

The Problems of Post Divorce Adjustment

The Problems of Post-Divorce Adjustment

By

Diane Marie Duff

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AUTHOR: Diane M. Duff, B.A. (McMaster University)

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Parents without Partners on post-divorce adjustment.

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## INTRODUCTION

### . Chapter I

The major purpose of this paper is to set forth a tentative plan for research into some of the problems involved in "post-divorce adjustment". We will be especially concerned with the problems of the Canadian divorced mother. We consider the divorced mother because she overwhelmingly receives custody of the children at the time of divorce. However, many of the problems to be discussed are equally relevant to the divorced father if he has custody. Consideration will be given to this special case in the discussion in later chapters.

In March, 1966, an act of the Canadian Parliament set up The Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons on Divorce for the purposes of investigating the need for and of making recommendations about changes in the Canadian divorce legislation. The proceedings of this committee contain repeated references to the unnecessary suffering of Canadians because of outdated divorce restrictions, but who are these people, how are they made to suffer and do they "suffer" any more than their American counterparts? These are some of the questions with which this paper is concerned.

The discussion in Chapter II will be primarily devoted to a presentation of divorce statistics such as age,

number of children, etc. since these characteristics will result in problems of post-divorce adjustment, the increasing divorce rate results in a larger proportion of the population facing these problems we will discuss. Coupled with the increasing divorce rate is the increase in the rate of urbanization resulting in increased problems for the divorced mother; in Chapter II we shall consider some of these problems such as because of urbanization, the divorced mother cannot return to a family farm for subsistence but must seek employment and a place for her and her children to live. This will result in many problems of post-divorce adjustment which we will consider in this Chapter.

Chapter II will also contain a comparison of the Canadian and American divorce and post-divorce data with an attempt at explanation of some of the differences or similarities.

In Chapter III, we will examine Goode's arguments concerning "post-divorce adjustment" and institutions (1956: 213-216). These arguments will be related to Canada and the existence of certain groups such as Parents Without Partners. We will argue that, where formerly remarriage provided the only solution for certain problems faced by the divorced parent, membership in these organizations may now provide an alternative solution and may result in a lower remarriage rate. In this chapter we will also consider some of the

problems faced by the divorced father with a comparison of his problems to those of the divorced mother. Some discussion will be involved with the questions of whether these groups may be serving as lonely-hearts clubs or whether some selection process may be operating in the type of person who eventually becomes a member.

In Chapter IV we will set forth a tentative plan for research into some of the questions arising as a result of the existence of these organizations. This research will include an extensive observation study of the activities of these groups to investigate not only how the groups actually operate but also whether they may be serving as lonely-hearts clubs. We will also suggest a study of past members in the hope that, by studying their reasons for ceasing membership, we will learn if there is a selection process at work and also by studying their remarriage patterns we may be able to answer, partially at least, the "lonely-hearts club" question. Perhaps the most useful part of the research plan we will suggest will be the use of control groups of divorced parents who are not members of any of these groups; the possible results of the comparison of these groups will be discussed in Chapter IV.

## Chapter II

### Socio-Demographic Factors of Divorce

In the United States in 1956, there were 382,000 divorces granted or 230 per 100,000 population (Jacobson, 1959:90) compared to a Canadian total for the same year of 6,002 or 37.3 per 100,000 population which by 1966 had risen to a total of 10,215 or 51 per 100,000 population. (Dominion Bureau of Statistics Daily Bulletin, Thursday, June 29, 1967:5) Who were these thousands of Americans and Canadians, how old were they, how long had they been married, where did they live, how many children did they have? These are some of the questions to be examined in this chapter and the answers will form the basis for a discussion of the problems faced by these people after they have obtained their decrees.

One of the first problems encountered in a discussion of these questions, is the lack of Canadian data. There would seem to be an appalling lack of Canadian research into this area. There is, on the other hand, an abundance of American data that could result in extremely interesting comparisons if Canadian data were available. For this reason, the American statistics will be presented, not for the purpose of comparison, but rather as a basis for speculation about the Canadian divorcee.

DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS:

A. Length of Marriage.

The danger of divorce seems to be greatest in the early years of marriage perhaps, as Landis suggests (1955: 497) because of the problems involved in adjustment to the change of roles from that of bachelor to marital partner. One fifth of all American divorces occur in the period of second to third year of marriage with the highest rate in the third year; in 1953, one-half of those seeking divorce had been married less than six years (Glick, 1957:140). According to Landis, (1955:498), the divorce rate declines after the seventh year of marriage and seems to stay at this lowered level for the duration of the years of marriage.

There are, of course, many explanations for this pattern of early divorce. One important factor is that in the early years there are fewer children so divorce would involve fewer problems such as custody and child support. A second factor may be that in the early stages of a marriage, the female will be young enough to seek or resume employment after a divorce thus reducing the problems of maintenance; added is the third consideration that as a result of early divorce the two people involved will be young enough that

the chances for remarriage are very high.

The decline of divorce rates after about seven years of marriage may be explained by added responsibilities.

After a couple has been married for such a length of time, there will probably be children plus a home usually with a mortgage and jointly held property and/or debts; all of these factors make more difficult the problems of divorce such as custody, maintenance, child support and division of property. A second explanation could arise from the fact that a couple which has survived marriage for a number of years will have adjusted to the problems of "domestic bliss" and should be better able to cope with the problems of marriage than a couple married two or three years. A tentative third explanation could arise from habit; it is often easier to continue with the old and known than it is to change, especially if the change is as costly both economically and personally, as divorce.

B. Age at Divorce.

Since most divorces occur in the early years of marriage, the people involved will be young; Goode cites the statistics that the mean age of women at the time of divorce is 28.2 years and for men the mean age is 28.4 years (1956:40).

In the United States in 1950, the median age at marriage for men was 23.0 years and for females was 20.1 years (Ogburn and Nimkoff, 1955:59), while in 1967 the average age at marriage for Canadian men was 25.4 years and for women was 22.7 years (Canadian Year Book, 1967:269). Since the trend has been towards earlier marriages (Ogburn and Nimkoff, 1955:58-59), it may be assumed that by 1967, the American bride and groom would be even younger than those of 1950; the point to be made is that the Canadian bride and groom will be slightly older than their American counterpart.

If we can assume, and I can find no basis for not doing so, that Canadian divorce also occurs most often in the early years of marriage, then the Canadian divorced male and female will be slightly older than the American.

The young age at divorce has great influence on the problems encountered after divorce. Because the average divorced female is in her twenties, she is able to enter the employment market and thus lessen the problem of economic dependence either on her ex-spouse or on her parents. This will be especially important with the increase in urbanization; the divorced mother does not have an extended family network or family farm to rely on for economic help so she must seek employment.

A second consideration is the effect of age on remarriage. Because the two people will still be young, their chances of remarriage will be very high - a situation that will be considered in greater detail in the next chapter.

C. Children.

The aspect of divorce that perhaps gets the greatest amount of publicity and concern is the children; how often we read of the effects on children of having their home destroyed; do broken homes result in greater delinquency, do children suffer because of the presence of only one parent?

In 1955 in the United States, there were 343,000 children whose homes were broken through divorce (Jacobson, 1959:131) although Glick points out that in a survey taken in twenty-two states, 55 percent of the couples obtaining divorces had no children (1957:140). Jacobson writes that for those divorces involving children, the average rises from 1.3 children in marriages divorced during the first year to 2.5 for marriages divorced in the twentieth year (in Landis, 1952:339). Jacobson further points out that two thirds of the children involved in divorce were under the age of ten (1959: 130). The young age of so many of the children is, of course, explained by the fact that so many divorces occur in the early years of marriage.

In approximately eighty percent of all divorces involving children in the United States, the mother receives the custody of the children; the father is given custody in only about ten percent of the cases (Jacobson, 1959:131). In Goode's sample of 425 divorce cases, custody was given to the mother in 74.8 percent of the cases and to the father in 2.4 percent (1956:311). The reason for this pattern is not merely a judicial bias but rather the belief that children, especially young ones, need the care of a mother more than of a father. This situation does, however, result in many problems such as visiting privileges, collection of child support and adjustment problems for the mother. A detailed analysis of the implications of "post-divorce adjustment" of some of these problems will form the basis for the following chapter.

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS

### A. Education

Kenkel indicates that as education increases, divorce decreases (1960:295). There could be many explanations for this such as the more educated people will be aware of and more willing to use marital counselling services; this

should solve some of the problems in the early stages of their development and so avert divorce. A second explanation could arise from the fact that the more education people have the later age at which they will marry and that marriages undertaken at later ages are less prone to divorce. A third, but perhaps rather dubious, explanation could be that the more educated, the better people will be able to understand and cope with the problems of marriage and parenthood.

When considering the question of the relationship between education and divorce, I must add the rather interesting fact pointed out by Glick that the highest rates of divorce are for women who drop out of high school or college before graduation (1957:154). This relationship could be explained by some personality characteristics that such people have a tendency to quit when "the going gets rough".

B. Class.

Ogburn and Nimkoff state that divorce is more common in the middle class and desertion in the lower class (1955:229). This pattern probably results from the economic expense involved in both divorce and post-divorce costs of child support. The middle class couple will be better able to finance the legal procedures of divorce as well as being in a better position to pay child support after the divorce.

For lower class couples, the legal fees involved in a divorce would be an extreme burden, if not a complete impossibility; this may have prompted the suggestions made to the parliamentary committee on divorce which was later adopted in the final legislation that some form of legal aid should be available to those who wish and are eligible for divorce but who do not have the resources to finance the legal aspects of it. (Proceedings of the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons on Divorce)

A second "attraction" of desertion or separation for the lower class could be the question of maintenance and child support. If a husband walks out on his family, the wife will first of all have to go to the trouble of finding him and then, having done so, she will have to go to court to force him to support any children they may have had. This is usually beyond the financial resources of a lower class woman so the husband escapes the financial responsibility for his children. This does, however, result in great problems for the wife/mother and leads to the pattern of lower class "common-law marriage" as frowned upon by the larger society. In fact, there are an estimated fifty thousand to four hundred thousand "common-law" marriages in Canada (Proceedings of the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons on Divorce, Vol. 16:821).

C. Work Experience.

Women who eventually become divorced have been found to have had more work experience than women who become separated (Glick, 1957:157). Logically, of course, it could be suggested that the more work experience an individual has had, the more easily that individual will be able to obtain employment again. This fact reduces the problem of the economic dependence of the divorced woman; if she is relatively certain of obtaining employment, she will, first of all, be able to finance a divorce and secondly will not be dependent on her ex-spouse for maintenance payments - a fact that may be of crucial importance in Canada where the maintenance orders of the divorce courts of one province are not enforceable in another province if a husband moves and decides not to pay. (Proceedings of the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons on Divorce.)

This higher rate of divorce for employable women could also be explained by the fact that a woman who is relatively sure of her ability to obtain employment will be more independent; by this I mean if she can get work, she does not have to "stick it out" in an unhappy marriage. A woman who may not be able to get a job does not have much of an alternative except to try to make her marriage work.

SOME ISSUES IN CANADIAN DIVORCE

The divorce laws of the ten Canadian provinces are fairly uniform with adultery being the main, and in some provinces the only, ground for divorce; this is in marked contrast to the American situation in which each state has different grounds varying from New York in which divorce was difficult due to the fact that adultery was the only grounds until recent reform to Nevada which has become famous for its easy Reno divorces. This vast difference in divorce laws will probably have a great influence on who divorces.

For the married American, wishing a divorce who does not have sufficient cause in the state in which he or she is resident, a move to an easy divorce state is an ideal solution. Not only will the individual be able to obtain a divorce, but there will be little economic disadvantage since he or she can obtain a job while fulfilling the residence requirement and getting the decree. For the married Canadian wishing a divorce, on the other hand, there is no such easy solution. Because the grounds for divorce are fairly stable from one province to another, there is no advantage to moving. Since that one criterion for divorce in Canada is adultery, there is need to gather evidence to prove that adultery has taken place; the gathering of this evidence usually means the employing of private investigators or the staging of adultery

with a professional co-respondent both of which may become quite costly, especially if the partner seeking the divorce is the wife. Just how important this economic factor may be can be shown by a comparison of the provinces ranked according to the family income and of the provinces ranked according to divorces per 100,000 population.

<u>Province</u>	<u>Family Income \$ (1961)</u>
Ontario	5274.
British Columbia	5184.
Alberta	4985.
Manitoba	4816.
Quebec	4694.
Saskatchewan	4511.
Nova Scotia	3954.
New Brunswick	3718.
Newfoundland	3592.
Prince Edward Island	3335.

(Elkin, 1964:75)

If the provinces are then ranked according to the number of divorces per 100,000 population for the year 1961 the result is the following:

<u>Province</u>	<u>(1961) Divorces per 100,000</u> <u>Population</u>
Ontario	2739
British Columbia	1397

<u>Province</u>	<u>(1961) Divorces per 100,000</u> <u>Population</u>
Alberta	1039
Quebec	348
Manitoba	312
Saskatchewan	251
Nova Scotia	245
New Brunswick	194
Prince Edward Island	8
Newfoundland	6

(Canada Year Book,  
1967:271)

As can be seen, these rankings are exactly the same with the exceptions of Quebec and Newfoundland; the variation in Quebec will be discussed later in this chapter under the question of religion. These two provinces, Quebec and Newfoundland, also present the problem of a lack of divorce courts, a factor which will be discussed later in this paper.

Since Canadian divorce is more costly than American, it will probably tend to be more of a middle class phenomenon in Canada than in the United States; the lower class in Canada just will not be able to finance divorce. This middle class character suggests that the Canadian divorcees will probably be better educated than their American counterparts; as well since they will be better educated, they will probably be slightly older than the American.

Because of the cost involved in Canadian divorce, the length of the marriage will probably be longer than the American. Because divorce is so costly it is not a solution for marital problems that people will quickly grasp at and, having decided to divorce, time will be needed to accumulate the money needed for the divorce. Based on these facts, I would suspect that not only will the length of time from marriage to divorce be longer but that the separation period from time of decision about divorce to actually going to court will be longer for Canadians than for Americans.

This longer duration of marriage in Canada will probably have great significance in the question of the children of divorce. Because the marriage has lasted longer there will probably be proportionately more children involved in divorced families and they will be slightly older than the American children. This possibility means the problems of custody and child-rearing which will be discussed in the following chapter may be of even greater importance for the Canadian divorce scene than they are for the American.

As mentioned above, the Canadian divorcee will probably be slightly older than her American counterpart and so quite possibly could face more difficulties in remarriage. It could be speculated that the Canadian divorcees will have a lower remarriage rate which could be crucial in the discussion

of the problems of post-divorce adjustment which will be presented in the next chapter.

If, as suggested above, divorce is more a middle class phenomenon in Canada and, therefore, the people involved may be better educated, it could be suggested that the Canadian divorced mother will be better able to obtain employment than the American and so will be even less economically dependent on her ex-spouse or family. This independence may be very important for solving certain problems involved in divorce and single-parenthood which will be discussed later.

Having considered the problem of what the characteristics of the Canadian divorcee may be as compared to the American, I would now like to examine some of the factors which may account for the differences in divorce rates for the two countries although the cultures prevalent in the two societies differ very little.

#### IMMIGRATION

According to Jacobson, immigrants have a lower divorce rate than native-borns because of a fear and distrust of the courts as well as the language problem (1959:101). If, then, there is any difference in the rates of immigration to the United States and to Canada, there could be an effect on the

divorce rates. In 1957, 282,000 immigrants arrived in Canada or 1.7 percent of the resident population (Keyfitz in Blishen et al., 1965:28). For the same year the immigrants to the United States equalled 0.17 percent of the resident population (Russett et al., 1964:233). As can be seen the Canadian immigration rate is ten times as high as the American; following from Jacobson's statements, it could be expected, therefore, that Canada would have a lower divorce rate as it, in fact, does.

#### RELIGION

The most important religious influence on divorce is membership in the Roman Catholic Church. The doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church concerning divorce may be summarized by:

"The unity and permanence of marriage are the instructions of God Himself; the state and individuals have no power to tamper with His laws." (O'Mahony, 1959:4)

Because of this teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, a Catholic population or segment of population will have a low divorce rate. In 1957, 36,023,000 citizens of the United States were classified as Roman Catholics, this figure represents 21 percent of the American population (Herberg, 1960:153). This can be contrasted to Canada where in 1961, 8,342,826

people were classified as Roman Catholic, this proportion equalling 45.7 percent of the total Canadian population.

It would be expected that a country such as Canada with a ratio of Roman Catholics approximately twice as high as that of the United States would have a lower divorce rate. I did gain the impression but no actual statistics from the Proceedings of the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons on Divorce that this pattern among the Roman Catholic population gives rise to a high incidence of the "common-law" type of relationship resulting from desertion and separation.

The influence of religion on divorce can be seen if the Canadian provinces are ranked according to the number of divorces and according to the percentage of the population which is Roman Catholic.

<u>Province</u>	<u>No. Roman Catholics</u>	<u>% Roman Catholics</u>
British Columbia	285,184	17.5
Alberta	298,741	22.4
Manitoba	210,871	27.9
Saskatchewan	242,888	26.3
Ontario	1,873,110	30.0
Nova Scotia	260,104	35.3
Newfoundland	163,618	35.7

<u>Province</u>	<u>No. Roman Catholics</u>	<u>% Roman Catholic</u>
Prince Edward Island	48,256	46.1
New Brunswick	310,607	51.9
Quebec	4,635,610	88.1

(Dominion Bureau of Statistics  
Bulletin SP-3, Introduction)

<u>Province</u>	<u>No. Divorces (1963)</u>	<u>Rate per 100,000 Population</u>
Alberta	1,268	90.2
British Columbia	1,516	89.4
Ontario	3,237	50.7
Manitoba	369	33.8
Nova Scotia	271	35.8
Saskatchewan	331	35.5
New Brunswick	172	28.0
Quebec	491	9.0
Prince Edward Island	8	7.5
Newfoundland	8	1.7

(Dominion Bureau of Statistics  
Bulletin, Thursday, June 29, 1967:5)

As can be seen from these tables, there is a tendency for those provinces with a high percentage of Roman Catholics to have a low divorce rate.

URBAN-RURAL POPULATION

Rural populations do have a lower divorce rate than urban populations. Kenkel suggests that this arises from a rural "pronounced taboo against divorce". (1960:298) Ogburn and Nimkoff present the more realistic explanation that farmers make a better adjustment to marriage because the husband and wife will have more in common since they will usually work the farm together (1955:233). A third explanation could arise from the economic factors; a rural family could stand to lose too much in the event of a divorce either because of the fact that the farm would have to be split in accordance with joint property rulings or, even if this does not occur, because there would be a tremendous loss in the "field hands" of the wife and children.

Some of the difference in divorce rates for Canada and the United States could be explained if there were differences in the proportion of the two populations who are classed as rural dwellers. In 1961, 30 percent of the Canadian population was classed as rural (Elkin, 1964:34); in 1960, 30 percent of the American population was classed as rural (Wrong, 1967:96). This would seem to discount the influence of the urban-rural factor on divorce rate but if the Canadian data is broken down provincially the relationship seems clearer.

If the Canadian provinces are ranked according to urban population we have the following.

<u>Province</u>	<u>% Rural</u>	<u>% Urban</u>
Ontario	22.7	77.3
Quebec	25.7	74.3
British Columbia	27.4	72.6
Manitoba	36.1	63.9
Alberta	36.7	63.3
Nova Scotia	45.7	54.3
Newfoundland	49.3	50.7
New Brunswick	53.5	46.5
Saskatchewan	57.0	43.0
Prince Edward Island	67.6	32.4

(Elkin, 1964:28)

If the provinces are then ranked according to the number of divorces granted per 100,000 population in 1967, we have the following.

<u>Province</u>	<u>No. Divorces</u>	<u>Rate per 100,000 Population</u>
British Columbia	1,961	109.6
Alberta	1,348	92.9
Ontario	4,054	60.2

<u>Province</u>	<u>No. Divorces</u>	<u>Rate per 100,000 Population</u>
Manitoba	443	46.0
Nova Scotia	323	42.4
New Brunswick	237	38.0
Saskatchewan	312	32.8
Prince Edward Island	16	14.8
Quebec	226	4.0
Newfoundland	3	0.6

(Canada Year Book, 1967:271)

As can be seen from an examination of these tables, the ranking for urbanization closely corresponds to the ranking according to the divorce ratio with the exceptions of Quebec and Newfoundland. Not only is the divorce rate for Quebec influenced by the religious factor but as well Quebec and Newfoundland do not have divorce courts. A resident of these two provinces who wishes a divorce must take his case to the Canadian Senate in Ottawa; this makes the financing of a divorce case a substantial, if not impossible, burden for many who might otherwise seek a decree.

The low divorce rate in Quebec might further be explained by the fact that a wife in Quebec has no legal claim for maintenance after the granting of the decree, (Report of the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons on Divorce, June 1967:15); this means that if a wife

obtains a divorce in Quebec she will have to be financially independent or dependent on her family.

#### SUMMARY

In this chapter, American statistics on divorce have been presented as a basis for speculation as to the characteristics of Canadian divorcees; speculation was necessary since actual Canadian statistics are not available. Where data was available, an attempt has been made at comparison of the American and Canadian divorce situations. Although this lack of Canadian data has been pointed out several times, it was not meant as a criticism of Canadian sociologists or statisticians; only by being aware of the gaps in their knowledge of Canadian society, can Canadian sociologists and statisticians do meaningful research.

This rather lengthy discussion has been devoted to the characteristics of divorcees such as age, education, etc. because these factors will greatly influence and in many cases create the problems faced after divorce. These problems and their solution will be examined in the next chapter.

## Chapter III

### Theories of Post-Divorce Adjustment

Having examined some of the characteristics of those people who get divorced, consideration will be given to what happens to these people after their divorces and how these characteristics influence their post-divorce occurrences. Jacobson reports that in 1948, one quarter of all brides aged 25 - 29 in the United States had been divorced (1959:72) while in Canada, in 1964, 5,644 out of 138,135 or 4.1 percent of all brides had been previously divorced (Canada Year Book, 1967:269). Not only do divorced persons remarry but they do so within a short period of time after their divorce; one third remarry within a year, one half within two years and two thirds within five years (Jacobson, 1959:69-70).

We may ask why so many people who were unsuccessful in a role would seem to be so eager to resume that role as quickly as possible. Goode attempts an explanation of this phenomenon in a discussion of the institutionalization of post-divorce behaviour and some of the problems connected with this (1956:203-216). Goode's statements will be examined with specific reference to Canada and the potential influence of certain organizations on this phenomenon.

If a discussion is meaningfully to centre on a specific group of people, it should be stipulated exactly who these people are, for this reason, "divorce" will be precisely defined. In Canadian law, divorce is divided into two types: the first, a vinculo matrimonii, is complete dissolution of the marriage relations; the second, a mensa et thoro, is the suspension of the marriage relations (Proceedings of the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons on Divorce:110). This second type is what is usually called legal separation and is the situation when a married couple go into court and agree to live separately with the husband usually paying child support and alimony; under this type of decree, the couple are still married and therefore do not have the privilege of remarrying. The first type of decree is the complete breaking of the marriage relationship or what Kenkel has defined as "the societally sanctioned means of terminating a marriage and redefining the statuses of the couple involved" (1960:287). Under this type of decree, the husband will usually be expected to pay child support and maintenance and the two persons involved will have the privilege of remarrying. It is the people who have obtained this complete decree who will be the group discussed in this paper.

The further distinction should be noted between divorce and annulment. In the event of annulment, the marriage is voided; this means that after an annulment, officially the marriage never occurred. This usually means that the husband is not responsible for maintenance payments and that any children that may have resulted from such a union are considered illegitimate. This paper will not be concerned specifically with those people who have obtained annulments although many of the problems discussed could quite readily be discussed with reference to them.

To recapitulate, "divorce", as it will be discussed in this analysis, is the complete dissolution of the marriage relationship, usually involving maintenance payments and with the privilege of remarriage.

The second definition that should be stipulated, since it will be the prime concern discussed, is "post-divorce adjustment". Goode defines it in the following way:

"The post-divorce adjustment process, then, is one by which a disruption of role sets and patterns, and of existing social relations, is incorporated into the individual's life pattern such that the roles accepted and assigned do not take the prior divorce into account as the primary point of reference."

(1956:19)

Goode uses the term to refer to the process by which the fulfillment of the previous marital role ceases

to be the primary source of identification; this means that the divorced female herself and the others with whom she comes into contact cease thinking of her as someone's ex-wife or the former Mrs. ---- but her primary source of identification becomes mother, female, worker, date, etc. When the term "post-divorce adjustment" is used, it will be in the same general context as Goode used it.

With these definitions in mind, I would like to examine Goode's explanation of the problems facing the divorced parent (primarily the divorced mother) and post-divorce adjustment (1956:203-216).

Goode first considers the problem of role ambiguity for the divorced woman. The accepted role in the Western society is wife/mother or widow/mother but there is no role pattern for mother/not wife. The role of "mother" is comparatively well defined in the Western societies but it assumes there will be present as well the role of "wife" or "widow"; when this is not the case, there is a certain amount of ambiguity resulting in great pressure exerted on the divorced mother to change her roles.

There are two possible solutions according to Goode - the woman can either change her role of "mother" or change her role of "divorcee". To change the first would

involve giving up the custody of her children, a change that would meet with great opposition by the larger society; this opposition arises because the myth of maternal instinct - that every woman wants to and will be a "good" mother - and that there must be something "wrong" with any woman who would voluntarily give up her children. The second solution is to change her role as divorcee and the most acceptable method of doing this is through remarriage. From this it can be seen that, for Goode, the only socially acceptable solution for the role ambiguity of the divorced mother is remarriage.

Certain problems are alleged to arise for children from broken homes. If one reads the Proceedings of the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons on Divorce, one is struck by the number of semi-informed "experts" who claim that homes broken by divorce result in psychologically unhealthy children and increased delinquency. Nye, however, has found that children from divorced homes, while not as well adjusted as children from a happy home, are better adjusted than "children from other broken homes and children from unhappy unbroken homes" (in Sussman, 1963:253). The divorced mother will, however, feel that she should make every effort to establish a happy home for her children and the way to do that is remarry.

Another source of problems for the divorced mother is visiting privileges. As stated in the last chapter, the children are overwhelmingly given into the custody of the mother but the father usually retains some visiting privileges. These visits, all too often, result in the children being used as weapons in the fights between parents or, as Goode points out, the children being used as spies when one parent encourages the innocent children to tell all about the activities of the other parent (1956:314). Although visiting privileges continue after the remarriage of the parents, Goode does state that the remarriage of either parent results in a lessening of the frequency of visits (1956:316). For this reason, the divorced mother may see remarriage as a means to not only acquire a surrogate parent for her children who will be able to help her cope with the problems that may arise but possibly, to eliminate the problem altogether since remarriage seems to discourage visiting and as a by-product will reduce contact with the ex-spouse.

There are, as well, certain practical problems which result in pressure toward remarriage, the first of which is economics. The problems of child support and maintenance payments means the financial position of the divorced mother is very precarious; as a result the divorced mother usually

has to seek employment raising the problem of who will care for the children. The mother must place the children, if they are young, either in the care of a nursery school or day-care centre which will only increase her financial problems or in the care of a relative such as grandmother or aunt. But the divorced mother in such a situation is faced with the problem that in our Western societies, the expectation is that a mother will stay home with her children. What is she to do?

Either first the mother stays home with her children and is financially dependent on her ex-spouse or, failing this, on some kind of social agency, or second she goes out to work to maintain a standard of living and meets with social disapproval because she is not at home with her children. In Goode's sample of 425 divorced mothers, only 25% or 108 felt they had no need of further financial assistance and 26% of the remaining 75% (those who needed financial help) went to social agencies such as Children's Aid or Welfare, while 57% of the 75% went to their own family for aid (1956:238). Goode sees that the solution to these problems lies in remarriage so that a standard of living may be maintained and at the same time the mother can stay home with her children.

A problem arises, as well, because of the lack of a male partner for social events or for sexual relations. A

divorced woman suddenly finds that many of her friends will be connected in some way to her ex-spouse and therefore will be uncomfortable around her and she will be uncomfortable around them because of the memories they will bring to mind about her ex-spouse and about her previous marriage. There is as well the problem that her married female friends may view her as a threat to their own marriage because she may be a too obvious example of a solution to marital problems through divorce. The divorced female in the Western society is surrounded by the "mystique" of an unattached woman "on the make" and for this reason she may be viewed as a threat by her married female friends who fear their husbands may believe in this mystique and also are "on the make".

Canadian society tends to be "couple-centered"; this means that most social activities are directed towards couples, most dances are for couples only, most nightclubs will not allow unescorted females to enter and much informal "friends-type" activity revolves around couples (card playing, get-togethers, etc.). For these reasons, the divorced female suddenly finds herself cut off from much social activity to which she previously had access and under pressure, from friends, to regain this activity, in the form of introduction to eligibles. All of these factors result in further pressures toward remarriage.

There is, too, the problem of sexual adjustment for the divorced parent. The married individual develops certain sexual habits and needs for sexual expression. The divorced mother finds she no longer has this sexual satisfaction as readily available as she did when married and must now seek it elsewhere. Mowrer suggests that this need results in a sexual panic and a high level of promiscuity among the recently divorced (in Landis, 1952:345). The divorced mother finds that the arrangement of these affairs presents certain practical difficulties. She must arrange for someone to care for the children while she is out; this can be costly if she is forced to hire a baby-sitter often and can be awkward if she asks relatives or friends to look after the children because eventually these adults will probably ask questions. Added to this is the problem that she must arrange for a discrete location for any rendezvous she wishes to have; she cannot have them at her residence because of the presence of her children and to have them in a public place such as a hotel etc. requires a great amount of diplomacy especially if her ex-husband should wish to have the custody ruling reversed.

There is, as well, the "double standard" in the Western society that, although men may engage in extra-marital

sexual relations, a woman should not engage in and especially should not enjoy sexual relations outside of marriage.

Although this presents problems for any unmarried female including widows, it may be especially crucial to the divorcee because of the presence of children and because of her ambiguous roles because there is no clearly defined pattern of behaviour for the divorced mother, society may be quicker to censure the "individual who sins". As a consequence of all of this, the divorced mother will feel the need of sexual satisfaction but to obtain it she will risk society's censure. The solution would seem to lie in marriage - the divorcee could, and would be expected to, engage in sexual relations with society's approval, - and so the divorced mother faces another pressure towards remarriage.

Goode considers all these pressures and the value placed on marriage in our Western societies are the explanation for the very high remarriage rate of divorced women.

I would suggest that in Canada there may be occurring a change in the value placed on marriage ; by this I mean that there may be increasing concern with the well being of the children and with the personal happiness of the adults involved rather than the past concern with maintaining the marriage. The ideal of marriage for the sake of marriage, as Goode seems to picture the standards of the Western societies, may be

declining and may be in the process of being replaced by the ideal of marriage as a source of happiness. This change in attitude may be evidenced by the reform in divorce laws which became effective on July 2, 1968. If this change is occurring, some of the pressures toward remarriage which Goode discusses may be eliminated.

Burgess and Cottrill point out that in American society, "happiness" is more and more becoming the criterion by which the success of a marriage is judged (1939:30); if this is the case, happiness will be an even more important criterion for judging post-divorce actions and roles. In the past, remarriage may have presented the only socially approved method for achieving happiness, the situation which Goode presents, but I would suggest that certain "clubs" and social organizations which have come into existence in the last few years may be furnishing an alternative method for the divorced parent to find happiness. If these groups do provide such an alternative, there will be less pressure towards remarriage and probably a lower remarriage rate for the members of these groups.

#### PARENT GROUPS

Perhaps the most extensive of these social groups is Parents Without Partners. Parents Without Partners is a

non-profit organization begun in New York State in 1958 (Proceedings of the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons on Divorce, 1966:172); there are now branches in almost every state in the United States and several in Canadian cities including Windsor, Hamilton and Vancouver. The membership of these groups consists of parents who are trying to raise children without a marital partner because of the death, divorce or separation of the second parent. The activities include educational meetings at which speakers discuss problems common to all of these people as well as social meetings and "family" activities where parent and children engage in joint activities. The members of this group hope that, through educational meetings and mutual assistance, solutions may be found to some of the problems faced by the single parent, particularly the divorced parent, and through the "family" activities to bring parent and children together for recreational activities without the resentment and distrust that is often found among children whose homes have been disrupted by divorce.

This group also sponsors certain social functions such as dances for the members so that these people will have some social activity without facing the problem of a lack of a partner which Goode discussed as being so crucial for the divorced parent.

A second group of this type is the Minus One Club of Red Deer, Alberta the members of which are twenty-one years of age and over "whose marriages have been disrupted by death, divorce or separation" (Proceedings of the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons on Divorce, 1967:1565). This group, affiliated with the Young Men's Christian Association, is a social club whose purpose is to increase the personal happiness of its members by helping them "redefine their roles and particular identities" (Proceedings of the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons on Divorce, 1967:1565).

One of the largest single groups of this type is the Single Parents Associated of Toronto. This particular group was begun in 1960 and presently has a membership of approximately two hundred parents who are raising children alone, again, because of the death, divorce or separation of the second parent. As stated in the Proceedings of the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons on Divorce:

"Single Parents Associated is an organization devoted to the social service and mutual assistance of single parents and their children." (Appendix 9, 1966:239)

Again, we find the importance of not only helping the divorced parent solve certain practical problems but also helping her to find certain personal happiness in her changed marital roles.

There are several more small groups of this type such as Mothers Alone Society which was begun in 1966 and has a membership of approximately thirty-five parents, All Lone Parents Society begun in 1963 with a present membership of approximately seventy and Canadian Single Parents begun in 1965 with a present membership of seventy-five parents (Proceedings of the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons on Divorce, 1967:858-859). These groups, all situated in Vancouver, have the same general educational and aid programmes as the other groups I have mentioned as well as extensive social and family activities; as stated in the brief submitted to the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons on Divorce:

"They plan family activities of a nature that a single parent cannot provide and carry out a social programme for the adult members."  
(1967:859)

Again, we find a stress not only on solving problems connected with single parenthood but on personal happiness as well. It is interesting to note that so many of these groups are situated in Vancouver when it is realized that British Columbia has the second highest divorce rate in Canada, second only to Ontario which also seems to have a large number of these clubs.

## ORGANIZATION

Before beginning a discussion of the possible social implications of these groups, I think perhaps it would be useful to show that they are "organizations" rather than merely gatherings of people.

Etzioni defines "organizations" as:

"social units (or human groupings) deliberately constructed and reconstructed to seek specific goals ---- organizations are characterized by (1) divisions of labour, power and communication responsibilities --- (2) the presence of one or more power centers which control the concerted efforts of the organization and direct them toward its goals --- (3) the substitution of personnel i.e. unsatisfactory persons can be removed and others assigned their tasks." (1964:3)

I think it is rather obvious that these groups fit the first requirement of having a goal; in this case, the stated goal would seem to be to help single parents solve practical problems faced when raising children alone as well as to promote personal adjustment to and thus happiness in their new marital situation.

The division of labour would seem to be present as evidenced by the existence of executives - president, treasurer etc. - and the setting up of committees to prepare briefs and recommendations on the necessary divorce reform submitted to the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons on Divorce.

As to the third characteristic of substitution of personnel, one need only look at the statement of the Single Parents Associated that in the six years in which they have been in existence several thousand parents have attended meetings regularly although their present membership is only a couple of hundred. I would expect to find that as the members become able to solve the problems of parenthood and adjust and find personal happiness they will feel they can manage without the aid and psychological support of the groups such as these and will cease membership or at least become less active.

It is possible that the parents who belong to these organizations are not members of the organization but rather clients. These groups are organizations whose "product" is solution of problems and happiness, the members of the organization could be the executive and occupants of committee positions who are responsible for formulating programmes and activities to dispense this "product". The ordinary parent who belongs to the organization could be considered to fit the client or customer role as Etzioni considers it as:

"--- consumption, in the sense of receiving services and goods for the satisfaction of one's needs, and control over the distribution of resources in accordance with one's needs.

(1964:95)

If we accept the possibility that these parents are customers, then their leaving the organization could indicate that they have acquired sufficient amounts of the "product" that further acquisitions, at least from this source, are unnecessary.

If, however, it were found that all of the parents are in fact influential in formulating policies and programmes and in decision making, then the "client" possibility could be rejected and all of the parents belonging to the group would be classed as "members" of the organization.

The second characteristic of "organization" which Etzioni pointed out was the presence of one or more power centers. I think it could be stated without too much argument that the executive of such groups could be considered one power segment but only a detailed study of the informal structure and actual operation of these groups would reveal whether other informal but still influential power centers exist.

In light of this discussion of these characteristics, I think it could adequately be shown that these groups do fit Etzioni's definition of "organization".

#### CHANGE IN ATTITUDE TOWARD DIVORCE

Many writers have pointed out that there has been a change in the attitude toward divorce; as Ogburn and Nimkoff state:

"There has been a gradual change in American opinion on divorce from sharp to rather mild disapproval --- the idea that divorce is a moral evil has been largely replaced by the idea that it is a social problem and a personal tragedy". (1955:243)

This change in the value placed on marriage, even if it is an unhappy one, seems to be taking place in Canada too. This change in attitude in Canada resulted in the formation of the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons on Divorce to which I have referred several times. This committee existed to make recommendations on needed changes in divorce regulations so divorce could be made easier (not easy, but easier) for the hundreds of people caught in unsuccessful marriages. It was hoped that through easier divorce these people could seek greater personal happiness either alone or through another attempt at marriage.

If there is this change in attitude toward divorce, we can equally expect there to be a change in the attitude toward the divorcee. Formerly the divorcee was viewed with great amounts of scepticism and disapproval so that the only socially approved solution to her problems was remarriage or to present herself as unmarried which was almost impossible if she had children. If the attitude toward divorce is liberalizing, it would seem to be quite probable that the attitudes toward the divorcee will also become less strict. If this is occurring, there may be lessened pressure for remarriage

and the divorcee will be freer to find alternative solutions to these problems as well as to achieve happiness by remaining single. I would expect to find that these organizations for single parents may, in fact, be serving as an alternative solution to remarriage, reflective of this change in attitude toward divorce and the change in the basic value of marriage; this means that the increasing value on personal happiness results in an attitude that solutions to some basic problems connected with child-rearing must be found and if the divorced mother can find these solutions by membership in these organizations she can, if she desires, find personal happiness by remaining single rather than by remarrying.

If this is the situation, I would expect to find that the remarriage rate for the members of these organizations would be lower than for a comparable group of divorcees who are not members of such groups or that, at least, the remarriages will not occur as rapidly after divorce as they do for non-members.

To recapitulate, Goode presents certain problems faced by the divorced mother, both connected with personal adjustment and associated with raising children without a second parent. According to Goode, the only socially acceptable solution for these problems has been remarriage but I am suggesting that membership in certain groups may be serving

as an alternative solution. Through educational programmes and "family" activities, these groups may be helping the divorced mother solve some of the problems of child-rearing and through social functions may be solving certain problems of personal adjustment. If this is occurring, these groups may be evolving a pattern for post-divorce behaviour which, coupled with the larger society's changing attitudes toward marriage and divorce, may eventually result in an institutionalization of post-divorce roles. This institutionalization of post-divorce roles should lessen the role ambiguity for divorced parents and thus reduce much of the pressure toward remarriage.

#### DIVORCED FATHERS

The discussion this far has centered on the problems of the divorced mother but the picture would hardly be complete without some consideration of the problems of the divorced father - that is the divorced male who has custody of his children. In the literature, little has been done on the divorced father because so few fathers receive custody of the children but, perhaps, this fact alone will increase their problems because the divorced father is such a social oddity.

Probably the most crucial problem faced by the divorced father is the economic one; not only will he be

responsible for maintenance payments to his ex-wife but as well he will have to hire someone to care for the children while he is at work. If he is considering remarriage, he will be faced with the problem of maintaining two households - the one formed by his new marriage and the maintenance payments to his ex-wife; this can be a huge financial burden if the new wife is not willing to assume some of the responsibility by seeking or maintaining employment. This could have profound effects on the stability of a second marriage since, I would expect, many women would be slightly resentful at having to work to maintain another woman.

The economic problem of remarriage will have another facet - that of having more children. The increasing cost of raising and educating children would seem to be making the large family economically not feasible. When two people marry and the husband already has children, it would seem unlikely that they could afford more. It could be suggested that certain resentment might arise if a woman is presented with the responsibility of raising another woman's children but cannot have children of her own because of the economic situation of the family. All of this could result in the divorced father having difficulty in finding a woman who would be willing to undertake such a marriage in the first place and secondly, if such a marriage takes place, could

result in problems of stability for such a marriage. This is a question that I suspect would yield some very interesting research findings.

The divorced father who remains single will face problems of child-rearing similar to those of his female counterpart - the most important of which is the shifting of the traditional family roles. In the Western societies the mother is usually the socio-emotional figure responsible for the love and emotional involvement with the child while the father is usually the task figure responsible for economically maintaining the family, is usually the discipline figure and less involved emotionally with the children. After a divorce, the father must assume both roles and become the socio-emotional figure for the children. This is the area that I suspect groups such as Parents Without Partners would be extremely helpful to the divorced father. Through its educational programmes, these groups could make the divorced father aware of the role he must now fulfill for his children as well as providing some guides as to how he should do it. The "family" activities will provide the divorced father an opportunity of getting together with his children on a recreational "fun" basis that should help promote the emotional bond between father and children.

One problem not faced by the divorced father is the

sexual one and especially the problems arising from the "double standard". The adult male is expected to participate in sexual relations so the divorced father need not be quite as discreet as the divorced mother; if society were to learn of a divorced father's sexual activity, there would be no shame or loss of respect such as would occur for the divorced mother. It might be suggested that, in fact, the problem for the divorced father will be just the reverse; as stated society expects the adult male to engage in sexual relations and if the divorced father were found to be living a chaste life there could be the suggestion that there is "something wrong with him".

The divorced father will not have as great problems as the divorced mother in finding sexual satisfaction; one need only consider the statistics on the number of females convicted each year for prostitution or soliciting to realize how available outlets for sexual needs are for any male including the divorced father.

In summary, the divorced father will have great economic problems which may hinder any effort at remarriage but will not face as great problems as the divorced mother in sexual needs. The organizations such as Parents Without Partners with which I am primarily concerned will have great benefit in helping the divorced father adjust to the change

in family roles; these groups can help the divorced father realize he must become the emotional and loving parent for the children as well as the providing parent and through the "family" activities can help smooth the transition for both father and children.

#### ALTERNATIVE ROLES FOR POST-DIVORCE ORGANIZATIONS

It could be suggested that perhaps these organizations are merely serving as lonely hearts clubs, that is as places for these divorced parents to meet members of the opposite sex who would be potential dates and future mates. If members date exclusively or tend to marry other members there would be some justification for such a charge.

The divorced mother who wishes to remarry, unless she has decided upon her next husband before her divorce, will probably experience some difficulty in meeting eligible men; this would happen because first of all, she has been married for a number of years so her circle of friends will probably be married and, secondly, because during her marriage she probably will have lost touch with the sources of unmarried men - by this is meant that she probably will not know where to go to meet unmarried men and once she has found them she probably will no longer be able to strike up casual acquaintances - in the slang of the day, she will have lost the ability of hustling a man.

For these women, the groups under discussion will be an ideal "hunting ground"; they will be offered the opportunity of meeting unmarried men on a social basis and at the same time will be relieved of any embarrassment or stigma at being divorced because the other people in the setting will be in the same situation. These people, I would expect to find, will tend to date and possibly marry other members.

The problem arises, however, that these groups would seem to be stressing that the divorced parent can find happiness by remaining single; what happens when a few members seem to be using membership as a mechanism for meeting spouses. These members seeking remarriage would seem to be retaining the larger society's old ideal of marriage yet they are in a situation that stresses a new norm of remaining single. This would seem to be a possible source for great conflict and tension for such individuals. I would expect to find under these circumstances the individual would find herself under great pressure from the group; the group would attempt a programme of resocializing the individual into accepting their standards. If the group's influence on the individual can be stronger than that of the larger society's traditional patterns, the individual will probably lessen her mate selection at least within the group. If, however, the group's influence is not strong enough to convert the individual, there could be one

of two results: first, she may be less obvious about her efforts at seeking a husband; this is the individual I would expect to find marrying another member, or second, if she continues to be overt about her efforts, she will come to be considered a deviant by the group and will eventually be eased out of membership - this is the individual I would expect to find who has ceased membership because of dissatisfaction with the group's activities.

If, in fact, the members of these organizations are found to have a lower remarriage rate than a comparable group of divorced non-members, it could be suggested that this difference is not a function of group membership but rather of the people who belong. The people who join these groups may be predisposed to reject the possibility of remarriage and merely be using membership in these organizations as justification for remaining single. It might be found that people who join these organizations may have had more severe marital problems or what Goode calls "divorce trauma" (1956:185), that is more severe shock and emotional turmoil connected with the separation and eventual divorce. These factors could result in the individuals developing a need to protect themselves from these problems happening again so they reject the possibility of remarriage. These individuals could join Parents Without Partners or such organizations in an effort not only to avoid society's pressures for remarriage

but also to gain the group's support and encouragement in their efforts to remain single.

It could also be suggested that there may be operating some kind of selection process on the part of the group itself. The group may encourage, probably unintentionally, the membership of those divorced parents who are ambivalent about or negative toward remarriage; those potential members who would seem to be interested in remarriage may be eliminated by the affiliation process or by the socialization which new members will probably undergo. An investigation of this possibility would be extremely difficult since the members who belong would obviously have whatever characteristic it is that the group would want yet how could the researcher ascertain exactly what that characteristic is and whether non-members do or do not possess it as well. Perhaps the only method to get at this problem would be a study of people who leave the group soon after joining and their reasons for ceasing membership.

#### SUMMARY

Goode in Women in Divorce presents the theory that a divorced mother's efforts at raising children alone result in certain role ambiguities and practical problems such as economics; these lead to great pressures for change and solution and, according to Goode, the only socially acceptable

solution lies in remarriage. I would suggest, on the other hand, the society's attitudes toward divorce and marriage may be resulting in a greater stress on personal happiness. This greater stress on personal happiness may be reflected in the existence of certain organizations such as Parents Without Partners which exist to help the single parent solve certain problems connected with raising children alone and to help the divorced parent adjust in the change of marital roles and find happiness by remaining single. If all of this is occurring, I would expect to find a lower remarriage rate for the members of these organizations than for a comparable group of divorced non-members.

I have discussed the possibility that, if such a lower remarriage rate is found, either it could be explained by some characteristic of the members such that they would reject the possibility of remarriage and merely use membership in these groups to justify rejecting society's traditional patterns or it could result from some kind of selection process by the group such that the majority of the people who become members do not wish to remarry and those who do wish it are in some way eliminated from membership.

The possibility has also been discussed that these groups may be merely lonely hearts clubs or sources of men for the divorced woman who wishes to remarry but is unable to

meet eligible men. If this occurs, the groups possible reactions have been discussed as well.

In the next chapter, a discussion will be presented of the type of research needed to investigate these possibilities and some of the problems involved in such research.

## Chapter IV

### Research Design

We have raised several questions regarding these organizations and to begin to answer them would require a very extensive research project.

The first question to be investigated is who are these people about whom we have been talking? Based on the demographic data presented in Chapter II, we would expect to find that these people are around thirty years of age, urban, Protestant, middle class with two or three children.

A characteristic that would be of importance is the affiliative tendency of these people. Do they belong to other voluntary associations, in what type of other organization are they members and why did they join this particular type of group? This type of inquiry would shed some light on the question of whether these organizations serve as lonely-hearts clubs. If the members belong to other organizations as we expect would be the case, we suspect there would be less tendency for these clubs to be sources of mates since the members would have other opportunities to meet men. For the member who wishes to remarry but does not belong to other groups, these organizations may be her only encounter with eligible men on a social level; this will be the type of person we would expect to find marrying other members,

for her this would be a "lonely-hearts" club.

Perhaps the best, if not the only, means of obtaining this information is by the use of an open-ended questionnaire. The main advantage of a questionnaire in this type of research, in our opinion, is that it gives the respondent anonymity; in trying to gather this information, we are asking the respondent to reveal much about herself and it would probably be much easier for her to do it without an interviewer sitting across from her waiting for answers. This could be crucial in gaining the co-operation of these people; if a divorcee is fairly certain of remaining anonymous she is more likely to answer personal questions than if she has to do it publicly, that is to a visible person.

A second advantage to a questionnaire is the uniformity from one respondent to another. As Selltig et al. point out a questionnaire is impersonal and is not influenced by personality variations of interviewers (1966:238). We suspect this could be very important in questions such as these because, since the questions are of a personal character, we suspect any embarrassment or hesitancy on the part of the interviewer could cause the respondent to withdraw her co-operation.

To more fully answer the lonely-hearts question, a study of the remarriage patterns of past as well as present

members would be required. If the past members who have remarried displayed a pattern of marrying other members, there would be some support for the possible charge that these are lonely-hearts clubs. If, however, past members marry outside of the organization and if present members seem to be dating non-members, then we think the charge could be refuted. The charge could also be refuted if it were found, by an extensive study of group activities, that the social activities are not as important to the members as the educational or family programmes - a possibility we shall discuss later in this chapter.

As well, a study of past members would reveal if these groups are adequately helping divorced parents to solve the problems of single parenthood and to adjust to their personal situation. If the past members were not remarried at the time they ceased membership, we must examine their reasons for leaving the group. If the members left because they felt they could handle their situation alone, then we might conclude that the organizations are fulfilling their goal of helping the divorced parent adjust. If, however, the members left because they were dissatisfied with the group's programmes, we must consider the possibility that these groups are functioning in some way that does not appear on the surface.

We would recommend for this phase of the research the use of a largely unstructured interview. As Selltitz et al. suggests, the unstructured interview "helps to bring out the affective and value-laden aspects of the subjects responses and to determine the personal significance of his attitudes" (1966:263). In this type of research, the interviewer can lead the respondent to topics such as reasons for ceasing membership and by using the response as a key to following questions the interviewer may obtain information that could not be obtained by an impersonal questionnaire. A respondent gives an answer to a particular question; if a questionnaire is being used that is the end of it but if an unstructured interview is used, the interviewer can then probe to obtain more information and to receive more than superficial answers which would probably be given on a questionnaire.

Unfortunately, the problem arises that most of these organizations are of such recent development that past membership will probably be very small and much dissatisfaction could be explained by the fact that any organization will have problems in the early stages. The people who quit these groups in the early stages when problems arose, may be the very people who quit a marriage early when problems arose.

Previously we mentioned the possibility that these groups may be functioning in some way that does not appear on

the surface or that one particular type of activity may be more important for the members than another. If participation seems to be greatest at social events, there would seem to be more evidence for the social club or lonely-hearts charge; if, on the other hand, attendance seems greatest for the educational or family activities, it could be argued that the group is most important to the divorced parent for its problem solving goal.

Probably the only reliable method of obtaining this information is by a participant - observation study. As both Whyte (1964:357) and Selltitz et al. (1966:202) point out this method allows the researcher to observe the behaviour as it occurs; the researcher develops familiarity yet detachment. Because the researcher has no personal involvement in the behaviour he can report it more accurately than the participants either because they are unaware of what is actually occurring or because it is too costly personally for them to report it. This could be very important in this research if, for example, it were found that the social activities are the most important for the members; the member, first of all, would probably be hesitant to admit that the social activities are so important because it would be contrary to the group's goals of helping members find happiness by remaining unmarried and secondly the member would be hesitant because it would not be terribly complimentary to them if the inference were drawn

that he or she has trouble meeting eligibles of the opposite sex.

We suggested in Chapter III that there may be operating some kind of selection process; the group members may by indirect or unconscious means, accept as fellow members only those who reject the possibility of remarriage. Probably the only means to ascertain if this is occurring would be by an observation study; the members may not even be aware that this is happening so they would be unable to report it to an interviewer and, even if they were aware that it is happening, they might be hesitant to report it since any preference of this type would seem to be contrary to the organizations' goals of helping all single parents find happiness.

One advantage to an observational study would be that it would allow for a study of the effect of the group on members over a period of time. Initially after divorce, the divorcee's attitudes toward remarriage will be greatly influenced by the severity of the trauma of divorce as well as pre-divorce marital problems; these initial attitudes will be greatly influenced by the bitterness and shock resulting from a divorce, that is, people who had greater problems in their previous marriages or who had particularly difficult divorces will tend to have attitudes opposed to remarriage because of a "halo" effect. After a length of time, we suspect these attitudes would become less negative as the bitterness wears

off and an observation study of the group would permit a study of this change in attitude toward remarriage and any influence the group may have in it. It is possible that the group's affiliative and socialization processes may merely reinforce the individual's rejection of remarriage but will change the reason for the rejection from one of bitterness to one of being able to find happiness without remarriage. An individual might have some difficulty or hesitancy in verbalizing this change whereas a trained observer should be able to trace the group's influence on the individual.

#### CONTROL GROUP

The usefulness of any data that might be obtained by a study of groups such as Parents Without Partners depends upon the use of a control group of divorced mothers who are not members of any of these organizations. The individuals in the control group should be matched to the members of the organizations according to the variables of age, length of marriage, length of time since the decree, religion and socio-economic background since these are the characteristics which we have discussed in reference to the members. It could be expected that if such a control group is formed, many of these non-members would have remarried or at least be on the way toward remarriage; this might further indicate the effects membership in the discussed groups will have on remarriage and attitudes toward it.

Again, a questionnaire would probably be the best method of obtaining this information for reasons which have previously been discussed.

Through informal interviews, we could gather data on the attitudes of non-members toward remarriage; any difference in attitude between the non-members and the members could help indicate if there is a selection process operating, either on the part of the group or on the part of the individuals who join - we must consider the possibility that it is not the group that selects members but that only a certain type of individual selects to join the group. The unstructured interview for this phase of the research has the advantage discussed previously that the interviewer can probe for information.

Perhaps the ideal situation would be the use of two control groups matched to the members according to those characteristics previously discussed. The difference in the two control groups, however, would be that one would consist of divorced non-members who have remarried while the second would be divorced non-members who have remained single. The interviewing of the members of both control groups would give a more complete assessment of attitude toward remarriage and the effect on it of membership in organizations like Parents Without Partners. If a control group of divorced, remarried parents were used, we have to consider the possibility that these people may have had their next mate selected before they

obtained their decree, a fact that would be indicated by the lapse of time between decree and remarriage; this situation would greatly influence the attitudes these people would have toward the divorce trauma and toward remarriage. Even if this were found to be the case, this type of control group would still serve as a useful comparison for the group of members.

#### PROBLEMS OF RESEARCH

A research project into the organizations we have been discussing involves many problems, the first of which is numbers. These groups are still very new to Canada and therefore their divorced membership is relatively small. Although these groups are an extremely interesting phenomenon for the sociologist, we are lead to wonder how valid are any statements based on such a small sample. Because of the small sample, we suspect that any statements made would have to be very tentative and general but their main importance would be as a basis for further research.

The second problem would seem to be gaining access to these groups. In the past year, we have made tentative approaches to the Hamilton branch of Parents Without Partners and were informed that we would be very welcome at their meetings if all questions and research plans were submitted to the executive for approval ahead of time. These people are divorced, and in Canada, at least, there is still a great deal of stigma attached to divorce; they are also parents who

must consider the welfare of their children and this includes protecting the children from publicity or notariety. For these reasons, we suspect a researcher would have some difficulty in gaining admittance to the group and the confidence of the members; we further suspect that if a researcher gained access to the group, he would find himself under great restrictions by the executive.

Perhaps one way to avoid part of this problem would be for the researcher to gain admittance to the group as a member by passing himself off as a divorced parent. Unfortunately, this does raise the question of ethics for the researcher. We are sure that as a member , the researcher would gain much personal information about these people and there then arises the ethical question of how much of this personal information is the researcher justified in using? The second problem with this procedure would be that information could be obtained about only a few of the questions that have been discussed. The researcher in this situation could very easily answer the questions concerning a selection process and the actual operation and importance of the organizations but how much could be learned about the members? The researcher, if he began to ask personal questions, would probably very quickly be suspected by the members; if he waited for them to volunteer any information, he might wait a very long time and then not acquire the information needed. When all of these factors are considered, this method would be of minimal use and should be

adopted only if there were no other way of getting to the group.

The use of control groups of divorced non-members raises even more problems the first of which is where to find these people? When we contacted the Court Clerk's Office in Hamilton, we were informed that divorce records were not public; this means that the researcher cannot see the court records to obtain even names unless he can in some way obtain special permission. The indication would seem to be that this method of obtaining names is highly unlikely. For all court sessions, most of the names of the people obtaining divorces are printed in the newspaper; we say "most" because some people if they have sufficient resources and/or influence can prevent their name from being printed. The researcher could go through past issues of newspapers to obtain the names of divorces granted but this again leads to certain problems.

The fact that some people are able to keep their names out of the newspaper would mean that the researcher, if using newspaper listings, would obtain a biased sample. The second problem is that a mere list of names does not help the researcher match these control people with the members of the organizations according to those characteristics which we have discussed as being important. This would indicate that the researcher would have to trace a huge sample of these people, obtain the information about these characteristics and then match the controls to the members; this type of

operation would involve a tremendous amount of time, money and work that often would be wasted because a large proportion of the people would not match the members and so would have to be discarded.

Perhaps the most difficult problem would be, having obtained a list of names of divorces granted for a span of several years, how to trace these people? Since the primary concern of this paper has been with the divorced mother, we are faced with the problem of remarriage; when the divorcee remarries, her name changes making it extremely difficult, if not almost impossible, to trace her. In a highly mobile society such as Canada, the problem arises in the lapse of time since divorce many of the women will have moved, again, making it very difficult to trace them.

Even if the problem of tracing these people could be overcome, we would be faced with the further problem of gaining their confidence. Those who had remarried would probably be hesitant to talk about a previous marriage and those who had remained single would probably rather forget the previous unhappiness - "let sleeping dogs lie" would be the type of reaction we suspect would come from these people. The members of groups such as Parents Without Partners have a certain vested interest in having the group's aim and programmes known but the people of the control groups have nothing particularly to gain from research such as this so gaining their co-operation

would be that much more difficult.

#### EXTENSIVE STUDY

Although a study on the membership of these organizations such as we have been discussing would yield some very useful data, what perhaps is crucially needed is a sample survey of divorced persons generally in Canada. A study such as the one in which we are interested would give information on only a specific group of divorced females in Canada; the use of control groups, while yielding some data for comparison, would still refer to only a specific sample. It seems to us that what is vitally needed is some sort of survey study of a sample of the entire divorced population. All that seems to be known about divorcees in Canada at this time is their number, both total and provincially, and how many of them remarry each year. It would seem that before we, as sociologists, can meaningfully discuss divorced people in Canada, much more needs to be known about the composition of this group - age, socio-economic background, children, length of marriage, and so many other characteristics of importance in the passage from marriage to divorce back to marriage.

#### SUMMARY

A research project into the questions raised by the existence of these organizations would involve many facets. First, an extensive observation study would be needed to learn

which of the organizations activities seems to be of most importance for the members in an effort to answer the lonely-hearts club suggestion; such a study would also indicate if there is a selection process at work in the process of membership.

Another aspect of the research would involve an extensive study of past members, first of all to trace remarriage patterns, again, to help answer the lonely-hearts club charge. Such a study of past membership would also be helpful in determining whether these organizations are helping divorcees solve their problems; by determining the reasons for past members ceasing membership, the researcher could gain insight into whether the people involved were satisfied that the groups helped them or not and why.

The use of control groups which are matched to the members of the clubs would reveal any differences in remarriage rates which might be accounted for by membership in these groups, as well as reveal any differences that would pre-dispose some people to join and be influenced by these groups.

A study such as we suggest would be necessary to fully investigate these questions would require a great investment of both money and time - an investment no one has made so far but one which we are sure would yield some extremely interesting and useful data not only for the sociologist but for those responsible for social and welfare policies as well.

## Chapter V

### Conclusions

On July 2, 1968, there came into effect in Canada new divorce legislation which broadened the grounds for divorce with the aim of making divorce easier. Perhaps of equal importance as the broader grounds is the fact that legal aid is available for those who are eligible for divorce but cannot finance the suit. The immediate result of this new legislation will be a sharp increase in the divorce rate because many people who, previously trapped in unsuccessful marriages but without legal grounds or without the wish to fabricate evidence by the use of a professional co-respondent, will now be able to bring suit for decrees. There will probably be great public outcry at the rise in divorce rate but we would suspect that, when this backlog is caught up, the divorce rate will level off higher than before the reform but not as high as the immediate rate.

This increase in divorce will make the solution to the problems we have discussed even more crucial to our society. There will be more divorced parents trying to adjust to the status of divorcee and trying to raise more children alone. If these organizations can help the divorced parent, they must be promoted and publicized but first we should know if, in fact, they do help.

The new divorce legislation will not only increase the number of divorced parents but will also have some effect on the socio-economic and demographic characteristics discussed in Chapter II. Because of the legal aid available, we would expect to find that there will be more lower class divorces than previously. This means that there will be more divorced mothers with less education and lower chances of obtaining employment; the lower class divorced male will be less able to pay maintenance and child-support payments. For the larger society, all of this will result in a greater drain on the welfare agencies.

Also as a result of the decrease in the financial problem of divorce, it may be found that divorces will occur earlier in marriage. This will mean not only that the divorced mother will be younger, with less education and therefore, again, with less likelihood of obtaining employment, but also the children of divorce will be younger. This will make for greater problems of adjustment and child-rearing so the organizations such as Parents Without Partners, which we have discussed, may play a greater role in the Canadian divorce situation and may become more prominent than previously.

The immediate reaction to the easier divorce is that the rate of "common-law" marriage should decline; people will be able to obtain a divorce and establish new legal

relationships. There will probably be a decline in "common-law" arrangements for a specific group of people - those who have been deserted by a spouse and could not previously obtain a divorce. There will probably also be a lower rate of desertion and separation; much of the "attraction" of desertion which we discussed earlier will be gone. It will no longer be cheaper to desert than to divorce.

We would suspect that the lower-class divorced mother may feel herself under greater financial pressure than the middle-class one; as a result she may feel greater pressure to remarry so the remarriage rate will rise in the future. We would suspect that these lower-class divorced parents are not the ones who will become members in organizations such as Parents Without Partners so there will not be little influence of this factor on the remarriage rate for the lower-classes.

This is becoming an increasingly important social problem in Canada and one that needs to be studied. It would seem that this area is one in which the Canadian sociologist must become involved.

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