this is when the major changes in family life took place. As time goes on, the events surrounding the divorce usually become less intense, therefore, children may feel less of a need to talk about it. This view finds some support in the framework outlined by Morawetz and Walker (as cited by Shapiro and Wallace, 1987), in which the *realignment* period is a time when family members must cope with the major changes occasioned by the divorce. Following this coping phase, there is the *reestablishment of social life*, during which family members adapt to their new life. It is possible that the siblings discussed the divorce more frequently while they were trying to cope, and less frequently when they had adapted to the changes. Hetherington (1989) found that the sibling

relationship tended to have protective qualities in the later stages of divorce rather than in the early stages. It is not clear whether siblings' discussion of divorce acts as a protective mechanism, and/or whether possible protective effects are demonstrated immediately or at a later time. In the present investigation it seemed that the sibling relationship, as a source of support, was most important to the children in the early stages of the divorce.

Second, although about half of the children said there were differences in the quality of the interactions with their sibling compared to before the divorce, it was not clear whether the differences tended to be developmental in nature rather than specifically related to the divorce. Finally, about half of the children said they felt the same level of warmth/closeness with their sibling compared to before the divorce, and again, it was difficult to assess whether differences in perceived closeness were related to the divorce or to developmental changes. Furman and Buhrmester (1990) found that sibling relations changed as children grew older; they became less intense in all respects. This finding was also found in the present study; for instance, many of the older children mentioned they spent less time with their sibling, and spent more time with their friends. Thus, despite the changes occasioned by the divorce, the sibling relationship seemed to be a solid presence in the lives of the children. This finding seems to fit into Minuchin's (1974) view of family relationships that was mentioned earlier: "The system maintains itself. It offers resistance to change beyond a certain range, and maintains preferred patterns as long as possible" (p. 52). Thus, in the present study, the sibling relationship seemed to be a constant in the lives of the children.

Although the sibling relationship seemed to remain fairly stable, it was not clear if this stability had any protective mechanisms or benefits for the children. As mentioned, studies have shown that the sibling relationship can act as a buffer following parental divorce, however, it would be interesting to find out if the constancy of the relationship contributes to the buffering process. Springer and Wallerstein (1983) found that adolescents reported marked increases in conflict in their sibling relationship after the divorce, but also that the relationship was a source of “security and continuity” in their lives (p.21). According to Hetherington (1988), this type of relationship is known as “ambivalent” because siblings exhibit both competitive and coercive behaviors as well as loyalty and protective behaviors.

Siblings’ divorce experiences: Similar or different?

Generally, the t-tests did not reveal any differences in how the siblings perceived the divorce or the sibling relationship. However, the interview data did show that siblings’ perceptions tended to differ; that is, the individual perspectives of the children were more apparent in the interviews. This might be because the interview session allowed the children to express their thoughts and views more freely than the more structured questionnaires. The fact that the children had different experiences of their parents’ divorce was consistent with past sibling studies. For instance, Dunn & Plomin (1990) found that siblings in intact families tended to have different views of each other and of their relationship. In terms of siblings’ divorce experiences, Monahan et al. (1993) also found that siblings had different views of their parents’ divorce. In the present study

as well as in other studies, the different perspectives of the siblings may be attributed to a number of factors. First, the age of siblings might play a part in how they experienced the divorce; younger children might view the divorce differently than older children for a variety of reasons. Younger children might be more sheltered by parents from the divorce than are older children, therefore, two children in the same family might experience the divorce very differently. It was also possible that younger and older children perceived the divorce differently because of age differences in their development. For example, younger children's less developed cognitive and reasoning skills might result in their having a different perspective of the divorce than their older sibling. Second, it is also possible that the extent to which the parent(s) talk about the divorce in front of the children influences how the children perceive the divorce. That is, siblings may have similar perceptions if they are exposed to frequent discussions about the divorce. If the divorce is never discussed by the parents, each child may have to form his or her own view of the divorce. Finally, siblings may have different perspectives of the divorce simply because they are unique individuals with different opinions, feelings, and ideas. It should be noted that siblings' perceptions of their parents' divorce are not orthogonal: siblings share the same divorce, but it is how they experience this event that differs.

The small sample size makes it difficult to assess whether similarity of siblings' experiences was associated with sibling closeness. A larger sample would be needed to determine this relationship. However, it can be concluded in the present study that there was a wide variety in the quality of the sibling relationships, and some siblings' divorce

experiences were more similar than others’.

Parents’ views of the sibling relationship

The third hypothesis stated that mothers and fathers would report different perceptions of their children’s divorce experiences and sibling relationship. However, it was not possible to test this hypothesis because the non custodial parent was not included in the present study. The final set of hypotheses stated that parents would view the sibling relationship more positively than the children. The t-tests of the SRQ factor scores revealed no differences between the children’s views of the sibling relationship, and parents’ views.

Parents’ views of their children’s divorce experiences

Finally, it was hypothesized that parents’ would view siblings’ divorce experiences as being more similar than the siblings would report. No differences were found between target and non target children’s views of the divorce. In addition, no differences were found between parents’ views of target and non target children’s experiences. Thus, it appeared that parents did not view siblings’ divorce experiences to be more similar than the children perceived them to be. This finding is not in accordance with that of Monahan et al. (1993), however, the small sample size made a reliable test of the predictions difficult.

Problems encountered and important considerations

When beginning a new study, researchers usually try to make sure that potential problems or difficulties are dealt with before proceeding with the research. When

beginning this research, much thought was put into identifying potential obstacles and finding solutions. However, problems did emerge after the research had commenced. Initially, it was assumed that only a handful of schools would need to be contacted in order to obtain the desired number of participants. However, when only four families were recruited from three schools, it became clear that finding participants would be a difficult task. Parents were more reluctant about letting their children participate than was anticipated. Although schools were the main vehicle of recruitment, support groups for divorced families were also approached, but with little success. Divorce is a sensitive topic, and is one that most families would prefer to keep private. Some parents responded negatively to receiving the research information, although most parents did not even return the forms that were distributed. Since the parents that did agree to have their children participate were such a small portion of the parents, the families that did participate in the study should be considered unique and not necessarily representative of divorced families in general. Divorced families that are willing to talk about their experiences may share certain characteristics, and it cannot be assumed that these characteristics apply to other families. Past studies have usually included both divorced and non divorced families in their samples. Including both types of families probably would have made it easier to find participants since divorced parents would not have felt they were specifically recruited.

Although finding participants was challenging, the data collection went more smoothly. In general, the children were willing to talk about their experiences. However,

it should be noted that asking children about their divorce experiences is a sensitive undertaking. There is a very fine line between gathering information from the child and causing harm to the child. At times, certain questions were not pursued for fear of causing psychological harm or distress to the child. Since my purpose in meeting with the children was only to gather information from them, ethically I could not ask questions that would distress them in any way. I wanted the children to leave the meeting feeling the same way they did as they entered the meeting. As such, the information that was obtained from the children cannot be considered to reflect the entire range of thoughts and feelings that they had regarding the divorce.

Some of the children in the study were quite young, and the information that was gathered from them should be interpreted with caution. The two 7 year old children in the study answered “I don’t know” to many of the interview questions. It was not clear whether they did not understand some of the questions, or if they really did not know the answer to these questions. It was also possible that younger children lacked the cognitive abilities necessary to reflect on the events in their lives. It was also possible that younger children were simply too young at the time of the divorce to recall their experiences clearly. Additionally, parents may tend to shield their young children from some of the events surrounding the divorce and, therefore, these children may know less than their older siblings. Nevertheless, researchers wanting to obtain children’s perceptions of their family life should be cautious about including young children, unless other means of gathering the information have been developed. Alternative methods of data collection

such as picture-drawing or games might be more appropriate to use with younger children.

It should also be mentioned that the data that was collected might not be completely accurate because the original measures were all modified to a certain extent. It is possible that different findings would have been obtained if the measures had not been modified.

Future research

Given the prevalence of divorce in today's society, much more research is needed to discover its effects on all family members, and in various areas of their lives. For example, research has shown that children from divorced families tend to demonstrate lower school performance than children from intact families (Hamilton, 1993; Kunz & Kunz, 1995; Mulholland, Watt, Philpott, & Sarlin, 1991). However, Nielsen (1993) found that many variables, such as contact with the father, can mediate the impact of divorce on children's academic performance. It would be interesting to know if siblings can also mediate the impact of divorce on school performance.

Despite the difficulties encountered in the present study, it would still be interesting to test the original hypotheses that were formulated, and to find out more about siblings' perceptions of the divorce and qualities of their relationship. It would also be important for future researchers to consider the importance of the family system, and to collect information from as many family members as possible. The more we know about the effects of divorce on children and family members, the better prepared we will

be to offer support and assistance to those who need it.

Conclusion

The present study contributed to our understanding of how children experience divorce, and how this event influences their relations with their siblings. More specifically, it was found that children had a wide range of specific divorce experiences, but also that they shared certain general experiences. Also, it was shown that it is challenging to ascertain the role of development versus other events in the lives of children. However, the study also shed some light on the difficulties that can be encountered when conducting research in this area. Despite the obstacles that can surface in this type of research, the study of divorce must be pursued.

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List of appendices

Appendix A: Initial letter sent to parents, information form, consent form

Appendix B: Sibling Relationship Questionnaire - Revised (child and parent versions)

Appendix C: Divorce Questionnaire -child version (CBAPS items and SDQ items)

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Appendix E: Open-ended interview items, response categories, illustrative responses, and table containing percentages of interview responses.

Appendix A

Initial letter sent to parents, information form, consent form

Dear Parent(s),

I am a graduate student in the M. A. in Child Study program at Concordia University, and am conducting research on children's experiences of their parents' separation/divorce. If you are **not** separated or divorced, please indicate this on the attached information form and return it to your 5th- or 6th-grade child's teacher. If you are separated or divorced, the rest of this letter explains the study to you and asks for your permission for two of your school-age children to participate in it. If you do **not** have two school-age children, please indicate this on the information form (question #4).

As part of the study, I would like to ask your children to complete two questionnaires, and would also like to interview them individually and privately. The questionnaires will be given to your children at their school, and the interviews will also be conducted at school at a later time. If your two children attend different schools (e.g., an elementary school and a high school), I will see them at their respective schools.

One of the questionnaires will ask each child to describe his/her relationship with his/her sibling (e.g., "How much do you and this sibling like the same things?"). The second questionnaire will ask each child about his/her divorce experiences, (e.g., "When my parents first told me about the separation/divorce I felt worried"). In the interview, I will also ask questions relating to the divorce (e.g., "What are some of the bad things about your Mom and Dad not living together?"). The interview will be recorded with a tape recorder.

In my study, I would also like to find out parents' views of their children's divorce experiences. As such, I would also be interested in having you complete two questionnaires. **If you would like to allow your children to participate, but are not interested in participating yourself, this is a possibility.** One of the questionnaires will ask you to describe your children's sibling relationship, and the second one will ask you to describe each of your children's divorce experiences. These questionnaires will be sent home to you through your child, and you will be able to complete them at your leisure. An envelope and postage will be provided for your convenience, and you can mail the completed questionnaires back to me.

I would like to assure you that the information that I gather from you and your children will remain strictly confidential. Only myself and my research supervisor will have access to the information that you and your children provide. Since I would like to find out generally about children's divorce experiences and sibling relationships, I will assign each family a number and will **not** use names. In addition, all findings will be reported as group results and no individual information will be used. At the conclusion of the study, I will send a short report on the group findings to you.

Participation in this study poses no risk to you or your children. The study only intends to gather some information from your family. Also, participation in this study does not have any direct benefits for you or your children, but it will advance our understanding of how children in the same family experience divorce. In turn, this knowledge can help teachers and counsellors support children who are experiencing their parents' divorce.

Even if you give consent for your children to participate in this study, your children do not have to participate if they do not want to. Furthermore, you and your children can withdraw from the study at any time if you wish to do so.

As a token of appreciation, a raffle will be held for the children of families who return the consent forms. Your family will be eligible for the raffle whether or not you give consent for your children to participate. One family will win two gift certificates from a local book store.

If you have any questions about this study, please call me at 483-4326. My professor, Dr. Bette Chambers in the Department of Education at Concordia University, can also be contacted at 848-2013.

Please fill out the attached forms and return all of the forms to your 5th- or 6th-grade child's teacher at school. I thank you for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Melissa Jennings
Graduate Student

Nina Howe
Research advisor

Information Form

In my study I would like to include families that have been separated/divorced for a certain period of time. In addition, I would like to include children of a certain age. The following questions will allow me to identify families that meet the requirements of my study. Not all separated/divorced families will be chosen for participation in this study.

1. Please indicate whether you and your spouse/partner are together or separated/divorced by putting an "X" in the appropriate []:

☐ We are together
☐ We are separated/divorced

If you answered "we are together", the following questions do not pertain to you. Please return this questionnaire to your 5th- or 6th-grade child's teacher.

2. If you are separated/divorced, please indicate the month and year when you and your spouse/partner began living apart: _____
3. What is your 5th- or 6th-grade child's name (please include the first and last names)? _____
4. Does your 5th or 6th grader have a brother or sister that is between 8 and 14 years of age? (This does not include stepsiblings or half-siblings that this child acquired after the separation/divorce)
YES ☐ NO ☐
5. If YES, please indicate this child's full name and age. (If you have more than one child within this age range, please indicate the child who is closest-in-age to your 5th- or 6th- grade child): _____
6. Do both of the children previously mentioned live with the same parent?
YES ☐ NO ☐

If YES, please indicate which parent these children live with most of the time
Mother[] Father[]

If NO, please indicate which child lives with which
parent: _____

7. Do both these children attend the same school?
YES [] NO []

If NO, please indicate the name of the school that your other child
attends: _____

8. Please indicate your relationship to these children:
Mother[] Father[]

9. Do you and your ex-spouse have joint custody of your children?
YES [] NO []

If YES, I will also need to contact him/her to ask for his/her permission for your
children to participate. I would appreciate having his/her name and address, if
possible:

If you answered YES to #4, please fill out the attached consent form.

Thank you for your help!

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER

Consent Form

Please read and sign the following:

"The purposes and procedures of Melissa Jennings' research study on children's experiences of their parents' divorce have been described to me. I understand that children in this study will be asked to complete two questionnaires, and will be interviewed individually and privately at their school. The study poses no risks to my children, nor does it have any direct benefits. I understand that participation in this study is completely voluntary and that my children may withdraw from the study at any time. It has been made clear to me that the information collected from my children is confidential and anonymous, and that their identity will not be associated with any of the results of the study."

My 5th- or 6th-grade child's full name is: _____

The full name of this child's closest-in-age sibling who is between 8 and 14 years of age (as identified in #5 of the questionnaire): _____

Please check one of the following:

_____ I give my children permission to participate

_____ I do not give my children permission to participate

Please indicate your relationship to these children (mother, father, etc.): _____

Please sign and print your name here:

Sign

Print

Date: _____

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER

Appendix B

Sibling Relationship Questionnaire -Revised (child and parent versions)

Child's name: _____

The phrase "this sibling" refers to: _____

A "sibling" is another word for "brother" or "sister". Please answer the following questions about you and your sibling whose name is written above. Please put an "X" in the [] next to your choice. For each question you can put only one "X". **There are no right or wrong answers.**

1. Some siblings do nice things for each other a lot, while other siblings do nice things for each other a little. How much do both you and this sibling do nice things for each other?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

2. Who usually gets treated better by your mother, you or this sibling?

- ☐ My sibling almost always gets treated better
 - ☐ My sibling often gets treated better
 - ☐ We get treated about the same
 - ☐ I often get treated better
 - ☐ I almost always get treated better
-

3. How much do you show this sibling how to do things he or she doesn't know how to do?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ Not too much
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Very much
- ☐ Extremely much

4. How much does this sibling show you how to do things you don't know how to do?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

5. How much do you tell this sibling what to do?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

6. How much does this sibling tell you what to do?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

7. Who usually gets treated better by your father, you or this sibling?

- ☐ My sibling almost always gets treated better
- ☐ My sibling often gets treated better
- ☐ We get treated about the same
- ☐ I often get treated better
- ☐ I almost always get treated better

8. Some siblings care about each other a lot while other siblings don't care about each other that much. How much do you and this sibling care about each other?

☐ Not at all
☐ Not too much
☐ Somewhat
☐ Very much
☐ Extremely much

9. How much do you and this sibling go places and do things together?

☐ Not at all
☐ Not too much
☐ Somewhat
☐ Very much
☐ Extremely much

10. How much do you and this sibling insult and call each other names?

☐ Not at all
☐ Not too much
☐ Somewhat
☐ Very much
☐ Extremely much

11. How much do you and this sibling like the same things?

☐ Not at all
☐ Not too much
☐ Somewhat
☐ Very much
☐ Extremely much

12. How much do you and this sibling tell each other everything?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

13. Some siblings try to out-do or beat each other at things a lot, while other siblings try to out-do or beat each other a little. How much do you and this sibling try to out-do or beat each other at things?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

14. How much do you admire and respect this sibling?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

15. How much does this sibling admire and respect you?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ Not too much
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Very much
- ☐ Extremely much

16. How much do you and this sibling disagree and quarrel with each other?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

17. Some siblings cooperate a lot, while other siblings cooperate a little. How much do you and this sibling cooperate with each other?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

18. Who gets more attention from your mother, you or this sibling?

- ☐ My sibling almost always gets more attention
 - ☐ My sibling often gets more attention
 - ☐ We get about the same amount of attention
 - ☐ I often get more attention
 - ☐ I almost always get more attention
-

19. How much do you help this sibling with things he or she can't do by him or herself?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ Not too much
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Very much
- ☐ Extremely much

20. How much does this sibling help you with things you can't do by yourself?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

21. How much do you make this sibling do things?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

22. How much does this sibling make you do things?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

23. Who gets more attention from your father, you or this sibling?

- ☐ My sibling almost always gets more attention
 - ☐ My sibling often gets more attention
 - ☐ We get about the same amount of attention
 - ☐ I often get more attention
 - ☐ I almost always get more attention
-

24. How much do you and this sibling love each other?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ Not too much
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Very much
- ☐ Extremely much

25. Some siblings play around and have fun with each other a lot, while other siblings play around and have fun with each other a little. How much do you and this sibling play around and have fun with each other?

☐ Not at all
☐ Not too much
☐ Somewhat
☐ Very much
☐ Extremely much

26. How much are you and this sibling mean to each other?

☐ Not at all
☐ Not too much
☐ Somewhat
☐ Very much
☐ Extremely much

27. How much do you and this sibling have in common?

☐ Not at all
☐ Not too much
☐ Somewhat
☐ Very much
☐ Extremely much

28. How much do you and this sibling share secrets and private feelings?

☐ Not at all
☐ Not too much
☐ Somewhat
☐ Very much
☐ Extremely much

29. How much do you and this sibling compete with each other?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

30. How much do you look up to and feel proud of this sibling?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

31. How much does this sibling look up to and feel proud of you?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

32. How much do you and this sibling get mad at and get in arguments with each other?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

33. How much do both you and this sibling share with each other?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ Not too much
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Very much
- ☐ Extremely much

34. Who does your mother usually favor, you or this sibling?

- ☐ My sibling almost always is favored
 - ☐ My sibling often is favored
 - ☐ Neither of us is favored
 - ☐ I am often favored
 - ☐ I almost always am favored
-

35. How much do you teach this sibling things that he or she doesn't know?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

36. How much does this sibling teach you things that you don't know?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

37. How much do you order this sibling around?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

38. How much does this sibling order you around?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ Not too much
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Very much
- ☐ Extremely much

39. Who does your father usually favor, you or this sibling?

- ☐ My sibling almost always is favored
 - ☐ My sibling often is favored
 - ☐ Neither of us is favored
 - ☐ I often am favored
 - ☐ I almost always am favored
-

40. How much is there a strong feeling of affection (love) between you and this sibling?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

41. Some kids spend lots of time with their siblings, while others don't spend so much. How much more free time do you and this sibling spend together?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

42. How much do you and this sibling bug and pick on each other in mean ways?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ Not too much
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Very much
- ☐ Extremely much

43. How much are you and this sibling alike?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

44. How much do you and this sibling tell each other things you don't want other people to know?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

45. How much do you and this sibling try to do things better than each other?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

46. How much do you think highly of this sibling?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ Not too much
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Very much
- ☐ Extremely much

47. How much does this sibling think highly of you?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

48. How much do you and this sibling argue with each other?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ Not too much
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Very much
- ☐ Extremely much

This questionnaire was completed by (circle): mother father

Please keep the following points in mind when completing this questionnaire:

- 1) This questionnaire asks you questions about the relationship between your two children that participated or will participate in this study.
 - 2) The blank space refers to: _____
 - 3) The phrase "this sibling" refers to: _____
 - 4) Please put an "X" in the [] next to your choice.
-

1. Some siblings do nice things for each other a lot, while other siblings do nice things for each other a little. How much do both _____ and this sibling do nice things for each other.

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

2. Who usually gets treated better by mother, _____ or this sibling?

- ☐ This sibling almost always gets treated better
 - ☐ This sibling often gets treated better
 - ☐ The children get treated about the same
 - ☐ _____ often gets treated better
 - ☐ _____ almost always gets treated better
-

3. How much does _____ show this sibling how to do things he or she doesn't know how to do?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ Not too much
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Very much
- ☐ Extremely much

4. How much does this sibling show _____ how to do things he or she doesn't know how to do?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

5. How much does _____ tell this sibling what to do?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

6. How much does this sibling tell _____ what to do?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

7. Who usually gets treated better by father, _____ or this sibling?

- ☐ This sibling almost always gets treated better
- ☐ This sibling often gets treated better
- ☐ The children get treated about the same
- ☐ _____ often gets treated better
- ☐ _____ almost always gets treated better

8. Some siblings care about each other a lot, while other siblings don't care about each other that much. How much do _____ and this sibling care about each other?

☐ Not at all
☐ Not too much
☐ Somewhat
☐ Very much
☐ Extremely much

9. How much do _____ and this sibling go places and do things together?

☐ Not at all
☐ Not too much
☐ Somewhat
☐ Very much
☐ Extremely much

10. How much do _____ and this sibling insult and call each other names?

☐ Not at all
☐ Not too much
☐ Somewhat
☐ Very much
☐ Extremely much

11. How much do _____ and this sibling like the same things?

☐ Not at all
☐ Not too much
☐ Somewhat
☐ Very much
☐ Extremely much

12. How much do _____ and this sibling tell each other everything?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

13. Some siblings try to out-do or beat each other at things a lot, while other siblings try to out-do or beat each other a little. How much do _____ and this sibling try to out-do or beat each other at things?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

14. How much does _____ admire and respect this sibling?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

15. How much does this sibling admire and respect _____ ?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ Not too much
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Very much
- ☐ Extremely much

16. How much do _____ and this sibling disagree and quarrel with each other?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

17. Some siblings cooperate a lot, while other siblings cooperate a little. How much do _____ and this sibling cooperate with each other?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

18. Who gets more attention from mother, _____ or this sibling?

- ☐ This sibling almost always gets more attention
 - ☐ This sibling often gets more attention
 - ☐ The children get about the same amount of attention
 - ☐ _____ often gets more attention
 - ☐ _____ almost always gets more attention
-

19. How much does _____ help this sibling with things he or she can't do by him or herself?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ Not too much
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Very much
- ☐ Extremely much

20. How much does this sibling help _____ with things he or she can't do by him or herself?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

21. How much does _____ make this sibling do things?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

22. How much does this sibling make _____ do things?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

23. Who gets more attention from father, _____ or this sibling?

- ☐ This sibling almost always gets more attention
- ☐ This sibling often gets more attention
- ☐ The children get about the same amount of attention
- ☐ _____ often gets more attention
- ☐ _____ almost always gets more attention

24. How much do _____ and this sibling love each other?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

25. Some siblings play around and have fun with each other a lot, while other siblings play around and have fun with each other a little. How much do _____ and this sibling play around and have fun with each other?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

26. How much are _____ and this sibling mean to each other?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

27. How much do _____ and this sibling have in common?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ Not too much
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Very much
- ☐ Extremely much

28. How much do _____ and this sibling share secrets and private feelings?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

29. How much do _____ and this sibling compete with each other?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

30. How much does _____ look up to and feel proud of this sibling?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

31. How much does this sibling look up to and feel proud of _____?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ Not too much
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Very much
- ☐ Extremely much

32. How much do _____ and this sibling get mad at and get in arguments with each other?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

33. How much do both _____ and this sibling share with each other?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

34. Who does mother usually favor, _____ or this sibling?

- ☐ This sibling almost always is favored
 - ☐ This sibling often is favored
 - ☐ Neither of the children are favored
 - ☐ _____ is often favored
 - ☐ _____ almost always is favored
-

35. How much does _____ teach this sibling things that he or she doesn't know?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ Not too much
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Very much
- ☐ Extremely much

36. How much does this sibling teach _____ things that he or she doesn't know?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

37. How much does _____ order this sibling around?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

38. How much does this sibling order _____ around?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

39. Who does father usually favor, _____ or this sibling?

- ☐ This sibling almost always is favored
- ☐ This sibling often is favored
- ☐ Neither of the children are favored
- ☐ _____ often is favored
- ☐ _____ almost always is favored

40. How much is there a strong feeling of affection (love) between _____ and this sibling?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

41. Some kids spend lots of time with their siblings, while others don't spend so much. How much free time does _____ and this sibling spend together?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

42. How much do _____ and this sibling bug and pick on each other in mean ways?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

43. How much are _____ and this sibling alike?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ Not too much
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Very much
- ☐ Extremely much

44. How much does _____ and this sibling tell each other things he or she does not want other people to know?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

45. How much does _____ and this sibling try to do things better than each other?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

46. How much does _____ think highly of this sibling?

- ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not too much
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Very much
 - ☐ Extremely much
-

47. How much does this sibling think highly of _____?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ Not too much
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Very much
- ☐ Extremely much

48. How much does _____ and this sibling argue with each other?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ Not too much
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Very much
- ☐ Extremely much

Appendix C

Divorce Questionnaire -child version

INSTRUCTIONS

Some children think or feel a certain way about their parents' separation/divorce, while other children think or feel in a different way. On the following pages are some statements about children and their separated/divorced parents. Some of the statements may be true about how you think and feel, while other statements may **not** be true of how you think and feel. Put an "X" next to the answer that is closest to the way you think and feel.

Some of the questions may seem strange to you, but try to answer them anyway. **There are no right or wrong answers.** Your answers will just tell me some of the things you are thinking now about your parents' separation/divorce.

In the following questions, separation or divorce refers to the time when your mother and father began to live apart.

1. It would upset me if other kids asked a lot of questions about my parents

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

2. It was usually my father's fault when my parents had a fight

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

3. I sometimes worry that both my parents will want to live without me

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

4. When my family was unhappy it was usually because of my mother

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

5. My parents will always live apart

- ☐ Really true
- ☐ Mostly true
- ☐ Somewhat true
- ☐ A little bit true
- ☐ Not true at all

6. I like talking to my friends now as much as I used to

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

7. My father is usually a nice person

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

8. It's possible that both my parents will never want to see me again

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

9. My mother is usually a nice person

- ☐ Really true
- ☐ Mostly true
- ☐ Somewhat true
- ☐ A little bit true
- ☐ Not true at all

10. If I behave better, I might be able to bring my family back together

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

11. I like playing with my friends as much now as I used to

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

12. When my family was unhappy, it was usually because of something my father said or did

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

13. I sometimes worry that I will be left all alone

- ☐ Really true
- ☐ Mostly true
- ☐ Somewhat true
- ☐ A little bit true
- ☐ Not true at all

14. Often I have a bad time when I am with my mother

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

15. My family will probably do things together just like before

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

16. I'd rather be alone than play with other kids

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

17. My father caused most of the trouble in my family

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

18. I feel that my parents still love me

- ☐ Really true
- ☐ Mostly true
- ☐ Somewhat true
- ☐ A little bit true
- ☐ Not true at all

19. My mother caused most of the trouble in my family

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

20. My parents will probably see that they have made a mistake and get back together again

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

21. My friends and I do many things together

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

22. There are a lot of things about my father I like

- ☐ Really true
- ☐ Mostly true
- ☐ Somewhat true
- ☐ A little bit true
- ☐ Not true at all

23. I sometimes think that one day I may have to go live with a friend or relative

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

24. I sometimes think that my parents will one day live together again

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

25. My friends understand how I feel about my parents

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

26. I feel my parents still like me

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

27. There are a lot of things about my mother I like

- ☐ Really true
- ☐ Mostly true
- ☐ Somewhat true
- ☐ A little bit true
- ☐ Not true at all

28. I sometimes think that once my parents realize how much I want them to, they'll live together again

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

29. When I heard about the separation/divorce I felt relieved.

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

30. When I heard about my parents' decision to separate/divorce, I felt angry.

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

31. I was shocked when my parents first told me that they were going to separate/divorce.

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

32. I was happy to hear that my parents had decided to get separated/divorced.

- ☐ Really true
- ☐ Mostly true
- ☐ Somewhat true
- ☐ A little bit true
- ☐ Not true at all

33. When I was first told about my parents' separation/divorce, I cried.

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

34. When I heard that my parents were going to get separated/divorced I felt sad.

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

35. I felt kind of scared when I found out my parents were going to separate/divorce.

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

36. When my parents first told me about the separation/divorce I felt worried.

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

37. I sometimes secretly wish my parents would get together again.

- ☐ Really true
- ☐ Mostly true
- ☐ Somewhat true
- ☐ A little bit true
- ☐ Not true at all

38. After the divorce, I spent most of my time alone (watching TV, reading, playing, etc).

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

39. I am glad my parents decided to get a separation/divorce.

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

40. I think that my parents did not consider me and the other children when they decided to get a divorce.

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

41. I sometimes secretly feel that the divorce was because of me.

- ☐ Really true
- ☐ Mostly true
- ☐ Somewhat true
- ☐ A little bit true
- ☐ Not true at all

42. After my father (mother) left, I felt less tense and nervous.

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

43. I sometimes still feel like crying when I think of my parents' divorce.

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

44. After the divorce, I felt that my father no longer loved me.

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

45. After the divorce, I felt that my mother no longer loved me.

- ☐ Really true
- ☐ Mostly true
- ☐ Somewhat true
- ☐ A little bit true
- ☐ Not true at all

46. Since the divorce, I feel that I must rely more on myself, I have to take care of myself more.

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

47. I sleep as well or better at night since the divorce.

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

48. My parents' divorce no longer bothers me in any way.

- ☐ Really true
 - ☐ Mostly true
 - ☐ Somewhat true
 - ☐ A little bit true
 - ☐ Not true at all
-

49. My parents were so upset during the time of the divorce I am sure they did not know what I was thinking or feeling.

- ☐ Really true
- ☐ Mostly true
- ☐ Somewhat true
- ☐ A little bit true
- ☐ Not true at all

Appendix D

Divorce Questionnaire -parent version

The following questions ask you about your child's () separation/divorce experiences. **In this questionnaire, the terms "separation" or "divorce" are used interchangeably and refer to the time when you and your ex-spouse began living apart.** Please answer each question by placing an "X" in the appropriate ☐.

1. What was this child's initial reaction to the news of the separation? (you may check more than one answer)

- ☐ no reaction
- ☐ upset (may or may not include crying)
- ☐ anger
- ☐ happiness
- ☐ surprise
- ☐ other, please specify: _____

2. For each of the following, please indicate whether this child did or did not ask about it soon after the separation was announced.

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| a) A change in residence | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| b) A change in school | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| c) A change in neighborhood | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| d) With whom he/she would live | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| e) How frequently he/she would get to see the nonresidential parent | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| f) How long the separation would be | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| g) Whether the separation was due to anything he/she said or did | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| h) Whether my ex-spouse and I would be getting back together | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |

3. Upon hearing about the separation this child

- ☐ took your side
- ☐ took your ex-spouse's side
- ☐ did not take sides

4. How eager is this child to discuss his/her thoughts and feelings surrounding the separation/divorce with you?
- ☐ absolutely refuses to talk about his/her thoughts and feelings
 - ☐ will occasionally talk about his/her thoughts and feelings if pushed to do so
 - ☐ will sometimes talk about his/her thoughts and feelings without being pushed into doing so
 - ☐ often wants to talk about his/her thoughts and feelings
5. How well do you know this child's thoughts and feelings about the separation/divorce?
- ☐ know virtually none of his/her thoughts and feelings
 - ☐ know very few of his/her thoughts and feelings
 - ☐ know some of his/her thoughts and feelings
 - ☐ know most of his/her thoughts and feelings
 - ☐ know virtually all of his/her thoughts and feelings
6. How frequently have you and this child talked about his/her feelings concerning the separation/divorce?
- ☐ never
 - ☐ seldom
 - ☐ sometimes
 - ☐ often
 - ☐ always
7. Please rate the extent to which this child has experienced the following since the separation/divorce.
- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>a) Personal growth and increase in self-knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> none <input type="checkbox"/> a little bit <input type="checkbox"/> somewhat <input type="checkbox"/> a lot | <p>f) Sadness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> none <input type="checkbox"/> a little bit <input type="checkbox"/> somewhat <input type="checkbox"/> a lot |
| <p>b) Increased happiness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> none <input type="checkbox"/> a little bit <input type="checkbox"/> somewhat <input type="checkbox"/> a lot | <p>g) Helplessness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> none <input type="checkbox"/> a little bit <input type="checkbox"/> somewhat <input type="checkbox"/> a lot |

c) Independence and responsibility

- ☐ none
- ☐ a little bit
- ☐ somewhat
- ☐ a lot

h) Confusion

- ☐ none
- ☐ a little bit
- ☐ somewhat
- ☐ a lot

d) Relief from conflict

- ☐ none
- ☐ a little bit
- ☐ somewhat
- ☐ a lot

i) Guilt or self-blame

- ☐ none
- ☐ a little bit
- ☐ somewhat
- ☐ a lot

e) Loneliness

- ☐ none
- ☐ a little bit
- ☐ somewhat
- ☐ a lot

j) Nervousness

- ☐ none
- ☐ a little bit
- ☐ somewhat
- ☐ a lot

8. Has the relationship between () and () changed since the separation/divorce?

- ☐ YES
- ☐ NO

If YES, please indicate briefly how it has changed (if you need more space please use another sheet of paper and attach to this questionnaire).

The following are some thoughts and feelings children might have regarding parental separation and divorce. For each, please indicate to what extent (this child) appears to have such a thought or feeling by placing an "X" in the appropriate ☐. It is not essential that your child has shared these with you directly. Rely on whatever evidence you wish in making your assessment.

9. My child feels that separation/divorce of his/her parents is something to be ashamed of.

☐ agree strongly
☐ agree
☐ undecided
☐ disagree
☐ disagree strongly

10. My child tends not to talk to his/her friends about the fact that his/her parents have separated or divorced.

☐ agree strongly
☐ agree
☐ undecided
☐ disagree
☐ disagree strongly

11. My child seems to interact with other children less now than before the separation/divorce.

☐ agree strongly
☐ agree
☐ undecided
☐ disagree
☐ disagree strongly

12. My child feels that one day he/she may be left alone with no one to take care of him/her.

☐ agree strongly
☐ agree
☐ undecided
☐ disagree
☐ disagree strongly

13. My child feels that if parents can fall out of love with each other it is also possible that his/her parents can fall out of love with him/her.

☐ agree strongly
☐ agree
☐ undecided
☐ disagree
☐ disagree strongly

14. My child feels that one day his/her parents will reunite and all will live together as one family again.

☐ agree strongly
☐ agree
☐ undecided
☐ disagree
☐ disagree strongly

15. My child may also feel that becoming ill or getting in trouble will demonstrate the need for both parents and so hasten this reunification.

☐ agree strongly
☐ agree
☐ undecided
☐ disagree
☐ disagree strongly

16. My child feels that his/her father was entirely responsible for the separation/divorce, and essentially blames him for breaking up the family.

☐ agree strongly
☐ agree
☐ undecided
☐ disagree
☐ disagree strongly

17. My child generally feels unliked by his/her father.

- ☐ agree strongly
- ☐ agree
- ☐ undecided
- ☐ disagree
- ☐ disagree strongly

18. My child feels that his/her mother was entirely responsible for the separation/divorce, and essentially blames her for breaking up the family.

- ☐ agree strongly
- ☐ agree
- ☐ undecided
- ☐ disagree
- ☐ disagree strongly

19. My child feels generally unliked by his/her mother.

- ☐ agree strongly
- ☐ agree
- ☐ undecided
- ☐ disagree
- ☐ disagree strongly

20. My child feels that he/she was somehow responsible for the separation/divorce.

- ☐ agree strongly
- ☐ agree
- ☐ undecided
- ☐ disagree
- ☐ disagree strongly

General Information

The following questions pertain to the family situation and living arrangements since the separation/divorce.

1. Please indicate your relationship to () and ()
☐ mother
☐ father
2. When did you and your ex-spouse separate? (That is, when did you begin living apart?) Please indicate the month and the year.

3. When did the divorce officially occur? Please indicate the month and the year. (Please indicate if you have not divorced).

4. Do all your children live with the same parent?
☐ YES
☐ NO

If YES, please indicate who has legal custody of the children

- ☐ you
☐ your ex-spouse
☐ both of you

If NO, please indicate the name(s) of the child (or children) who live(s) with you

And the name(s) of the child (or children) who live(s) with your ex-spouse

5. Please briefly describe the arrangement that you and your ex-spouse have in terms of time spent with the children. (For example, the children stay with you and your ex-spouse on alternate weeks). _____

6. Did you work outside your home **before** the separation? _____

If YES, did you begin working **more** after the separation? _____

If NO, did you begin working outside your home **after** the separation? _____

7. Who was your children's **primary** caregiver **before** the separation? (please circle)
YOU EX-SPOUSE BOTH

8. Who is your children's **primary** caregiver **since** the separation? (please circle)
YOU EX-SPOUSE BOTH

9. How much time do you spend with your children since the separation, compared to before the separation?

- ☐ More time spent with them now
☐ About the same amount of time spent with them now
☐ Less time spent with them now

Please feel free to write additional information: _____

10. How much time does your ex-spouse spend with your children since the separation, compared to before the separation?

- ☐ More time spent with them now
☐ About the same amount of time spent with them now
☐ Less time spent with them now

Please feel free to write additional information: _____

11. Please indicate the number of years of education that you have: _____

12. Please indicate your occupation: _____

I thank you most sincerely for your time and cooperation.

Appendix E

Open-ended interview questions, response categories, illustrative responses, and table containing percentages of interview responses.

1. What does it mean when two people get divorced?

- 1) **Incompatibility -including fighting** ("They just can't get along with each other")
- 2) **Marriage dissolution** ("They end their marriage")
- 3) **Physical separation** ("They move away from each other")
- 4) **Psychological distance** ("They grow apart from each other")
- 5) **Loss of love** ("They don't love each other anymore")
- 6) **Child-oriented** ("I thought I would never see my dad again")
- 7) **Legal explanation** ("They go through court and the judge settles it")
- 8) **Don't know**

2. Why don't your mom and dad live together anymore?

- 1) **Incompatibility -including fighting** ("They never got along good")
- 2) **Marriage Dissolution** ("They aren't married anymore and got divorced")
- 3) **Loss of love** ("They don't love each other anymore")
- 4) **Affair** ("Dad fell in love with an another lady")
- 5) **Parental trait, behavior, or habit** ("Because my father is an alcoholic" or "Because my father wasn't nice to us")
- 6) **Child blames self and/or other children in family** ("We blame ourselves on it usually")
- 7) **Child blames other person** ("Yes, my cousin")
- 8) **Don't know**

3. Do you think your mom and dad will ever live together again? Why or why not?

- 1) **Incompatibility** ("No, because they just don't get along")
- 2) **Parent remarried or dating someone else** ("No, because my dad got married again")
- 3) **Parent report** ("No, because my mom said so")
- 4) **Finality of divorce** ("Now that she divorced him she will never want to go back to him")
- 5) **Emotional reasons** ("No, because they don't love each other anymore")
- 6) **Parents have no contact** ("No, because they don't even talk to each other anymore")
- 7) **Family members happier now** ("My dad's happy, my mom's happy, we're all happy, no fights, nothing")
- 8) **Parents tried living together again** ("Because they kind of tried it for a while")
- 9) **Don't know**

4. a) **Do you think anyone is to blame for your mom and dad not being together like they used to be?**

- 1) **YES**
- 2) **NO**
- 3) **Don't know**

b) **If YES, who?**

- 1) **Mom**
- 2) **Dad**
- 3) **Both mom and dad**
- 4) **Child**
- 5) **Other person**

c) **If mom or dad, why?**

- 1) **Parent changed** ("He never really like, was like when they first met. he changed")
- 2) **Parent alcoholic -negative behaviors associated with alcoholism** ("If he would have stopped drinking, maybe my mother would have considered to stay with him")
- 3) **Parent violent** ("He kind of beated my brother")
- 4) **Parent controlling** ("My dad was too controlling")
- 5) **Other**

5. **What are some of the bad things about your mom and dad not living together anymore?**

- 1) **Circumstances associated with non custodial parent's absence** ("I don't get to see my dad much")
- 2) **Less contact with sibling** ("My brother lives with my dad and I don't get to see him much")
- 3) **Less money or material possessions** ("We don't have a lot of money now")
- 4) **Problems with new family situation** ("At first I did not like my mom's boyfriend")
- 5) **Loss of family togetherness and traditions** ("It was more fun when we had family together, now we don't have that")
- 6) **Less time spent with custodial parent** ("My dad works a lot so we don't get to see him much")
- 7) **Feels different from friends** ("I'm one of the few people who of my friends that are divorced")
- 8) **None** ("I don't think there's any bad things really")
- 9) **Don't know**

6. What are some of the good things about your mom and dad not living together anymore?

- 1) **No more parent conflict** ("Mom and dad don't fight with each other anymore")
- 2) **Improved relations with one or both parents** ("I'm much closer to mom now")
- 3) **Relief from non custodial parent's trait, behavior, or habit** ("We don't have to put up with dad's temper anymore")
- 4) **Parent happiness** ("Well, my dad is happy right now with someone else")
- 5) **Advantages of having two homes/families** ("We do more now because my mom's boyfriend has two vehicles")
- 6) **Child likes new family situation** ("That I have my stepdad")
- 7) **None** ("There are no good things")
- 8) **Don't know**

7. What is your mom like? How would you describe your mom?

- 1) **Positive personality characteristics** ("She's a pretty nice person")
- 2) **Negative personality characteristics** ("I could find her very mean and scary sometimes")
- 3) **Positive behaviors with child** ("She takes me places")
- 4) **Negative behaviors with child** ("A little bit strict sometimes")
- 5) **Mother has changed** (positively or negatively) ("She changed a lot")
- 6) **Neutral characteristics or behaviors** (e.g., tastes/preferences, physical characteristics, occupation, skills, etc.) ("She has blue eyes")

8. What is your dad like? How would you describe your dad?

- 1) **Positive personality characteristics** ("He's nice")
- 2) **Negative personality characteristics** ("He really gets frustrated quickly")
- 3) **Positive behaviors with child** ("He takes good care of us")
- 4) **Negative behaviors with child** ("He doesn't let me do anything")
- 5) **Father has changed** (positively or negatively)
- 6) **Neutral characteristics or behaviors** (e.g., tastes/preferences, physical characteristics, occupation, skills, etc.) ("He likes to work on computers")

9. a) Have you told many friends that your mom and dad don't live together?

- 1) **YES**
- 2) **NO**
- 3) **SOME**

b) If YES or SOME, why?

- 1) **Friends asked about parents** ("I told my friends because they kept asking me over and over again about my parents")
- 2) **Sharing of common experiences** ("Some of my friends' parents are divorced so I told them that my parents were divorced too")
- 3) **Social/emotional support** ("If I didn't tell them I would feel sad")

- 4) **Inevitably of discovery** ("Because it's kind of obvious")
- 5) **Social activities** ("Sometimes they want to invite me to their birthday party and I can't go because I have to either stay with my mom or I have to go with my father")
- 6) **Don't know**

c) If NO, why?

- 1) **Doesn't talk about it much or wants to put it behind him/her** ("I don't talk about it very much")
- 2) **Friends just found out** ("My friend came over to play and my dad was moving out")
- 3) **Don't know**

10. Do you think it matters to your friends that your mom and dad no longer live together?

- a)
 - 1) **YES**
 - 2) **NO**
 - 3) **SOME**

b) If YES or SOME, why?

- 1) **Caring/understanding nature of friendship** ("Because they care about me and what happens to me")
- 2) **Influences activities with friends**
- 3) **Don't know**

c) If NO, why?

- 1) **Friends don't care or friends are selfish** ("They have no feelings for other people sometimes")
- 2) **Commonality of divorce** ("Because there is some people in our class that are, parents are divorced")
- 3) **None of their concern** ("They don't have to be concerned for my parents")
- 4) **Divorce occurred long ago**
- 5) **Don't know**

11. Are there any ways in which you think you are different from your friends?

- a)
 - 1) **YES**
 - 2) **NO**
 - 3) **SOME**

b) If YES, how?

- 1) **Divorce-related** ("My parents' separation was not a nice one and for my friends hers was clean and easy")

- 2) **Personality characteristics** ("I think I am more crazy")
- 3) **Tastes/preferences** ("They like for sports and I usually go for music")
- 4) **Physical appearance** ("Because they are tall and I'm short")
- 5) **Abilities** ("I'm a little more stronger than most of them")
- 6) **Don't know**

12. What do you do when you visit/see your (non custodial parent)?

- 1) **No contact with non custodial parent**
- 2) **Activities done without parent** (i.e., with siblings, other relatives, friends, alone) ("I play outside with Carrie")
- 3) **Activities done with parent alone** (i.e., one-on-one) ("We wrestle with each other")
- 4) **Activities done with parent and sibling(s)** ("We ride bikes together")
- 5) **Time spent with parent and relatives** ("We go to my aunt's house")
- 6) **Time spent with parent and stepfamily** (e.g., parent's boyfriend/girlfriend) ("He's married too and so we all do stuff together")
- 7) **Don't know**

13. Think about the way things were between you and your (non custodial parent) before the separation, and the way things are now. What are some of the differences?

- 1) **Circumstances associated with infrequent contact with non custodial parent** ("Now I hardly get to see my dad")
- 2) **Positive changes in parent-child relationship** ("We're more open with each other")
- 3) **Negative changes in parent-child relationship** ("I feel less close to dad now")
- 4) **Living arrangements** ("Dad lives in a different house now")
- 5) **Changes related to new family dynamics** ("It's a little different around my dad because my dad's fiancée is always there")
- 6) **Changes not related to the divorce** (e.g., changes due to developmental differences) ("My dad doesn't treat me like a baby anymore")
- 7) **Child does not recall/Doesn't know** ("I can't really remember that much about my relationship with my parents before the divorce")
- 8) **No differences**

14. a) Do you and (sibling) talk about the divorce?

- 1) **YES**
- 2) **NO**

b) If NO, Why?

- 1) **Child or sibling does not want to talk about it** ("Me and my sister we don't talk about it, it really bothers her")

- 2) **Child cannot recall divorce** ("I don't really remember a lot")
- 3) **Don't think about it** ("We just don't think about it")
- 4) **Don't know**

c) If YES, What do you talk about?

- 1) **Thoughts and feelings regarding changes in family dynamics or structure** ("We talk about how happy we are that my dad is gone")
- 2) **General feelings and thoughts** ("We talk about how sad we feel about the divorce")
- 3) **Causes of divorce** ("We talk about why my mom and dad got divorced")
- 4) **Hopes of parental reunification** ("We used to like wish and pray that our parents would get back together")
- 5) **Don't know**

15. a) Do you think there are any differences in how things are now with (sibling) compared to before the separation/divorce?

- 1) **YES**
- 2) **NO**

b) If YES, what are the differences?

- 1) **Personality changes** ("She is more rude")
- 2) **Changes in the frequency of time spent together, behaviors, rituals** ("She does less things with me than before")
- 3) **Differences in terms of closeness of relationship** ("We are less close now")
- 4) **Increased fighting** ("I think we fight more")
- 5) **Development-related changes** ("Before we used to get along because we were young")
- 6) **Other non divorced related changes** ("We go on a different bus")
- 7) **Don't know**

16. a) Do you feel closer, less close, or about the same to sibling since the divorce?

- 1) **Closer**
- 2) **Less close**
- 3) **About the same**

b) If closer, why?

- 1) **Spend more time together** ("We do more stuff together")
- 2) **Siblings support each other**
- 3) **One or both siblings are protective of each other** ("He's more really protective of me")

4) **Maturation/development** ("Closer because he didn't really understand anything when he was little")

5) **Siblings are going through the same situation** ("I know he feels similar that I feel")

c) If less close, why?

1) **Developmental differences** ("She's not at the same stage as I am, I have my older friends and all that")

2) **Personality changes**

3) **Siblings spend less time together** ("Less, when I was a little kid she used to play with me so much")

4) **Don't know**

Table 11

Percentage of each response given in the interview

Item	Response category	Percentage
1.	Incompatibility	46%
	Marriage dissolution	8%
	Physical separation	33%
	Psychological distance	8%
	Loss of love	33%
	Child-oriented	13%
	Legal	8%
	Don't know	4%
2.	Incompatibility	58%
	Marriage dissolution	13%
	Loss of love	8%
	Affair	8%
	Parental trait	33%
	Child blames self	4%
	Child blames other person	0%
	Don't know	4%
3.	Incompatibility	17%
	Parent remarriage	38%
	Parent report	8%
	Finality of divorce	13%
	Emotional reasons	29%
	Parents have not contact	4%
	Family happy now	13%
	Parents tried living together again	4%
	Don't know	4%
4.	Yes	46%
	No	54%
	Don't know	0%
	If yes,	
	Mom	0%
	Dad	45%
	Both	36%
	Child	9%
	Other person	18%

5.	Circumstances	42%
	Less contact with sibling	8%
	Less money	13%
	Problems with new family	4%
	Loss of togetherness	17%
	Less time with custodial parent	4%
	Different from friends	4%
	None	13%
	Don't know	4%
6.	No conflict	50%
	Improved relations	8%
	Relief from parent	17%
	Parent happiness	13%
	Advantages	4%
	Child likes new family	8%
	None	21%
	Don't know	8%
7.	Positive personality	79%
	Negative personality	21%
	Positive behavior	46%
	Negative behavior	25%
	Mother changed	8%
	Neutral	38%
8.	Positive personality	38%
	Negative personality	42%
	Positive behavior	38%
	Negative behavior	29%
	Father changed	0%
	Neutral	42%
9.	Yes	67%
	No	21%
	Some	13%
	If yes or some.	
	Friends asked	21%
	Sharing	37%
	Social/emotional support	26%
	Inevitability	21%
	Social activities	5%
	Don't know	5%
10.	Yes	17%

	No	54%
	Some	17%
11.	Yes	46%
	No	46%
	If yes,	
	Divorce	18%
	Personality	27%
	Tastes/preferences	18%
	Physical appearance	27%
	Abilities	36%
	Don't know	0%
12.	No contact	17%
	Without parent	25%
	With parent alone	8%
	With parent and sibs	50%
	Parent and relatives	13%
	Parent and stepfamily	8%
	Don't know	0%
13.	Circumstances	17%
	Positive changes	13%
	Negative changes	13%
	Living arrangements	0%
	Changes new family	8%
	Not related to divorce	13%
	Doesn't recall	17%
	No differences	21%
14.	Yes	17%
	No	58%
	Used to	25%
15.	Yes	54%
	No	46%
	If yes,	
	Personality	15%
	Changes in frequency	54%
	Difference in closeness	15%
	Increased fighting	46%
	Development	38%
	Other non-divorce	0%

	Don't know	0%
16.	Closer	33%
	Less	21%
	Same	42%
