

A PILOT STUDY OF THE ADJUSTMENT PROBLEMS
OF DIVORCED WOMEN AT KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

By 1264

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

The primary purpose of this paper was to discover how divorced women at Kansas State University perceived themselves and their problems. It was felt that these women should have an opportunity to express themselves, and to discuss what they felt to be their major problems both as divorcees and as college students. Previous research has tended to limit and confine data gathered to the realm of what various professional people felt were the problems of the divorcee without the actual population segment under investigation, namely the divorcee, being contacted.

The concept for this report grew out of a preliminary paper written for Dr. David Danskin's course in Occupational Information which dealt with the personal experiences of one divorcee. Further exploration of this area followed Dr. Carrol Kennedy's course in The Development of the College Age Student as the result of the expansion of preliminary ideas through reaction papers, class discussions, and continued exploration of theories with Dr. Kennedy.

An implicit hypothesis that divorcees have similar types of adjustment problems was formed in a twofold method. First, through an evaluation of the researcher's own personal experiences as a divorcee; and second, through discussions with other divorcees who were personal friends. It was discovered that all elicited rather common responses about the problems of adjusting to an unmarried state, and adjusting to the University environment and its accompany-

ing problems, frustrations, and satisfactions.

In addition, the researcher felt that these women comprised a segment of the total student University population about which very little was known. Information about them was seen as having a threefold value: first, to the University; second, to the individual herself; and third, to the community as a whole. The data obtained from the interviews conducted would lead to a profile picture of the unique position a divorcee holds, which would enable all concerned to be made more aware and sensitive to the particular problems and needs of these women. It would enable such places as the Student Counseling Center to function more adequately in providing the necessary professional assistance which these women might require. It would aid the women directly in coping with their own needs and problems; and their fellow students, indirectly, because in essence these women would then be able to function more effectively in the total University environment.

Although researchers have reported on the problems of divorcees in general (Goode 1956, Sanford 1966, Cavan 1965, Duval, 1967), a review of the literature has failed to reveal research into the problems of the divorcee as a student.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

Through permission of Dr. David Danskin and the Office of the Director of Housing and Food Service, a total population of thirty-five divorced women was obtained from the files for Spring Semester of 1969. Included in the information from the files was the name, address, telephone number, age, number of children, and academic standing. Although an effort was made to contact all thirty-five women, only seventeen were available during the Summer session and these were contacted by telephone. Of these seventeen women, one refused permission to be interviewed, and four were unable to be interviewed because of a time conflict, although they expressed interest. Twelve who were contacted were interviewed and were very cooperative. One woman had recently remarried but was included in the study because she had been a divorcee at the time the population was obtained.

A ten page questionnaire (see Appendix) was constructed consisting of: (1) a report of the facts about the respondent; and (2) a report of the opinions and beliefs of the respondent which incorporated both subjective and objective factors. The questionnaire took on a format structure comprised of open-ended questions and follow-up probes. A set of several questions was formulated in each particular area of investigation in order to obtain the most complete picture possible. The questionnaire was pretested on three individuals in order to test the understandability of the questions and the reliability of the results obtained. It was found through evaluation of the pretest responses that the questionnaire contained no major elements which

needed revision. The questionnaire dealt with six major areas of interest and relevance. These were: first, statistical background about each divorcee; second, attitudes toward the divorce by the divorcee and her family and friends; third, adjustment problems of the divorcee; fourth, adjustment problems of the divorcee as a college student; fifth, attitudes toward meeting other people; and sixth, ways in which the University could help the divorcee herself.

Each of the twelve divorcees were contacted by phone. The purpose of the study was explained, and a time was set for the interview. Three of the women were interviewed in the Kansas State University Counseling Center, two were interviewed in luncheon contacts, one was interviewed during dinner, and six were interviewed in their homes. One of the purposes of the interview was to keep the atmosphere as informal as possible, with the idea that this might facilitate a relaxed exchange of ideas and attitudes. The average interview lasted approximately one and one-half hours if the divorcee had no children, and about two hours if she had children. The data obtained from the interviews expressed a candid and intelligent view of the divorcee as a person and as a student.

CHAPTER III

DATA ON STATISTICS AND ATTITUDES

In order to give a comprehensive view of the divorced woman at Kansas State University, it was felt that statistical data on the total population should be included.

There were thirty-five women who listed themselves as divorcees on their Housing registration cards. The low number of divorcees in a student body of almost 14,000 seemed surprising. However, a possible explanation may be that young divorcees who had retaken their maiden names may have listed themselves as single rather than as divorced women.

The ages of the divorcees at Kansas State University, excluding the two who failed to list an age, ranged from twenty-one to forty-six years with the average at thirty years and eight months as of July 1, 1969. The total number of children for the thirty-five women was thirty-eight. There were seventeen women who had children. The average number of children for the total population was 1.09 children per divorcee. For those having children, the number ranged from one to four, and the average number was 2.24 children per divorced woman.

The classification of the thirty-five women was broken down as follows: freshman two, sophomore four, junior five, senior five, graduate fifteen and special graduate one. Three women failed to list their classification.

Additional information on statistics and attitudes gathered from the files and from answers to the questionnaire by the twelve women who were interviewed included the following data.

The ages of the twelve women ranged from twenty-one to forty-three years with the average age being thirty years and three months.

Academic classification and major educational fields. Three of the women interviewed were sophomores, one was a junior, two were seniors, four were working on their Masters, and two were working on their Doctorates. Half of the women interviewed were in some area of the Education curriculum, and there was one each in English, Speech Pathology, Statistics, Journalism, Art and Interior Architectural design. Eight had attended college prior to their marriage, two had not. Seven had changed their academic major because of frustration in their previous major, and five had not changed their majors. One divorcee stated that she felt that she had become stereotyped in high school teaching and solved the problem by working in the more intellectually stimulating university atmosphere.

The reasons for continuing or returning to college included: higher salary, better able to provide for their children, professional standing, development of self-potential, bored at home, bored with a previous job, and the security of a teacher's certificate. Six were encouraged by family or ex-husbands to continue their educations. Four of the women were discouraged by people in their jobs, family,

or ex-husbands. Two stated that they continued their education as a part of their overall master plan.

Nine of the women interviewed were from some area of Kansas, three were from out of state.

Employment and income. Ten of the twelve women interviewed were employed, two were not. Of those employed, five held full-time positions and five held part-time jobs. The type of work done varied from sales work to teaching, data processing, and research at the University. Their salaries ranged from \$320 per month to \$20,000 a year. Two of the women held Fellowships from the University. Other sources of income included: parents one, loans one, jobs ten, support from ex-husbands two, and child-support six. One woman lived at home, and one divorcee's mother lived with her.

Six of the women felt that it was not difficult to make ends meet on their present income, four felt that it was. One woman stated that it had been difficult earlier but was not now. When asked if it were more difficult now to make ends meet than when they were married, ten answered "no", and two replied that it was about the same.

Children. These twelve women had a total of seventeen children, eight boys and nine girls. The number of children ranged from zero to four with the average for the twelve being 1.4 children per divorcee. However, only seven women had children. The average number of children for these seven women was 2.4 children per divorced mother. The ages of the children ranged from three to seventeen years, with the average age at ten years and one month.

Attitudes of the fathers toward the children. Four of the women said that their husbands were eager to see their children. Two fathers spent several nights a week with their children, one saw his children every other weekend, and one saw his children as often as possible. Of the three mothers who said that their ex-husbands were not eager to see their children, only one father had seen his children in the past two years. Three divorcees said their husbands were prompt in sending child support money, three said they were not. One woman did not accept any money from her ex-husband as she earned more than he did.

Statistical information about the divorce. The length of time since these women had been divorced ranged from two months to ten years. Nine had been divorced less than five years, two for five to ten years, and one for just over ten years. The length of time they were married ranged from eight and a half months to thirteen and a half years. Seven had been married less than five years, four for five to ten years, and one for more than ten years. This had been the first marriage for all twelve, although one woman had been remarried recently and one planned to be married within a month.

When asked when they first began to feel that something was wrong in their marriage, four women said that it had been within the first six months, one said within the first year, five said within the first five years, and one said during the eighth year of her marriage. One woman said that she knew before she was married that it was a mistake,

but did not explain why she had married in spite of her feelings. One woman stated that it had happened very suddenly, and that her husband had come home one day and said that he wanted a divorce because he was in love with another woman.

These women were married a total of seventy years and six months, with the average length of marriage being five years and nine months.

Actual incidents which made them feel that something was wrong with their marriage included: "having to solve all the problems during the marriage," "husbands who could not face reality," "husbands who could not express their feelings," "conflicts in job interests," "conflicts in time when both were students or husbands had night or weekend jobs," "basic personality changes," "basic psychological differences," "incompatibility," "immaturity on the part of the husband," and "everything in general." One woman described the break-up of her marriage as being rather like cancer, a creeping, decaying process. One of the women mentioned sexual incompatibility as a cause in the break-up of her marriage.

Two women began to think about divorce within the first six months of their marriage, five within the first five years, and five within five to ten years of marriage. In eight cases it was the woman who first brought up the subject of divorce, in two cases the husband had filed.

Most of the women said they had sought professional advice. In only two cases did the husband and wife go together, and in seven the women said they had gone alone. Four of the women talked with a minister or priest, four had talked with marriage counselors, and one had talked with a psychiatrist.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY OF GENERAL FINDINGS

In support of the original theses, that divorced women had similar problems, many areas of similarity in attitudes and feelings were obtained from the data gathered through the questionnaire (see Appendix) particularly in the area of personal adjustment to being a divorced woman.

Self-concept. In discussing problems of adjustment in self-concept, only one woman said that feelings of inadequacy had not been a problem. One woman said that after ten years, she was still searching to learn what had been wrong in their marriage and why. One said that since her divorce she had become more of a person, and another said that counseling had helped her reconstruct a workable self concept. Two had thought at first that their divorces had been totally their fault, but had more recently realized that both they and their husbands had been at fault. One divorcee said that the time since her divorce had been spent in a constant rebuilding of pride and self-confidence.

Five women agreed that feelings of worthlessness had been a problem, and one stated that these feelings were a problem to her occasionally. Four women had had problems in feeling non-feminine, six had not and one had only on occasion. One of the women said that her pride in being a woman was hurt, and another said that she missed not having a man around to make her feel like a woman.

Two of the women said that they felt unloved and unlovable, three said it had not been a problem. One said she felt that no one wanted her since her divorce, but another said that she had felt used and unloved during her marriage. One said that she felt all divorcees had periods of feeling unloved and unlovable.

In discussing feelings of a failure because they had been divorced, three had had difficulty in adjusting to over-whelming feelings of failure. One divorcee, who was a graduate student, said that her feelings of failure were more concerned with the possibility of her failing her preliminaries and having to return to her parents and admit failure in this area, too. One said that her feelings of failure were the hardest for her to handle.

Other comments made in discussing problems in adjustment included: "wanting to know what is wrong with me and why I could not adjust," "am depressed often," "finally realized that I could not solve my ex-husband's problems for him," "considering suicide," and "found myself to be more normal in wanting womanly things out of marriage." One did say that other people seemed to feel that she should have some of these feelings of inadequacy, worthlessness, and failure, but she did not. Another said that her weight had always been a problem in her marriage, and so all of these feelings were magnified as she could not be happy with herself.

Sex. The divorced women handled their feelings of needing a sexual relationship in a variety of ways. Two women admitted needing

the fulfillment of a sexual union; one did not have these feelings. One woman said it was the most difficult adjustment she had had to make. One said that she refused to acknowledge such feelings; and another said that she kept trying to put them down. One said that she was so afraid of making another mistake that she avoided contact with men. An attractive young divorcee said that she had a demanding job which required a great deal of travel and thus she had an outlet for her energy which left her too tired to miss a sexual union. Three of the older women said that it had been a mistake not to realize it as a problem earlier, but they had learned to live with it and rarely thought of it now. One said that it became a problem when she was with an attractive man who was intellectually stimulating. One woman admitted that she had gone on a mad search for a sexual partner shortly after her divorce, but the majority of interviewees seemed to ignore or did not admit having feelings of needing the fulfillment of a sexual relationship.

In commenting on feelings of needing to be held, six women said that they had these feelings. Others said that they needed to be held more now that the children were getting older, and that they missed the physical contact with other people. Two women said that they did not have this type of physical contact with their husbands when they were married, so it was no more of a problem now than it had been before their marriage. One woman said that she needed someone, just to be able to be held and to be able to lean on someone for

a little while. One said that she missed the feeling of security that came from being held by her husband.

Eleven of the twelve women replied with an emphatic "yes" when asked if they needed to feel wanted and desired as a woman and as a person. One said that she did, only when it was the right person. Three said that they had not felt wanted or desired during their marriages, but still needed to be. One woman said that these feelings were a continuing problem and that the older she became, the more difficult it was to find a suitable partner.

Additional comments concerning adjustment made by the interviewees were extremely candid. One divorcee said that because she had had three children within three years, she had approached intercourse with her husband with some trepidation and had been relieved of these feelings of reluctance through her divorce. Another said that her husband's concept of being a masculine person was to be a very cold, withdrawn individual who was unable to give any show of affection. She felt that she greatly needed someone who could be affectionate with her in small ways. One woman's husband would not let her know that he needed her and consequently refused any affection she offered him. One said that she still needed a father's image to take care of her, and still needed to lean a little. Another said that she did not want to get involved with another man as she did not know what had been wrong in the first place. Several said that the morning after guilt of a sexual relationship was not worth the temporary

release of sexual frustration. But, all agreed that needing to feel wanted and desired was one of the most difficult problems they had had to deal with after their divorce.

Finances. In discussing financial adjustment problems, eight of the divorced women replied not having their husband's income had not been a problem. Four said that their husbands had always been in school and had not contributed to the family income during their marriage. One said that she had never thought about it as a problem. Three said they had never been allowed to handle the money when they were married, and one had had to account to her husband for every penny that she spent. Six said that they had not had a problem with feeling they had the total burden of having to earn all the money themselves because they had always done so before the divorce and had not had to make an adjustment. One said that having had to earn all the money herself had been a problem but that it was one of the motivations behind going back to school and getting a better job. One said that if she kept in close touch with her lawyer, she had a fairly good income from her ex-husband. Another related that she knew that she could turn to her ex-husband for money if she really needed to do so. Some of the additional comments pertaining to financial adjustment problems included: "not been able to save anything," "have had a couple of scarey times," "always am in debt but somehow manage to handle the problem," "not been able to make

ends meet without child support and alimony," and feel "hostile in having to provide for the children." One divorcee said that while she had been married, her husband had spent all the money; another said that everything was better since the divorce; and a third said that finances were not as much of a problem now as when she had been married. One related that she sometimes spent money so she would not think about her other problems. One woman stated that she tried to avoid time payments so she would not "get in over my head." One divorcee continues to partially support her ex-husband because her earning potential is greater. However, most of the women agreed that they had had to make some type of adjustment in their financial situation.

Married friends. After living in a married state and then being divorced, adjustments had to be made concerning the divorcees' relationships with friends they had had during their marriages.

When asked if they felt left out of their married friends' groups or get togethers, only one said that she had, but that she understood why. One, who was the youngest in a large family, said she felt left out more in family gatherings than at any other time. One said that she continued to see married friends during the daytime. Since many of the women and their husbands had been students during their marriages, most of their friends had graduated and had moved away. Two said that they still maintained contact

with some of their friends who had moved. Four women had moved since their divorce and had not had contact with previous married friends. In the last year of her marriage, one woman had moved four times and had not had a chance to make friends. One stated that she felt uncomfortable in married groups because she felt different. Two others said that because of their jobs, their circle of friends had changed. Four women said that they had not had many married friends during their marriages except for one or two couples. One stated that she had dropped all contacts with earlier friends.

One of the questions which brought interesting results was one dealing with the divorced women's attitudes toward friends who were married men and women. Nine women said that they had not felt that they had become a threat to other women because they were single; two felt that they had, but felt they had not done anything to precipitate a conflict. All agreed that they did not act in situations in such a manner as to be a threat and that they had made a point of avoiding such situations by not being overly friendly with husbands of married friends. One said that it had not been an immediate problem, but over the last ten years she had felt that she had been a threat to a married woman at times because she was single. Six women had had difficulty with men within the group becoming overly friendly, three had not. One woman said that it had definitely been a problem and that it was her pet peeve. She had had more problems with her boss than with any one else. Another had had a problem with a married professor who naturally assumed that she would be interested in him. In all cases,

the men had been considered good friends and the women felt disillusioned by the unsavory advances these men had made to them. All felt that it was better to keep people at a distance and thus avoid any social contact with married men.

Several women said that most of their friends during their marriages had been their husband's friends or business associates. Four said they had been their friends, and four said they and their husbands had had joint friends. One woman said her husband had run around with a group of single men friends and she had had married women friends. One said that she and her husband had not had any joint friends and another said that she kept her friends at school separate from her home because of her husband's jealousy. Another said that her friends became people from work. Two women said that they had always felt closer to their friends than to their husband's friends. One divorcee had moved after her divorce and then had moved back to the same community and found that some of her married friends were single again. Three of the women said that they had been confined by many small children at home and had not had the opportunity to make any friends. An interesting result of this set of questions indicates that these divorced women had had either a very narrow circle of married friends or none at all.

Single friends. Since the time of their divorces, it was felt that these women would have made up a group of single friends whom they joined occasionally for social activities. However, half of the women interviewed did not get together with single friends, five said they did. One woman said she had no single friends. Another said

that because she was older, most of her women friends were married. One young divorcee said that she had only one close single friend. Another said that she was tied to her own family and did not have time to do things with friends. One woman said her social life had been nil until two years ago when she joined Parents without Partners. She did not like the group very much but felt it was something to do that got her out of the house once in a while. Nine women felt that they had had things in common with their few single friends either through school or work. Two women who have children still see their husbands frequently and do not socialize without them.

Four women said their single friends were people they had known while separated, and seven said their friends were people they had met since their divorce. However, four of these women said their friends were people they had known casually before their divorce or through school or work. Seven women said that some of their friends were also divorced women, three did not know any other divorcees. Generally, they did not see these women very often. Additional comments about this problem included: "feel a need to meet girls who are close to my age who are single," "am the only one with children," "and "keeping myself busy enough that I do not miss a social life." These women looked for the type of people as friends whom they could talk to and feel comfortable with but who would not make demands on their time or lives. Eight women expressed a feeling of being in limbo, of not having the freedom of being single because they still had to provide a home for their children, and yet not having

the protection and companionship of being married. One woman who had no children said that because she had been married, and she could never go back to feeling totally single again.

Attitudes of parents and in-laws. In relating their parents' attitudes toward their marriages and divorces, nine women said that their parents had not felt that they had made a mistake or failure in their marriage by being divorced. Two women said that their parents felt that their marriages had been a mistake in the first place. One woman did not know how her parents felt about her marriage or her divorce. One divorcee said that her parents had blamed her for the break up of her marriage. Another said that her parents had not been in favor of her marriage from the beginning and had an "I told you so" attitude. One said that her parents had not been sold on the idea of her marriage but had thought that it would work. Another felt that she had changed so much for the better since her divorce that her parents were glad that she was single again.

When asked how their parents felt toward their husbands, eight women said that their parents had liked their husbands, four said that their parents had not liked them. One related that her parents appeared to like her husband as much as they liked anyone who was a problem to society. Two said their fathers had thought their husbands were lazy and did not have sufficient drive and purpose. One young divorcee stated that her parents had liked her husband better than they had ever liked her. Another said that her father had hated her husband from

the first time he had met him.

Ten women said that their husbands' families had liked them, one did not know how they felt, and one said they were suspicious of her because she was from a different ethnic and religious background. Only one woman said that her husband's mother had been nasty after the divorce, but the mother admitted that her son had not done his share during the marriage. Half of the women said they had maintained contact with their ex-husbands' families. One said that she got along better and felt closer to her ex-husband's mother than she did to her own mother. Another said she had great rapport with her ex-mother-in-law. In one case, the ex-husband's grandmother babysat full time with her great-grandchild.

A great majority of the women stated that both their parents and their husbands' parents had been very distressed by their divorces. However, ten women said that their parents were relieved to have them out of their marriages, one did not know how her parents felt, and one said her parents would have liked her to have continued in her marriage. One woman said her parents were relieved except that they were not quite sure that she wasn't getting into a worse mess by being divorced. Another said her parents had wanted her to develop to the place that she wanted to be, and had encouraged her divorce for this reason. One stated that her marital problems had caused problems in her parents' marriage. Several others said their parents realized

that divorce was inevitable and were glad to have it over. One woman said that her husband had been tied to his mother, that it had been her mother-in-law who had called a lawyer, and had pushed her into a divorce. One woman's parents had wanted her to come home to live; another who had moved into her parents' home, has not liked the controls they had placed on her.

Attitude of children. Because their children's reactions to their divorces are often a problem, the seven women who had children were asked to discuss their children's attitudes toward their divorces.

When asked if their children blamed anyone for the divorce, only one said that she felt that although it was not exactly blame, her children were angry with her and hurt by their father. One said that her son sometimes reacted as if her husband were to blame. Another said that it was possible that her children blamed both of them, but she really did not know for sure. Two stated that their children had been too young to understand at the time, four said their children had been very upset by it, and one said that her daughter had never commented one way or another about the divorce. However, two divorcee's husbands eat dinner with the family almost every night, so the children have frequent contact with them, and continue to see their fathers as very much a part of the household.

In relating possible additional discipline problems since their divorce, three of the divorcees said that their children had not been more difficult, and one said that hers had been more difficult, and one said she had not had any problems until the last year.

All of the divorced mothers expressed a great deal of concern for the well-being of their children. One said that her son was very suspicious of adults and that no one had taken the time to get to know him. One said that her son had gone through a brief time of rebellion shortly after the divorce. All expressed concern that there was no prominent male figure in their children's lives, and felt that they as mothers were the only strong adult influence in the lives of their children. They were worried about how their children would adjust as adults, and wondered if they really knew enough to guide and aid their children in making the right decisions and choices. One felt that her son was too receptive to suggestions from his peer group. Another said that her older son was involved in his father's problems and was just beginning to come out of it. Several expressed concern that their children were too attached to them and wanted them to have security from other adults as well. One young mother said that her daughter asked for her daddy one day and her mother the next. She also felt that her husband had been a much better disciplinarian than she was. Another mother said her children had been wonderful and had taken over a great deal of the responsibility for running the home smoothly. One related that her husband had never been home very much anyway, so it had not been different since the divorce.

Total responsibility. Two of the divorced mothers said that they had difficulty in handling the total responsibility for themselves and

their children, and two felt there had been no problems. Two said they had always had the total responsibility and were used to it. One said it had not been terribly easy to adjust, and another said it was just different now. One mother said she had not been sleeping well, and expressed concern for the future and the necessary pressure of having to keep her job in order to provide for herself and her children.

Social life. In a discussion of their social life and dating, five women said that they were dating, and five said they rarely dated. One woman had remarried very recently, another is engaged, and two continue to date only their ex-husbands. One woman said she almost married again shortly after her divorce, but then realized the man was not right for her and broke off her engagement. Another divorcee went with a man for fourteen months and planned to marry him, but discovered that he had some serious psychological problems and broke up with him. Of those who were dating, six said they dated only one man at a time, and two said they dated more than one man at a time. Three had seriously discussed marriage with the man they were dating, four had not discussed marriage. Five women were dating divorced men, two were not. Five women said that the men they dated were older, two dated younger men, and four said the men were about the same age.

In relating some of their problems in beginning to date again, half of the women said it was very difficult. Two women said it was not difficult as they had met men through work or school and dating

became an easy and natural thing to do. One woman said it was not difficult because she liked the man she was dating. However, those that did have difficulty expressed a number of problems. One woman said she really did not want to date but that she wanted to get out of the house occasionally. Another said she had been out of the dating game for so long it was difficult to know the rules. Other problems discussed included: "felt strained at times because I did not know what to expect of myself or my date," "have been out of touch for so long that I don't know how to dance or do the current dances," "never had dated too much before marriage and I do not really know how to act in a dating scene," "have had so little contact with men in the past few years that the approaches they use are so different," "am sure I am interested in being married again and so am not sure I want to date," "am not sure I know myself well enough not to get involved with men again," "am scared because it has been so long since I have gone out with a man," "have incurred difficulty in finding someone with the same interest levels," and "feeling funny because I am with someone else who is not my husband."

In discussing some of the additional daily frustrations listed in the questionnaire, most of the women interviewed, the divorcees with children in particular, were delighted to learn that other divorced women had had the same type of problems they had had. One said that she had finally found a gadget for opening jars so that she

did not have to pound them on the floor anymore. One young divorcee said that her insurance man had given her the run around, and that she had car trouble and had not known anyone reliable to fix it for her. She also said that being alone sometimes bothered her but she was beginning to get used to it. An additional frustration related to situations with other men, particularly married men. Another divorcee said that her most difficult frustration was in learning to make decisions for herself, as she had been brought up to do as she was told. She was bringing up her own children to be independent but sometimes they were too much so. One young woman who lived at home said that she did not have enough time to herself because of her family. Another stated that she felt competent in handling business and money affairs but she really did not like the total responsibility of doing so. She also felt a time conflict of having too many tasks to do and not enough time in which to do them. A young mother said that she worked with her three year old daughter some but not as much as she wanted to. She also said that she got lonely easily but that her ex-husband was around three or four nights a week which helped. A divorcee with four children laughed and said "yes!", "yes!", "yes!" when asked about daily frustrations. Last winter she and her four children were without plumbing for ten days, and a month later part of the roof fell in. She said that she had learned to cry when she had needed to.

She walked out of the house when she could not stand it anymore, lost her temper when she felt it would help, and played the piano to calm herself. She also said that she had had to schedule time to be alone and to get off by herself. Another divorcee with a child said that it would help to have an intelligent, resourceful father to reinforce discipline, and that in the last few months she had wished that she could shift the burden of responsibility for awhile. She also was frustrated by propositions from men who were supposed to be good friends. One woman said that she was apt to let things go, her checkbook was a mess, the car was ready to fall apart, she could not fix the screen door that the dog had jumped through, and she slept or watched television to escape her problems. Although she felt it was childish to react this way, she had learned to get rid of some of the frustrations by doing something purely selfish, by going out or by getting a complete change of routine. For this reason she had taken up skiing and enjoyed it tremendously. Then she was ready to go back and then do the chores and not feel the weight of the world. She felt she was happier when she was busy and not wallowing in self-pity. She also said that she felt that being safe was deadening in a sense. Another divorcee with children said that she had always answered the children's questions and had never had reinforcement of discipline, so it was not any different now than it had been. She went on to say that her husband had disciplined the children without explaining why and that they were afraid of him. She still does not have time to be by herself, and would like some time to do things with friends. She still sees her husband frequently.

as he comes to dinner several nights a week. He feels inadequate and hurt when she mentions other friends, which makes her feel guilty about having friends. She said it would be better if she did not live here, but her husband threatens that he would not come to visit the children if she moves away. She felt that she was giving her children a father for awhile. She grew up hating arguments and spent her time during her marriage avoiding tension with her husband. She related that she still felt caught in the middle and was almost overwhelmed by it at times.

Adjustment to college life. Because adjustment to college life is thought to be difficult for most single students, the possibility of additional problems in adjustment to being a divorced woman and a student was explored with these women. Three women said that because they were older, they felt that their age had been a factor in adjustment; eight said that it was not. One graduate teaching assistant who had taught high school said it was difficult to adjust from the authority of being a teacher to being a student again. One said that she felt she filled a mother image in many ways; another said that because she was taking a graduate course, most of the people in her course were older. One divorcee said that if she were younger, she might go back to school in the Fall full time. A young woman said that as a freshman, she had carried five hours. Worked thirty hours a week, and had a daughter a year old. Most of the women felt that they were accepted by the other students.

Two women felt that having the total responsibility of the children while in school and trying to study had been a problem, and one said that she had always had this responsibility so it was no different now than it had been before she was divorced. Another related that she had always been in school and that her husband had never helped at home during her marriage. One woman said her husband's grandmother had taken care of her daughter since she had been a baby. Another said her mother lived with her and was home most of the time when her son came home from school. One mother said her children fought constantly about which one was going to do what.

In discussing the problem of finding time to study, one said that she did not study, two said they had never been very well self-disciplined to study, and two said that finding the time was always a problem. One said that she studied in order to concentrate on something other than her problems; but three said that although they had the time, they found it difficult to study. One said that she scheduled time to study as she had to schedule time to do anything, and another said that studying always came first.

Other problems related in the area of adjusting to college life included: "feel the lack of a social life," "feel insecure because it has been fourteen years since I have been in school," "have nothing in common with other students." One said that since her divorce, she did better in school because she know now what she wanted to do.

Another said she did not quite know who she was as a student. One divorcee with children said that school cut into her family life, and another said that she did not and had not had the time with her children she would have liked to have had. One woman, who wore her wedding ring until she was recently engaged, said that other students would ask her where her husband was, or if he were a student. One divorcee said she felt as if she were in limbo, that she was not a part of any world.

All agreed that they had had to make some type of additional adjustments to college life and being a student because they were divorcees.

Meeting other divorcees. When these women were asked if they would be interested in meeting other divorcees, five said that they would, four said that they would not, and two said, "possibly under the right circumstances." One said that it did not matter whether or not the woman was a divorcee. All agreed that they were not interested in superficial relationships, that friendships can not be forced into being, that they just happen. One said that she had been to a Parents without Partners meeting but had not liked it because the women seemed to be husband hunting. One said that she was not very sociable and did not care about meeting other people. All agreed that they were interested in meeting people with whom they had something in common, not particularly a divorce. One said that she felt it was time

to meet people her own age, and another said she would like to have someone to do things with. One did say it would be nice to know someone who was in a similar situation. But, one woman who had been divorced ten years, said she would like to get away from the subject of divorce, another said that she did not care to rehash her divorce, and a third felt that she had talked about her divorce as much as she wanted to. One said that she was learning to love and like what she had, and to forget the things that she did not have. Three women said it would be nice to get together and have a chance to talk about their problems and frustrations with people they thought would understand. Two were delighted with the idea of being able to exchange baby-sitting, and three would have liked to meet other people who enjoyed playing cards. But, all agreed that their divorces were not what made them have things in common with other people, that it was something internal which created friendships.

Ways in which the University could help. In a discussion of ways in which the University could aid or help them with their problems, one woman said that she wished there were some way to make contact with other people her own age. Three women who had made use of the Counseling Center or the Mental Health Clinic felt that it had helped them, nine had not. Of those who had not, one saw a psychiatrist in Topeka, one had been to the Family Services in Los Angeles following her divorce, and five said that they had either thought about going

for help, thought that they should, or thought that it was a very valuable service. One woman said that she did not think that the University was responsible for what had happened to her before she came here. Two of the women had been employed by the University but had not been students at the time they felt they needed the most help. One said she went to the Counseling Center with the hope that it would not only alleviate her problems, but that her husband would come to. One who had been to a Counseling Center at another college said that it had not helped her because the counselor there was not prepared to handle anything more involved than the problems of eighteen year olds.

Group activities. Because many of these women have difficulty in meeting other people on a social basis, they were asked if they would be interested in some type of group activity, particularly an over twenty-five group made up of single University students and faculty, twonspeople, and military personnel. Half of the women felt that they would be very interested, one was not sure, and four said that they were not interested. Of those who were not interested, one was still in the college age group, one said she was not very sociable, one said that it depended on the type of activity engaged in by the group, and one said it might be helpful for others but that she was not interested. Of those that were in favor of such a group, one said that she thought there was a crying need for something like

that and that she needed the stimulation of more adult conversation. One said that she felt the need to mix more with people, and another said that her church had not helped her in meeting people. One related that there was always the problem of paying a babysitter, and another said that she was not interested in making friends in an artificial sense. One said that in California she had gone the party route, for awhile, but had gotten bored with it and found other outlets for her energy. Many said that they were interested but did not know if they would actually go, or if they really had the time to go. Two of the women had been to interpersonal relations groups in the University for Men program and had been very stimulated by them.

Over-all it was apparent that these women agreed that they had major personal adjustment problems in being divorced and in becoming students. It was evident that these women had great difficulty entering into interpersonal relationships with others. They seemed to lack the ability, or were afraid to make the personal commitment that such relationships necessitates.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The primary purpose behind the pilot research was to ascertain what divorced women at Kansas State University had to say about themselves and their problems. It was felt that these women should have an opportunity to express themselves, and to discuss what they felt to be their major problems both as divorcees and as students. The preceeding chapters have dealt with the expressions of these women. It was found that divorcees had certain types of adjustment problems which were peculiar to them as individuals; namely, adjusting to an unmarried state and adjusting to the University environment. The data gathered has a functional value in acquainting such agencies as the Student Counseling Center and the Mental Hygiene Clinic on campus at Kansas State University with background information about the unique problems of these divorced women.

A total population of thirty-five women were personally interviewed. A ten page questionnaire (see Appendix) was constructed which encompassed six major areas: first, statistical background about each divorcee; second, attitudes toward the divorce, by the divorcee and her family and friends; third, adjustment problems of the divorcee; fourth, adjustment problems of the divorcee as a college student; fifth, attitudes toward meeting other people; and sixth, ways in which the University could help the divorcee herself.

Many areas of similarity in attitudes and feelings were obtained from the data gathered through the questionnaire, particularly in the area of personal adjustment to being a divorced woman. Most of the women interviewed agreed that they had had difficulty in adjusting to feelings of inadequacy, to needing to be wanted and desired as a woman, to feelings about sex, to dating problems, to financial problems, and to daily frustrations. Although there was a similarity in the types of problems with which the divorcees had difficulty, the method by which each woman handled or solved her problems was unique. All of the divorcees seem to have made a relatively good adjustment to their situations despite their problems, and are leading productive and fulfilling lives. It is felt that divorced women would be encouraged by learning that other divorcees have had to deal with many of the same frustrations and adjustments with which they are confronted.

There is a need for an agency of some type to be set up which could assist these women, as well as other mature women, in finding reliable and inexpensive babysitters, gas stations, repair garages, beauty shops, cleaners, and medical facilities. It is suggested that the University for Man program include a group for divorced women in an attempt to aid them in dealing constructively with some of their adjustment problems.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What is your age? _____
2. What is your home town? _____
3. Are you employed? Yes _____ No _____
If Yes, a. Is that full-time or part-time work? _____
b. What type of work do you do? _____
4. What is your family's approximate income? _____
5. What is the source of your income? (Approximate percentages)
 - a. Parents _____
 - b. Loans _____
 - c. Grants _____
 - d. Assistantships _____
 - e. Scholarships _____
 - f. Job _____
 - g. Support exhusband _____
 - h. Child Support _____
6. Is it difficult to make ends meet on your present income? _____

7. It is more difficult now than when you were married? _____

8. What is your present academic standing?
 - a. Freshman _____
 - b. Sophomore _____
 - c. Junior _____
 - d. Senior _____
 - e. Graduate _____
 - f. Special _____

9. What is your academic major? _____
10. Did you attend school prior to your divorce? Yes _____ No _____
11. Did you attend school prior to your marriage? Yes _____ No _____
12. Have you changed your academic major? Yes _____ No _____

If Yes: Why? _____

13. Reasons for returning to college:

- a. Higher salary? _____
- b. Better able to provide for children? _____
- c. Professional standing? _____
- d. Development of self potential? _____
- e. Others _____
- _____

14. Did anyone encourage you to return to school to continue your education?

Yes _____ No _____ Who? _____

15. Did anyone discourage you? Yes _____ No _____ Who? _____

1. How long have you been divorced? _____

2. How long were you married? _____

3. Was this your first marriage? Yes _____ No _____

4. Do you have children? Yes _____ No _____

If so, how many? _____

Ages? _____

Sex of children? _____

5. What are the arrangements for visitation by your ex-husband?
6. Is your husband eager to see the children? Yes___ No___
7. Is he prompt in sending money? Yes___ No___
8. Reasons for the divorce:
- a. When did you first begin to feel that something was wrong in your marriage?
 - b. Do you recall the incident or incidents which made you feel this way?
 - c. When did you first begin to think about divorce?
 - d. Was it your husband or you who first brought up the subject or possibility of divorce?
Self___ Husband___
 - e. Who filed for the divorce? Self___ Husband___
 - f. Did you or your husband seek professional advice or counseling?
Yes___ No___
 - g. If Yes, did you go together or alone? Together___ Alone___
 - h. Whom did you see?
 - i. How did your parents feel about the divorce?

9. Adjustment problems:

a. Self-concept

Did you or do you have feelings of:

1. inadequacy?
2. worthlessness?
3. non-femininity?
4. unloved and/or unlovable?
5. failure?
6. others

b. Sexual

1. Feelings or needing fulfillment of a sexual union?
2. Needing to be just held?
3. Needing to feel wanted and desired?
4. Others

c. Financial

1. Not having husband's income?
2. Feeling total burdens of having to earn all the money yourself?

3. Others

d. Married friends:

1. Left out of married friends' groups or get togethers?
2. Becoming a threat to other women because you were single?
3. Having men within the group become overly friendly?
4. Were most your friends during your marriage your husband's _____, yours _____, or joint friends _____?
5. Other problems?

e. Single friends:

1. Do or did you ban together to do things? Yes _____ No _____
2. Do you have things in common with your single friends?
Yes _____ No _____
3. Are your single friends people you knew before you were married _____, while you were married _____, or did you meet them since your divorce _____?
4. Are some of your friends divorced women? Yes _____ No _____

5. Other problems:

f. Parents, in-laws, and family:

1. Have they looked at you as if you'd made a tremendous mistake or failure in your marriage?

Yes ___ No ___

2. Did your parents like your husband? Yes ___ No ___

3. Did your husband's family like you? Yes ___ No ___

4. Do you maintain contact with any of your ex-husband's family? Yes ___ No ___;

5. Were your parents relieved to have you out of the whole mess? Yes ___ No ___;

6. Others:

g. Social-dating:

1. Are you dating now? Yes ___ No ___
2. One man? ___ more than one? ___
3. Have you talked about marriage? Yes ___ No ___

4. Is he divorced? Yes _____ No _____
5. Does he have children? Yes _____ No _____ Number _____
6. Are most of the men you date older _____, younger _____,
or about the same age _____?
7. Was it difficult to begin dating again? Yes _____ No _____
8. What were some of the problems you had?

h. Children:

1. Do your children blame you _____ or your husband _____
for the divorce?
2. Have they been more difficult to handle since the divorce?
Yes _____ No _____;
3. Additional problems in this area:

i. Handling total responsibility for self and children?

j. Some of the frustrations that have been mentioned are: opening jars, taking out the garbage, checking on the car, handling the insurance, answering kid's questions, helping them solve their problems, doing all the disciplining without reinforcement, children leaning on you, no time for self or self-growth, wishing you could shift burden for just a little while, never being alone or else being alone too often, etc. In light of your experiences, would you comment on some of the feelings that you have had?

10. Additional adjustment problems as students:

1. Has your age been a factor? Yes _____ No _____

If yes, in what way?

2. Responsibility of children while in school and trying to study?

3. Finding time to study?

4. Other problems:

11. Would you be or would you have been interested in meeting other divorcees? Yes _____ No _____;

1. Exchange babysitting? Yes _____ No _____

2. Someone to have something in common with? Yes _____ No _____;

3. Play cards? Yes _____ NO _____

4. Just to get together and have a chance to talk about problems and frustrations? Yes _____ No _____

5. Other reasons:

12. Are there any types of special services that the University should offer to you such as:

a. Counseling?

1. Have you ever made use of the Counseling Center or the Mental Health Clinic? Yes _____ No _____
2. If yes, was it helpful? Yes _____ No _____
3. Why or why not?

b. Would you be interested in group activities, particularly and would you participate in an over twenty-five singles group?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, what kind?

c. Any suggestions?

A PILOT STUDY OF THE ADJUSTMENT PROBLEMS
OF DIVORCED WOMEN AT KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

BY

CAROLYN H. FLORER

B. A. , Morningside College, 1961

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

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This report was a pilot study of the problems of divorced women at Kansas State University. It was believed that these women were a segment of the total student population about which the University had little or no information. The purpose of the research was to ascertain statistical data about divorced women and the adjustment problems which they faced as divorcees and as college students.

A total population of thirty-five was obtained from the files of the Director of Housing and Food Service for the Spring semester of 1969, and an open-ended questionnaire was designed. Seventeen divorcees were students during the Summer session and twelve were available to be personally interviewed. The interviewees were most cooperative and open in discussing their feelings and reactions to their personal problems. Although the questionnaire was perhaps somewhat biased because of the researcher's personal experiences, the interviewees were given ample opportunity to express themselves.

The results of the questionnaire for the most part supported the original thesis behind the study: that these women were an unknown segment of the University's population, that they had a number of adjustment problems about which the University should be made aware, and that they were desirous of expressing their status.

The prupose of the research was to discover the number of women involved, their ages, the source of their income, their academic standing and major fields of education, their reasons for returning or continuing their education, the length of time married and the length of time since their divorce. In addition, attitudes toward the reasons for their divorce and incidents which led to the filing for divorce, the reactions to their divorce by friends and family, their adjustment problems as divorcees, their adjustment problems as students, their need to meet other people, and ways in which the University could aid these women in solving their problems were sought. The main concept behind the research was to learn what divorcees had to say about themselves and their problems, not what other researchers had to say about them.

An extensive analysis of the data has not been attempted as this report was designed to be a fact-finding study to discover what divorcees had to say about themselves. It is hoped that a comphrensive analysis of this data will be made in a continued and expanded study of divorced women on campus, and that other Universities and Colleges will begin a study of these women on their campuses.