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School of Social Work

Going Beyond:

A Demonstration Project of Group
Work With Early Adolescents From
Families of Separation and Divorce

by

Janet Marie Dennis, B.S.W.

A Thesis
submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through the School of Social Work in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Master of Social Work at the
University of Windsor

September, 1980

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

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RESEARCH COMMITTEE

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DEDICATION

To Jacquie

"Those

Who Love Us

Let Us Find

Our

Own

Way" (Eugene Kennedy)

May your way "go beyond" and
be filled with happiness and
challenge.

With love

Jan

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I wish to thank my parents and sisters for their support. Special thanks is extended to my sister Jacquie, to whom this thesis is dedicated.

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hints on statistics. I also wish to thank Mrs. Fleda Warren for her typing of this thesis, and particularly for the occasional helpful editorial comment.

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Very Special Thanks is extended to my friends: Yvonne Jinks, particularly for her good sense of humor that helps one to keep all situations in perspective.

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Special Thanks is also extended to Dr. William McDermott, Executive Director of The Child's Place, who has continued to provide encouragement that this thesis would come to a successful completion.

I thank God for His love. Convocation day, October 4th, is the feast day for St. Francis of Assisi. The prayer that he authored has always been my favorite. It begins with: "Lord, make me an instrument of Your Peace."

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project was twofold. First was to determine the emotional issues that early adolescents experience due to the separation and/or divorce of their parents. The second purpose was to demonstrate that social work practice with groups could be an effective means of helping these children to cope with their emotional responses to this crisis in their lives.

The sample included twenty-seven early adolescent boys and girls placed into three groups (2 treatment, 1 control). Two groups, comprised of seventeen adolescents were involved in a group program devised by this researcher. The other ten adolescents served as control and did not meet as a group until the treatment groups' program was completed.

This research project was conducted in the school system and required authorization of school personnel as well as written parental permission.

Pre and post group measurement comprised of a questionnaire that was developed and administered by the researcher. Also, every adolescent was interviewed both before and after the group program in order for this researcher to obtain pertinent information about them and their involvement in the group.

Results indicated that the overall scores on the post test from the Adolescent Questionnaire (Appendix E) did not produce a statistical significance. However, the data has shown specific emotional issues of significance. The additional factors of the years since the separation differences in the experience of boys as compared to that of the girls are evident through the results. Further data from each individual participant collected during a post-group interview substantiated that the group experience was helpful to them. This was attributed to the experience of being able to express and share feelings of importance with others who had also experienced parental marital breakdown.

The researcher has made recommendations for professionals involved with families of separation and/or divorce for interventive services and future research.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

The breakdown of the traditional marital partnership has affected the lives of many families in North American society. With the increase of this phenomenon, personnel in the human sciences are being challenged to view the family in a renewed dynamic way. The family unit has provided the nurturance that children require on both the physical and emotional levels. At a time when the stability of the family has been broken through marital breakdown, one of the most urgent of questions one may ask is what happens to children through this process?

There has long been a recognition that a separation is a very painful event for children; the effects of which endure over time (Bowlby, 1973). However, we cannot assume that the effect of parents' separation and/or divorce on children is similar to other types of separations. Current knowledge of the effects of other separations may not reflect the impact experienced through this particular life crisis.

This study developed from the researcher's interest

in what were the emotional reactions of adolescents experiencing parents' separation and/or divorce. A further interest was to gain insight into how a social worker might intervene in an effective way with those who had experienced this life crisis.

The researcher had an interest in group work and thought that this mode of intervention might provide a means through which such children could receive help with their particular difficulties in such situations.

It was apparent that the number of children who experience their parents' marital breakdown was increasing.

It is estimated that about 25 percent of children born between 1910 and 1960 lived in a single parent family sometime during their development but that 40 to 50 percent of children born during the 70's will spend a part of their childhood in a single parent home. The rate of remarriage also seems to be declining which means that more children are remaining for more sustained periods of time in single parent homes (Bane, 1977).

Canadian statistics indicate that of 57,155 divorces in Canada in 1978, 55.1 per cent occurred in families with dependent children (Statistics Canada, April, 1980).

Further, from the years 1921 to 1978, the divorce rate in Canada has increased 106.1 per cent. Between the years from 1971 to 1978, the rate of increase in divorce was 58.1 per cent (Statistics Canada, April, 1980).

The school setting was chosen by the researcher

since it is the social community to which children are related. It was thought that this project could contribute to our understanding of children's reactions to the experience and effects of marital breakdown. Further, this project would add to the clinical group experience of this researcher. This would be accomplished through an assessment of the results these children report prior to and after their experience in a group.

CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

Introduction

The purpose of this section, termed Review of the Literature, is to provide the reader with definitions of the ideas or concepts utilized in this thesis. The major divisions of this review include a section on early adolescent development and the emotional issues early adolescents face due to parental marital breakdown. The subsections on these emotional issues will discuss the research and available writings in the area of children's reactions to their parents' separation and/or divorce. The particular emotional responses to be discussed are sadness and depression, anger, loyalty conflicts and fear. Perception of self and concern over family finances are other issues that have been documented as being of significance for the adolescent of parental marital breakdown and will also be included in this review. In addition, the concepts related to social work practice, which include the assessment of such children, and the interventive programs that have been developed to be of assistance to them, will be discussed.

Early Adolescent Development

The purpose of this section is to define and discuss the term "early adolescence." A clear definition of this term is required because adolescents in this "early" stage of development were involved in this research project.

The definition chosen by this author was one provided by Dr. Derek Miller (1974), a psychiatrist who writes extensively about adolescents. There are a number of noted authors who have written on the overall stage of life termed or referred to as "adolescence." From his longstanding work with adolescents, Miller (1974) has taken the term adolescence and divided it into three distinct and separate life phases. For each of these phases he has discussed particular developmental tasks. In his framework, the first phase was entitled "early adolescence." This phase was defined as, "the period of puberty, which lasts three years or more, from about eleven or twelve until fourteen or fifteen" (Miller, 1974, p. 6).

Miller (1974) asserted that the overriding concern for adolescents were the physical changes that they experience at this point in their lives. He elucidated these physical changes as follows:

...a period starting from the beginning growth of testicles in boys to the time when there is active production of spermatozoa. In girls the era lasts from the onset of an increase of pubic hair, followed by the budding of breasts, the beginning of vaginal secretion and the enlargement of breasts, to the time when menstruation begins (Miller, 1974, pp. 6-7).

Accompanying these physical changes was the need for the early adolescent to maintain some sense of control in his/her life. The physical changes were of great proportion. Their physical body, over which they thought they had control, was no longer predictable. This was due primarily to the relatively short period of time within which these physical changes occurred.

The adolescent attempted to master a sense of control while at the same time extensive bodily changes were experienced. In addition to this physically changing body was the approaching need for independence from their families (Miller, 1974, p. 11).

Thus, this diversity of developmental tasks posed a further dilemma for the early adolescent. While undergoing significant physical changes, the need for supportive adult figures and models was understandable. Yet to solicit parental support while at the same time developing feelings of separateness would at best place the early adolescent in a state of confusion. It must be understood that the stress experienced during this developmental phase, although normal, was great.

Given the normal diversity of developmental task, we must question what a parental marital breakdown would contribute to the stress experienced by the early adolescent. The current writings (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1974, 1980) of the developmental impact of parental marital breakdown on adolescents point to the distress as having been of a temporary nature. For instance:

...most of the young people whom we studied were able within a year following parental separation to take up their individual agendas and proceed toward adulthood at a more measured pace (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1974, p. 503).

Conclusions of a more generalized nature were provided by Hunt and Hunt (1977). Their work was able to refute some of the overall biases regarding the effects of parent absence on adolescents. They concluded that, "the effect of divorce on children while not wholly good, is better than if there had been no divorce" (Hunt and Hunt, 1977, p. 190).

These overall findings, while significant, do not specify the extent or nature of the emotional effects that occurred when early adolescents experienced parental marital breakdown. Given that stress is felt during this time, one could ask what were the emotions experienced and how did they cope with these feelings.

These questions were in concert with the purposes of this research project. In order to establish a means

of intervention with these early adolescents, it was critical, first, to understand what the emotional effects of parental marital breakdown really were. These emotional responses will be discussed in the next section of this thesis.

The Emotional Issues Early Adolescents Face Due To Parental Marital Breakdown

The literature concerned with the effects on adolescents, of parental marital breakdown, is very limited both in amount and scope. At best, it can be described as being in an exploratory stage. Therefore, refinement of the knowledge in the area of parental marital breakdown will only be possible through continued research.

There are two main sources of information that discuss the emotional issues early adolescents face due to parental marital breakdown. The first source is from the research thus far completed. From this researcher's search, there are three research studies on the effects of parental marital breakdown on adolescents. One is a longitudinal study done by Wallerstein and Kelly (1974, 1980) in California. Another study was completed by M. Dermott (1970) in Michigan, which utilized psychiatric records from a sample of one hundred and sixteen children

aged fourteen and under, who had experienced parental marital breakdown, to determine if any consistent behavioral patterns were observed or reported. Other research has been completed by Hetherington (1973) on the specific effects of father absence for adolescent girls, and Hetherington, Cox and Cox (1978) studied pre-school children of parental marital breakdown.

Further data was provided by clinical professionals who have observed their adolescent clients who had experienced parental marital breakdown. Although these observations may not have undergone rigorous scrutiny of research methodology, they can, in fact, be regarded as significant for this study. The writings are by noted professionals who record their experiences from years of practice with adolescents. The contribution made to the literature is their help in providing a basis of information from which further scientific exploration and documentation is possible.

For instance, Richards and Willis (1976) have discussed the emotional issues and overall effects of parental marital breakdown which they found to be of great difficulty for the adolescents. At the very least, their work acts as a barometer from which further writings and research studies may be completed.

Louise Despert (1953), a psychiatrist whose

practice included children of separation or divorce, pioneered work in the area of understanding how parental marital breakdown effected the children within the family. She further noted from client observations that the overall effects for adolescents were less than those experienced by younger children who continued to have dependent bonds on parents. The essence of her belief was that the experience of parental marital breakdown was much more painful for the younger more dependent child than for the adolescent. For example, she stated:

The child from the age of twelve onward has achieved physical independence, and he is also relatively independent emotionally. The effect of a separation from one of his parents is no longer so devastating to him (Despert, 1953, p. 55).

It is important to view Despert's position within the era in which it was written. The sophistication of understanding of adolescent development was limited and divorce was less acceptable in society. However, despite the expansion of our understanding on adolescence, Despert's ideas in writing were not challenged in the literature for years. When challenged by a longitudinal research study by Wallerstein and Kelly (1974, 1980), it was demonstrated there were psychological effects of parental divorce on adolescent children. The contents refuted the notion that parental marital breakdown was less painful for adolescents than it was for the younger children.

Wallerstein and Kelly, in a sample of 21 adolescents, from a population of 131 children, came to this conclusion after having studied the effects of parental separation and divorce on children ranging in age from 2½ years to 18 years. From the results, it became evident that parental marital breakdown was in fact extremely painful for adolescents and effected their development at this critical stage in their lives.

Despite the expectation that the adolescent process of decathecting the parents in the psychological move out of the house would lessen their pain, the acute distress repeatedly and forcefully conveyed to us was inescapably real (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1974, p. 486).

This researcher found no further substantiation through research on the adolescent experience of parental marital breakdown beyond Wallerstein and Kelly's work.

Thus, beyond the work completed by Wallerstein and Kelly, it is important to discuss the writings devised by professional practitioners whose observations on case material were reported in the literature. Their information provided a base from which the researcher was able to design this research and, in addition, provide a model for future research.

Summary of the Research Completed on Adolescents of
Separation and Divorce

The Elements of Blame and Guilt

There are a number of words that are used to describe marital breakdown. Some of these include phrases such as 'the marriage did not work out' or 'the marriage failed.' These terms are used because marriage in North American culture is viewed as a life long contract. Where this contract or commitment is no longer adhered to by either spouse, then the terms depicting failure are used to describe the marital breakdown. The very use of the word failure denotes an unsuccessful marital situation. One response to failure is the element of blame. The tendency to blame exists because it shifts the responsibility for the marital breakdown onto the other party. Often, one partner blames the other for the marriage breakdown. It requires a great amount of personal maturity to admit wrongdoing. There is also guilt felt when one takes on responsibility for having caused the breakdown. Thus, it is far less painful to blame the other person in the marriage and absolve oneself in order to avoid the burden of impending guilt.

Also, historically, the ability to obtain a divorce in Canada meant that evidence of wrongdoing must

be presented to the court. The other option was to wait seven years before an application for divorce was allowed to be made. The need for evidence provided some of the motivation for one partner to blame the other. In effect, this system of evidence helped to establish an adversary relationship between the marital partners. One or both partners presented evidence of non-compliance to the marital contract. The burden of blame for the marital breakdown was placed on one of the partners. This was determined by the judge after the hearings, in which evidence was presented. Given these circumstances, the societal control held by the court unwittingly set up the ground rules from which individual partners may have needed to blame each other for the breakdown of the marriage.

One may wonder to what extent the children become involved in the establishment of blame for the marital breakdown. Also, we may ask to whom this blame is directed.

It is apparent from Richards and Willis (1976), that young adolescents may have blamed themselves for the marital breakdown. The feeling of guilt is the emotional reaction that the adolescents experienced when he/she blamed themselves. There was a range of degrees to which adolescents accepted the responsibility or blamed

themselves for their parents' marital breakdown. Some adolescents questioned "whether they have said or done anything to cause it" (Richards and Willis, 1976, p. xii).

This level may be viewed as simply an expression of doubt. However, the content implied that the adolescent had experienced some direct involvement in the marital breakdown. It was indicated by Sorosky that the young adolescent may have been more predisposed to take on the responsibility and thus felt guilt for causing the marital breakdown (Sorosky, 1977, p. 125).

In contrast, research completed by Wallerstein and Kelly (1974) concluded that the adolescents in that study did not blame themselves or take on the responsibility for causing the marital breakdown. The adolescent experience differed from the preschool and latency aged children. These younger children felt responsible and, therefore, experienced guilt for the marital breakdown (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1974, p. 487).

This research also showed that the adolescents studied were initially not able to discuss the pain they experienced through parental marital breakdown. The revelation of the actual pain experienced could not be admitted until one year later. This was found in a follow-up study during which the researchers had discussions with the same children who had provided the initial data for the study (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1974, p. 487).

Thus, there exists a diversity of opinion in the literature regarding the element of blame or guilt as experienced by adolescents for parental marital breakdown.

Sadness and Depression

A research report on emotional responses to parental marital breakdown stated the adolescents in the study felt, "considerable sadness and sense of loss, and a sense of betrayal by both parents" (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1974, p. 486).

Actual documentation of depression in children of parental marital breakdown is reported through the work of a physician, McDermott (1970). After the examination of the records, he concluded that moderate, severe or predominant depression existed in 34.3% of the children from the divorced parent group (McDermott, 1970, p. 423).

Childhood depression as a result of parental marital breakdown has also been discussed by the clinician, Gardner (1970). However, most writings related more specifically to children below adolescent years.

Salk (1978), a noted clinician and prolific author in childhood psychology, has reported that depression existed among his young clients as a response

to their parents' separation or divorce. The degree of severity of this depression was significant. He further reported depression being expressed through physical symptoms. Salk stated:

Muscle weakness or physical exhaustion is a frequent complaint in young children under the stress of divorce. Their emotional state is reflected in feelings of physical exhaustion, and their muscle weakness relates to feelings of helplessness. It is as if the body has complied with the child's emotional state; he is essentially immobilized by the circumstances.

A lack of appetite, complaints of stomach aches, and a sad faced expression also reflect a child's generalized depression, caused by feelings of loss (Salk, 1978, p. 48).

Although no specific studies exist for adolescents, one may assume that this depression response does not disappear as a child enters early adolescence.

Anger

There are a myriad of emotions experienced by children whose parents' marriage failed. Anger is one of the emotions that is experienced along with fear of abandonment and guilt. Given the complexity of the life situation, one may wonder just how the variety of emotions take expression with the changed family. It is apparent from the literature (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1974) that the expression of anger is the central, or most encompassing, feeling that needs expression.

The expression of emotion can be the affective

response of feelings. Attempts have been made to isolate the various feelings and situate them in the context in which they were expressed.

It was stated that for the adolescent the:

Predominant affects generated were those of great anger at the parents for breaking up the family at a point critical to the adolescent, considerable sadness and sense of loss, and a sense of betrayal by the parents if not both (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1974, p. 486).

Attempts have been made to isolate the reasons why an adolescent might experience such great anger. It was discovered that adolescents experienced much conflict when confronted with issues regarding allegiances and loyalty. Where these factors became issues to be resolved, the feeling that the adolescent experienced was one of anger (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1974, p. 493). This occurred particularly when the family were involved in the divorce proceedings in court. With the adversary system of the court, and the negative relationship between parents, the adolescent was placed at the core of the conflict. Decisions had to be made with regard to which parent the child (children) would live.

...early in the divorce proceedings, more than half of our adolescents were profoundly conflicted by issues of allegiance and loyalty, and angrily protested the role they felt was being forced upon them (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1974, p. 493).

The expression of the anger was not limited to specific situations such as the custody battle. Although anger could be general, it could take expression in the direction of turning it against themselves or against others.

Richards' and Willis' (1976) work helped the adolescents to understand how the inappropriate expression of anger could have negative effects on themselves and others. This was provided in the statements:

If you turn your anger against yourself, you are punishing yourself for all the things you heard your parents accuse each other of doing....
If you turn your anger against others, you will be making them suffer for what you feel toward your parents (Richards & Willis, 1976, p. 18).

Thus, it was recognized that anger was a natural affective experience for the adolescent of parental marital breakdown. This anger may not be directed to the appropriate sources of the situational pain experienced by the adolescent. Where this anger lacked direction, it was thought that its expression became generalized towards self or others. This was viewed as destructive and in the extreme, could possibly point to emotional disturbance.

Anger played a significant role in the psychological life of 23 percent of the children and adolescents, who were not coping well. Most of the anger was defensive and reflected the underlying fear, sorrow, and sense of powerlessness of these youngsters (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980, p. 71).

It was also recognized that:

The most violently angry and dysfunctional responses of all it seems probable, are elicited in children and adolescents who not only experience repeated separations but are constantly subjected to the threat of being abandoned (Bowlby, 1973, p. 249).

In the literature it was accepted that anger was an understandable emotional response to the situation of parental marital breakdown and its directional expression toward parents was found to be acceptable.

Loyalty Conflicts

As a result of parental marital breakdown, conflicts of loyalty placed the adolescent in a position where decisions had to be made in favor of one or the other parent. This caused much hardship for the adolescent because of the emotional binds that resulted.

The situation of loyalty conflicts existed regardless of the emotional climate within the family at the time of separation. Thus, loyalty conflicts were inherent in the situation of a family breakup regardless of how parents tried to guard against them. Loyalty conflicts necessarily existed due to the fact that the adolescents were forced to make choices at this point. For instance, the adolescent had to choose to reside with one or the other parent. This choice inevitably placed him/her in an emotional bind because it was a very

difficult decision to make at such a significant time of life.

When you're forced to make choices between one parent and the other this can sometimes make you feel disloyal and guilty. Choosing to live with one parent encourages guilt feelings about the other parent (Robson, 1979, p. 66).

In essence, the conflict was an inner conflict which existed in the adolescent as he/she attempted to maintain a relationship with both parents. The adolescent needed to have relationships with both parents. However, given the conflicting circumstances of marital breakdown, parents' personal needs were juxtaposed with the needs of the adolescent. Where this conflict of needs existed, guilt was the result.

In the case where the adolescent visited the other parent, the conflict may have been more evident. This has occurred particularly when one parent degraded the other parent.

Some people experienced guilt when they heard one parent degrading the other parent. They felt that they were being disloyal to the other parent by listening (Robson, 1979, p. 67).

Loyalty conflicts have clearly been difficult for the adolescent to experience. These conflicts have illustrated how difficult it was for parents to meet the needs of the adolescent. What has been proposed as a means through which adolescents will feel less

psychological pain due to loyalty conflicts was, "Kids feel less pain when they have ways of separating themselves from their parents' problems (Richards and Willis, 1976, p. 9).

However, this solution was difficult to implement, given the dependent versus the independent nature of the parent-adolescent relationship. Further substantiation of this necessary distance required by the adolescent from parental marital problems was given credibility by researchers who stated:

Finally, it seemed that the adolescents who appeared to do best were frequently those who were able at the outset to establish and maintain some distance from the parental crisis and whose parents, whether wittingly or reluctantly, permitted them to do so (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1974, p. 504).

The emotional binds caused by loyalty conflicts appear to have been of great significance for the adolescent. When parents have been antagonistic toward one another, the adolescent becomes embroiled in their conflict. This has been very painful for the adolescent when he/she attempted to maintain a relationship with both parents. For their own sake, the adolescent needed to be able to have these relationships.

Perhaps the most crucial factor influencing a good readjustment was a stable, loving relationship with both parents, between whom friction had largely dissipated, leaving regular, dependable visiting patterns that the parent with custody encouraged (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980, p. 71).

Where a relationship with both parents was not possible, the only solution to this dilemma was that the adolescent develop distance from his/her parents' conflict-filled marriage.

The situation of being placed in psychologically painful binds through loyalty conflicts was extremely difficult for the adolescent of parental marital breakdown.

Fear

In order to comprehend whether or not the emotional reaction of fear was of consequence, it was essential to first review other related effects of parental marital breakdown. Some writers have positioned themselves in the stance that the effects of parental marital breakdown upon the adolescent are of little significance (Despert, 1953; Turrow, 1977).

However, through a closer review of existing writings, the insecurity that resulted for the adolescent was in fact viewed as being an important factor in their lives. Given the results of Wallerstein and Kelly's (1974, 1980) work, it is now possible to state that according to what we can extrapolate from this research, adolescents are effected by parental marital breakdown. The extent to which fear is experienced as one of these effects is not documented. However, there exists some

formulations on the effects of fear resulting from parental marital breakdown for younger children. The foundation for what is written is an underlying fear of abandonment (Salk, 1979; Gardner, 1976). If this emotional response of fear is viewed within a sequential framework, it may have exaggerated effects on all human relationships for the child.

The separation produces a general feeling of instability in all human relationships. It is almost as if no one can be trusted. If the custodial parent was the one who was instrumental in causing the departed parent to leave, what is to prevent his being similarly ejected from the household? The resulting insecurity and instability can indeed be frightening (Gardner, 1976, p. 115).

For the younger child, the fear was a result of seeing the parent's leaving as a rejection or abandonment of him/her (Gardner, 1976, p. 112). The issues regarding abandonment for the adolescent were present due to the critical developmental stage that they were experiencing. However, their issues took different directions. Their fears appeared to have included a question as to whether or not parents would stop loving them (Richards and Willis, 1976, p. 10). This thinking was reflective of the insecurity felt by the child. It logically followed that if parents' love for one another no longer existed, then the love for their children could also cease to exist.

The dilemma was clearly related to the dependency the child had on parents. The additional fear which followed was beyond the uncertainty of love and included questions as to the continuance of basic physical and security needs being met. Being in a position of losing one parent directed thinking about the possibility that she/he may lose the parent with whom they were living. The adolescent was dependent upon this parent. This thinking projected onto the youth's life situation, though confined just to thought, generated the most fear for the adolescent (Richards and Willis, 1976, p. 52).

To date, research has not substantiated the emotional reaction of fear to be of significance for the adolescent of parental marital breakdown. However, it is suspected that their experience of fear is analogous to that of the young child. The issue which generated this emotion was the fear of abandonment and fear of the possible loss of love (Richards and Willis, 1976).

Perception of Self

In North American culture, adolescence is a time for sorting out issues of maturation which specifically revolve around the need to attain autonomy as a distinct individual (MacLennan, 1973, p. 31). It has been recognized that marital breakdown was a conflictual time for parents

(Wallerstein and Kelly, 1977). This circumstance may have presented a conflict situation where the adolescent's need for individuation is juxtapositioned with needs of the parents. This may in part be due to circumstances where:

...parents manifest a desperate need to use the adolescent as an unconscious or conscious extension of themselves in the conflicted relationship with the spouse, creating difficulty in maintaining proper distance and separateness from developing youngsters despite intellectual recognition that the child's burgeoning autonomy needs protection (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1974, p. 484).

This description may also be related to the loyalty conflict situation. The emotional responses that point to the perception of self as having come from a family situation of parental marital breakdown needed to be recognized.

The reactions of an adolescent to his/her family situation were within a social context of how others viewed them. Issues related to autonomy during this developmental stage emphasized the adolescent's significance of self as related to the outside world. The desire to be like others was paramount. Thus, the circumstance of having experienced parental marital breakdown may have contributed to the adolescent's feelings of being different from others. "Many kids feel ashamed after their parents' divorce. They feel different" (Richards and Willis, 1976, p. 135).

The experience of the adolescent of parental marital breakdown must also be related to the developmental view of their attachment to their parents. At this period in their life, it was recognized that:

During adolescence a child's attachment to his parents grows weaker. Other adults may come to assume an importance equal to or greater than that of the parents, and sexual attraction to age-mates begins to extend the picture (Bowlby, 1969, p. 207).

The feeling of shame and that of being different set the adolescent apart or maintained a distance from others. The basis for this being different was rooted in the position that linked themselves with the conflict experienced by the parents. The reality of being from a family where the parents' marriage was broken down was apparently viewed by the adolescent as a source of shame.

Adolescents may have used the viewpoints of others as a barometer from which to judge their own life situation. This has contributed to a deepening of their feelings of inadequacy. What was most pertinent was their views of how "happy" families lived. Given the family stereotype presented by societal institutions and the media, it became clear to them that their family did not fit these models. Though this perception may have been based, at least in part, on fantasy, this did not make their experience less painful. In essence these:

Kids feel as if their parents have failed to live up to the ideal they have in their heads of what a family should be--which includes being happy (Richards & Willis, 1976, p. 74.).

The sense of shame as a result of parental marital breakdown has been a reality for the adolescent to deal with. It is important to note that this feeling could be extended to the point where "some kids are so ashamed of their parents' divorce that they try to hide it (Richards and Willis, 1976, p. 136).

Involvement with other supportive persons was very important during this crisis time. A separation or divorce of parents often also meant a physical move away from their home. This move placed the children in a situation where they had to adjust to different geographical surroundings and also had to establish new friendships. How others responded was critical to these adjustments. Also relevant was how the adolescents viewed themselves as having come from a family of parental marital breakdown.

Some people have behaved in such a way as to prolong this sense of shame. Others expected that these kids would be miserable (Richard and Willis, 1976, p. 135). In essence, the negative feelings which have had influence over the adolescent's sense of self may have resulted from other people who have felt and acted differently toward the divorced family (Richards and Willis, 1976, p. 136).

This situation led to the exaggeration of feelings of shame or embarrassment and possibly those of guilt for the adolescent.

Separation or divorce resulted in a situation where an adversary type of position was taken by family members and others who knew the family. This positioning has often been taken by relatives and former friends of the previously intact family. These responses have also caused, or at least contributed to, the pain of isolation experienced by the adolescent of parental marital breakdown.

The other situation which contributed to feelings of discomfort or, for some, instability, occurred when parents began to date. The immediate questions that arose were directed towards the adolescent's security. One would naturally wonder what the introduction of strangers into, particularly the custodial, parent's life, would mean. Underlying were possible questions the youth had regarding her/his parent's sexuality.

These issues, and specifically the ones involved in the adolescent's security, may have presented a threat in which their life was no longer predictable. At the very least, feelings of uncomfortableness arose when parents started to date (Richards and Willis, 1976, p. 114).

Of much more dramatic proportions for the adolescent was the loneliness that they faced when parents went

out into the world in order to get their own personal needs met (Richards and Willis, 1976, p. 133). This particular situation presented another example of a juxtaposition of the needs of the adolescents and those of their parents. The resolution of this dilemma was apparently multi-faceted in that it occurred over time and had the adolescent moving into a world apart from parents where their own life had to be developed (Richards and Willis, 1976, p. 133). However, this solution was not a viable one for all adolescents of parental marital breakdown. Evidence to the contrary was provided through research in that:

We were struck as well by the high incidence of intense loneliness that we observed in 27 percent of the children (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980, p. 70).

The adolescent from a family of parental marital breakdown did have emotional issues to resolve that were particularly related to his/her family situation. How others felt and acted towards them influenced their own perception of themselves and their family. The solution or resolution was rooted in the individual's ability to move into a new type of life with the establishment of new friendships and the adjustment to an unfamiliar geographic area. Though these adjustments were possible for these adolescents, for some, the intense feeling of loneliness continued as a reality for many years after the separation or divorce (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980).

Concern Over Family Finance

Within the diversity of issues which the adolescent faced through parental marital breakdown, family finances appeared to have been one of great significance. This issue was linked to the uncertainty that the adolescent experienced. The insecurity on an emotional level became exaggerated through the importance placed on family finances.

Ackerman's (1972) experience with families of marital breakdown led him to conclude that:

In the worst cases, the exploitation of the teenager gets linked up with a perpetual war about how the monies of the family are going to be divided (Milgrim, 1972, p. 40).

The importance of this issue was further evidenced in research:

One interesting observation was the often unrealistic concern about finances seen predominantly in those adolescents functioning reasonably well. Because money was one of the most common battlegrounds between divorcing parents many of the children and adolescents became "money-wise" somewhat prematurely (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1974, p. 489).

This observation was contrasted by the eighteen month follow-up survey which specified that the adolescents in the study were more realistic in their demands for money. That conclusion was that:

In general, the divorce appeared to create a more mature attitude toward financial matters in the long range, despite the initial anxiety and anger about being deprived (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1974, p. 490).

Thus, the concern over family finances existed as a concrete issue of parental conflict. The resolution of conflict in this one area was linked to the adolescent's adjustment to their changed life situation as well as the overall resolution of differences that existed between their parents.

Social Work Intervention

Indications in the literature of social work involvement or intervention with children of parental marital breakdown was that this is a relatively new concept. This area of intervention has developed as a result of a variety of perceptions regarding the needs of those children. The formulation of intervention concepts and procedures was based on the theoretical understanding of how these children's emotional needs could be met. Given the preliminary stage at which the general theory base existed, the development of intervention theory was also at a beginning state. Therefore, a review of the intervention concepts with adolescents of parental marital breakdown began with the compilation of ideas as to what these children needed. The steps involved in the assessment of these children required definition. Another aspect most pertinent for this researcher was the role of teachers' play with children of parental marital breakdown.

Another concept critical to this study was the formulation of what was understood when one compared short term or brief intervention with these children as opposed to long term involvement with them.

Germane to the discussion of interventive concepts are the examples of what has actually been done as well as the results of such involvement. The final overview of concepts to be reviewed were those which led to the framework from which came the plan for the groups of adolescents to be involved in this project.

Assessment of Children

What has been formulated as a list of needs for children of parental marital breakdown is indeed general and yet extensive. The primary emotional needs were believed to be:

The need for ongoing accurate and age-appropriate information about the parents' divorce; the need for a stable environment and predictable family routines; the need to mourn the loss of the parental pair; the need to maintain emotional ties with both parents and develop a meaningful relationship with each individual parent as opposed to the parental pair; the need for emotional security and a sense of self-worth; and the need to express and deal with a variety of emotional reactions brought on by the divorce process (that is, sadness, denial, guilt, anger and so on)(Woody, 1978, p. 531).

Given this context in which emotional needs were placed, the translation of the need assessment into an appropriate plan for intervention was possible. The

planned intervention must be responsive to these identified needs. To enable this, Wallerstein and Kelly (1977) authored a systematized approach where they constructed five steps in an assessment process.

The first step involved finding out what was the child's understanding of the parents' divorce. The second step was to determine what was the child's affective response to this situation. The third step reviewed the child's defense system. The fourth step observed the pervasiveness or spread of the child's responses. The fifth and final step looked at new behaviors or the appearance of new symptoms in the child (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1977, pp. 25-26).

One of the concerns for these children, identified through observations, was that most often the parents had a preoccupation with their own needs that blocked them from being sensitive to their children's needs.

Therefore, when one reviewed the supportive people in the child's world, a critical person involved was their teacher in the school. Most important in the position of his/her role in the child's life was the recognition that:

Teachers became a central stable figure in the lives of several children in the months following the separation; in some cases the only stable figure in these children's environment (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1977, p. 28).

The teacher's involvement with their students who

have experienced parental marital breakdown is of tremendous importance. Given additional information of the needs of these children, and an understanding of how to intervene, the teachers could then be of more effective support. While their role is circumscribed through the limitations placed on them in their employment, given more information, they are better able to support the children who experience this crisis (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980).

Professional intervention through trained practitioners in psychology or social work was viewed as important, particularly for the children in late latency and adolescence, in order to:

Validate their reality testing by discussing with someone outside of the family the various details of the separation and divorce (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1977, p. 36).

It was further observed by Wallerstein and Kelly (1977) that these children obtained observable relief through brief intervention.

Intervention Through the Use of Groups

Three types of group intervention with children of parental marital breakdown all reported in the literature. The first approach was a structural one where sessions were pre-planned. A project of this type of intervention was reported by Wilkinson and Black (1977).

They placed children of divorce in small groups. They viewed their groups as developmental, or of support to the child's emotional development. The program consisted of eight group meetings. Each group session was pre-planned and had a high degree of structured activities, thus eliminating the possibility of much unstructured conversation during group meetings. The thrust of the program was to assist the children in the recognition that the divorce was a situation that occurred between parents. The other direction of this program was to assist the children to understand that the experience of parental marital breakdown was one which others had to face and deal with too. Due to the shared experience it was believed that a great amount of social learning was accomplished through this program (Wilkinson and Black, 1977, pp. 205-212).

One significant result reported through this program was that of thirty-two respondents, "80% of the children said that they had learned about other people's feelings as well as their own" (Wilkinson and Black, 1977, p. 212).

It is apparent that for those preadolescent children, relief came from having shared feelings with others who had also experienced the breakdown of their parents' marriage (Wilkinson and Black, 1977).

Another group program (Robson, 1979) for adolescents of parental marital breakdown was initiated in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Robson met with twenty-eight adolescents, all of whom had experienced parental marital breakdown. These adolescents' experiences were compiled and recorded in My Parents Are Divorced Too. It provided accounts of the painful experiences as relayed by the adolescents during group discussions. Her presentation provided a graphic portrayal of these children's emotional issues. It clearly substantiated that parental marital breakdown led to extended emotional pain for their adolescent children. The emotional issues reported were similar to those documented by other writings on the subject. However, an additional contribution of this work was the individuals' accounts of their own life situations which enabled the reader to understand in a more real or experiential way what had occurred.

Another approach to groups for children of parental marital breakdown were the self-help groups established by adolescents in a high school setting. These groups were devised by a high school counselor who recognized that there were a number of students of parental marital breakdown in his school. The group program was called "The Divorced Kids Group" and it met during lunch break at school. It was led by adolescents who had

completed a credit course on peer group counselling. This self-help group was a newly devised program and results on its significance were not available. However, it did receive newspaper and television coverage (O'Reilly, 1979, p. 15).

The Socialized Work Group Theoretical Framework Utilized In This Research Project

Introduction

The following section will outline the theories of group work practice utilized in the formation of the groups for this research project. The concepts were taken from the writings of accepted experts in the field of social work group practice. The blend of their thoughts on practice represented a foundation from which the groups in this research project were planned and completed.

There are four sections that describe the concepts utilized in this project. The first section will deal with why this author chose group work as the mode of involvement.

The Use of Groups with Adolescents as the Chosen Mode of Treatment

There are a variety of models that describe how adolescents are helped through their involvement in a

group. For most adolescents, a small group situation can help them to define themselves in relation to others. In a very real way, a group may serve as a feedback situation where ideas and behaviors are tested. Some of the known benefits derived from a group are:

It helps the members gain a better perspective on themselves and their problems by demonstrating that others have similar difficulties and by allowing them to share their concerns with one another....

The group also enables its members to engage in reality testing in a relatively safe setting....

The uncertain client may also gain needed support from the group....

The pressure of the group may also be an impetus to the client who might otherwise fail to do something constructive about his difficulties (Lewis, 1970, pp. 122-123).

Thus, a group can provide an impetus for change. Specifically, for the adolescent, a group may be viewed as a small arena of social relationships. It is in this setting that the adolescent may experience profound insight and change in his/her life situation.

In essence:

Change is achieved when the individual gains a new perspective on himself and his world. He may feel differently about himself and learn new skills in expressing himself and coping with his world through new experiences or through increased understanding of himself and his environment (MacLennan, 1972, pp. 345-346).

The dynamics or inter-personal relationships that develop in the group can provide the necessary support and strength required for a different view of their life situation. It begins with the very necessary step

of helping the adolescent to determine his/her identity as an individual. The process in a group with others:

Offers them a chance to see themselves as their peers see them and not just as they distort themselves; it offers the opportunity to come to realistic grips with "Who am I?" (Brandes & Gardner, 1973, p. 157).

With an emergent and renewed identity within the circumstances in their life, the adolescent experiences autonomy from the situations that previously caused much personal pain. In addition, the aspect of personal responsibility unfolds as a reality with which the adolescent has to deal. The choice to accept this obligation is an individual decision as the group:

Reflects some possibilities for the adolescent's increased autonomy and self-esteem with some responsibility for himself (Sugar, 1972, p. 90).

This altered view is of vital importance for the adolescents whose parents have separated or divorced. Many changes have occurred in their lives. Some of these changes include a move from the family home and leaving familiar geographical surroundings and friends. Relationships with parents and other family members have change and the adolescents had to sort out their feelings around these differences. Those most able to relate to their situation are peers who had experienced similar adjustments because of parental marital breakdown. Groups provide the setting in which the adolescent is able to

work on his/her individual issues while being with others who can support and confront in order to enable the process of change to occur.

CHAPTER III

Research Design and Methodology

School Setting

The setting chosen by the researcher to conduct the groups for this project was the school in which the children were students.

This setting was chosen due to the fact that the school represents the adolescent's primary contact in society, outside of the family. Attendance at school is required in this province until the youth reaches the age of sixteen. The school is, therefore, the link or the societal community, to which the child is expected to relate.

Also, it was the belief of the researcher that the school might be the primary target of the stress that was expressed by the adolescent. Separation and divorce of parents added a burden to an already demanding transitional life phase for the adolescent. It was thought that the consistent setting within the adolescent's life could also be the place where they experience social work intervention as a helpful support and as a potential means of change.

Permission for Project

The initial support for this project was provided by my field work supervisor, Ruth Ann Schnarr, M.S.W., Chief Social Worker for the Windsor Separate School Board, in September 1978 (interview, September 1978). Further support and permission came from Mr. Donald Diabaldo, Superintendent of Special Services for the Windsor Separate School Board (interview, October 1978). This was received in October and written permission was completed in the form of the Statements of Limitations (Appendix A). Also, the researcher accepted the condition that, if the research is to be done in this setting, the results must be shared with school personnel in the form of a seminar presentation. In addition, a copy of the completed thesis would be presented to the Board.

Research Design of the Project

Classification of the study

Within the classification system developed by Tripodi, Fellin and Meyer (1969) for research, this study meets some of the requirements set for an experimental study. These requirements are as stated:

Empirical methods used in experimentation include the experimental manipulation of one or more independent variables, the use of control groups, and the employment of randomization procedures to assure that the experimental and control groups can be regarded as equivalent (Tripodi, et al, 1969, p. 22).

The sub-type of research is defined as a field experiment. The requirements for a field experiment are set forth as being:

Field experiments are experimental studies which involve the manipulation of one or more independent variables in a natural setting in order to determine causal relationships (Tripodi, et al, 1969, p. 32).

This study may be further described as being a demonstration project whereby:

It also has the purpose of testing an hypothesis of practical concern about the outcome of the study which frequently has implications for social action to be taken by those within the setting or outside of it (Thomas, 1967, p. 391).

Rationale For Conducting the Experimental Study

The purpose for conducting this research project as an experimental study was to assure some degree of external validity. This refers to the ability to generalize the results from this study to other populations (Tripodi, et al, 1969, p. 28).

Through the use of two treatment and one control group this was accomplished. Children in the control group had also experienced the separation or divorce of their parents. These children were not involved in their group until the two treatment groups were completed. Thus the control group served as a control group for the time during which the two treatment groups met. Afterwards, when data had been collected on all three groups (two

treatment, one control), the control group was offered a treatment program with contracts that were established with the individual members. The plan and arrangement for the group experience with the control group went beyond the boundaries of this research project. To collect data of a personal nature and then not involve the control adolescents in a group similar to that provided for the treatment adolescents was viewed as professional negligence by the researcher. Therefore, the researcher made a commitment to proceed with a group for the control group and the plan was similar to that which the treatment group experienced. This group met after the treatment groups were completed.

Population and Sample

The population for this study was comprised of twenty-seven early adolescents in three schools within the Separate Schools in Windsor.

They were boys and girls, aged twelve through fifteen, who had experienced parental separation or divorce.

Random selection into control and treatment groups was not possible. The groups were representative of similar demographic characteristics as those of the treatment adolescents. Selection of the early adolescents was made

possible through information from teachers and principals in the three schools.

Hypothesis

The involvement of early adolescents in a social work directed group improves their perception of self as a child of separation and/or divorce.

Research Questions

1) What are the emotional issues that an early adolescent experiences due to the parents' marital breakdown?

2) Are these issues different for the adolescent of a recent separation and/or divorce as opposed to the adolescent whose parents' marriage broke down years ago?

3) Do both boys and girls experience these emotional issues in a similar way?

Null Hypothesis

The involvement of youth, ages twelve to fifteen, in a group experience led by a professional social worker does not improve the youths' understanding of themselves as a child of separation and/or divorce.

Operational Definitions

Involvement - belonging to or being a member of the group;
talking and listening with other group members

during group meetings; attendance at group meetings; being a part of evaluation procedures.

Early Adolescents - youth aged twelve to fifteen.

Social Work Directed Group - six to nine adolescents meeting together with a professional social worker. The content evolved from a written contract or agreement with each group member.

Improves - positive change from pre to post reports from the participants.

Perception of Self- understanding of self as an adolescent of separated and/or divorced parents.

Separation and/or Divorce - adolescent's parents are no longer living together as a marital couple.

Limitations of This Project

(1) The small number of adolescents prevented testing of some concepts that would be helpful to the knowledge regarding children's reactions to separation and/or divorce.

(2) The school setting may limit generalization of results to other settings.

(3) The selection of participants was not based on a random procedure.

(4) The participants were known to school personnel to be children of separation and/or divorce.

(5) Parents had to give signed approval for their adolescents to be involved in the group.

Criteria for Selection of Settings for Groups

The initial criterion used to involve a particular school as a setting for one of the groups was the receptivity of the principal. In order to form these group sessions in a school, it was imperative that the principal support the program and be willing to provide basic information to this researcher for contacting possible group members. There was also need for flexibility within the school to allow group members to participate in the program during school hours. The provision of an adequate meeting room to ensure privacy was a necessity.

Another criterion of the setting was the need for one of the schools to allow its students to act as a control group for a short period of time during which the treatment groups met.

Permission for Involvement

Other permission for involvement was dependent upon prospective group members and their parents. The members had to be in the stage of early adolescence, aged twelve to fifteen. The parents had to provide background information and sign permission for their child's involvement.

Possible group members completed the Adolescent Questionnaire (Appendix E) prior to involvement.

Referrals from Schools

A number of schools were approached and three were to be selected as the settings for the groups. Referrals to the group were to be made jointly by the principal and teachers.

A third group would serve as the control group while the two treatment groups were being run in schools. The basis for this decision was the fact that this would provide the variety of sample characteristics needed for a good control group situation.

Pre-Group Involvement With Parents and Adolescents

Prior to the involvement of the adolescents in the groups, a series of individual interviews were conducted. This contact was made with school personnel, as discussed earlier in the previous section, potential members and parents.

The next steps involved in the pre-group process were to be a phone call and a personal interview with the parent(s). In order to involve children in the groups, signed parent permission was required.

The information obtained from each adolescent's parent is contained in a questionnaire (Appendix C).

This information provided data on the reasons for the separation or divorce. It also gave the parents' perspectives on their children's reactions to this crisis. Other data obtained through the parents was information about financial pressures that resulted from the separation or divorce.

After the meetings with the parents, the researcher planned to meet with each adolescent. The purpose was for them to complete the Adolescent-Questionnaire (Appendix E), and to discuss the possibility of their involvement in the group.

Design of the Group Sessions

There were three groups (2 treatment, 1 control) of adolescents who had experienced their parents' separation or divorce. The two treatment groups were run simultaneously for eight weekly sessions of one and one half hours. The control group did not meet until the two treatment groups had completed their sessions. Data was collected by the researcher in personal interviews with the participants of all three groups prior to the first meeting of any of the groups. It was then collected again from all members of the three groups immediately after the final meeting of the two treatment groups.

Group Program

The group program was designed to respond to the significant emotional issues indicated by each adolescent on the questionnaire. The questionnaire was devised by the researcher and reflects her perception of the opinions of current research and practice knowledge. From the responses of the adolescents, it was clear to the researcher that many of the emotional issues for these adolescents were covered in the questionnaire. Therefore, the researcher believed that there was a strong basis of similar issues to be discussed in the group.

Group Formation

The formation of the groups for adolescents of parental marital breakdown could have followed the programs that had been previously attempted (Black, 1977; Robson, 1979). The direction for program development for the groups of this research project differed, however, from that taken by others involved in providing groups for children of separation or divorce.

The program planning for this research project's groups was formulated according to theory provided by social work theorists who have developed models or frameworks for groups. The substance of the program was related to the important emotional responses that the

adolescent answered when she/he completed their initial questionnaire (Appendix E).

Their responses became the basis upon which they contracted to be involved in the group. In essence, their answers were their reasons for participation in a group where others had experienced similar emotional issues due to their parents' marital breakdown.

Contract

The emphasis on particular emotional issues was different for each individual. However, the emotional content received through the questionnaires formed a contract for each individual's involvement in the group. From the beginning, and prior to the first meeting as a group, there were clear reasons and expectations for the group members' participation. Another term for this process may be the preliminary contract whereby it was:

An extended effort to clear expectations and may be used to draw prospective clients closer to the point where they are ready to be committed to the treatment process (Douglas, 1976, p. 61).

Also, any type of therapeutic situation can pose a threat or heighten the anxiety level of the client group, particularly during the initial introductory period. This fear will continue unless the orientation to a variety of elements within the group are dealt with in a forthright and expedient way.

Prospective members know why the group is being established, what its purposes are, how it will be conducted, who will be the leader, what the group will demand of the members, where it will take place, under what auspices, at what times, and what the ground rules will be. They should be encouraged to reflect on why they should be included and to formulate what they expect to obtain from the experience (MacLennan & Felsenfeld, 1968, p. 77).

All of this introductory information must be clearly understood by prospective members in order to ensure their contract or commitment to the group prior to its first meeting.

The Group Work Theoretical Construct

The emphasis of programming for the groups was therapeutic in nature as opposed to a pre-planned structural didactic approach that other groups for children of divorce had employed (Wilkinson and Black, 1977). Rather than the other approaches previously reported, the direction for the groups in this project was based on the phases of group work as presented by Schwartz (1971). Within this construct, there are four phases which were termed "phases of work."

The first phase was essentially the preparatory stage termed the "tuning in" phase where "the worker readies himself to enter the process, to move into the group experience as a professional helping person" (Schwartz, 1971, p. 13). In this beginning stage, the work must be completed prior to the first group

meeting. This work includes arrangements such as the establishment of the physical setting or meeting room. Other preparatory work includes all of the individual interviews with prospective members for the group. This pre-meeting work is essential to the therapeutic work of which a group is capable. Without it, the leader cannot plan appropriately for the group situation that can best meet the needs of the members.

The second phase has been termed the "beginnings stage" (Schwartz, 1971, p. 15). At this time, the group meets together to form its initial relationship. Goals that have been formulated are shared. Thus, the purpose for the group is clarified and members make the initial adjustments necessary in order for movement to occur towards a stage where more meaningful inter-relationships are developed.

The third phase is termed the "work" phase (Schwartz, 1971, p. 16). During this critical stage, the group focuses on the purposes upon which the group was formed. This is the time during which the group members engage themselves and each other in order to express feelings and resolve experiences or change behaviors that are related to having committed themselves to involvement in the group.

The fourth and final phase is the "period of

transitions and endings" (Schwartz, 1971, p. 17). Time is spent during the last few meetings to help the group members prepare for the end of the group meetings. It is during this time that the group is given the opportunity to discuss what has been accomplished through the group. Also to be discussed are the issues that remain unresolved or unworked during a particular group. The feelings about the impending separation from the group must also be discussed during the last phase of the meetings. Most important, is the recognition by group members of what the group has meant to them as individuals as well as how they have been helpful to other members.

This stage represents a separation from others with whom personal information has been shared. With preparation, this separation can be dealt with effectively where the members leave with clear knowledge of what they have gained and learned through this group experience.

CHAPTER IV

Research Findings

Introduction

There are seven sections in this chapter. The first section describes the plans and arrangements made for this research project that were completed after permission from the Windsor Separate School Board was received and prior to the first meetings of the groups. The plans and implementation of the group programs are discussed in section two.

The analysis of the data is described in the next five sections of the chapter. The demographic material, presented first, is followed by a discussion of the emotional issues significant to the adolescents in the treatment and control groups. This data, taken from the Adolescent Questionnaire (Appendix E) served as the basis for the pre group and post group examination. A report of the frequency of the answers is followed by a discussion of those issues which showed a statistical significance. A comparison of this research project's findings with other research is then discussed.

The results of the t test regarding overall scores of the group members follow and the chapter closes with the data obtained from the individual group members.

Pre-Group Planning and Arrangements

Pre-Group Meetings with School Personnel

The first step in planning for the groups was a meeting with the principal of each school. The meetings consisted of the researcher sharing the proposed plan to involve early adolescents of parental marital breakdown in a group. The type of group proposed was one for open discussion and interaction, with all areas of concern a possibility. It was important that the Principal have a clear understanding of this type of group prior to making a commitment for such a project in the school. After the endorsement, the researcher outlined a design for obtaining basic information such as the child's and the parents' names, addresses and phone numbers (Appendix B).

The principal's approval was required for the group participants to be released during school hours for their group. In addition, the use of a meeting room that would not be interrupted for the one and one-half hours was necessary.

A subsequent meeting with the classroom teacher of each of the group members was arranged to inform them of the group program and to confirm the arrangements for

the group. In most cases, the teachers made special arrangements, which included changing their teaching schedules to ensure the group member would not miss particular educational material important to them.

The researcher approached eight schools for this project. In each of the schools, the principal desired the program; five of the eight schools were not able to meet the requirements. In the three accepted schools, one insisted in sending a letter to the members' parents asking for permission for the researcher to contact them to discuss the program. The principal in this school recognized that he would have enough students for several of these groups in his school. The return rate from the parents of possible group members was 50 per cent of the early adolescents in that school whose parents were separated and/or divorced. Personal contact by phone was made possible through the receipt of the necessary information in the other two schools. The researcher arranged for a home visit through this phone contact with the parents.

Although this planning and meeting process with school personnel required much time on the part of this researcher, the results indicated that it was of value. The researcher found the school personnel to be very supportive, helpful and flexible throughout the time

during which the groups met. General feedback of a non-identifiable nature was provided to them and it is the belief of this researcher that a mutual respect and understanding developed between herself and the school personnel as professionals.

The presentation of a clear plan and the overall positive relationship and cooperative work situation that developed between school personnel and this researcher ensured that the school setting was a good one for the groups to be conducted.

Pre-Group Meetings with Parents

There were, following the letter or phone contact, a number of possible ways that could have been utilized in order to contact parents. The purpose of the parents' meeting was threefold. The first was to inform them of the discussion type group program where emotional issues related to the separation and/or divorce would be discussed. The second purpose was to obtain their written permission allowing their child to be involved in the group (Appendix D). The third purpose was to obtain descriptive information regarding themselves, their child, and their marital breakdown (Appendix C).

The importance of this personal contact with the parents was that they had an opportunity to meet the

researcher and discuss the purposes and program of the groups. Also, the researcher was concerned about possible unresolved feelings of guilt and denial, or both, that the separation or divorce may have caused for them and their children. It was believed by the researcher that this information would be provided through interviews as opposed to any other means of obtaining information.

It is important to note that no parent of the 28 contacted refused my request for this home interview. However, one parent refused permission for the child to participate in the group.

The home visit was for one and a half to two hours. After introductions and an explanation by the researcher about her interest in working with children of separation and divorce, the emotional issues were also explained to them. The parents were asked to share some information (Appendix C) with her about the circumstances and results of their marital breakdown. The researcher was genuinely surprised by these parents' willingness to share with virtually a stranger. The control group members' parents were told that their children would serve as a control for a time, but that they would also be involved in the group program upon completion of the experimental groups. It was the researcher's opinion that the personal contact with the parents resulted in both the permission

being granted and later, the adolescents' readiness for involvement in the group. The parents were interviewed prior to any contact with the adolescents. Despite the value of the parent contact, it is possible that it may have had an effect on the interview, and later, with the adolescent. However, the actual effect was not known.

The descriptive information obtained by the parents assisted the researcher in knowing the family situations of the adolescents in this project (Appendix C and Table 1).

Description of the Participants

From the information received from the parents (Table 1, p. 63-5), of the 27 participants, the majority or 74 per cent of the adolescents in this research project were between the ages of twelve to thirteen and 26 per cent were aged fourteen to fifteen.

In relation to their birth position within their families, 37 per cent were first born children. For 48 per cent, the separation had occurred at least five years ago. The separation had occurred between two to three years ago for 22 per cent. For the rest of those involved in the sample, their parents' separation occurred between one month to two years, or up to four and five years ago.

Most of the adolescents in this study, 67 per cent or two thirds, had experienced separation of parents previous

TABLE I

Information Provided By Parents

	Treatment Group One		Treatment Group Two		Control Group		Total Sample	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Age:								
12-13 years	6	75	8	89	6	60	20	74.0
14-15 years	2	25	1	11	4	40	7	26.0
Birth Order:								
1st	3	38	4	45	3	30	10	37.0
Middle	2	25	2	22	4	40	8	29.6
Last	3	37	2	22	3	30	8	29.6
Only Child			1	11				
Years Since Separation:								
0-1 yr.			1	11	1	10	2	7.4
up to 2 yrs.			1	11	1	10	2	7.4
up to 3 yrs.	2	25	3	34	1	10	6	22.2
up to 4 yrs.			2	22			2	7.4
up to 5 yrs.			1	11	1	10	2	7.4
5 yrs. plus	6	75	1	11	6	60	13	48.1
Previous Marital Separations:								
Yes	6	75	5	56	7	70	18	66.7
No	2	25	4	44	3	30	9	33.3

TABLE I - continued

Information Provided By Parents

	Treatment Group One		Treatment Group Two		Control Group		Total Sample	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Primary Reason for Separation:								
Alcoholism	3	38	4	45	5	50	12	44.0
Irresponsibility	4	50	2	22	2	20	8	30.0
Unfaithful Spouse	1	12	2	22	2	20	5	19.0
Money			1	11			1	4.0
Not Getting Along					1	10	1	4.0
Visiting:								
Yes: Weekly	1	12	3	33	2	20	6	22.0
Monthly	2	25	3	33			5	19.0
BiMonthly					1	10	1	4.0
Sporadic Yearly	2	25	3	34	4	40	9	33.0
No	3	38			3	30	6	22.0
Adolescent's Relationships:								
Mother-positive	8	100	6	67	10	100	24	88.9
-negative			3	33			3	11.1
Father-positive	1	12			1	10	2	7.4
-negative	7	88	9	100	9	90	25	92.6

TABLE I - continued

Information Provided By Parents

	Treatment Group One		Treatment Group Two		Control Group		Total Sample	
	N	%	N	T	N	%	N	%
Professional Counselling:								
Yes	5	62	6	67	2	20	13	48.0
No	3	38	3	33	8	80	14	52.0
Financial Difficulties:								
Yes	7	88	6	67	6	60	19	70.4
No	1	12	3	33	4	40	8	29.6
Remarriage:								
Yes					1	10	1	3.7
No	8	100	9	100	9	90	26	96.3

N = 27

to the final one. This may account for their need to discuss loyalty conflicts during the group. For 44 per cent, the primary reason for the marital breakdown was the alcoholism of the husband. It is therefore understandable that most of the adolescents had a need to discuss alcoholism and how it had effected them emotionally. Another 30 per cent was attributed to his lack of responsibility. Money difficulties and the couple not getting along were reported to account for the separation by 4 per cent each.

For 33 per cent, or one third, of the adolescents, visits with their fathers were on a sporadic or yearly basis or they had no contact at all. Another one fourth, 22 per cent, had weekly contact with their fathers. Continued and regular contact with both parents was found to be very important in Wallerstein and Kelly's study (1980). Monthly visits occurred for 19 per cent and bi-monthly contact occurred for 4 per cent of the participants in this research study. No visiting or contact with their fathers occurred for 22 per cent. The lack of contact with fathers was viewed as rejection. For many, they needed an opportunity to discuss and share with others how difficult this had been for them. With regard to how the informants, or mothers, saw their relationship with their adolescent, 89 per cent reported a positive one. This statistic is in direct opposition to the informants'

reports of their former spouse's relationship with the adolescent, which 93 per cent reported the relationship as negative.

Of all the families in this study, over half reported that they had not been involved in any form of counselling. For those who had reported involvement, counselling had been on a very sporadic basis.

Financial difficulties occurred for 70 per cent of the families after the separation occurred. This was not the case for 30 per cent of the families. Most of the group participants felt a strong responsibility to their family, and did not want to further burden, particularly their mother, with requests for money.

Remarriage had occurred for only one family in this study.

Individual Meetings with the Participants

The researcher met with each prospective group member at the school, prior to the first group meeting. The purpose of this meeting was to have him/her complete the Adolescent Questionnaire (Appendix E). The procedure was to give the adolescent the questionnaire, first reviewing the instructions for completing the form. Then the researcher left the room and asked that the adolescent open the door when they were finished filling out the questionnaire. The researcher returned to the room and

discussed with the adolescent his/her answers to the questionnaire and the important issues for that person, and the possibility of his/her continued interest in being a member of a group with others who had experienced their parents' marital breakdown. All of the adolescents interviewed stated that they wanted to be involved in the group in their school.

The adolescents were told that the purpose of the group was to discuss with others the emotional issues that they experienced. These group meetings were on a weekly basis for one and one-half hours and at the same time and day for eight sessions. The expectation that they would come to each session, bring their concerns to the group, and be involved by either listening or talking, was also clarified at this point.

The researcher was surprised that, beyond a few basic inquiries, the group participants had no questions about being involved in this personal discussion type of group.

The emotional issues that appeared through their answers on the Adolescent Questionnaire became the reasons for their involvement in the group. Each prospective member agreed that these were to be discussed with the group when the individual felt comfortable and able to do so. Each member's specific emotional issues was his/her contract or

reason for involvement in the group. These issues were written for each individual participant.

After the group meetings were completed, the researcher met with each group member in order to have them complete the Adolescent Questionnaire (Appendix E) again. Also, every member was asked what she/he received from being involved in the group (Appendix M). These meetings were an opportunity for the researcher to say good-bye to the members on an individual basis and thank them for sharing their thoughts and experiences with the others. They were difficult for the researcher because most of the members talked about how they missed the group and thanked her for having involved them in the experience. These meetings occurred within a week after the last group session.

Group Program

Implementation of Plan

The initial planning for the groups involved the pre-group involvement. This stage followed the requirements for the preparatory work for groups as described by Schwartz (1971), and has already been described in previous sections of this thesis.

Plans for the first three group sessions were made prior to the first group meetings. Structured

sessions were planned for the first three sessions to ensure a good beginning stage for the groups. These structured sessions were pre-planned by the researcher to ensure that particular relevant material would be discussed during these meetings. It also provided an opportunity for group participants to feel comfortable about talking in the group.

An integral part of the planning was a strong emphasis that group process, or the groups' abilities to be therapeutic agents, was viewed as essential. More specifically:

The most challenging new element in the group situation is the possibility of releasing the therapeutic potential of the group itself. Group therapy, and not individual therapy in a group, is the goal. If the therapist is skillful, the group itself becomes a therapeutic agent and gathers momentum of its own with therapeutic consequences clearly greater than would result from the efforts of the therapist alone (Hobbs, 1951, p. 305).

The emphasis of programming for the groups was therapeutic in nature as opposed to a pre-planned structural didactic approach that other groups for children of divorce had employed (Wilkinson and Black, 1977). This meant that the researcher wanted to provide a group situation where the participants would discuss the emotional issues or feelings that were important to them. The researcher would help to direct some of the discussion, ensuring the inclusion of all participants. It was

recognized that the discussion-type of group would be a new experience for the participants. Through the use of the group, participants did feel free to discuss with others what their experience of parental marital breakdown had been. The group had tremendous therapeutic impact on individual members because it was no longer necessary to keep their issues of concern secret. Rather they shared these experiences and the hardship felt. The burden was no longer as painful when they learned others had also experienced similarly.

The members also learned that their feelings were legitimate responses to their situations. Much discussion centered on how feelings could be expressed in ways which were appropriate and not hurtful to others. This was particularly true for the expression of anger, an emotion many participants had felt. The participants continued to remark, on their Post Meeting Reaction Forms (Appendix G), that the group was helpful for them. To know that others had felt the same way they had, and had experienced similar difficult situations, was supportive.

The Group Meetings

At the initial meeting, in order to introduce the group members and have them interact immediately, the researcher paired each group member with another whom they did not know very well. The pair exchanged personal

information about themselves and their interests. Each member in the pair had to then introduce his/her partner to the group. This accomplished immediate discussion for members in the group. It also served to alleviate the initial tension experienced in this new situation.

Each member had the important emotional issues that were written at the time of his/her individual meeting. For the next part of the first session, each group member voluntarily shared his/her issues with the group. In each group, remarks were made that the issues were similar for others in the group.

In the second meeting, the plans for the groups became individualized due to different needs. One of the groups was ready to proceed into discussion sessions without the entire session being pre-planned. The other group required a more highly structured second session before being able to be involved in more self-directed discussion sessions.

Treatment Group B was involved in an inner and outer circle exercise. During this exercise the inner group talked with one another while the outer group observed and wrote their observations. The content of this session was how members were helping or hindering the group discussions. These observations were shared by each member in the outer circle. The circles then switched roles so

that all members received feedback on their involvement in the group, as well as observing others in interaction.

The purpose of this exercise was to help the group members to become aware of how others viewed their contribution in the group. This exercise was introduced at this time because the researcher believed that this group would have difficulty in discussions without such an experience.

For the second session of treatment Group A, the researcher followed a plan which was to show the film, My Dad's New Wife. The group then discussed the film's content as it related to their own situation. Thus this group entered the "work" phase (Schwartz, 1971, p. 16) at this point.

For the third session the treatment Group B saw the film, My Dad's New Wife, and discussed its contents as to similarities and differences to themselves. They entered the "work" phase during this session (Schwartz, 1971, p. 16). Treatment Group A proceeded into the discussion of feelings (Appendix F) exercise. This same feelings exercise was utilized in the fourth session for treatment Group B.

After Group A's structured sessions, comprised of three sessions, and four sessions for Group B, both groups entered, the following weeks, into discussions around the emotional issues that had been previously identified.

For each group, the direction of the discussion was different. However, the issues which had significance were readily discussed.

In order to facilitate the plan for the groups, that ensured they would proceed according to the needs of the individuals involved, the researcher had each member complete, after every session, the Group Evaluation Form (Appendix G). This provided a concrete means for the researcher to determine the direction for the issues that were discussed.

The main issues were the loyalty conflicts they experienced when they attempted to maintain a relationship with both parents. Many expressed anger towards parents, siblings and relatives. For the majority, the need to express this anger had gone unmet and they had not talked about it.

Their concerns about family finances continued and had been a real source of embarrassment for most participants. Another issue of concern was their parents' abuse of their use of alcohol, and what it was like for them to cope with this in their family.

All of these issues were important ones to the group participants. For most, they shared these issues with others in the group. This sharing was of some help to them. Also during the meetings, the researcher not

only assisted with the discussions, but also helped the group to review alternative ways to handle their feelings and life situations, ways new to them. This was viewed by the researcher to be of central importance to helping the members to grow. When appropriate, the researcher would share her own feelings and experiences so that the group members would feel comfortable in sharing.

From the third last session onward, the researcher continued to remind the members that the group would be ending. This allowed for the discussion of issues not only to be more focussed but the members were more specific about those issues most important to them.

The termination phase (Schwartz, 1971) was a difficult one during which the members wanted the meetings to continue. In the final meeting, the group members summarized what their involvement in the group had meant.

The researcher pointed out that they had experienced separation in their lives and now they faced another such experience. This particular experience, separation from the group, was different in that they were able to discuss, recognize and share their feelings about such an ending of relationships. It also served the members in enabling them to focus on what the group experience had done for them.

The groups proceeded through their various phases of development. The researcher felt that the experience

had been a valuable learning one for all the group members and for herself.

Frequency of Responses on Adolescent Questionnaire

Introduction

The researcher developed the Adolescent Questionnaire (Appendix E) by using the emotional issues that became evident in the literature. This questionnaire was based on a five point Likert scale. It was administered to the adolescents in the treatment and control groups both before and after the group program and served as the pre and post test for these groups.

The Responses Indicating Feelings of Insecurity

There were five questions from the Adolescent Questionnaire (Appendix E) which indicated feelings of insecurity about themselves, their parents, and their family. From the responses (Appendix H), some members in the treatment group, from pre to post scores, experienced a reduction of "feeling different from the other kids," "wondering if parents would stop loving them," and "feeling disappointed that their family was not a happy one." The level of "trying to hide their parents' separation" remained the same for the treatment group. There was a slight increase of "feeling scared that they may lose the parent with whom they live" between the pre and post scores.

For the control group, there was a reduction in the areas of "feeling scared that they might lose the parent with whom they lived," "wondering if parents would stop loving them," and "feeling disappointed that their family was not a happy one." The issue of "feeling different from other kids" remained the same. "Trying to hide the separation" increased slightly for this group.

The Responses Indicating Feelings of Sadness, Guilt and Loneliness

From the responses of the treatment group (Appendix I) regarding feelings of "sadness" and "guilt," some felt less sad and less guilty about having said anything that would have caused the separation or divorce from pre to post scores. On their responses to "feeling lonely" and "having done anything to have caused the marital breakdown," there was a slight increase of these feelings.

For the control group (Appendix I) feelings of "loneliness" and "sadness" decreased slightly. Feelings that they "said something to have caused the separation or divorce" increased slightly, whereas feelings that "they did something to cause it" remained the same.

The Responses Indicating Feelings of Anger

From the responses for the treatment group, the

scores regarding feelings of "anger when parents depend on them" and feelings of "anger towards themselves" remained the same (Appendix J). This is in marked contrast to the other feelings of anger, all of which increased after they had been involved in the groups. There is no known explanation for this result.

For the control group (Appendix J), their feelings of anger decreased on every score except for one. The general question of feeling "angry towards parents for having broken up the family" remained the same on both scores. Possibly their responses on the questionnaire and involvement in the pre group interview made it legitimate to know anger is an okay feeling and can be discussed.

The Responses For Issues Over Which They Had No Control

"Feelings of hurt because some relatives were no longer as involved with their family" and "feeling uncomfortable about parents' dating" increased (Appendix K) somewhat for the treatment group. Their feelings of "concern over family finances" and "disloyalty when they talk to one parent" decreased.

For the control group, their feelings of "hurt because of a change in the involvement of relatives" increased. Their feelings of "concern over family finances" decreased. In regard to their feeling "uncomfortable

about parents' dating" and "disloyalty to one parent when they talk with the other," pre and post scores remained the same.

The Ability to Talk With Others

Some members in the treatment group talked less "about the parents' separation or divorce" (Appendix L). They also had lower scores on "people understanding their feelings" after the group. Their post scores increased for "talking about the marital breakdown with people whom they trust" and regard as "close friends."

The post scores for the control group indicated that some talked less "about the separation or divorce with others" and "with close friends." For some, they talked more "with people whom they trust" and felt that "people understood their feelings" more at the time they were completing the post questionnaire.

Crosstabulations on Responses

Crosstabulations on Treatment Group Responses

Pre-Group Responses

The responses by the treatment group prior to the group program indicated that those whose parents had separated between three and four years were experiencing sadness to a significant degree (Table 2). There was a decrease in the anger felt towards others as the

TABLE 2

Crosstabulations on Treatment Group Responses

Crosstabulation	Pre-Group Scores		Post-Group Scores	
	Statistic	Level of Significance	Statistic	Level of Significance
Years since Separation				
Sad About Loss	Chi Square	.01		
Angry With Others	Chi Square	.05		
Talk With Others	Chi Square	.01		
	Kendall's Tau B	.01		
	Pearson's R	.01		
Talk When Trust Others	Pearson's R	.02		
Talk With Friends	Chi Square	.04		
Feeling Different			Kendall's Tau	.05
			Pearson's R.	.04
			Chi Square	.05
Relatives Are Different			Chi Square	.05
Concern With Finances			Kendall's Tau	.04
			Pearson's R	.04
Sex				
Try to Hide	Pearson's R.	.03		
Uncomfortable About Dating	Kendall's Tau	.04		
	Pearson's R.	.04		

years since the separation or divorce increased. This decreased level was statistically significant (Table 2). For these children, the related issues of talking with others, with people whom they trusted, and to friends, about the separation or divorce was not likely if the marital breakdown had occurred up to two years ago.

The crosstabulation on sex by variables proved to be interesting as the boys were less likely than the girls to hide the separation or divorce. They were also less likely to feel uncomfortable about their parents' dating. These boys did not feel disloyalty towards one parent when they talked about their feelings with the other parent. Nor were they as angry as were the girls when one parent depended upon them. The boys were more likely to feel concerned over family finances.

Post Group Responses

For the treatment children, after the group program, there were some issues that were significant on crosstabulation. There were fewer issues for the participants that remained significant and the post-group issues of significance were different from the pre-group ones (Table 2).

On the issue of "feeling different from other children" as the number of years since the separation or divorce increased, there was a reduction in significance

of this issue. This was also true for their "concern over relatives who were not as involved with them anymore" since the marital breakdown. "Concern over finances" diminished as the number of years since divorce increased.

In other crosstabulation regarding sex, it was observed that the boys were less likely than were the girls to be concerned about the possibility of "losing the parent with whom they were now living," further indicated by the lessening concern as the years since divorce increased. The issue in which they "did not feel disloyal about talking to the one parent about their feelings" remained the same as reported in the pre-measures. Again, boys were not as concerned about the issue of disloyalty as were the girls in this study.

Crosstabulation on Control Group Responses

Pre-Group Responses

On the pre-group responses, the control group were less likely to "hide their parents' marital breakdown" as the years increased since the divorce.

There was an evident need to "talk with others" and "talk with friends about the separation or divorce." This need heightened as the years since the separation or divorce increased (Table 3).

TABLE 3

Crosstabulations on Control Group Responses

Crosstabulation	Pre-Group Scores		Post-Group Scores	
	Statistic	Level of Significance	Statistic	Level of Significance
Years since Separation				
Try to Hide	Pearson's R.	.05		
Talk With Others	Chi Square	.04		
Talk With Friends	Chi Square	.04		
	Pearson's R.	.01		
Feeling Different			Pearson's R.	.03
Uncomfortable About Dating			Chi Square	.01
Disloyalty			Chi Square	.02
			Pearson's R.	.006
Sex				
Try to Hide			Pearson's R.	.05

Post-Group Responses

The number of items demonstrating significance on cross tabulation data differed from the pre-group responses for the control group on the post-group responses.

The issue regarding the "need to talk about the separation or divorce" was no longer significant. "Feeling different from others" decreased as the years since the marital breakdown increased. Also "feelings of disloyalty towards one parent if they spoke to the other about their feelings" decreased proportionately to the number of years since the separation or divorce. The feeling of "being uncomfortable with parents' dating" was statistically significant to the control group.

The girls in the control group were less likely to "hide the marital breakdown" than were the boys (Table 3).

Results of t Test of Significance on Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this study was that the adolescent's perception of self as a child of separation or divorce would improve after involvement in the treatment group. The instrument used to determine the results was the Adolescent Questionnaire (Appendix E). This questionnaire was administered to all treatment and control group members both before and after the group program. All

questions were on a Likert scale comprised of five points. It was the belief of the researcher that, after the group program, the members' scores would increase over their pre-group scores. This increase in scores would mean that their feelings around the parental marital breakdown had decreased in intensity, while their ability to talk about it and be understood would increase. Also, through involvement in the group, it was thought that the overall scores of the adolescents from the treatment groups would increase significantly over the scores for the adolescents in the control group.

In order to calculate whether the hypothesis could be accepted or rejected, the researcher utilized the one way t test. This test calculated the difference between the two means for the two groups. The level required to accept that the difference was significant at the .05 level was not attained. Therefore, group treatment did not provide a significant difference.

What Treatment Group Members Received Through Involvement in the Group

From what was reported to the researcher, by individual members during their termination interview (Appendix M) it was evident that the group experience had been helpful. What was relayed by many of the adolescents was

that they felt they could discuss their feelings of sadness, anger and disappointment and that these feelings were accepted by the others. Another result of a similar nature was that the members no longer felt alone in the experience of their parents' marital breakdown. This feeling has been described as having universality in the literature. It is one of the curative factors which Yalom (1975) believes is of vital importance if the group treatment is to be effective. He stated that:

In the therapy group, especially in the early stages, the disconfirmation of their feelings of uniqueness is a powerful source of relief. After hearing other members disclose concerns similar to their own, patients report feeling more in touch with the world and describe the process as a "welcome to the human race" experience (Yalom, 1975, pp. 7-8).

Another factor reported by group members was that the others in the group were helpful to them. This was also given credibility in the literature and has been termed altruism.

When patients look back over the course of therapy, they invariably credit other members as having been important in their improvement; if not for deliberate support and advice, then at least for having been there and permitting the patient to learn about himself from their relationship (Yalom, 1975, p. 13).

While the researcher believed that the group could be the means through which members received help, it was gratifying to see that these results did occur.

Summary and Discussion of Research Findings

The frequency data demonstrated a diversity in the emotional issues as experienced by the treatment and control groups in this study. Through further examination and crosstabulation of the data, patterns in the responses became evident.

The Need to Talk About the Separation or Divorce

On the pre-group measures, the need to talk about the separation surfaced for both treatment and control groups. For the treatment group, what was important was that for those whose parents' separation occurred two years ago or less, they did not talk to others in general, be they people whom they trusted or friends. For those whose situation was that the separation occurred two years ago or more, they were able to talk about it. This same pattern emerged for the control group, they felt a need to talk about the separation with others in general and with friends. This need increased proportionately with the increase in years since the separation.

On the post group measures, the need to talk had diminished for both the treatment and control groups. From the responses of the individual members of the treatment group (Appendix M) it is evident that what most

received from the group was the ability to talk about the separation and their feelings with others who had similar experiences. This may account for why the need to talk did not show up as being significant on the post-group scores. With these same needs, the control group's need to talk was also not statistically significant on the post scores.

The researcher met with all control group members prior to the first group meeting for the treatment group. During this meeting the control adolescents completed the Adolescent Questionnaire. The researcher did not believe that these brief conversations would have been of importance to the control group's responses on the post measures. However, these factors appeared to have diminished in significance and the researcher attributes this to the pre-group conversations. One of the difficulties in this design was the concern of the researcher and the school personnel that the control group not be placed in a psychologically vulnerable state by completing a questionnaire on emotional issues and then waiting for a period of time before being involved in a treatment group situation.

Issues of Importance for the Treatment Group

There were a few issues of importance to the treatment group. The issue of feeling sad about the separation or divorce was of significance for the treatment

group particularly for those where the marital breakdown occurred between three and four years ago. This finding is similar to the loneliness felt by the adolescents at the five year post measures in the Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) study.

The level of anger experienced by the treatment group members decreased significantly as the years since the separation increased. The feeling of anger has been discussed at length in the literature. Wallerstein and Kelly (1977) reported that the majority of adolescents in their study resumed their lives in a more measured pace at their eighteen month follow up. This may account for the diminished level of anger over time that was reported by the adolescents in this research study.

The treatment group reported an inability to talk about the separation or divorce where it occurred within the time of two years or less. This finding has also been substantiated through the work of Wallerstein and Kelly (1977). This occurred when they reported that many of their adolescents could not talk about the separation until the researchers saw these children eighteen months later for follow up.

The boys of the treatment group, according to pre-group measures were less likely to hide the marital breakdown than were the girls. Also, the boys felt less

uncomfortable about their parents' dating others. They did not feel disloyal to one parent when they discussed their feelings with the other parent. It was also found that these boys did not feel as angry when parents depended on them.

It is difficult to account for these differences as they have not been previously reported in the literature. These results may point to either a denial of their emotions by the boys in the study or they may point out that early adolescent girls are more aware or more vulnerable emotionally to the separation or divorce of their parents. A further factor which may account for the discrepancy in results would be that parents depend emotionally more on their girls during the crisis of marital breakdown. Thus the girls would experience the emotional issues in a heightened way. The difficulty in attempting to find an answer for these results is that they have not been previously reported and thus answers are speculative.

On a concrete concern over family finances, the treatment boys in this study felt more concerned than did the girls. Family finances is an area that has been well documented in the literature. Yet the difference felt between the boys and girls has not been pointed to in the literature to date.

On the post measures, fewer emotional issues were

of significance to the treatment adolescents. The concerns that demonstrated significance were important because they diminished proportionately to the increase in years since the marital breakdown. These concerns were feeling different from others, change in relationship with some relatives and concern over family finances. No single concern remained significant because it increased from the pre and post scores for the treatment group. There were some differences between the boys and girls in this study on the post scores. These differences were that the boys felt less concern about the possible loss of the custodial parent than did the girls. Also, the issue of feeling disloyal when talking with one parent about feelings remained at the same level of significance. This meant that the boys felt less concerned about this issue as did the girls in the study.

Overall, due to the reduction of significant issues for the treatment group, it is possible that the group program had influence over these results.

Issues of Importance for the Control Group

For the control group, on the pre-group scores, one significant issue was that they were less likely to hide the marital breakdown as the years since the separation increased. On the post scores, this was significant for the control group and more significant for the girls

of this group. This result may be related to those of Wallerstein and Kelly (1974) where the adolescents could not discuss the pain they felt about the marital breakdown until these researchers saw them during an eighteen month follow up.

This group's need to talk was reported earlier in this section because of its similarity to the experience of the treatment group.

On the post scores, the significant issues included a decrease in this group's feeling of being different from other kids. Also, the issue of feeling disloyal when discussing feelings with one parent diminished proportionately to the increased length of time since the separation or divorce. The issue of feeling uncomfortable about parents' dating continued to be of significance to the members of the control group.

The results of these differences which existed for the control group are not documented in the current literature. These differences could point to the need for us to acknowledge that emotional issues are experienced according to the individual's life circumstances and cannot be generalized for all adolescents who have experienced the separation or divorce of their parents.

It is important to note that some of the results of this study concur with the results of previous research

findings and the beliefs in the literature based on practice with adolescent clients. However, from the results of this study the overview of the emotional issues that adolescents experience due to parental marital breakdown may not be experienced in the universal way as is presented in current literature.

The Impact of the Group Experience on the Participant

The treatment group provided a therapeutic situation where the members could discuss their feelings and experience the acceptance from others who had also experienced their parents' marital breakdown. "I'm not the only one that went through it," is a good illustration that it was helpful to realize that he/she was not alone in this experience.

"I can talk more with people about my feelings," was one of the participant's response when asked what he got out of the group. Some of the participants were able to discuss how their feelings had changed through the group experience. For many, their feelings of anger had changed. Sometimes these feelings had been directed at her parents. "I'm able to talk with my parents more now. I realize that it's better that they're divorced. I'm not so angry anymore," was one example.

The element of blaming one parent for the

separation or divorce was experienced by some of the participants. An opportunity to discuss this had been helpful. "I'm not feeling angry with my dad anymore," is a good example that this feeling had diminished.

Anger also was directed towards the family in which they were living. Illustrations of how these feelings changed were expressed thus: "I don't get half as mad at my brother and sister anymore," and "I now find it easier to cope with my mom and sisters." It is possible that this insight occurred due to the participant's involvement in a situation where the expression of a variety of feelings was permitted and accepted. Once they had been able to recognize and express their feelings, the participants were capable of understanding their families. They no longer needed to blame the family for their hurt which was previously expressed through anger or sadness. One member said he benefited most from: "the feelings, because sometimes I was sad about the separation and now it doesn't hurt."

There was a recognition and acceptance of the member's experiences and the feelings associated with their family situation. This group helped to meet some of the participants' needs. As a result of these meetings, their emotional needs were clarified and their ability to differentiate themselves from the parental conflict

was increased. Thus the loyalty bonds which brought conflict were less anxiety provoking than they had previously experienced them. "When my mom and dad are talking, I don't get as upset as I used to."

These results support the need for adolescent group programs of this type. The researcher's belief that the school is a good setting for such a program was supported in the results of this study.

It was also evident that a further investigation and more work must be done to assist children who experience such a crisis in their life.

This study has demonstrated that adolescents can be helped through participation in a group designed for discussion of the emotional issues they experienced through parental marital breakdown.

As professionals, this study has also pointed to a beginning stage of our understanding of these children's needs and the effect of intervention with them. This work has just begun and it is hoped by this researcher that it will be continued by researchers and those who intervene in the lives of the children of separation and/or divorce.

Recommendations

The researcher has recognized the tremendous need

for knowledge in the area of the effects of parental marital breakdown on children. From her experience through this research project, it is evident that the emotional issues of anger, loyalty conflicts, and concern over family finances appeared to be those most significant to the participants in these groups. It is also evident that while the number of years since the marital breakdown lessened the intensity of some feelings, it also increased the need to discuss those emotional issues most important to the adolescents.

If the researcher was to plan for future research, it would concentrate on a limited number of emotional issues and a plan similar to this research in the form of a discussion group.

There is clear substantiation that further work both in the areas of research and intervention must be done if children who experience this crisis in their life are to be helped.

It is recommended that:

For Teachers - That information about the effects of parental marital breakdown be provided to them. A clear understanding is needed regarding how they can be helpful to children who experience parental marital breakdown.

For Professionals, Legal, Psychology, Social Work

- That the legal, social work and psychology professions help families to be aware of the effects of the marital breakdown on the children in order to help minimize this trauma for them.

- That the members of these professions work in a co-operative manner to maximize the possibility for joint custody of children whose parents are involved in the divorce process.

For Families - That a family attend a court clinic to sort out the emotional issues surrounding this life crisis.

Social Work Profession - That intervention programs for families, and specific ones for the children, be developed to enable members to work through the emotional difficulties that accompany a marital breakdown.

- That research be continued to determine the emotional needs of children who experience parental marital breakdown.

- That the development and refinement of intervention techniques with children and families of marital breakdown be continued.

Research - That a longitudinal study be undertaken to determine the developmental, emotional, and social

effects of parental marital breakdown on children.

Groups - That the use of groups with children of separation and/or divorce be recognized as an effective mode of intervention: groups provide a therapeutic experience because the members have a capacity to give and receive support from others who have also experienced their parents' marital breakdown.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Statements of Limitations

STATEMENTS OF LIMITATIONS

I agree to protect the anonymity of the students and institutions involved both in formally published reports of the research, contact with the news media, personal conversations, or other forms of communication.

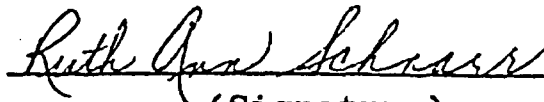
I do not intend to employ procedures which unduly or unnecessarily invade the privacy of a student or his family or disturb or threaten their integrity.

I shall supply at least one copy of my research project to the Board and its administrative staff.



(Researcher's Signature)

1. Researcher's Supervisor


(Signature)

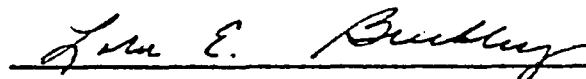
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(Date)

2. Research Coordinator

(Signature)

(Date)

3. Faculty Research Advisor


(Signature)

1978 11 27

APPENDIX B

Information From Principal

INFORMATION FROM PRINCIPALCHILD'S NAME:SIBLINGS (Names and ages)ADDRESS:PHONE NO:GRADE:SCHOOL:TEACHER:PRINCIPAL:HAVE THE PARENTS OF THIS CHILD SEPARATED?WHAT GIVES YOU THE IMPRESSION THAT THE CHILD'S PARENTS ARE SEPARATED?

APPENDIX C

Information From Parents

o

INFORMATION FROM PARENTS

PARENT'S NAME:

ADOLESCENT'S NAME:

ADOLESCENT'S DATE OF BIRTH:

ADDRESS:

PHONE NO:

SCHOOL:

GRADE:

TEACHER:

PRINCIPAL:

SIBLINGS (Names and Ages):

- 2 -

WHICH PARENT IS CHILD LIVING WITH NOW?

HAS CHILD LIVED WITH ANYONE ELSE?

YES _____ NO _____

WHO? _____

FOR HOW LONG? _____

WHEN DID SEPARATION OCCUR?

HAD THERE BEEN PREVIOUS SEPARATIONS?

IF YES, HOW MANY SEPARATIONS OCCURRED?

WAS THERE A TRIAL SEPARATION?

IF YES, WHAT RESULTED FROM THE TRIAL SEPARATION?

HOW LONG WAS THE DISCUSSION OF SEPARATION PRIOR TO THE ACTUAL SEPARATION
WHERE ONE PARENT MOVED AWAY FROM THE OTHER?

WHY DID THE SEPARATION OR DIVORCE OCCUR?

HOW DID EACH FAMILY MEMBER REACT TO THE SEPARATION OR DIVORCE?

DOES THIS CHILD VISIT THE OTHER PARENT?

HOW OFTEN?

HOW DO THEY REACT?

WHAT IS YOUR PERCEPTION OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THIS CHILD?

WHAT IS YOUR PERCEPTION OF YOUR FORMER SPOUSE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THIS CHILD?

DID THE FAMILY (or any part of the family) RECEIVE PROFESSIONAL COUNSELLING?

WHEN DID THIS OCCUR?

HOW LONG WERE THEY INVOLVED IN COUNSELLING?

HAS THIS SEPARATION OR DIVORCE BROUGHT FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES TO THE FAMILY?

HOW SERIOUS ARE THESE?

HAS THE PRESENT FAMILY BEEN RE-CONSTITUTED WITH ANOTHER FAMILY THROUGH RE-MARRIAGE?

APPENDIX D

Parent Consent Form

SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT

PARENT CONSENT FORM

for

INVOLVEMENT OF STUDENT SOCIAL WORKER

Dear

I would like to involve your son/daughter in a group with other children of their age. The purpose of the group is to help the children to understand and deal with the emotional issues they face. The emphasis of the program will be to review specifically those emotional issues related to the separation or divorce of their parents.

We know that where these issues are faced and dealt with the children are then better able to resolve this crisis in their life.

Before beginning the group, I require your permission. Please sign the form below and return this form to the school. If you have any questions, please contact me at the school.

As an M.S.W. student Social Worker, I am in the Master of Social Work year of University training. I worked as a professional worker four and a half years after receiving my Bachelor of Social Work degree from the University. I am supervised by Ruth Ann Schnarr, Chief Social Worker of the Social Work Department at the Windsor Separate School Board and Dr. Lola Beth Buckley of the University of Windsor. I am confident that this group experience can be helpful to your child.

Again, if you have any questions, please contact me at the school.

Sincerely,

Janet Dennis, B.S.W.,
M.S.W. Social Work Student

I/We hereby grant permission to the student Social Worker under the supervision of the Social Work Department of the Windsor Separate School Board to work with my son/daughter:

Signed:

(Parent or Parents)

DATE: _____

APPENDIX E

Adolescent Questionnaire

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

- 1) Answer the questions honestly, indicating how you feel.
- 2) Place a check mark in one of the slots like this:



- 3) Answer all questions.

Thank You.

Adolescent Questionnaire

___ 1. When I think about my parents' separation or divorce I feel lonely.

Never	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
-------	-----------	-------	------------	--------

___ 2. I try to hide my parents' separation or divorce.

Never	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
-------	-----------	-------	------------	--------

___ 3. I feel different from other kids because of my parents' separation or divorce.

Never	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
-------	-----------	-------	------------	--------

___ 4. When I think about my parents' separation or divorce, I ask myself if I said anything that caused it?

Never	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
-------	-----------	-------	------------	--------

___ 5. I talk about my parents' separation or divorce with others.

Never	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
-------	-----------	-------	------------	--------

(1)

___ 6. I feel concerned about our family finances.

Never	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
-------	-----------	-------	------------	--------

___ 7. I am scared that I might lose the parent with whom I am living.

Never	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
-------	-----------	-------	------------	--------

___ 8. I talk about my parents' separation or divorce with people whom I trust.

Never	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
-------	-----------	-------	------------	--------

___ 9. When I think about my parents' separation or divorce, I feel sad because I have lost one of my parents.

Never	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
-------	-----------	-------	------------	--------

___ 10. I feel hurt because some of my relatives are not as involved with our family anymore.

Never	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
-------	-----------	-------	------------	--------

___ 11. People understand my feelings.

Never	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
-------	-----------	-------	------------	--------

___12. I wonder if my parents will stop loving me.

Never	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always

___13. I feel disappointed that our family is not a happy one.

Never	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always

___14. I talk about my parents' separation or divorce with close friends.

Never	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always

___15. I feel embarrassment because of my parents' separation or divorce.

Never	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always

___16. I feel disappointed in myself.

Never	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always

___17. When I think about my parents' separation or divorce I wonder if I did anything that caused it.

Never	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always

___18. I feel uncomfortable about my parents dating other people.

Never	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
-------	-----------	-------	------------	--------

___19. Ever since my parents have been separated or divorced:

a) I feel anger towards my parents for breaking up our family.

Never	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
-------	-----------	-------	------------	--------

b) I feel angry when one of my parents depend on me.

Never	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
-------	-----------	-------	------------	--------

c) I feel angry with others.

Never	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
-------	-----------	-------	------------	--------

d) I feel angry with myself.

Never	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
-------	-----------	-------	------------	--------

e) I feel angry with one of my parents for breaking up our family.

Never	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
-------	-----------	-------	------------	--------

f) I feel angry with both of my parents for breaking up our family.

Never	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
-------	-----------	-------	------------	--------

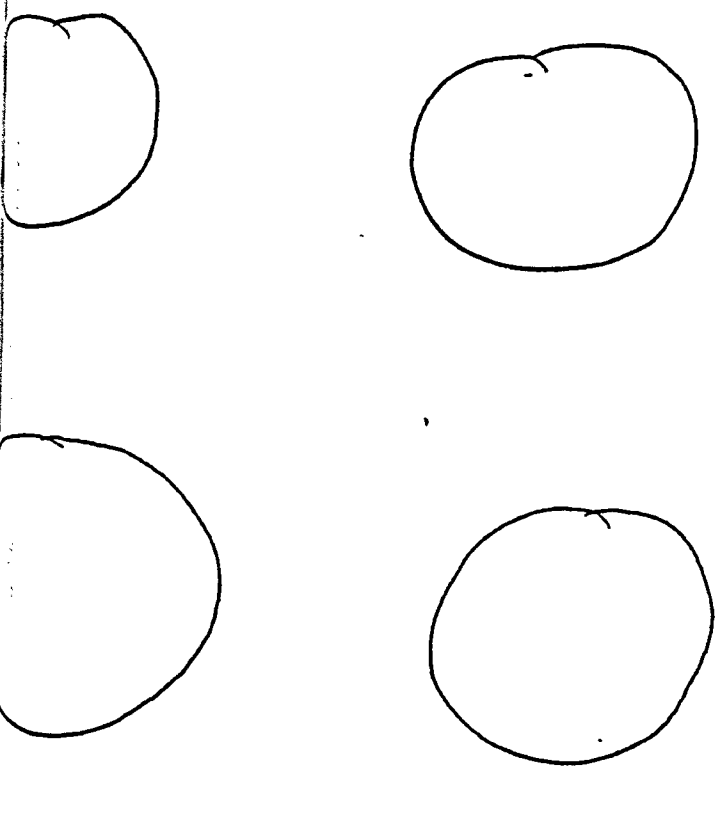
___20. I feel disloyal to one of my parents if I talk
about my feelings to my other parent.

|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
Never Sometimes Often Very Often Always

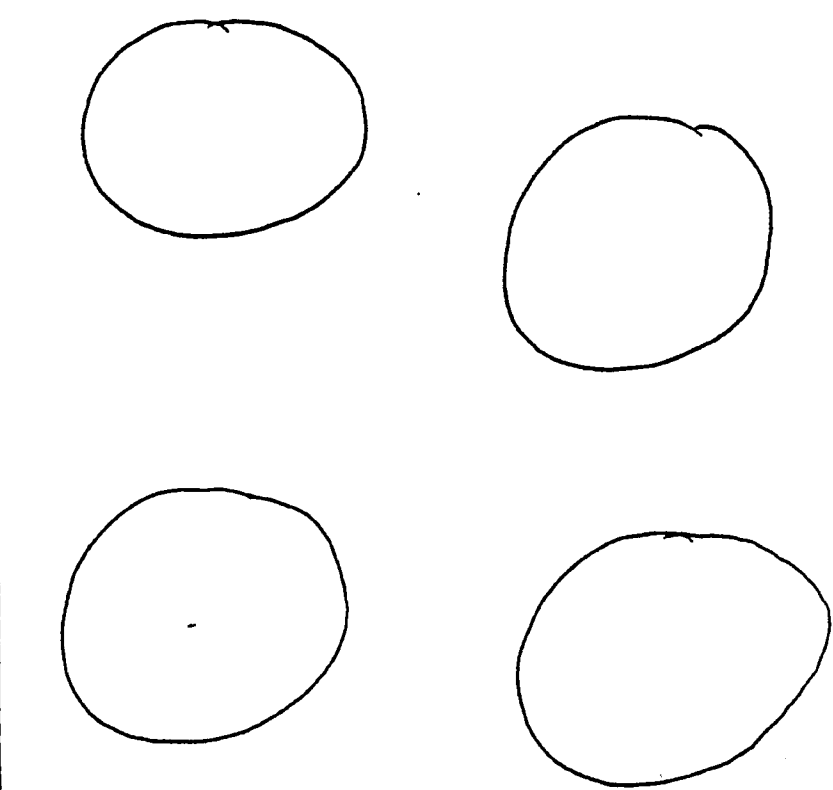
APPENDIX F

Feelings Exercise

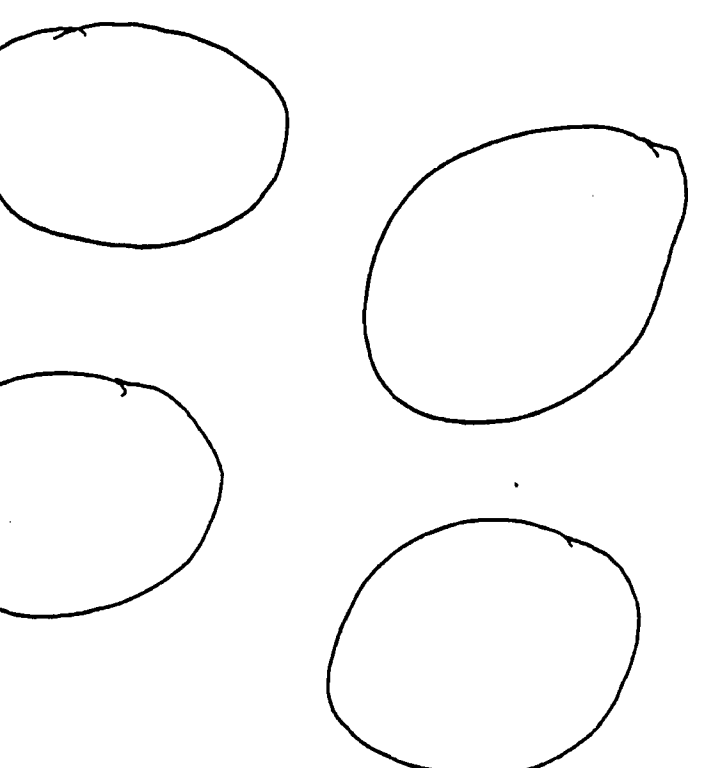
feelings that I showed
the time of my parent's
separation or divorce:



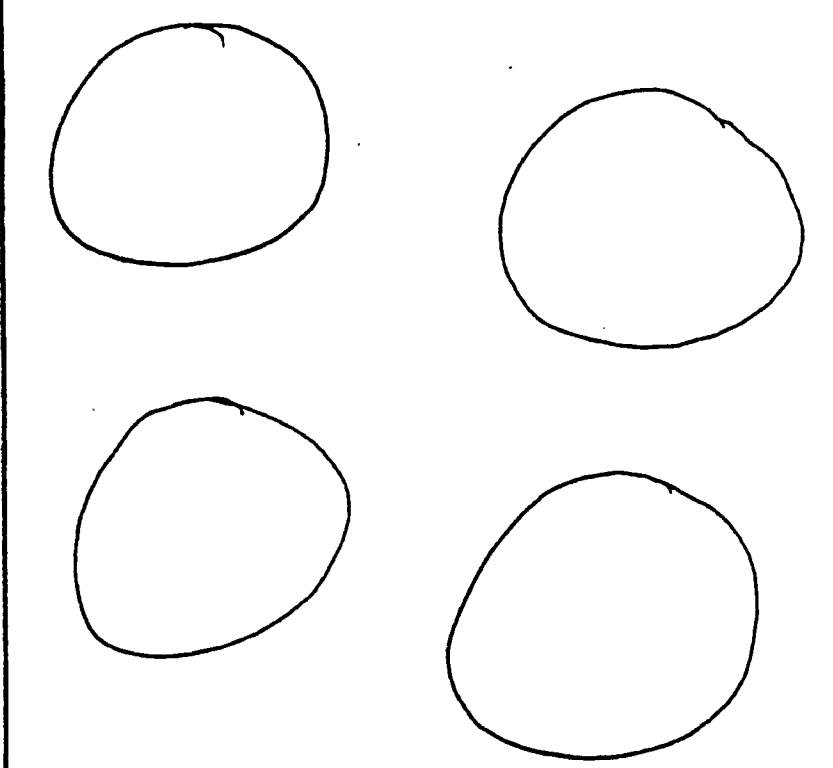
The feelings that I did
not show at the time
of my parent's separation
or divorce.



feelings that I now
show about my parent's
separation or divorce.



The feelings that I do
not show now about
my parent's separation
or divorce.



APPENDIX G

Group Evaluation Form

GROUP EVALUATION

Name _____ GROUP # _____ Date _____

1. How well did the meeting go today? (circle one)

it was very mostly partly not so partly mostly very
great good good good good bad bad bad

2. What did you like about the meeting today?

3. What would have made the meeting better?

4. What was the worst thing about the meeting today?

5. What did you get out of coming today?

6. The main thing(s) we focused on in this discussion was (were) _____

7. What did you learn about yourself during this meeting? _____

8. What do you think the group needs to discuss next? _____

9. Is there anything else that you would like to say? _____

APPENDIX H

The Frequency of Responses on Adolescent
Questionnaire Indicating Feelings of
Insecurity

On a Scale of Five, The Frequency of Responses on Adolescent
Questionnaire Indicating Feelings of Insecurity

	Treatment Group		Control Group	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
I try to hide my parents' separation or divorce	4.4	4.4	4.3	4.
I feel different from other kids because of my parents' separation or divorce	3.8	4.1	4.7	4.7
I am scared that I might lose the parent with whom I am living	3.5	3.4	4.	4.2
I wonder if my parents will stop loving me	4.3	4.5	4.8	4.9
I feel disappointed that our family is not a happy one	4.	.41	3.5	4.2
I feel embarrassment because of my parents' separation or divorce	4.5	4.6	4.9	4.8
I feel disappointed in myself	4.3	4.6	4.5	4.7

APPENDIX I

The Frequency of Responses on Adolescent
Questionnaire Indicating Feelings of
Sadness, Guilt and Loneliness

The Frequency of Responses on Adolescent Questionnaire
Indicating Feelings of Sadness, Guilt and Loneliness

	Treatment Group		Control Group	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
When I think about my parents' separation or divorce:				
I feel lonely.	4.2	4.1	4.	4.2
I feel sad because I have lost one of my parents.	3.4	3.8	3.7	4.2
I ask myself if I said anything that caused it.	4.5	4.6	4.9	4.8
I wonder if I did anything that caused it.	4.5	4.4	4.8	4.8

o

APPENDIX J

The Frequency of Responses on the Adolescent
Questionnaire Indicating Feelings of
Anger

The Frequency of Responses on Adolescent Questionnaire
Indicating Feelings of Anger

	Treatment Group		Control Group	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Ever since my parents have been separated or divorced:				
a) I feel anger towards my parents for breaking up our family.	4.6	4.4	4.7	4.7
b) I feel angry when one of my parents depend on me	3.9	3.9	4.5	4.7
c) I feel angry with others	4.2	3.9	4.3	4.8
d) I feel angry with myself	4.4	4.4	4.3	4.6
e) I feel angry with one of my parents for breaking up our family.	4.7	4.4	4.6	4.7
f) I feel angry with both of my parents for breaking up our family.	4.8	4.4	4.7	4.9

APPENDIX K

The Frequency of Responses on the Adolescent Questionnaire
For Issues Over Which They Had No Control

The Frequency of Responses on the Adolescent Questionnaire
For Issues Over Which They Had No Control

	Treatment Group		Control Group	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
I feel concerned about our family finances.	2.8	3.2	3.1	3.7
I feel hurt because some of my relatives are not as involved with our family anymore.	4.	3.7	3.2	4.
I feel uncomfortable about my parents dating other people	4.2	4.1	4.1	4.1
I feel disloyal to one of my parents if I talk about my feelings to my other parent.	3.8	3.9	4.2	4.2

APPENDIX L

The Frequency of Responses on the Adolescent Questionnaire
Related to the Ability to Talk With Others

The Frequency of Responses on the Adolescent Questionnaire
Related to the Ability to Talk With Others

	Treatment Group		Control Group	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
I talk about my parents' separation or divorce with others	1.8	2.2	1.9	2.1
I talk about my parents' separation or divorce with people whom I trust	2.7	2.6	2.5	2.4
People understand my feelings	2.8	2.5	3.2	2.9
I talk about my parents' separation or divorce with close friends.	4.5	4.6	4.9	4.8

APPENDIX M

Responses of Individuals in Treatment Groups
When Asked What They Got Out of
Being Involved in the Group

Responses of Individuals in Treatment Group A When Asked
What They Got Out of Being Involved in The Group

1. I can talk more with people about my feelings.
I can understand why they broke up.
More people understood my feelings that were in the group than they did before.
2. I got a lot.
I could talk with more people and be understood.
I don't get half as mad at my brothers and sisters anymore.
3. I understand my mom more than I used to.
Understanding. I now find it easier to cope with my mom and sisters, I know what I'm going through and what they're going through.
I know what other kids feel.
4. The part that we talked about the separation.
The feelings, because sometimes I was sad about the separation and now it doesn't hurt.
5. I'm not scared anymore of the divorce.
6. I think it helped a lot.
It helped me to understand what happened.
I really enjoyed it.
I'm going to miss the group.
7. That I'm not the only one who has the same feelings.
I was able to talk about my parents' divorce.
Some Issues stayed the same, some changed because I didn't feel them as much.

8. A lot of things, because we talked about feelings.
Most of the issues changed since I started the group.
9. That there are other people with the same problems.
I'm not the only one.
There are friends that I can depend on, that can help me.
10. I'm not the only one that went through it.
11. I enjoyed talking about things about the separation.
12. I'm able to talk about it.
13. I'm not feeling angry with my dad anymore.
I'm not angry with anybody because of the divorce,
'cause everybody else has the same thing that I do.
14. When my mom and dad are talking, I don't have to get
as upset as I used to.
I can talk to my mom about not wanting to have my dad
over and she listens.
15. That I talked to the group about my parents.
That I could talk to others about their divorce.
That I could talk about my feelings if I was sad or
happy or anything like that.
16. A lot. When I first went into the group, I thought
that they couldn't help me with my problem. But they
could when I went.
Help with sad feelings about my parents' separation.
Made me feel better than when I first came in.
17. I got to realize that I wasn't the only one with the
problem of the divorce of my parents.
I'm able to talk with my parents more now.
My feelings are changed about one of my parents'
breaking up the family. I realize that its better
that they're divorced.
I'm not so angry anymore.

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