

**A GROUP INTERVENTION PROGRAMME
FOR ADOLESCENTS OF DIVORCE**

By

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in the subject

PSYCHOLOGY OF EDUCATION

At the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR E WIECHERS

NOVEMBER 2000

DECLARATION

"I declare that **A GROUP INTERVENTION PROGRAMME FOR ADOLESCENTS OF DIVORCE** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references."



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SUMMARY

✧ Divorce has become so prevalent in our present day society, that it is regarded as one of the most stressful and complex mental health crises facing children today. As parents are often under tremendous stress during the time of divorce, they may be incapable of providing the support and guidance children need.

The purpose of this study is to present a group counselling intervention programme to assist children of divorce and to create a supportive group atmosphere in which children can share divorce-related feelings, clarify common misconceptions and reduce feelings of isolation. Findings of this study indicate that the acquisition of problem-solving communication and anger control skills help to reduce feelings of depression and anxiety, improve the self-concept and ultimately promote post-divorce adjustment.

TITLE OF THE THESIS:

**A GROUP INTERVENTION PROGRAMME FOR ADOLESCENTS
OF DIVORCE**

KEY TERMS:

Divorce; separation; adolescent development; parent-child relationships; group counselling; intervention programme; impact of divorce; divorce-related feelings; depression; anxiety; self-concept; adolescent; peer relationships.

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A GROUP INTERVENTION PROGRAMME FOR

ADOLESCENTS OF DIVORCE

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Divorce has become so prevalent in our present day society, that it is regarded as one of the most stressful and complex mental health crises facing children today. Divorce generates a tremendous amount of stress in families and the effects are so multifaceted and so serious, that children of divorce are regarded as a population at risk (Wallerstein & Kelly 1980).

It has been postulated that parental conflict and divorce are some of the causes of adverse emotional effects on the children involved. A consequence of divorce on children has been evidenced in that it negatively affects their school performance and social-emotional wellbeing (Kalter 1984:590). More specifically, increases in depression, anxiety, anger, phobias, guilt and decreased self-esteem have been noted in both the short and longer terms (Larson & Lampman-Petratis 1989:291). It is unrealistic to assume that a child can perform well academically when the child is upset by such serious unresolved personal problems as those involved in divorce. Gecas and Seff (1990:701), report that studies indicate there was more tardiness, truancies and discipline problems resulting in suspension and expulsion among students from single parent families than among those who came from intact family environments. The dissolution of the natural family has a profound effect on the child and the sad fact is that most children are expected to face these troubling times alone, having to rely on their

own resources to work through the special problems they face (Kaslow & Schwartz 1987:392).

When parents divorce, children often experience a double loss: they experience the loss of the parent who leaves, and in a sense they experience the loss of the remaining parent, both of whom may be emotionally unavailable to their children at the time of divorce owing to their own turmoil (Hett & Rose 1991: 38).

As parents are often under tremendous stress during the time of divorce, they may be incapable of providing the support and guidance children need. Divorce increases the probability that both children and parents will experience a variety of stressful life changes. The number of *change* events, as well as the number of negative events, after a divorce have been shown to be positively correlated with psychological problems in children (Fogas et al 1992:590). Children of divorce have a greater probability of encountering multiple stressful life changes, such as economic decline, relocation, changes in childcare arrangements and decreased social support networks (Harris 1992:80). In addition to environmental factors, certain individual factors influence children's adjustment, including their coping styles and their ability to make sense of the divorce and view their own role in it realistically (Sandler et al 1994:1746). In order to resolve fears of being abandoned and self-blame, children also need to regain the belief that they have some control over their world. The school may become a critical source of support, nurturance and stability (Goldman & King 1985:283). By providing this type of service in the school, it normalizes the experience for the child and allows for the development of an ongoing support system.

Group counselling is perceived as the most practical, efficient and effective treatment mode for children of divorce (Cantrell 1986:166). Group counselling helps reduce the feelings of isolation and shame that so many of the children experience and can provide valuable peer support. The Group provides an opportunity for much-needed and desired peer validation as well as peer modelling of appropriate behaviour and alternative ways of thinking and feeling.

This system may assist children in coping with the emotional consequences of their parents' divorce.

This study will focus on implementing a group intervention programme for adolescents of divorced parents in order to alleviate some of the problems that result from parental divorce and teach coping skills to ensure that psycho-social development is not arrested as a result of parental divorce.

1.2 ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM

1.2.1 Awareness of the Problem

The researcher's motivation to undertake this study was prompted by her continuous contact, as a standard tutor and Guidance counsellor, with children who were constantly being referred due to behavioural misconduct, low academic achievement, truancy, drug-related disorders and general discipline problems. On investigating the children's backgrounds, she found that a high percentage of these pupils came from divorced home environments. In addition, professional interaction with these children of divorced parents highlighted the need for stronger emotional and social intervention.

Further, a review of current research indicated that the number of children from broken families being seen for psychological or behavioural problems is growing (Felner et al 1975:308). When parents divorce, the children lose something vital to their development, namely the family structure. The changes and disruption due to divorce lead to changes in the concept that the child has of himself, his parents and his family. Wiehe (1984:17) found that children of divorce showed lower self-esteem, more negative attitudes towards their parents and an external locus of control orientation when compared with similar children from intact families.

Divorce is not an isolated event – it has important ramifications that impact on the development of the individuals involved well after the divorce has taken place. Adolescence is a period of particular vulnerability in childhood development, as it is during this developmental phase that children experience dramatic changes in cognitive levels of functioning, physical maturation, social and emotional awakening and personal identity formation. Studies show that parental divorce during this critical phase is associated with serious difficulties in children's scholastic functioning, emotional adjustment, social relations and rapport with their parents (Watt et al 1986: 285).

This study is essentially concerned with the development of a group intervention programme for adolescent children of divorce. This intervention programme will offer support to adolescents at this critical phase, teach them problem solving skills and challenge the irrational beliefs that they may have about divorce.

1.2.2 Investigation of the Problem

Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) conducted a longitudinal study of children's developmental responses to divorce – they concluded that divorce is stressful for most children and that it serves as a potential developmental interference. The developmental stage of the child at the time of divorce was related to the quantity and quality of the child's reactions. These reactions included feelings of shame, anger, fears of being abandoned, a shaken identity, loneliness and loyalty conflicts. Reactions were also observed at school in the forms of a decline in achievement, acting-out behaviour and strained relations with peers and teachers. Several alternate studies highlight a picture of significantly poorer adjustment for children of divorce with an emphasis on their high-risk status (Kurdek & Berg 1983:53).

Children of divorce often feel deprived of important sources of emotional support when their parents divorce. They are faced with unique problems and concerns, including changes in life-style and the loss of part of their previous psychological

support systems (Cantor 1977:185). The collapse of the family structure is especially difficult for adolescents. Developmentally, adolescence is a time of remarkable change. The biological move into puberty ushers in a host of dramatic physiological changes. Youngsters become acutely aware of their bodies and of their sexuality, which contributes to a quality of being self-absorbed. Emotionally, adolescents struggle to adapt to these biological and external social changes while at the same time trying to carve out their own niche apart from their parents. It is most important during this state of flux on all developmental fronts, that adolescents receive emotional support, love and firm guidance from their parents.

When parents divorce, the adults frequently have less time and energy as well as fewer emotional resources for parenting. According to Kalter (1989:557), at the time of divorce, adolescents face the formidable task of adjusting to two sets of significant changes in their lives, namely those that normally arise in this period of development; and those accompanying the divorce process.

Adolescents may find alarming new ways of expressing their feelings of distress and internal conflicts. They may use illicit drugs, abuse alcohol, precociously or promiscuously engage in sexual activities, physically hurt others or themselves or even run away from home. According to Kalter (1989:557), these behavioural expressions of internal conflict and distress are virtually absent at every other stage of childhood development. If these issues are not addressed, the adolescent may be placed in a position of serious risk that has far reaching consequences.

Group intervention programmes have proved to be very effective in assisting children in coping with divorce-related stressors. Most of the group programmes however, have targeted the younger age group, especially the early and later elementary school children. These programmes have focused on using peer-

emotional support, communication skills training and the provision of information about divorce to enhance the self-concept and adaptive skills in children from divorced families (Stolberg & Garrison 1985:113).

Gwynn and Brantley (1987:162) used a similar approach focusing on the relief of depression and anxiety. Groups for children affected by divorce have been conducted with a variety of approaches, with activities ranging from health information to exploring emotions and relationships.

✓ Very few of these intervention programmes however, have targeted the adolescent developmental phase. A group intervention programme can be very effective for adolescents, as they often find it easier to discuss their problems in the group context than in individual counselling. Hammond (1981a:392) describes the group as a place where students share feelings, common experiences, problems and possible solutions, learn communication skills, receive and experience empathy and enjoy the satisfaction of helping others.

As adolescence is a time of egocentricity, the group situation may help adolescents to benefit from sharing their feelings and experiences with others in similar situations. (It may also help to normalize their feelings of instability pertaining to the divorce.)

1.2.3 Statement of the Problem

It would appear that children whose parents are divorced are at risk for a variety of psychosocial problems. Most divorces involve painful transitions and numerous challenges for children. Adolescents are an especially at risk group, ✓ as they struggle to adapt to the complexities involved in their own developmental changes as well as being confronted with the possible loss of support and parental guidance needed to negotiate this crucial stage of childhood development successfully.

This underlines the need for supportive interventions to help adolescents work through the complex impact of their parents' divorce (Pedro-Carroll & Cowen 1985: 20). If educators have the responsibility to teach children how to realise their potential and how to cope with developmental crises as they occur, then they cannot ignore the sizeable crisis in a child's life caused by the divorce of his parents.

The problem investigated by this research study reads as follows:

Will a group intervention programme assist adolescents in identifying their feelings about the divorce and help them to come to terms with the divorce?

The research problem may be evaluated as an attempt to investigate the impact of parental divorce on adolescents and to see how a group intervention programme can assist in alleviating the negative effects of divorce on adolescents. Various subsidiary problems will also be investigated and these will be formulated in the next section.

1.2.4 Related Problems

A further investigation of the problem statement prompts the following questions:

- What are the normal developmental stages experienced by adolescents?
- How does divorce impact on adolescent development?
- What are the implications of divorce on adolescent psycho-social adjustment?
- What role does the school play in adolescent adjustment to parental divorce?
- What are the mediating factors towards positive adolescent adjustment to parental divorce?
- What coping skills need to be developed in order to deal with feelings associated with the divorce?
- What irrational beliefs need to be identified and addressed in order to facilitate greater understanding and acceptance of parental divorce?

- How does divorce affect adolescents' inter-personal relationships?
- How do group intervention programmes benefit adolescents of parental divorce?
- What criteria should group intervention programmes for adolescents of parental divorce satisfy?

With the specific research problem and its subsidiary problems in mind, the aim of the research may now be taken into consideration.

1.3 GENERAL AIM

The aim of this research is twofold. First, to develop an intervention programme to be used in a group counselling process for adolescents from divorced families, and second, to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme which has been developed.

1.3.1 Specific Aim

This study aims to apply a group intervention programme to assist the adolescent in dealing with the psychological, emotional and cognitive effects pertaining to parental divorce.

1.3.2 Related Aims

Certain related aims arise from the specific aim and they are as follows:

- To assist adolescents in identifying and understanding their feelings pertaining to parental divorce;
- To assist adolescents in developing coping skills to deal with their feelings associated with parental divorce;
- To assist adolescents in identifying irrational beliefs pertaining to parental divorce;

- To facilitate greater interaction and support among their peers;
- To identify support structures to assist adolescents in dealing with parental divorce;
- To facilitate an understanding of group counselling as a process towards positive adjustment to parental divorce;

1.4 RESEARCH GOALS

The goals of this research study are:

- to do a literature study on the effects of divorce on adolescents;
- to evaluate the research that has been compiled on group intervention programmes for adolescents of parental divorce;
- to develop an intervention programme for adolescents of parental divorce and present it in a group counselling environment;
- to establish by means of empirical research (pre- and post-testing) the effects of the group intervention programme on adolescents of parental divorce;
- to ascertain through group discussions and informal interviews whether the intervention programme was beneficial and to highlight its possible limitations.

The main goal of the research study will be to determine whether adolescents of parental divorce have acquired the coping skills necessary to negotiate this crucial developmental stage and the effectiveness of the programme in facilitating positive post-divorce adjustment in adolescents.

With these specific goals in mind, demarcation of the research study can now take place.

1.5 DEMARCATION OF RESEARCH

The demarcation of the research study will be discussed in this section, however a comprehensive analysis of each chapter in the research programme will be formulated in section 1.8.

As the development of an intervention programme for adolescents of parental divorce is the focal point of this research study, investigation into previous research on divorce intervention programmes will be considered. An investigation of the developmental stages and the possible crises adolescents have to face in order successfully to negotiate each stage will also be considered. Emphasis will be placed on the effects of divorce on adolescents' inter-personal relationships.

The school is considered a natural setting for a divorce intervention programme for adolescents. The role of the school in assisting adolescents to adjust to parental divorce will be explored. The ultimate aim of establishing a school-based intervention programme for adolescents of parental divorce is to determine how effectively it can be included in the secondary school curriculum thereby providing secondary school children with the support they need at their time of crisis.

The study will further be demarcated as follows:

- An analysis of the general effects of divorce on adolescents will be provided.
- Developmental theories relating to adolescent development will be considered.
- A description of the impact of divorce on adolescents cognitive, emotional and moral development will be provided.

For the purpose of this study, the intervention programme was presented to eight adolescents whose parents were divorced. The group consisted of four boys and

four girls varying in ages from thirteen to seventeen years old. An initial interview took place to screen members for the group and to gather essential background information. The programme ran for a period of ten weeks with one-and-a-half hour sessions once a week over the ten-week duration. The group members were selected from various English medium High Schools in the area and all came from white, middle-class socio-economic backgrounds. Selection was based on availability, willingness to attend and suitability for the programme.

The formulation of the research method is explored in the next section.

1.6 RESEARCH METHOD

Adolescents will be evaluated in the context of a group environment. An evaluation of their family relationships, emotional status, self-concept, anxiety levels and attitude towards divorce will be included in the results. A qualitative research method, including pre-and post-test data, will be used in this study. Hypotheses will be formulated and then analysed from the data collected through sustained contact with members within the group setting. As the sample size is so small, generalizations to the population will not be formed.

Once all the literature on divorce intervention programmes has been reviewed, a programme for group intervention for adolescents of parental divorce will be developed. The programme will run for a period of ten weeks.

Before the programme is implemented, the participants will be required to undergo a complete battery of tests. These include:

- The Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)
- The Adolescent Self-Concept Scale (ASCS)
- The Beck Depression Inventory (BDI)
- The IPAT Anxiety Scale (IPAT)
- The Family Functioning in Adolescence Questionnaire (FFAQ)

At the end of the ten-week sessions, the full battery of tests (the same as above) will once again be implemented. The data from the test battery will be analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Once all the data have been collected a pre- and post-test analysis will be made including a qualitative description of the participants' written or spoken words and observable behaviour. All perspectives will be taken into consideration and issues raised within the context of the group will be dealt with in a sensitive and meaningful manner.

Once all the information has been analysed and interpreted, certain deductions and possible recommendations will be made.

1.7 CLARIFICATION OF THE CONCEPTS

The following key concepts will be used throughout this study:

- **Divorce:** This term refers to the legal dissolution of a marriage. For the purpose of this research, divorce is regarded as a process, which spans the duration from the time of separation through to the period after the legal divorce. (Wallerstein 1994).
- **Beliefs:** Beliefs refer to the child's thoughts, and contribute to his conceptualization of a particular situation. (Kurdek & Berg 1987 and Smilansky 1992)
- **Self-esteem:** Self-esteem refers to the evaluation an individual makes with regard to himself; it is a personal judgement of his worthiness. (Coopersmith 1967: 4)
- **Self-concept:** The self-concept is viewed as the way an individual perceives and evaluates himself and his behaviour; it is strongly influenced by the way others perceive him. (Rogers 1951)

- **Qualitative Methodology:** refers to the research that produces descriptive data: people's own written or spoken words and observable behaviour. It is also more than a set of data gathering techniques: it is a way of approaching the empirical world. (Patton 1990)
- **Custodial Parent:** is the parent who is allocated the full rights and responsibility for the care of the child.
- **Non-custodial Parent:** This parent has no rights over the child and the only legal responsibility over the child is usually one of maintenance.
- **Custody:** is the legal possession of and authority for a child bestowed upon the custodial parent.
- **Joint Custody:** is the shared legal possession of and authority for a child bestowed upon both parents who become joint custodial parents.
- **Access:** Access is the non-custodial parent's legal right to contact and visitation with his children.
- **Bi-nuclear Family:** Two nuclear family units, which are a result of divorce and are connected by a network of kinship bonds and relationships.
- **Ex-spouse:** refers to a person who through divorce has become a former husband or wife.
- **Adolescence:** A developmental stage from 13 to 18 years of age. For the purpose of this study, the term "adolescence" will therefore refer to early and middle adolescence, a period where great physical and biological changes take place within the individual.
- **Homogenous Group:** A group that is classified according to its similarity in one or more specific characteristics.
- **Group therapy:** Therapy that is conducted within the context of the group and not on an individual basis.
- **Cohesiveness:** is the total sense of inclusion in a group felt by its members.

1.8 RESEARCH PROGRAMME

The main aim of the preceding chapter has been to introduce the topic under discussion. There has been an orientation of the reader to the field of study and

the various areas that this study aims to examine have been delineated. Further planning of the research study will now follow.

Chapter Two will review the literature concerning the relevant research and theoretical background of adolescence, including physical, psychological, cognitive, moral and emotional developmental changes (with a particular focus on self-concept and self-esteem), and inter-personal relationships. Important and relevant developmental theories will also be discussed here.

Chapter Three will be an expansion of Chapter Two, taking into consideration the impact of divorce on adolescents' cognitive, emotional, psychological and moral development, with particular reference to adolescent depression and self-esteem. The role of the school and of group counselling will also be explored.

Chapter Four will focus on group counselling as a therapeutic process. The rationale behind using the school for the purpose of intervention will be explored, reinforced by studies that have already been conducted in this area. Group techniques specific to this research study will be discussed.

Chapter Five consists of the empirical details of this research study. The members of the research group, evaluation media and research methodology will be discussed.

Specific details on the research done in the group will be discussed in **Chapter Six**. A qualitative and quantitative analysis of the results will then be formulated.

Chapter Seven will provide some conclusions with a summary, research findings and recommendations.

1.9 SUMMARY

Divorce seems to be increasing with more families affected by it each year. As family life at the beginning of the 21st century becomes more complex through disruptions such as divorce, separation and remarriage, there is pressure on mental health services to respond constructively to such difficulties. The reality of these difficulties poses an important challenge to design an intervention programme aimed at forestalling negative psychological outcomes and promoting positive adaptation in children of divorce.

The next chapter will take an in-depth look at the literature and relevant research concerning the development of adolescents.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Adolescence today is broadly perceived as a more difficult and dangerous period than it has been previously. Those holding this view focus on increases in teenage pregnancy, school dropout, alcohol abuse, juvenile violence and arrests, depression and suicide as evidence of deteriorating conditions. Although uncommon in childhood, these problems increase in early adolescence, and they can lead to a greater likelihood of negative developmental trajectories in late adolescence and young adulthood (Uhlenberg & Eggebeen 1986:25). Adolescence is receiving increasing recognition as a crucial, yet under-studied, developmental period, during which it may be possible to prevent the establishment of damaging patterns and assist in promoting a healthy transition into adulthood (Barber & Crockett 1993).

Adolescence is a developmental period characterized by changes in all social contexts as well as dramatic individual changes in physiology and cognitive capabilities (Petersen 1987:583). As this study focuses on the effects of divorce on adolescents, it is necessary to consider the developmental stages of the adolescent and the physiological, emotional and cognitive abilities of this crucial developmental phase and the impact that these have on the adolescent's ability to cope with parental divorce. A brief overview of the developmental theories will be considered in order to support the belief that developmental issues are crucial when designing a treatment model for adolescents in crisis due to divorce (Coffman et al 1988:247). Adolescents' interpersonal relationships and how they affect their ability to cope with issues pertaining to divorce will also form part of the discussion in this chapter.

2.2 THE ADOLESCENT

The word **adolescence** comes from the Latin verb *adolescere*, which means “to grow” or “to grow to maturity” (Golinko 1984:749). It is defined as a period of growth between childhood and adulthood (deBrun 1981:913) and is usually considered to occur over the period of thirteen to eighteen years of age. The transition from one stage to the other is often gradual and uncertain, and the time span is not necessarily the same for every person, but most adolescents do eventually become mature, well-balanced adults. Taking this view into account, adolescence may be likened to a bridge between childhood and adulthood over which individuals must pass before they are able to take their place as mature, responsible and creative adults.

2.3 DEVELOPMENTAL CHANGES IN ADOLESCENCE

2.3.1 The Physical Changes

The physical changes that take place in adolescence are fundamental during this crucial stage of development. This stage is different for males and females and impacts on their ability fully to integrate themselves as members of society, thus determining whether their journey into mature adulthood will be successfully negotiated. The physical changes that take place during puberty (as the initial stage of adolescence) include the growth spurt, the enlargement and maturation of the primary sex organs, the development of the secondary sex characteristics, and for females, the beginning of menstruation – known as ‘menarche’ (Stager 1988:118).

2.3.1.1 The Adolescent Growth Spurt

An early sign of maturation is the adolescent growth spurt – a sharp increase in height and weight that generally begins in girls between the ages of 9 and 14 and in boys between the ages of 10 and 16. Growth in height is virtually complete by

age 18 (Behrman & Vaughan 1984 :468). Boys and girls grow at different rates during adolescence. The growth spurt in males is more intense and its later appearance allows an extra period of growth. In both sexes, the adolescent growth spurt affects practically all skeletal and muscular dimensions. During this growth spurt, parts of the body may be out of proportion for a while, resulting in the familiar teenage awkwardness or “gawkiness” that accompanies unbalanced, accelerated growth. Balance is eventually restored, but meanwhile, just when the ability to charm members of the opposite sex seems of the utmost importance, the typical adolescent presents as clumsy and awkward (Behrman & Vaughan 1984:469).

2.3.1.2 *Primary Sex Characteristics*

The primary sex characteristics are the organs that are necessary for reproduction. In the female, the body structures involved are the ovaries, uterus and vagina; in the male, they are the testes, prostate gland, and seminal vesicles. During puberty, these organs enlarge and mature. The principle sign of sexual maturity in girls is menstruation. In boys, the first sign of puberty is the growth of the testes and scrotum and the principal sign of sexual maturity is the presence of sperm in the urine. Like menstruation, the timing of the appearance of sperm is variable. A pubescent boy often wakes to find a wet spot or a hardened, dried spot in the bed, letting him know that while he was asleep he had a nocturnal emission, an involuntary ejaculation of semen that is commonly referred to as a “wet dream”. Most adolescents who are neither having sexual intercourse nor masturbating regularly have these perfectly normal emissions, which may or may not occur in connection with an erotic dream (Rice, 1989:161).

2.3.1.3 *The Secondary Sex Characteristics*

Secondary sex characteristics are physiological signs of sexual maturity that do not directly involve the reproductive organs. They include the breasts of the females and the broad shoulders of males. Others involve changes in the voice,

texture of skin, and pubic, facial, axillary (armpit) and body hair typical of an adult male or female (Akinboye 1984:485).

The first sign of puberty in girls is usually the budding of the breasts. The nipples enlarge and protrude; the areolae (the pigmented areas surrounding the nipples) enlarge; and the breasts assume first a conical and then rounded shape. The breasts are usually fully developed before menstruation begins.

Some male adolescents experience temporary breast enlargement - much to their distress - which is normal and may last from 12 to 18 months. The increased activity of the sebaceous glands gives rise to outbreaks of pimples and blackheads that are the bane of many teenagers' lives. Acne is more common in boys than girls and seems to be related to increased amounts of the male hormone, testosterone. The voices of both boys and girls deepen, partly in response to the growth of the larynx and partly, especially in boys, in response to the production of the male hormones (Akinboye 1984:486).

2.3.1.4 Menarche - The First Menstruation

According to Bullough (1981:365), Menarche is the first menstruation – or monthly shedding of tissue from the lining of the womb. Menarche occurs fairly late in the sequence of female development. Although in many cultures menarche is taken as a sign that a girl has become a woman, usually the early menstrual periods do not include ovulation, and many girls are unable to conceive until 12 to 18 months after menarche. Since ovulation and conception do sometimes occur in these early months, however, girls who have begun to menstruate should assume that if they have sexual intercourse they could become pregnant (Stager 1988:118).

2.3.1.5 Psychological Impact of Physical Changes

Adolescence is probably the most embarrassing part of the life span for both boys and girls. Teenagers are acutely self-conscious and sure that everyone is

watching them; meanwhile their bodies are constantly betraying them. It is not surprising that the dramatic physical changes of adolescence have many psychological ramifications. Especially keen for girls are psychological reactions to the onset of menstruation, to changes in physical appearance, and to early or late menstruation (Bullough 1981:366). Menstruation is a psychological as well as a physical event, as it symbolises the shift from girlhood to womanhood. Girls who have begun to menstruate are more conscious of their femaleness than girls of the same age who are not menstruating. They are more interested in boy-girl relations and in adorning their bodies and seem more mature in certain personality traits.

2.3.1.6 *Feelings Pertaining to Physical Changes*

Most young teenagers are more concerned about their looks than about any other aspect of themselves and many do not like what they see in the mirror (Siegel 1982:277). Boys want to be tall, broad shouldered and athletic, while girls want to be pretty, slim but shapely, with nice hair and skin (Tobin-Richards et al 1984:491). Anything that makes boys think that they look feminine or girls think that they look masculine makes them miserable. Teenagers of both sexes worry about their weight, their complexions and their facial features. Girls tend to be unhappier about their looks than boys of the same age – no doubt because of society's great emphasis on women's physical attributes. When adolescents are asked what they like least about their bodies, often boys say "nothing" while girls complain mostly about their legs and hips (Tobin-Richards et al 1984:501).

Adolescent girls are more prone to depression than boys are, mainly because of concern about their appearance. They feel "ugly"; consider themselves too fat, too short or too tall; or hate their hair or their complexions. Adults often dismiss adolescents' preoccupation with their looks, but in a society in which personality is often judged by appearance (Dion et al 1972:286) self-image can have long-lasting effects on young people's perceptions and resultant feelings about themselves. This view is supported by Clark-Lempers et al (1990:277) who

believe that adolescent depression can result from a disturbed self-image or from numerous environmental and situational factors. With the onset of puberty, most young people begin to make a thorough assessment of themselves, comparing not only their body parts but also their motor skills, intellectual abilities, and social skills with those of their peers and their ideals or heroes. Their perceptions of others' feelings, accompanied by self-conscious behaviour makes adolescents vulnerable to embarrassment (Street 1988:450).

In research done on children from divorced families, Bynum and Dum (1996:448), found that these children had significantly lower scores on self-esteem than children from intact families. It was noted that parental divorce negatively impacts on adolescents' self-esteem as it removes the independence-encouragement, acceptance and secure attachments to both parents required to successfully negotiate this crucial developmental phase (Bynum & Dum 1996:450).

2.3.2 Cognitive Development in Adolescence

2.3.2.1 General Overview

Jean Piaget (1972:1012) offers the dominant explanation for the nature of changes in how adolescents function in the cognitive arena. According to Piaget, it is during the adolescent phase of development, that the highest level of cognitive development takes place. He called this level, which is characterised by abstract thought processes, *formal operations*.

Attaining the formal operational stage provides the adolescent with the ability to manipulate new information. The adolescent is no longer limited to the earlier concrete operational stage and now has the ability to deal with abstractions, test hypotheses and see infinite possibilities. This stage enables adolescents to analyze political and philosophical doctrines and to construct their own theories

about society. They now begin to recognise that definite answers to life's questions do not always exist.

Abstract thinking also has emotional ramifications for the adolescent. The ability to love or hate is no longer related nor confined to people – they can now love abstract concepts like freedom or hate exploitation. The adolescent has developed a new mode of life. The “possible” and the “ideal” captivate both mind and feeling (Ginsburg & Oppenheimer 1979:201).

According to Piaget, both inner and outer changes in the lives of adolescents combine to bring about cognitive maturity. The brain has matured and the social environment is widening, providing more opportunities for experimentation. The interaction between cognitive maturity and the social environment is an essential part of the adolescence as a developmental phase. In this regard, even if neurological development has sufficiently advanced to reach the formal reasoning stage, it may never be attained if the adolescent is not encouraged both culturally and emotionally.

Piaget's view of cognitive maturity in adolescence has been criticised however, as not everyone is capable of abstract thought, even by late adolescence or adulthood. In addition it appears that his view does not make allowances for practical intelligence – the ability to handle “real-world” problems, or the wisdom that helps people cope with an often chaotic world (Papalia 1972:230). In contrast however, Wallerstein and Kelly (1980:14) support Piaget's view of cognitive maturity in adolescence, as they believe that the adolescent during the stage of parental divorce has an advantage over younger children in that they are better able to understand why the parents separated and are better able to resolve interpersonal conflicts.

2.3.2.2 Egocentrism

One of the most fundamental characteristics of cognitive development in adolescence involves the concept *egocentrism*. Egocentrism focuses on the behaviours and attitudes of the adolescents and include aspects such as: a) finding fault with authority figures; b) argumentativeness; c) self-consciousness; d) self-centredness; e) indecisiveness and f) apparent hypocrisy (Yudkin 1984:18-25). These aspects will now be discussed in more detail.

a) Finding Fault with Authority Figures

Adolescents tend to imagine an ideal world. When they realise that the people they once worshipped fall short of their ideal they become very critical. This criticism is an important stage in the adolescents' cognitive and social development and needs to be survived until they are able to acknowledge that nothing and nobody is perfect. When parents divorce, they may find themselves faced with intense criticism from their adolescent (Yudkin 1984:18).

b) Argumentativeness

Part of the formal operation stage is the adolescents' ability to see many nuances in an issue. They often practice this new ability by arguing with their peers and their elders. As the adolescent matures cognitively, he or she may begin to challenge longstanding family routines, customs, beliefs and values and may upset the once stable family system (Smetana 1988:326). When the family system is further disrupted by parental divorce, the inner turmoil and outer conflict that characterises the developmental stage of adolescence may result in a more lasting, bitter and demeaning view of parents. When arguing with the adolescent, focus should be on their behaviour and not their personality. Single parents do better to parent their adolescents through reasonable compromise rather than force, thus enabling them to stretch their reasoning ability, assisting

them in developing a sense of self-efficacy and thereby acknowledging and respecting their independence without becoming embroiled in a feud.

c) Self-Consciousness

The extreme self-consciousness of young adolescents has a great deal to do with the “imaginary audience” – a conceptualised observer who is as concerned with their thoughts and behaviour as they are themselves (Yudkin 1984:19). Adolescents assume that everyone else is thinking about the same thing they are thinking about – themselves. This kind of self-consciousness is especially agonizing in adolescence and any form of public criticism or ridicule can have an adverse effect on their self-esteem or their ability to successfully negotiate this developmental stage.

d) Self-Centredness

Elkind (1984), uses the term “personal fable” for the conviction that we are special, that our experience is unique, and that we are not subject to rules that govern the rest of the world. This is an important aspect of egocentrism that shows up strongly in early adolescence. This concept underlies much of the self-destructive and risk-taking behaviour of the adolescents who think they are magically protected from harm and that what happens to other people will not happen to them.

The challenge during this phase is for adolescents to maintain a sense of being special while realising that they are not exempt from the natural order of life.

e) Indecisiveness

Adolescence brings about an awareness of the many choices in life. They often have trouble making up their minds even about simple things and choices may be pondered on for hours even though they are not life changing (Yudkin 1984:22).

f) Apparent Hypocrisy

Young adolescents often do not recognise the difference between expressing an ideal and working towards it. Part of the growth experience for the adolescent is realising that values not only have to be thought about, they also need to be acted on in order to bring about change. This hypocrisy is often displayed when the adolescent, during parental divorce, will choose to stay with the parent who offers minimal disruption to his or her life and with whom maximum personal benefit can be attained (Yudkin 1984:23).

2.3.4 Moral Development in Adolescence

According to Kohlberg (1981), moral reasoning forms part of the adolescent's cognitive development. Adolescents continue to develop morally as they acquire the capacity to think abstractly and to understand universal moral principles. Kohlberg states that advanced cognitive development however, does not necessarily guarantee advanced moral development, but it must exist for moral development to take place. Kohlberg (1970:458), identified three major levels of moral development, each level with two types of moral orientation or judgment. The level and sub-types are listed below:

Level I: Premoral Level

Type 1: Punishment and obedience orientation – (Motivation: To avoid punishment by others)

Type 2: Naïve instrumental hedonism – (Motivation: To gain rewards from others)

Level II: Morality of Conventional Role Conformity- Conventional Morality

Type 3: Good-person morality of maintaining good relations with and approval of others – (Motivation: To avoid disapproval of others)

Type 4: Authority-maintaining morality – (Motivation: To maintain law and order because of concern for the community)

Level III: Morality of Self-Accepted Moral Principles- Postconventional Morality

Type 5: Morality of democratically accepted laws – (Motivation: To gain the respect of an individual or community)

Type 6: Morality of individual principles of conduct – (Motivation: To avoid self-condemnation for lapses).

In outlining his stages, however, Kohlberg was careful not to equate each type with a particular age group. His reasoning behind this, was that within any one age group, individuals are at different levels of development in their moral thinking: some are retarded, others advanced. Kohlberg and Gilligan (1971: 1051), indicate that the development of moral thought is a gradual process as the individual passes through a sequence of increasingly sophisticated moral stages.

Most adolescents engage in Kohlberg's conventional level of moral development. They have internalised the standards of others and they conform to social conventions, support the status quo and think in terms of doing the right thing to please others or to obey the law. Only a small number of people seem to attain Level III, postconventional morality. This level is normally attained in adolescence or adulthood, and focuses on the person's ability to look at two socially accepted standards and choose the one that is right for them. It should be remembered that a high level of cognitive development however, does not necessarily indicate a comparably high level of moral development. This is because factors besides cognition affect moral reasoning.

According to Kohlberg's theory, it is the reasoning underlying a person's response to a moral dilemma, not the answer itself, which indicates a person's stage of development (Kohlberg 1968:26). Thus, a certain level of cognitive development is necessary but not sufficient for a comparable level of moral development. Progress to postconventional moral thinking seems to depend on appreciating the relative nature of moral standards. Adolescents should be encouraged to explore higher levels of moral reasoning through discussion, interpretation and exposure to people at a level of moral thinking slightly higher than their own present level. Adolescents need to understand that every society evolves its own definition of right and wrong and that morality may be culture specific. In addition adolescents may find themselves faced with a moral dilemma when their parents divorce. This will be expanded on in the next chapter.

2.4 SELF-CONCEPT AND SELF-ESTEEM OF THE ADOLESCENT

The **self-concept** may be defined as conscious, cognitive perceptions and evaluations by individuals of themselves; it is their thoughts and opinions about themselves. It has been called the individual's "self-hypothesised identity" (Wayment & Zetlin 1989:339). It implies a developing awareness of who and what one is. It describes what individuals see when they look at themselves, in terms of their self-perceived physical characteristics, personality traits, roles and social statuses. The self-concept therefore has a strong evaluative component and may be described as the system of attitudes individuals have about themselves.

Self-concept theory and research indicate that attitudes towards the self influence behaviour and provide insight into individual perceptions, needs and goals. The self-concept therefore, plays a key role in the integration of personality, in motivating behaviour and in achieving mental health (Swartzberg 1982:57). Carl Rogers' (1951:489) theory of personality sees the self-concept as the

organisation of the perception of the self. It is the conscious, cognitive perception and evaluation of the self, including thoughts and opinions about the self that enable the person to recognise that he or she is a distinct, separate individual. Rogers saw behaviour as "the goal-directed attempt of the organism to satisfy its needs as experienced in the field as perceived" (Rogers 1951:491). Rogers postulated a basic need for positive regard from others, and a need for positive self-regard, which is synonymous with self-esteem and is learned through the introjection of positive regard from others.

Swartzberg (1982:65), states that a large number of writers have elaborated on the self-concept or similar self-referential terms as a major element in their theories of human behaviour and personality. However, an imprecision of terminology exists and there is confusion regarding definitions of self-referent constructs. A wide range of self-terms are employed (such as self-concept, self-image, self-esteem, self-worth), and these are sometimes used interchangeably and synonymously. The terms are so intertwined and overlapping in the literature that it has been suggested that the constructs be discussed as a group (Swartzberg 1982:66). However, differences between the terms **self-concept** and **self-esteem** emerge: the self-concept is viewed as the way an individual perceives himself and his behaviour and is strongly influenced by the way others perceive him. A child learns his self-concept from others – it is formed from early social interactions with significant others and is later influenced by the perceived feedback from others.

Self-esteem has been defined by Coopersmith (1967:4), as "the evaluation that the individual makes and customarily maintains with regard to himself; it expresses an attitude of approval or disapproval and indicates the extent to which the individual believes himself to be capable, significant, successful and worthy. In short, self-esteem is a personal judgment of worthiness that is expressed in the attitude the individual holds towards himself". Koenig (1988:115) reinforces Coopersmith's definition by stating that individuals whose

identities are weak or whose self-esteem has never sufficiently developed manifest a number of symptoms of emotional ill-health.

The self-concept seems to be the logical developmental antecedent of self-esteem. One must first form an opinion of oneself, assessing one's strengths and weaknesses (self-concept) before being able to determine the degree of satisfaction or esteem to be accorded to this self-concept (self-esteem) (Koenig 1988:116).

The importance of these constructs for this research derives from the relationship between self-esteem and adjustment. Self-concept can considerably affect behaviour because it summarises a child's own evaluation of his ability to realise his own potential and has a decisive influence on personal adjustment. Self-concept has consistently been shown to be a reliable measure of mental health, of the ability to cope with problems, to function under stress, to act efficiently and to form relationships with others (Smilansky 1992:52). Adolescents with low self-esteem are self-conscious and overly vulnerable to criticism, or rejection that testifies to their inadequacy, incompetence or worthlessness (Rosenthal & Simeonsson 1989:691). Swartzberg (1982:68), found that persons low in self-esteem were more destructive, more anxious and distressed and more prone to manifest psychosomatic symptoms than are persons with relatively higher self-esteem. These differences were thought to be due to differences of anticipation, reaction and willingness to trust and rely upon one's own judgment as a basis for action. The differences were further thought to be attributable to the self-consciousness and greater sense of self-exposure experienced by the person with low self-esteem. Low self-esteem contributes to excessive vulnerability, high anxiety, inner tension and lack of confidence, all of which interfere with the formation of interpersonal relationships.

It has been conventionally accepted that parents are the major sources of the young child's self-concept through their position as significant others emitting salient feedback. Most self-concept theorists consider peers as an important

salient feedback. Most self-concept theorists consider peers as an important influence only in later childhood, but some studies have pointed towards the potency of peers and siblings as influences in the formation of the self-concept of young children (Pombeni et al 1990:357). The adolescent operates in two worlds: that of adults (parents and teachers) and that of peers. Both worlds play a part in his development, but the importance of how his friends see him increasingly colours his view of himself. During this developmental stage, the adult influence on attitude development diminishes and what the peers think of the adolescent assumes increasing significance. Concepts of self are developed or reaffirmed in the adolescent's efforts to gain a place in the peer group and in the attempt to get recognition from peers. The adolescent's self-concept may be regarded as the result of conscious and/or unconscious comparisons with one or more reference group. During adolescence, the peer group can be considered as the predominant reference group, having considerable impact on the individual's self-concept. Adolescents readily turn to their peer culture and derive from it their support and identity.

2.5 EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE ADOLESCENT

Probably the most important task of adolescence, is the search for identity, the quest to find out "who I really am" (Brooks-Gunn 1988). During this phase, adolescents need to develop their own values, to find out what they can do and to be proud of their accomplishments. They want to develop close relationships with both boys and girls their own age, and to be liked, loved and respected for who they are and what they stand for. Adolescents pursue the search for self-identity in many ways. They experience doubts, anxieties and questions about the future. As Erik Erikson (1950) emphasises, the effort to make sense of the self and the world is not "a kind of maturational malaise". It is instead, a healthy, vital process that contributes to the ego strength of the adult. The chief task of this stage of life, Erikson believes (1968), is to resolve the conflict of "identity versus role confusion" – to become a unique adult with an important role in life. To form an identity, the ego organises a person's abilities, needs and desires and

helps to adapt them to the demands of society. The search for identity however, is a life long quest -it comes into focus during adolescence and persists throughout life, for some more insistently than for others.

The rapid physical growth and new genital maturity during this phase alert adolescents to their impending adulthood and they begin to wonder about their roles in society. Erikson sees the prime danger of this stage as "role confusion", which can express itself in a young person taking an excessively long time to reach adulthood. A certain amount of identity confusion is normal however, as it accounts for both the chaotic nature of their behaviour and their painful self-consciousness about their looks. Cliques and intolerance of differences are often defenses against identity confusion, feels Erikson (1968:201). Adolescents may also show confusion by regressing into childish behaviour to avoid resolving conflicts or by committing themselves impulsively to poorly thought-out courses of action.

According to Erikson's concept of this developmental stage, the fundamental virtue that arises from this identity crisis, is the virtue of fidelity, sustained loyalty, faith or a sense of belonging to a loved one, or to friends and companions. Self-identification emerges when young people choose values and people to be loyal to, rather than from having accepted them from the significant adults in their lives. This ability to make a personal choice represents an extensively developed sense of trust. The important aspect is no longer to trust others as one did in infancy, but to be trustworthy oneself. Adolescents now transfer their trust from their parents to other people who can help guide them through life. Love and intimacy is an important part of the avenue towards identity, says Erikson. By becoming intimate with another person and sharing thoughts and feelings, the adolescent offers up his or her own tentative identity, sees it reflected in the loved one and is better able to clarify the self.

2.6 PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN ADOLESCENCE

In order for adolescents to develop an individual identity, they need to separate from their parents. The effect that this separation has on the parent-child relationship will be explored as well as their relationship with the people whom they turn to for emotional support in making the transition to independence – their peers.

2.6.1 Relationship with Parents

Adolescents experience a constant tension between their need to break away from their parents and their dependency on the parents. They try to establish their own private identity while at the same time staying connected with parents and family. The adolescents' emotional turmoil is often matched by their parents' ambivalence. Parents find it hard to let go, as they feel torn between wanting their children to be independent and wanting to keep them dependent. This may be especially prevalent in a divorced home, as the adolescent may take on the more responsible role of the absent parent. As a result, the adolescent receives a "double message" from the parent – that which is said, and that, which is oppositely communicated by their actions.

Conflict is more likely to surface between adolescents and their mothers rather than their fathers (Steinberg 1981, 1987). This may be due to the fact that mothers have been more closely involved in their children's development and find it more difficult to give up their involvement in their children's lives. Mothers are normally sole custodians of the children after a divorce. The emotions attending this transitional phase in the adolescents' life however, do not necessarily lead to a break with both parental and societal values. Although adolescents report slightly more negative moods than their younger counterparts, they do not talk about wide swings in emotional states, which are often considered inevitable in adolescence (Larson & Lampman-Petrailis 1989:285). Research reports that

significant conflict mainly occurs in families that had problems before the children reached adolescence (Collins 1990).

Conflict between parents and adolescents normally revolve around mundane issues like schoolwork, curfews, friends and personal appearance. Such conflict may reflect the quest for independence or may be a continuation of parents' efforts to teach children to conform to social rules.

Conflict is a normal aspect of every relationship and since the transitions of adolescence involve the psychological tasks of separating from parents and family and forming a clear and consolidated sense of self, which ultimately challenge patterns set in childhood, it is not surprising that discord arises. This may be compounded in a divorce situation where added stress is placed on the home due to single-parent status and expectations being placed on the adolescent, both by himself and the parent, possibly to behave in a more responsible manner. Parents and children however, usually manage to resolve their disagreements satisfactorily and parents continue to exercise considerable influence on their adolescents' basic values and morals. When conflicts are severe and cannot be resolved easily, adolescents are at risk for serious problems. In such cases, intervention and counselling can often help families cope (Offer et al 1989:733).

Parents of adolescents have to walk a fine line between granting their children enough independence and protecting them from immature lapses in judgment. If separation or emotional independence from the family comes too early, it can spell trouble for the adolescent. This trouble can take the form of alienation, susceptibility to negative peer influences, and such physically or socially unhealthy behaviour as drug abuse or premature sexual activity (Steinberg 1987:452). Parents need however, to step back and allow their children to take some risks. Positive exploration – trying a new activity, making new friends, learning a difficult skill, taking on a new challenge, or resisting peer pressure – pose challenges that lead to growth (Damon 1984:332).

Authoritative parenting seems to provide the right balance. It offers warmth and acceptance; assertiveness about rules, norms and values and a willingness to listen, explain and negotiate (Hill 1987:21). This is contrasted with the authoritarian style of the autocratic parent. The effect of this latter parenting style is to produce a combination of rebellion and dependency (Henry et al. 1989:17). Adolescents are taught to follow their parents' demands and decisions without question and not to try to make decisions themselves. One of the reasons that authoritative parenting works so well with adolescents, is that it takes their cognitive development into account. When the parents explain the reasons behind a particular stance, they are acknowledging their adolescents' ability to evaluate a situation on a more sophisticated cognitive level. Adolescents raised in an autocratic environment often show emotional disturbances and have problems. Those who rebel against parental authority may leave home as soon as they can, while others may display overt hostility towards their parents and deeply resent their control and domination (Jordan 1989:16). The authoritative home is likely to be one of respect, appreciation, warmth and acceptance. This type of home, where there is warmth, fairness, and consistency of discipline, is associated with conforming, trouble-free nondelinquent behaviour for both boys and girls (Kandel 1990:186).

2.6.2 Relationship with Peers

Adolescents going through rapid physical changes take comfort from being with others who are going through similar changes. They find reassurance in being able to turn to friends for advice, as they can understand and sympathise because they are in the same position themselves. The peer group plays an important role in the adolescents' move towards achieving autonomy and independence from their parents. They provide a source of affection, sympathy and understanding and create a relatively safe base for experimentation to take place.

In early adolescence, friends are more intimate and supportive than they have been earlier. They regard loyalty as more critical to a friendship, and they compete less and share more with their friends than do younger children (Berndt & Perry 1990). These changes are partly due to cognitive development, as adolescents are able to express both their thoughts and feelings and can also consider another person's point of view. These features of friendship continue into adulthood.

Gender also has an effect on friendships. Males tend to count more people as friends than females do, but male friendships are rarely as close as female ones. Female friendships are generally more intimate than those of their male counterparts. Emotional support and sharing of confidences are particularly vital to female friendships throughout life (Blyth & Foster-Clark 1987:710).

Adolescents tend to choose friends with similar traits to themselves. This need for similarity in friendships is very important to the adolescent. This may be because teenagers struggle to differentiate themselves from their parents, they need the support of people like themselves (Weiss & Lowenthal 1975). This need also shows in the way adolescents often imitate each other's behaviour and are influenced by peer pressure. Members of the peer group are constantly influencing and being influenced by each other. Research has confirmed this shift from dependency on parents to dependency on peers, before young people are able to become truly independent (Steinberg & Silverberg 1986:845).

Adolescents who have high self-esteem, who consider themselves competent and who do well at school, tend to form close, positive friendship bonds. As they become more sure of themselves, they become more autonomous. According to Newman (1982), as adolescents reach a state of greater autonomy, they are more likely to make up their own minds and to stick with their decisions in the face of disagreement from either parents or peers.

2.7 DEVELOPMENTAL THEORIES

Research carried out in regards to intervention programmes for adolescents of divorce, have found that the developmental stage of the child is an important criterion that needs to be taken into consideration, when instituting such a programme. A brief synopsis of the theories from a psychoanalytical, psychosocial and cognitive perspective will follow, focusing specifically on the adolescents' developmental stage.

2.7.1 Psychoanalytical View - Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)

As Sigmund Freud is regarded as the father of psychoanalysis, his theories and that of his daughter, Anna Freud, will be discussed in this section.

Freud did not place a great deal of emphasis on the adolescent stage of development, as he considered the early years of a child's life to be the formative ones. Freud described adolescence as a period of sexual excitement, anxiety and sometimes personality disturbance (Freud 1953). He proposed that the child goes through various stages of development from birth until death and labeled each stage according to the age of the child. The fourth stage of development, according to Freud, was called *the period of latency* and occurred from six years of age until puberty. It is during this period that the childrens' sexual interests start to wane and they start relating to people who can help satisfy their need for love. They gradually shift their source of pleasure from the self to other people. During this phase the adolescents become more interested in cultivating the friendship of others, especially those of the same sex, as they want to consolidate their acquisition of appropriate sex-role behaviour.

During the *genital stage*, which is normally reached at adolescence, the process of "object finding" is brought to completion. Internal and external maturation of the sexual organs takes place and a strong desire to resolve sexual tensions follows. This resolution demands a love object, which is usually found in a member of the opposite sex. Freud stressed that the sexual aim of the

adolescent is different from that of the child. The child seeks physical pleasure and psychic satisfaction through bodily contact and the stimulation of the erotogenic zones and the pleasure the child derives from this becomes an end in itself. The sexual aim changes with the onset of adolescence. The sexual stimulation of the erotogenic zones of the body is no longer an end in itself but a preparation for the greater satisfaction of orgasm in intercourse (Freud 1953:227).

Freud emphasises two important elements of the sexual aim at adolescence. The first element is the *physical and the sensual*. This incorporates the desire for physical pleasure and the release of sexual tension. The second element is *psychic*, namely the affectionate component, which is often more pronounced in females than males. The underlying needs that motivate the adolescent to seek out a love object, are the desire for true affection and the release of sexual tension.

An important part of the maturing process at adolescence, is the loosening of the emotional ties with the parents. Freud speaks of a second oedipal situation that develops during adolescence where the son may fall in love with his mother and the daughter with her father (Freud 1925:74). Due to social inhibitions, this expression of sexuality is restrained, resulting in the adolescents' need to loosen their connections with their families. As they overcome and repudiate their incestuous fantasies, adolescents also complete one of the most painful psychical achievements of the pubertal period, namely detachment from parental authority (Freud 1953:227). This is done by withdrawing their affection from their parents and transferring it to their peers. Blos (1979:156) referred to this emotional loss as the "mourning of separation".

Subsequent theorists refer to the process of *Individuation*, which involves a differentiation of an individual's behaviour, feelings, judgments and thoughts from those of their parents. At the same time the parent-child relationship moves

toward growing cooperation, equality and mutuality as the child becomes an autonomous person within the family context (Mazor & Enright 1988:35).

Freud believed that the greatest need for the adolescent during this particular developmental stage was to establish and maintain heterosexual friendships. He also assumes that object-choice during adolescence must find its way to the opposite sex in the development of heterosexual friendships.

2.7.2 Anna Freud (1895-1982)

Anna Freud, the daughter of Sigmund Freud, was more concerned with the period of adolescence than her father was. Her theory elaborated more on the process of adolescent development and the changes in the psychic structure of the child at puberty (Freud 1946, 1958). She characterised adolescence as a period of internal conflict, psychic disequilibrium and erratic behaviour.

Adolescents are, on the one hand, egotistic regarding themselves as the sole object of interest and the centre of the universe, but on the other hand, also capable of self-sacrifice and devotion. They form passionate love relations, only to break them off suddenly. They sometimes desire complete social involvement and group participation and at other times solitude. They oscillate between blind submission to and rebellion against authority. They are selfish and materialistic but also full of lofty idealism. They are ascetic yet indulgent, inconsiderate of others yet hypersensitive themselves. They oscillate between optimism and pessimism, between indefatigable enthusiasm and sluggishness and apathy (Freud 1946:159).

The reasons for this conflicting behaviour are the psychic disequilibrium and internal conflict that accompany sexual maturation at puberty (Blos 1979:156). Anna Freud, like her father Sigmund Freud, recognised a three-way conception of a person. The *id*: which is viewed as the foundation of all a person's drives and impulses; the *ego* which according to Anna Freud means the sum of those

mental processes that aim at safeguarding mental function; and the *superego*, the individual's conscience. During adolescence the impulses of the *id* increase and present a direct challenge to the individual's ego and superego. The renewed vigor of the adolescent's instincts directly challenges the reasoning abilities and the powers of conscience. A conflict now develops between the *id* and the superego. Unless this *id*-ego-superego conflict is resolved during adolescence, the consequences can be emotionally devastating to the individual. The ego employs various defense mechanisms to defend and protect the adolescent. It represses, displaces, denies and reverses the instincts and turns them against the self, producing anxiety and creating symptoms of inhibition during adolescence. If the superego is sufficiently developed during the latency period of adolescence, then harmony among the *id*, ego and superego is possible, thereby preventing feelings of extreme guilt and anxiety from manifesting during this developmental phase (Freud 1946).

2.7.3 Psychosocial View - Erik Erikson (1902-1980)

Erik Erikson is referred to as a neo-Freudian, as he was a devoted pupil of Sigmund Freud. However while Erikson writes within a Freudian framework, his views also differ widely from Freud. Freud saw the developmental period from birth to age five as the foundation on which later personality development was built. Freud therefore, focused on that period and did not devote much attention to the events of later childhood or to those of adulthood. Erikson picked up where Freud left off and devoted a great deal of attention to the later stages, especially adolescence. He saw the crisis that characterizes adolescence – the identity crisis – as the most important of life (Corey 1990:181). The task of this period is to establish an identity, or a sense of oneself as a unique person.

Erikson stressed that development could only be understood within the context of culture and society (Stone & Church 1984). He suggested psycho-social stages that the developing individual goes through, that have social forces interacting at different stages of development. Successful completion of each stage means

that the person is free to move into the next stage of development. Each stage is characterised by an emotional conflict that needs to be positively resolved (Stone & Church 1984). If the stage is not positively resolved, growth may be arrested which could create conflicts that last a lifetime. Human growth is seen in terms of conflicts, both inner and outer, which the vital personality weathers, re-emerging from each crisis with an increased sense of inner unity with an increase of good judgment: to do well (Erikson 1983:92). Erikson described eight stages of human development. The overall task of the individual is to acquire a positive ego identity as he moves from one stage to the next. The positive solution of the task, each with its negative counterpart, is listed below for each period (Erikson 1950, 1959).

1. *Infancy*: Achieving a basic sense of trust versus a basic sense of mistrust – birth to age one-and-a-half years.
2. *Early Childhood*: Achieving a sense of autonomy versus a sense of shame and doubt – age one-and-a-half to three years.
3. *Play age*: Achieving a sense of initiative versus a sense of guilt – three to five years.
4. *School Age*: Achieving a sense of industry versus a sense of inferiority – five to twelve years.
5. *Adolescence*: Achieving a sense of self-identity versus a sense of identity diffusion – twelve to eighteen years.
6. *Young adult*: Achieving a sense of intimacy and solidarity versus a sense of isolation – eighteen to twenty-five years.
7. *Adulthood*: Achieving a sense of generativity versus self-absorption (stagnation) – twenty-five to sixty-five years.
8. *Mature Age*: Achieving a sense of ego integrity versus disgust and despair – sixty-five years plus.

As discussion in this study will be limited to the adolescent task of establishing ego identity, an in-depth study of the adolescent developmental stage namely, *acquisition of identity versus identity diffusion* will follow. The concept identity is

one of Erikson's most important contributions to psychology. It is a complex concept which can be defined as the individual's image of himself, including the feeling that a thread of continuity runs through his life, and that his self-image and the view others have of him are essentially in agreement (Erikson 1963:261). Erikson emphasises that identity formation neither begins nor ends with adolescence. It is regarded as a lifelong process, which is largely unconscious for the individual. The adolescents' identity formation continues through a process of selection and assimilation of childhood identifications, which in turn depend upon parental, peer and societal identification of them as important persons (Erikson 1982). In the midst of this turmoil the adolescent has the task of ultimately deciding where he or she stands in the face of these varying expectations. If the adolescent fails, *identity diffusion* results, and the person will lack purpose and direction in later years (Corey 1990:182).

The newly emerging individual is both moulded and recognised by the community in which he or she lives. From an early age, the child begins to build up expectations of what it will be like to be older and what it will feel like to have been younger through the multiplicity of successive and tentative identifications. These expectations form part of an identity as they are successively verified in decisive experiences within the psychosocial context. Society accommodates the adolescent's search for identity by providing a psychosocial moratorium – a period of grace for the youth to pursue his quest for identity relatively undisturbed, a period in which he is allowed to experiment with various identities (Erikson 1963:262).

According to Erikson, the adolescent phase is characterised by increased conflict and fluctuation of the ego strength. The experimenting adolescent becomes the victim of an identity consciousness that forms the basis for the self-consciousness of youth. In order to avoid the dangers of role diffusion and identity diffusion during this time, the individual must establish a sense of personal identity. Establishing a sense of personal identity involves evaluating

personal assets and liabilities and learning how to use them to achieve a clearer concept of who one is and what one wants to become.

Hamachek (1988:356) describes some of the characteristic behaviours of people who have a sense of identity: "They have a stable self-concept, they have a clear sense of goals; they are less susceptible to peer pressure, they generally accept themselves, they are able to make decisions without vacillating, they assume a sense of responsibility for what happens to them, and they are able to be physically and emotionally close to selected individuals without losing themselves".

Integration of all converging elements and a resolution of conflict must be attained before the adolescent can fully master this developmental stage.

2.7.4 Cognitive View - Jean Piaget (1896-1980)

Jean Piaget is considered to be one of the greatest cognitive psychologists of his time. It is therefore his view on the cognitive development of the child, with special reference to adolescent development that will be included as part of this research study.

Piaget taught that cognitive development is the combined result of environmental influences and the maturation of the brain and nervous system (Piaget 1972:90). From observations of children and numerous experiments he conducted on their way of thinking, he concluded that human beings go through several distinct stages of cognitive development. Each stage involves the acquisition of new skills and depends on the successful completion of the preceding one. Piaget (1952) used the concept *schemata* when referring to the cognitive structures underlying the organised patterns of behaviour. Four main stages of intellectual development were identified: the sensorimotor period, the pre-operational period, the concrete operational period and the period of formal operations. A brief

outline of the general outcome of Piaget's four global stages of development will be discussed.

Piaget's four stages are:

1. The *sensori-motor stage* – (Birth to two years). The most salient feature of this first stage, according to Piaget, is that internalized thinking processes are absent. Thinking, if any, occurs as a stimulus-response connection with the physical world without mediation, although the latter part of this period marks a transition to symbolic play, imitation, and representation of objects (Muuss 1988:202).
2. The *pre-operational stage* – (two to seven years). Piaget believes that during the second or pre-operational stage, children acquire the internalized thought processes that they lacked as infants. Pre-operational children can deal with the world symbolically, but still cannot think logically. Hence in Piaget's system the early precursors of what subsequently will be called "thought" are internal representation of overt actions (Brainerd 1986:37).
3. The *concrete-operational stage*- (seven to eleven years). The major feature of this period is that children's thought processes lose their intuitive character and become rigorous and logical. Some capacity for logical reasoning is shown in this stage, though it relates only to things actually experienced. Brainerd (1986:38) states that rigorous, logical thinking is only produced when applied to concrete informational inputs. In other words, concrete-operational thought is not sufficiently abstract hence the label "concrete".
4. The *formal-operational stage* – (Eleven years and up). During this final stage of development, the remaining refinements of adult thought are acquired. Thinking processes no longer depend on observed data and are said to be fully abstract. Thought operations can now be carried out on hypothetical information or situations that may never occur in reality (Brainerd 1986:38). Piaget believes that by the time the achievement phase of the formal-operational stage is attained (about age 15), intelligence has arrived at its ultimate equilibrium and no further qualitative structural improvements will occur (Brainerd 1986:38).

“As children pass through these periods, they change from organisms incapable of thought, and dependent on their senses and motor activities in knowing the world about them, to individuals capable of great flexibility of thought and abstract reasoning” (Stone & Church 1984:343).

The adolescent falls into the *formal operational stage* of cognitive development. During this stage adolescents move beyond the concrete, actual experiences characterised by the *concrete operational stage* and begin to think in more logical, abstract terms. Piaget subdivides the stage of formal operations further into substages III-A, almost full formal function (eleven to fifteen years), and III-B, full formal function (fifteen years and up). The division III-A, corresponding to early adolescence, appears to be a preparatory stage in which adolescents may make correct discoveries and handle formal operations, but the approach is still crude (Muuss 1988:205). During this stage adolescents are not yet able to provide systematic and rigorous proof of their assertions. By the time adolescents reach substage III-B, they have become capable of formulating more elegant generalisations and of advancing more inclusive laws. Most of all, according to Muuss (1988:206), they are now able to provide spontaneously more systematic proof of their assertions, since they understand the importance of method of thought. The complexity of the problems that the individual can handle increases substantially during these years, and reaches an equilibrium after substage III-B has been attained (Muuss 1988:206).

Some adolescents and adults never reach this formal operational stage either because of limited intelligence or cultural deprivation. Elkind (1967:1025) calls this final stage of formal operational development, the *conquest of thought*. The adolescent is able to move beyond the limitations of empirical reasoning and engage in the use of systematic, propositional logic in solving problems and drawing conclusions. Formal operational adolescents are able to use inductive reasoning to systematise their ideas and deal critically with their own thinking and construct theories about it. Deductive reasoning may then be used to test these

theories logically and scientifically, considering several variables in order to discover the truth. They are able to escape the concrete present and think about the abstract and the possible. This facility enables them to project themselves into the future, to distinguish present reality from future possibility, and to think about what might be (Bart 1983: 875). This ability to project themselves into the future has many important consequences for their lives especially when trying to come to terms with parental divorce. The adolescents' cognitive capacity relating to divorce issues will be explored in the next chapter.

In summary, formal thinking, according to Piaget, involves four major aspects: *introspection* (thinking about thought), *abstract thinking* (going beyond the real to what is possible), *logical thinking* (being able to consider all important fact and ideas to form correct conclusions), and *hypothetical reasoning* (formulating hypotheses and examining the evidence for them, considering numerous variables).

2.8 CONCLUSION

As stated earlier in this chapter, adolescent development is characterised by changes in social structure as well as dramatic changes in physiology and cognitive capabilities. The transition into adulthood is likely to be particularly difficult for youth who have experienced less than optimal development during early and middle adolescence.

As this research focuses on the impact of divorce on adolescent adjustment, early adolescence is an optimal time to intervene. Outcomes during and after parental divorce may be negative or positive, depending on both the nature of the challenges they face and the moderating factors such as the adolescent's personal characteristics and the adaptive capacity and coping resources of the family (Rice et al. 1993:235-237).

The following chapter will attempt to assess the impact of divorce on the developing adolescent and the types of structures that can be employed to prevent the establishment of damaging patterns, thereby promoting a healthy transition into adulthood.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ADOLESCENT AND DIVORCE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Three an attempt will be made to assess how divorce impacts on the developing adolescent, taking into account their psycho-social, moral, emotional and cognitive developmental stages. In addition an investigation into how divorce affects the adolescent's relationships with his or her parents, peers and the school, taking into consideration the types of support structures required to assist the adolescent towards healthy adjustment, will be discussed.

A brief look at divorce as a process and the effect it has on the adolescent will follow.

3.2 DIVORCE AS A PROCESS

Early views of divorce saw it as a short-term crisis of acute dimensions. Wallerstein (1994:103) writes that their work shows that divorce is not a brief, time-limited crisis, but a long-term experience. Divorce is seen as an extended process of changing family relationships, characterised by multiple stages, beginning with a period of parental conflict within the pre-divorce family. A discussion of these stages follows:

The first stage of divorce is the **acute phase** – the period surrounding the marital rupture and its immediate aftermath. This period usually represents the most unhappy period in the lives of all the family members. At this time, men and women often behave in uncharacteristic ways – many are overwhelmed with rage and others with feelings of abandonment that can consolidate into a long-lasting depression. During this phase there is also an undermining of the parenting function. There is a decreased awareness of the child's needs, a reduced

sensitivity to his or her feelings, less consistent discipline and a general confusion in the household routines. Wallerstein and Kelly (1980:79) call this phenomenon "the diminished capacity to parent" and say that it is so widespread it should be considered as an acceptable divorce-related change in the parent-child relationship.

As the acute stage starts to subside – normally a year after its induction – the **transitional stage** of the divorced family sets in. This stage usually lasts for several years and the disequilibrium continues in a new mode as parents get involved in new relationships, new careers, new educational opportunities and sometimes relocations. The family boundaries often appear permeable at this stage as new people are included and others are excluded from the family.

The third stage of the process of divorce may bring **stabilization** to the divorced family or it may herald **remarriage**. The remarried relationship is often different from the first marriage in that it carries with it the conscious memories of the initial failure, the fear of repeating that failure, as well as the need to acknowledge the very real presence of children from that first marriage, and the difficulties of integrating these children into a marriage that itself is hardly established.

This complex set of changes put into motion by the marital breakdown is likely to occupy a significant portion, if not all, of the child's or adolescent's growing-up years. Wallerstein (1983:232) suggests that divorce is "the most stressful and complex mental health crisis facing children today." She compares divorce to the loss of a parent through death or the loss of a community through natural disaster. Each disrupts family relationships with "an acute, time-limited crisis followed by an extended period of disequilibrium" leaving in its wake a "diminished, more vulnerable family structure" (Wallerstein 1983:230).

Wallerstein and Kelly (1976:84), found that adolescents have the poorest response to divorce among children of all ages. The reorganization and

readjustment of the family situation represents a special set of challenges and an added burden to the expected tasks of the adolescent. These developmental tasks become harder to accomplish when the family is in a time of crisis and unable to meet the basic needs of the child. The impact of divorce on adolescent development will be addressed in the next section.

3.3 THE IMPACT OF DIVORCE ON ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

From a developmental point of view, adolescence is the stage of life when the youth is faced with biological, cognitive, psychological and social challenges. A smooth transition into adulthood involves negotiating these challenges successfully. Theorists and clinicians have described adolescence as a time of profound inner turmoil and outer conflict when the adolescent is faced with specific developmental tasks (Freud 1969; Blos 1962). When parents divorce, adolescents are faced with the formidable task of adjusting to two sets of significant changes in their lives, namely, those that normally arise in this period of development; and those that accompany the divorce process (Kalter 1984:301).

The trauma of divorce includes conflict between parents that often precedes, accompanies and follows divorce; the possible loss and diminished contact with a parent; the potential diminished parent effectiveness and decreases in economic support. In addition to these traumas, divorce-related transitions often involve geographic moves, the addition of step-siblings and a new set of extended family members. These divorce-related factors have a direct impact on the life courses of children and may be especially challenging for the adolescent who is simultaneously involved in critical developmental transitions (Anderson, Hetherington & Clingempeel 1989).

Children experience enormous sadness at the loss of the family unit and the intensity of these losses has been shown to interfere temporarily with the emotional, social and psychological growth of children (Wallerstein & Kelly 1976).

For some children, the trauma causes acute adjustment problems and can leave them more vulnerable to future psychiatric problems (Hett & Rose 1991:39).

The possible effects of divorce on adolescents' cognitive, emotional, psychosocial and moral development will now be considered.

3.3.1 Cognitive Development

Inhelder and Piaget (1958), tell us that cognitively, by the age of thirteen, most adolescents have reached the stage of formal operational thought, enabling them to reason hypothetically and to make judgements about possible future events. This stage is often characterised by a rapid shift in their perceptions of and feelings about their parents. Parents may be perceived as complex human beings with realistically admirable qualities as well as true limitations and faults. This process often includes periods where the adolescent idealises the parent and has great expectations of what they can do, followed by periods of doubt, where the parent is perceived in extremely negative terms.

At this cognitive stage of development, adolescents have probably developed the capacity for self-reflexive thinking and can simultaneously perceive the opposing views held by each of their parents. Parental divorce however, may temporarily derail this cognitive capacity, as adolescents begin to view their parents in a more lasting, bitter and demeaning light. This creates internal conflict for adolescents, as their disappointment in their parents is at odds with their love for them, their need to have appropriate guidance and limits and their need for loving, involved role models to help them in consolidating their identity (Kalter 1984:304). Moreover, the divorcing parents often presume that their adolescent is more mature than he or she actually is and may expect him or her to provide them with emotional support and take sides in the ensuing conflict. Adolescents therefore, may be more vulnerable to acute loyalty conflicts than children of other age groups (De Varis 1995:242). These loyalty conflicts may seriously impact on

their emotional development, an issue that will be addressed in the following section.

3.3.2 Emotional Development

Emotionally, adolescents are in a stage of egocentricity (Erikson 1982:37). They are preoccupied by their own thoughts, and also tend to believe that these thoughts are the focus of attention for other people. While they begin to take responsibility for their own actions and to accept the consequences of their behaviour, they are also preoccupied with their own needs and interests. Parental divorce may cause adolescents to develop unconscious beliefs that place the responsibility for the marital discord and separation squarely on their shoulders. Personalising the divorce stimulates feelings of guilt causing great emotional pain and may seriously damage feelings of self-esteem. In addition divorce itself evokes feelings of shock, fear, anger and sadness, which may manifest consciously or remain below the level of awareness for the adolescent (Hetherington & Anderson 1987:247).

Within the adolescent stage social activities are often of paramount importance and very absorbing. Energy levels and sexual tensions are high and social and extra-curricular activities direct and diffuse their psychic and physical energies (De Varis 1995:243). As a result, a divorce and the ensuing alterations to their routine are perceived to be an obstruction in their lives. Adolescents generally favour the arrangement that produces the least disruption to their daily routines and one that will maintain the status quo as closely as possible, especially with regard to school. Some adolescents however, will align themselves with the most needy parent whereas others will align themselves with the parent who will give them the least restrictions and the most comfortable life-style (Hetherington & Anderson 1987:247). The adolescent may consciously (or unconsciously) manipulate such a situation to his or her advantage by "playing one parent off against the other", inadvertently creating more conflict between parents and rendering a difficult situation even more problematic.

The acute sadness and intense feelings of loss experienced by the adolescent at the stage of parental divorce, may impact on his or her sense of identity and arrest this particular psychosocial stage of development. This concept is explored in the next section.

3.3.3 Psychosocial Development

According to Erikson's (1982), psychosocial stages of development, the adolescent is in the stage of *identity acquisition versus role confusion*. During this crisis stage of development, the adolescent asks: "Who am I?" and "Where do I belong?" This developmental conflict is intensified in a divorce situation where possible solutions to such questions are more difficult to attain in the dissolution of the family structure.

The psychological task at this crucial adolescent stage of development, involves separating from parents and family and forming a clear and consolidated sense of self that would become the basis of further identity formation (Erikson 1968:261). The adolescent, in the process of identity formation and ego integration, embarks on a path to establish a career and to form an intimate relationship. A parental divorce, which represents a failure on the part of their parents to sustain an intimate relationship, brings into question the value of any efforts on behalf of the adolescent, to try to establish an intimate relationship. Tasker and Richards (1994:345) suggest that the timing of parental divorce is a significant predictor of general and intimate relationship beliefs among adolescents. They found that the more time that has passed since the divorce, the more negative and unrealistic beliefs about relationships develop. On the other hand, the fewer number of years that have passed since parental divorce, the greater number of sexual behaviours are exhibited by adolescents and the greater involvement in heterosexual relationships at a younger age. Explanations for this trend are presented by Chase-Lansdale et al. (1995:1616). First, adolescence is a time of major developmental transformations and life

choices involving the renegotiating of autonomy and connectedness with the family and the development of sex-role identity and intimate relationships with others. Therefore, parental divorce at this time in an adolescent's life may be quite disturbing. Secondly, the transition into young adulthood is in close proximity. The event of parental divorce at this developmental assimilation may lead to a greater likelihood of adverse reactions. Therefore, continuous maladjustment in the aftermath of relatively current parental divorce will exist upon entering adolescence. Lee (1995:56) concurs on the maladjustment issues of the adolescent as he found that non-traditional patterns of behaviour such as early sexual activity, non-marital cohabitation, and high school dropout appear to be more frequent for adolescents from divorced families. These trends may have resulted from growing up in a single-parent household and/or witnessing parents' marital transitions or it may be that the adolescents attempt to gain intimacy through physical relations with others and become reluctant to commit to a long-term emotional relationship out of fear of failure. Lee (1995:58) provides another possible interpretation stating that adolescents may try to prove they do not suffer from the same problems with relationships as their parents did. An underlying insecurity and fear of repeating the events of the previous generation is manifested this way. This impacts on adolescents' ability to reduce their psychological dependency on their parents, to separate from their family and to form an adult identity, thereby reducing their ability to successfully resolve their identity crisis at this crucial developmental stage.

As related in the above literature, the parents' inability to sustain an intimate relationship impacts on the development of the adolescent and brings certain moral issues into question. These issues will be discussed in the following section.

3.3.4 Moral Development

According to Kohlberg (1981), moral reasoning is part of cognitive development. Adolescents continue to develop morally as they acquire the capacity to think

abstractly and to understand universal moral principles. During adolescence, cognitive development includes the movement from concrete thought to a higher level of reasoning, leading to the formulation of a system of values, morals, and life goals in accordance with the newly emerging self (Kohlberg 1984:76).

Kohlberg, as a cognitive developmental theorist has been criticised for ignoring the role of the family (Reimer 1993:178) in moral development, in contrast to psychoanalytic and social theory, which stress the role of the family in this area. According to psychoanalytic theory, children's morality develops through the internalization of values. In other words, identification with their parents is crucial for values internalization. Social learning theory postulates that morality results from children's modelling their parent's beliefs and practices. Imitation is seen as crucial for moral socialization. Kohlberg (1984:78) did not see family participation as crucial for moral development or identification with a specific parental figure as necessary for the attainment of mature moral reasoning. Kohlberg proposed that all social interactions may propel moral development to the extent that they create cognitive disequilibrium and provide the adolescent with certain role-taking opportunities.

Divorce has been associated with lower levels of moral development and an increase in deviancy and delinquency in studies which have involved the effects of absent fathers (Kogos & Snarey 1995:179). However, factors such as socioeconomic status, authority patterns and father contact will also affect such negative outcomes in father-absent homes. Therefore frequent contact with the non-custodial father may help to alleviate the likelihood of these outcomes.

Wallerstein (1983:441) reports that many adolescents of divorced parents tend to develop a more "traditional" type of morality and are critical of what they perceive as their parents' "immoral conduct". In support of this, other studies have found that negative moral developmental consequences are not inevitable, regarding the impact of divorce on children (Friedman 1982:566, Grossman et al 1980:270).

Kogos and Snarey (1995:184) found a positive relationship between parental divorce and adolescents' "moral reasoning maturity", possibly due to the adolescents becoming more morally autonomous earlier. They found that parental divorce stimulates role-taking in adolescents, which promotes their ethical sensitivity and moral autonomy as they seek to comprehend both sides of the dissension. Lopez (1987:50) discovered that such moral maturity may result from the necessity in some cases of adolescents taking on the role of the absent parent which may enhance their role-taking opportunities and understanding of adult concerns. These findings coincide with the formal operational cognitive developmental stage, whereby adolescents are able to evaluate numerous viewpoints rather than to simply "take one side".

All these factors however, impact on the development of the adolescent and may result in depression or a lowering of self-esteem.

3.4 THE EFFECTS OF DIVORCE ON DEPRESSION AND SELF-ESTEEM IN ADOLESCENTS

Children have frequently been described as reacting to the divorce of their parents with regression, withdrawal, sadness, grief, attention-seeking behaviour, and aggression (Kelley & Berg 1978:218). Depression and low self-esteem may characterise some of the reactions of children whose parents have divorced. Self-esteem and depression appear to be negatively correlated, that is when self-esteem is high, depression will be low and vice versa. According to Coopersmith (1967), individuals with low self-esteem often tend to withdraw and experience feelings of distress. They may be more self-punitive, passive, experience greater anxiety and exhibit more psychosomatic symptoms and feelings of depression. Kantrowitz and Darnton (1992:50), state that the emotional wounds children suffer are significant and divorce remains an important issue throughout their lives. A comprehensive review of literature shows consensus in that significant numbers of children suffer for many years from psychological and social

difficulties associated with continuing or new stresses within the family, post-divorce. These children also experience heightened anxiety about forming enduring attachments at later developmental stages including young adulthood (Bynum & Durm 1996:447).

Omizo and Omizo (1987:46), write that numerous studies have found that children of divorce tend to suffer from diminished self-concept. They speculate that this could be because many children feel guilty and blame themselves for the divorce, or feel insecure and abandoned by one or both parents (Wallerstein & Kelly 1976:258). Adolescents experience an acute sense of shame about divorce, which could have a negative effect on their self-esteem. Shame and guilt feelings are seen as diminishing the child's already injured self-esteem. The separation of the parents inevitably produces feelings of insecurity in the child and this also contributes to a lowering of the child's self-esteem. The effects of the parents' diminished capacity to parent (Wallerstein & Kelly 1980), together with the adolescents' sense that their parents are overburdened with their own problems can also contribute to feelings of low self-worth.

Smilansky (1992:34) writes that parental divorce and the question it raises about the impermanence of love and relationships, is likely to affect a child's self-perception noticeably. When children interpret the parental departure as abandonment and rejection, or when they feel guilty and blame themselves for the divorce, their self-esteem is negatively affected. Smilansky's study of the adjustment of Israeli schoolchildren of divorced parents examined the relationship between the self-image of these children and their conceptualization of divorce. Conceptualizing the divorce process involves three separate but related concepts: understanding the reasons for divorce and not blaming oneself, seeing divorce as a common and acceptable but not inevitable occurrence, and conceptualizing the irreversibility of divorce. Their results showed that higher levels of conceptualization of divorce correlated with more positive social self-image, clearer and more defined personal identity and greater capacity for self-criticism. Wallerstein and Kelly's study (1980) also supported the positive

relationship between high conceptualization of divorce and personal identity and found that many children experience an identity crisis as a result of their parents' divorce. The study also showed that children who understand the reasons for and the scope of the divorce process and realise that they still belong to both parents, have fairly well-defined personal identities.

Umbersohn et al (1992:15) found that divorce not only triggers a number of secondary problems that are causally related to depression, but it heightens adolescents' vulnerability to one of the most common problems faced by families headed by a single parent: economic hardship. Economic hardship is a major factor accounting for adolescent distress in single-parent families as it serves as a secondary incidence of divorce, contributing to a diminished parenting capacity, possible parental absence (due to long working hours) and changes in household composition. Conversely however, youths in single-parent families were found to be largely immune to the effects of family conflict and turmoil, both of which are potent stressors for youths in intact family environments. Several reasons for these findings are provided by various researchers. It is believed that adolescents from divorced homes are exposed to less disharmony post-divorce. Hetherington (1989:13) found that adolescents from divorced homes are exposed to more positive interactions with parents than those from intact homes. This may be due to the fact that adolescents from divorced homes are withdrawing or disengaging from the family. Dishion et al (1991:175) suggested that current findings of positive interactions between adolescents from divorced homes and their parents, were due to less monitoring and supervision on behalf of the parents and issues may simply not be discussed or resolved. Also because of other immediate stressors (e.g., financial difficulties), divorced mothers may be less attuned to parenting issues, which in the long term may increase the problems encountered by the adolescent through lack of parental supervision and monitoring. Aseltine et al (1994:255) found that divorce appears to foster socio-developmental changes that shield youths from the emotional effects of subsequent family problems, thus promoting better emotional adjustment than if the divorce had not occurred. This positive emotional adjustment may be as a

result of a good relationship with at least one parent, which as Rutter (1987:317), observed, serves to insulate the adolescent against the negative effects of family discord. It could also be due to a developmental process through which the adolescent has the ability emotionally to detach himself from the family thereby developing his own identity and own sense of self-worth.

These findings are consistent with previous research by Berg and Kelly in 1979, (365) who found no differences between children of divorced and intact families in their perceptions of their self-worth, incidence of depression and control over their environment. They suggest that perceived low self-esteem and depression are as a result of many interactions reflecting diverse life experiences over long periods of time and may not necessarily be as a consequence of marital disruption.

It appears that there are no definite findings on a causal relationship between parental divorce and adolescent depression and low self-esteem. Divorce may act as a potential stressor which may result in adolescent depression and low self-esteem, but other psycho-social factors play a determining role in enabling the adolescent successfully to conceptualize his or her parents' divorce and the attainment of a positive sense of self-worth. A disrupted parent-adolescent relationship is one of the difficulties postulated to occur following divorce.

3.5 THE EFFECTS OF DIVORCE ON RELATIONSHIPS

This study has already elicited numerous examples of the impact of divorce on adolescents. An important factor to consider is the effect divorce has on the adolescents' interpersonal relationships. The effects of divorce on the adolescent-parent and the peer relationships will be explored in this section.

3.5.1 The Parent-Adolescent Relationship

The role of the family and the specific interactions of parent and child have been regarded as powerful determinants of adolescent development. Early psychoanalysts viewed healthy adolescent development as a process of individuation attained by a loosening of family ties and infantile object attachments (Blos 1962; Freud 1969). The detachment from parents was triggered by biological changes and characterised by intra-familial conflict, often resulting in adolescent rebellion. A shift in the way theorists view the parents' role in the process of adolescent individuation and separation occurred with the feminist revisions of development. Josselson (1987) an active feminist, challenged the notion that the realignment in family relationships occurred against a backdrop of emotional detachment. It would appear that successful negotiation of adolescence lies not in merely asserting independence, but in establishing modes of interdependence in the family (Grotevant & Cooper 1986:82). They believed that family processes that encourage and support the individuation and separateness of the adolescent whilst maintaining a connection with the family are thought to be most effective in generating competence.

Taking the above factors into consideration, it is evident that inter-personal relationships impact on the adolescents' individuation and separation process. This process may be arrested when parents divorce, as parents may no longer be able to rely on long standing support structures namely, their former marriage, former in-laws and friends who have sided with one or the other spouse. Parents are then tempted to rely on their children for support and these children who are themselves in emotional transit due to the break up of their families and parents who are suddenly leaning on them heavily, may experience problems completing the developmental tasks of this age.

Studies in the area of family relationships and adolescence have also examined qualities of the parent-child relationship that promote or curtail healthy development. A style of parenting characterised by parental warmth, democratic

parent-child interaction, and parental limit setting is consistently associated with positive developmental outcomes in adolescents (Baumrind 1991:115). When parents divorce, the parent-child relationship can be adversely affected, as divorce and its related stresses may directly affect the ability of parents to interact with their children effectively. During the period of separation and the two years following, there is typically disruption in the parent-child relationship when parents are likely to be physically or psychologically unavailable (Camara & Resnick 1988:337). Studies indicate that immediately after divorce, both parents tend to be inconsistent, less affectionate, and lacking in control over their children (Hetherington 1989:12). The adolescent's capacity to maintain his developmental stride is inversely related to the parent's need to lean heavily on the child for emotional and social support. Johnston et al (1989:578) agree with these findings and suggest that when parents try to form alliances with a child against the other parent, or when boundaries between the parent-parent and parent-child subsystems become unclear, children are likely to be drawn into parental negotiations, tensions, or active conflicts. The consequences of such diffuse boundaries are stress and confusion for the child.

Loyalty conflicts are often a source of stress and difficulty for children of divorce. Children feel love for and allegiance to both parents, yet fear the consequences of loyalty to both, which may result in feelings of guilt and anxiety. The extent to which a child feels caught between parents – practically and/or emotionally - may predict difficulty in adjusting to the divorce. It is argued that adolescents may either be able to distance themselves from loyalty conflicts as they become more involved with peer relationships, or become more involved in loyalty conflicts, as, due to a greater cognitive capacity, they are able to see multiple points of view. Buchanan et al (1991:1010) believe that positive parental co-operation may lessen the likelihood of children being caught in the middle of parental conflict. Children whose parents were able to resolve issues on an adult level, without using them as a go-between, experienced less difficulty adjusting to their parents' divorce. The quality of the parent-child relationship however, was also determined by the individual characteristics of the adolescent. Case studies of

adolescents in high-risk families characterised by intense post-divorce conflict reveal that adolescents, who had a high level of ego development and ego resilience, were able to form positive, constructive relationships with their parents (Hines 1995).

Weiss (1979:98) observed that children of divorce tend to "grow up" a little faster because of the additional responsibilities and maturity demands required of them by single parents. The divorce may hasten the development of psychological resources, which increases their resilience and enables them to maintain some degree of emotional stability in the midst of conflict.

Parental stress also has a negative effect on the adolescent's ability to adjust to the divorce. Custodial mothers, possibly due to financial hardship following the divorce, were more likely to be depressed, self-involved, erratic, less supportive, and ineffectually authoritarian, resulting in problems with control and monitoring (Hetherington 1989:13). Custodial fathers report better family adjustment and fewer problems with children, two years after the divorce, which could be related to fewer financial worries, more social support and having custody of older children (Furstenberg 1988:120).

Studies on the effect of custody arrangements on adolescent adjustment and parent-child relationships found better adjustment for adolescents who live with the same-sex parent (Camara & Resnick 1988). Disruptions in the parent-child relationship are most marked for custodial mothers and sons (Hetherington & Clingempeel 1992:277). Divorced mothers and their pre-adolescent daughters often form a close relationship, especially if the child has chosen to align herself with her mother against her father, which may lead to the lessening of the age-appropriate gap between parent and child. This relationship may become conflicted in later adolescence, especially if the mother remarries (Hetherington & Clingempeel 1992:277).

After the divorce the relationship of the non-custodial parent with the child is of great significance. Cutsinger and Glick (1983:17) refer to two studies indicating that the relationship of the non-custodial parent to both the former spouse and the child is a critical factor in the child's adjustment and self-esteem. They refer to research findings that report a higher rate of behaviour problems among father-absent children. They conclude that the findings of several studies suggest that a continued relationship with the non-custodial parent is important to the adjustment of the child. These findings are indirectly supported by Kurdek and Berg (1983:901) who studied the dimensions of contact with the non-custodial parent and concluded that frequency and regularity of visitation, and amount of telephone contact were non-significantly related to children's divorce adjustment. What was significant to the divorced child's adjustment was the amount of time non-custodial parents spent in direct exclusive contact with them. Hetherington and Clingempeel (1992:277) found that even a small amount of contact with the non-custodial parent could facilitate a close relationship. They also found that parenting that was characterised by high levels of warmth, support, monitoring, communication, firm and consistent control, and low levels of punitiveness, was associated with positive adjustment to the divorce.

Several factors tend to play a role in determining the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship following parental divorce. Findings indicate that positive father-adolescent relationships and positive mother-adolescent relationships with moderate inter-parental conflict, served as the greatest predictors for successful psychosocial adjustment in the adolescent. Positive peer relationships were also determined as an indicator towards positive adjustment post-divorce. This relationship will be explored in the next section.

3.5.2 The Peer Relationship

Yarcheski and Mahon (1984:914) found that the need for close friends becomes crucial during adolescence. Prior to the adolescent phase of development, children have not depended primarily on their peers for emotional satisfaction.

They have looked to their parents for fulfillment of their emotional needs and have sought their praise, love and tenderness. Only if they have been unloved, rejected, and adversely criticized by parents will they have turned to friends or parent substitutes for emotional fulfillment. This picture changes during adolescence. Sexual maturation brings new feelings, the need for emotional fulfillment and for emotional independence and emancipation from parents – the individuation process. Adolescents now turn to their peers to find support formerly provided by their families (Frankel 1990:70).

Adolescents need relationships with others with whom they can share common interests. As they grow older they desire a closer, caring relationship that involves sharing mature affection, problems and their most personal thoughts (Pombeni et al 1990:354). They need close friends who stand beside them and for them in an understanding, caring way. Friends share more than secrets or plans; they share feelings and help each other resolve personal problems and interpersonal conflicts (Werebe 1987:271).

Research has indicated that disclosure of the adolescents' feelings to their parents depends on the openness of family communication. However, as they get older, adolescent self-disclosure to friends increases. Females of all ages exhibit greater emotional disclosure to both parents and peers than do males. This finding is consistent with traditional masculine concepts that emphasise that males are not to express emotional concerns and feelings (Papini et al 1990:971). One of the reasons friendships are crucial is that adolescents are insecure and anxious about themselves (Goswick & Jones 1982:47). They lack personality definition and secure identities, and find comfort in their friendships.

As noted in the previous section, a divorce can damage the intimate relationship between adolescents and their parents, and often between themselves and their non-custodial parent. They are often the victims of a long and painful process in which the love, care and trust of two people are being torn apart. It is important to assess how parental divorce affects adolescents' ability to form close inter-

personal relationships with their peers. Mednick et al (1990:72) states that although peer-child relationships are largely independent of parent-child relationships, a child may seek to develop relationships with peers that would compensate for the damaged parent-child relationship. Friends are a major source of support for adolescents of divorce, especially the best-friend relationship. The best-friend relationship is characterised by being able to share one's most intimate thoughts and feelings in an atmosphere of trust, openness, loyalty, understanding and reciprocity. If these characteristics are present, adolescents will be more inclined to confide their most intimate thoughts and secrets with their best friend.

Adolescents may develop stronger relationships with their peers, as they depend on them for the social support that may be lacking in the home environment. They gather friends around them from whom they gain strength and who help establish the boundaries for themselves. From their peers, they learn the necessary personal and social skills and societal definitions that help them to become part of the larger adult world. They become emotionally bound to others who share their vulnerabilities and their deepest selves. Difficulties may arise in establishing close relationships with peers, when adolescents have a poor self-image or do not have a close relationship with at least one of their parents. McCombs et al (1988:63) found that there is a significant correlation between relationships with parents and adolescents' social adjustments.

Children who described family members as isolated and disconnected as a result of depressed mood or financial difficulties, had a lower percentage of friendships with their peers. Parental mood, specifically maternal depressive symptoms have been linked to poorer child psychosocial adjustment. Developmentally, adolescents are involved in the process of renegotiating family ties and relationships. If adolescents experience premature detachment from the family, rebellion and problem behaviour may result. Disengagement during adolescence, especially among adolescent boys, if associated with an antisocial

peer group, can be detrimental to adjustment after the divorce and may negatively impact on the parent-child relationship.

It is evident that peer relationships are a strong source of support for the adolescent of divorce. They provide the strength and security the adolescent requires to still maintain a sense of self and to feel reasonably intact despite the dissolution of the family system.

The school is often a natural setting to assess the quality of adolescents' interpersonal relationships and to determine the adolescents' adjustment to parental divorce. An investigation into the effects of divorce on the adolescent in the school setting will follow.

3.6 THE EFFECTS OF DIVORCE ON THE ADOLESCENT IN THE SCHOOL SETTING

The question of how divorce affects the performance of adolescents in school has become increasingly important to teachers, school counsellors and school principals, since learning is one of the central developmental tasks for all school-age children. No systematic research on the impact of divorce on school-age children was done prior to 1976, despite the fact that they are the largest group affected by divorce.

Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) found in their interviews with teachers, that two-thirds of the children showed changes in their school behaviour after their parents' separation. The most frequently observed problems were: lowered academic achievement, anxiety (seen in restless behaviour), concentration difficulties, increases in daydreaming, sadness and depression (especially in younger children), and increased aggression on the playground (in adolescent boys). Teachers observed an increase in children seeking them out and a need for more attention, expressed by children wanting closer physical proximity. It would seem that adolescents' academic performance is lowered because it is

hampered by classroom behaviours that interfere with performance and require special handling. Strained relationships with peers and teachers, and attention-seeking and acting-out behaviour do not contribute to positive school performance.

It appears that there is a connection between children's responses to divorce, its effects on their school performance and on their self-concept. When children have difficulty focusing their attention and efforts on factors outside the family, the frequent result is poor school performance. If these achievement problems continue, they can contribute to a poor self-concept. As a positive self-concept is related to so many other variables of academic, social, psychological and emotional success, the child of divorce who has negative self-evaluations is likely to have many problems in school (Omizo & Omizo 1987:46).

A school survey sponsored by the U.S. National Association of Elementary Principals, showed that children from divorced families were lower in achievement, had more discipline problems at school and were absent from school more often than children from intact families. Similar results were reported by Brown (1994) who compared achievement, tardiness, absenteeism, discipline problems and drop-out rates for children of divorced and intact families.

It has been well established that parental separation and divorce are related to adverse emotional effects on children; all of these effects seem to be related to impaired school adjustment and performance. This poses challenges to teachers, principals and school counsellors to offer supportive interventions for these children. The school once again, is regarded as the most natural setting for intervention to take place.

3.7 THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL

Peres and Pasternack (1985:143) investigated the extent and conditions under which the school can compensate for the role of the family in cases where the

functioning of the parents is seriously curtailed by divorce. Sociological and socio-psychological theories view socialization, first and foremost, as a social process. Children find their place in a system of relationships in which there is both hierarchy and equality and objective demands alongside emotional support. While integrating into this setting, the offspring gradually learn to generalise familial roles to social relationships outside the family, initially in educational institutions and later on in the realms of work, politics and culture (Radin 1976:239).

Parents invest a variety of resources – material, intellectual, social and emotional – in their children. This investment enables the children to succeed in educational settings and thereby find their place in a similar stratum to that of their parents. Single-parents however, often lack the financial and/or emotional resources to invest in their children's educational well-being.

As the number of students from single-parent families increases, schools must consider how they can provide the support structures these children need. Taylor (1986) found that social support, within the context of the school environment, may mediate the negative effects of single-parent family status on academic achievement. This was supported by Torgerson (1988) who found that as students' lives at home were affected by a reshaping of the family unit, the routines and consistency provided by school, afforded students regular patterns and stability. Students enjoyed the nurturing and security found in the structured features of the school environment. Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) noted that goals, rules and expectations gave students the procedures to live by, while grades, monitoring, reassurances from others and social success improved students' self-esteem.

A semi-structured interview conducted by Lewis (1992:27) on 14 high school students of divorced parents revealed some interesting findings. A brief synopsis of these findings follows: support at school was provided by teachers familiar with divorce cases enabling them to initiate guidance and support to the students from

divorced families. Teachers were cited by children of divorce, as the most important persons to have an influence on their recovery and self-esteem. Teachers who were aware of student feelings were able to give sincere interest, care and advice. If staff awareness was absent, then only those students who exhibited maladaptive behaviour patterns were assisted by providing group or individual intervention programmes. For some students however, school became a difficult place because they felt "different". These students indicated that they appreciated teachers who gave their situations consideration but did not treat them differently from others. These findings support Cusick's (1973:66) depiction of "the power of the school as a healer or dehumaniser", as it was noted that the organisation, through peer relations, nourished and strengthened its members. This was accomplished when students felt that they were accepted as part of the school environment.

Schools provide structure and stability and maintain a foundation "that's not going to come apart like the family came apart" (Ourth & Zakarig 1982). The school that relies less on the material, cognitive and motivational resources that the child is presumed to receive at home has a better chance of putting the one-parent child on equal competitive footing with his fellow students from intact homes. Further investigation is still required as to how the school can accommodate the needs of the students from single-parent families. Possible intervention strategies which could be used to address these issues, would include curriculum adjustments, teachers' roles in a formal network of intervention, sensitivity to the financial changes and the support and encouragement of school principals.

Positive adjustment to parental divorce appears to be the key issue when investigating adolescents' psycho-social well-being. A brief overview of various studies on adolescent adjustment to parental divorce will now be considered.

3.8 ADOLESCENT ADJUSTMENT TO PARENTAL DIVORCE

Current research regarding the effects of divorce on adolescents implies that family conflict affects adolescent development more than the parent's marital status (Aseltine 1996:256). It appears that it is the quality of life and the perceived absence of family conflict that is associated with adolescent adjustment. Research by Alpert-Gillis et al (1989:585) showed low to moderate relationships between perceived support and child adjustment after divorce. Children who felt that they had more overall support had less post-divorce problems, anxieties and worries. Factors such as resilience and other adaptive outcomes were related to strong familial and extra-familial support systems. Although this study involved pre-adolescent children, it is felt that the findings are also applicable to adolescents.

Rutter (1981:247) felt that in order to comprehend what adjustment involves one needed first to establish the basic needs of the child. He outlines the four main needs of a child as being: a stable, warm and intimate family relationship; good role models; consistent discipline and the freedom to love both parents. As previously indicated in this study, parental divorce disrupts the family environment, often resulting in the adolescent being given more freedom or being left to his own devices, loyalty conflicts between parents and inconsistent or no discipline being enforced. These factors impact on the adolescents' ability to adjust to parental divorce. Studies have supported this view by stating that families who were less likely to promote autonomy and intimacy resulted in adolescents experiencing greater levels of psychiatric symptomology. Adolescents with parents who simultaneously convey support while encouraging independence have more secure identities and greater psychological resilience (Grotevant & Cooper 1985:417).

Amato and Keith (1991:33) found short-term negative effects of divorce in areas of school achievement, conduct problems, psychological adjustment, social adjustment and parent-child relations. A longer-term study conducted by Amato

(1996:630) discovered that adolescents whose parents divorced displayed negative behavioural and attitudinal associations towards relationships. These included less positive commitment to intimate relationships, a higher frequency of live-in relationships, a greater likelihood of choosing to cohabit rather than to marry and a greater likelihood of not marrying. These findings highlight both the diversity and more importantly, the highly inter-correlated nature of risks following parental divorce.

Silitsky (1996:165), found that the adjustment of New York City High School adolescents from divorced families related positively to the psychological adjustment of the custodial parent; to the availability of social support and to the adaptability and cohesion of the family. Parental anger or abuse before or after separation and stressful changes after the divorce reflected negatively on adolescent adjustment. Silitsky suggests, therefore, that negative effects on adolescent development can be minimized by divorcing parents having access to psychological assistance, and by reducing acrimony surrounding the divorce, as far as possible. He suggests family therapy and divorce mediation in this regard. He also stresses the need for social support to reduce stress and to render the period involving the divorce as smooth as possible.

From all the research done on the impact of divorce on the adolescent, one may conclude that many factors play a role in determining positive post-divorce adjustment. A group-intervention programme may assist adolescents in coming to terms with their parents' divorce and enable them to deal with it positively without it having a detrimental effect on this crucial developmental phase.

3.9 GROUP INTERVENTION FOR ADOLESCENTS OF DIVORCE

Therapeutic groups are aimed at prevention, remediation and enhancement of optimal functioning and are not specifically aimed at "repairing" pathology. Support groups for children of divorce are considered to be such "therapeutic" groups and Scheidlinger (1984:574) supports the widest possible use of such

short-term groups for children's developmental crises (such as divorce) in the context of mental health prevention.

Hurley et al (1984:266) reviewed three therapeutic models for treating children of divorce – psychodynamic, family therapy and the educational support group model. Support groups conducted either within the community or within schools are primarily preventative in nature and focus on crisis intervention as a means of preventing the development of psychopathology. They refer to the findings of Guerney and Jordan (1979:283-284) who believe that regardless of whether or not children are symptomatic and showing adjustment problems, they should be provided with support in an effort to prevent problems resulting from the crisis of divorce. They also believe that the support group format is more acceptable to most families than the therapy format, in that the latter identifies divorce with illness and pathology.

Group counselling is seen as the preferred treatment modality with adolescents, since they require peer validation to meet their developmental needs. This is thought to generate more therapeutic impact than confirmation from an adult therapist alone. Participation in a group setting with other children of divorce is thought to alleviate some of the shame, doubt and stigma associated with parental divorce. The group process gives children the chance to view the divorce process realistically and to witness in others a variety of options for action and feeling. Members of the group are often at a different stage of adjustment to divorce, and so, for each member there is someone else who has experienced roughly the same dimension of divorce. The divorce group is seen to offer a natural blend between the therapeutic group process and the developmental phenomenon of peer group membership. Adolescents seek self-discovery and self-affirmation through peer-group interactions. At this age, group membership also serves to affirm their independence from adult supervision. The divorce group catalyzes peer-group interaction, based on the members' common bonds, needs, feelings and experiences (Sonnenshein -Schneider & Baird 1980:89).

The study done by Kurdek and Siesky (1980:98) on adolescent adjustment to divorce, found that positive adjustments and reactions to divorce were (among other things) related to children's sharing of divorce-related concerns with friends. The researchers conclude that this suggests that peers function as a support system for children experiencing their parents' divorce. As parents are likely to be pre-occupied with their own turmoil about the marital disruption, children may more easily turn to friends for comfort and support. The researchers suggest that children who have themselves experienced divorce may be the source of greatest support in both clinical and non-clinical settings. Children from divorced homes may feel isolated from their peers who have intact families. Support groups deal with this isolation by providing "new" group membership that is both meaningful and relevant to the children.

Group interventions are also regarded as beneficial as, in addition to peer support, they provide children with a feeling of safety through numbers that facilitates freer expression than in individual treatment (Schreier & Kalter 1990:59). Group work is also considered more pragmatic, as it provides a service to a larger number of people in a limited amount of time. Edelson (in Cutsinger & Glick 1983:18) believes that group work uses the therapists' time more efficiently and increases the probability that learned skills will be used in situations outside the group.

Several additional purposes served by discussion groups for children of divorce are listed by Pfeifer and Abrams (1984:23). Groups meet the need for common experience sharing with peers; groups validate children's experience that they are facing a special adaptational challenge; groups provide information and clarification about the process of parental divorce; groups provide a context for children to work through developmentally specific issues associated with the divorce process. In addition, groups provide a context for screening children who might need more intensive psychotherapy.

The focus of this research study is on a group intervention programme aimed at providing adolescents with the knowledge and coping-skills required to assist them in the understanding of their situation preparatory to overcoming the possible adverse effects resulting from parental divorce. Group counselling as an intervention process for adolescents of divorce will be explored in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR

GROUP COUNSELLING AND THE ADOLESCENT OF DIVORCE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Literature reveals that Group Counselling is a very effective therapeutic tool that has achieved tremendous success within the context of the school environment. This chapter will provide a brief overview of group counselling, and then discuss the type of group, techniques and goals employed by the researcher for this particular study. An investigation into some objectives and techniques employed by other researchers pertaining to group counselling as a therapeutic technique, focusing specifically on the rationale of school-based divorced groups for adolescents, will also form part of this chapter.

4.2 GROUP COUNSELLING

4.2.1 An Overview

Dinkmeyer and Muro (1977:274) regard group counselling as an interpersonal process led by a professionally trained counsellor and conducted with individuals who are attempting to cope with typical developmental problems. It focuses on the thoughts, feelings, attitudes, values, purposes, behaviour and goals of the individual and of the total group.

Corey (1990:7) states that group counselling has preventative as well as remedial aims. The counselling group generally has a specific focus which may be educational, vocational, social or personal. The group involves an interpersonal process that stresses conscious thoughts, feelings and behaviour and tends to be growth oriented in that its focus is on discovering internal

resources of strength (Corey 1990:7). In other words, participants in a group process may be facing temporary conflicts and situational crises, or they may be trying to change self-defeating behaviour patterns.

The focal point of this research study is the conflict and situational crises pertaining to adolescents of divorce. An examination of relevant literature revealed that several previous attempts to help children overcome the effects of divorce and separation had successfully used a group work format. Group counselling often provides the empathy and support necessary to create the atmosphere of trust that leads to the sharing and exploration of these concerns.

Roizblat et al (1990:300) found that a series of group sessions helped children to express their feelings and to understand aspects of divorce, enabling them to talk about the divorce and making them more mature and independent. This was demonstrated by the children having a greater ability to express thoughts and feelings relating to the divorce and a more realistic approach regarding the possibility of their parents reuniting.

A review of the literature indicates that group counselling is the most effective approach to use when dealing with adolescents. A brief discussion on the benefits of group counselling for adolescents follows.

4.2.2 Group Counselling and the Adolescent

Literature reveals that adolescence is a difficult period that is often characterised by paradoxes. During this important developmental stage, adolescents may strive for closeness, yet they also fear intimacy and often avoid it; they rebel against control, yet they want direction and structure; although they push and test limits imposed on them, they see some limits as a sign of caring; they are not given complete autonomy, yet they are often expected to act as though they were mature adults; they are self-centred and preoccupied with their own world, yet

they are expected to cope with societal demands and to reach outside themselves by expanding their horizons (Barber & Lyons 1994:430).

With all these polarities, it is easy to understand that adolescence is typically a turbulent and fast-moving time, one that can accentuate feelings of loneliness and isolation. Group counselling is especially suitable for adolescents, because it provides a forum in which they can express and explore their conflicting feelings and discover that they are not alone in these conflicts. The group context enables them to question their values openly and to modify those that are found wanting, to learn to communicate with peers and adults, learn from the modelling provided by the counsellor and learn how to accept what others have to offer and to give of themselves in return (Corey 1990:182).

Early adolescence is considered as an optimal time to intervene given the nature, quantity and potential synchrony of normative and non-normative developmental transitions (Rice et al 1993; Simmons & Blyth 1987). Young adolescents are a particularly important target group for intervention programmes, as they are at an age when potentially harmful situations are surfacing and if the onset of negative pathways is not prevented, the transition into adulthood is likely to be particularly difficult. Group intervention programmes provide adolescents with a place in which they can safely experiment with reality and test their limits. A unique value of group counselling is that it lets adolescents be instrumental in one another's growth –the group members help one another in the struggle for self-understanding.

The success of group counselling with adolescents may be attributed to the fact that adolescents are highly influenced by their peers. The peer group during adolescence remains one of the major sources of support in attempting to provide solutions to the typical adolescent under pressure for self-recognition of himself as a child of his past and an adult of his future (Hogan 1980:62). The group setting provides adolescents with the opportunity to struggle through the confused issues that adolescence typically creates. It provides support against

common enemies, guidelines for acceptable behaviour, a forum in which to discuss issues that can be safely explored only with those who are equally unsure, and tolerance for uncertainties and inconsistencies concerning ultimate goals (Hogan 1980:64). The group situation often provides the adolescent with the support he needs to negotiate this crucial developmental stage successfully.

From the above discussion it seems possible that group counselling is a very effective intervention technique which may be utilised not only to convey information to adolescents, but also to address the conflicts and crises that may arise as a result of parental divorce. The next section will focus on the organisation of these group sessions.

4.2.3 Group Composition

Careful planning is needed for the composition of a group. What must first be established is who should be included in the group and whether it will be a homogenous (a group comprised of similar characteristics e.g. adolescents of parental divorce) or a heterogenous (comprised of different characteristics) group. Consideration should be given to factors such as age, sex, school grade, intelligence, socio-economic background, prior acquaintance and personality factors. A decision must also be made about the size of the group, the place where group meetings will be held, the time when sessions will be held and the length of each session. The leader must also decide whether it will be an open or a closed group. If it is an open group situation, then new members will be allowed to join the group at any time, whereas if it is a closed group, then no new members will be allowed to join once the group has been established.

This section will have a brief look at the factors involved in the composition of a homogenous, personal-growth group and what the group will consist of.

4.2.3.1 A Homogenous Group

Selecting a homogenous as opposed to a heterogenous group is normally determined by the goals of that particular group. Homogenous groups are based on a common interest or problem. According to Corey (1990:87) a group composed of homogenous members is more functional than one composed of people from different populations. An adolescent divorce intervention group is considered to be homogenous. This type of group focuses exclusively on the unique developmental problems adolescents face, such as those related to interpersonal relationships, sexual development and identity, and the struggle toward autonomy (Corey 1990:87). In a group designed for divorce intervention and composed exclusively of adolescents, the participants are encouraged to express many feelings that they have kept to themselves. The group process enables them to interact with members of their own age, enabling them to share their concerns and receive support and understanding.

This research study will investigate the benefits of an intervention programme designed for adolescents in a closed, homogenous, self-help group setting. A brief look at self-help groups will now be provided.

4.2.3.2 Self-Help Groups

Self-help groups are normally composed of people with common interests and they provide a support system that helps reduce psychological stress and gives the members the incentive to begin changing their lives. Riordan and Beggs (1988:14) reviewed self-help groups and found that they consist of organizations of people with similar emotional, physical, or behavioural problems or a common concern or affliction.

This particular research study emphasises peer support as an important tool towards relieving psychological distress and achieving positive behavioural change. The self-help group will be homogenous, consisting of adolescents from divorced home environments. It will be a closed group, as once members have been selected, no new members will be allowed to join.

Selection and preparation of group members will be discussed in the following section.

4.2.3.3 *Group Selection and Preparation*

The most effective method of group selection and preparation is when the group counsellor holds a personal interview with each prospective member. This interview enables the counsellor to evaluate whether or not the client is suitable for group counselling. Corey (1990:13) believes that the interview clarifies the purpose of the group, sets the ground rules for behaviour in the group and it allows the counsellor to assess each individual's readiness for group counselling. During this preliminary interview, information pertaining to group counselling can be given to each client. Expectations of group members should also be clarified as well as the disposal of any misconceptions the individual may have about group counselling.

It must be emphasized that entrance into the group is purely voluntary and no pressure will be placed on the individual to join the group. The essential points that should be covered during the initial interview, according to Corey (1990:14) should include:

- the purpose of the group
- the concern of the individual and his willingness to share his concern with the group
- the involvement of the individual in helping other members of the group

There are no specific guidelines for group composition. The composition of the group will ultimately be determined by the boundaries and the therapeutic goals previously established by the counsellor based on what the counsellor hopes to achieve within the group process.

A discussion on the size of the group will formulate the next part of this section.

4.2.3.4 *Size of the Group*

The size of the group plays an important role in the group's dynamic. The group's size may depend on factors such as the age of the clients, the type of group, the experience of the group counsellor and the type of problems explored (Corey, 1990:91). Yalom (1985:284) believes that a group of seven members is an ideal size, but the size can vacillate between five to ten members. A group with less than five members will probably not function as a group as the dynamic tends to be lost. The bigger the group however, the less time there is available for each member to work through his/her problems. It is possible that one or two of the members may leave the group, so it is advisable to start with nine or ten members. Ohlsen et al (1988:42) believe that six to eight members are ideal for adolescent groups.

Eight adolescents between the ages of thirteen and seventeen will be selected to participate in the divorce intervention group for the purpose of this study. The duration of the intervention programme is an important consideration when formulating a group.

4.2.3.5 *Duration*

The total number of sessions to be held and the time allocated for each session must be established at the beginning. Jacobs et al (1988:39) state that it is a

good idea to establish certain boundaries, as the clients are then aware of how much time they have to work through their problems.

Factors concerning time constraints in the school environment include, for example, the availability of the counsellor, the length of the school term, the length of the school's periods and what periods are available in the timetable.

There are no specific rules determining how often a group should meet. Jacobs et al (1988:40) provide the following determinant: "...neither so often nor so infrequently as to defeat the overall purpose." For the purpose of this research study, the divorce intervention group will run for a period of ten weeks, with one-and-a-half hour sessions each Wednesday afternoon. The researcher believes that one session per week will be adequate.

If pupils are involved in the school context, the counsellor must ensure that written permission from the parents is obtained. Permission from the Headmaster or Headmistress and from the relevant Education Department is also required.

4.2.3.6 Location

Since a poor setting can set a negative tone that will adversely affect the cohesion of the group, an effort should be made to secure a meeting place that will ensure confidentiality and make it possible to do in-depth work with the adolescents. According to Yalom (1985:286) a meeting place that is convenient, private, has a certain degree of attractiveness and allows for face-to-face interaction is crucial. The lighting should also be good and the chairs comfortable. The chairs should all be of equal height, otherwise it would be better for members to sit on the carpet. The best seating arrangement is in a circle, so that all members can see one another and it is best not to use tables, as they can form a barrier between members of the group (Ohlsen et al 1988: 42-43).

The group leader plays a vital role in the success of the group programme. A brief investigation into the role of the group leader and the qualities required to effectively lead a group will be discussed.

4.3 THE ROLE OF THE GROUP LEADER

The techniques, skills and personal characteristics that a group leader brings into the group may determine the success or failure of that group programme. According to Corey (1990:52) group leaders bring to every group their personal qualities, values, and life experiences. In order to promote growth in members' lives, leaders need to live growth-oriented lives themselves. Leaders need to have the courage to engage in self-appraisal themselves, if they wish to foster honest self-investigation in others. The group leader often acts as a role-model to members of the group. The leaders' behaviour is often the most effective component towards group cohesion and self-disclosure as group members "see" the leader demonstrating positive patterns of behaviour and don't just "hear" what type of behaviour is acceptable (Corey 1990:52).

Corey (1990:8) believes that it is the role of the group leader to facilitate interaction among group members, helping them to learn from one another, assisting them in establishing personal goals and encouraging them to translate their insights into concrete plans that involve taking action outside the group. It is this fundamental belief that forms the foundation of this research study, as the group leader will attempt to facilitate positive interaction among group members, discouraging false beliefs pertaining to parental divorce and to get members to generalise that which is learned in the group to other areas of their lives.

Having assessed the role of the group leader, it is also important to determine the role of the school in a divorce intervention programme. An investigation into the goals employed by various researchers of group intervention programmes for children of divorce and the techniques employed by them and by the researcher of this particular study will also be highlighted.

4.4 GROUP COUNSELLING FOR ADOLESCENTS OF DIVORCE

4.4.1 School-based Intervention Programmes

The role of the school has already been mentioned (see section 3.8), but a further investigation into the rationale of a school-based programme for children of divorce is pertinent at this point.

It has been well established that parental conflict and divorce are related to adverse emotional effects on the children involved (see section 3.1). Among these are increased impulsivity, distractibility, aggressiveness, acting-out behaviour and overall lowered academic achievement (Wallerstein & Blakeslee 1989). The effects divorce can have on children relate to both the family and society. During divorce, social support for the family is typically lacking. Wallerstein & Blakeslee (1989) point out that unlike other family crises, during divorce, social support systems tend to fall away. A death in the family brings aid and comfort from others. Even after natural disasters, friends and neighbours gather to assist those in need. When the crisis is divorce, friends are afraid they will be forced to choose sides and neighbours think it is none of their business. When the family structure collapses, the child's world is often left without much needed emotional support. The lack of emotional support these children are experiencing can be improved by offering interventions through the schools.

Pedro-Carroll et al (1992:117) found that school-based interventions help counter the adverse effects of divorce. They argued that during the time surrounding the divorce, many parents are under tremendous stress and may not be capable or available to provide the support and guidance children need, thus the school professionals become a critical source of support, nurturance and stability. Providing such services in the schools allows for grouping children by developmental level, normalizes the experience and allows for the development of an ongoing support system. Goldman and King (1985:281) believe that during

familial disruptions schools can play an important role as a source of nurturance and continuity as well as a place where age appropriate developmental tasks can be pursued. Interventions are primary way schools can assist children with effectively coping and can promote the child's adjustment to the new situation (Freeman & Couchman 1985:46).

Stolberg and Mahler (1994:149) investigated a school-based programme that offered emotional support to children of divorce. They found that although adolescents are the most openly upset by the divorce and are the most expressive of their feelings of anger, sadness, shame and embarrassment, they were more likely to seek support from people outside the family such as peers or school personnel. By offering the adolescents emotional support, a significant reduction in clinical symptomology resulted.

Another school-based study found that: "Children of divorce who perceived themselves as having more overall support had lower scores on measures of post divorce difficulties, anxiety and worry and higher scores on measures of openness about the divorce and positive resources" (Cowen et al. 1990:727).

The implication of these studies is that emotional support in the school setting is effective in helping children of divorce cope with their situations. The accessibility of school-based groups is an important consideration. Hodges (1986:245) emphasizes this point by claiming that parents are often willing to allow children to participate in school programmes because they involve no time, energy or money. He therefore concludes that school-based programmes may reach children who do not have the support of private therapy.

The school seems to be the most natural setting in which to offer a school-based intervention programme. However, the needs of the children have to be addressed before such a programme can be implemented. A tremendous amount of research has been conducted on the types of goals that should be

attained for effective divorce intervention to take place. These goals will be explored in this next section.

4.4.2 Goals for Group Intervention

Smilansky (1992:96) sees that all efforts on behalf of children of divorce should be aimed at helping children conceptualize divorce correctly. She writes that good conceptualization must be on both the general and the personal levels. First the child must understand the five general concepts of divorce, namely:

- Divorce is a universal but not inevitable phenomenon;
- It is irreversible;
- Children are not the cause of their parents' divorce;
- Even after divorce, children belong to both parents;
- After divorce, families may take on a new structure;
- Divorced parents can remarry and their children can maintain ties with biological and step-parents.

Second, the child needs to apply general concepts to his individual case. Smilansky (1992:96) believes that children need to be helped to make this transfer from the general to the personal, and they need to be helped to reach emotional acceptance of these concepts and their implications. Support groups for children of divorce are seen as promoting this.

Pedro-Carroll et al. (1992:121) developed the Children of Divorce Intervention Programme (CODIP). CODIP is a preventative intervention that addresses the emotional and behavioural problems many children experience when parents are divorcing. The programme has several specific goals which are to:

- Provide a supportive group environment;
- Help children identify and express their feelings;
- Promote understanding of divorce-related concepts and clarify divorce-related misconceptions;

- Develop skills in social problem-solving, effective communication, support-seeking and appropriate expressions of anger;
- Enhance children's positive perceptions of themselves and their families;
- Foster parent-child communication;
- Facilitate a smooth group termination with maintenance of support.

The most central finding regarding the effectiveness of the programme was that it benefitted children's adjustment. Evidence showed that there was diminished anxiety and fewer negative attributions about themselves and their families. Results suggested that participants also acquired more realistic perceptions concerning situations they could and could not control.

Most recently Pedro-Carroll et al (1997:8) published research examining the effects of their CODIP programme on five-year-old and six-year-old children. Their results show improvements for the treated children on teacher, parent, child and counsellor measures of adjustment.

The main goal of Sanders and Riester's (1996:148) school-based intervention programme was to enhance children's understanding of divorce and to gain insight into their thoughts and feelings about divorce. Another goal was to help children learn ways of coping with problems associated with their parents' divorce.

Sanders and Riester (1996:149) listed general characteristics that would be included in the sessions, namely:

- What is divorce?
- Why people get divorced;
- Feelings experienced;
- Coping with feelings;
- Guilt and divided loyalties;
- Familial changes;

- Custody and new living arrangements;
- Step-families;

Analysis of their programme revealed that there was an improvement in peer relations and feelings about the divorce appeared to be normalized, which helped them feel more comfortable or self-confident in interactions with peers.

As can be seen from the above discussion, generating goals for counselling groups is predicated on existing knowledge about children's responses to divorce, their developmental needs and factors predicting post-divorce adjustment.

Warren et al (1986:101) provide a note of caution to group counsellors: although children of divorce are at risk, it cannot be assumed that all children of divorce will have serious problems. Some children will function normally after a divorce. Warren et al. (1986:102) indicated that: "The majority of children show consistent evidence of resiliency and adaptation". Counsellors therefore, must be wary of putting additional stress on children of divorce by expecting them to have problems when in fact they do not.

Various approaches and techniques have been used to maximize the benefits of group intervention programmes for children. Some of these approaches will be discussed in the next section, specifically highlighting the techniques employed by the researcher for this particular study.

4.5 APPROACHES TO AND TECHNIQUES OF GROUP COUNSELLING

Various authors have mapped-out designs for school-based intervention programmes that collectively take into consideration the developmental stage of the child, parental involvement and culture and background (Pedro-Carroll et al. 1997; Wallerstein & Kelly 1989; Goldman & King 1985).

The techniques employed in the CODIP programme developed by Pedro-Carroll and Alpert-Gillis (1997:8) focus on the post-divorce adjustment of the child. Their first three sessions have an affective component designed to catalyze expression of divorce-related feelings and the sharing of common experience. The next three sessions have a cognitive skill-building component where children are taught a sequence for resolving interpersonal problems. The next three sessions deal with anger expression and control. As previously stated, this programme proved to be very effective in helping children adjust to parental divorce.

Stolberg and Mahler (1989, 1994) designed a fourteen-week, school-based intervention programme whereby participants were assigned to one of four groups, namely: support, support and skill building, support, skill building and transfer, or parent training.

The skill building component was dedicated to helping children not only label feelings, but also associate them with causal events and to be able to express feelings about events by combining events with feelings about them. The results of Stolberg and Mahler's model yielded significant adjustment gains in those who participated in the skill-building component. There was also a reduction in internalizing and externalizing behaviour and total pathology.

The majority of authors reviewed in the literature incorporated structured activities in their groups. These structured activities were seen as ice-breakers and served as introductory stimuli for discussion. The activities also stimulated self-disclosure and provided a less threatening atmosphere for participants. The structured activities include videos and movies, drawings, role-play, board games, skits, puppets and bibliotherapy (where sections of relevant books are read and discussed in the group). Developmental level and age-appropriateness must be taken into consideration when selecting structured activities.

A brief discussion of the activities and techniques used in this research study is now presented.

4.5.1 Ice Breakers

This term was borrowed from Crosbie-Burnett and Newcomer's (1989:156) multimodal approach to group counselling. Ice breakers are non-threatening activities used by the group counsellor to introduce the session and to stimulate participation and interaction amongst the group members. The Ice breakers used in this study were in the form of "personal interviews" where participants were divided into pairs and had to interview each other in order to obtain as much information about that person in the space of five minutes. Each pair was given the opportunity to report back to the group on what they had learned about each other. Another effective ice breaker was to get the participants to choose an animal to represent themselves. Once they had chosen their animal, they then had to explain to the group why they had made that particular choice and the group members provided personal feedback on choices made by other members.

4.5.2 The Collage

A Collage is a projective therapeutic technique that enables group participants to place some psychological distance between themselves and their divorce situation. Each participant was given an A3 sheet of paper with the instructions to divide the sheet into three equal sections, and then to label the sections, past, present and future. The participants then cut out pictures from magazines that represented their past, present and future family situations, feelings and ambitions. These were then presented to the group and feedback was provided from other group members.

The Collage has tremendous stimulus value and offers participants the opportunity to project their emotions and possibly to gain a better perspective on their current situation.

4.5.3 Drawings

In the third session, the group participants were given the task of drawing a picture of their family prior to the divorce. This technique parallels the procedure for the Kinetic-Family-Drawing (Burns & Kaufman 1972) in which children are asked to draw a picture of their family engaged in an activity. As demonstrated by the Kinetic-Family-Drawing, children express their emotions and concerns in their drawing. The drawings done by the members of the group, were not assessed according to the parameters of the Kinetic-Family-Drawing, but instead, were used as a further stimulus for discussion on parental divorce and family system issues. Once the members had finished their drawings, followed by a brief discussion about the drawing, they were given the instruction to tear the drawing into smaller, but manageable, pieces. A new piece of paper was then provided upon which the participants then reconstructed their “broken” family.

The aim of the exercise was to get participants to understand that despite parental divorce and despite the cracks and “tears” in the family system, a family unit could still exist.

4.5.4 Writing Exercises

Getting group members to write down a specific plan of action can be very meaningful. The members were also asked to keep a journal of their feelings throughout the ten-week sessions. This often helps children to put their thoughts and feelings into perspective. The members were also given the task of critically analyzing their group experience, by writing down what the group meant to them and how they perceived their group experience.

4.5.5 Family Modelling

A description of this particular technique is provided by Jacobs et al. (1988:170-171). They state that the counsellor helps the individual to arrange his family the way he experiences them. For each family member, a group participant is chosen and "placed". For example, father and brother sit together on one side and mother and daughter sit together on the other side. This helps the participant to understand how his or her family functions. This technique is regarded as a practical expression of the Kinetic-Family-Drawing used in therapy. This exercise must be followed immediately by a discussion in the group, as feelings pertaining to the family situation must be dealt with in the "here and now" within the context of the group situation.

4.5.6 Role Playing

Role-playing entails acting a part in an important "production" (Corey 1990:227). It can be a very effective technique whereby new modes of behaviour are learnt. Playing roles enables participants to get in contact with aspects of themselves of which they are not aware. Role-playing is often characterized by a high degree of emotional intensity and often leads to a catharsis and some degree of insight. Feedback from other group members is essential. Role-playing can serve three primary functions according to Corey (1990:228):

First, it can be used as a method of "diagnosis". As members' role-play various situations, the counsellor has ample opportunities to learn more about how they think and feel as well as what they do. Second, role-playing can also be used as a means of "instruction". Through a modelling process members learn more effective interpersonal skills by observing a variety of ways to deal with problems. Finally, it can be used as a method of "training", for by getting involved in the active process of playing roles, members often develop new insights and new coping skills.

As can be seen from the above examples, there are many therapeutic techniques available to the counsellor. An important consideration when applying techniques is the developmental stage of the group. It is also important to ensure that the various techniques do not take the place of effectively working through the problems. The counsellor must ensure that the climate of trust, openness and genuineness is not damaged. All the information gained from the various techniques must be dealt with effectively in the group context.

4.6 CONCLUSION

The information provided throughout this study emphasizes the fact that divorce can be a very stressful time for children. Research has shown that school-based intervention programmes are very effective in assisting adolescents in particular to cope with the changing family system. Various therapeutic techniques are employed to help adolescents deal with the often confusing and painful situation following parental divorce.

Chapter Five will focus on the empirical investigation conducted by the researcher for implementation in this particular study.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE EMPIRICAL DESIGN

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Having reviewed the literature on adolescent development (Chapter Two) and the impact of divorce on adolescent development (Chapter Three) it is evident that divorce is a stressful event that can have serious developmental consequences if not addressed timeously. Research shows (Chapter Four) that school-based intervention programmes have been successful in providing the adolescent with much needed support at the time of crisis in his/her life.

In order to determine the effects of an intervention programme on adolescents of parental divorce, it is necessary to provide details of the empirical investigation used in this research study. A summary of the research design will be provided.

5.2 GENERAL STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem being investigated in this research study has been stated in Chapter One. After theoretical analysis of empirical research, the problem is formulated as follows:

Will a divorce intervention programme provide adolescents with the support and skills necessary to facilitate a deeper understanding of their feelings about their parents' divorce? In other words, the purpose of this study is to determine the effects of a group-counselling programme on adolescents of parental divorce.

5.3 DEMARCATION OF PROBLEM

Certain hypotheses are stated to further demarcate the problem and to direct the research study.

5.3.1 Hypotheses

5.3.1.1 *Hypothesis One:* The group intervention programme will facilitate deeper self-understanding through reflection and clarification from the group counsellor.

5.3.1.2 *Hypothesis Two:* The adolescents' interpersonal relationships will improve after exposure to a group intervention programme.

5.3.1.3 *Hypothesis Three:* The adolescents' self-concepts will improve after exposure to a group intervention programme.

5.3.1.4 *Hypothesis four:* The group intervention programme will relieve some of the anxiety experienced by the adolescents.

5.3.1.5 *Hypothesis Five:* If depressive symptoms are evident in the adolescents, exposure to a group intervention programme will help alleviate some of these symptoms.

5.3.1.6 *Hypothesis Six:* The group intervention programme will correct adolescents' irrational beliefs pertaining to parental divorce.

5.3.1.7 *Hypothesis Seven:* The group intervention programme will facilitate support among adolescents' peers.

5.4 SPECIFIC GOALS

This research study will investigate to what extent the following goals can be realised in the group process:

- 5.4.1 To determine the effect of the intervention programme on the adolescents' ability to gain a deeper understanding of the self, and assess the skills they have developed to deal with parental divorce effectively.
- 5.4.2 To determine the effect of the intervention programme on adolescents' inter-personal relationships.
- 5.4.3 To determine the effect of the intervention programme on adolescents' self-concept.
- 5.4.4 To determine the level of anxiety in adolescents after exposure to the intervention programme.
- 5.4.5 To determine the level of depressive symptoms in adolescents after exposure to the intervention programme.
- 5.4.6 To determine the effect of the intervention programme on correcting irrational beliefs pertaining to parental divorce.
- 5.4.7 To determine the level of peer support gained in the intervention programme.

Motivation for the group intervention programme has been summarised in the above section through statement of the problem and providing specific goals that will be explored in the group process. The research methodology used in this study will be discussed in the next section.

5.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.5.1 Group Composition

The group comprised of eight adolescents consisting of four boys and four girls, ranging between the ages of thirteen and seventeen years. The members were selected from various English medium Government High Schools in the area and all came from white, middle-class socio-economic backgrounds.

5.5.2 Method of Investigation

Although this research is based on a school-based intervention programme, as members were selected from different schools in the area, meetings were held at one particular school on a Wednesday afternoon, after official school hours. This group was intended to serve as the pilot group for possible integration of the divorce intervention programme in the school curriculum.

A letter was sent to the various schools (see appendix I) and names of possible group participants were put forward. An interview was conducted with the custodial parent of each of the participants, to explain the group process, get their permission in writing and to obtain certain background information.

An initial interview was then held with each of the respondents. During this interview, the counsellor questioned the respondents about their feelings, beliefs and attitudes towards their parents' divorce. The intervention programme was explained to the respondents, detailing group objectives, time of each session and the duration of the programme. The respondents were then given the choice to join the programme or not.

The eight selected members were then subjected to a battery of tests. These tests were again administered at the end of the ten sessions. The members were also asked to critically assess their involvement in the group process.

5.5.3 Test Media

Certain Test Media was implemented as part of the pre- and post-test evaluation procedure. The tests used were the IPAT Anxiety Scale, the Thematic Apperception Test, Beck's Depression Inventory and the Family Functioning in Adolescence Questionnaire. A description of each test, the evaluation procedure and the scoring system used for the purpose of this research study will be discussed in the next section.

5.5.3.1 *The IPAT-Anxiety Scale (IPAT)*

The IPAT Anxiety Scale was developed from extensive research and practice as a means of acquiring clinical anxiety information rapidly, objectively and in a standard manner. It is a brief, non-stressful, clinically valid questionnaire for measuring anxiety, applicable to all but the lowest educational levels (Cattell et al 1986:1). According to Cattell et al (1986:1) the scale provides an accurate appraisal of free anxiety levels, supplementing clinical diagnosis, and facilitating all kinds of research or mass screening operations where very little diagnostic or assessment time can be spent with each testee.

Considering the total score on the scale, an individual sten score of 1, 2 or 3 indicates stability, security and general mental health. Stens of 4, 5, 6 and 7 are still in the "normal range" and need occasion no further particular inquiry if the individual (or group) has no other indications of psychological difficulty. A sten of 8, 9 or 10 indicates definite psychological morbidity, which could have adverse effects on schoolwork and social-emotional adjustment.

The IPAT Anxiety Scale is a useful tool to determine the permanence of very high or very low anxiety levels, the participant's sensitivity to therapy, stress or other conditions and situations.

5.5.3.2 The Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)

The TAT is one of the most frequently used tests in the psychological world. Apperception is regarded as an organism's meaningful interpretation of perception, following the definition by Herbart (1972:15): "The process by which new experience is assimilated to and transformed by the residuum of past experience of any individual to form a new whole. The residuum of past experience is called apperceptive mass". This definition and the use of the term "apperception" suggest that there can be a hypothetical process of non-interpreted perception, and that every subjective interpretation constitutes a dynamically meaningful apperception distortion. The TAT therefore provides a useful interpretation of the individual and his life world and is a valuable tool for research, psychotherapy and vocational guidance (Du Toit & Piek 1974:9).

The test presents drawings of reasonably structured situations of people, objects and events. The person is then free to react on what he perceives, but the nature of the stimulus still channels the reaction in a specific direction (Du Toit & Piek 1974:11). This view is supported by Holt (1951:181) who states that the TAT pictures permit more or less systematic exploration of specific areas of potential conflict of motivational importance, and the subjects perceptual reactions to the pictures yield an additional source of valuable data about the way he looks at his world.

Du Toit and Piek (1974:12) believe that the TAT is a useful tool to understand behaviour. Bellak (1954:34) supports this view by stating that "The Thematic Apperception Test is a technique for the investigation of the dynamics of personality as it manifests itself in inter-personal relations and in the apperception or meaningful interpretation of the environment".

The TAT was used in this research study to elicit possible problem areas pertaining to divorce issues and then at the end of the ten-week sessions to

determine possible areas of growth that had taken place. The interpretive data of the respondents will not be attached to this study.

An in-depth analysis of the TAT responses will not be submitted for the purpose of this study, but a general assessment will be made according to the following:

CARD 1 – Stimulus Value – Relationship towards self.

- How is a new situation approached?
- Is the person reticent or do they charge in?
- Is it intellectual or emotional?
- Is it active or passive?
- What is the person's attitude towards authority figures and how does he/she react to the demands of life?
- How is success achieved?
- Is it in fantasy or reality?
- Are elements of depression evident?

CARD 2 – Stimulus Value – Interpersonal Relationships

- Has the person constructed a family scene?
- How are interpersonal relationships in the family perceived?
- Is the environment perceived as supportive or isolating?

CARD 3 – Stimulus Value – Frustration and Aggression

- How does the person cope with frustration?
- Is the aggression directed internally or externally?

CARD 4 – Stimulus Value – Male/Female Relationships

- How is the male attitude towards the female perceived?
- Is it regarded as protective or aggressive?

- Are themes of jealousy evident?

CARD 6GF – Stimulus Value – The Father-Daughter Relationship

- What is the person's attitude towards the figure of authority?
- What is the nature of the father-daughter relationship?

CARD 7BM – Stimulus Value – The Mother-Son Relationship

- What is the nature of the mother-son relationship?
- What is the person's attitude towards the figure of authority?

CARD 7GF – Stimulus Value – The Mother-Daughter Relationship

- What is the nature of the mother-daughter relationship?
- What is the person's attitude towards the feminine sex role and motherhood?

CARD 8BM – Stimulus Value – The Ambition Card

- What relationships are identified in the card?
- Is there aggression?
- Against whom is the aggression directed?
- Are career aspirations identified?

CARD 13MF – Stimulus Value – Sex Card

- What is the person's attitude towards male and female sexuality?
- Are sexual implications acknowledged?
- If so, how is it described?
- Are there feelings of guilt?

- Who carries the blame?
- Are there indicators of aggression towards the female figure?

CARD 14 – Stimulus Value – Gender Identification

- Is the gender of the figure identified as male or female?
- Does the person indicate a fear of darkness?
- Does the person reveal possible suicidal tendencies?
- If so, does contemplation or rationalization of suicide take place?

5.5.3.3 *Beck's Depression Inventory (BDI)*

This questionnaire was designed and developed by Beck et al (1961). The Beck Depression Inventory is based on the premise that the number of symptoms the person experiences will intensify as depression increases. Beck's Inventory makes allowances for this possibility. The items on the BDI were determined from clinical observations (Beck et al 1961).

The items listed on Beck's Depression Inventory include the attitudes and symptoms reflected in the vast amount of research that has been done on depression. The Inventory consists of twenty-one statements reflecting various attitudes and symptoms. Each category describes a specific behavioural manifestation of depression and consists of four graded statements. The person must evaluate himself according to the listed statements. A numerical value ranging between nought and three is attributed to a particular statement depending on the degree of intensity.

Valuations of the depression scale graded as follows:

- 0-9 No Depression
- 10-15 Mild Depression
- 16-23 Moderate Depression
- 24-63 Severe Depression (Branberry & Olivier 1978)

Beck's Depression Inventory will be used to determine whether group members present with any depressive symptoms at the beginning of the intervention process and then will be assessed again at the end of the programme to evaluate whether a decrease in symptoms occurred over this period.

Divorce impacts on inter-personal relationships, especially those within the family. The Family Functioning in Adolescence Questionnaire was used to determine how the single-parent family functions as a system.

5.5.3.4 *The Family Functioning in Adolescence Questionnaire (FFAQ)*

The Family Functioning in Adolescence Questionnaire was developed to provide an instrument for assessing the psychosocial health of the family during the stage of adolescence, as perceived by the adolescent. The FFAQ is based on a model that integrates family systems research and the developmental tasks of the adolescent.

Research on the family systems model indicates six dimensions determining healthy psychosocial functioning of the family. These, and some of the more important aspects of each, are as follows:

Structure

According to Beavers (1977; 1981) organisational structures in the family have clear but permeable boundaries around individual members and a cohesive

parental subsystem. Structure in the family implies, focusing on healthy models of adult authority namely, models of a good marriage, models for practice in problem solving, models for a coherent and appropriate system of values, self-control of anger, a positive mother-adolescent relationship and a positive father-adolescent relationship.

Affect

Beavers (1981) defines affect as "a broad range of affective expressiveness ". Affect in the family focuses on expression of feelings, acceptability of expressing both positive and negative feelings, feelings of being supported in the family and sensitivity to others. It may also include needs of independence and acceptance in the family, focusing on a need for a sense of belonging, a need for privacy, a need for independence, fair punishment, being trusted, a good mother-adolescent relationship, experiencing a positive attitude of parents towards friendships with opposite sex, rather wanting to please parents than friends in risky situations and being listened to.

Communication

Clear and direct communication in the family focuses on positive feedback, a positive, pleasant environment, clear messages, self-assertion and positive models for practicing problem solving (Beavers 1981).

Behaviour Control

This questionnaire looks at both *inappropriate* and *democratic* behaviour controls. *Inappropriate* behaviour control focuses on a negative increase in independence from family. Rather wanting to please peers than parents in risky situations, inappropriate degree of behaviour control (parents either too lenient or too strict) and a strong peer group influence. *Democratic* behaviour control focuses on healthy independence from family, participation in decision-making

processes, proper sex guidance and training in economic management (Olson et al 1979).

Value Transmission

Value Transmission implies the transmission of ethical standards and social values by parents to children (Lewis 1978). Two types of value transmission orientations are assessed. First, *other people and religious-oriented*, focusing on sensitivity to other people, respect for other people, care for other people, development of religious values and encouragement of moral behaviour (honesty). Second, *individual development-oriented*, focusing on development of abilities to full potential, development of intellectual abilities and obtaining best qualifications and recognition of growth towards adulthood.

External Systems

External Systems indicate clear but permeable external boundaries of the family in its relationship with systems outside the family system (Beavers 1981). It focuses on participation in sport, community life, church and future career planning.

The framework, within which the FFAQ has been designed, focuses on the developmental tasks of the individual family members, as well as on those of the family as a unit, during this particular stage of the family life cycle (Rowe 1981).

According to Minuchin (1974:47): "Human experience of identity has two elements – a sense of belonging and a sense of being separate. The laboratory in which these ingredients are mixed and dispensed is the family, the matrix of identity". The qualitative change from the earlier stage that marks the family life cycle of having an adolescent child, is induced by the need to change the balance between belonging and separateness, and to encourage the young person to become increasingly autonomous. This study has already indicated

that families, who meet the need of adolescents to grow towards independence, provide an environment conducive to high levels of psychosocial adjustment.

The forty-two items of the FFAQ yield six separate dimensions, each of which is related to one or more developmental tasks to be mastered during the adolescent stage of life. A minimum score of 7 and a maximum score of 28 may be obtained. Stanines are then determined for each of the above mentioned dimensions, ranging from the minimum to the maximum score. A stanine score of 1, 2 or 3 will indicate below average family functioning in a particular dimension, a stanine score of 4, 5 or 6 will indicate average family functioning in a particular dimension and a stanine score of 7, 8 or 9 will indicate above average family functioning in a particular dimension.

The FFAQ will be used in this study to determine how the adolescent perceives the functioning of his or her family. The questionnaire will be completed at both the beginning and the end of the ten-week sessions to evaluate if any changes in perception took place during the time of the group intervention process.

5.5.3.5 *The Adolescent Self-Concept Scale (ASCS)*

The self-concept is defined by Vrey (1974:95 – translation) as follows: “The self-concept refers to the configuration of convictions about myself and to attitudes towards myself which are dynamic and, of which I am or may become conscious”. The self-concept is of critical importance to a person, both in his psychological existence and in his coexistence with others. This statement is supported by Purkey (1970:12) who states that the self-concept as a frame of reference, as a basis for evaluation and as a method of associating with others underlines the attitudinal aspect, namely its inclination towards stable patterns of action and behaviour.

Vrey (1974:2) developed the ASCS after an in-depth analysis and description of the ego, the self and the self-concept. He found that it related closely to the

Tennessee Self-Concept Scale designed by Fitts (1965) and designed the ASCS on these findings. Vrey (1974:3) differentiates between different dimensions of the self-concept that in turn, constitute the structure of the self-concept. The dimensions that determine the structure of the self-concept are:

- The physical self - the self in relation to physical aspects
- The personal self - the self in its own psychological relationships
- The family self - the self in family relationships
- The social self - the self in social relationships
- The moral-ethical self, or the self in relation to moral and religious norms, and self-criticism.

The quality of the individual's experience of self-respect and self-esteem in each of the relationships, both separately and jointly, indicates how he perceives himself (Vrey 1974:3).

The items in the Adolescent Self-Concept Scale are formulated in such a way, that the responses distinguish between a positive and a negative self-concept. A positive self-concept consists of a positive or favourable evaluation of the self in relation to certain values (Vrey 1974:4).

A score that will be determined out of 100, will indicate a high, medium or low self-concept. A score of 28-55, with a stanine of 1, 2 or 3 will indicate a low self-concept; a score of 56-70, with a stanine of 4, 5 or 6 will indicate a medium self-concept, while a score of 71-90 with stanines of 7, 8 or 9 will indicate a high self-concept (Vrey 1974:20).

The ASCS will be used for the purpose of this research study, to determine the self-concept of the participants at the beginning of the intervention programme. The ASCS will again be administered at the end of the programme to determine whether the intervention programme had an effect on the participants' self-concept.

5.5.3.6 Other Evaluation Media

Other evaluation media will be used in the course of the programme. Through pedagogical observations, attention will be paid to body language, tone of voice, attitudes and facial expressions of participants. At the end of the programme, participants will be requested to evaluate their participation in the group intervention process critically. The aim of this evaluation is to determine whether the group participants found the programme meaningful and whether it assisted them in being able to deal with issues pertaining to their parents' divorce.

5.6 CONCLUSION

The above mentioned media will be used to determine the effects of the divorce intervention programme on the group participants. The group intervention programme used in this research study and an analysis of the test results will be provided in Chapter Six.

CHAPTER SIX

THE DIVORCE INTERVENTION PROGRAMME

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Research has found that school-based intervention programmes for adolescents help counter the adverse effects of divorce (Pedro-Carroll et al 1992:117). Chapter Six will focus on the intervention programme used for the purpose of this study. Certain media were introduced before the programme was initiated. The same media were then used to determine the effects of the programme on the adolescents of parental divorce.

A comprehensive analysis of each group member will not be provided in this study, as this is not an in-depth study of individual members. It focuses instead on the cumulative effect on the group as a whole. This Chapter will provide a brief description of the ten-week divorce intervention programme, followed by a personal image of each group member including the following:

- i) Background history
- ii) Reasons for inclusion in the group
- iii) Pre- and Post-test Psychometric Results
- iv) A summary of all the results

The pre-and post-test results will be tabulated to quantitatively identify the cumulative effect on the group as a whole and to determine the outcome of the divorce intervention programme. Hypotheses will then be accepted or rejected according to these results.

The divorce intervention programme will be discussed in the next section.

6.2 THE DIVORCE INTERVENTION PROGRAMME

The Divorce Intervention Programme consisted of ten, one-and-a-half hour group sessions. Group sessions were preceded by an individual interview with each respondent, followed by a psychometric evaluation. The individual interview was an important part of the pre-group process and will be discussed in the next section.

6.2.1 Individual Interview

An individual interview was held with each of the respondents to gain certain background information and to determine their attitudes, beliefs and possible problem areas pertaining to the parental divorce. The group process was also explained to each of the respondents. The following factors were emphasized:

- Confidentiality pertaining to all that was shared and discussed in the group
- Honesty and the willingness to share their problems with the group and to offer support to other group members
- Commitment to attend each session and to participate in the programme
- To perform a series of psychometric tests before and after the programme

6.3 THE GROUP PROCESS

The main objective of the group process was to create a climate of openness, honesty and genuineness. A constant striving towards achieving the general principles of group dynamics would be made including, the development of group trust and cohesion through the encouragement of group interaction, the acquisition of social skills, role-modelling positive behaviour patterns, encouraging inter-personal growth and the expression of feelings.

The general goals of the group sessions were as follows:

- Improving inter-personal relationships
- Increasing self-knowledge and self-understanding
- Increasing the self-concept
- Identifying problem areas causing depression and anxiety

Each session had specific goals that will be included in the discussion on the individual group sessions that follows in the next section.

6.4 THE DIVORCE INTERVENTION TREATMENT PROGRAMME

As has been indicated, the Divorce Intervention Programme consisted of ten, one-and-a-half hour sessions. An attempt was made to achieve specific goals in each session through the introduction of goal -related techniques and activities.

The Group Leader's role was to facilitate in the group process and to provide structure and continuity to each of the sessions. A discussion of the individual sessions is incorporated in the next section.

6.4.1 Session One

The first three sessions of the Intervention Programme focused on the Affective Component.

6.4.1.1 General Outlay

Time	1 ½ Hours
Materials	Koki pens Labels for names Whiteboard for writing rules

Goals

- Orientation of Group Process
- Allaying members' fears and anxieties about the group
- Discussion of group goals and expectations
- Providing a clear statement of purpose
- Facilitating group cohesion
- Outlining group rules and methods to be employed
- Stimulation of interaction among group members
- Identification of problem areas

6.4.1.2 Techniques

a) Ice-Breaker

Group members are divided into pairs. They are requested to interview one another to glean as much information about the other person as possible. Each member then introduces their interviewee to the group.

b) Expectations

Group members then discuss their personal expectations of the group and possibly establish personal goals. The Leader's expectations and goals for the group are also discussed.

c) Rules

Encourage group members to establish rules. Rules should include:

- Confidentiality
- Respectful listening

- Punctuality and regular attendance
- Acceptance of one another's feelings
- Encourage comfortable participation and sharing

d) Activity

i) "Telling their Story"

Group members were given the task of "telling their story" pertaining to their parents' divorce.

ii) Expression of feelings

All the members expressed distress at their parents' divorce. Common feelings that came to the fore in this session were anger and resentment towards the parent they perceived was responsible for the divorce; hurt at not being consulted prior to the divorce and guilt that they were in some way to blame for their parents divorce. Tremendous feelings of loss (loss of the non-custodial parent) and insecurity (fear of not seeing non-custodial parent) were evidenced in their responses. Financial problems were indicated as a post-divorce stressor, which manifested as conflict between parent and child and parent and parent, especially where maintenance issues were concerned. Concern for both parents, especially the custodial parent in most instances, was highlighted in their responses.

6.4.1.3 Evaluation of Session One

This goal of this session was to facilitate group interaction and initiate the development of trust. The session was designed to catalyse the expression of divorce-related feelings, the sharing of common experience and to induce group cohesion. As each member related his/her own story, other members enthusiastically supported and agreed with certain statements of divorce-

related feelings. The sharing of personal divorce–related stories was aimed at reducing feelings of isolation, feelings of being different and the stigma attached to divorce. The ice-breaker activity at the beginning of the session was to relieve the tension, as it was considered less threatening having the members introduce each other to the group. This activity helped to facilitate group interaction as each member participated in the discussion. The members established the rules and norms of the group with very little prompting from the group leader. Problem areas highlighted in this session included loss of choice, inter-personal conflict, possible feelings of depression and taking responsibility for parental divorce (egocentrism – refer to Chapter Two). The identified problem areas would be dealt with in later sessions. Some members displayed a lack of empathy for their peers’ feelings in their eagerness to identify and discuss their specific divorce-related problems. At this point the Leader used the skill of reflection to model empathy to the group. Respondent D’s attention-seeking behaviour was very disruptive to the group, as he would constantly interject or make comments, while other members were talking. This situation was not addressed during this session as this was still in the initial stage of the group process.

The next session would aim at building on the support provided by peers in the group and at further facilitating identification and expression of divorce-related feelings.

6.4.2 Session Two

6.4.2.1 General Outlay

Time	1 ½ Hours
Materials	Whiteboard Koki pens Paper and Pencils

Goals

- further identification and expression of divorce–related feelings
- to enhance members' ability to identify and label divorce–related feelings in themselves and others
- to express feelings appropriately
- to provide a safe climate to facilitate the expression of feelings

6.4.2.2 Techniques

a) Feedback on previous session

Members were invited to provide feedback on the previous session. The group leader also provided feedback on the first session in order to role-model behaviour for group members.

b) Ice – breaker

The divorce related feelings that were expressed by the members in the previous group session were reintroduced and written on the whiteboard in order to identify and clarify their feelings from the previous session.

Each member was asked to select an animal that they felt represented them. This activity was chosen in order to provide members with the opportunity to project their individual characteristics onto a particular animal, thereby enabling them to gain insight into their own and other members' particular needs and aspirations in a less threatening manner. Once they had chosen their animal they discussed the reasons for their choice with members of the group.

c) Activities

The following activities were conducted during this session:

- i) Members were provided with a piece of paper and given the instruction to draw their family prior to the divorce.
- ii) Members were requested to label three feelings they experienced during the divorce process and write them on the reverse side of the paper.
- iii) Members were requested to tear the paper into squares and then to paste the picture back together on a separate sheet of paper.
- iv) Members were requested to complete the statement: "Divorce is..."

Pre-divorce family issues and the feelings experienced during the divorce were then discussed during the feedback session with the group.

6.4.2.3 Feedback on Session Two

In the conclusion to each activity pertinent deductions will be provided.

1. Ice-breaker

The following responses and explanations were provided on the ice-breaker activity:

Respondent A – Panda Bear – is big and strong and can survive on its own. I chose a Panda Bear as I would like the freedom to behave independently and be strong enough to resist all the negative, outside forces directed at me.

Respondent B - Leopard – A respected member of the jungle; sleek, fast and beautiful. I chose a leopard as it represents freedom to explore its environment, it usually gets what it wants (prey) when it sets its sights on a specific target and it's not scared of anything.

Respondent C – Dolphin – I chose a dolphin as I regard the dolphin as a symbol of freedom. It swims around in the sea, trouble-free, without anyone telling it what to do and how it should do it. I would love to be like the dolphin.

Respondent D – Elephant – The elephant is big and not afraid of anything. It will just crush or wipe out everything in its path – it doesn't have to stand aside for anything or anyone. I chose the elephant because (giggles) I'm fat and I would like to just crush all the people who get in my way.

Respondent E – Rabbit – A rabbit is shy and withdrawn – it burrows into a hole away from crowds. I chose the rabbit because I am quite withdrawn. I'm shy around people and don't enjoy crowds. I prefer the safety of my room and spend a lot of my time alone.

Respondent F – Rabbit – Like Respondent E, I am also shy and prefer to spend time in my own company. I hate crowds and I especially hate having to stand up and speak in front of people.

Respondent G – Mouse – A mouse stays in its little hole and is regarded as timid and shy. I'm a shy person and I don't like interacting with people – I prefer doing things on my own.

Respondent H – Bird – A bird is a symbol of freedom. It flies around in the sky – there are no rules and regulations, it can go wherever it wants to go without anyone telling it what to do. I would love to be a bird and be able to think and behave independently without having people tell me what I can and can't do all the time.

The deductions made from the above responses were that most of the respondents had a desire for freedom and independence from the constraints of their present home environments. Their desire for freedom and independence is characteristic of the adolescent stage of development. Their need to think and behave independently without fear or resistance from “outside forces” may indicate a greater intensity of these feelings post-parental divorce.

The respondents that indicated withdrawal and a preference for their own company highlighted a need to encourage them to actively participate in the group process. Respondent D’s response (an elephant) may suggest a low sense of self-worth and a desire to overcome the obstacles that have been placed in his way.

This activity provided the group leader and its members with greater insight into the personalities and problem areas that individual members were dealing with.

2. Activity (i)

Family Drawings Prior to Divorce

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| Respondent A: | Family drawn as a happy unit; very integrated with no conflict. |
| Respondent B: | Happy family unit with respondent indicating a close relationship with both parents. |
| Respondent C: | A strife-torn, chaotic family environment, riddled with conflict. |
| Respondent D: | A happy family unit indicating wealth and an affluent lifestyle. |
| Respondent E: | A big, smiling sun, representative of happiness and warmth. |
| Respondent F: | An unhappy drawing, with down-turned mouths and father isolated from the rest of the family. |

- Respondent G: A fully integrated happy family.
- Respondent H: The world – representative of the family, as his world,
that was shattered after the divorce.

Most of the above responses reflect the intact family unit as a “happy” one, which was seemingly “shattered” after parental divorce.

3. Activity (ii)

Three Labelled Feelings

The following three feelings were labelled by each respondent.

- Respondent A: Disbelief, anger and irritation.
- Respondent B: Anger, shock and sadness
- Respondent C: Depressed, scared and angry
- Respondent D: Guilt, anger and sadness
- Respondent E: Scared, responsible and angry
- Respondent F: Guilt, anger and fear
- Respondent G: Anger, hurt and betrayal
- Respondent H: Lonely, guilty and angry

“Anger” appears to be the most dominant emotion expressed in the above responses. The feelings of shock, sadness, fear and disbelief are normal reactions to loss and highlighted the need for members to understand and deal with the stages of grief, thereby learning to accept the divorce situation eventually.

4. Activity (iii)

Divorce is....

The following responses were provided on this activity.

Respondent A: A situation that has a lasting impact on your life, it makes you fear commitment and never want to get married.

Respondent B: It makes you feel angry and hurt.

Respondent C: A thing that splits lives and hurts the people involved.

Respondent D: A very, very bad thing.

Respondent E: A very hurtful and upsetting event that makes you mad or drives you to do crazy things.

Respondent F: Is a very bad thing that you would not wish on anyone.

Respondent G: Something that wrecks your life.

Respondent H: A lot like hell. More bad than good.

The responses to this activity indicated that all the respondents perceived parental divorce as a negative, life-changing event. Group members during the group process will examine the phenomenon of divorce and the resulting changes in the family.

6.4.2.4 *Evaluation of Session Two*

In the feedback from the previous session, group members stated that despite their initial anxiety at the start of the group, they had looked forward to the next session. The ice-breaker enabled members to project their perceived beliefs about themselves and to reveal sensitive parts of themselves during this initial stage of the group process. This sharing facilitated group interaction on a spontaneous and humorous level, encouraging group cohesion. The main goal of this session was to facilitate identification and expression of divorce-related feelings. The feedback from respondents in the group illuminated the fact that there are very few positive feelings related to parental divorce. Anger was the most dominant emotion and the leader indicated that this important emotion would be dealt with in later sessions. Despite all the negative emotions that came to the fore in this session, respondents indicated that they felt "better" at having been able to identify, label and express their feelings pertaining to their parents' divorce. The group leader explained the term "Universality of feelings" whereby members were encouraged to generalise the feelings they had identified in the group to their home environment, thereby not merely containing the expression thereof to the group context. The leader explained the reasoning behind pasting the "torn" family together on another sheet of paper. This was representative of the fact that despite the family system being "torn" apart by divorce, that all the members were still part of a system and that the possibility of a new, "happier" sub-systems within the total system did exist. The aim of this exercise was to end the session with a feeling of hope. Containment of feelings was also discussed in the form of contacting one another if they felt the need to speak to someone, or to start a journal, writing down all their feelings. The gist of which could be discussed in later sessions.

Although enthusiastic group interaction was stimulated, Respondent D's behaviour was still considered disruptive to the development of group cohesion. The only person to address his behaviour was his older sibling, Respondent F, who either reacted defensively or apologetically. Despite annoyance and

irritation displayed by other members of the group, no one confronted his disruptive behaviour. The leader did not confront Respondent D, as yet, in order to observe other respondents' reactions (or lack thereof) to his behaviour.

6.4.3 Session Three

6.4.3.1 General Outlay

Time 1½ Hours

Material Whiteboard
Koki Pens

Goals

- to increase children's awareness of events that precede and/or cause various feelings
- to clarify common misconceptions about divorce
- encourage discussion on divorce related anxieties
- educating children regarding the impact of divorce on parents
- helping children to understand how divorce affects parents' feelings and behaviours

6.4.3.2 Techniques

a) Ice-breaker

A brief discussion on how the group members' week was and how they felt after the previous week's session.

b) Activity

- i) Three questions were posed to the group:
 - a) What makes a good marriage?

- b) Why do you think your parents got divorced?
- c) What changes have occurred since the divorce?

Group members' responses to the above three questions were written on the whiteboard.

- ii) How do you feel the divorce has impacted on your parents' feelings and behaviour?

Responses were once again noted on the whiteboard.

- iii) Problem areas were identified and members were divided into groups and role-played an identified problem area.

6.4.3.3 Feedback on Session Three

In the conclusion to each activity pertinent deductions will be provided.

1. Feedback from previous week's session

Some members indicated that they had contacted each other during the week when they were feeling upset and that it had helped them to speak to their peers. Most of the members stated that they had felt happier during the week, except for Respondent A who indicated that she had left the previous session feeling angry and irritated, having identified the impact that divorce had, had on her life. All the members indicated that they looked forward to the next session.

2. Activity (i)

Responses to questions.

- a. What makes a good marriage?

Qualities such as love, trust, communication, supporting one another, intimacy; ability to resolve conflict; working towards a common goal and the sharing of common interests were the responses to the first question.

The responses indicate that the respondents are aware of the qualities that are required to encourage a successful partnership in marriage.

b. Why do you think your parents got divorced?

- My father had an affair
- My parents didn't really love each other – they had to get married
- I used to help my father with his business but then I stopped; maybe that is why he left.
- My father stopped caring about us (he is more interested in his "new" family; or his behaviour has changed towards the member).
- My parents fought all the time and stopped communicating with one another.
- My father didn't want my sister and says its her fault that they got divorced.
- My Gran came to live with us and she interfered with my Mom and Dad's relationship.
- My Mom was bored because my dad worked late all the time, so she left.
- My father didn't want us anymore.

The members' responses to the question as to why they thought their parents got divorced highlighted the area of "blame" for the divorce being placed on a particular parent or "self-blame". Their responses emphasised the need for members to learn to analyse relationships and to understand that sometimes people make mistakes. They also need to see that the divorce is a problem between their parents and not that one of the parents is to blame.

c. What changes have occurred since the divorce?

- We have had to move house and change schools
- We seldom get to see our mom/dad (the non-custodial parent)
- Our parents use us as “go-betweens”, we have to relay messages to them
- My mother is experiencing financial difficulties because my father doesn't pay maintenance
- We have a “new” family
- I get to spend more time with my father
- We are spoiled materially – our father tries to buy us

The above responses highlight the changes that often occur, post-parental divorce. The changes in the family often include custody, visitation, battles that rage on between the parties, finances, stepfamilies, loyalty issues and children's fears of the unknown after the divorce, to name but a few. The members were encouraged to explore the resulting changes in their families within the context of the group process, to share their concerns about the changes and then to try and examine them more objectively in anticipation of alleviating some of the distress they had incurred.

3. Activity (ii)

How do you feel the divorce has impacted on your parents' feelings and behaviours?

- My mom cries all the time
- My mom is angry and bitter and tends to take it out on us
- My dad seems happy – he got what he wanted – a new family
- My mom expects me to be the man-of-the house
- My mom runs my dad down to me all the time; she always curses him
- My mom puts us on a guilt trip and makes out as though we don't care about her.

- I can't do anything right in my father's eyes – he constantly degrades me and makes me feel worthless.
- I am constantly being forced to take sides – my mother expects me to side with her against my father.

The members' responses highlight some of the negative effects of divorce on children. Some of the issues indicated by the members' responses were additional family responsibilities, becoming involved in adult concerns, the emotional "loss" of the custodial parent and feelings of guilt and manipulation. These issues all demand attention and need to be examined within the context of the group process.

4. Activity (iii)

The Role-play activity. ✓

The role-play enacted a situation where the "daughter" was being used as a "go-between" for her parents. A decision was made to role-play this particular "scene", as the majority of the group members indicated that their parents used them to relay messages from the one parent to the other. A brief description of the role-play follows:

Respondent A:	Daughter
Respondent B:	Father
Respondent E:	Mother.

Respondent E (as mother) – Phone your father and tell him that you are starving because he hasn't paid the maintenance and there is no food in the house.

Respondent A: (as daughter) – (Pretends to phone). Dad, Mom told me to phone you and tell you that we have no food to eat because you haven't paid the maintenance.

Respondent B: (as father) – (Angry tone of voice). Tell you mother that I will pay her when I'm good and ready and that if she budgeted more carefully, she would have food in the house.

Respondent A (as daughter) – Actually Dad, I tell you what, here is Mom, you tell her yourself.

Respondent A role-plays a possible way to deal with the situation of being used as a "go-between". Other members of the group who have also found themselves in this situation provide personal feedback highlighting their situation.

Feedback is provided by group members on how to deal with certain problem areas that have been highlighted in the session.

The group session ends with a summary of the problem areas and effective ways of dealing with the issues that have been role-played in the session. This will be discussed in the evaluation of the session.

6.4.3.4 *Evaluation of Session Three*

The evaluation of the session revealed that most of the problem areas related to common misconceptions pertaining to parental divorce. These misconceptions included the following: that they were somehow to blame for the divorce; that if they improved their performance, either on the sports field or academically, that their parents would reunite; that their mother / father was to blame for the divorce; they have no future prospects due to a lack of financial support; their lives will never be happy again; and they must provide emotional support for the custodial parent.

The leader discussed these misconceptions with the group highlighting that neither parent was necessarily to "blame" for the divorce, but that circumstances

may have led to parents' decision to end the marriage. Emphasis was placed on the fact that parents may have divorced each other, but that did not mean that they had divorced their children.

The following areas were emphasised:

- Children are neither to "blame" nor responsible for their parents divorce
- The futility of blaming a parent
- The child was entitled to love both parents equally
- They did not have to get involved in inter-parental conflict
- They had a right to be happy
- They had a right to their feelings
- They had a right to set boundaries and to refuse to play certain roles expected of them by either parent

The role-play activity addressed the issue of members being used as "go-betweens" for their parents. Although members offered each other advice on how to deal with this particular situation, when the leader challenged the members to transfer what they had learned in the group situation to the real life situation, members indicated that they felt "powerless" or "inadequate" in being able to do so.

Fears of alienating parents through not complying with their requests were indicated, highlighting their feelings of insecurity in their new family system. This emphasised a need for the development of problem-solving techniques and adequate coping skills to deal with divorce-related issues effectively. The taking of risks and the possible consequences to certain actions would also have to be addressed. This became the goal of the fourth session.

Respondent D's attention-seeking behaviour once again disrupted the group process. The leader modelled problem-solving behaviour by asking members how they felt when respondent D did not listen to what they were saying and

interrupted the process. The leader also encouraged members to address respondent D with their comments. Most of the members indicated that they felt irritated and annoyed when he became disruptive and they felt that he was not listening to them. Respondent D reacted to these comments by becoming very upset, but was willing to acknowledge that he understood why the group felt annoyed with him. The group members encouraged him to participate more positively in the process and with their acceptance and support, he left feeling much happier.

Sessions 4 –6 made up the Cognitive Skill-building component of the programme.

6.4.4 Session Four

6.4.4.1 General Outlay

Time	1 ½ Hours
Material	White Board Pencil Paper Koki Pens

Goals

- to teach children to evaluate a problem effectively
- to generate alternative solutions through the use of self-statements and brainstorming techniques
- to enhance group interaction and facilitate support among group members

6.4.4.2 Techniques

a) Ice – Breaker

A brief feedback on the previous session and on how the group members felt during the week.

b) Activity

i) Discussion on Problem-Solving Techniques

Each member was given a handout – “Can your life be Problem Free” (see Appendix III). The counsellor read through the handout with the group. The problem situation was discussed using the criteria as presented in the handout. Alternative solutions were generated and the group decided on a productive solution.

Group members were then requested to write down a concrete divorce-related problem. Techniques were brainstormed in accordance with guidelines given on the handout. Certain members then volunteered their problem situations. Through brainstorming techniques and feedback from the group, viable solutions to these difficult situations were generated. While generating alternative solutions to the problems, members were also requested to anticipate the consequences of these solutions.

ii) Role-play activity

Two members of the group were requested to role-play a concrete divorce-related problem that had been identified in the previous activity. The aim of the role-play activity was to model the use of problem solving skills in the anticipation of finding positive solutions to the particular problem.

iii) Relaxation and Visualization

Relaxation and visualisation techniques were discussed with group members. The members were given the instruction to close their eyes and to visualise a particular problem situation. Once their “vision” was in place, they were given the instruction to relax their bodies and to deeply, inhale and exhale their breath, five times. While they were practicing their relaxation and breathing techniques, they were requested to think about and visualise an appropriate plan of action for solving their particular problem, using the skills they had practiced in the previous activity.

iv) Homework Exercise

The group members were requested to practice one of the problem-solving techniques discussed during the session, on both friends and family members.

6.4.4.3 Evaluation of Session Four

Some of the members indicated that they had felt both sad and relieved at the end of the previous session – sad because the session had highlighted the problems that had occurred since their parents divorce and yet relieved that they were not responsible for the divorce. Respondent D indicated that he felt “bad” about his behaviour, but appreciated the group’s honesty and during this session it was evident that he had made an effort to get involved in the process.

It was evident that problem-solving skills were seriously lacking among group members. Solutions generated were often irrational, immature or aggressive. For example, Respondent D: “Well, if you’re going to treat me like that, I will just run away!” Through guidance and role-modelling techniques, it became the task of the leader to elicit effective problem solving techniques using communication skills and assertiveness techniques. The leader offered alternative solutions, using “I” statements and an assertive manner, to the irrational solutions that were

offered by some of the members. For example, Leader: "When you don't listen to me, I feel that you do not care about me. It makes me so unhappy that I feel that I could just run away."

As divorce demands that children "grow up" and learn life skills at a much earlier age, they need the opportunity to learn assertiveness, problem-solving skills, risk-taking and communication skills. This session was aimed at trying to instill some of those skills in the group members. Maturity level played an important role in the member's ability to utilise the learned skill effectively. The leader realised that more practice would be needed in this area and decided to continue with problem-solving techniques in the next session.

6.4.5 Session Five

6.4.5.1 General Outlay

Time 1 ½ Hours

Material White Board
Koki Pens

Goals

- further enhancing problem-solving techniques
- investigating how the members of the family communicate with one another
- establishing positive modes of communication
- verbal and non-verbal communication techniques are introduced

6.4.5.2 Techniques

a) Ice – Breaker

Homework from the previous week was discussed and problem-solving techniques were evaluated.

b) Activity

- i) Each member was asked to think of a specific family situation that illustrated how their family communicated with one another. Feedback was then provided to the group.
- ii) Communication strategies, were discussed with the group in accordance with Gael Lindenfield's (1993:184-186) exercise on "Improving Communication Skills". This exercise included the following list of communication strategies:
 - a) **Active Listening** – do you listen attentively and empathetically or do you often find your mind wondering or that you are feeling impatient to chip in with your tale or point of view? Do you often get accused of interrupting or misunderstanding?
 - b) **Conversation** – How easy is small talk for you? Are you good at judging "atmospheres" and selecting the appropriate style of conversations to suit each occasion? Do you tend to "put your foot in it" or get too serious, personal or "jokey"?
 - c) **Compliments** – do you give and take these assertively and freely? Can you keep eye contact and be specific and direct in what you say? Do you get embarrassed and uncomfortable and want to get the whole business over with as soon as possible?
 - d) **Requests** – Do you honestly give yourself the right to ask for things and give others the responsibility for saying "no"? Do you tend to load your request with justifications and apologies? Do you hang back from asking, hoping someone else will ask, or that someone will read your mind or take the hint? Do you find yourself often thinking, "They ought to have known I

would have liked ...”?

- e) **Complaints** – do you make as many as you would like or do you tend to hold back until things really get intolerable? Do you sound like a squeaking door mouse or bull-in-a-China shop when you complain? Can you persist or do you give in very easily?
- f) **Body language** – do you have any habits, which confuse or corrupt your communication with others? Do you, for example, over smile, look too solemn, fidget, cover your face with your hand, speak too quietly or too loudly, stand too close or keep to big a distance, use too many gesticulations or stand too rigidly?
- g) **Self-presentation** – does the way you dress or the way you wear your hair, etc send confusing signals out to others? Do they make you appear more passive / authoritarian / sexy / rebellious, etc. than you actually are, or want to be seen to be.
- ii) Positive Communication techniques were role played by members of the group. The group members were divided into pairs and requested to engage in conversation with one another, preferably on a divorce-related issue. Members were instructed to practice their communication techniques through active listening, observation of body language and presentation and to affirm each other through the use of compliments and honest encouragement.
- iii) Homework Exercise
The homework task given to the members for the following week, was to practice their communication skills on family members and friends.

6.4.5.3 Feedback on Session Five

Deductions made from the following activities will be provided in the evaluation of session five.

1. Activity (i)

Family Communication Strategies

Respondent A:

The communication in our house revolves around shouting at one another followed by long periods of silences.

Respondent B:

My Mom and Dad don't listen to me. If I need something I prefer to speak to my father on the phone rather than speaking to him face to face.

Respondent C:

If I ask for anything or try and speak to my mother, she always puts me on a guilt trip or she runs my father down to me and tries to get me to side with her.

Respondent D:

I don't speak to my father, only to my mother. I can tell my mother anything, but my father never listens to me.

Respondent E:

I speak to my Gran or to my friends if I have a problem. I won't speak to my mother because she always puts me on a guilt trip or gives me advice, which is always the wrong advice and then we end up fighting.

Respondent F:

I can speak to my mother about anything, but I am terrified of my father. Him and I don't talk, he just orders me around and I obey. My mother normally protects me against my father. If I want something from him, I ask my mother to ask him on my behalf.

Respondent G:

I only speak to my father. My mother and I just shout at each other all the time, no matter what I do it is wrong as far as she's concerned so I don't speak to her.

Respondent H:

My father and I get on very well. I can speak to him about anything and everything. We are very open with one another, but I can't speak to my mother as she is too involved with her own life – she doesn't listen to me.

2. Activity (ii)

Communication Strategies

A list of effective communication strategies was provided and discussed with the group. Each member was asked to assess, according to the above-mentioned list of communication strategies, what their personal mode or style of communication was and / or that of significant family members. Feedback on this activity elicited the following responses:

Respondent A:

I think I'm a good listener, but I have a problem accepting compliments and hate asking people for help. I also hate it when people offer me advice.

Respondent B:

I find it difficult to make small talk and I suppose I expect people to read my mind. When it comes to speaking to my friends, I often get impatient with them so I tend to interrupt a lot or I just don't concentrate on what they're saying.

Respondent C:

My friends and family tell me that I talk too much and that I don't listen to them. My facial expressions give me away, as people can always see what I'm feeling as it is reflected in my face.

Respondent D:

I have no problem asking for what I want. If I don't get what I want then I tend to throw a tantrum until that person gives in. I guess I also don't listen too well, but I just love talking.

Respondent E:

It depends on who is talking whether I will listen to them or not. I listen to my friends, but when my mother speaks to me I switch off. I find it easy to have a conversation with people I know, but I get embarrassed when they compliment me as I'm not always sure if they mean it or not.

Respondent F:

I think I'm a good listener, but I find it difficult making conversation, especially with people I don't know well, and I prefer to do things for myself rather than to ask for help.

Respondent G:

Well I'm not really such a good listener. People tend to avoid speaking to me as they regard me as too quiet and withdrawn. Perhaps it's my body language or something – I don't know.

Respondent H:

I'm a good listener – I think so anyway – a lot of people speak to me about their problems and ask me for advice. I think I'm open and friendly, but I do have a problem asking people for help and I don't accept compliments very easily.

3. Activity (iii)

Role-play.

Members were divided into pairs or groups of three and effective communication strategies were role-played with constant input and feedback from the group.

6.4.5.4 Evaluation of Session Five

Group members found it difficult to communicate their needs and feelings to significant members of their family, which resulted in feelings of frustration, anger and withdrawal. Conflict, anger and hurt seemed to be the most dominant consequences of their inability to communicate effectively. This may also be due to the parents' inability to model effective communication to their children. This session generated a tremendous amount of interaction among the group members, as they all supported one another's situations and provided valuable input as to different ways of effectively communicating with the significant others in their lives.

Group cohesion was positive as group members freely exchanged ideas and constructively criticized one another's communication styles. This emphasized that members felt comfortable with each other and trusted each other enough to communicate openly and honestly in the group context. Activity (ii) seemed to enhance a greater self-understanding, as members identified their respective communication strategies. Most members indicated that they were not good listeners, they had trouble accepting compliments and had difficulty making a simple request. The body-language issue stimulated a lot of interaction and mirth among the group members, as they illustrated various poses to one another.

The leader identified that group members had entered the working phase of the group, which is characterised, by a high level of trust. Once again, there were possibly too many activities packed into this session, as members were unable to explore any area in greater depth.

Conflict and anger issues were highlighted as potential barriers to effective communication. Dealing with conflict was discussed in the next session.

6.4.6 Session Six

6.4.6.1 General Outlay

Time 1 ½ Hours

Material White Board
Koki pens
Handout on Conflict

Goals

- to identify conflict management styles
- to encourage effective methods of dealing with conflict

6.4.6.2 Techniques

a) Ice-Breaker

The previous week's homework on effective communication techniques was discussed highlighting areas that worked and that didn't work.

b) Activities

- i) A handout entitled – **How do you manage conflict?** (See Appendix IV) was given to each group member. The handout consisted of various animals depicting certain conflict management styles. A brief description of each style is provided:

The Ostrich – denies conflict

The Tortoise – withdraws to avoid the issue

The Crocodile – hides behind and manipulates by tears

The Hyena – avoids the issue by laughing

The Weasel – rationalises

The Gorilla – overpowers with aggression or presence
The Donkey – is dogmatic, judgmental and self-righteous
The Owl – feelings and emotions are hidden
The Sheep – conforms with the group
The Giraffe – feels he is too superior for conflict
The Cat – makes a creative compromise
The Dog – wants relationships to be open and honest. He views conflict as neutral and natural.

Each member was asked to identify how they managed conflict in various situations.

- ii) The members were requested to identify how they perceived the conflict management styles of other members of the group. This was mainly introduced as a fun activity and to determine whether individual members' perception of their own conflict management styles were congruent with those of the other group members.
- iii) A father-daughter conflict situation (one that had been revealed during a previous session) was role-played in the group and aimed at examining how to manage the conflict effectively.

6.4.6.3 Feedback on Session Six

1. Activity (i)

How do you manage conflict?

Using the criteria depicted in the handout – How do you manage conflict? (See Appendix IV) - group members identified their own particular conflict management styles in various situations. Feedback on this activity is provided in the following responses:

Respondent A:

Tortoise – during inter-parental conflict – I go to my room and study.

Owl – I feel that people don't really understand, so I keep my feelings to myself.

Dog – I believe that what goes around, comes around. We must be open and honest with one another.

Respondent B:

Tortoise – when my parents fight

Owl – most of the time

Ostrich – when I'm with my friends.

Respondent C:

Tortoise – when my parents fight

Hyena – when I'm feeling hurt or when friends don't understand how I'm feeling

Sheep – I tend to follow, rather than lead in situations.

Dog – How I would like to manage conflict.

Respondent D:

Tortoise – when my parents fight

Cat – I compromise with my brother.

Dog – How I would like to behave.

Respondent E:

Ostrich – I deny that problems exist.

Owl – I tend to bottle my emotions

Dog – I'm open and honest with my friends

Cat – I reach a compromise with my brother

Dog – How I would like to manage conflict.

Respondent F:

Ostrich – I won't reveal the conflict

Tortoise – when my parents argue and fight

Owl – I try to hide my feelings – I find a safe place and cry.

Respondent G:

Cat – I prefer to make a compromise in most situations.

Gorilla – When I get really angry, I become aggressive.

Respondent H:

Ostrich – I pretend that there is nothing wrong

Hyena – with my friends – I avoid the issue.

2. Activity (ii)

THE MEMBERS' PERCEPTION OF OTHER GROUP MEMBERS' CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES

Member	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
A	X	Tortoise	Tortoise	Weasel	Sheep	Owl	Ostrich	Hyena
B	Gorilla	X	Tortoise	Crocodile	Tortoise	Ostrich	Ostrich	Hyena
C	Gorilla	Tortoise	X	Hyena	Ostrich	Owl	Cat	Owl
D	Tortoise	Tortoise	Tortoise	X	Ostrich	Ostrich	Tortoise	Owl
E	Tortoise	Tortoise	Tortoise	Dog	X	Ostrich	Hyena	Owl
F	Gorilla	Tortoise	Cat	Donkey	Ostrich	X	Hyena	Hyena
G	Cat	Tortoise	Cat	Tortoise	Ostrich	Ostrich	X	Owl
H	Gorilla	Tortoise	Cat	Donkey	Ostrich	Ostrich	Cat	X

3. Activity (iii)

Role Play - Father–daughter conflict situation

Respondent A: (As daughter)

I want to know why you told Mom that you weren't even sure I was your child.

Respondent F: (As Father)

That's not true – you must have misunderstood. Of course I know you're my daughter.

Respondent A: (As daughter)

Don't lie to me. I heard what you said to Mom and it made me feel very hurt and angry.

Respondent F: (As Father)

I understand that hearing that must have hurt you very much. I would just like to reassure you that I love you very much and I had no intention of hurting you.

Respondent A: (As daughter)

Well you did hurt me and I'm not sure if I can trust you anymore.

Respondent F: (As father)

Please forgive me, I'm very sorry. What will I have to do to make it up to you?

This role-play activity depicted a genuine conflict situation that had occurred between Respondent A and her father. The role-play activity provided Respondent A with the opportunity to re-enact the conflict situation between her and her father and to deal with it in a more controlled manner, having identified her usual conflict management style (the owl) and using the problem-solving skills she had learned in the group process. Respondent F's modelling of a

positive conflict management style possibly contributed to Respondent A's ability to deal with an extremely sensitive issue in a rational and assertive manner.

6.4.6.4 *Evaluation of Session Six*

During the feedback session, members indicated that they had become more aware of their communication styles during the week. They identified that this awareness had enabled them to communicate far more effectively with both friends and family members.

The members thoroughly enjoyed this session as they determined their conflict management styles. Almost all the members previously managed parental conflict by either denying it or withdrawing from it. Discussions ensued as to how, instead of withdrawing from the conflict, they could confront it and manage it assertively. Group cohesion and interaction was further enhanced in this session as members critically evaluated each other's conflict management styles. Members were willing to take risks due to the high level of trust that had developed during the working phase of the group process. There was a lot of laughter and disagreement as they discussed how they perceived one another's conflict management styles. This was a positive exercise as it enabled them to identify their conflict management styles. Observed peer support was very strong as agreements and disagreements on management styles were offered and discussed. The role-play modelled a positive style of conflict management. Relevant input from the group was noted, especially from Respondent F who stated that he was too fearful of his father even to consider interacting with him assertively. Support from the group was offered and various techniques were discussed. The session ended on a positive note, with constructive feedback and a summary of the issues that were highlighted during the session.

Discussion of conflict resolution by group members in an empathic, supportive context further fostered group cohesion. A key distinction was made between problems beyond children's control and thus not solvable (e.g. parent

reconciliation) and those within their control (e.g. appropriate ways of communicating feelings). Understanding and being able to deal effectively with the latter was designed to increase children's sense of mastery and comfort with others and to address one of Wallerstein's (1983:265) crucial psychological tasks – disengaging from parental conflict and resuming the child's agenda.

The members were encouraged to become more aware of their communication styles and conflict management styles and to write down their successes and the problems that they encounter during the week and to bring that to the next session.

6.4.7 Session Seven

6.4.7.1 General Outlay

Time 1 ½ Hours

Material Whiteboard
Koki

Goals

- to determine circumstances that precipitate anger and ways to identify it in others and us
- to describe actual anger experiences
- to discuss appropriate and inappropriate ways of expressing anger

6.4.7.2 Techniques

a) Ice – Breaker

Reflect on the homework task of the previous session. Briefly discuss whether they were able to manage conflict more effectively during the week.

b) Activities

“Anger” was highlighted in session two, as the most dominant emotion resulting from parental divorce. Dealing with strong feelings of anger and the expression and control thereof, is another one of Wallerstein’s (1983:266) crucial psychological tasks. The following activities were introduced to initiate anger expression and control:

- i) A brief discussion on circumstances that precipitated anger in the group members. These were noted on the whiteboard.
- ii) A brief discussion on how the members deal with their anger.
- iii) A discussion on appropriate and inappropriate ways of expressing anger.

6.4.7.3 Feedback on Session Seven

1. Activity (i)

Circumstances that precipitate anger. Global overviews of responses are stated.

I get angry:

- when my parents fight
- when my privacy is violated
- when parents divorce
- when people ignore me
- with my siblings
- when people lie or are dishonest
- when my trust is broken
- when my mother is overprotective
- when I am not given a choice
- when I am not given time / disregarded
- when I cannot behave independently
- when my feelings are not taken into consideration

2. Activity (ii)

The group members offered the following responses as to how they deal with their anger.

Respondent A:

I block it out and tend to give people the silent treatment. I withdraw to my room and listen to music.

Respondent B:

I punch the door or go and throw a baseball against the wall.

Respondent C:

I cry, curse, shout, slam doors, walk away or give people the silent treatment.

Respondent D:

I curse or count to ten.

Respondent E:

I displace it onto others – I get very irritable and find fault with everyone and everything around me. I go to my room, turn up the volume of the music and drown in my own anger.

Respondent F:

I curse and walk away. Go and cry in my room or try and keep myself busy so that I don't have to think about it.

Respondent G:

I go into my room and lie on my bed, seething. I find a quiet place and cry.

Respondent H:

I slam doors, listen to loud music or go for a long ride on my bicycle.

3. Activity (iii)

The leader provided members of the group with some guidelines as to how to deal with anger assertively (Lindenfield 1992:119-121). (See Appendix V). Appropriate ways of expressing anger were then discussed in the group.

6.4.7.4 Evaluation of Session Seven

During the feedback session members indicated that they had thoroughly enjoyed the previous week's session as it had been a lot of fun. Feedback on the homework exercise regarding managing conflict elicited both positive and negative responses. The older group members stated that they had practiced some of the skills on both their friends and their parents and found them to be very effective. The younger members indicated that they were still experiencing some problems when it came to conflict management and still chose to withdraw from the situation rather than confront it.

Most of the circumstances precipitating anger (that were highlighted by group members) had become more evident since the parental divorce. The group members indicated that since their parents had divorced, conflict in the household had increased, that they were not given a choice pertaining to events surrounding the divorce and mostly that their feelings were not taken into consideration. As they felt unable effectively to express their anger to the parent concerned, they resorted to inappropriate ways of dealing with their anger. The group members were encouraged to brainstorm effective ways of managing anger. The leader provided the members with guidelines for "Assertive Anger Management" (see Appendix VI), illustrating more appropriate alternatives to dealing with their anger. The leader indicated that there was a direct link between conflict management and anger management. The management of one of the areas (e.g. anger) could prevent the other from occurring (e.g. conflict) and vice versa.

As anger is, according to Wallerstein (1983:266), one of the important psychological tasks that children of divorce have to master, this important emotion was extended to the next session. Group members were asked to re-read the guidelines for "Assertive Anger Management" and to practice managing their anger more effectively with their parents and their peers during the week until the next session. They were once again invited to make journal entries pertaining to their anger management.

6.4.8 Session Eight

6.4.8.1 General Outlay

Time 1 ½ Hours

Material White Board
Koki Pens
Paper
Pencils

Goals

- further to enhance appropriate and inappropriate ways of dealing with anger
- to assist them in better understanding their anger
- to provide them with more adequate coping mechanisms when dealing with anger
- to determine what anger feels like

6.4.8.2 Techniques

a) Ice-breaker

The leader introduced a brief review of the previous session. Members were invited to share how they managed their anger during the week.

b) Activities

- i) Group members were requested to close their eyes and visualize a situation that made them very angry. They were then expected to identify their physiological reactions to that angry situation i.e. what is going on inside their body.
- ii) An “Anger shield” was drawn on a piece of paper and divided into four sections. Each section was headed by a question:

Section 1 What makes you angry?
Section 2 How do you deal with your anger?
Section 3 How would you like to change your behaviour?
Section 4 How do you feel about yourself?
- iii) Role-play effective anger management.
- iv) Loud, angry music was played (a combination of Rave and Heavy Metal). Group members were requested to close their eyes and to behave in such a way, that appropriately expressed their anger (e.g. jump up and down, shout etc.).

6.4.8.3 Feedback on Session Eight

Deductions will be provided at the conclusion to activity (i).

1. Activity (i)

The visualization exercise. A general overview of group members' physiological responses to anger is provided. Responses were as follows:

- Tightening of the chest
- Headaches
- Heart palpitations

- Nausea
- An urge to move
- Feeling hot
- Taking deeper breaths than usual
- More acute hearing
- Muscle tension

The responses in activity (i) indicate typical anxiety fight/flight reactions. Such a state of heightened arousal places considerable strain on the body and should therefore not be sustained over long periods of time. As anger induces a state of heightened arousal, unless it is managed effectively, it could seriously damage one's health. The group members' ability to identify their physiological responses to anger, was an important step towards positive expression and management of anger.

2. Activity (ii)

A general overview of responses indicated by group members on the "Anger Shield" is provided. Deductions made from these responses will be provided in the evaluation of the session.

Response to Section 1: **What makes you angry?**

- Secrets
- Lies
- Broken trust
- Divorce
- Over protectiveness
- Lack of Choice
- When my privacy is violated
- When I don't stand up for myself

- My mother
- When my mother shouts at me.

Response to Section 2: **How do you deal with your anger?**

- Cry
- Throw things
- Withdraw into my room
- Take it out on other people
- Walk away
- Slam doors
- Count to ten
- Curse
- Cycle

Response to Section 3: **How would you like to change your behaviour?**

- Have the courage to stand up for myself.
- Talk about it.
- Let the person know that I am angry with them.
- Let all the emotions and built-up anger explode and feel free afterwards.
- Stop behaving badly.
- Face up to it and deal with it positively.

Response to Section 4: **How do you feel about yourself?**

- Powerless
- Inferior to others
- Lonely
- Never say the right things
- Bad

- Not good
- Angry
- Disappointed
- More special than my brother and sister.

3. Activity (iii)

An angry situation between a mother and her daughter is role-played in front of the group.

Respondent C (as mother):

Hurry up, I want you to go to Eastgate with me.

Respondent E (as daughter):

Mom, I don't want to go to Eastgate as I am writing a test tomorrow and I have to study.

Respondent C (as mother):

You can study later, I want you to come to Eastgate with me now and I won't take "no" for an answer.

Respondent E (as daughter):

I must always do what you want me to do, well I'm not going to Eastgate, I'm going to study (walks out and slams door).

4. Activity (iv)

Angry music is played – a compilation of various music pieces that elicit an angry emotion. Respondents dance around, shout, scream, laugh, and jump up and down.

6.4.8.4 *Evaluation of Session Eight*

During the feedback session, members indicated that they had become more aware of their anger and had practiced dealing with it more effectively. Some members stated that they had managed to control their anger by confronting the issue and not “climbing into the other person’s character”.

The first activity helped group members to identify their physiological reactions to anger. In the discussion that followed this activity, members indicated that they were now aware of their bodily reactions to anger and would try to remember this as a warning sign in future. Activity (ii) elaborated on the members’ reactions to anger that were dealt with in session seven. A more appropriate way of dealing with anger was discussed and through group interaction, members explored more constructive techniques on how to express their anger. Their feelings of low self-worth and low self-esteem were also identified. Most of the members indicated that since the divorce they had been left feeling powerless, lonely and angry. It was decided to contain these feelings and to explore them in the next session. The role-play activity highlighted an inappropriate response to dealing with anger. The group members acknowledged that Respondent E’s reaction to her “mother’s” request was inappropriate and that it would probably exacerbate her feelings of anger. More appropriate responses were then brainstormed in the group.

Members indicated that they thoroughly enjoyed the last activity as it had a cathartic effect enabling them to get rid of some of their tension and releasing some of the anger that had built-up during the session. The session ended on a high note with lots of laughter, positive comments and support from group members as they made arrangements to contact each other during the week.

6.4.9 Session Nine

6.4.9.1 General Outlay

Time 1 ½ Hours

Material Magazines
Paper
Glue
Scissors

Goals

- to determine the positive aspects of divorce
- to enhance positive perceptions of self and family
- to enhance self-esteem
- Introduce termination

6.4.9.2 Techniques

a) Ice-breaker

Group members provide feedback on the previous week's session. The leader reminds the group that this is the second last session and termination of the group is discussed.

b) Activities

i) A Collage

Each member was given an A3 sheet of paper and asked to divide the sheet into three sections. The sections were labelled past, present and future. They were required to cut out magazine pictures depicting their past divorce experiences, present experiences and future perspectives. The emphasis was placed on positive aspects of divorce for present and future perspectives and to explore them in the next session.

- ii) Each member was to write on a piece of paper something positive about the other members of the group. What they really liked about them including how they had facilitated growth in the particular member.

6.4.9.3 Feedback on Session Nine

1. Activity (i)

Feedback on the collage:

Respondent A: **Past**

I felt lonely and isolated. I withdraw into my room and study. Everything was rosy and happy while I was young.

Present

I feel hopeless but get to spend more time with my father.

Future

I would like something solid - like a rock - something unchangeable. I would like to have more freedom and to communicate openly with everyone.

Respondent B: **Past**

Everything was happy. We did everything together as a family.

Present

My Mom and I are very close. I am doing well at school and in my sport. Things are getting better between my father and I.

Future

I want to own my own business. I want to play baseball for South Africa. Then I will settle down and have a family.

Respondent C:

Past

I felt like I was being blown away. My life was hard, cold and lonely. Everything around me felt plastic.

Present

I feel like a dolphin – feel that I've been more helpful towards people. My sister and I are there for each other. We support one another.

Future

I want to have a good relationship with a member of the opposite sex. I want my life to be fruitful. I want to be happy and free.

Respondent D:

Past

I was very happy. I love dogs.

Present

My parents spoil me. We get to do more fun things together.

Future

I want to be on top of everything. I want to hang out with my friends. I want to be happy.

Respondent E:

Past

I felt that my parents didn't want me, that I was a "throw away" child. I lived in a black and white world and was very unhappy.

Present

I love my animals. I'm happier now without all the conflict. I spend more quality time with my father.

Future

I want to be happy and free. I want to have a nice home. I want to have my own children whom I'll be very good to.

Respondent F:

Past

I was very happy when my parents were still together.

Present

My parents' divorce has left me feeling sad and lonely. I have more freedom to do what I want to do now. I don't have to listen to my mother and father fighting anymore.

Future

I want to be happy. I want to become a computer technician. I want to have my own children and of course, a happy marriage.

Respondent G:

Past

I was very happy

Present

I love horses. I want to stop behaving like a mouse and spend more time with my father.

Future

I want to have my own family; live in a hot place and be happy.

Respondent H: **Past**

I was very happy. I always thought my father was “the man” – he was my hero. I got on well with my father and my brother.

Present

My father is always there for me. I enjoy helping my stepmother clean the house. I still feel crushed at times.

Future

I want to be free and independent. I want to cycle all over the world. I want to have my own family and be happy.

Themes from collage

Various themes came to the fore in the presentation of the collages. Most of the group members indicated that they had felt happy in the past when their parents were still married. Feelings of loneliness, sadness and isolation were evident in some of the responses to their **past**. Positive themes were evident in members' responses to the **present** in their collages. A lack of inter-parental conflict, quality times being spent with the non-custodial parent and improved relationships with the custodial parent were some of the themes indicated in their responses. **Future** themes included the pursuit of happiness and stability, marriage and children and positive career aspirations.

2. Activity (ii)

This was done as a written exercise – once the respondents had written a positive comment on each member of the group, the notes were given to the members and not shared with the group.

6.4.9.4 *Evaluation of Session Nine*

The aim of this session was to focus on the positive aspects of divorce and to enhance the members' self-esteem. The feedback from the collages indicated that since the divorce there had been a reduction in conflict, school work had improved, sport had improved, they managed to have fun and spend quality time with the non-custodial parent and some were more spoiled materially.

Overall, the perception was, that despite the hurt and pain caused by parental divorce, that a lot of positive aspects did result from the divorce. The feedback from the Collages was then linked to the feelings that were identified in the previous session. A lot of the feelings that had been expressed in session eight came through as past responses on the Collage. The leader encouraged the members to acknowledge the growth that had taken place in them since their parents' divorce and to look forward to a more positive future.

Unfortunately, due to time constraints, the positive feedback session was not discussed as a group exercise. It did however, enhance self-esteem, as members hugged and thanked one another for their comments and for the support provided during the group process.

The session ended on a positive note, as members revealed that they "felt better" having assessed the positive aspects of divorce. This session seemed to have a cathartic effect as expression of divorce related feelings provided them with the opportunity to put certain issues into perspective and to offer mutual support around divorce-related issues. Members were reminded that the next session would be the last one.

6.4.10 Session Ten

6.4.10.1 General Outlay

Time 1 ½ Hours

Material Pen / Pencil
Paper

Goals

- positive closure
- critically evaluate growth and progress

6.4.10.2 Techniques

a) Group Discussion

The leader provided a summary of all the previous sessions and members shared their thoughts and feelings about the group.

6.4.10.3 Feedback on Session Ten

The members critically evaluated the intervention programme and shared their thoughts and feelings about the group process. The following responses were made:

Respondent A:

The group has been an eye-opener for me. I realized that I am not the only person whose parents are divorced and I realized that there are people who understand how I feel. I know that if I get married it will be forever and I won't make the same mistakes my parents made. I'm not too happy about the fact that the group think I'm a Gorilla (see session six), but I have learned to stand-up for myself and to stop throwing things at people when I'm angry. At times I feel we didn't all connect properly, as we are all different ages, but we tried to help the

younger members as much as possible. When there was disruption in the group however, our leader helped us to address it and interest was soon restored. Our group leader's sympathy and understanding and the fact that she encouraged us to express our feelings, no matter how scary they may seem, brought us out of our protective shells and enabled us to face the harsh realities of the world. Thanks to the support of the group members, I realise that I am not alone and that I have friends who will be there for me. I feel sad having to say goodbye and to leave all of you who have shared in my problems and understood where I was coming from. Time seems to have flown, but I know that I can go out and conquer my fears now. It's been great, thank you.

Respondent B:

The group has been great! I have made new friends and learned a lot. I no longer feel so lonely and most important of all, I can now speak to my father, which I wasn't able to do before.

Respondent C:

I have thoroughly enjoyed the group. I don't feel so angry and upset anymore, I no longer let my Mom put me on a guilt-trip and I even went on holiday with my father and left my mother at home, which I've never done before. I also feel that I've made new friends in the group. Thanks to all of you and to the leader for all your help and support – I really wish this wasn't the last session.

Respondent D:

I've learned not to get so angry and I speak about my feelings now. I just wish there was more food!! (Biscuits were provided at each session, but Respondent D jokingly suggested that future sessions should provide a greater variety of food).

Respondent E:

For me the group has been very helpful. It has helped me deal with my emotional memories of the divorce. Also being with people my age, and who

have been through what I've been through has helped. Because of the interaction and relating of certain situations. I think that it has helped me express myself in a way that I could not before. It has also helped me realize that I have rights as well, and that I should not keep my feelings inside in fear of hurting my parents. Just because our parents got divorced does not mean that we should feel guilty about it and try protecting our parents. I also feel that this group must continue for other children who have been through a divorce or who are going through one at the moment.

Respondent F:

What I've mostly enjoyed is the friendship and support I've received from the group especially from Respondent E. I have also learned to speak to my father without feeling terrified all the time. The only criticism I have, is that having my brother in the group inhibited me somewhat, as I was fearful that he would go and tell my mother what was discussed in the group. I think if you decide to run another group, you must not include the siblings.

Respondent G:

Well, I don't feel like a mouse anymore. I think that counselling should always take place in a group rather than individually, as it is much better. I'm feeling a lot happier now and would like to say "thank you" to the group for all their help and support.

Respondent H:

I wasn't very happy about joining the group at first, as I didn't think it would help. I must say however that it did help and I learned a lot from all of you. One thing I do realise is that I am not alone anymore, that I have people to talk to. It has been a fun experience – thank you.

Once all the respondents had provided feedback on the sessions, arrangements were made for a fun outing and a party later on during the week that would represent closure of the group programme.

6.4.10.4 *Evaluation of Session Ten*

The leader summarized the groups' responses and thanked everyone for participating in the programme. The leader reminded members that they had developed a mutual support base and encouraged them to remain in contact with one another. Everyone thanked the leader for her participation and for organizing the programme. All the members expressed regret that the programme had ended as they had enjoyed it so much. Arrangements were then made for the post-test evaluation. The group decided to go ten-pin bowling and have a party later on that week.

6.5 SUMMARY OF THE SESSIONS

The ten sessions were divided into three components – an affective component, a cognitive component and a support component. The affective component focused on the impact divorce had on the members, communication skills and coping skills. The cognitive component focused on problem solving techniques, conflict and anger management. The support component assessed positive support structures and the enhancement of the self-concept and the self-esteem.

As the sessions developed, problem areas could be explored and expanded on and planning could be done for the next session. During the ten-week sessions, members were given the opportunity to discuss their problems, to offer advice and support to other members and to enhance self-knowledge through the learning of life skills. Universality and diversity of emotions were developed and a safe climate was provided to practice new behaviour patterns and to facilitate expression of feelings. Group cohesion and interaction was attained through the development of trust, confrontation and acceptance.

At the end of the Divorce Intervention Programme, psychometric tests were repeated. A summary of the personal image of each respondent, the pre- and post-test results and pedagogical observations made by the leader, during the group process, will be discussed in the next section.

6.6 PERSONAL IMAGE OF RESPONDENT A

6.6.1 Background History

Respondent A is seventeen years old and is currently writing Matric at one of the local Government High Schools. Her parents had been married for twenty-three years when her mother discovered that her father was having an affair with another woman. Respondent A had always enjoyed a close relationship with her father and felt deeply shocked and disappointed when she found out that he was having an affair. Her father then left the home and instituted divorce proceedings against her mother in October 1999, giving her sole custody of the children, aged seventeen and thirteen. After the initial emotional upheaval caused by the divorce, Respondent A and her father discussed his reasons for having an affair and managed to re-establish the close bond they had shared prior to the divorce. This caused a tremendous amount of conflict between her and her mother, as the latter felt betrayed by the daughter. The conflict between Respondent A and her mother increased after she had visited her father or spent a weekend with him. Respondent A indicated that her mother constantly put her on a "guilt trip" and refused to let her go out with her friends or take her anywhere, under the guise of being protective of her. The deterioration of their relationship caused the respondent to become socially withdrawn, her schoolwork suffered and she felt angry and frustrated at having been drawn into her parents' conflict situation. She felt that her mother blamed her father for the breakdown of the marriage and that she was being manipulated into choosing sides between her parents.

Respondent A stated that she wanted to study to become a chef at a Hotel School in Durban, where she would then live with her father, as he was

considering moving down to Durban to be close to his girlfriend. Her mother refused to consider this an option, citing financial problems and her father's irresponsible behaviour as reasons for her refusal.

The dissolution of the family has left Respondent A feeling distressed, unhappy, unmotivated and confused about her future career.

6.6.2 Reasons for Inclusion in the Group

It was evident that respondent A was in a state of emotional distress. She felt unable to resolve the conflict between her mother and herself and felt guilty when she spent time with her father. The divorce had impacted negatively on her relationship with her parents and her peers. Her schoolwork deteriorated and she felt uncertain about her future career. Her belief that no one could understand how she was feeling and that she would have to deal with her crisis situation, alone, made her a prime candidate for inclusion in the group. Respondent A indicated a willingness to participate in the group process as she realised that she was not coping with her parents' divorce and felt that she could benefit from discussing her issues within the context of the group.

6.6.3 Pre- and Post-test Psychometric Results

6.6.3.1 Pre-test Results

The respondents' pre-and post-test psychometric scores will be presented in this section. Reference should be made to **Chapter Five** for a detailed description of the psychometric tests used in this study. Sectional references will be provided in the first case study only (Respondent A) and must then be used for all the respondents.

Results from the psychometric tests revealed the following:

- i) **Severe depression** – (see section 5.5.3.3) A score of 34 on Beck's Depression Inventory indicates that Respondent A is suffering from severe depression (see Table (iii), pg. 217).
- ii) **High Anxiety level** – (see section 5.5.3.1) A sten score of 9 on the IPAT Anxiety Scale reveals that Respondent A is in a state of high anxiety (see Table (iv), pg. 218).
- iii) **Low self-concept** – (see section 5.5.3.5) A score of 35 on the ASCS indicates that Respondent A has a low self-concept (see Table (i), pg. 215).
- iv) **Low Structure** – (see section 5.5.3.4) A stanine score of 1 on the FFAQ reveals that Respondent A is experiencing the structure in the family as below average (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- v) **Low Affect** – (see section 5.5.3.4) A stanine score of 1 on the FFAQ indicates that Respondent A rates both the quantity and the expression of affection in her family very low (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- vi) **Low Communication** – (see section 5.5.3.4) A stanine score of 1 on the FFAQ indicates that Respondent A experiences Communication as problematic in the family (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- vii) **Low Behaviour Control** – (see section 5.5.3.4) A stanine score of 3 on the FFAQ indicates that Respondent A's Behaviour Control is below average (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- viii) **Low Value Transmission** – (see section 5.5.3.4) A stanine score of 1 on the FFAQ reveals that Respondent A does not identify positively with the Values System of her parents (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- ix) **Low External Systems** – (see section 5.5.3.4) A stanine score of 2 on the FFAQ shows that Respondent A does not have much interaction with other External Systems (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- x) According to the **TAT** responses (see section 5.5.3.2), elements of helplessness ("..couldn't get his note right"), hopelessness ("couldn't do anything..") and depression ("..doesn't want to see anybody..") are evident. An analysis of the **TAT** reveals that Respondent A may be searching for an identity beyond the confines of the family unit ("..she is

going to make her life better, find herself.."). Significant figures are regarded as authoritarian ("..her parents are really strict..") and do not promote independent thought processes or freedom of expression ("..she is restricted and bounded.."). Indications of aggression, especially towards males are also evident ("..the man thinks he's macho..storms off.."). The conflict situation in the family is regarded as overwhelming ("..when her parents fight, she isolates herself...doesn't want to interfere..") and her inability to deal with it constructively causes her to withdraw from it. Anger at her inability to express her emotions and to behave independently is also evidenced in the analysis of the **TAT**. A search for meaning, identity ("..wishing that he could be himself..") and self-expression ("..not be isolated where there is no light..") is revealed throughout her responses in the **TAT**.

The post-test results will be presented in the next section.

6.6.3.2 Post-test Results

Results from the psychometric tests reveal the following:

- i) **Moderate Depression** – A score of 20 on Beck's Depression Inventory indicates that Respondent A has moderate depression (see Table (iii), pg. 217).
- ii) **High Anxiety Level** – A sten score of 8 on the IPAT Anxiety Scale reveals that Respondent A is still in a state of high anxiety (see Table (iv), pg. 218).
- iii) **Low Self-concept** – A score of 41 on the ASCS shows that the respondent has a low self-concept (see Table (ii), pg. 215).
- iv) **Low Structure** – A stanine score of 3 on the FFAQ reveals that the Structure in the family is still perceived as below average (see Table (vi), pg. 219).

- v) **Low Affect** – A stanine score of 2 on the FFAQ indicates that the respondent rates both the quantity and expression of affection in her family as below average (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- vi) **Low Communication** – A stanine score of 2 on the FFAQ shows that Respondent A experiences Communication as below average in the family (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- vii) **Average Behaviour Control** – A stanine score of 4 on the FFAQ indicates that the respondent's Behaviour Control is average (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- viii) **Low Value Transmission** – A stanine score of 1 on the FFAQ reveals that the respondent does not identify positively with the Value System of her parents (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- ix) **Low External Systems** – A stanine score of 3 on the FFAQ shows that the respondent does not participate in school-related activities and has below average interaction with other external systems (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- x) Responses on the **TAT** indicate that the male-figure is identified as the aggressor, who behaves aggressively towards the female figure ("..the woman has been hit by her husband.."). Women are perceived as being subservient to men ("..she will get up and cook supper for him.."). Their role is to ensure that the man's needs are met. Indications of inter-parental conflict ("..parents have just had a fight.."), tension and withdrawal ("..she did not want to get involved..") from conflict are evidenced throughout the responses. Underlying elements of depression and unhappiness ("..the person is trapped..") are revealed in some of the responses. Freedom and independence ("..he will find his way and walk over the green hills to freedom..") are achieved in her final responses on the **TAT**.

6.6.4 Summary of Respondent A

Scores on the pre- and post-test results do not reveal a remarkable improvement in all the areas that were tested. The respondent showed an improvement in mood, as she went from suffering from a severe depression to a moderately depressed state. Her anxiety level was still high and despite an improvement in her self-concept, this was still considered low. A lack of cohesion among her parents was evident in her score on Structure in the family, but her responses indicate that her need for privacy and independence was being recognised. The respondent was still experiencing difficulty in expressing her feelings, but an improvement in the area of mutual trust was indicated on her Affect score. Communication in the family was still considered a problem, as she was not being encouraged to express her feelings. Recognition of her growth towards adulthood and her ability to practice self-control was evident in her improved score in Behaviour Control. Her low score on Value Transmissions could indicate that her parents are inappropriate models for value transmission. Her lack of interaction with systems (the school or the community) beyond the boundaries of the home environment was indicated in her low External Systems score. Success was achieved in the area of freedom and independence, as noted in her responses on the TAT. This may indicate that growth had taken place in her ability to form a personal identity separate from her parents.

The pedagogical observations made by the leader in the context of the group process will be discussed in the next section.

6.6.5 Pedagogical Observations

Respondent A indicated at the beginning of the group intervention programme that she felt very lonely because no one else could understand her situation. As the group programme progressed, she seemed to settle down and managed to identify with most of the issues that were raised by other group members. Within the context of the group environment, Respondent A was able to practice

assertiveness and problem solving skills. She generalised these learned skills to the home and school environment enabling her to feel more comfortable about confronting her feelings and challenging parental decisions that she either did not feel comfortable with or did not agree with. Her mature cognitive capacity enabled her to provide valuable insight to other group members, challenging their irrational beliefs and encouraging them to develop positive problem-solving techniques.

6.7 PERSONAL IMAGE OF RESPONDENT B

6.7.1 Background History

Respondent B is a sixteen-year old, grade nine pupil, at a local Government High School. His parents divorced in May 1999 after an eighteen-year marriage. According to Respondent B, his father came home one night and called them all into the bedroom where he announced that he was filing for divorce as he had found someone else. He had apparently been having an affair with another woman, but indirectly blamed his wife and his twelve-year old daughter for his departure from the family. He had not wanted more children after the respondent's birth. He was very unhappy when his wife fell pregnant with their daughter and on the day that she was born, he was retrenched from his job. This caused a lot of conflict and financial stress in the family, which resulted in his alienating himself from them. He has apparently not found secure employment since the birth of his daughter twelve years ago.

On the day that his father left, Respondent B indicated that he felt very angry and upset and blamed his mother and sister for his father's departure. He also blamed himself as he used to help his father run a small business from their home, but due to sporting and academic commitments, he was no longer able to help him as much as he used to. He believed that this might have contributed to the divorce. Respondent B stated that he and his father had always enjoyed a

very close relationship, but that he was scared of his father, as he would beat him if he did not approve of his behaviour.

Respondent B indicated that several changes occurred in his life after his parents divorced. He was forced to take on certain responsibilities, including finding a coaching job so that he could assist his mother financially, as his father was not paying maintenance due to being out of work. A tremendous amount of conflict and animosity developed between his parents and he was subjected to each parent denigrating the other at every opportunity. This left respondent B feeling very confused, as once he had realised that his mother and sister were not to blame for his father's departure, he then had to try and re-establish a relationship with each parent. This resulted in a close relationship developing between Respondent B and his mother and sister, and a friendship developing between him and his father. He believes that he and his father no longer relate as father and son, but rather as friends. He describes his mother as a generous, kind and loving person, who makes every effort to ensure that his needs are being met.

He states that the most difficult adjustment he has had to make, apart from the lowering of his standard of living, has been to accept his father's girlfriend and her children as "new" family members, as his father insists on referring to them as his "new family". He has managed to make friends with his father's girlfriend and her children, but refuses to accept them as members of his family.

Respondent B feels that since the divorce, he has become more independent and there has been a remarkable improvement in both his academic and sporting abilities. He believes that this may be due to the fact that his father never really encouraged him in these areas and without the negative input, he has been able to establish a sense of self-worth by achieving in both the sporting and academic areas.

6.7.2 Reasons for Inclusion in the Group

Respondent B presented a very mature interpretation of his parents' divorce. This however, did not detract from the fact that he was experiencing mixed emotions as to the role he was expected to play since the divorce. Despite his managing to develop a close relationship with each parent, independent of one another, their constant denigration of each other to him, left him feeling confused as to which parent was telling the truth. It was evident that he needed to separate himself from the conflict between his parents and to realistically identify his responsibilities as a child in the home, apart from the responsibilities of his parents towards him.

Respondent B indicated that he would like to participate in the group, as he was struggling to deal with the conflict between his parents and was unsure of the role he was expected to play in the home environment. He also stated that he did not have friends living in the area and was hoping that the group would initiate the development of new friendships with people in a similar situation to his.

6.7.3 Pre- and Post-test Psychometric Results

6.7.3.1 Pre-test Results

Results from the psychometric tests revealed the following:

- i) **No Depression** – A score of 4 on Beck's Depression Inventory indicates that Respondent B is not suffering from depression (see Table (iii), pg. 217).
- ii) **High Anxiety level** – A sten score of 8 on the IPAT Anxiety Scale reveals that Respondent B is in a state of high anxiety (see Table (iv), pg. 218).

- iii) **High Self-concept** – A score of 85 on the ASCS indicates that Respondent B has a high self-concept (see Table (i), pg. 215).
- iv) **Low Structure** – A stanine score of 2 on the FFAQ reveals that Respondent B is experiencing the Structure in the family as below average (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- v) **Average Affect** – A stanine score of 5 on the FFAQ indicates that Respondent B rates both the quantity and the expression of affection in his family as average (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- vi) **Average Communication** – A stanine score of 5 on the FFAQ indicates that Respondent B experiences Communication as average in the family (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- vii) **Low Behaviour Control** – A stanine score of 2 on the FFAQ reveals that Respondent B's Behaviour Control is below average (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- viii) **Low Value Transmission** – A stanine score of 1 on the FFAQ reveals that Respondent B does not have many interactions with other External Systems (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- ix) **Low External Systems** – A stanine score of 3 on the FFAQ shows that apart from encouragement to participate in school-related activities, Respondent B does not have much interaction with other External Systems (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- x) According to the **TAT** elements of sadness (“..he used to be happy..”) and depression (“...he is crying..”) are evident. The theme of conflict and loss (“..the father has walked out..”) due to a divorce is revealed in the analysis of the responses on the **TAT**. Indications of aggression and anger towards women (“..the man was angry and hit his wife..”) are evidenced in some of the responses as well as the loss of a significant relationship with the father figure (“..the father is sad because he cannot see his child..”). Divorce related issues such as conflict (“..they are shouting at each other..”), loss, anger, the father walking out (“..the woman is left on her own..”), confusion (“..she doesn't understand why her father left..”) and unhappiness are emphasised in his responses on the **TAT**.

The post-test results are presented in the next section.

6.7.3.2 Post-test Results

Results from the psychometric tests reveal the following:

- i) **No Depression** – A score of 0 on Beck's Depression Inventory indicates that Respondent B is not suffering from depression (see Table (iii), pg. 217).
- ii) **Average Anxiety** – A sten score of 5 on the IPAT Anxiety Scale reveals that the respondent is functioning within the normal range of anxiety (see Table (iv), pg. 218).
- iii) **High Self-concept** – A score of 87 on the ASCS indicates that the respondent has a high self-concept (see Table (ii), pg. 215).
- iv) **Low Structure** – A stanine score of 2 on the FFAQ shows that the respondent is experiencing the Structure in his home as below average (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- v) **Average Affect** – A stanine score of 5 on the FFAQ indicates that the respondent rates both the quantity and expression of affection in his family as average (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- vi) **High Communication** – A stanine score of 9 on the FFAQ indicates that the respondent experiences positive Communication in his family (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- vii) **High Behaviour Control** – A stanine score of 8 on the FFAQ reveals that Respondent B's Behaviour Control is above average (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- viii) **High Value Transmission** – A stanine score of 9 on the FFAQ indicates that Respondent B identifies positively with the Value System of his parents (see Table (vi), pg. 219).

- ix) **High External Systems** – A stanine score of 9 on the FFAQ shows that the respondent participates in school-related activities and enjoys above average interaction with other External Systems (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- x) Responses on the **TAT** indicate passive (“..sitting and thinking..”) acceptance of the divorce situation (“..watching mom’s boyfriend working..”) contrasted with underlying feelings of sadness and confusion as to why it had to happen (“..he was happy when mom and dad were together..”). The theme of “loss” is evident throughout his responses, namely the loss of the father-son relationship, loss of happiness, loss of the family unit (“..dad walked out..”) and the loss of fun and joyful interaction (“..they used to have lots of fun together..”). The future is presented as being uncertain. An element of ambition is present, but this is achieved in fantasy and not in reality (“..the boy watches movies about becoming a doctor..”). Anger and aggression is directed at the mother figure (“..the man killed his wife..”). Indications of the respondents struggle fully to accept his parents divorce (“..he used to be happy when his parents were together..”) is evident throughout his responses on the **TAT**.

6.7.4 Summary of Respondent B

Respondent B’s positive outlook on life and the fact that he was a popular member of the group had a positive effect on his self-concept and no signs of depression were evident. At the beginning of the intervention programme he was in a state of high anxiety, but a marked decrease (from 8 to 5) was noted at the end of the programme. This was possibly due to his being able to separate himself from inter-parental conflict and from his feelings of responsibility towards his mother. The low Structure score reinforced the lack of cohesion among his parents and his need for respect of and acceptance of his individuality within the family. His affect score did not change during the course of the programme as he was able to express his feelings adequately at the inset thereof. Communication in the family improved (from 5 to 9), as he became more actively involved in the decision making process in the home environment. A dramatic

improvement in his scores in Behaviour Control (from 2 to 8) and Value Transmission (from 1 to 9) may indicate that he was able to practice self-control in conflict situations and that his growth towards independence and adulthood was being recognised in the family. He modelled strong moral behaviour patterns and internalised his ability to develop his potential to the full. His positive interaction with group members of the opposite sex, his involvement in soccer coaching and his selection for the South African Junior Baseball Team enhanced his self-esteem and may account for the improvement in his score on External Systems (from 3 to 9). Responses on the TAT showed very little variation in the pre- and post-test analysis. His responses indicated that he was still struggling to come to terms with his parents' divorce and that he was still feeling sad and angry at his father's departure from the family. His post-TAT responses revealed possible career aspirations as he indicated that he would like to become a doctor. Although this career option was only achieved in fantasy, it is still considered relevant to his particular developmental stage and shows that he is thinking about his future career opportunities.

The group leader made the following pedagogical observations:

6.7.5 Pedagogical Observations

Respondent B presented as rather shy at the beginning of the group process. As the programme continued, he managed to open up and verbalised his distress at the loss of his father and confronted the anger that he felt towards his mother. He was very popular with the female members of the group. He would always highlight the positive changes that had occurred in his life since his parents' divorce, thus modelling positive behaviour patterns and coping skills to other group members. He managed to identify and clarify his feelings towards his parents and accepted that it was not his responsibility to ensure his parents' happiness. As the programme continued, he became more relaxed and seemed to enjoy the valuable contribution that he was making to the group.

6.8 PERSONAL IMAGE OF RESPONDENT C

6.8.1 Background History

Respondent C is a fourteen-year old, grade eight pupil, at a local Government High School. Her parents had been married for twenty-two years when they divorced eight month ago. While her mother and older sister, aged seventeen, were on holiday in Australia, her father met and had an affair with another woman. On returning from Australia, her mother was informed by a mutual friend that her husband was having an affair. Her mother confronted her father and suggested that they go for marital counselling, but her father refused, stating that he wanted a divorce.

When her father moved out and instituted divorce proceeding against her mother, conflict between the parents and between the parents and the children erupted. According to Respondent C, her mother reacted very badly to her father moving out and then started behaving very negatively toward her father and toward her and her sister. She would constantly make derogatory comments about her father and expected her to take sides against him. This negative behaviour was reinforced when respondent C spent time with her father.

Respondent C indicated that her parents' relationship prior to the divorce was perceived as a happy one. Since the divorce the atmosphere in the home is very tense and often riddled with conflict. One of the main sources of conflict in the home is a lack of finances, as her father does not pay her mother maintenance. Her mother often places the responsibility of trying to get maintenance from her father on her shoulders, with the threat that if he does not pay they will end up living in a "squatter camp". The children also play the role of messengers for both parents, a role Respondent C revealed that she did not mind playing, as she then gets to speak to her father.

Respondent C indicated that she sides with her mother against her father, as her greatest fear is that her mother will kick her out the house and force her to go and live with her father. She also stated that she is scared that her mother will stop loving her and that her mother will do something harmful to herself (commit suicide) if she did not constantly side with her. She felt that since the divorce, her mother had become very impatient and depressed and that she was unable to communicate with her mother on the same level as she did, prior to the divorce. Despite her concern for her mother, it was evident that Respondent C also loved and cared about her father. She revealed that her relationship with her father was always very close and had grown even closer since the divorce. Her father had always been the one who helped her with her schoolwork and she could turn to him if she needed advice. She expressed concern that her schoolwork would suffer as a result of not having her father around to assist her when she needed help. Her relationship with her mother has not impacted on her relationship with her father, as he still behaves protectively towards her and seems to understand her need to protect her mother.

Respondent C stated that she felt ashamed when her parents divorced, as most of her friends come from intact families. She felt that her friends did not understand her distress and did not always know how to respond when she cried at school. She wished that she did not have to find herself in the middle, between her mother and her father, and that each parent could find happiness in their separate lives.

The divorce has left Respondent C feeling very anxious about her parents' happiness and about her future. She also felt angry and confused at constantly being forced to choose between her parents.

6.8.2 Reasons for Inclusion in the Group

It was evident that Respondent C was trying to deal with a myriad of emotions pertaining to her parents' divorce. Her desperate concern for her mother's

welfare and constant longing for interaction with her father left her feeling anxious, insecure and deeply distressed. She appeared to be in a state of crisis and inclusion in the group process could possibly assist in enabling her to deal with some of the emotional issues she was experiencing after her parents' divorce. Respondent C indicated that she would like to participate in the group process as she wanted to learn to manage her anger, deal with parental conflict more effectively and allay some of the fears that had developed since her parents divorced.

6.8.3 Pre- and Post-test Psychometric Results

6.8.3.1 Pre-test Results

Results from the psychometric tests revealed the following:

- i) **Mild Depression** – A score of 18 on Beck's Depression Inventory indicates that Respondent C is suffering from mild depression (see Table (iii), pg. 217).
- ii) **High Anxiety level** – A sten score of 10 on the IPAT Anxiety Scale reveals that Respondent C is in a state of high anxiety (see Table (iv), pg. 218).
- iii) **Low Self-concept** – A score of 50 on the ASCS indicates that Respondent C had a low self-concept (see Table (i), pg. 215).
- iv) **Average Structure** – A stanine score of 4 on the FFAQ reveals that Respondent C experiences the Structure in the family as average (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- v) **Average Affect** – A stanine score of 4 on the FFAQ indicates that Respondent C rates both the quantity and the expression of affection in her family as average (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- vi) **Average Communication** – A stanine score of 4 on the FFAQ reveals that Respondent C experiences Communication in her family as average (see Table (v), pg. 219).

- vii) **Low Behaviour Control** – A stanine score of 3 on the FFAQ indicates that Respondent C's Behaviour Control is considered below average (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- viii) **Low Value Transmission** – A stanine score of 3 on the FFAQ reveals that Respondent C does not identify positively with the Values System of her parents (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- ix) **Average External Systems** – A stanine score of 5 on the FFAQ shows that Respondent C participates in school-related activities and interacts with other External Systems (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- x) An analysis of Respondent C's **TAT** responses reveal elements of helplessness, isolation, loneliness and depression ("..she's sitting and waiting for her dad.."). Parental divorce ("..his parents have got divorced.."), conflict ("..her parents have just had an argument..") and financial hardship ("..her mom doesn't have any money..") are some of the themes that are highlighted in her responses. Indications of anger and aggression ("..the boy's dad beat him up..") directed at the male figures are also evident. Her desperate longing for interaction with the father figure ("..she wishes her dad could walk through the door..") results in feelings of unhappiness and depression ("..she is very upset.."). The responses communicate an inability to deal with conflict situations ("..he just walks out the door.."), preferring instead to withdraw, causing further feelings of frustration and helplessness to develop.

6.8.3.2 Post-test Results

Results from the psychometric tests reveal the following:

- i) **Mild Depression** – A score of 15 on Beck's Depression Inventory indicates that Respondent C was still suffering from mild depression (see Table (iii), pg. 217).
- ii) **High Anxiety** – A sten score of 8 on the IPAT Anxiety Scale revealed that the respondent was still in a state of high anxiety (see Table (iv),

pg. 218).

- iii) **Medium Self-concept** – A score of 56 on the ASCS shows that the respondent has a medium self-concept (see Table (ii), pg. 215).
- iv) **Average Structure** – A stanine score of 5 on the FFAQ indicates that Respondent C regards the Structure in her family as average (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- v) **Average Affect** – A stanine score of 5 on the FFAQ reveals that the respondent rates both the quantity and expression of affection in her family as average (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- vi) **Average Communication** – A stanine score of 4 on the FFAQ indicates that the respondent experiences Communication as average in her family (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- vii) **Average Behaviour Control** – A stanine score of 4 on the FFAQ shows that the respondent's Behaviour Control is average (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- viii) **Average Value Transmission** – A stanine score of 6 on the FFAQ indicates that the respondent identifies with the Value System of her parents to a certain extent (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- ix) **Average External Systems** – A stanine score of 5 on the FFAQ shows that the respondent participates in school-related activities and enjoys average interaction with other External Systems (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- x) Responses on the **TAT** indicate that the loss of the family unit through divorce ("..she's trying to get her husband to return..") is identified. Divorce, as a result of the male figure having an extra-marital affair ("..her husband had an affair.."), is evident throughout the **TAT** responses. Underlying feelings of anger ("..she was beaten up by either one or both parents..") and aggression directed at both parents are highlighted in certain responses. The male figure is identified as the aggressor ("..he will beat her up..") and the female figure as the victim ("..she is left to survive on her own with no maintenance.."). Financial hardship due to a lack of maintenance also comes to the fore. Inter-relationship conflict resulting in

divorce or separation (“..they are fighting..she will leave him..”) is evidenced in certain responses. Withdrawal from conflict and the loss of communication (“..her parents won’t talk to her..”) with significant others is evident. The future is seen in a positive light, with the anticipation that the present situation will improve (“..he prayed and he will see the light of the future..”).

6.8.4 Summary of Respondent C

Respondent C was very anxious and unhappy when she entered the group programme. Although her level of anxiety had decreased slightly, she was still in a state of high anxiety at the end of the programme. All she wanted was for her parents to get back together again so that their lives could become “normal” again. She was still in a mild state of depression at the end of the group process, but a slight improvement in her self-concept was noted. No changes in Structure, Affect, Communication and External Systems occurred in her post-test results. The group process possibly helped her to separate from her mother, as she was able to spend a holiday with her father, something she refused to do prior to joining the group. She also indicated an improvement in being able to communicate her needs and feelings to her parents, recognising when they put her on a “guilt trip” and addressing the matter. A slight improvement in Behaviour Control revealed that she was starting to think and behave more rationally, rather than emotionally. Her increasing autonomy and awareness of her own value system may account for the higher score in Value Transmission (from 3 to 6).

During the course of the programme, she entered into a relationship with a young man and indicated that she was able to speak to him without feeling awkward or embarrassed. She seemed to benefit from the programme as she received lots of nurturing and support from the other group members that possibly contributed to her improved interaction with her peers at school.

6.8.5 Pedagogical Observations

Respondent C communicated openly and honestly with the group right from the beginning. She openly displayed emotion in the group and often cried when she felt angry or upset with the situation at home. This was coupled with a lovely sense of humour, which relieved some of the emotional tension in the group. She played a positive role in the group process by modelling acceptance and support of other group members.

6.9 PERSONAL IMAGE OF RESPONDENT D

6.9.1 Background History

Respondent D is a thirteen-year old, grade eight pupil, attending a Christian College in the area. His parents were divorced in May 2000 after a marriage of 16 years. His mother instituted divorce proceedings against his father after she learned that he was having an affair with one of his business associates. According to Respondent D, when his mother informed him of the pending divorce he went to his room and cried. Once the initial shock had worn off, he was left feeling very confused. He stated that he felt angry and disappointed with his father, who had raised them with strong Christian values, always insisting that they behave honestly and that they distinguish right from wrong. His father's behaviour had shattered his image of how a Christian should behave, leaving him feeling very confused and insecure as to how his friends and members of the congregation would react towards him, once they found out that his parents were getting divorced.

Respondent D indicated that he had never enjoyed a close relationship with his father, as he was a strict disciplinarian and a "workaholic" and spent very little time with him. He stated that he was afraid of his father and would never consider discussing personal issues with him, especially as his father constantly referred to his weight problem and made him feel ashamed. He preferred to

He felt that it was his role to encourage and support his mother, especially as she considered him her favourite. He enjoyed a reasonably close relationship with his older sibling, a fifteen-year old brother, but stated that since the divorce, this relationship had become fraught with tension and conflict possibly due to his brother's emotional distress and low frustration tolerance level, since discovering his father's infidelity.

Since the divorce, Respondent D had spent more time with his father, but the relationship had not improved as his father still focused on his work, preferring to give him money to keep himself entertained or buying him computer games to keep him occupied. Respondent D indicated that he did not enjoy spending time with his father as he blamed him for his mother's unhappiness. He also resented the fact that his father did not spend time with him, but would travel to Durban on alternate weekends to visit his girlfriend. Respondent D took on the role of "spy" in his father's house and would carry information to his mother about his father's activities and on any discussions that they might have had. He stated that he would often take money from his father's wallet to give to his mother, to ensure that they did not suffer financially.

6.9.2 Reasons for Inclusion in the Group

Respondent D indicated that he would like to join the group as he felt that the group could provide him with security and help him to feel safe. Respondent D has a very low physical self-image and constantly referred to himself as being "fat". His parents divorce left him feeling very insecure and seem to have distorted his value system. His inability to communicate his needs to his father effectively and his distorted sense of responsibility to his mother made him a prime candidate for inclusion in the group process. It seemed appropriate to provide him with the opportunity to develop the skills required to think and act as an independent individual.

6.9.3 Pre- and Post-test Psychometric Results

6.9.3.1 Pre-test Results

Results from the psychometric tests reveal the following:

- i) **Severe Depression** – A score of 35 on Beck's Depression Inventory indicates that Respondent D is suffering from severe depression (see Table (iii), pg. 217).
- ii) **High Anxiety level** – A sten score of 8 on the IPAT Anxiety scale reveals that Respondent D is in a state of high anxiety (see Table (iv), pg. 218).
- iii) **Low Self-concept** – A score of 54 on the ASCS indicates that Respondent D has a low self-concept (see Table (i), pg. 215).
- iv) **Average Structure** – A stanine score of 6 on the FFAQ reveals that Respondent D is experiencing the structure in the family as average (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- v) **High Affect** – A stanine score of 7 on the FFAQ indicates that Respondent D rates both the quantity and expression of affection in his family as above average (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- vi) **Average Communication** – A stanine score of 5 on the FFAQ indicates that Respondent D experiences Communication as average in the family (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- vii) **High Behaviour Control** – A stanine score of 9 on the FFAQ reveals that Respondent D's Behaviour Control is above average (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- viii) **High Value Transmission** – A stanine score of 8 on the FFAQ indicates that Respondent D identifies positively with the Value System of his parents (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- ix) **High External Systems** – A stanine score of 7 on the FFAQ shows that Respondent D participates in school-related activities and enjoys above average interaction with other External Systems (see Table (v), pg. 219).

- x) The theme of divorce (“..I think his parents got divorced..”) is evident throughout the analysis of Respondent D’s responses on the **TAT**. Strong indications of anger and aggression (“..she ran her husband over with the car..”) are directed at the male figures. The father figure is identified as the aggressor (“..her father beat her mother...she is weeping..”), while the female figure is perceived as a helpless victim of circumstance. Respondent D identifies the role of the child as one of caretaker, who has to support the mother “in every way (s)he can”. Elements of helplessness (“..the violin is going to ruin his life..”) and depression (“..her life is in a terrible mess..”) are evident throughout the responses. Conflict between the mother and father dominates the responses (“..the father is arguing with the mother..”), while the child’s inability to deal with parental conflict results in feelings of isolation and rejection (“..he is planning to run away..”), compounded by suicidal thoughts (“..his father rejects him, so he kills himself”).

6.9.3.2 Post-test Results

- i) **Severe Depression** – A score of 34 on Beck’s Depression Inventory indicates that Respondent D is suffering from severe depression (see Table (iii), pg. 217).
- ii) **Average Anxiety** – A sten score of 7 on the IPAT Anxiety Scale shows that the respondent is within the normal range of anxiety (see Table (iv), pg. 218).
- iii) **Medium Self-concept** – A score of 58 on the ASCS indicates that Respondent D has a medium self-concept (see Table (ii), pg. 215).
- iv) **Average Structure** – A stanine score of 6 on the FFAQ reveals that the respondent regards the Structure in his family as average (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- v) **High Affect** – A stanine score of 7 on the FFAQ indicates that the respondent rates both the quantity and expression of affection in his family as above average (see Table (vi), pg. 219).

- vi) **Average Communication** – A stanine score of 6 on the FFAQ reveals that Respondent D experiences Communication as average in his family (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- vii) **High Behaviour Control** – A stanine score of 9 on the FFAQ indicates that Respondent D's Behaviour Control is above average (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- viii) **High Value Transmission** – A stanine score of 8 on the FFAQ shows that the respondent identifies positively with the Value System of his parents (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- ix) **High External Systems** – A stanine score of 8 on the FFAQ indicates that the respondent participates in school-related activities and enjoys above average interaction with other external Systems (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- x) Responses on the **TAT** indicate that Respondent D is in a state of heightened sexual awareness (refers to all the women as being "pregnant"). Underlying feelings of sadness ("..she will cry and run away..") and depression are evident throughout the responses. Divorce, inter-relationship conflict and extra-marital affairs ("..parents were fighting...they got divorced..he had an affair..") are concurrent themes throughout his responses on the **TAT**. Withdrawal from conflict is highlighted in the final response ("..he wept and is going to run away..").

6.9.4 Summary of Respondent D

Respondent D was still in a state of severe depression at the end of the intervention programme. His severely depressed state places him at risk, especially due to his constant references to "suicide" in his TAT responses and referral to a psychiatrist for further evaluation should be considered. His anxiety levels were considered "normal" at the end of the group process, which was an improvement on the high state of anxiety he was in at the beginning. The results on the FFAQ appear to be extremely high and do not correlate with the leader's observation of his behaviour within the context of the group. Structure is scored as average in his responses, indicating healthy models of adult authority and a

model of a good marriage, yet his parents are divorced and he regards his father as an authoritarian who is difficult to talk to. His high score in Behaviour Control is also questionable, as he often displayed a lack of self-control by interrupting other group members and was initially regarded as a disruptive element to group cohesion. Only once the members had confronted him on his behaviour, dealing with him assertively rather than aggressively, was he able to settle down and actively participate in the group process. His strong Christian values could account for the high score in Value Transmission, but as previously mentioned, after the divorce, he took on the role of "spy" for his mother and would take money from his father's wallet whenever he visited him. This may be due to a lack of maturity and an overdeveloped sense of responsibility towards his mother, which could have resulted in his inappropriate moral behaviour. Respondent D may be regarded as a sensitive and affectionate young man, which could account for his high Affect score.

Cognitively, he may still be regarded as immature, as he was unable to generalise what he had learned in the group to the home environment. His self-concept improved during the course of the programme, which may have been due to peer acceptance and support. He learned to communicate his needs more effectively in the group without having to resort to negative behaviour. He was still experiencing problems communicating with his father and preferred to withdraw, rather than confront potential conflict issues. Peer relationships at school improved as a result of him feeling better about himself and possibly due to becoming less dependent on external affirmations that he was a worthwhile individual.

6.9.5 Pedagogical Observations

Respondent D presented as very hyperactive in the group. He would constantly look for attention by interrupting and demanding that the group notice him. When the group confronted him on his behaviour, he was mortified and started crying. His behaviour however, improved and he managed to settle down and participate in the group activities. After a very immature start, he eventually made a

valuable contribution to the group through his insightful comments and sensitivity towards other members' feelings.

6.10 PERSONAL IMAGE OF RESPONDENT E

6.10.1 Background History

Respondent E is a thirteen-year old, grade eight pupil, at a local Government High School. Her parents married when her mother was eighteen years old as she was pregnant with Respondent E. When the respondent was seven years old, her parents divorced. She stated that the reason her parents divorced was that her father was having an affair with a married woman, who had two children of her own. Bitter conflict ensued as a result of the affair, until the respondent's mother packed her father's clothes and forced him to leave the home. As the respondent was still very young at the time of the divorce, she did not understand her mother's refusal to allow her father back into the house and ended up blaming her mother for her father's departure.

An acrimonious custody battle followed which resulted in the respondent's mother gaining sole custody of the children aged seven, three and two. The ensuing conflict and bitterness between her parents caused her to side with her mother and she neither saw nor spoke to her father for a year. Unable to manage her feelings of rejection and disappointment effectively, she became very angry and directed this anger at her mother and her younger brother and sister. Her relationship with her mother deteriorated to such an extent that they were unable to be civil towards one another. Both her parents re-married, leaving her feeling totally isolated without any significant support structures. Respondent E stated that she did not like her step-father, but his marriage to her mother catalyzed her into re-connecting with her father. She started seeing her father more often but was unable to enjoy a close relationship with him, as she did not get on with her stepmother.

The lack of emotional support from her parents and the constant conflict between her and her stepparents resulted in her leaving her mother's home to live with her grandmother. She believes that her grandmother gave her the love and stability she lacked in her own home and regards her as the most significant influence on her life. Her mother recently divorced her stepfather and has since made an effort towards repairing the damage that was caused by the first divorce and the re-marriage. She gets to spend time with her mother over the weekends, but will not consider moving back to her.

Respondent E stated that the divorce left her feeling lonely and insecure and that she was forced to take responsibility for her younger siblings at a very young age. She still feels resentful towards both her parents for the pain that they have caused in her life.

6.10.2 Reasons for Inclusion in the Group

Respondent E stated that after the divorce she "bottled" all the feelings inside of her and became more and more withdrawn. This impacted on her behaviour as she struggled to settle down in High School and was unable to interact or communicate effectively with her peers. She would often resort to attention-seeking behaviour to get her teachers and her peers to notice her.

The respondent indicated that she would like to join the group, as the divorce-related feelings had started surfacing again and hoped that the group would provide her with the skills and support she required for "putting the past behind her". Her feelings of insecurity and her isolation from her peers indicated that she could possibly benefit from the group process.

6.10.3 Pre- and Post-test Psychometric Results

6.10.3.1 Pre-test Results

Results from the psychometric tests reveal the following:

- i) **Mild Depression** – A score of 13 on Beck's Depression Inventory indicates mild depression in Respondent E (see Table (iii), pg. 217).
- ii) **High Anxiety level** – A sten score of 8 on the IPAT Anxiety scale reveals that Respondent E is in a state of high anxiety (see Table (iv), pg. 218).
- iii) **Medium Self-concept** – A score of 61 on the ASCS indicates that Respondent E has a medium self-concept (see Table (i), pg. 215).
- iv) **Low Structure** – A stanine score of 1 on the FFAQ shows that Respondent E experiences the Structure in the home as below average (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- v) **Low Affect** – A stanine score of 1 on the FFAQ indicates that Respondent E rates both the quantity and expression of affection in the family as very low (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- vi) **Low Communication** – A stanine score of 3 on the FFAQ reveals that Respondent E experiences Communication as below average in her family (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- vii) **Low Behaviour Control** – A stanine score of 2 on the FFAQ indicates that Respondent E's Behaviour Control is below average (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- viii) **Low Value transmission** – A stanine score of 2 on the FFAQ shows that Respondent E does not positively identify with the Value System of her parents (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- ix) **Low External Systems** – A stanine score of 2 on the FFAQ indicates that Respondent E does not participate in school-related activities and has below average interaction with other External Systems (see Table (v), pg. 219).

- x) Responses on the **TAT** reveal elements of insecurity (“..she’s not sure..”) and depression (“..she seems to be moping...she’s crying..”). An inability to deal with inter-personal conflict comes to the fore as Respondent E’s responses indicate withdrawal from conflict (“..she’ll just walk away..”) in preference to confronting or dealing with it. No relationship between the mother and daughter is recognised and the responses reveal no evidence of a family unit. Indications of anger and aggression (“..his father has been shot..”) directed at the father figure are evident. Lack of personal choice (“..his parents forced him to play the violin..”), insecurity (“..not sure if he likes it..”), anger (“..she will get cross..”) and depression (“..he’s sad..”) are the concurrent themes as evidenced in her responses on the **TAT**.

6.10.3.2 Post-test Results

The results of the psychometric tests reveal:

- i) **Mild Depression** – A score of 11 on Beck’s Depression Inventory reveals that Respondent E shows elements of mild depression (see Table (iii), pg. 217).
- ii) **Average Anxiety** – A sten score of 6 on the IPAT Anxiety Scale reveals that the respondent is functioning within the normal anxiety range (see Table (iv), pg. 218).
- iii) **Medium Self-concept** – A score of 63 on the ASCS indicates that the respondent has a medium self-concept (see Table (ii), pg. 215).
- iv) **Low Structure** – A stanine score of 1 on the FFAQ shows that the respondent experiences the Structure in her family as below average (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- v) **Low Affect** – A stanine score of 3 on the FFAQ reveals that Respondent E rates both the quantity and expression of affection in her family as below average (see Table (vi), pg. 219).

- vi) **Low Communication** – A stanine score of 1 on the FFAQ indicates that Respondent E experiences Communication in her family as below average (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- vii) **Low Behaviour Control** – A stanine score of 3 on the FFAQ shows that the respondents Behaviour Control is below average (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- viii) **Low Value Transmission** – A stanine score of 2 on the FFAQ indicates that the respondent does not identify positively with the Value System of her parents (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- ix) **Low External Systems** – A stanine score of 1 on the FFAQ reveals that the respondent does not participate in school-related activities and has below average interaction with other External Systems (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- x) Elements of sadness (“..she is upset..”) and loneliness (“..the girl is probably lonely..”) are revealed in her responses on the **TAT**. Her responses indicate sensitivity for other people’s feelings (“..he doesn’t want to hurt his parents..”), especially those of the father figure and a concern as to what other people think of her. Underlying feelings of guilt (“..maybe she has done something wrong..”) and a need to protect her inner thoughts (“..she won’t let him find out what she’s doing..”) are evidenced in some of the responses. A need to escape the present situation and a desire for freedom (“..trying to escape out the window..”) is indicated in the final response on the **TAT**.

6.10.4 Summary of Respondent E

Respondent E was very committed to the group process and positively contributed to group cohesion through her interaction and communication with members outside of the weekly sessions. A slight improvement in depressed mood was evident at the end of the programme and her initial high anxiety level decreased and normalised. Respondent E is presently living with her grandmother and lacks positive interaction with her parents and siblings. This

may account for the low Structure and the low Affect score on the FFAQ. At the beginning of the programme she had a tendency to focus on the negative aspects of her life, often blaming her parents for her unhappiness. As the process continued, she became more assertive and started taking responsibility for her emotional wellbeing. Communication with her father and stepmother improved as she made more effort to interact with them. Communication with her mother was still strained, but her resentment of her mother became less evident. Her behaviour at the beginning of the programme was quite egocentric, as she would not always listen to what the other members were saying, but as she continued with the process she displayed greater sensitivity towards her peers and modelled positive behaviour patterns. She still needs to internalise her own value system and develop her own philosophy on life. This will probably develop with maturity. Her low External Systems score indicates that she does not participate in extra-mural activities, but the group enabled her to develop new friendships and to interact positively with her peers. She started dating one of the group members (Respondent F) and this seemed to have positive influence on her self-esteem, possibly reducing some of the feelings of loneliness that were evidenced in her TAT responses.

6.10.5 Pedagogical Observations

Respondent E initially presented as very timid and shy in the group. She was very aware of the opposite sex members and would become very coy around them. Her revelations in the group indicated that she perceived herself as a victim whose life had been ruined due to parental divorce. As the programme continued, she became more responsive and started seeing herself in a more positive light. She became a central member of the group, as she initiated communication among the members beyond the weekly sessions. As the programme progressed, she started behaving less like a victim, peer relationships improved and she started thinking more rationally and independently.

6.11 PERSONAL IMAGE OF RESPONDENT F

6.11.1 Background History

Respondent F is a fifteen-year old, grade eleven pupil, in attendance at a local Christian College. He is Respondent D's older sibling. He indicated that he was with his mother on the day that she discovered that his father was having an affair. They were going on a diving weekend, when she decided to check the e-mails before leaving. She opened an e-mail sent to her husband, which revealed an intimate message from one of his business associates. When she confronted her husband, he admitted to having an affair and stated that he had never loved her and that he wanted a divorce. The respondent stated that despite the fact that he had never enjoyed a close relationship with his father, the news of his affair devastated him. He and his mother spent the entire weekend crying and trying to console one another.

The respondent described his father as a workaholic who had very little time for the family. He indicated that he was terrified of his father, as he was extremely authoritarian and demanded that he perform to his very high standards otherwise he would be beaten. He seldom interacted with his father other than to assist him with his work and stated that they rarely communicated on a personal level. He revealed that he regarded his father as a "bad person" who was solely to blame for the dissolution of the family.

The respondent described his mother as a wonderful, kind and generous person who would go out of her way to ensure that his needs were met. He stated that he felt closer to his mother than to his father and that if he had a problem or wanted to discuss a personal issue, he would speak to his mother and not his father. He indicated that he had grown closer to his mother since the divorce, but that she was very tense and especially concerned about their financial situation. This created a lot of tension in the home and his mother would often erupt over minor issues. He played the role of "go-between", as both parents used him to

convey messages to each other. This role created a lot of stress in his life as he was constantly caught in the middle of his parents' conflict. He also felt that his role was to protect and support his younger brother, but indicated that their relationship had deteriorated since their parents divorce due to the fact that his stress and unhappiness had caused him to become impatient and irritable towards his brother.

Respondent F indicated that since the divorce his relationship with his father had improved slightly, but he did not trust this improvement as he felt that his father was trying to bribe him or win him over by buying him computer games and by giving him money. He hoped that he could develop a more positive relationship with his father in the future and that they could spend more quality time together. He resented the fact that his father never had time for his family but now that he had found a new girlfriend, spent every second weekend travelling to Durban to spend time with her. The respondent stated that his future could be quite positive as perhaps he and his father could start having fun together. His father would probably spoil him materially, but hopefully would stop disciplining him so harshly.

6.11.2 Reasons for Inclusion in the Group

Respondent F was very tearful and embarrassed throughout the interview and initially expressed reluctance to join a group or discuss his parents' divorce. Once he realised that there was no pressure to do either of the above, he settled down and at the end of the interview indicated that he would be willing to participate in the group process. He believed that a group comprised of peers in a similar situation to his, would be less threatening than individual therapy. He stated that he was not coping with his parents' divorce and that he would like to be able to learn to communicate with his father without feeling terrified every time he was in his presence. He was also pleased that his brother would be joining the group as he believed that it may assist both of them in dealing with divorce related issues and improve their relationship. His apparent distress indicated

that he was in a state of crisis and that he could possibly benefit from the divorce intervention programme.

6.11.3 Pre- and Post-test Psychometric Results

6.11.3.1 Pre-test Results

Results from the psychometric tests reveal the following:

- i) **Severe Depression** – A score of 24 on Beck's Depression Inventory indicates that Respondent F is suffering from severe depression (see Table (iii), pg. 217).
- ii) **High Anxiety Level** – A sten score of 10 on the IPAT Anxiety scale reveals that Respondent F is in a state of high anxiety (see Table (iv), pg. 218).
- iii) **Low Self-concept** – A score of 37 on the ASCS indicates that Respondent F has a low self-concept (see Table (i), pg. 215).
- iv) **Low Structure** – A stanine score of 1 on the FFAQ reveals that the respondent is experiencing the structure in his home as low average (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- v) **Medium Affect** – A stanine score of 4 on the FFAQ indicates that the respondent rates both the quantity and expression of affection in his family as average (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- vi) **Average Communication** – A stanine score of 6 on the FFAQ reveals that Respondent F experiences Communication as Average in his family (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- vii) **Low Behaviour Control** – A stanine score of 3 on the FFAQ shows that the respondent's Behaviour Control is below average (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- viii) **Low Value Transmission** – A stanine score of 3 on the FFAQ reveals that Respondent F does not positively identify with the Value System of his parents (see Table (v), pg. 219).

- ix) **Low External Systems** – A stanine score of 3 on the FFAQ shows that apart from encouragement to participate in school-related activities, he does not have much interaction with other External Systems (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- x) It is evident from the responses on the TAT that Respondent F is not coping with the demands (“..the little boy...has never played the violin before..”) that are being placed on him in his present situation. No family unit is identified and the theme of separation (“..she’s trying to get away from the man..”) and divorce (“..they will go their different ways..”) features quite strongly in his responses. Parental figures are regarded as emotionally unavailable. The responses indicate a passive acceptance (“..sitting and not doing anything..”) of circumstances and a reluctance to confront or deal with conflict. There is a tendency to “run away” or withdraw from conflict situations (“..she will run away..”). Elements of sadness (“..she’s been crying..”) and depression are evidenced throughout the responses, especially sadness at the loss of the father-son relationship. Feelings of anger and resentment (“..scorning her mother..”) are directed at the mother figure while the father is perceived as unavailable, as he is too busy (“..gets called for another operation..”). Evidence of hope for a brighter future feature in some of the responses (“..thinking about a brighter future..”).

6.11.3.2 Post-test Results

Results from the psychometric tests reveal the following:

- i) **Mild Depression** – A score of 15 on Beck’s Depression Inventory evidences that Respondent F still has some depression (see Table (iii), pg. 217).
- ii) **Average Anxiety** – A sten score of 7 on the IPAT Anxiety Scale indicates that Respondent F is functioning within the normal range of anxiety (see Table (iv), pg. 218).

- iii) **Low Self-concept** – A score of 46 on the ASCS reveals that Respondent F has a low self-concept (see Table (ii), pg. 215).
- iv) **Average Structure** – A stanine score of 4 on the FFAQ indicates that the respondent is experiencing the Structure in his home as average (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- v) **Average Affect** – A stanine score of 6 on the FFAQ reveals that the respondent rates both the quantity and expression of affection in his family as average (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- vi) **Average Communication** – A stanine score of 5 on the FFAQ indicates that Respondent F experiences Communication as average in the family (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- vii) **High Behaviour Control** – A stanine score of 8 on the FFAQ shows that Respondent F's Behaviour Control is above average (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- viii) **High Value Transmission** – A stanine score of 9 on the FFAQ indicates that Respondent F identifies positively with the Value System of his parents (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- ix) **High External Systems** – A stanine score of 7 on the FFAQ shows that the respondent participates in school-related activities and enjoys above average interaction with other External Systems (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- x) The responses on the **TAT** indicate that the respondent may be trying to live up to the expectations of significant others in his life ("...he is trying to master the violin.."). Divorce ("...her parents are getting divorced.."), conflict ("...her parents are fighting..") and the loss of the father-son relationship ("...he never sees his father..") are themes evidenced throughout his responses on the **TAT**. Underlying feelings of guilt, shame ("...scorned by her parents..") and depression ("...he'll never know his father..") come to the fore. Despite the conflict and the sadness, success in opposite sex relationships ("...they will kiss and make up..") is achieved and indications of a positive future are present ("...he will be happy..").

6.11.4 Summary of Respondent F

Respondent F was clearly in a state of crisis and deep distress at the beginning of the intervention programme. His state of anxiety decreased and he was functioning on a normal level of anxiety by the end of the intervention process. He would get very emotional whenever he discussed his parents' divorce, especially the lack of a meaningful relationship between him and his father. He seemed to benefit from the programme, as he went from a state of severe depression to a mild depressed state at the end of the process. His improved Structure score (from 1 to 4) may indicate that he felt more settled in the divorced home environment and that he had learned to separate from his mother and started thinking and behaving more independently. The opportunity to express his feelings within the safety of the group environment and the acceptance and support gained from his peers had a positive effect on him, resulting in an improved Affect score. The respondents' possible frustration at not being part of the decision-making process in his family was indicated by a slight decrease in his score in Communication. He did however state, that he managed to engage in conversation with his father without the feelings of anxiety and tension that previous encounters had induced. His relationship with Respondent E did wonders for his self-esteem and enabled him to interact positively with members of the opposite sex, which slightly improved his self-concept (from 37 to 46). His Behaviour Control showed a remarkable improvement (from 3 to 8) which may have been as a result of his improved self-esteem and his ability to formulate his own identity within the group. His renewed self-confidence and increased feelings of autonomy encouraged him to explore a more mature philosophy of life, resulting in a high score on Value Transmission (from 3 to 9). His relationship with Respondent E and the positive interaction with his peers in the group promoted his involvement in recreational activities beyond the confines of the home environment, resulting in an improved External Systems score. TAT responses indicate that the respondent was still trying to come to terms with his

parents' divorce and the increased demands that were being placed on him in the home environment. Although elements of sadness and inter-parental conflict were still evident in his responses, the post-TAT responses indicated growth in the areas of relationships with members of the opposite sex and hope for a more positive future.

6.11.5 Pedagogical Observations

Respondent F was very shy and withdrawn at the beginning of the programme. He often became tearful and emotional when discussing the dissolution of his family, which left him feeling very embarrassed. Through the acceptance and support from his peers in the group, he managed to settle down and became an active participant in the group process. Initially when his younger sibling, Respondent D's, behaviour disrupted the group, he would react by either becoming defensive or admonishing him. The counsellor eventually indicated that his brother's behaviour in the group was not his responsibility, which enabled him to relax and participate in the process. He became one of the main participants in the role-play activities, role-modelling positive behaviour patterns for other group members. He eventually started interacting with the group without waiting for an invitation to do so.

6.12 PERSONAL IMAGE OF RESPONDENT G

6.12.1 Background History

Respondent G is a thirteen-year old, grade eight pupil, at a local Government High School. Her parents were married for thirteen-years and have been divorced for one-and-a-half years. The respondent indicated that she had always perceived her parents' marriage as "perfect", until the day her father never came home. It was a terrible shock to the whole family as no-one suspected that there were any marital problems. Further investigation revealed that her father may have been abusing drugs, which could have explained his sudden irrational

behaviour. When her mother confronted her father, he became abusive and demanded a divorce. The respondent and her two younger siblings, a sister aged ten and a brother aged six, had great difficulty accepting the divorce, especially the respondent, as she had always shared a very close relationship with her father. Several changes took place in the respondent's life after the divorce; they moved house and she moved schools. The post-divorce emotional and physical upheaval caused a tremendous amount of stress in her life and she struggled to settle down in her new school and experienced problems making friends.

Respondent G's mother was described as an "emotional wreck" after the divorce and during this initial crisis phase was emotionally unavailable to her children. She felt extremely angry and resentful towards her ex-husband and directed most of her anger at the respondent. The respondent was unable to come to terms with her parents' divorce and became totally withdrawn. She held her mother responsible for the emotional upheaval in her life and directed most of her anger and resentment towards her.

The respondent indicated that she loved her father dearly and that she would prefer to live with him. She stated that she had gone from a happy home to a miserable home where her mother was always angry and spent most of her time shouting at the children. She preferred spending time with her father as in his house they have fewer rules and regulations, she has her own bedroom and they have more fun with him. Her greatest desire was to live with her father as she felt that her mother did not care about her and that her father "loved her more than his own life". She regarded herself as his favourite child, as he would go to great lengths to ensure that her every need was met.

She resented having to move schools and indicated that she hated the rules and regulations of her new school. She had previously attended a less structured school environment that specialised in Art, whereas her new school was far more academically inclined. She had not made any friends at her new school, which

left her feeling isolated and lonely. She also felt angry and burdened by her mother's wrath.

Her father's girlfriend recently gave birth to a daughter and Respondent G expressed delight at having a new half-sister. She constantly reiterated that she would prefer to live with her father as she felt that she could not trust her mother and that she did not enjoy living in the same house with her.

6.12.2 Reasons for Inclusion in the Group

Respondent G's inability to come to terms with her parents' divorce, her presumably irrational negative beliefs about her mother and her idealised image of her father indicated that she could possibly benefit from the divorce intervention programme. Her withdrawal from her family, isolation from her peers and her depressed mood evidenced that she was in a state of crisis. She passively accepted the invitation to join the group, displaying no real enthusiasm in getting involved in the group process. She did however indicate her willingness to co-operate and attend the weekly group sessions.

6.12.3 Pre- and Post-test Psychometric Results

6.12.3.1 Pre-test Results

Results from the psychometric tests reveal the following:

- i) **Severe Depression** – A score of 25 on Beck's Depression Inventory indicates that Respondent G is suffering from severe depression (see Table (iii), pg. 217).
- ii) **High Anxiety Level** – A sten score of 8 on the IPAT Anxiety Scale reveals that Respondent G is in a state of high anxiety (see Table (iv), pg. 218).
- iii) **Low Self-concept** – A score of 52 on the ASCS shows that the respondent has a low self-concept (see Table (i), pg. 215).

- iv) **Low Structure** – A stanine score of 1 on the FFAQ reveals that the respondent is experiencing the Structure in her family as below average (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- v) **Low Affect** – A stanine score of 3 on the FFAQ indicates that Respondent G rates both the quantity and expression of affection in her family as below average (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- vi) **Average Communication** – A stanine score of 4 on the FFAQ reveals that Respondent G experiences Communications as average in the family (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- vii) **Low Behaviour Control** – A stanine score of 2 on the FFAQ shows that Respondent G's Behaviour Control is below average (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- viii) **Low Value Transmission** – A stanine score of 2 on the FFAQ indicates that Respondent G does not identify positively with the Value System of her parents (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- ix) **Low External Systems** – A stanine score of 2 on the FFAQ shows that Respondent G does not participate in school-related activities and has below average interaction with other External Systems (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- x) Responses on the **TAT** reveal an inability to cope with the demands being placed on her by significant others ("...a little boy...looks very confused"). Elements of confusion ("...he doesn't understand it.."), anxiety ("...maybe she did something wrong..") and depression ("...she is hurt and is crying..") are evident throughout the responses on the **TAT**. A family unit is identified. Underlying themes of conflict ("...she's holding her husband back from a fight.."), anger and aggression ("...they'll probably get into an argument..") are concurrent throughout the responses. Concern for the father figure's physical and emotional ("...his father's lying on the bed...they're going to operate on him..") well being is highlighted.

6.12.3.2 *Post-test Results*

Results from the psychometric tests reveal the following:

- i) **Minimal Depression** – A score of 6 on Beck's Depression Inventory reveals that Respondent G is not suffering from depression (see Table (iii), pg. 217).
- ii) **Average Anxiety** – A sten score of 6 on the IPAT Anxiety Scale indicates that the respondent is functioning within the normal anxiety range (see Table (iv), pg. 218).
- iii) **Medium Self-concept** – A score of 58 on the ASCS indicates that Respondent G has a medium self-concept (see Table (ii), pg. 215).
- iv) **Low Structure** – A stanine score of 3 on the FFAQ reveals that Respondent G is experiencing the Structure in her family as below average (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- v) **Low Affect** – A stanine score of 3 on the FFAQ indicates that Respondent G rates both the quantity and expression of affection in her family as below average (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- vi) **Average Communication** – A stanine score of 4 on the FFAQ shows that the respondent experiences Communication as average in her family (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- vii) **Average Behaviour Control** – A stanine score of 5 on the FFAQ reveals that the respondent's Behaviour Control is average (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- viii) **Low Value Transmission** – A stanine score of 3 on the FFAQ indicates that Respondent G does not positively identify with the Value System of her parents (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- ix) **Low External Systems** – A stanine score of 3 on the FFAQ shows that Respondent G participates in some school-related activities and has below average interaction with other External Systems (see Table (vi), pg. 219).

- x) Elements of sadness, helplessness and depression (“..her parents beat her up and take their anger out on her..”) are evident in her responses on the **TAT**. Underlying feelings of anger (“..she has a lazy mother..”) are directed at the mother figure that takes out her stress (“..her mother has screamed at her..”) on the helpless child. The male figure is perceived as the aggressor who directs his anger at the female figure by sexually abusing her (“..he raped and killed the woman..”). Although both the male and female figures are portrayed in a negative light, a more forgiving attitude is expressed towards the male figure (“..the man is lonely..”). Hope for a better future for the male figure is evident in her final response (“..opening a window of light into his soul..”).

6.12.4 Summary of Respondent G

Respondent G seemed to benefit from the intervention programme, as she was able to drop some of her defences and communicate her feelings to the group. The respondent was in a state of severe depression and high anxiety when she entered the group. As she became more involved in the process, she opened up and communicated her needs more positively to her peers, thereby reducing her anxiety and increasing her sense of self-worth.

Her perceived lack of respect and acceptance of her individuality from her mother and her need for privacy and independence was reflected in her low Structure score. Her inability to express her feelings adequately in her family and her perceived lack of support and understanding in that environment was evidenced in her low Affect score. Her Behaviour Control improved (from 2 to 5), as she practiced more self-control when dealing with conflict situations. Her low Value Systems score may indicate that she has yet to develop her own value system and determine a personal philosophy on life. Very little interaction with activities beyond the confines of the home environment was evident in her low External Systems score.

Responses on her TAT reveal that she was still experiencing conflict with her mother, as she wanted to go and live with her father. During the group process she managed to resolve her inner conflict as to which parent she would like to live with and finally decided to discuss living with her father with her mother. This was the only area in which a shift in the pre- and post-test TAT responses was indicated.

Although few changes were indicated in the results on the FFAQ, the intervention programme appeared to have assisted her in her ability to make independent choices and positively identify and deal with the problem areas in her life. At the end of the programme, an improvement in her overall mood and self-image was evident.

6.12.5 Pedagogical Observations

Respondent G was very shy and withdrawn when she joined the group. She preferred to isolate herself, passively observing the process initially, sharing very little of herself with the other members. During the initial stages of the programme, the respondent tended to function on a purely cognitive level, seemingly unwilling or unable to connect on an emotional level and reveal her feelings to the group. As the programme continued, she became more animated and started exposing more of her inner thoughts and feelings to the group. She appeared to be more comfortable within herself and enjoyed the interaction with her peers. The support and encouragement she received from the group members gave her the courage to address the emotional issues she had harboured since her parents' divorce. Towards the end of the programme, she openly shared and interacted with the group members and especially seemed to enjoy the contact and support she received beyond the confines of the weekly sessions.

6.13 PERSONAL IMAGE OF RESPONDENT H

6.13.1 Background History

Respondent H is sixteen-years of age and is currently in grade eleven at a local Government High School. He has an older brother aged nineteen and two younger stepbrothers aged fourteen and eleven.

The respondent was seven-years old when his parents divorced. His father discovered that his mother was having an extra-marital affair and when he confronted her, she asked for a divorce leaving her sons in their father's custody. The respondent indicated that he had always enjoyed a close relationship with his mother, prior to the divorce, and felt devastated when she left. He stated that he did not see his mother for several months after she had left and then one afternoon she telephoned and requested a visit. Having spent the afternoon with her, she would then "disappear" for several months again before contacting him. This was the pattern until a year ago when she moved back into the area and he started seeing her on a more regular basis.

The respondent stated that he felt sad and insecure when his mother left and that he missed her terribly. He was always delighted when she reappeared and then would feel devastated when she disappeared again. When his mother left, he developed a strong, close bond with his father. He admired his father for taking care of them and for seeing to their needs. He regards his father as understanding and easy to talk to. Whenever he needs advice or is uncertain about how to deal with an emotional issue, he speaks to his father.

When the respondent's father re-married, he still managed to maintain his close relationship with him, but this caused conflict between him and his step-mother. They are in constant conflict with one another and she recently blamed him for her older son leaving home to live with his father. This has caused a rift in their relationship and has led to a lot of unpleasantness in the home.

When Respondent H's mother moved back into the area, he started seeing her more often and stated that they have managed to develop a fairly good relationship but they often argue. He feels protective towards her and indicated that he plays the role of caretaker often having to give his mother advice on how to manage her life. She in turn tends to make him feel guilty if he does not make an effort to see her.

He stated that he has always struggled academically and that he is constantly concerned about what other people think of him. He likes to make a good impression on people and would like to become a missionary or a minister in the future.

6.13.2 Reasons for Inclusion in the Group

The constant disappearance and reappearance of Respondent H's mother caused tremendous emotional upheaval in his life. He stated that he still had bouts of sadness and believed that his life could possibly have been better had his mother kept in closer contact with him. He indicated that he would like to join the group, as he still could not understand why his mother had left. He also felt that since his parents had been divorced for such a long time, that he could possibly assist other group members in dealing with issues pertaining to their parents divorce. His openness and honesty made him a possible role-model for other members of the group, possibly providing them with the opportunity to look beyond their immediate situation and realise that in time they too could positively adjust to their parents' divorce.

6.13.3 Pre- and Post-test Psychometric Results

6.13.3.1 Pre-test Results

Results from the psychometric tests revealed the following:

- i) **No Depression** – A score of 8 on Beck's Depression Inventory indicates that the respondent is not suffering from depression (see Table (iii), pg. 217).
- ii) **Normal Anxiety level** – A sten score of 4 on the IPAT Anxiety Scale reveals that Respondent H is experiencing a normal level of anxiety (see Table (iv), pg. 218).
- iii) **High Self-concept** – A score of 82 on the ASCS shows that the respondent has a high self-concept (see Table (i), pg. 215).
- iv) **Average Structure** – A stanine score of 4 on the FFAQ indicates that the respondent experiences the Structure in the home as average (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- v) **Average Affect** – A stanine score of 5 on the FFAQ reveals that the respondent rates both the quantity and expression of affection in his family as average (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- vi) **Low Communication** – A stanine score of 3 on the FFAQ indicates that the respondent experiences the Communications in his family as below average (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- vii) **Average Behaviour Control** – a stanine score of 4 on the FFAQ shows that the respondent's Behaviour Control is average (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- viii) **Average Value Transmission** – A stanine score of 5 on the FFAQ indicates that the respondent identifies positively with the Value System of his parents (see Table (v), pg. 219).
- ix) **Low External Systems** – A stanine score of 2 on the FFAQ reveals that the respondent has minimal participation in school-related activities and

has very little interaction with other External Systems (see Table (v), pg. 219).

- x) Elements of anger (“..this guy’s beaten her up..”) and aggression directed at the female are identified in his responses. The female figure is depicted in a negative light, as she is perceived as an adulteress who “cheats” on her husband (“..he caught his wife cheating on him..”). Themes of conflict (“..they are not agreeing on something..”) and separation (“..he wants to leave..”) are evident throughout his responses on the **TAT**. An unhappy family unit is identified (“..his wife and the daughter don’t look happy..”) and certain responses reveal concern for the father figure’s well being (“..his father’s been shot... he’s worried he may die..”). Life-changing decisions (“..they have to decide on an issue that will change their lives..”) and a possible lack of personal choice (“..she has to sit and listen..”) come to the fore. School is revealed as a problem area (“..he’s at school...can’t concentrate...will be moaned at..”).

6.13.2.2 Post-test Results

Results from the psychometric tests reveal the following:

- i) **No Depression** – A score of 6 on Beck’s Depression Inventory reveals that Respondent H is not suffering from depression (see Table (iii), pg. 217).
- ii) **Normal Anxiety level** – A sten score of 4 on the IPAT Anxiety Scale indicates that Respondent H is functioning within the normal anxiety range (see Table (iv), pg. 218).
- iii) **High Self-concept** – A score of 82 on the ASCS shows that Respondent H has a high self-concept (see Table (ii), pg. 215).
- iv) **Average Structure** – A stanine score of 5 on the FFAQ indicates that Respondent H is experiencing the Structure in his family as average (see Table (vi), pg. 219).

- v) **Average Affect** – A stanine score of 6 on the FFAQ reveals that the respondent rates both the quantity and expression of affection in his family as average (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- vi) **Average Communication** – A stanine score of 4 on the FFAQ indicates that Respondent H experiences Communication as average in his family (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- vii) **Average Behaviour Control** – A stanine score of 5 on the FFAQ reveals that Respondent H's Behaviour Control is average (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- viii) **Average Value Transmission** – A stanine score of 6 on the FFAQ indicates that Respondent H identifies with the Value System of his parents (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- ix) **Average External Systems** – A stanine score of 4 on the FFAQ shows that the respondent participates in school-related activities and enjoys average interaction with other External Systems (see Table (vi), pg. 219).
- x) Elements of anger and aggression (“...this guy beat up his wife...” directed at the female figure are evident in his responses on the **TAT**. School is identified as a problem area (“...the little boy can’t do the work...the teacher will shout at him...” with too many pressures and demands being placed on him. Hope for the future and positive inter-personal relationships with the opposite sex (“...they’re going to sort out their problems and get married...” are evident in his responses.

6.13.4 Summary of Respondent H

Respondent H was considered the most “experienced” member of the group, as his parents had been divorced for ten years. His positive self-image and easy-going personality made him the ideal candidate to model positive behaviour patterns to the group.

His responses on the FFAQ indicate that his father respected and accepted his individuality and his need for privacy (Structure). The strong bond that exists

between him and his father was reflected in his Affect score, as he felt comfortable in being able to express his feelings, trusting that he would receive support and understanding from his father. He openly and assertively communicated his needs in the group. As the programme progressed, he was able to identify the areas that he had repressed and managed to deal with them within the context of the group. His relationship with his mother improved as he developed the coping skills to confront and challenge her when she tried to use him as a "go-between" or attempted to put him on a "guilt trip". He role-modelled positive behaviour patterns and was not afraid to confront Respondent D when he felt that his behaviour was unacceptable. He displayed high moral and religious values and indicated that he would like to become a missionary when he left school. His interaction with External Systems increased as he developed friendships with other group members and was invited to participate in recreational activities.

No evidence of a dramatic shift between pre- and post-test TAT responses was noted. School was still considered a problem area, as he was struggling academically. Underlying feelings of anger and aggression were still being directed at the female figures, possibly indicating that he hadn't fully resolved his mother's departure from the family all those years ago. A positive shift was evident in terms of his responses on relationships with members of the opposite sex indicating aspirations towards future success in this area.

Towards the end of the programme he was chosen to go on a leadership camp in anticipation of becoming a prefect. This had a very positive effect on his sense of self-worth and taking the above factors into consideration, it appears as though he did derive some benefit from the programme.

6.13.5 Pedagogical Observations

Respondent H initially presented as self-confident and indicated that he was unsure as to how the programme would benefit him as he believed that he had managed to resolve most of the issues pertaining to his parents' divorce. The programme seemed to have an unsettling effect on him, as he identified and realised that there were certain areas in his life that he had either blocked out, or left unresolved. As the programme developed and with the support of his peers, he managed to work through some of his issues, especially those involving his mother's disappearance from his life and he soon became his old confident self again. He played an important role in the group process, as he was able to assist the other members to regard the future in a more positive light.

The pre- and post-test psychometric results will be presented in tabulated form in the next section.

6.14 THE ADOLESCENT SELF-CONCEPT SCALE
ASCS – (Pre-Test)

	Total Scores
Low Self-concept	28-55
Medium Self-concept	56-70
High Self-concept	71-90

(Table i)

Group Member	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Average
Physical Self	6	16	8	10	10	5	9	17	10,13
Personal Self	4	17	7	9	13	8	9	15	10,25
Family Self	8	15	12	10	11	4	11	14	10,63
Social Self	4	16	9	9	10	6	7	14	9,38
Value Self	5	15	7	10	11	7	8	15	9,75
Self Criticism	8	6	7	6	6	7	8	7	6,88
TOTAL	35	85	50	54	61	37	52	82	57

ASCS – (Post-Test)

(Table ii)

Group Member	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Average
Physical Self	8	18	7	8	11	3	9	17	10,13
Personal Self	6	17	7	11	16	9	12	14	11,50
Family Self	8	15	13	13	5	8	12	15	11,13
Social Self	3	17	10	11	12	10	9	16	11,00
Value Self	8	12	10	9	11	10	8	16	10,50
Self Criticism	8	8	9	6	8	6	8	4	07,13
TOTAL	41	87	56	58	63	46	58	82	61,38

6.14.1 Summary of the Pre- and Post-test Results on the ASCS

An average 4,38 increase in the self-concept of the group members was noted. From these results we can accept Hypothesis Three which states: "The adolescents' self-concepts will improve and they will feel better about themselves after exposure to a group intervention programme" (See pg. 94).

6.15 BECK’S DEPRESSION INVENTORY (BDI)

No Depression	0-9
Mild Depression	10-15
Moderate Depression	16-23
Severe Depression	24-63

(Table iii)

Group Member	Before	After
A	34	20
B	4	0
C	18	15
D	35	34
E	13	11
F	24	15
G	25	6
H	8	6
Total	161	107

6.15.1 Summary of the Pre- and Post-test Results on the BDI

A 54 point difference on the pre- and post-test results on the BDI indicate an overall decrease in depression in group members. Hypothesis Five can therefore be accepted. Hypothesis Five states: “If depressive symptoms are evident in the adolescents, exposure to a group intervention programme should help alleviate some of these symptoms” (See pg. 94)

6.16 IPAT ANXIETY SCALE

Indications of stability	1-3
Normal	4-7
High Anxiety	8-10

(Table iv)

Group Member	Before	After
A	9	8
B	8	5
C	10	8
D	8	7
E	8	6
F	10	7
G	8	6
H	4	4
Total	65	51

6.16.1 Summary of the Pre- and Post-test Results on the IPAT Anxiety Scale

A 14 point decrease in anxiety is observed, therefore Hypothesis Four can be accepted. Hypothesis Four states: "The group intervention programme should relieve some of the anxiety experienced by the adolescents" (See pg. 94)

6.17 THE FAMILY FUNCTIONING IN ADOLESCENCE QUESTIONNAIRE
FFAQ - (Pre-Test)

Below Average	1-3
Average	4-6
Above Average	7-9

(Table v)

Group Member	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Total	Average
Structure	1	2	4	6	1	1	1	4	20	2,5
Affect	1	5	4	7	1	4	3	5	30	3,75
Communication	1	5	4	5	3	6	4	3	31	3,9
Behaviour Control	3	2	3	9	2	3	2	4	28	3,5
Value Transmission	1	1	3	8	2	3	2	5	25	3,13
External Systems	2	3	5	7	2	3	2	2	26	3,25
Combined Total									160	20,03

FFAQ – (Post-Test)

(Table vi)

Group Member	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Total	Average
Structure	3	2	5	6	1	4	3	5	29	3,63
Affect	2	5	5	7	3	6	3	6	37	4,63
Communication	2	9	4	6	1	5	4	4	35	4,38
Behaviour Control	4	8	4	9	3	8	5	5	46	5,75
Value Transmission	1	9	6	8	2	9	3	6	44	5,5
External Systems	3	9	5	8	1	7	3	4	40	5
Combined Total									231	28,85

6.17.1 Summary of the Pre- and Post-test Results on the FFAQ

An average increase of 8,82 points on the FFAQ indicates an overall improvement therefore Hypothesis Two can be accepted. Hypothesis Two states: "The adolescents' interpersonal relationships will improve after exposure to a group intervention programme" (See pg. 94).

6.18 THE THEMATIC APPERCEPTION TEST

As previously mentioned in Chapter Five (section 5.5.3.2), the TAT is a projection test, which enables the individual to project unconscious feelings, wishes, strivings and conflicts that he or she may be experiencing. These feelings are projected into the conscious, outside world, thereby providing a useful interpretation of the individual and his or her life world (Du Toit & Piek 1974:9).

A general overview of the salient issues and potential areas of growth in the pre- and post-test analysis of each card will be discussed. A comprehensive analysis of the group members' responses will not be provided for the purpose of this study, but interpretation of the findings will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Seven.

CARD 1- (Pre-test)

Themes of divorce, financial hardship and school pressure were evident in the responses to this card. The responses indicated that the respondents were unable to deal with the demands that were being placed on them, either by the school or by their parents. Success was not perceived to be achievable in the future, as respondents' felt totally overwhelmed by the situational pressure they were presently being exposed to.

CARD 1 – (Post-test)

Underlying themes of parental divorce, financial hardship, depression and an inability to live up to the expectations and demands of significant others come to the fore. The father figure is identified as the aggressor, who places excessive demands on the child, in most of the responses. Success is eventually achieved as they manage to live up to the expectations of significant others.

SUMMARY OF CARD 1 – (Pre and Post-test)

The predominant impression gained from the responses on Card 1, was one of total negativity. A sense of helplessness and hopelessness in the face of the divorce situation was evident in both pre- and post-test responses. The identification of the father figure as the aggressor, who places excessive demands on the child, could be seen as respondents' attempt to find an explanation for the divorce situation. A positive shift is evident in the post-test responses on Card 1. The perception is that success is achieved, either in fantasy (wish fulfillment) or in reality (through maturation and independence gained from the present situation), as respondents manage to live up to the expectations of significant others in their lives.

CARD 2

Concurrent themes in the responses to this card are divorce, financial hardship and the disintegration of the family unit. A need to escape the conflict and the demands being placed on them by significant others is also evident in some of the responses. An indication of the cycle of divorce being repeated in younger generations was also present.

CARD 2

The theme of divorce and the loss of the family unit are evident in most of the responses. Underlying feelings of loneliness, anxiety and a withdrawal from conflict come to the fore. Future success and happiness are achieved, as conflict is resolved and relationships are restored.

SUMMARY OF CARD 2 – (Pre- and Post-test)

The predominant theme in Card 2 is the need to escape the conflict situation and the feeling that divorce is cyclical. Despite the fact that loneliness and a need to escape from conflict was still evident in the post-test responses, an indication that these issues could be resolved in the future, either in fantasy (wishing that their parents could get back together again) or in reality, (ensuring that their personal relationships do not disintegrate) was present.

CARD 3

Underlying elements of conflict, depression and helplessness were evident in the responses to this card. The male figure, in most of the responses, is identified as the aggressor and the female figure as the helpless victim. A withdrawal from inter-parental conflict and a desire to escape the turmoil of the home environment is highlighted in their responses.

CARD 3

Underlying elements of helplessness and depression are evident in the responses. The male figure is identified as the aggressor and the female as the helpless victim. Feelings of shame and humiliation induced by the father figure are present, but success is achieved in the future as happiness and a sense of self-worth are restored.

SUMMARY OF CARD 3 – (Pre- and Post-test)

Feelings of helplessness and depression still prevailed in the responses on Card 3, with the male seen as the aggressor and the female as the helpless victim. Pre- and post-test responses reveal a predominant desire to avoid conflict. Feelings of shame and humiliation in connection with the father figure, as evidenced in post-test responses, could be an indication that respondents are attempting to identify (albeit painfully) with parental conflict, as opposed to avoiding it totally as indicated by pre-test responses. Again, success was seen as a future possibility, as respondents are able to develop an identity separate from their parents, instilling a sense of self-worth.

CARD 4

The male figure is identified as the aggressor and in some instances, the protector of the female figure. Inter-relationship conflict and separation is evident in the responses. The male figure is perceived as the aggressor, who inevitably walks out on the female figure, or the female figure is regarded as an adulteress who “cheats” on the male figure, depending on the individual’s frame of reference.

CARD 4

Conflict between the male and female figures dominated the responses to this card. The male is identified as the aggressor, who does not listen to the female and instead chooses to leave her. In some of the responses the male is identified as having an affair which results in divorce. A reasonable amount of success was achieved in some of the responses, as conflict was resolved and the relationship was restored.

SUMMARY OF CARD 4 – (Pre- and Post-test)

Themes of divorce, conflict and separation are identified in both pre- and post-test responses. "Blame" for the divorce is attributed to the unfaithful partner indicating that they still held that person responsible for the dissolution of the family unit. The resolution of conflict and restoration of the relationship as indicated by the post-test responses, may be regarded as an unconscious desire for their parents to get back together again, or that since the divorce, conflict in the home has decreased.

CARD 6 GF

The male-female relationship is identified as being conflict oriented. Indications of a negative relationship between father and daughter are present in some of the responses, with feelings of anger and aggression being directed at the father figure. When the relationship is identified as husband and wife, the husband is perceived as aggressive and demanding, while the wife is fearful and subservient.

CARD 6 GF

The male figure is identified as the aggressor who directs his anger at the female figure. The female figure is identified as the victim who has to hide her emotions from the male. The conflict and lack of communication result in divorce.

SUMMARY OF CARD 6 GF (Pre- and Post-test)

A repetition of themes of the male being perceived as dominant and aggressive and the woman as helpless and subservient was evident in the pre- and post-test responses on this card. Although the post-test results may be perceived as negative, the respondents' identification that constant conflict and lack of meaningful communication could result in divorce, may be seen as a possible area of growth resulting from the intervention programme. The responses indicate a greater awareness of the possible negative outcomes that result when individuals are unable to positively resolve conflict issues.

CARD 6 BM

The mother-son relationship was identified in most of the responses as a positive one. The son is perceived as being protective and understanding of the mother. Some of the responses identified conflict between the mother and son.

CARD 6 BM

Conflict between the male and female figure is identified. Underlying feelings of guilt and shame due to having an affair come to the fore. An element of anger directed at the mother figure due to the loss of the father-son relationship is evidenced in some of the responses. The future either results in divorce or the conflict between the mother and father is resolved and the relationship continues.

SUMMARY OF CARD 6 BM – (Pre- and Post-test)

Once again, the responses on the post-test appear to be more negative than the pre-test responses. The post-test responses could indicate a greater awareness of their feelings and growth in that respondents no longer feel the need to take responsibility for the mother figure. The anger directed at the mother figure may be a latent desire for a closer relationship with the father figure. Over-identification with the father figure on the respondents' behalf, may have resulted in feelings of shame and humiliation and the possible fear that they may repeat this negative behaviour pattern. The resolution of conflict, either in fantasy (parents get back together again) or in reality (divorce) is once again evident in their responses.

CARD 7 GF

Underlying themes of helplessness, withdrawal from conflict, anger and depression come to the fore in the responses to this card. Supportive relationships between siblings or between a mother and daughter are identified,

as they try to protect each other from the conflict and turmoil the divorce has caused in their lives. The loss of the father-daughter relationship is also evident and the child is perceived as a helpless victim of circumstance. A lack of choice and withdrawal from inter-parental conflict are present in some of the responses.

CARD 7 GF

Parental divorce and the loss of relationship with the father figure are the dominant themes in the responses to this card. Underlying feelings of neglect, shame and confusion come to the fore. Happiness was achieved in the future in some instances, but the majority of the responses indicated that parental divorce resulted in conflict, tension and distress.

SUMMARY OF CARD 7 GF (Pre- and Post-test)

The themes of divorce and conflict are once again evident in the responses on Card 7 GF. A supportive relationship between the siblings is identified initially, but in the post-test responses, the need for a meaningful relationship with either one or both parents is evident. The intervention programme stimulated identification of feelings of loss in significant relationships. Possible maturation and growth took place during the course of the programme, enabling respondents to identify and clarify these feelings of loss in their responses.

CARD 8 BM

A tremendous amount of anger and aggression is directed at the male figure that is identified, as the father figure, in most of the responses. Reaping financial benefit as a result of the father figure's demise is also evident in some of the responses. Ambition and financial power are achieved in fantasy, rather than reality in most instances.

CARD 8 BM

Anger and aggression directed at the male figure are evidenced in the responses to this card. Underlying feelings of fear and confusion come to the fore. Concern for the father figure's well being and distress at the loss of relationship between the father and child are identified in the responses. Success is achieved in some responses, where the father-child relationship is restored.

SUMMARY OF CARD 8 BM – (Pre- and Post-test)

Although feelings of anger and aggression are directed at the male figure, the perceived loss of a meaningful relationship with the father figure and concern for his well being was evident in the post-test responses. The "absent" parent is often perceived as the object of great concern to the children who are left behind and this concern may be projected as idealisation of the parent or possible exaggeration of events pertaining to that parent. The post-test responses indicate a longing for recognition and the restoration of a meaningful relationship with the father figure (the non-custodial parent). This may once again be a projection of the feelings of loss that were identified during the course of the intervention programme.

CARD 13 MF

The male figure is identified as the aggressor who harms or abuses the female figure, either physically or sexually. In some of the responses, the male figure is identified as the father, who is unable to protect his child from the abuse, or the husband who has abused or murdered the wife out of anger and frustration. Elements of anger, frustration and depression come to the fore. An indication of remorse on the male figure's behalf is evident in some of the responses.

CARD 13 MF

Inter-parental conflict, anger, guilt and the loss of a loved one are the themes identified in the responses to this card. The male figure is identified as the aggressor who directs his anger at the female figure. Denial of responsibility and feelings of guilt and remorse on behalf of the male figure over the loss of relationship with the female figure are evident in some of the responses.

SUMMARY OF CARD 13 MF – (Pre- and Post-test)

The male is identified as the aggressor who either physically or sexually abuses the female in both pre- and post-test responses. The responses made by the female respondents may be an indication of their fears of being raped, attacked or abused by men. This may be as a result of their perception of the female as being the “weaker” sex who is subjected to abuse by the male or a reflection of the violent crime that is being instituted against women in our present society. The male responses elicited feelings of guilt and remorse. This may be a perception of the father figure being held responsible for the distress of the mother figure and for the dissolution of the family unit or that the remorse felt by the father figure will ultimately result in the restoration of the relationship (wish fulfillment).

CARD 14

The concurrent themes evident in the responses to this card were isolation, feelings of rejection, withdrawal from conflict and desperation. The majority of the responses entertained thoughts of suicide as a possible solution to financial hardship, a low sense of self-worth and the loss of relationship between the child and the parent. Only one response indicated hope for the future as the child

managed to leave the conflict and turmoil behind in order to establish a brighter future for herself.

CARD 14

A desire for freedom, loneliness, isolation and the loss of relationship with a significant other are the identified themes in the responses to this card. Success is achieved, as the future is filled with happiness and hope for a “brighter” tomorrow.

SUMMARY OF CARD 14 – (Pre- and Post-test)

The depressed state of the respondents was revealed in the pre-test responses on this card. These responses indicated feelings of isolation and desperation, culminating in suicidal thoughts. Although themes of loss and isolation were still evident in the post-test responses on this card, a more philosophical rationalisation and contemplation of the future was offered, indicating a positive shift towards future happiness and success.

6.19 CONCLUSION

The results from the pre- and post-test analysis indicate that group members had clearly been adversely affected by the trauma of divorce. The group intervention programme focused on building life skills and included activities that helped members express their feelings, acquire coping skills and improve interpersonal relationships skills. Problem-solving skills were also included to help reduce the stress and trauma of divorce and to enhance the member's ability to gain control over the divorce situation, thus enabling them to feel less helpless. The members were encouraged to express their feelings using different techniques, to identify support systems and to deal with parental conflict. Peer support helped to normalise their experience with parental divorce. Peer support and acceptance was demonstrated through respect, validation and

tolerance of the feelings of other group members. This required loyalty, trust and risk taking on behalf of both the giver and the receiver. Through the interaction of the group members and their willingness to share their innermost thoughts and feelings, a climate of trust was established enabling members to feel trusted and to trust others.

The intervention programme was designed to test certain hypotheses. A comprehensive analysis of the empirical findings on the stated hypotheses, the group dynamic and the recommendations will be formulated in Chapter Seven as the conclusion to this research study.

CHAPTER SEVEN

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This study's main goal was to evaluate the effectiveness of an intervention programme for adolescent children of divorced parents. An evaluation of the findings of the intervention programme, in accordance with the literature survey conducted in the previous chapters, will be formulated in the next section.

7.2 RESEARCH FINDINGS

7.2.1 Findings According to Chapter Two

In Chapter Two, the Emotional Development, the Developmental Stages and the Cognitive Development of the adolescent were discussed. These developmental areas were taken into consideration in the design and implementation of the intervention programme. The members of this study group were all in the adolescent stage of development which, according to Erikson (1968:76), is the stage of "achieving identity versus role confusion" (see section 2.8.3). This stage is characterised by adolescents' search for self-identity. They want to develop close relationships with both boys and girls their own age and to be liked, loved and respected for who they are and what they stand for. The fact that the members were all at this same developmental stage played an important role in the programme, as it enabled the members to identify with one another and facilitated positive peer interaction, the expression of feelings and the building of significant bonds among group members. The members seemed to find reassurance in being able to turn to their peers for advice, as they could understand and sympathise because they were in the same position themselves. A few of the younger group members however, did display aspects of "role

confusion", by regressing into childish or attention-seeking behaviour and by committing themselves impulsively to poorly thought-out courses of action during the role-play activities. This highlighted the need to possibly further differentiate the group into early and late adolescence, taking their cognitive development into consideration.

According to Piaget (1972:90), the adolescent falls into the "formal operational stage" of cognitive development. At this stage, the adolescent is able to reason hypothetically and to make judgements about possible future events. The findings in this research study indicate that the cognitive development of the adolescent is an important criterion to be considered when designing an intervention programme. However further differentiation between the two sub-stages of formal operational thought should be taken into consideration. As previously discussed in Chapter Two (see section 2.8.4), Piaget subdivides the stage of formal operations further into two sub-stages, namely III-A, almost full formal function (12-14 years) and III-B, full formal function (15 years and up). The division III-A, the earlier sub-stage, corresponds to early adolescence and appears to be a preparatory stage in which adolescents may make correct discoveries and handle certain formal operations, but they are not yet able to provide systematic and rigorous proof of their assertions. During sub-stage III-B, adolescents have become capable of formulating generalisations and dealing with problems of increasing complexity.

It was evident during the group process, that members who fell into the category of "late adolescence" were able to deal critically with their own thinking and distinguish present reality from future possibility. They were also able to generalise that which they had learned in the group programme to other areas of their lives, giving them the advantage of being able to evaluate problems from different viewpoints. Although further differentiation on the two sub-levels of "formal operational thinking" is recommended, the older group members seemed to have a positive influence on the younger members. They role-modelled more mature responses to parental divorce for the younger members of the group and

encouraged deeper analysis and critical evaluation of the responses made and misconceptions about their parents' divorce. This positive exploration and challenging of "immature" thought processes within the context of the group environment encouraged risk-taking among the younger members and enabled them to explore constructive solutions to their problems. Further exploration of the process of divorce was discussed in Chapter Three and will be dealt with in the next section.

7.2.2 Findings According to Chapter Three

Chapter Three focused on the process of divorce and the effect it had on the adolescent's self-concept and feelings of depression. The role of the school in the intervention process was also discussed. The findings indicate that most of the group members were still in the "acute stage" of the divorce process (see section 3.2), as the divorce was a recent event in their lives. This stage usually represents the most unhappy period in the lives of all family members and may be characterised by a decreased awareness of the child's needs, a reduced sensitivity to the child's feelings, less consistent discipline and general confusion in household routines. The developmental tasks of the adolescent become harder to accomplish when the family is in a time of crisis and unable to meet the basic needs of the child. The group members experienced tremendous feelings of guilt, shame and confusion during this "acute stage" of the divorce process, which resulted in a diminished self-concept and a severe state of depression in most instances. Conflict between parents, the possible loss or diminished contact with the non-custodial parent and a decrease in economic support were just some of the issues members were dealing with at the beginning of the programme. The intervention programme helped the members to identify some of the areas that were causing them distress. The process encouraged the members to explore their feelings of loss and supported their individuation and separation from their parents (especially from parental conflict), whilst maintaining a connection with the family. The need for emotional independence and emancipation from parents was identified in the group process, as members

looked to their peers to find the support formerly provided by their families. The support received from their peers through self-disclosure, the development of trust and the sharing of common experiences, possibly helped alleviate some of their distress and had a positive impact on their self-concept and emotional well being.

The school is regarded as an appropriate setting for the counsellor to ease the adjustment of adolescents of parental divorce. Research (Cowen et al 1990:731) reveals that students can cope better with the psychological issues of divorce when they experience hope, appropriate information and support that can emerge from group counselling. Teachers and school counsellors are in the best position to provide adolescents with the support they need during this crucial transitional phase in their lives. Their close contact with the students places them in the prime position to be able to identify children in distress and to provide them with the necessary tools to assist them through this crisis period in their lives. This study provides school counsellors with suggestions for an intervention programme that may be used with little additional training. The group format allows counsellors to assist more children in coping with divorce and the activities can be easily modified to meet the needs of specific groups of children.

The intervention programme played a role in helping to minimise the negative effects on adolescent development caused by their parents' divorce. The programme's encouragement of resilience, autonomy and the need for extra-familial support systems provided members with the opportunity for positive adjustment to parental divorce.

The group as a process for positive intervention and adjustment was discussed in Chapter Four.

7.2.3 Findings According to Chapter Four

The group consisted of four boys and four girls ranging from thirteen to seventeen years of age. The mixing of the genders worked well, as it provided members with different perspectives on the impact of parental divorce. The female group members were more open and willing to communicate their distress during the initial phase of the group process. Their openness modelled positive behaviour patterns for the male group members, stimulating greater interaction and participation in the group process.

As mentioned in section 7.1, future selection of group members should possibly differentiate between early and late adolescence. The differences in emotional and cognitive maturity levels were evident in the early adolescents' inability to generalise that, which was learned in the group environment to the home environment. Yalom (1985:284) regards a group consisting of seven members to be the ideal size, but this study found that a group consisting of six members would possibly be better, as time was not always available for each member adequately to work through his or her problems. Either the size of the group should be reduced or the length of the session should be increased to provide each member with the opportunity to deal with his or her issues.

The group leader modelled positive patterns of behaviour, which was an effective component towards group cohesion and self-disclosure. The leader assisted members in establishing personal goals and encouraged them to translate their insights into concrete plans that involved taking action outside the group. The group involved an interpersonal process that stressed conscious thoughts, feelings and behaviour and tended to be growth oriented in that it focused on discovering internal resources of strength. Within the supportive group context, characterised by a climate of safety, acceptance and peer support, the members shared their intimate feelings and concerns with peers who had been through a similar experience and could empathise with them. This resulted in the members feeling less isolated and different from their peers. The programme also helped

members to identify and appropriately express their feelings about the divorce and helped to reduce their confusion about the family situation.

The intervention programme emphasised skills building and this impacted on their overall adjustment. Improvements in members' perceptions of parental divorce, their ability to deal with divorce-related feelings, peer social skills and problem-solving skills were noted. Inter-personal problem-solving techniques, conflict management and anger control skills offered in the programme, stressed a differentiation between problems that could and could not be solved. The members were also encouraged to disengage from inter-parental conflict and to avoid acting as "go-betweens" for their parents. The members were able to generalise these learned skills to a range of current problems and experienced an increased sense of self-worth when problems were resolved. The experience also helped children to discuss significant personal concerns directly with their parents and led to changes in feelings and behaviours that generalised positively to the home situation. The group context was found to be especially suitable for adolescents, as it provided a forum in which they could express and explore their conflicting feelings, test their limits and experiment with reality, thereby encouraging growth in one another and within themselves.

The group dynamic played an important role in the successful integration of the intervention programme. The group dynamic will be discussed in the next section.

7.3 GROUP DYNAMIC

The different phases of the group process played an important role in the group dynamic. The findings of the group dynamic during the different phases of the group process will be discussed in this section.

During the initial or transitional phase of the group process, certain problem behaviours were identified. Initial resistance to the group process was recognised in some members remaining silent and giving very little of

themselves. Through the nurturing and support of their peers, with no pressure being placed on them to participate, a non-verbal message giving them permission to be themselves, gradually eroded their resistance and they soon became active participants in the group process. The disruptive and monopolistic behaviour of certain group members often prevented other members from getting their fair share of group time. When this behaviour and the effects thereof were challenged the members settled down and positively contributed to the group process.

During the working phase of the group, life skills were developed. Group cohesion was strengthened as a result of members' willingness to share painful and similar experiences, as well as sharing humorous moments. Feelings of universality developed as members realised that they all experienced similar problems. Their sense of self-worth and value increased as they provided support for one another. The skills provided in the programme and the modelling of positive behaviour patterns improved their self-knowledge and provided the opportunity to learn new behaviours. The group process instilled hope and encouraged interpersonal growth. The expression of painful feelings and the identification of possible solutions to problem areas had a cathartic effect on the members as they gained greater self-awareness and a deeper level of self-understanding. The empirical findings of the group intervention programme will be discussed in the next section.

7.4 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

The majority of the group members (six out the eight) were selected to participate in the intervention programme, as they were still experiencing the "acute phase" of the divorce process. This phase normally occurs shortly after the marital breakdown and usually starts to subside a year after its induction. Taking the acute phase of divorce into consideration, the study was designed to test the hypotheses that children of divorce who participate in group intervention programmes would exhibit less depression, less anxiety, an increased self-

concept and improved inter-personal and peer relationships. Psychometric tests were implemented and the empirical findings thereof, will be discussed in this section.

7.4.1 Depression

According to Wallerstein (1994:103), the acute phase of divorce is normally characterised by feelings of loss, sadness, rage or abandonment, that may consolidate into a long-lasting state of depression (see section 3.2). The initial results on the BDI indicated that most of the members were in a state of moderate or severe depression (see section 6.14, table iii). These initial results possibly reflected the tremendous feelings of sadness and loss experienced by the group members at the beginning of the programme. Findings on the post-test results on the BDI indicate a considerable overall decrease in depression in group members (see section 6.14 table iii). This improvement may have been as a result of the intervention programme focusing on the identification of divorce related feelings, the positive interaction with peers and the encouragement of autonomy and independence of thought within the context of the group environment.

7.4.2 Anxiety

The pre-test results on the IPAT Anxiety Scale indicate that the majority of group members were in a state of high anxiety at the beginning of the programme (see section 6.15 table iv). A slight decrease in anxiety was noted in the post-test results on the IPAT Anxiety Scale. Possible explanations for the slight decrease in anxiety levels are: First, that divorce often heightens adolescents' vulnerability to one of the most common problems faced by single-parent families namely, economic hardship. Economic hardship is a major factor accounting for adolescents' distress and anxiety, as it serves as a secondary incidence of divorce, contributing to a diminished parenting capacity, possible parental absence (due to long working hours) and changes in household composition

(Umbersohm et al 1992:15). The recognition of this secondary incidence as a stress related factor, was highlighted in members' responses on the TAT and in their initial interview. As economic hardship is a factor which is not easily resolved in the short-term, anxiety pertaining to this secondary incidence of divorce, may have still been present in the members at the end of the intervention programme. Second, anxiety may be regarded as a stable dimension, which resists change over a short term. Although the intervention programme may have effected a slight decrease in anxiety, a short-term intervention may not be sufficiently powerful to affect a considerable change in a relatively stable dimension such as anxiety (Pedro-Carroll & Cowen 1985:609).

7.4.3 Self-concept

The self-concept has a strong evaluative component as it describes what individual's see when they look at themselves, in terms of their self-perceived physical characteristics, personality traits, roles and social statuses (see section 2.4). The adolescent's self-concept may be regarded as the result of conscious and/or unconscious comparisons with one or more reference group. During adolescence, the peer group can be considered as the dominant reference group, having considerable impact on the individual's self-concept. Adolescents readily turn to their peer culture and derive from it their support and identity (Smilansky 1992:54).

An overall improvement in self-concept was noted in all the group members, with Respondent F showing the most significant increase (see section 6.13 table ii). This was possibly due to the fact that he was able to confront his fear of his father and the development of a relationship between him and Respondent E had a positive effect on his self-esteem. Once again, the overall improvement in members' self-concept may be regarded as slight, as like anxiety, self-concept is a relatively stable dimension that resists change over a short-term. Self-concept has however consistently been shown to be a reliable measure of mental health, of the ability to cope with problems, to function under stress, to act efficiently and

to form relationships with others (Smilansky 1992:52). The increase in self-concept of the group members, however marginal, may be attributed to their ability to deal more effectively with their personal issues pertaining to parental divorce and the nurturing and support they received from their peers throughout the group process. The sharing of painful experiences, an improvement in conflict management and problem-solving ability and the often humorous interaction among the members may have contributed positively to an increased self-concept.

7.4.4 Interpersonal Relationships

The FFAQ focuses on the adolescents' functioning in the present family environment. The results on the FFAQ reveal a positive increase in all six factors assessed on the questionnaire. A brief description of each factor will be provided followed by the findings on the post-test results.

Structure in the family implies focusing on healthy models of adult authority namely, models of a good marriage, models for practicing problem solving, models for coherent and appropriate system of values, self-control of anger and a positive mother-adolescent and father-adolescent relationship.

In the pre-test FFAQ responses, none of the members indicated that their parents were appropriate models of a good marriage, which may be considered obvious due to the fact that their parents are divorced. The parental divorce was perceived by the adolescent, as a failure on behalf of the parents to sustain an intimate relationship and brought into question the value of any efforts on their behalf, to try to establish an intimate relationship with members of the opposite sex. The emotional loss of the mother-adolescent relationship and the perceived loss of the father-adolescent relationship, due to his moving out of the family home was evident in members' pre-test results on the FFAQ. A lack of self-control and an inability for members to manage their anger effectively, was also reflected in the low scores on the pre-test.

An overall increase in the post-test score on **Structure** in the family, may have been as a result of the intervention programme focusing on anger management and the encouragement of members to explore the areas that negatively impacted on their relationship with significant others. The post-test results reveal a more positive mother-adolescent and father-adolescent relationship and an increase in self-control possibly as a result of their improved problem-solving ability.

Affect in the family focuses on the expression and acceptance of feelings. It also includes needs of independence and acceptance in the family, focusing on a need for independence, for being trusted, a good mother-adolescent relationship and being listened to, to name but a few.

The problem areas identified in the pre-test responses on the FFAQ indicated an inability to express both positive and negative feelings, a lack of mutual trust, a need for independence, to be listened to and a perceived lack of support in the family.

An increase in the post-test score on **Affect** in the family, may be due to the intervention programme focusing on the expression of feelings and the members feeling more confident in their ability to express both positive and negative feelings in the family. Their increased self-awareness and sense of autonomy combined with sensitivity towards others may have resulted in improved relationships in the family, positively contributing to the increase in Affect in the family environment.

Clear and direct **Communication** in the family focuses on positive feedback, positive pleasant environment, clear messages, self-assertion and positive models for practicing problem solving. A marginal improvement in **Communication** in the family was noted, as through the support and positive feedback received in the group context, members were able to be more assertive

and practice their problem-solving skills. This may have enhanced their ability to positively communicate their needs to family members.

Appropriate **Behaviour Control** focuses on healthy independence from family, participation in decision-making processes, proper sex-guidance and training in economic management. A considerable increase in the post-test score on **Behaviour Control** indicated that the positive interaction with their peers in the group process and their enhanced communication skills, contributed to their positive separation and increasing feelings of independence and acceptance in the family. The members were regarded as being at less risk at the end of the intervention programme as they displayed a decreased need to please their peers rather than their parents in risky situations. Parental divorce may have contributed positively to an improved score on Behaviour Control, as an increased sense of responsibility and the participation in the custodial environments' decision-making processes encouraged a greater sense of belonging and feelings of acceptance.

Value Transmission implies the transmission of ethical standards and social values by parents to children. Kogos and Snarey (1995:184) found a positive relationship between parental divorce and adolescents' "moral reasoning maturity", possibly due to adolescents becoming more morally autonomous earlier. The increase in the score on **Value Transmission** may indicate that the intervention programme encouraged the members to focus on sensitivity towards other people, by respecting and caring for other members in the group. It could also be as a result of parental divorce stimulating role taking in adolescents, which promotes their ethical sensitivity and moral autonomy as they seek to comprehend both sides of the dissension. This improved score in self-awareness may have been as a result of the intervention programme encouraging members to focus on the development of their full potential in recognition of their growth towards adulthood.

The **External Systems** factor focuses on participation in sport, community life, church and future career planning. A considerable increase in the score on External Systems may once again be attributed to an improved self-awareness possibly resulting from the intervention programme. The positive interaction with their peers, an increase in recreational activities and the awareness of future career opportunities, especially amongst the later adolescent group members, may have resulted in the improved score on external systems.

7.4.5 Responses on the TAT

The TAT is a projection test and is a useful tool in the evaluation and interpretation of the individual and his life world. A general overview of the dominant themes and potential areas of growth in group members' responses will be discussed in this section.

Underlying themes of divorce, inter-parental conflict and the loss of a close relationship with the non-custodial parent were evidenced in the responses on the post-test **TAT**. These responses highlighted the fact that most of the members still experienced their parents' divorce and the resulting divorce-related issues, as painful factors in their lives. As the intervention programme focused on divorce-related feelings, the perceived negative responses on the post-test TAT may be as a result of these feelings being brought into the conscious mind of the members, enabling them to deal with the issues on a more concrete level. Some of the responses however, indicated the members' "unconscious" beliefs that the unfaithful parent is to "blame" for the divorce, which elicited feelings of shame, insecurity and a sense of abandonment by one or both parents.

Loyalty conflicts and the role of the members as a "go-between" for their parents, were also revealed in their responses on the post-test TAT. Loyalty conflicts are often a source of stress and difficulty for children of divorce. Children feel love for and allegiance to both parents, yet fear the consequences of loyalty to both, which may result in feelings of guilt and anxiety. The loyalty conflicts identified in

the members' responses were revealed in their perception of the father figure as the aggressor who behaves abusively towards the mother figure. This may be perceived as members' inability to distance themselves from loyalty conflicts resulting in a need to protect the "weaker" parent, or responses may indicate members becoming more involved in loyalty conflicts, as, due to an increased sense of autonomy and greater cognitive capacity, they are able to see multiple points of view.

The quality of the parent-child relationship and the resolution of inter-parental conflict as evidenced by members' responses, were also determined by individual characteristics of the members. The early adolescent responses showed a greater inability to detach themselves from the family discord, often indicating a "wish fulfillment" that the conflict would be resolved and the parental relationship restored. The later adolescent' responses however, revealed higher levels of ego development and ego resilience, as they were able to detach themselves emotionally from inter-parental conflict and conceptualise the irreversibility of the parental divorce, thereby reinforcing the separation and individuation process.

The responses on the TAT indicate that the intervention programme did not result in the members being "recovered" by the end of the process, as high levels of anxiety and insecurity were still evident in their responses. Their need for positive separation and the formulation of a personal identity was still being hampered by their parents' inability to interact with them effectively. This may be as a result of the findings by Camara and Resnick (1988:337) who state that during the period of divorce and the two years following, there is typically disruption in the parent-child relationship when parents are likely to be physically or psychologically unavailable. The intervention programme may however have succeeded in easing members movement into or along Wallerstein's (1987:199-211) "transitional" stage of the divorce process (see section 3.2), which usually sets in once the acute stage starts to subside. The transitional stage is characterised by greater acceptance by the adolescent of the divorce situation,

less conflict in the post-divorce environment and more positive interactions with one or both parents.

Although the intervention programme did not serve to insulate the members against the negative effects of divorce, certain areas of positive emotional adjustments were evident. This may have been as a result of growth and maturity within the programme encouraging members to develop their own identity and their own sense of self-worth.

Recommendations for future group intervention programmes for adolescents of divorce will be discussed in the next section.

7.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made for future group intervention programmes for adolescents of divorce:

- that a differentiation between early adolescence and late adolescence be made, as emotional maturity and cognitive development play an important role in group members' ability to develop self-reflective thought processes (see section 3.3.1).
- that a larger study sample be used in order to generalise the results to the greater population and to make them more significant.
- that group intervention programmes run separate but parallel group programmes which include the custodial parent, aimed at providing information about children's responses to divorce and at dealing with single parent issues. Research shows that children whose parents were simultaneously involved in intervention programmes made the best improvements (Pedro-Carroll et al 1992:117).

- that group intervention programmes also maintain contact with the non-custodial parent, as literature validates the importance of the non-custodial parent's relationship with the child (see section 3.5.1).
- that a systemic approach be utilised, which sees the child, the parents, the teacher and the school system all as targets for intervention programmes dealing with the changes associated with divorce. Intervention programmes should include groups for children, education groups for parents, teacher training, classroom modules and consultation with the school system as a whole.
- that long-term follow-up evaluations be made to determine the extent to which positive short-term programme outcomes endure. Erratic behaviour patterns may emerge during the treatment process and time to practice learned skills may be required before differences in behaviour appear. Long-term follow-up sessions may be required to assess and promote positive developmental gains.
- that a more sensitive measure be used to evaluate subjective reports by group members when assessing the therapeutic value of the intervention programme, since it is possible that the measures used to evaluate changes are insensitive to some of the internal changes that occur.
- that future intervention programmes should be flexible in order to accommodate children of different ethnicity and socio-economic status. Modifications need to be made in order to include different languages, procedures and elements that portray diverse ethnic backgrounds (Pedro-Carroll et al 1992:120).
- that intervention programmes focus on supporting adolescents in the development of a positive identity, to improve interpersonal relationships and in the separation and individuation process. The programme should also

encourage the internalisation of positive values and norms, the development of a future perspective and emancipation through realistic self-concept realisation.

- that more therapeutic provision for adolescents from divorced families is needed if they are going to be helped to overcome the trauma of divorce.

7.6 CONCLUSION

The results of the present research study indicate that a group intervention programme for adolescents of parental divorce can contribute to altering the misconceptions about the divorce, reduce feelings of anxiety and depression and enhance interpersonal relationships. The intervention programme appeared to succeed in empowering the members to overcome certain adverse effects of parental divorce.

Assisting adolescents in the adjustment to parental marital transition, through either preventative or remedial interventions, is an important step toward enhancing optimal development of each child's potential. Recent trends in the rate of divorce suggest that many children will experience the dissolution of their parents' marriage. The present study developed a ten-session group intervention programme for adolescents of divorce and the results indicate an improvement in all areas of psychosocial adjustment. It is hoped that the programme, plus the findings and the recommendations will have a practical and useful value for mental health professionals in the field. Improving and increasing support through the continued utilisation of effective school-based intervention programmes for children of divorce will help alleviate some of the detrimental effects of divorce and facilitate greater psychosocial adjustment.

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Holy Rosary School

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APPENDIX I

Dear Parents and Pupils

I am currently studying for an M.Ed degree in Educational Psychology at the University of South Africa.

Part of my studies will be to investigate the advantages of a school based intervention programme for children from divorced home environments.

Divorce is rated as one of the most stressful and complex mental health crisis facing children today. When a family is in crisis, the child's basic needs are often left unmet and the normal developmental task of childhood and adolescence becomes harder to accomplish. The parents themselves are often in their own state of crisis and may be unaware or unable to meet the needs of their children. In most cases, teachers and counsellors are in the best position to offer support and stability to the child undergoing a process of change.

I am looking for ten volunteers to participate in a ten week long group programme that enables adolescents to deal with divorce. The volunteers must be between the ages of thirteen and sixteen years old and their parents must be divorced.

If you are interested in finding out more/joining the group, please fill in the return slip below.

Thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely

C Johnson

M R D'Andrea
SENIOR SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

REPLY SLIP

I, parent/guardian of _____ (Pupil's full name)

DO / DO NOT give my permission for my son/daughter to participate in a group intervention programme for adolescents of parental divorce.

Signed

Date

1940 - 2000

Sixty Years of Excellence

Affiliated to JOCASCO - Johannesburg Catholic Schools' Council

QUESTIONNAIRE ON DIVORCE

The following questionnaire has been compiled to assist me in my research on divorce.

The information you provide will be kept confidential, so please try to be as honest as possible.

Your assistance is most appreciated.

NAME						
AGE		SEX	M = MALE		F = FEMALE	
NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN THE FAMILY						
BROTHER(S)					SISTER(S)	
YOUR POSITION IN THE FAMILY - Oldest, ...						
ADDRESS						
TELEPHONE / CONTACT NUMBER/S						

1	How old were you when your parents divorced?
2	Which parent do you live with?
3	How often do you see the parent you are not living with?
4	Please describe how you felt when your parents got divorced? (Angry, resentful, responsible ...)
5	How would you describe your relationship with:
A	Your custodial parent? (The one you live with)
B	Your non-custodial parent? (The one you don't live with)
6	Have either of your parents remarried?
7	If yes, state which parent is remarried.
8	Do you have a good relationship with your new step-parent?
YES	NO
9	Please describe how you feel about yourself and the situation at home.
10	Would you like to participate in a group intervention programme aimed at helping you to come to terms with your parent divorce?
YES	NO
11	Which afternoon of the week would suit you to participate in the group programme?

Thank you for your participation

CAN YOUR LIFE BE PROBLEM FREE?

- ◆ Human beings are dynamic and are always in a process of developing and growing. Each developmental stage brings with it a set of tasks to be mastered. These may be physical, emotional or intellectual tasks.
- ◆ Problems are universal. Everyone has problems everyday. They may be small and sometimes big. Problems also involve taking on responsibilities.
- ◆ The older we get the more responsibilities we have to take and because of these the more problems we must resolve.
- ◆ Unless problems are resolved they will tend to accumulate and become larger problems. It is important to try to resolve a problem as soon as you become aware of it.
- ◆ Problem-solving may be for better or worse. How we solve a problem is very crucial. If we learn to resolve problems productively we can actually change our limitations into assets. Seen in this light problems become opportunities for growth and development.

PROBLEM SOLVING: STEPS INVOLVED.

Productive problem-solving focuses on finding the most economical way to produce the most beneficial solution to a problem.

◆ YOUR ATTITUDE COUNTS.

- Relax. When your energy is tied up in tight muscles and body tensions, in distracting thoughts or worries, you will be unable to solve the problem facing you.
- It is important to tell yourself that the problem situation is a normal aspect of living.
- Tell yourself you can actively attempt to solve the problem or cope with the situation.
- It is important that you recognise that the situation is problematic.
- Avoid acting impulsively.

• UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEMS SITUATION:

EXAMPLE: John's situation:

I am very unhappy with my father. Him and I have never really shared a close relationship and now that him and my mom are divorced, I am expected to spend alternate weekends with him. He has a new girlfriend, who has two children of her own. We get along okay, but I find myself withdrawing more and more from this situation. My father and I seldom speak – when we do, he always tries to justify why he left – I get angry because he runs mom down and tries to get me to take sides with him. He never really listens to me and thinks that he can just tell me what to do all the time. I don't really fight with him, as I am scared that if I do, he will either stop paying mom maintenance or decide to stop seeing me all together. I think about the problems at home all the time and this has caused my school work to drop.

EXPLORING THE PROBLEM:

1. What is the problem? Could be:

- : Unhappiness with father's present situation since the divorce
- : Unable to communicate effectively with his father
- : Unable to get his father to listen to him
- : Fear that his father will stop paying maintenance

- : Fear that his father will stop seeing him
- : Loss of interest in school work

If John could communicate his insecurities to his father and get him to listen to where he is coming from then perhaps he could enjoy a closer relationship with him. So the problem could be a **lack of effective communication with his father.**

2. What are the components of the problem?

- : Withdrawal from effectively communicating with his father;
- : Fear of his father
- : Lack of concentration at school

3. Why is the situation a problem?

- : John feels insecure about his relationship with his father;
- : He feels caught in the middle between trying to have a good relationship with his father and protecting the needs of his mother;
- : His needs as his father's son are not being met;
- : He could fail the year due to a lack of concentration on his school work.

4. For whom is the situation a problem?

- : For John who is being adversely affected by it and is feeling angry and unhappy about it.

5. Who else is affected?

- : John's father – his son is withdrawing from him
- : John's mother – he may feel resentful towards her
- : John's friends – he may no longer participate in activities with them the way he used to.

6. Can the problem be ignored?

- : No. It will become larger and more complicated and John will find it increasingly difficult to cope with his daily activities.

GENERATION OF ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS:

Continue with John's situation.

1. What does John want?

- : Possibly to enjoy a closer relationship with his father.

2. Brainstorming:

- : Stop seeing his father.
- : Muster up the confidence to speak to his father requesting that his father does not speak until he has finished speaking.
- : Ask his mother to tell his father to get off his back.

- : Arrange a weekend away just with him and his father so that they can speak about John's issues.
- : Carry on as normal and try to deal with it as time passes.
- : Discuss the problem with the guidance teacher at school.
- : Get his father to attend therapy with him so that they can sort out their differences within the 'safety' of the therapeutic environment.

DECIDE ON A PRODUCTIVE SOLUTION:

What is involved in deciding on the course of action?

- Each alternative solution is evaluated.
- Decide on the criteria or standard you will use to evaluate each solution. Depending on your problem these could be in monetary costs, time energy, positive or negative side effects.
- Predict and consider possible consequences of each course of action.
- Consider the short- and long-term effects of these consequences on you and other people who may be involved.
- Select the solution that stands out above all the rest because it scores high on all criteria.

It should be noted that the problem-solving approach can help us accept a solution that we might not have accepted initially had we not looked at all the alternatives and found that they were even worse or their results would have been short-lived.

Group exercise: Continue with John's situation:

Let one volunteer participant

- : Consider all suggested solutions
- : Decide on a useful solution
- : Motivate his/her decision
- : Give reasons for rejecting the other solutions
- : NB: He/she can combine solutions and improve on other ideas.

Let the group assist and give him/her constructive feedback.

Planning the implementations of a solution:

Continue with John's situation:

Let another volunteer participant come up with a plan for putting the selected solution into action following the suggested steps.

Let the group give him/her constructive feedback and where necessary make suggestions to improve the plan of action.

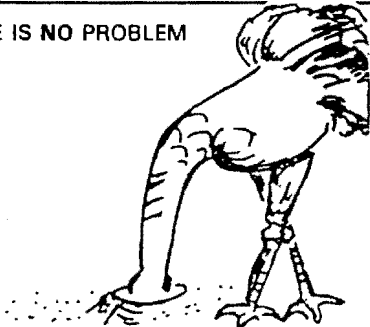
SUMMARY: PRODUCTIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING CHART**STEPS TO PROBLEM-SOLVING**

Check your general attitude	Understand the problem-situation	Come up with alternative solutions	Decision-making	Plan and implement your decision	Verify your decision
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THE PROCESS

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relax • Tell yourself the problem is a normal aspect of life • You can solve the problem • Recognize the situation as problematic • Avoid acting impulsively 	<p>Analyse and explore the situation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is the problem situation? - What are the component parts of the problem? - Why is the situation perceived as problematic? - Who is experiencing the problem? - Who is affected by the problem? - Can the problem be ignored? 	<p>Brainstorm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Come up and list as many solutions as possible - Postpone the evaluation of your possible solutions - Combine and improve your ideas. 	<p>Evaluate each solution on your list</p> <p>Decide your standard for regarding a solution as 'good' or 'bad'.</p> <p>Predict and consider all possible consequences of each course of action.</p> <p>Consider the short- & long-term effects of the outcome of the preferred solution.</p> <p>Select the best solution.</p>	<p>Break the solution into small parts of action</p> <p>Start with small action.</p> <p>Start right away.</p> <p>Evaluate the effects of your small beginnings.</p> <p>Tackle the difficult actions.</p>	<p>Check if</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Your problems have been solved. - You are happy with the outcome - You would like to improve your solution <p>If your problem is not solved, check: What went wrong with the plan;</p> <p>If your plan can be improved;</p> <p>If you need another plan;</p> <p>If no other plan is available: Go back to step 4</p> <p>Consider your second best solution. Repeat the process until</p>
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HOW DO YOU MANAGE CONFLICT?

<p>THERE IS NO PROBLEM</p>  <p>THE OSTRICH DENIES CONFLICT</p>	<p>I'M GETTING OUT OF THIS PEOPLE NEVER AGREE ANYWAY</p>  <p>THE TORTOISE WITHDRAWS TO AVOID THE ISSUE</p>	<p>DON'T HURT ME</p>  <p>THE CROCODILE HIDES BEHIND AND MANIPULATES BY TEARS</p>
<p>HA-HA! HO-HO! HEE-HEE!</p>  <p>THE HYENA AVOIDS THE ISSUE BY LAUGHING</p>	<p>IT'S ALL VERY SIMPLE REALLY ...</p>  <p>THE WEASEL RATIONALISES</p>	<p>YOU MUST BELIEVE ME</p>  <p>BECAUSE I AM RIGHT! THE GORILLA OVERPOWERS (AGGRESSION OR PRESENCE)</p>
<p>I AM RIGHT AND YOU ARE WRONG</p>  <p>THE DONKEY IS DOGMATIC JUDGEMENTAL & SELF-RIGHTEOUS</p>	<p>I THINK AND THINK AND THINK AND THINK!</p>  <p>THE OWL'S FEELINGS & EMOTIONS ARE HIDDEN</p>	<p>BAH BAH BAH BAH BAH BAH</p>  <p>THE SHEEP CONFORMS - HE GOES ALONG WITH THE GROUP RATHER THAN HIS OWN FEELINGS</p>
<p>IT JUST ISN'T DONE WHERE I AM UP HERE</p>  <p>GIRAFFE FEELS HE IS TOO SUPERIOR FOR CONFLICT</p>	<p>I'LL MEET YOU HALFWAY - I'LL SCRATCH YOUR BACK IF YOU'LL SCRATCH MINE</p>  <p>THE CAT MAKES A CREATIVE COMPROMISE</p>	<p>I CARE ENOUGH TO CONFRONT. I MIGHT NOT LIKE WHAT YOU ARE DOING BUT I STILL VALUE YOU.</p>  <p>THE DOG WANTS RELATIONSHIPS TO BE OPEN AND HONEST. HE VIEWS CONFLICT AS NEUTRAL AND NATURAL.</p>

GUIDELINES ON DEALING WITH ANGER ASSERTIVELY

- **Start Positively** – Use self-statements e.g. “I want to let you know how I am feeling because I believe that it will clear the air between us”.
- **Halt Procrastination** – The earlier anger is tackled, the better the chance of handling it assertively. Always aim to take control at the stage of mild irritation before it develops into full-blown rage.
- **Check your Physiology** – Your body is a more truthful indicator than your mind where anger is concerned. Take note of your personal physiological responses to anger e.g. shortness of breath, headaches, tightening of the chest etc.
- **Analyse** – take time to assess what might be going on, both on and below the surface. Ask yourself the following questions:
 1. What are my rights in this situation?
 2. Does this situation remind me of any other? Has an old wound been opened?
 3. Is there any threat in this situation for me? If there is, do I perceive it rationally or am I exaggerating it?
 4. Am I projecting a feeling or a quality onto this person or situation, which actually belongs to me?
 5. Am I suffering from stress (physical or mental) which may be fuelling my fire?
 6. What aspects of my own behaviour could be partly responsible?

- **Release your physical tension** – beat the stuffing out of a cushion; do some strenuous exercise or bang a few well-built doors. Screw your face up several times and then let the muscles relax. Don't forget to let go of the tension in your throat – growl, scream or shout abuse at an empty chair or into an empty field.
- **Address your fear** – make any contingency plans necessary so that you are not held back from expressing your anger for fear of what may happen if you do.
- **Write or mentally compose your script** – carefully prepare what you are going to say to open up a discussion, which hopefully will lead to some resolution, at the very least, just inform the other person of your feelings. You don't have to learn your words off by heart of course, but at least thinking about what to say, and what not to say, will help you refrain from saying something which you might later regret or which is guaranteed to cause more trouble.
- **Be direct** – use the first person and say "I'm feeling irritated / annoyed / angry".
- **Specify the degree of anger.**
- **Don't accuse others of making you angry** – instead of saying "you make me feel angry", say "I get angry when you"
- **Share your feelings of threat and fear** – "I'm frightened of saying this to you because you may think ... or you may reject me / hit me, but"

- **Avoid criticism**
- **Stay with the present issue** – don't bring in past grievances.
- **Don't label or generalize** – "you always...". Criticize the behaviour and not the person.
- **Be specific and realistic in your request.**
- **Be assertive rather than aggressive.**