HEBREW UNION COLLEGE - JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
California School

in cooperation with

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
School of Social Work

DIVORCED JEWISH MOTHERS

A Study of the Effect Divorce has Upon Jewish Identity, Affiliation and Life Style

A Thesis submitted in partial
fulfillment of the requirements
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IN

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by

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INTRODUCTION

In 1975 there were over one million divorces in the United States--the highest number in the history of this country.[1] In California, in the same year, one out of two marriages terminated in divorce. Divorce appeared not to be a problem among Jews as late as 1960. At that time the Jewish divorce rate was one out of ten marriages.[2]

Since then, however, there has been a dramatic rise in marital dissolution among Jews. Jewish family service agencies reported a 390 percent increase in single-parent family clients.[3] Jewish Centers estimate that on the average, single-parent families comprise from 10 to 25 percent of their total membership and registration reports from Jewish communal camps indicate that 15 to 40 percent of the campers are children of such families. In sum, "the dissolution of Jewish families seems to be occurring at a rate comparable to that being experienced in the broader community."[4]

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[1] Los Angeles Times, 16 January 1976, p. 16.

[2] Alfred K. Allan, "Newest Jewish Problem: Divorce," National Jewish Monthly (New York: December 1961), p. 7.

[3] Single Parent, Jewish Family Project," National Council of Jewish Women (New York: 1974), p. 2.

[4] S. Morton Altman, "Single Parent Families," Viewpoints (New York: Association of Jewish Center Workers, November 1974), p. 5.

Divorce has been described as a process "so traumatic that the individuals involved are usually incapacitated for months, and sometimes years,"[5] and also as "the beginning of a journey of self-discovery and development."[6]

As a result of their personal and professional experience with divorce, the authors have become acutely aware that divorce is accompanied by enormous, sometimes shattering change. A host of complicated factors determine how successful an individual weathers the experience and goes on from there. Being part of a community is a very important aspect of life. We had noted that family dissolution was often accompanied by decreased acceptance in the Jewish community.

Our study focuses on the affect of divorce on Jewish affiliation, personal identity, and life style. Although Jewish tradition always had provisions for divorce, marriage and family life are considered the instrument par excellence of Jewish survivial. Given the family orientation of Jewish institutions and organizations, the researchers hypothesized that the Jewish divorcee and her children might well represent a group-at-risk with regard to Jewish continuity. In essence where little or no communal inclusion exists, she might dissaffiliate; and her chidlren may lose the opportunity for involvement with the Jewish community.

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[5]Marvin Bienstock, "Families in Dissolution," Viewpoints (New York: Association of Jewish Center Workers, November 1974), p. 6.

[6]Mel Kranzler, Creative Divorce (New York: New American Library, 1976), p. 212.

In order to test our assumptions, we interviewed forty divorced Jewish mothers who had custody of their children. In addition to the serious personal loss and practical difficulties, divorce disrupted the women's relationship to the Jewish community. The women were eager to share their feelings and hoped our study would result in the kind of understanding which would enable them to become meaningfully participating members of the Jewish community.

The major portion of our gratitude goes to these forty women who welcomed us into their homes and shared many personal, sometimes painful aspects of their experience. We are grateful, also, to those Rabbis and Jewish communal professionals who, in addition to expressing interest and encouragement, informed female single-parent members of their congregations and organizations about our study and, thus, were instrumental in providing us with our sample.

We would like to thank Gerald B. Bubis, Director of the School of Jewish Communal Service of the Hebrew Union College who provided us with a setting for learning, out of which our research developed. Special thanks also goes to Harvey Horowitz, librarian of the Hebrew Union College, California campus, who helped us locate important resource material. We are especially grateful to our research advisors, Dr. Rosa F. Kaplan of the School of Jewish Communal Service, Hebrew Union College, and Dr. Bruce Jansson of University of Southern California School of Social Work, who provided valuable direction and criticism, and to Dr. Samson Levey who reviewed our manuscript and checked Judaic references.

We fervently hope that this study will add to the understanding of how divorce affects Jewish mothers and their children, and result in appropriate and comprehensive community planning for this group.

CHAPTER I

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Divorce in Primitive Societies

Virtually every society has some form of divorce. In America, marital dissolution is a complex social phenomenon and a traumatic personal experience; however, there are societies where divorce is viewed with equanimity and carries with it no social stigma.

One such group was the Kaingang of Brazil, where a prime motivation for marriage was to strengthen alliances between families which aided their group hunt for food.[7] When a Kaingang couple married, the partners were not obliged to drop their former sexual liasions, and there was no concept of sexual exclusivity or faithfulness. Couples might end their marriages many times before the man and woman found what he or she believed was the right mate. When a man's wife left him, at worst he had to cook his own meals and spread his own bed, but he did this without shame, for there was no stigma attached to a man doing "woman's work." When a husband left his wife, she was considered fair game for anyone who might be interested in her. Kaingang women were sexually aggressive, and when finding themselves "divorced," had no hesitation in asking a man to marry them. Sometimes relatives attempted to patch up a broken marriage, but most often, individuals

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[7]Jules Henry, The Jungle People (New York: Vantage Books, 1964), p. 47.

sought new alliances immediately. The one divorce taboo concerned those marriages which had produced three or more children. This rule served to protect the older woman with a large family from being abandoned at an age when finding a new husband would be difficult. Divorce among the Kaingang had little agony associated with it. Food was equally shared by all tribal members, and a woman without a husband had no fear of going hungry. This is in sharp contrast to our civilized western culture where the divorced woman generally suffers greater disabilities than the man.

The women of the Kaingang lived a rather egalitarian existence as compared to the women of western civilization whose relationships with men are less than equitable.

Divorce in the Jewish Tradition

It is interesting to note that one of the oldest myths depicting woman as an inferior marriage partner is the story of Lilith. According to Jewish legend, Lilith, and not Eve, was Adam's first wife. She was created so that he would not be alone in the world; and she, like Adam, was formed from clay. Lilith remained married to Adam for a short time, and then left him when he refused her full equality and insisted that she maintain a subordinate sexual position. God sent three angels in pursuit of Lilith, and they found her in the Red Sea. The angels threatened that if she did not return to Adam, one hundred of her sons would die each day. Lilith, however, refused, declaring that she would rather take this punishment than be eternally submissive to Adam. Lilith was depicted as a female demon in Jewish

mysticism, a strangler of infants and a seducer of men, who used their noctural emissions to create demonic sons.[8]

After Lilith deserted Adam, God decided to create another mate for him, and the story of Eve relates how she was formed from Adam's rib. According to legend, God debated over which part of Adam's body should be used to create his helpmate. God feared that if He made Eve from the head of Adam, she would turn out to be arrogant; if He used Adam's ear, Eve might become an eavesdropper. He did not want to use the mouth for fear she might become a gossip, nor the heart which might make Eve envious. God thus chose Adam's rib, because it was the "safest" part of the body.[9,10] This legend delineating the proper role for women in a patriarchal world, perhaps set the scene for what later became the traditional view of woman in the marriage partnership.

Divorce is not a new entity in the Jewish community. Provisions for divorce were a part of Judaic law which regarded divorce as a legal recognition that a marriage had ended.[11] Despite this, Judaism has consistently stressed the centrality and importance of

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[8]Gershom Scholem, "Lilith," Encyclopedia Judaica, ed. Cecil Roth, Vol. II (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing Company, 1971), p. 246-249.

[9]Louis Ginsburg, Legends of the Bible (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1956), p. 35.

[10]Another Talmudic interpretation of Eve's creation states that she was formed from Adam's rib so as to remain close to his heart.

[11]Robert Gordis, The Jewish View: Marriage, Birth Control, Divorce (New York: Burning Bush Press, 1967), p. 30.

maintaining the intact family. Thus the divorced woman was frequently viewed with pity or castigation, and residues of this attitude persist today. Divorce represented an interruption or cessation of Jewish parental role models for the children, and was seen as a threat to the continuity of Jewish identification and group survival. Although divorce could be legally obtained, it was frowned upon both religiously and socially and granted only as a last resort.[12]

An understanding of Jewish law and custom pertaining to marriage and the family serves to highlight the ramifications of divorce among Jews. Marriage served two purposes. The first was to foster procreation in fulfillment of the first charge to humanity: "p'ru u'r vu," "to be fruitful and multiply."[13] The second was to provide companionship, "It is not good for man to dwell alone, I will make a helpmate opposite him."[14] The sanctity of the home and family permeates the teachings of Judaism. The first of the six hundred thirteen "mitzvot," laws of the Torah, state that man must "take a wife and raise a family." Jewish law also ensured companionship and sexual satisfaction, particularly for the wife.

Bachelorhood among the Rabbis was rare and celibacy was discouraged. Jewish tradition stressed four major values pertaining to

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[12]Leon S. Lang, "Four Foundation Stones," in Marriage and the Jewish Tradition, ed. Stanley Brav (New York: Hallmark-Hubner Press, 1951), p. 22.

[13]Genesis 1:28.

[14]Ibid., 2:18.

home and family relationships: "taharat hamishpacha, gidul banim ubanot"; "kibud av vaem"; and "shalom bayit". The first. "taharat hamishpacha," is the integrity of family life. The second is "gidul banim ubanot," child rearing. Raising children requires the reinterpretation of old laws and the incorporation of new values. Traditionally, parents were obliged under law to fill all the child's daily needs. The father had the responsibility to educate his son, teach him Torah and provide him with training in a trade or a profession. The mother had no legal obligation toward the children, although she was obliged to fulfill their needs out of the law of "tsedakah," charity. The wife's legal duties to care for her children were a part of her marital duties toward her husband. The Book of Proverbs describes the "Woman of Valour" a model for Jewish women to emulate. The Woman of Valour is a good wife and mother. She responds to the needs of her husband, provides food and clothing for her children and also helps the poor. She teaches through personal example the kind of life her children should lead. The role of the woman is vital in Judaism for the family is the basic social unit in Jewish society.

The third value is "kibud av vaem." This is filial responsibility and respect for the elders'experience and wisdom. The fourth is "shalom bayit" or family compatibility. In the Jewish community, the life of the individual was measured in terms of his relationship to family and community and happiness was not as important as responsibility to one's group. The best adjustment in life

resulted from the conscious decision to fully integrate into the family and society and to govern one's behaviour in accordance with group values.

The family served both social and religious purposes. It was the vehicle for role modeling and for maintaining the standards of Jewish life and actions. It fostered continuity; and under ideal situations, could counteract the fragmenting forces of life.[15]

Jewish law makes a number of provisions for women. "Kiddushin" is the act performed between a man and a woman which leads to a change in their personal status from bachelorhood to becoming a husband and from single womanhood to becoming a wife.[16]

"Yevamot" is the provision for levirate marriage. The first book of the "Order of Women" deals with levirate marriage or the obligation of a man to marry his childless sister-in-law in the event of the death of his brother. This obligation predates Torah law itself. Apparently a woman who married into a family was not free to leave until she had produced a son to perpetuate the family name. The widow had to wait a minimum of three months after her husband's death before contracting a levirate marriage in order to be certain

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[15]Benjamin Schlesinger, The Jewish Family (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), p. 11.

[16]Ichud Habonim, Sisters in Exile (New York: Ichud Habonim Labor Zionist Youth, 1972), p. 25.

of the paternity of any future child and avoid the risk of a forbidden marriage.[17,18]

The ceremony of "halitzah" was performed in the event that a levirate marriage was either not desired nor possible. This ceremony required the man and his deceased brother's wife to come before a court of elders. The man who does not wish to fulfill levirate obligations must stand up and declare, "I like not to take her." The sister-in-law in turn then would remove his shoe, spit in his face and answer: "So shall it be done unto the man that does not build up his brother's house."[19]

The "ketubah" or marriage contract was the core document of the Jewish marriage relationship. Its form made clear that marriage was contractual, based upon the exchange of money between the fathers of the bride and groom. It also validated the mutual regard and affection expected of the bridal pair and it required purity, fidelity, and dignity in the marriage relationship. The "ketubah" covered a wide range of subject matter, from property rights to the

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[17] Ibid., p. 26.

[18] Normally, sexual relations are not permitted between a man and his brother's wife. An exception is only permitted or required if the brother died childless. If the widow is indeed pregnant, a levirate marriage is not only not required but not permitted. Nowadays the levirate marriage is hardly ever practiced.

[19] Deuteronomy 25:9.

sexual rights of the woman; a definition of marital responsibility and the penalties involved for violation of the terms of the "ketubah."[20] This marriage contract was an assurance of physical support for the woman and also had provisions for divorce.

"Gittin" or divorce states that:

> When a man taketh a wife and marrieth her, then it cometh to pass if she find no favor in his eyes because he hath found some unseemly thing in her, that he write her a bill of divorce and giveth it in her hand and sendeth her out of the house.[21]

In the case of divorce, there was only one procedure, the man must give a divorce notice or "get" to the woman. The woman cannot give a "get" to the man; however, she was not entirely without rights.[22] The woman could appeal to a special Rabbinic court "beth din" to force her husband to give her a "get" if the marriage took place under false pretenses, if the husband was immoral, if his profession was intolerable to her, if they were sexually incompatible, if he embarrassed her or denied her entry to their home, if his demands were such that her reputation would be blemished, if he angered easily, if he insulted her, or if he left her for an unreasonable length of time.[23]

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[20] Habonim, Sisters in Exile, p. 26.

[21] Deuteronomy 24:1.

[22] Habonim, Sisters in Exile, p. 29.

[23] Ibid.

During the Talmudic and Medieval periods there were safeguards made to protect the woman from masculine whim. A "get" became exceptionally technical and only a rabbinic court could dispense one. The court might intercede to convince the couple to reconcile, or might even threaten "cherem" (excommunication).[24] Despite the safeguards, there were still disparities of status between men and women with regard to divorce. The "get" assured the woman the right to remarry free from any challenge, and ordered the husband to pay to the wife the fee agreed upon in the "ketubah." Remarriage was impossible for the woman who did not receive a "get."

The law was particularly restrictive toward the woman in the case of the "agunah" or "chained woman." The "agunah" was a married woman who was separated from her husband and could not remarry either because he refused to agree to a divorce, had deserted her, or his death could not be proven.[25] In order for the wife to secure her freedom and the right to remarry, concrete proof of her husband's death was required; mere probability was not acceptable. If a man was lost at sea, confined to prison or an insane asylum, missing in action, or if he had emigrated to another country and never sent for his wife, she remained a "chained woman."

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[24]Ruth Brin, "Can a Woman be a Jew?" Reconstructionist, Vol. 34 (October 1968), p. 8.

[25]Michael Elon, The Principles of Jewish Law (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1975), p. 410.

Over time, the ground for divorce became more liberal and measures were added to protect the status of the wife and children. Mutual consent was required in order to divorce. The husband had the right to give his wife a "get" if she was an adultress or was suspected of adultery; if she disregarded Jewish ritual laws; if she denied him his sexual rights for one year; if she refused to follow him to their dwelling place, to Israel or Jerusalem; if she suffered from an incurable mental or physical illness that made living with her impossible or dangerous; or if she was unable to bear children.

The woman could go to the courts in order to persuade her husband to give her a divorce if he contracted a chronic disease after they had married, if his vocation made him physically repulsive, if he treated her cruelly, if he wandered from Judaism, if he squandered his property and refused to support her, if he committed an offense that forced him to flee the country, if he was sterile or impotent by his own admission, if he persistently refused sexual intercourse, or if he habitually consorted with prostitutes.[26]

Although grounds for divorce and divorce procedures suggested a liberal view, there existed strong moral and societal pressures against the dissolution of a marriage, thus making divorce a relatively rare phenomenon. As is written in the Talmud: "The altar

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[26]Rabbi Julius Kravetz, "Divorce in the Jewish Tradition," in Jews and Divorce, ed. Jacob Fried (New York: K.T.A.V. Publishing House, Inc., 1968), pp. 154-155.

sheds tears over he who divorces his first wife; the Lord hates his sending her away."[27]

When no reconcilliation was possible, the couple had to go to the courts and request that a legal document be written out. This bill of divorcement stated that a husband had given his wife her freedom and that all bonds were severed and that she was henceforth free to marry another. After the bill was written, it had to be put into the hands of the woman by the husband in the presence of two witnesses to ensure that she could not be divorced without her knowledge. After the "get" was given, the man was free to remarry immediately, but the woman had to wait for ninety days in order to determine paternity in the event she was pregnant at the time of divorce.[28]

Protection for the woman and her rights to divorce were developed and codified by Rabbenu Gershom of Mayence in the eleventh century:

> It is ordained that as the man does not put away his wife except of his own free will, so shall the woman not be put away except by her own consent.[29]

Although there were provisions for divorce in Jewish law, Jews living in the diaspora acculturated to the thinking of the age and the countries in which they settled. There were provisions made

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[27] Ibid., p. 155

[28] Ibid., p. 156.

[29] Ibid., pp. 21-22.

in Jewish law which required that the law of the land supercede religious law in all but a few areas. Jewish reformers of the Enlightenment period of the late eighteenth century tried to base their opinions on a rational approach to tradition. One of the many areas which had to be rethought was the status of women which was undergoing change in the spirit of individual rights. In England, a single or widowed Jewish woman had the power to make contracts, to write a will, and to sue in the courts.[30]

By the beginning of the twentieth century all western countries had their own laws of divorce and in general, the authority of the Jewish courts came to an end. Many countries granted divorce on grounds similar to those of Jewish law, or in some cases were more stringent. Observant Jews still adhere to the requirement of the "get" in addition to a civil divorce. The mass influx of Jews to this country took place during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century; and as American citizens, Jews were subject to the divorce laws of the United States which were based in most part on Christian doctrine.[31]

Christian Doctrine and Divorce

Christian divorce doctrine has its roots in the laws of the Roman Republic. Before the time of Christ, Rome used a free contract

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[30]Habonim, Sisters in Exile, p. 50.

[31]Max Rheinstein, Marriage Stability, Divorce and Law (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), p. 34.

in marriage where either party might obtain a release without court proceedings, simply by declaring before a witness that they wished to dissolve the marriage. This practice was similar though less rigid than the Jewish procedure of the "get."

There is ambiguity in the interpretation given in the Gospel of Mathew regarding Jesus's statement on divorce, and this unclear position has been the basis of debate within the Church. To the question "is it lawful to divorce one's wife?" Jesus replied: "...whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another, commits adultery."[32] Two positions have resulted from this statement. The first is that Christ taught the indissolubility of marriage and forbade divorce. The second is that the husband may divorce his wife only on the grounds of adultery.[33]

Separation was allowed in the case of intermarriage between a Christian and a pagan, if the "unbelieving" partner desired to separate. This doctrine was based on St. Paul's Epistles and was called the "Pauline Privilege." St. Augustine established a doctrine for the Catholic Church called "The Good of Marriage." He wrote, "Once a marriage is entered upon the first union of two human beings bears a kind of sacred bond. It can be dissolved in no way, except by the death of one of the parties."[34] This doctrine emphasized the

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[32]Nelson Manfred Blake, The Road to Reno (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1962), p. 10.

[33]Ibid., p. 11

[34]Ibid., p. 12.

holy nature of the married state which symbolizes the never-ending union of Christ and the Church.

In Catholic teachings, the chief goal of marriage was to beget children, with the supplementary aim of avoiding sin through fornication and adultery. This dual goal is a consequence of the Christian preference for chastity. Even after Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, divorce continued to be available under old forms. Under Roman Law, marriage was considered a private arrangement. Neither Church nor state had coercive power. However, the Church could use the powerful weapon of witholding sacraments from those considered to be living in sin. Although there was no divorce in theory, there was a continual "divorce problem" especially among the wealthy, where husbands had no problem getting rid of their wives and marrying other women. Divorces were granted through bribery and other forms of influence. The Church took solace in the belief that without its efforts, the situation would have been worse.

During the Reformation period, Protestants eagerly rejected the Catholic doctrine, although they too had difficulty in establishing a clear position on divorce. In answer to the question "What is the procedure in matters of marriage and divorce?", Martin Luther replied, "This should be left to the lawyers and made subject to secular governments."[35] Luther's was the first Christian allusion to divorce being a civil matter. During the latter part of the

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[35] Ibid., p. 22.

seventeenth century, the Puritans in England demanded that matrimonial cases be taken to the civil courts and were also the first to assert the wife's right to divorce on an equibasis with the husband. Nevertheless divorce was still a right reserved primarily for the rich and influential. Divorce was rare with only five granted through Parliament up until 1715.[36] More than a century later, in 1869, England passed laws which allowed for an absolute divorce through the courts.[37]

Divorce in America

American laws of divorce have their origin in the laws of England. In the colonies there was discrepancy and disagreement on the use of civil courts. After the War of Independence, divorce became more frequent and states set about to develop their own codes of law in reaction to the rigidity of the English law. New England was the first to recognize and grant divorce. As legislative divorce became more frequent, the institution was attacked as arbitrary, costly and lacking in safeguards.[38] Following the model of New England, other states developed law courts and grounds for divorce. Adultery and desertion were the most prominent causes of divorce, and the laws were based on the assumption that divorce was a punishment for marital misconduct.

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[36] Ibid., p. 32.

[37] Ibid., p. 33

[38] Rheinstein, Marriage Stability, Divorce and Law, p. 34.

There was a good deal of discrepancy among the states as to the strictness or leniency of their divorce laws. It was, therefore, common practice for those seeking divorce to "migrate" to a state where laws were less stringent. A movement was begun in favor of uniform national divorce laws which would have done away with "migratory divorce," a privilege reserved primarily for the rich. This movement never succeeded and vast differences in divorce laws between the states still exist.

Divorce laws in America generally require that one party be considered at fault. A lawyer has to establish in court the guilt of one party and the innocence of the other. In states that used the fault theory, 75 percent of all divorce was based on "cruelty." Often witnesses would perjure themselves to give testimony of cruelty. In New York State "hotel evidence" was concocted to prove that a husband was an adulterer.[39] As established by Christian doctrine, laws were intended to discourage divorce by punishing the party guilty of misconduct, yet the termination of the marriage was often what the "wrong-doer" sought.[40]

To this day, divorce laws remain inconsistent, expensive, and hypocritical and built on the premise of deciding which of the partners is at fault.[41] The state of California was the first to

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[39]Michael Wheeler, No Fault Divorce (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974), p. 4.

[40]Ibid., p. 6.

[41]Ibid., p. 18.

implement divorce reform with the establishment of "no fault" divorce. In 1970 the California legislature replaced the term "divorce" with the term "dissolution of marriage." This eliminated all fault-related grounds such as extreme mental cruelty or adultery and replaced it with a standard of "irreconcilable differences."[42] Contra Costa County in California handles divorce through the mail if advance agreement has been reached on property settlement and child custody. The media at times have poked fun at this phenomenon, equating "mail order" divorce with other California fads.

By 1972 Iowa, Florida, Oregon, Michigan, and Colorado had followed the California example, each with their own variation. New York has had a no fault law with continued revisions since 1966. No fault divorce has taken the place of "marital breakdown," "incompatability," and "separation" statutes. Most recently, a bill has been introduced in the Maryland legislature which would permit three-year marriages to dissolve without going to court if both parties agree to divorce. Georgia might respond to the growing divorce rate on another level. There presently is a bill pending which would require marriage and divorce counseling as a part of the marriage licensing process.[43]

The divorce rate in California has risen 45 percent since the enactment of no fault divorce laws, and many see a direct connection between the leniency of the law and the rise in the divorce

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[42] Ibid., p. 19.

[43] Los Angeles Times, Part 2, 8 March 1976, p. 1.

rate. Although "lax" laws are one of the oldest reasons cited as a cause of divorce, it is by no means the only one.

The Causes of Divorce

The attempt to answer the question "What causes divorce?" might well result in responses as myriad as the incidence of divorce itself. As Goode points out, the question is similar to asking "What causes death or crime or society? At times the kind of answer that seems demanded is one which will say that Factor X causes divorce and all divorces may be explained in terms of Factor X."[44] Yet the search for the causes of divorce is one that has gone on throughout history and has commanded the attention of theologians, sociologists, psychologists, and laymen. Divorce in the United States up until the mid-nineteenth century appears to have been a relatively rare occurrence.[45] There were only twenty-seven published articles on divorce between the years 1802 and 1881 with the first appearing in the Southern Quarterly Review in 1854.[46]

"Easy" divorce laws have long been blamed for a rising divorce rate. The churches in the United States have been powerful molders of opinion, and church leaders were the first to call public attention

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[44]William J. Goode, After Divorce (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1956), p. 113.

[45]James H. Barnett, "Divorce and the American Divorce Novel" (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1939), p. 34.

[46]Ibid., pp. 34-35.

to the increasing practice of divorce during the nineteenth century. In the early 1800's, some New England states passed what were deemed to be more liberal laws, which allowed divorce where there was "proven adultery, desertion, or intemperance."[47] In 1816, Dr. Timothy Dwight, President of Yale University responded to this legislation by declaring:

> The passage of easy divorce laws will lead to an increase in divorce that will be dreadful beyond conception...within a moderate period, the whole community will be thrown by laws made in open opposition to the laws of God.[48]

Although the opinion that a rise in the divorce rate was due to the ease with which people could obtain a divorce, the divorce rate steadily increased even in those states which had stringent laws.[49]

A number of other causes of divorce have been postulated during the past one hundred-fifty years. For example, the increase in the number of divorces has been attributed to the rise of industrialization. Prior to the era of industrialization, it is argued the extended family formed a self-sustaining unit with all members, from the very youngest to the elderly, contributing toward the family's economic survival. The rise of industrialism resulted in the removal of some family members from their homes and land to work

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[47] Ibid., p. 18.

[48] Blake, The Road to Reno, p. 59.

[49] William L. O'Neill, Divorce in the Progressive Era (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1967), p. 27.

in factories. Since those who were not capable of working were excluded from the system, the very young and the very old were seen as a drain on the family. The elderly lost their status of respect and veneration and the very young were totally dependent until they reached an age of productivity. The mother, too, lost her status as an economic contributor and was forced to become the sole caretaker of the dependent children. These role changes in the family loosened the bonds which had held it together and contributed to a rise in desertion and divorce. As Goode points out, "Industrialism seems to produce roughly the same magnitude of divorce wherever it appears. In Western countries it has been accompanied by a marked increase in divorce."[50]

Another theory presumed that increased longevity precipitates divorce. As the life span increases, multiple marriage within one's life become feasible. This theory appears plausible at first glance, yet loses its viability when one compares longevity with the rate of divorce over the past fifty years. In 1925, a man of twenty could expect to live to be sixty-six, while a woman of twenty could expect to live to age sixty-eight. Thirty years later, in 1955, a man's life expectancy at age twenty was seventy years, an increase of 6 percent, and a woman's was seventy-six, an increase of 14 percent. In that same period, however, the divorce rate increased by about

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[50]William J. Goode, The Family (New Jersey: Englewood Cliffs, 1964), p. 109.

40 percent, or almost seven times as much as the increase in adult life expectancy for men and three times as much as the increase for women. In the eleven years from 1960 to 1971 life expectancy hardly changed at all while the divorce rate increased about 70 percent.[51]

Other more recent and more plausible explanations of divorce are socio-economic factors. Our modern economy demands mobile and adaptive citizens, whose first loyalty is to their own functioning. Thus, great emphasis is placed on the individual's right to maximize his capabilities.[52] This striving for self-realization is a uniquely American phenomenon and a comparatively recent one. The credo of rugged individualism has inspired many myths regarding the "lone frontiersman" when, in fact, "The family has been the basic unit in the founding of the United States and the frontier was settled by families rather than individuals."[53]

The present-day popularity of self-actualization may more plausibly be traced back to psychiatric preoccupation with the individual. Today the individualistic creed is encapsulated by Dr. Fritz Perls:

> You do your thing and I do mine. I am not in this world to live up to your expectations, and you are not in this world to live up to mine. You are you, and I am I. And if by chance we

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[51]Robert S. Weiss, Marital Separation (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1975), p. 5.

[52]Ibid.

[53]Karl Llewellyn, "Behind the Law of Divorce," Columbia Law Review 33, 1933, p. 249.

> find each other, it is beautiful, if not, it can't be helped.[54]

As Americans became less bound by tradition, religion, and public opinion, they experienced a tremendous increase in life options and choices. The emphasis on freedom of choice carried to its final limits in regard to marriage results in no choice being seen as irrevocable. With the freedom to choose goes the right to change one's mind. "If past mistakes are to be reparable in every other field of human relations, why should marriage be the exception?"[55]

Up until ten years ago, the seventh year of marriage was considered the "danger point," and was jokingly referred to as the "seven year itch." Since 1966 there has been a dramatic rise in the divorce rate involving marriages of ten years and longer. During that year 40 percent of all divorces involved such marriages, and the percentage has increased each year since then.[56] A marriage begun ten or more years ago often involved partners who perceived their roles as clear and delineated--the husband as the primary wage earner and the wife as homemaker and mother. A little over a decade has passed since Betty Friedan's "Feminine Mystique" began to arouse the consciousness of American women to the male dominance of the

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[54]Fritz Perls, Gestalt Therapy Verbatim (Lafayette, California: Real Peoples Press, 1969), p. 4.

[55]Margaret Mead, Male and Female (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1949), p. 334.

[56]Morton Hunt, The World of the Formerly Married (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966), pp. 18-19.

world in which they lived, and the women's movement has since made an undeniable impact on the role of women, men, marriage, and the family. It has led women to question their traditional roles and to change their self-image. Feminists feel that far too much has been made of the biological differences between men and women. Rather, they argue different socialization processes account for a larger part of the observed behavioral differences between the sexes. Feminists declare that women are expected to be passive, receptive, nurturent, patient, helpful, submissive and dependent, and every facet of the mass media continually contributes to this image. In fact, women who do show initiative, independence, and competitiveness are often presented as unhappy because they have denied their essential feminine identity.[57]

Joseph Epstein in his book, "Divorced in America," sensitively describes the oppressiveness his wife felt with the traditional feminine role:

> The children had all gone off to school, leaving her alone much of the day. Between boredom and unhappiness runs a very thin line and she crossed it. She was very bright and mightily resourceful, but she had been brought up to be a wife and a mother. Once, being a wife and mother may have been enough. For a time, for her it had been enough, but now no more. She hadn't a trade, she hadn't anything specific she wanted to do, but she

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[57] The Women's Movement (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1973), p. 13.

> knew she was unhappy. I proposed the idea of taking some college course, of becoming an interior decorator, of starting lessons in guitar or painting. But her unhappiness was too urgent, by this point, too deep-seated and she was too intelligent to allow it to be assuaged by such common placebos.[58]

Unequal growth patterns between husbands and wives have been cited as a cause of divorce. This used to be referred to as the "executive syndrome," where the man was moving upward into a more stimulating environment while the woman, confined to the role of mother and homemaker, remained static. The advent of the women's movement appears to have reversed this phenomenon. "The woman, in a burst of anger, breaks out of her cocoon, demanding to exercise her wings, and the husband is unprepared to deal with the new creature his wife has become."[59]

Another proposed cause of divorce involves the unrealistic expectations which are placed on marriage. For example, the linking of love and of marriage was unknown up until comparatively recent times. For centuries, marriage was a contractual arrangement, made not by the bride and groom, but by their parents. Today, the idea of entering marriage without "being in love" is viewed with suspicion and even distaste, while a marriage between two people who love one another is viewed as right, proper, and beautiful. Yet, the popular notion that marriage would provide full-time ecstasy often turned

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[58]Epstein, Divorced in America, p. 38.

[59]Joanne and Lew Koch, "Consumers' Guide to Therapy for Couples," Psychology Today, March 1976, p. 33.

out to be an illustion. The most damaging aspect of the linking of love and of marriage is the level of expectation it tends to stimulate and the fact that the "hypnotic ecstatic condition usually enjoyed during courtship fades not long after leaving the altar."[60]

Margaret Mead has declared that "The American marriage is one of the most difficult marriage forms that the human race has ever attempted...couples marry for little more reason than that they 'fell in love.'"[61] Dr. Mead's statement, made in 1949, may appear sorely outdated when applied to the latest generation of men and women of marriageable age. Living together before marrying is an almost commonplace occurrence, especially among college students. Parental opinion about this arrangement has changed from consternation and shame, to acceptance, either begrudging or wholehearted. Given the prevalence of divorce, many parents have come to view living together arrangements as a practical method whereby two people can test out their compatibility under circumstances which approximate marriage in all but the legal aspect; and thus, hopefully, prevent the trauma of divorce.

For an older generation, however, the love ethic of marriage remains potent. Those who grew up during the second, third, and fourth decades of this century were too late for the arrange marriages of prior generations and too early to have been able to foresee the problems of romance-oriented monogamy.

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[60] William J. Lederer and Don D. Jackson, Mirages of Marriage, (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1968), p. 55.

[61] Mead, Male and Female, p. 342.

> We were almost, but not quite the first generation to believe in love marriages. We placed the enormous burden of love onto a relationship designed primarily and originally for the survival of the human race.[62]

More recently, the prevalence of divorce has been attributed to the new sex ethic, often referred to as the "sexual revolution." In past times "incompatibility" was usually a delicate euphemism for sexual unhappiness in marriage. Today's attitudes toward sexuality in general and sexual intercourse in particular represents a revolution which has affected tradition and values as well as religion, psychology, and sociology. In 1908, Sigmund Freud laid the major share of the blame for various forms of "modern nervousness" at the door of the "injurious influence of culture which unduly suppresses the sexual life of civilized people.[63]

The standard of middle class Vienna of Freud's time (which prevailed in Europe and America as well) declared that the only legitimate expression of sexual desire was through marriage. Both men and women were expected to remain chaste until they married and life-long abstinence was the rule for those who never married. Marriage, however, generally did not usher in freedom of sexuality between husbands and wives. Sexual morality restricted intercourse even in marriage itself, for it compelled the couple to be satisfied with a very small number of sexual acts leading to conception.[64]

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[62]Eda J. LeShan, The Wonderful Crisis of Middle Age (New York: David McKay Co. Inc., 1973), p. 148.

[63]Sigmund Freud, "Civilized Sexual Morality and Modern Nervousness," quoted in Joseph Epstein, Divorced in America, p. 55.

[64]Ibid.

Today, sixty-eight years later, Freud's delicately worded plea for a greater acceptance of one's human sexuality appears tame and almost quaint when contrasted with the amount of sexually explicity material presently in circulation. The effect of this massive emphasis on sex has resulted in sex becoming "...a highly compartmentalized activity, rather like high jumping...at some vague point, a good sex life stopped being a privilege and a delight and turned into a shrilly demanded right."[65] The current effort to "make marriage work," has resulted in a tremendous focusing upon sexual gratification in marriage. In the past there was a proliferation of marriage manuals, which spelled out what to do and how to do it. More recently these books and a new professional class of marriage counselors "advise variations of sexual behavior once considered unnatural if not illegal. Some now urge not only a variety of techniques, but a variety of partners as well."[66]

The standards of sexual performance, as outlined in books on sex and as portrayed in many current films, serve to raise the sexual expectations of both partners and are often ones which the average husband and wife cannot meet. Dr. David Reuben writes: "An active and rewarding sex life, at a mature level is indespensible if one is to achieve his full potential as a member of the human race."[67]

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[65] Epstein, Divorced in America, p. 59.

[66] The Women's Movement, p. 38.

[67] David Reuben, M.D., as quoted in Joseph Epstein, Divorced in America, p. 60.

This type of statement most often is made with the intent of encouraging partners to achieve new or added joy through sex. Unfortunately, the opposite often results. A husband or wife who may have come to terms with some sexual dissatisfaction in their marriage may, in the light of current sexology, decide to find a more satisfactory partner and thus dissolve the marriage.

> Sex, if not necessarily always a true reason, now, at least provides another excuse for breaking up a marriage...If the sex in one's marriage is not up to the mark, then everyone will understand that the marriage is probably best broken up."[68]

In conclusion, causes of divorce theories have ranged from the purely legalistic ones of blaming easy divorce laws to the more complicated changes in both the society and in the attitudes of individuals. Often, however, even with the best of will and intelligence, people cannot make a happy marriage. "Marriage involves so much within human beings that is unconscious, that one may be more astonished by the number of marriages that do endure."[69]

Causes of Divorce Among Jews in the United States

Judaism, while stressing the sanctity of marriage, has always permitted divorce after ascertaining that the welfare of the couple might be endangered by a marriage which has resulted in misery and degredation.[70] Thus, the millions of Jews who emmigrated to the

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[68]Epstein, Divorced in America, p. 71.

[69]Goode, After Divorce, p. 1.

[70]Norman Linzer, The Jewish Family (New York: Commission on Synagogue Relations, Federation of Jewish Philanthrophies, 1968) p. 44.

United States during the turn of the century had, as part of their culture and tradition, a familiarity with divorce. In fact, the vast majority of them came from the Pale of Settlement which, toward the end of the nineteenth century, had a divorce rate among Jews which was higher than that of the other religious and ethnic groups in that region.[71]

An examination of the causes of divorce among Jews since 1900 must begin with the incidence of desertion, which was prevalent among immigrant Jews.[72] The vast majority of Jews who wished to come to America were poor, and often the family could afford passage for the husband only while his wife and children were left behind to await the day when he had accumulated enough money to send for them. In some cases, years elapsed before this was possible. During the intervening time, the husband had adjusted to his new homeland; the arrival of his wife and children years later was, in some instances, a less than joyous occasion. Their long separation created a cultural gulf between them. In addition, the husband, having grown accustomed to life as a single man, was now faced with the hard reality of having to support a family. Thus a number of husbands chose desertion, "the poor man's divorce."

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[71] The Jewish Attitude Toward Divorce, quoted in Jacob Freid, ed., Jews and Divorce (New York: K.T.A.V. Publishing House, 1968), p. 53.

[72] Ibid., pp. 63-65.

Jews coming to this country also possessed a traditional stance toward marriage which was based upon the belief that it was both a religious obligation, "mitzvah," and a rational decision. Any two decent people from similar family lines could marry. The attraction between them was not of paramount importance because marriage was seen as an alliance between families, not an arrangement between two individuals.[73] The flowering of love between the couple was considered a bonus, not a requisite. When Golde tremulously asks Tevye, "Do you love me?" in "Fiddler on the Roof," the question indeed was a novel one.

One of the causes of divorce among Jews in recent decades may be due to their adoption of the priority of love in marriage. Large numbers of Jews arrived in the United States at a time when romantic marriage was gaining great acceptance and popularity, and love in marriage was placed high on the list of steps that had to be taken in order to achieve full "Americanization." The traditional arranged marriage, typified by the "shadchan," marriage broker, could only exist as long as the idea of romantic love remained submerged.[74] Abrahm Cahan, in his novel, The Rise of David Levinsky, vividly illustrates how the recently arrived Jewish immigrant adopted this value.

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[73] Marhsall Sklare, America's Jews (New York: Random House 1971), p. 76.

[74] Ibid., p. 76.

Levinsky (to Dora): "Was yours a love match?"
Dora (wincing): "What difference does it make? We were married as most couples are married. Much I knew of the love business in those days. After the wedding, I knew that I was a married woman and must be contented...but my daughter will be happy! She shall go to college and be an educated American lady and, if God lets me live, I shall see to it that she doesn't marry unless she meets the choice of her heart...I was married in the old fashioned way, but in this country people have different notions.[75]

The first articles citing divorce as a problem among Jews were published in the 1960's. Prior to that time, divorce appeared not to be a Jewish problem; and its low incidence, like the relative absence of alcoholism among Jews, was perceived to be a function of cultural values within the Jewish community. The rise in the Jewish divorce rate was documented in an article appearing in the National Jewish Monthly in December 1961, entitled: "Newest Jewish Problem: Divorce." The author Alfred Allan attributed the rise in the divorce rate among Jews to "psychological causes" when he noted that "there are times when the moral counsel given by a rabbi to an estranged couple does not penetrate because the rabbi does not know that one or

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[75]Abraham Cahan, The Rise of David Levinsky (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1960), p. 266.

both of the partners is psychologically ill."[76] Those seeking divorce were believed to have psychoneurotic disturbances, usually originating in childhood and manifesting themselves in later life. The article ends by calling for increased psychological counseling for Jewish couples which would result in "preventing needless divorce." The author's faith in the efficacy of psychotherapy as a divorce preventative dovetails with Sklare's finding that "of all segments of the American population, Jews display the greatest faith in psychotherapy and make extensive use of it."[77]

The earlier discussion of the women's movement as a possible factor causing divorce can be applied to Jewish marriages as well. While the effect of the movement upon Jewish women specifically is still inconclusive, it appears that the younger the woman, the greater the impact the movement is likely to have upon her. A profile of the "average" women's liberation member places her in her 20's to 30's, middle-class, white, striving toward eventual professional career status, a bit unconvential in her life style, while maintaining social behavior indicative of middle-class norms. Members are described as cosmopolitan, usually more interested in national and international events than local ones, politically liberal with

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[76] Allan, "Newest Jewish Problem, Divorce," p. 7.

[77] Sklare, America's Jews, p. 90.

institutionalized religion playing a very insignificant role in their lives.[78] Clearly, a portion of young Jewish women fit this description. Then too, the higher educational level achieved by younger Jewish women would seem to indicate, if not their membership, then certainly their exposure to the tenets of the women's movement.

In his preface to the book, Jews and Divorce, Jacob Freid expresses the belief that affluence is one of the major underlying causes of divorce among Jews. As youth, the children of immigrant parents had too little; today, they are parents of families that have too much. This raised standard of living brought in its wake a focusing on materialism and a rebellion against the tradition of their parents and grandparents. Succeeding generations of Jews have been able to take increased advantage of the economic and educational opportunities in this country, and a by-product of their success has been their experiencing family and social problems almost unheard of in the past.[79]

Acculturation results in "cultural dilution." As Jews increasingly adopt the prevailing values of the general society, they tend to become further removed from their traditional ones. Religious sanctions regarding divorce have no hold over a vast majority of Jews.

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78 Maren L. Carden, The New Feminist Movement (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1974), p. 20.

79 Freid, Jews and Divorce, p. VIII.

The goals of individual happiness and self-fulfillment have superseded religious duty and group responsibility.[80] Community opinion always acted as a brake on divorce and was still a factor up until the early 50's. It was then that vast numbers of Jews began to experience financial success which afforded them a considerable level of physical mobility. Old neighborhoods were abandoned as Jews flocked to the suburbs, to other states and to the west. Friends and relatives were scattered and the extended family gave way to the nuclear family structure with all its attendant problems of pressure and isolation. Rabbi Harold Schulweiss expresses the belief that affluence tends also to shield youngsters from fully experiencing life's frustrations and pain. Parents, in their eagerness to provide the "good life" for their children, have unwittingly weakened and handicapped them. A generation unused to dealing with self-denial or delayed gratification is ill equipped to weather marriage.[81]

There is every indication that the dissolution of Jewish marriages is occurring at a rate comparable to that being experienced in the broader community.[82] The search for causes has been replaced with articles calling for an increased understanding and acceptance

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[80] Ibid.

[81] Rabbi Harold Schulweiss, Lecture (Los Angeles, California: University of Southern California, May 1976).

[82] Altman, "Single Parent Families," p. 5.

of the Jewish single-parent family, and proposals for programs which can better answer their needs.

Post Divorce

The divorcee's identity changes the moment she removes her wedding ring. Both society's view of her and her own self-image now reflect her move from married to single status. The newly divorced woman is reminded of her new identity each time she fills out an application form and checks "divorced," or is asked by a new acquaintance what her husband's occupation is. The financial security she may have known while married very often has been shattered. If she is unable to work, she may be faced with the necessity of borrowing money or applying for government assistance. For the woman who has never been a welfare recipient, receiving financial aid or using food stamps further erodes her sense of dignity and adds to her feelings of failure. Her new identity brings with it changes in her daily life. In addition to being a mother, cook, and chauffeur, she now may also be the breadwinner during the day and in the evening may have to magically become a charming, attractive woman whom any man would want to date.

For the divorced mother, a change in financial status often spells the move from security to chronic money problems. For many middle-class women, it is also the realization that their contribution to the professional success of the ex-husbands will now go unrewarded.[83] Many women have little experience in handling family

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[83] Weiss, Marital Separation, p. 74.

finances and, therefore, may not be aware of their financial situation at the time of divorce. This is especially true if the practice in marriage involved the husband paying the bills and the wife receiving a weekly or monthly allowance.[84]

Very often receiving credit from department stores or banks is exceptionally difficult. Most married women never establish credit in their own name and are often automatically considered a poor credit risk after divorce. The divorced mother may be unemployed or underpaid with several dependents. Many women may resort to lying about their marital status or are forced to ask their parents to co-sign a credit contract. In either case, the situation denies them a sense of independence and is a reminder of the stigma attached to being divorced. The divorced mother, finding herself financially dependent on her ex-husband, her parents, or the government may respond with anger or desperation. The struggle to free herself of financial problems may be one of the most difficult burdens she has to cope with.

Work plays a significant role in establishing some equilibrium in the single-parent family. A steady income provides some financial security while giving the woman a sense of worth. Work also provides a new self-definition, whereby one's marital status becomes less important. Paid employment provides a community of

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[84]E. Geggel and R.L. Schwartz, "Helping the Single Mother Through the Group Process," Journal of Jewish Communal Service 50 (September 1974):246.

[85]Weiss, Marital Separation, p. 246.

others who are less concerned with a woman's personal life. Work makes it possible and necessary to get out of the house and serves as a distraction from obsessively reviewing one's situation. It has also been observed that jobs which entail frequent but superficial engagement with others may be ideally suited to the recently divorced woman, providing reassurance of her acceptability without requiring that she reveal a great deal about herself.[86]

If a woman chooses to pursue a professional career, she may have to return to school to complete college or begin a graduate program. This, too, creates financial problems but carries with it the same salutary benefits of working. The decision to work depends upon many factors: the ages of her children, her training, her former experience, her financial situation, and her present state of mind. When a woman decides to work, she must reorganize family roles and responsibilities. Her children must become less dependent and more cooperative, because in essence they are all members of a "survival team." Many women ease into new roles by beginning with part-time work. This gives the children a chance to adjust to her being away and to accept their new responsibilities.[87]

Child rearing for the divorced mother may present the problem of both task and emotional overload with unending responsibilities

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[86] Ibid., p. 247.

[87] Carol Mindley, The Divorced Mother (New York: Random House, 1968), p. 225.

and restrictions on her freedom.[88] When one parent is physically (and often psychologically) missing, the mother has no adult in the home with whom to compare her perceptions about her children, nor share in their discipline. The divorcee trying to pursue a personal life may be made to feel guilty by her children or her parents, especially if she is unsure about what she wants to do. If her children fail at school or engage in acting-out behavior, there is a tendency to blame this on the divorce which doubles the mother's sense of failure and guilt. It has been found that children profit from a parent who communicates openly and honestly about her needs and pursues a life of her own outside the home. This may be difficult for a divorced woman whose ability might be impaired as the result of the trauma of divorce and personal deprivation.[89]

Communication between the mother and her children includes preparing them for new relationships with men. It is important that the mother's male friends be introduced to the children with the understanding that they are not new attachment figures. Younger children especially tend to come to view other males as father replacements. Mother's relationship with a man may be temporary, and his leaving can mean another loss in the child's life.

Once a divorced mother returns to school, starts a new job, or begins to date, she may have taken the first effective step toward

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[88]Weiss, Marital Separation, p. 185.

[89]Ibid., p. 186.

alleviating loneliness. Newly divorced mothers tend to believe that their children will provide a bulwark against loneliness, yet their sense of aloneness can be most acute in the evening after they have put their children to bed. A divorced mother writes: "I lay awake as my children sleep. My arms tingle with longing to touch and be touched...I explore my body, it is not a bad body...at least not to me."[90]

Loneliness is the single, most overwhelming feeling a divorced woman must cope with. For many, it is not the experience of being alone, but loneliness which is so difficult---a single, aching emptiness that needs to be filled. The development of an entirely new social network can help to counter balance loneliness and provide some opportunities for meeting new men. Once a woman begins to date, she may be forced to re-examine her attitudes toward men and her expectations regarding romantic love. Many women have had only limited association with men prior to their divorce, and a woman who was unhappily married may harbor resentments and hostility toward men in general. It has been found that when the woman finds herself less needy, ready to develop her own identity and think independently, she will view men differently. A woman who has clarified her own values and chosen her goals tends to feel increased confidence in

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[90] Jan Fuller, Space (New York: Arthur Fields Books, Inc., 1973).

herself and is able to experience more mature relationships. Dating in and of itself brings hope for a new attachment and the reassurance that life is not barren.[91]

The divorcee, often inexperienced in dating, may feel a combination of sophistication and naivete. Although she may date with an awareness of her sexual needs, she might not be prepared to handle either her own impulses or a man's advances and is confronted by the need to develop a new sex ethic. Many times she finds herself disregarding her former sexual values, while unable to replace them with anything other than her own instincts.[92] One woman, divorced after fourteen years of marriage, stated: "I don't like being thirty-six years old and dealing with all these sexual problems. I haven't had any experience. All I've been, is married."[93] A woman raised with the ethic that associates sex only with marriage and committment, might be devastated by the sexual expectations of some men. Sexual accessibility can mean different things to men and to women. For some men sex is motivated by a desire to augment their self-esteem, while women, subject to a lifetime of socialization, associate sex with permanent relationships.[94] After deeper reflection, a newly divorced woman might realize she wants a simple friendship with a

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[91] Weiss, Marital Separation, p. 248.

[92] Ibid., p. 285.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Geggel and Schwartz, "Helping the Single Mother," p. 250.

mar. Yet a platonic relationship is often difficult to arrange. Divorced men and women in their search for a mate might abort a relationship which holds no promise of sexuality.

Children, too, encounter post-divorce problems requiring a range of adjustments. Divorce can precipitate a variety of behavioral reactions to the multiple losses which they experience. One of the major losses a child sustains is that of no longer having both parents readily accessible. The child may experience the loss of a psychosocial support system which may also damage his sense of faith and trust. For the child, the family unit represents security and an unchallenged absolute. When a separation occurs, a trust is broken, and new father-mother-child relationships have to be established.

The child may long for his "pre-divorce" mother, rather than the one who now has new needs and is going through the process of creating new roles for herself. The same phenomenon may occur with the father in the context of his physical absence and, in some cases, his psychological distance. Furthermore, the child may experience environmental change. Very often the single-parent family has to move for financial reasons and such shifts require the child to make compound adjustments to a new home, school, friends, teachers, and neighborhood.[95]

A study done by Dr. Judson T. Landis, Professor of Family Sociology at the University of California, revealed that the emotional shock of divorce is greater if the child was led to believe that his

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[95]John G. Cull and Richard E. Hardy, Deciding on Divorce (Springfield, Ill.: American Lecture Series Publications, 1974), p. 89.

parents were happily married. Landis found that children of divorce were more dependent on their friends as they sought the security that was missing from their home. In adolescence and young adulthood, they tend to "go steady" rather than date casually. For some, the shame they connect to divorce lowers their self-esteem, and they feel inferior to friends who have intact families. Children sometimes carry the burden of guilt for having "caused" the divorce which can add to their feelings of shame.[96]

The post-divorce problems of the single-parent mother encompass an almost mind-boggling spectrum. The extent of the adjustments she has to make range from a swift change in personal identity to concerns over the functioning of her family and dealing with financial problems. The newly divorced mother is often faced with this range of problems simultaneously.

Divorce no longer bears the stamp of shame and stigma that it once did. Its very prevalence makes it commonplace, yet each divorcee may feel isolated and alone. Being divorced often demands an inordinate degree of psychological awareness and an undaunted perspective during a period of loss and confusion. The chapter analyzing our data illustrates the post-divorce problems encountered by our respondents.

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[96] Mindley, The Divorced Mother, p. 95.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

We began our research with the assumption of the likelihood of a connection between divorce and cessation of Jewish affiliation, and thus hypothesized that Jewish mothers and their children might represent a "group at risk" regarding Jewish continuity. As described in the Introduction, this study addressed itself to the following questions:

1. Is there a diminution of Jewish affiliation and identity among divorced Jewish mothers and their children?
2. What are the emotional difficulties and concrete problems brought about by divorce?
3. What programs and services are perceived as needed by the respondents, and by the researchers?

Sampling Method

Our sample population consisted of forty divorced Jewish mothers with children living at home, who were either members of temples, members of Jewish Centers and only incidentally clients of Jewish social service agencies in Los Angeles. All of our respondents are residents of either the West Los Angeles, Santa Monica, or the San Fernando Valley, all areas of high Jewish density where a number of Jewish institutions and agencies provide service to the Jewish community.

We obtained our sample population in the following manner. Letters describing our research were sent to the rabbis of a number

of large Conservative and Reform synagogues, requesting that female singe-parent congregants contact the researchers if they wished to participate in the study (see Appendix B). Names of female single parents who are members of Jewish Centers were made available to us; and from these lists, we randomly selected and contacted prospective respondents. Finally, a portion of the women volunteered to be respondents after hearing of our study through friends.

The Inverview

Interviews were conducted in the homes of the respondents and lasted approximately two and one-half hours. Our interview schedule included both structured and open-ended questions concerning: (1) personal background; (2) temple and Jewish organizational affiliation; and (3) the emotional and practical problems following divorce (see Appendix A for instrument).

The interview schedule was pretested and designed in such a way that the questions flowed naturally. Notes were taken during the interview, and the researchers wrote up additional material afterward.

Prior to conducting the interview, the researchers explained the reasons for their personal and academic interest in divorce among Jews. This tended to put the respondents at ease. In addition, we believe that our statement of interest in the respondent's situation elicited in her a sense of her "specialness." In many instances a bond of trust was established early in the process. In all cases trust had been established before the end of the interview. Anonymity was ensured and often replies of a very personal nature were not

recorded by the interviewer. Each question was posed in such a way as to allow maximum freedom of response. The range of answers to structured questions were read to the respondent only after she had fully replied to the question in her own words.

All of the women were warm and hospitable, offering refreshments, introducing us to their children, and at times showing us around their homes. After the interview, many expressed a desire for continued contact with us. They also evinced a genuine interest in our research and expressed the hope that our study would result in more adequate programming for Jewish single parents and their children, plus a better understanding of divorce in the Jewish community.

Limitations of the Study

Our sample is not representative of the general Jewish community, in that all of our respondents were either Jewishly affiliated through temples and Centers and/or recipients of Jewish social services. Generalizations from our study can best be applied to Conservative and Reform denominations, in that only one respondent was Orthodox. The overall limitation of our sampling procedure lies in the impossibility of drawing from a pool containing the names of all divorced Jewish mothers in the community. Thus, the study may have overlooked individuals who might have specific needs and suggestions for services not mentioned by any of the forty respondents.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The following is an analysis of the data collected from our forty respondents. It includes personal and demographic information, patterns of temple and Jewish organizational affiliation, the emotional and practical problems following divorce, and the effect marital dissolution has on Jewish identification.

Personal Background and Demographic Data

Our respondents ranged in age from 29 to 49 years, with a mean and median age of 37. Fifty percent of the women were below the age of 37, and 50 percent were above. They had been married from 3 to 21 years, with an average length of marriage of 13.9 years. They have been divorced from 1 to 19 years, with a mean of 6 years. Fifty-seven percent were divorced from 1 to 3 years, 28 percent from 4 to 8 years and 15 percent from 9 to 19 years. The respondents' number of children ranged from one child to four, with a mean of 2.1 children per family. The children ranged in age from 3 to 26 years, with an average age of 11.2 years. Twenty-two (55%) of their ex-husbands were professionals (physicians, attorneys, accountants, therapists, artists). Nine (22%) owned their own businesses; 5 (13%) held managerial positions and 4 (10%) were white-collar workers.

Forty-six percent of the women grew up in California. Thirty-eight percent came from the Northeast, 2 percent from the South,

10 percent from the Midwest, 2 percent from Canada and 2 percent from Europe. The respondents have been living at their present address from 1 to 16 years, with an average length of stay of 5.5 years. Fifty percent have been at their present address from 1 to 3 years and the remaining 50 percent from 4 to 16 years. Seventy percent of the respondents reported that they planned to move within two years, and of those, 71 percent hoped to move to another residence within the Los Angeles area.

Ninety-eight percent of the women were born in the United States (2% of those were born in Canada). Forty percent were second generation, and 60 percent were third generation Americans. Fifty-seven percent of the women reported that both their parents are alive. Eighteen percent stated that both their parents were deceased, and 25 percent reported one parent alive. Seventy-two percent had parents living from 2 to 30 miles from them, and 70 percent visited with their parents from a number of times per week to once every two weeks. Twenty-seven percent saw their parents a few times a year, and 3 percent rarely saw them.

Seven (17%) of the women had graduate degrees, 12 (30%) had completed four years of college, 13 (33%) had completed some college, and 8 (20%) completed high school. Twenty-one (51%) are presently enrolled in school or other educational programs which will prepare them for a career in the future. Of these, 5 (25%) will complete their schooling in less than one year. Twelve (56%) will complete school within two years and 4 (19%) will finish in three or more years.

Twenty-five (63%) of the women either are or are planning to have a professional or semi-professional career. Thirty (75%) are presently employed. Of those 24 (60%) are working full time.

Fifteen (36%) of the women use some form of outside child care (day-care centers, nursery schools or babysitters). The remainder had older children who either were in junior high school or beyond. Those using outside care anticipated needing some form of child care service for periods ranging from one to ten years or longer.

In summary, our respondents generally were a mature group chronologically who had been married for an average of almost 14 years. This is reflected in the ages of their children whose average age was 11.2 years. Although they had been married for a substantial length of time (mean: 13.9 years), the majority (57%) were divorced from one to three years. Almost half of the women were either natives of California or moved to the state during their early childhood. The statistics revealed that the women as a group were not especially mobile, having been at their present address for an average of 5.5 years. Although over 70 percent planned to move within the near future, their anticipated moves were not necessarily for financial reasons. Our sample was a highly educated group with 80 percent of the women having either taken some college credit, completed college, or completed graduate school. Although 30 percent of the women had infrequent contact with their parents, the greater majority had regular and frequent contact with them.

Temple Affiliation Patterns

Twenty-five (63%) of the respondents were temple members prior to divorce; and of those, 17 (68%) reported that they are still members of that temple. Eight (32%) joined another congregation since divorce, and 17 (42%) completely dropped their membership. Seventy-seven percent of the present temple members reported high levels of temple activity prior to divorce. These included three officers, eight committee members, ten sisterhood members and ten holding volunteer positions. Some women participated in more than one category. Out of the total of twenty-five present temple members, only three remained somewhat active in their congregations after divorce. None were officers or committee members and only one was a sisterhood member.

Seventeen (68%) reported that they felt some level of discomfort, ranging from mild to extreme, regarding participation in temple activities and services since divorce. Five (20%) felt no discomfort, and 3 (12%) reported no difference. The women explained that the nature of their discomfort included a poignant sense of their singleness, which was aroused simply by their walking into the temple. The custom of wives and husbands kissing one another "Good Shabbos" at the end of the service also served to remind them that they were divorcees. A few women reported that they had no compunction going to service by themselves when they were married, yet felt terribly conspicuous going unescorted after they were divorced.

Those women with pre-Bar/Bat Mitzvah-age children expressed

apprehension over the impending ceremony. A number of them said they felt conflicted over having their ex-husbands participate, especially in those cases where the mother had completed all the arrangements without the father's assistance or encouragement. One woman summed it up by saying, "What should be a truly joyous occasion for the child and his parents is turning into an experience I am dreading." Many worried over the shame and embarrassment their child might feel during that part of the ceremony which involves parents' participation.

Some women complained that all of the temple's social events were geared for couples, and tickets to these affairs were sold on a "per couple" basis. Some said their temples did nothing to facilitate single parents getting to know one another, which increased their sense of isolation. They also reported sensing that couples in the congregation viewed them as a possible threat to their own marital stability. Others, upon reflection, stated that their overall sense of "not fitting in" was probably due to their own self-consciousness over being recently divorced. Finally, a few women expressed resentment over being overlooked for leadership positions in the temple, specifically because they were divorced.

It should be noted that some congregations have instituted meaningful single-parent programs and those women who reported comfort in their temples were also participants in these programs.

Eighteen (72%) stated that they were aware of other single parents in the congregation. Seven (28%) were either unaware or uncertain of other single parents. Seventeen (68%) reported that there

were some programs for single parents in their temples, and 8 (32%) said there weren't any.

Of the programming they were aware of, 11 (44%) were aware of single-parent "havurot,"[97] 14 (56%) were aware of singles' social programs (primarily dances) and day-care or nursery school programs. Nineteen (76%) of the women who are present temple members had occasion to apply for a reduced temple fee, 2 (8%) did not, and 4 (16%) were considering doing so. Fifteen (79%) said the procedure was simple, and 4 (21%) said it was difficult and complicated.

Of the present temple members with children under the age of 13 (a total of 42 children), 25 (58%) plan to Bar/Bat Mitzvah, 12 (30%) do not, and 5 (12%) are undecided.

In summary, the data showed that the women who were temple members both before and after divorce had been highly active in their congregations prior to divorcing, with greatly diminished participation following divorce. They attributed this to feelings of discomfort because they were divorcees, to lack of time because they were working or going to school, to lack of money, and to the scheduling of temple activities (especially sisterhood) during daytime hours. Almost 70 percent of the women reported feelings of discomfort in their temples despite their awareness of other single parents in the congregation and their knowledge of single-parent programs.

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[97] "Havurot" are collections of Jewish families or individuals who gather together for study and the celebration of Shabat, life cycle events, and Jewish holidays.

Our total sample included seventeen women who were temple members while married and who, after divorce, dropped their membership. In general, these women were less active in their temples during their marriage, when compared to present temple members' participation prior to divorce. Of the seventeen, only one had been an officer, one a committee member, four had belonged to sisterhood, five were volunteers, and the remainder "just attended services."

The women reported that they discontinued temple membership because of feelings of discomfort or lack of money. Thirty-three percent left the temple less than 6 months after divorce, 22 percent left within one year, and 45 percent left after 18 months. Twenty-two percent of these women said they were aware of single parents in the congregation, and 78 percent said they had no awareness of other single parents. Seventy-seven percent said there were no programs for single parents in their temples and 22 percent reported awareness of singles' social events.

Former temple members had a total of 48 children under the age of thirteen. The mothers of twenty-nine (61%) of these children said that they plan on Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Fourteen (29%) will not be Bar/Bat Mitzvah, and the mothers of 5 (10%) of the children were undecided.

It is interesting to note the high percentage (61%) of former temple members who plan to Bar/Bat Mitzvah their children under age 13. These women reported that although they had dropped their temple membership, they still had strong positive feelings about Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

Jewish Organization Affiliation and Use of Jewish Social Services, Pre- and Post-Divorce

Twenty-one (52%) of our respondents were members of Jewish organizations (other than temples) prior to divorce. Of those, 13 (62%) have discontinued membership since divorcing. Of these, 45 percent dropped their membership because of feelings of discomfort over being a member and divorced. Thirty-eight percent lacked time to participate, 0 percent dropped because of financial reasons and 7 percent because they moved.

Thirty-one (77%) of the respondents had occasion to use some Jewish social service just prior to or after divorce. Fifty percent of those who were clients of Jewish Family Service reported satisfaction with their experience, and 50 percent reported dissatisfaction. Those reporting dissatisfaction felt they could not establish rapport with their social worker. Some said that the social workers were insensitive to their problems; they were often in need of concrete help, but the worker insisted on doing "therapy" with them. Others said their worker was a "male chauvinist," advising them to place more importance on helping their husbands and to delay their own plans for working or going to school in the interest of saving the marriage. Some reported being in desperate financial straits, having received no child support payments for a number of weeks and having counselors who expressed disbelief. One woman said her worker insisted on calling her physician to confirm her story.

Satisfaction, too, was determined by the relationship the

respondent developed with the social worker. A number of women reported having "excellent, knowledgeable counselors." They believed that their marriages might have been rescued had their husbands agreed to continue therapy. One woman stated: "The closer the counselor got to our real problems, the more silent my husband became, until finally he refused to go. I do wish the counselor would have called my husband and somehow insisted that he continue. However, I couldn't convince him, so I guess it is unrealistic to suppose that the counselor could have."

Eighty-six percent of those respondents who were Jewish Center members reported satisfaction with their contact with Centers since divorce. Fourteen percent were dissatisfied. Satisfaction centered primarily around reduced membership fees for single parents, and Centers' child care and camping programs. Women described some membership workers as "kind and sensitive and aware of the numerous problems of single-parent families." They also expressed deep appreciation for camp scholarships, which enabled their children to have meaningful and pleasurable summer experiences, and not be home alone during the summer months. Other women said that their children never felt stigmatized at Center programs because they came from divorced homes. Some respondents also reported having gone to discussion groups for single parents and found them informative and worthwhile. "I realized that my problems were not unique, and I'm looking forward to going back."

Dissatisfaction with Jewish Centers included some mothers

finding the child-care facilities physically depressing, and lacking in learning materials (books and records) and meaningful programs. Others stated that there were no Center programs for their teen-age children. Two mothers decried the fact that Centers "catered only to the normal child," and that there were no programs of Jewish content for the exceptional child. Others found the people who attended singles' affairs at Jewish Centers shallow or malfunctioning and believed that Centers do not attract the level of people they were accustomed to associating with.

Seventy-five percent of the respondents who used the services of Jewish Big Brothers reported satisfaction with their experience. Twenty-five percent were dissatisfied. Satisfaction was based upon the quality of the experience their sons had with the "Big Brothers." They also reported that their sons had improved behavior and a better self-image as a result of having a "Big Brother." Some, however, wished that the Big Brothers would provide their sons with "Jewish input." They felt that inculcating Jewish identity would be more successful coming from a man whom their sons respected.

Dissatisfaction was expressed with the process of selecting potential "Big Brothers." Some felt that the screening was inadequate because their sons had been paired with men who were too old or ill and were unable to participate in physical activities with them.

In response to the question, "What current Jewish programs do you believe are most valuable for single parents and their families?" 13 (32%) said "counseling." Thirteen (32%) felt that

singles' groups were most valuable, 10 (25%) cited child-care services and 4 (10%) said financial assistance.

In summary, the respondents were a group with a high level of Jewish affiliation. One hundred percent of the women had been temple members prior to divorce and 52 percent had been members of other Jewish organizations during their marriage. They also had high levels of activity in their temples and organizations before divorcing. Divorce, with its attendant emotional and concrete problems, drastically reduced the levels of participation of these women. The vast majority of both present and former temple members reported discomfort in their temples and organizations stemming from the "intact-family centeredness" of these institutions. Some women expressed anger and frustration over "feeling like outsiders" and called for changes in the thinking and programming of the temple. Others seemed to accept the situation, declaring that the temple was "just one more place where divorced people didn't fit in."

Concomitant with their high affiliation level, a large majority of the women were recipients of some form of Jewish social service or participants in various Jewishly sponsored single-parent programs. The respondents had their greatest number of contacts with Jewish Centers, Jewish Family Service, and Jewish Big Brothers. The women reported most satisfaction with Centers, followed by Jewish Big Brothers, and Jewish Family Service. A major factor influencing satisfaction was the attitude of the professional they came in contact with. The respondents reported deep appreciation of those staff

members who displayed understanding and empathy toward the divorcee and her needs. Relevancy of the program or service was a second factor affecting satisfaction. In the main, the women expressed dislike for large social events for singles, such as dances, which they described as "impersonal and demeaning."

Post Divorce Phenomena

Concrete Effects. Twenty-one (52%) of the women reported that their standard of living went down after divorce, 11 (27%) said it remained the same and 8 (20%) said it went up. Those women who reported a rise in their standard of living also said that it went down immediately after divorce and then rose after they found employment. Others explained that they were now earning more money than their husbands earned during their marriage. Twenty-four (60%) sought financial assistance after divorce. Thirteen (32%) did not, and 3 (7%) were considering doing so. Of those who sought financial assistance 47 percent received assistance from their parents, 32 percent from government agencies, 5 percent from friends and 16 percent from bank loans and other sources.

Thirty (75%) said their financial situation necessitated work after divorce, 8 (20%) did not have to work, and 2 (5%) worked out of choice and not need. Twenty-eight (70%) said they had difficulty in establishing credit after divorce and 12 (30%) said they did not. Many women who did establish credit reported that they lied regarding their marital status and financial or employment situation in order to get credit.

Fourteen (35%) changed their residence after divorce for financial reasons. Fifteen (38%) did not move and 11 (27%) moved for reasons other than financial (to be closer to work, friends and family). Of the 25 women who did move, 14 (56%) experienced difficulty in renting a house or an apartment because they were single parents.

In summary, over 50 percent of the respondents reported that they experienced lowered incomes, had to seek financial assistance, were forced to work, had difficulty in establishing credit, and had problems with renting apartments or houses after divorce.

Twenty (53%)[98] reported they were satisfied with the amount of time their ex-husbands spent with the children, 13 (34%) said they wished their ex-husbands would see the children more often, and 5 (13%) said they would prefer their ex-husbands to see the children less often. Twenty (53%) reported that their children were harder to handle after they were with the fathers. Sixteen (42%) reported no problems, and 2 (5%) said the children were easier to handle.

Twenty (53%) said they feel that their children's relationship with the father had grown closer since the divorce and 18 (47%) said it had become more distant. The respondents explained that the closer relationship they saw between the children and the father was due to the father's valuing the children more, and the children realizing that he is an individual with needs of his own. This was especially true in those instances in which the children were in their teens.

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[98]Two of the respondents' ex-husbands had died.

Some said that divorce had brought an end to the tension in the home, and the father's being out of the house enabled him to relax and enjoy his children. Other women explained that the father had little time to spend with his children during the marriage and specific visiting rights now allowed him time alone with them.

Those who reported a deterioration in the father-child relationship felt this was due to younger children, especially, seeing their father as a fantasy figure who indulged them when he saw them, but did not consistently support them either financially or emotionally. A number of others felt that lack of a day-to-day contact was responsible. In essence, the relationship had to be renewed each time, and often the father tended to exert too much control during visits, in an effort to make up for the lack of daily contact. There also were reports of the fathers physically abusing their wives and children; an instance of a father kidnapping his child, and occasions of the fathers' promiscuity throughout the marriage, all resulting in the children's drastic loss of respect for the father.

Thirty-four (87%) of the women reported that their relationship with their children had grown closer since divorce. Six (13%) reported it was more distant.

The women who felt a closer relationship with their children said that since divorcing their self-image had improved, and they were thus better able to openly love their children. Another major theme was the need for the children to shoulder more responsibility, resulting in cooperation with family members and a strengthened sense of

family loyalty. Mothers found they could be more open with their children, and their home had become more democratic. Some women reported that they had to be buffers between the children and their husbands during the marriage. Divorce allowed them to discard this role and enjoy the mother-child relationship. Others reported that immediately after divorce they tended to parentify their children out of a need for emotional support. With time, these mothers said they learned to let their children be children, and this too tended to solidify the relationship.

Those mothers who reported a more distant relationship with the children since divorce, cited their feelings of being overwhelmed with responsibility, lacking time and energy for relating to them, and resenting their children for impinging upon their freedom.

Divorce Vis-a-vis Jewishness. Twenty-four (60%) of the respondents described themselves as "traditional Jewish women" prior to divorce, in that their primary roles were as wives, homemakers, and mothers. Nine (22%) said they had been "somewhat" traditional, working part-time, or volunteering, while still regarding the family as primary. Seven (17%) said they were "non-traditional." They had careers during marriage, saw themselves as equal to their husbands and were interested in personal growth and self-fulfillment.

When asked if divorce brought about any changes in the roles they played, 32 (80%) answered "definitely yes." Eight (20%) said "no." Seventy-two percent of the women stated that they were very pleased with this change and 18 percent were displeased. The women who

were pleased explained that they felt suffocated in the role of Jewish wife and mother and, for the first time, had the opportunity to define who they were, rather than having to fit into a prescribed role. Some women said that divorce enabled them to explore their Jewishness. This was especially true in those instances where their husbands had only minimal Jewish identity. Four of the women had been married to non-Jewish men and divorce allowed them to explore their Jewish identity without feeling inhibited.

Those women who reported unhappiness with the change in their roles said they resented having to work, had no time to fulfill the traditional roles of homemaker and mother, and had to give up many pleasurable activities such as cooking and volunteering.

It is important to note that those women who were pleased with the change also stressed that it was not accomplished without difficulty. They felt their sense of worth and independence was hard won, yet, in retrospect, well worth it. Many stated that had they known the extent of the difficulty involved in making these changes, they might not have chosen to go through divorce. Yet they took pride in the progress they had made, and would not choose to return to their former roles.

Respondents were asked, "What, in your opinion, is the attitude of the Jewish community toward the divorced Jewish mother?" Three (7%) said "very accepting," 17 (42%) said "somewhat accepting." Fourteen (35%) said "somewhat non-accepting," and six (15%) said "quite unaccepting." Forty-two percent of the respondents said that

the accepting attitudes reflects a general acceptance by the Jewish community of the phenomenon of divorce. Two percent said that this reflected the Jewish tradition of caring for the woman without a husband. Forty-two percent said that rejecting community attitudes were due to Judaic emphasis on the intact family. Thirty-eight percent said that it was caused by negative attitudes toward divorce in general, and 20 percent said the community reacted negatively toward the woman who stepped out of her traditional role.

Nineteen (47%) reported a strengthened sense of Jewish identity following divorce. Two (5%) said divorce reduced their sense of Jewish identity, and 19 (47%) said divorce did not affect their Jewish identity in any way.

Those who reported a strengthened sense of Jewishness said that after their divorce they felt a need to feel closer to God, and found that attending Temple services was a moving and meaningful experience. Their discovery of Judaism enabled some to "find a place in life again." Many reported that they never felt a need to investigate their Jewish heritage when married, and in their search for meaning in their lives after divorce, investigated other religions and then returned to Judaism. Others said they felt strongly about raising their children as Jews and thus found it necessary to develop a strengthened sense of Jewish identity.

Fifty-four percent reported satisfaction with the quality and depth of Jewish identity of their children, and 46 percent were dissatisfied. Some of those reporting satisfaction said that the

father was and is instrumental in promoting a strong sense of Judaism in the children. Many said that children were receiving a solid Jewish education and that Judaism was practiced in the home.

Of those reporting dissatisfaction, some said that their ex-husbands' Jewish self-hatred tended to sabotage the children's sense of Jewish identity. This was especially true when the ex-husband had married a non-Jewish woman, and the children were exposed to Christian holiday celebrations. A number of women reported that the children's Jewish education had to be interrupted because of the cost. One mother admitted that her continual voicing of dissapointment with Jewish men has underminded her children's pride in being Jewish. Others said that their children found little acceptance among their Jewish peers and felt that many of them were affluent and spoiled. One reported her ex-husband's Jewish dogmatism resulted in the children moving away from Judaism.

In summary, our data showed that divorce caused considerable change in the roles and life style of a majority of the respondents. These changes were most marked for the women who described themselves as "traditional" during marriage. Despite the difficult adjustments which accompanied the changes, a large majority (72%) reported being pleased with the new roles they now had.

The women were evenly divided as to how they felt divorcees were viewed by the Jewish community. They tended to define "Jewish community" as those Jews who shared their milieu. Thus, those who received emotional support from friends, family and rabbis, tended

to feel that the Jewish community was accepting in their attitudes toward divorced women. Thus their experience did not reflect an ideological position but their own experience.

Almost half of the respondents reported a strengthened sense of Jewish identity after divorce. A number of women explained that the disruption and upheaval they experienced as a result of their divorce heightened their need to seek stability in their lives and led to a rediscovery of their Jewish identity. Many, however, reported that expressing their Jewish identity through the conventional means of temple affiliation was uncomfortable or inadequate, and they were at a loss as to what to do or where to go to find programs of Jewish content in which they would feel at home.

Separation and Divorce. Thirty-two (82%) of the women reported that they and their ex-husbands had separated one or more times prior to divorcing. The remainder did not separate. Nineteen (47%) received couple-counseling prior to divorce, 12 (30%) received individual counseling, and 9 (22%) had no counseling. Of those who received counseling, 21 (66%) saw a therapist in private practise, 8 (25%) used a family service agency, and 2 (6%) were in group therapy with a counselor in private practise. (One woman used both a therapist in private practise and a family service agency.)

When asked if they would have chosen to work out an alternative to divorce, 22 (55%) of the women said "definitely not," 11 (27%) said "definitely yes" and 3 (7%) were not sure. Four (10%) said they had tried alternatives such as "open marriage" and living apart

and "dating" their husbands, but those alternatives were unsuccessful. More than half of the women felt that they had no viable alternative other than divorce.

Twenty (50%) of the respondents' ex-husbands have remarried. Of these, 64 percent have married non-Jewish women (Protestant, Catholic, Bhuddist) and 10 (50%) married women ten or more years younger than themselves.

Twenty-six (65%) of the women said they wanted very much to remarry, 11 (27%) were ambivalent about remarriage at this time, and 3 (7%) wanted an exclusive relationship with a man but not marriage.

When asked if one prerequisite for a future husband be that he be Jewish, 18 (45%) said, "definitely yes," 7 (17%) considered this somewhat of a prerequisite, 8 (20%) said it was a low priority, and 7 (17%) said it was definitely not a priority. Some women reported that at one time they had been willing to marry non-Jews, yet changed their mind after experiencing a gap in culture and outlook between themselves and non-Jewish men.

In summary, the data revealed that the greater majority of respondents sought some form of marital counseling and separated one or more times prior to divorcing. Although all of the women expressed regret over the failure of their marriages to endure, more than half of them believed that divorce was their only alternative. The remainder felt that, given the wisdom of hindsight, they would have chosen to have been more flexible or more persistent in their effort to avoid divorce. Many expressed the belief that the extent to which their marriages had deteriorated rendered counseling

ineffectual. Others found fault with the quality of counseling they received, and some quoted their therapists as declaring that they "were in business to help people and not to save marriages."

Exactly half of the respondents' ex-husbands have remarried, with a majority choosing non-Jewish wives ten or more years their junior.[99] A majority of the women expressed a desire to remarry and almost half of them felt that Jewishness was an important prerequisite for a future husband.

Positives and Negatives of Single Parenthood. Sixty percent of the women stated that dating and sex were two of their major problems. Forty percent cited the fact that they could not take vacations longer than a weekend away because of worry over leaving their children and babysitting costs. Thirty-two percent said their employment opportunities were severely limited in that they could not work during evening hours nor travel. Twenty-five percent felt their chances of remarriage were greatly diminished because they had children. Some said they believed that divorced men feared remarriage because of the financial burden posed by having to support two families. Twenty-two percent said that attending school was a problem because of the scheduling of classes and lack of quiet time at home to work on school assignments.

Those women who replied that dating and sex represented major problems for them explained the dilemma they experienced in connection

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[99] See concluding chapter for a discussion of the implications of this finding.

with having men sleep over while their children were at home. Many said they rejected this arrangement because of the possible effect this would have on their children. Those mothers with teen-agers were especially concerned over providing exemplary models for their children. As one woman said, "I am trying to transmit sexual values to my daughter who is fourteen. I cannot have a man sleep here. That would be in direct conflict with the stance I have taken in my discussions with her." For some, the complications and costs involved in hiring babysitters in order to date were too difficult to surmount. Those with very young children explained that a simple shopping trip or just taking a walk by themselves was impossible. They either stayed at home or took their children with them.

A number of working mothers with young children described a typical day which involved waking early, cooking breakfast, getting themselves ready for work, their children ready for public school, nursery school or day care, transporting them there, going to work, working all day, leaving work and picking up the children, driving home, cooking dinner, relating to their children, bedding them down for the night, and finally relaxing a while before going to sleep themselves.

Despite the range of handicaps and problems the divorcees encountered, when asked what positives they had experienced since divorce, 28 (70%) said they felt an increased sense of their capabilities. Thirty-six (90%) felt they were more responsible and mature as a result of their increased exposure to life and the world.

Fifteen (38%) cited new careers, and 13 (32%) said that divorce was instrumental in motivating them to return to school.

Nineteen (49%) of the women said they had no awareness of their capacities or capabilities prior to divorce. Six (15%) said they were always aware of them and 15 (36%) were aware of them but did not develop them.

The women's projections for future happiness were evenly divided between a pessimistic and an optimistic outlook. When asked what they thought their lives would be like five years from now, 22 (55%) imagined they would be married. Seventeen (42%) saw themselves as resolving their financial problems. Seventeen (42%) felt that they would have better paying and more satisfying jobs. Twenty-two (55%) believed their children would be better adjusted and 10 (25%) expected to be able to travel.

The table following is an analysis of those areas which most affected our respondents after divorce based on the scale of one to five, with one signifying least difficulty and five signifying most difficulty.

Summary

Our respondents were a predominantly middle-class socio-economic group, well educated, chronologically mature with a high level of Jewish affiliation. The authors' original assumption was that marital dissolution plays a significant role in the erosion of Jewish identity and the reduction of Jewish affiliation. While the data did

Table 1

POST-DIVORCE ADJUSTMENT

	1	2	3	4	5	Total of Columns 4 & 5
Loneliness	4 (10%)	3 (8%)	6 (15%)	7 (17%)	20 (50%)	27 (67%)
Finances	3 (7%)	3 (7%)	13 (33%)	3 (7%)	18 (45%)	21 (52%)
Temple	10 (40%)	2 (8%)	2 (8%)	6 (24%)	5 (20%)	11 (44%)
School*	8 (30%)	1 (4%)	8 (30%)	4 (15%)	6 (22%)	10 (37%)
Job**	11 (32%)	6 (17%)	8 (23%)	2 (6%)	8 (23%)	10 (29%)
Family	24 (60%)	------	5 (13%)	4 (10%)	7 (8%)	11 (18%)
Community Groups***	20 (67%)	3 (10%)	2 (7%)	3 (10%)	2 (7%)	5 (17%)
Friends	18 (45%)	6 (15%)	13 (32%)	2 (5%)	1 (2%)	3 (7%)

*School difficulty referred to problems encountered with class schedules, finances, studying, etc. Totals reflect those presently enrolled, plus those who had to drop out.

**Job meant problems encountered on the job which related specifically to respondents' single-parent status. Totals reflect those formerly and presently employed.

***Community groups was defined as all non-sectarian organizations which respondents were members of and the level of difficulty encountered due to single-parent status. Totals reflect past and present members.

not reveal a mass decline in Jewish affiliation and identity, it did uncover important community implications. Foremost were the descriptions of the divorcees' discomfort in the temple. Lack of relevant programs for single parents was another oft-stated complaint.

Those women expressing satisfaction with the quality and depth of their children's Jewish identity most often cited the Jewish education their children were receiving in day schools or the temple. Dissatisfaction was traced to the mother's (or father's) neglect or inability to foster Jewish identity in their children and the lack of low-cost youth programs with Jewish content which might do what they cannot.

Loneliness was the women's most salient problem. They attributed this loneliness to both a sense of isolation and to the lack of a "significant other" in their lives. Often their loneliness was exacerbated by spending time with married friends, and was somewhat diminished only after they developed meaningful relationships with divorced people who had begun to achieve an accommodation to their situation.

A few of the women experienced severe financial problems which tended to darken every aspect of their lives. Those whose money worries were not as drastic still had to make major adjustments in buying habits and life style.

The hours the authors spent with the respondents afforded them a chance to personally observe family interaction. This, plus the concern the women expressed for their children and the family as a

whole, left no doubt that these single parent families are cohesive units.

As a group they experienced a traumatic loss which may have been complicated by its having been voluntary. They were often distressed by the confusions of moving from one life style to another. Yet, the difficulties these women experienced are not due to weakness or to inadequacy, but are those which anyone in their situation would experience.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

Twentieth century American society with its rapidly rising divorce rate appears to be undergoing a change in marital patterns in the direction of the Kaingaing practice of "searching for the right mate." Yet the two cultures differ drastically in the degree of social disorganization brought about by divorce. As Americans we speak of the "trauma of divorce"; and as Jewish Americans, we see a link between divorce and a break in Jewish cultural continuity.[100] The Jewish tradition of marriage as an obligation, and monogamy as the normal way of life, survives to this day. At the same time, divorced Jewish parents and their children comprise a growing group whose presence challenges the Jewish community, its synagogues, and its social service agencies and organizations.

Although our data did not reveal an elimination of Jewish affiliation among divorcees, seventeen of the forty women we interviewed did discontinue temple membership, citing feelings of discomfort with Jewish institutions and lack of money as major factors in their decision. An even greater proportion of present temple members spoke of their sense of not fitting into congregational and Jewish organizational life. This shared perspective, however, did not appear to

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[100] Linzer, The Jewish Family, p. 14.

impinge upon our respondents' sense of Jewish identity. Divorce had stimulated a need for stability and community for themselves and their children, and they shared a desire to find Jewish institutions where they would feel at home. The researchers contend that divorce and its ensuing life disruptions require interventive programs which ameliorate distress, bring about a rediscovery of Jewish values, and eliminate the schism which exists between the divorcee and the Jewish community.

Program Proposals

1. Jewish single-parent groups based on the "havurah" model can be designed to answer a number of the multiple needs of single-parent families. Group programs could consist of discussion about divorce-related problems, celebration of Jewish holidays, Jewish study, family retreats, and parent-child communication. In addition, participants might be instructed in basic crisis counseling techniques which would offer members a network of friends to whom they could turn in times of acute distress. This group model presupposes limited use of professionals other than initial group organization. The decision to hire professionals to lead special programs would depend upon participants' consensus of group needs.

2. A number of our respondents mentioned a desire for a dignified "match-making service," whose prime function would be to help Jewish men and women meet one another. This service would differ from the traditonal "schadchan" in that opportunities for

sociability would be the primary aim and marriage might be a by-product rather than a goal.

One respondent described the "Single Parent Register" where readers place ads in a monthly publication. Replies are sent to a central location where they are read and forewarded only if the sender's message meets certain specifications of good faith and propriety. The authors believe that this model could easily be duplicated in a "Jewish Single Parent Register," staffed by trained single-parent volunteers.

3. Our respondents explained that pre-divorce separation and the period immediately following the decision to divorce were the most difficult times for them. They spoke of the need they had then for people who were objective, empathetic, and who could offer information about the problems they were likely to encounter. We envision a program of persons with such qualifications making personal contact with new divorcees and providing them with information about existing single-parent programs.[101]

4. The researchers believe that structural changes in temples and Jewish organizations can be facilitated by educating the married about divorce and its attendant problems. Temple and Jewish organizational board meetings and couples' groups are ideal forums for

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[101]This model is an adaptation of the current program for mastectomy patients. Trained volunteers who have themselves undergone the operation visit women immediately after mastectomy and provide emotional support and information about post-operative programs.

introducing educational programs and consciousness-raising seminars on divorce.

5. Although a number of our respondents held positions of leadership in temples and Jewish organizations when they were married, not one of them reported being involved in this way since divorce. The adjustment phase following divorce often precludes continuation of active involvement. We believe that this hiatus results in reinforcing the image of divorcees as poor candidates for community involvement. A portion of our respondents who have been divorced for a number of years have successfully adapted to their new life style and now represent a group possessing untapped leadership capacities. All of our programs were designed to utilize the experience and skill of these women. Professionals dealing with single-parent groups tend to overlook the vital part which divorcees can play in helping others who are in the midst of marital dissolution.[102]

Future Implications

The post-divorce problems gleaned from the literature were documented in our findings. Loneliness, isolation, and financial problems were our respondents' three major areas of distress. Our original assumption that divorced Jewish mothers and their children may be a group-at-risk in regard to Jewish continuity is one which requires

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[102] Drug programs successfully utilize ex-addicts as paraprofessionals. In a similar manner, divorcees are better able to establish rapport with other women who have been divorced.

careful consideration. Continued lack of acceptance and sparsity of Jewish single-parent programs might well cause a further reduction in Jewish affiliation.

The data concerning the remarriage patterns of our respondents' ex-husbands suggest that these men may be a group at even greater risk in regard to Jewish continuity. Research on divorced Jewish fathers and their affiliation patterns appears not to have been attempted and certainly warrants study. Their high intermarriage rate (13 out of 20, or 64 percent) as well as the verbal reports of our respondents points to a significant diminution of their Jewish identity and affiliation.

Although a majority of our respondents expressed a desire to remarry, they have a 40 percent chance of doing so. This is due to their chronological maturity and the lack of marriagable men in their age category. Young childless divorcees have the highest remarriage rate. This diminishes with age and motherhood and drops sharply for women over forty.[103] It appears safe to assume that at least ten of these forty women will remain single. When divorcees past the age of forty are added to the population of Jewish widows in the same age category, the total represents a significant number of unmarried Jewish women whose children are approaching independence. The authors believe that future planning must include Jewish social

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[103]George Gilder, Naked Nomads (New York: The New York Times Book Co., 1974), p. 73.

services for this population plus a change in the communal structure of temples, Centers, and social agencies.

The Jewish community in America has from its inception undergone constant demographic and sociologic change. The phenomenon of divorce among Jews is presently contributing to this state of flux. The crisis of divorce brings with it both danger and opportunity; increased acceptance and imaginative planning would forestall much of the familial and communal disorganization of divorce.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT

GENERAL BACKGROUND - Section 1

I'd like to begin with some general questions about yourself:

1. How long have you lived in Los Angeles? # of years_____.
2. How long have you lived at this address? # of years___months___.
3. Are you planning to live here for the next: Year?___2 years?___ longer than 2 years?___.
4. If no on #3: Where do you plan to move to? a. Another residence within L.A. b. Out of L.A. but within California c. Out of state d. Out of the U.S.
5. Did you grow up in: a. a rural area b. a small town c. a mid-size city d. a large city
6. What was the name of the city where you grew up?_____.
7. Where were your parents born? Mother Born_____ Father born_____.
8. Are your parents living? Mother: Alive___deceased_____ Father: Alive___deceased____.
9. Do your parents (mother/father) live within: a. 10 miles___ b. 30 miles___ c. between 30 and 75 miles___ d. out of L.A.___ e. out of state___ f. out of the U.S.___.
10. How often do you see your parents? a. once a week or oftener___ b. about twice a month___ c. once a month___ d. a few times a year___ e. hardly ever see them___.
11. What was the last grade you completed in school? a. Completed graduate school___ b. completed college___ c. some college___ d. completed H.S.___ e. some H.S.___ f. other_____.

12. Are you working at the present time? a. full time (30-35+ hrs.)____
    b. part time (20 hrs or less)___ e. not working____
13. Are you enrolled in school or other educational program which will prepare you for a career in the future? a. Yes___ b. No___
14. Is your educational program: a. full time (12 or more units)
    b. part time (less than 12 units) c. other_____
15. Are you seriously considering working in the future?
    a. seriously considering____ b. leaning that way____
    c. undecided____ d. definitely not____
16. How many years will it take you to complete your schooling?
    a. less than 1 year b. 1 year c. 2 years d. 3 years
    e. more than 3 years
17. What are your career goals? (Specify_____)
    a. professional b. semi-professional c. white collar
    d. own business e. other

CHILDREN - Section II

18. How many children live at home with you? a. 1 b. 2 c. 3 d. 4 e. 5
19. What are their ages and their sex: a. Ages_____b.Sex_____
20. When you work (or are away at school, or are away during the day) how are your children cared for? a. your relatives b. husband's relatives c. friends d. nursery school e. public school f. day care center g. other f. children don't need care during the day.
21. How much longer do you anticipate using outside child care? a. less than 1 year b. 1 year c. 2 years d. 3 years e. 4 years
22. How would you rate this care? a. excellent b. good c. average d. poor
23. What activities of yours are most handicapped by having the children living with you? a. vacations b. job possibilities c. education d. dates e. remarriage f. other (specify)
24. Would you like to have your former husband see the children a. less often b. more often c. about the same as at present
25. Do you find your children (child) harder to handle after these visits? a. harder b. easier c. about the same
26. This may be a bit difficult for you to asses, but would you try to tell me if the children's relationship with their father has changed from what it was when you were married? a. much closer b. somewhat closer c. stayed about the same d. more distant e. much more distant

27. In the case of your relationship with the children, would you say that has changed from what it was when you were married? a. much closer b. somewhat closer c. stayed about the same d. more distant e. much more distant

28. What do you believe accounts for this change? Probe for feelings in addition to concrete reasons.

AFFILIATION - Section III

29. I'd like now to discuss your membership in various organizations. A number of women whom we have interviewed reported that they dropped their membership in some organizations and became members of others after their divorce. For instance, just prior to your divorce, was your family a member of a temple? a. yes b. no

30. Are you presently a member of that temple? a. yes b. no c. joined another

    If NO on the above, move to question #44

31. As a present temple member, would you say your level of participation in temple activities has changed since you were divorced?

    a. increased b. somewhat increased c. somewhat decreased d. definitely decreased

32. What specific temple activities did you participate in prior to your divorce? a. officer b. committee member c. sisterhood d. volunteer e. other

33. What specific temple activities are you active in now? a. officer b. committee member c. sisterhood d. volunteer e. other

34. What specific temple activities are your children engaged in now? a. religious school b. special classes c. social clubs d. just attend services e. none f. other

35. I notice that____of your children are under 13. Do you plan on he/she being Bar/Bat Mitzvah? a. yes b. no c. one of them was but not the other d. other

36. I notice that___of your children are under 13. Do you plan on he/she being Bar/Bat Mitzvah? a. yes b. no c. undecided d. other

37. I am interested to learn what your feelings were regarding participating in temple activities after your divorce. Would you say you felt: a. very comfortable b. somewhat comfortable c. somewhat uncomfortable d. most uncomfortable

38. What would you say caused these feelings? (probe, ask her to talk about feeling "different;" feeling supported and comforted; Rabbi's attitudes toward divorced women; attitudes of other congregants, etc.

39. After your divorce, did you have occasion to apply for a reduced temple membership fee? a. yes b. no c. presently considering doing so.

40. Could you describe the procedure for having your fee reduced? a. simple procedure b. somewhat complicated c. very complicated and difficult d. other

41. Are you aware of other single parents in the congregation? a. yes b. no c. uncertain

42. Are there any programs (formal or informal) in your temple which encourage and/or facilitate single-parent members to get to know one another? a. yes b. no c. don't know

43. Could you describe these program?

(Former Temple Member)

44. What specific temple activities did you participate in when you were a temple member?

a. officer b. committee member c. sisterhood d. volunteer e. other.

45. What specific temple activities did your children participate in? a. religious school b. special classes c. social clubs d. just attended services e. other

46. I notice that___of your children are over 13. Was he/she Bar/Bat Mitzvah? a. yes b. no c. one of them was, but the other wasn't d. other

47. I notice that__of your children are under 13. Do you plan on he/she being Bar/Bat Mitzvah? a. yes b. no c. undecided d. other

48. At the present time are your children enrolled in any programs which include Jewish content? a. yes b. no c. no, but planning to enroll

49. Could you specify what these programs are?

50. I am most interested to learn why you decided to drop your temple membership; could you describe your reason for doing so? (probe for specifics)

a. general discomfort because of being a single parent
b. financial reasons
c. lack of time
d. other

51. How long after your divorce did you drop your temple membership? a. less than 6 months b. 6 months to 1 year c. 1 to 2 years d. 2 years e. more than 2 years

52. When you were a temple member, were you aware of other single parents in the congregations?

    a. yes b. no c. uncertain

53. Were there any programs (formal or informal) in the temple which encouraged single-parent members to get to know one another?

    a. yes b. no c. don't know

54. Could you describe these programs?

55. Were you a member of any other Jewish organizations just prior to your divorce? a. yes b. no

56. Could you tell me what they were?

57. Have you withdrawn your membership from any of these organizations since your divorce?

    a. yes b. no c. no, but thinking of doing so

58. Could you tell me why you withdrew your membership from: (name of each organization, ask same question for each)

59. Have you since your divorce had occasion to use the services or participate in the programs of any Jewish institution or organization? a. yes b. no c. no, but thinking of doing so

60. Could you tell me which organizations you did participate in and how you would rate your experience with each of them?

Name of organization	Rating
	a. very satisfactory b. somewhat satisfactory c. somewhat unsatisfactory d. very unsatisfactory

61. I am interested to know what made these experiences satisfactory/ unsatisfactory for you. Please describe.

62. In your opinion, what are the most valuable programs or services for single parents which are provided by Jewish agencies, organizations, and institutions?

a. child care b. religious c. single programs d. counseling e. financial assistance f. other g. none

63. Using your own experience as a yardstick, what programs would you <u>like</u> to see inaugurated which would especially meet the needs of the divorced Jewish woman? (Probe)

CONCRETE EFFECTS OF DIVORCE - Section IV

64. What was your former husband's occupation?
    a. professional b. executive c. managerial d. own business
    e. white collar f. blue collar g. other
65. Did your standard of living change after your divorce?
    a. went up b. went down c. remained about the same
66. Did you have occasion to seek outside financial assistance after your divorce? a. yes b. no c. no, but considering it
    d. yes, but will shortly not need it
67. From whom did you receive this assistance?
    a. relatives b. friends c. outside agencies d. bank loan
    e. other
68. Did you find it financially necessary to work after your divorce? a. yes b. no c. other
69. Did you change your residence after divorce for financial reasons? a. yes b. no
70. Did you experience difficulty in establishing credit after divorce? a. yes b. no c. some
71. Do you feel you encountered special problems on your job because you are the head of a single-parent household?
    a. yes b. no c. some
72. Probe for the nature of the problems, i.e. time off when children are sick, doctor, and dentist appointments, leave during school vacations, etc.

73. In the area of housing, did you encounter any difficulties in renting this apt/house because you are a single-parent family? a. yes b. no c. some

Probe for the specifics of the difficulties.

74. Since your divorce, in which of the following areas did you experience difficulties, and could you rate the intensity of each on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 signifying least difficulty and 5 signifying most difficulty.

	1	2	3	4	5
Job					
School					
Children					
Temple					
Friends					
Rabbi					
Cmty groups					
Finances					
Family					
Loneliness					

DIVORCE VIS-A-VIS JEWISHNESS - Section V

I'd like now to ask you some questions concerning Jewish identity:

75. Could you describe how you saw your role as a Jewish woman before your divorce?

    a. traditional; stay home, be primarily wife and mother.

    b. somewhat traditional; work part time or volunteer, but hold the family as coming first.

    c. non-traditional; working or going to school, seeing herself as equal to her husband in most ways; caring for and about the children, but not seeing them as the central focus of her life.

76. Do you think that your divorce has brought about changes in the role you now play as a Jewish woman and mother? Probe for specifics, i.e. working, full time school, seeking self-fulfillment more than she did before divorce, focusing on emotional growth, etc.

77. How do you feel about these changes?

    a. very pleased b. somewhat pleased c. displeased

    d. very displeased

78. What in your opinion is the attitude of the Jewish community toward the divorced Jewish mother?

    a. very accepting b. somewhat accepting c. not too accepting

    d. quite unaccepting

79. What in your opinion causes this response?

a. traditional view of Jewish women b. emphasis on the intact family in Judaism c. negative attitude toward divorce in general d. tradition of acceptance and caring for the woman without a husband e. general acceptance of a phenomenon of present-day society f. other

Probe for reasons.

SEPARATION AND DIVORCE - Section VI

80. The decision to divorce is very often preceeded by separation. Did you and your former husband separate before divorcing?
a. yes b. no c. separated more than once

81. Prior to your decision to divorce, did you seek couples' counseling?
a. yes b. no c. I wanted to, he did not d. he wanted to, I did not

82. Would you tell me what kind of counseling it was?
a. private b. agency c. group d. Rabbi e. other

83. If you could have worked out an alternative to divorce, such as open marriage, or living apart but seeing one another, would you have chosen that rather than divorce?
a. yes, definitely b. not sure c. definitely not
d. we tried open marriage and it didn't work e. we tried separating but it didn't work f. other

84. How many years were you married _____years

85. How long have you been divorced? _____years/months

JEWISH IDENTITY - Section VII

86. Has your former husband remarried?

a. yes b. no c. is planning to shortly

87. If yes (or planning to) what religion is his spouse (future spouse)?

a. Jewish b. Catholic c. Protestant d. other

88. What are your attitudes toward remarrying?

a. want to very much b. want a relationship, but not marriage

c. definitely against remarriage d. ambivalent about remarriage

e. other

89. Would you say that one prerequisite for a future husband be that he be Jewish?

a. yes, definitely b. somewhat of a prerequisite

c. a low priority d. definitely not a priority

90. Do you feel that being divorced has in any way affected your sense of Jewish identity?

a. strengthened J.I. b. reduced J.I. c. hasn't affected it one way or the other

91. Could you tell me why this is so? Probe for reasons and for feelings.

92. Are you satisfied with the quality and depth of Jewish identity of your children?

a. very satisfied b. somewhat satisfied c. somewhat dissatisfied

d. very dissatisfied

FUTURE - Section VIII

93. It is well known that single parents have to deal with many obstacles; on another note, what positives have you experienced since your divorce: Probe for specifics.
a. education b. career c. more mature d. increased experience in the world e. increased sense of my capabilities f. other

94. Would you say that you were aware of these capacities within yourself before your divorce, or do you believe you developed them after being divorced?
a. always aware of them b. aware of them but did not develop them c. unaware of them prior to divorce d. other

95. One final question, can you jump ahead to the future and tell me what you think your life will be like 5 years from now? Probe for specifics.

96. What is your age? ____.

APPENDIX B

COPY OF LETTER SENT TO RABBIS

Dear Rabbi_____:

My colleague Janis Plotkin and I are second-year graduate students at the USC School of Social Work and Hebrew Union College School of Jewish Communal Service. We are currently engaged in a master's thesis, researching the Divorced Jewish mother's views and perspectives toward Jewish identity, affiliation and the changes in life style which divorce brings.

Our review of the published studies and papers on the divorced Jewish mother has revealed that oftimes the research reflects the author's view of her, rather than directly reflecting the views of the divorced Jewish mother herself. We believe this situation has resulted in creating some stereotypic images whose validity needs investigation.

Our study calls for a minimum of forty in-person interviews with divorced Jewish women whose children are living at home, and who are current or former Temple members. It is our hope that a portion of respondents will come from _____Temple, and therefore ask that those members who wish to participate in the study contact: Mona Panitz, 451-5183 or Janis Plotkin, 836-6529, any weekday evening.

The interviews will take approximately one to two hours and will be held at a time and place that is convenient to the respondent. We deeply appreciate your interest and your help.

Sincerely,

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