Developmental Differences in Children's Understanding of Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage

ELIZABETH MAZUR

University of Michigan

One hundred and nineteen children in kindergarten, second, and fourth grades, living with never divorced biological parents or with divorced mothers, were interviewed with both open-and close-ended questions about their understanding of, and evaluative attitudes toward, marriage, divorce, remarriage, and stepfamilies. Results indicate clear developmental differences in children's understanding of these issues and in their opinions about marriage, divorce, and stepfamilies. No differences were found, however, between the understanding of children with divorced and non-divorced parents, or between boys and girls. Although children with divorced parents were more likely than children with nondivorced parents to expect themselves to divorce in the future, no other differences were found in their attitudes. Results are discussed within a constructivistic perspective of children's acquisition of social knowledge.

Several studies in the past decade have investigated how children and adolescents reason about their parents' divorce and how this understanding changes developmentally (Kurdek, 1986; Kurdek & Siesky, 1980; Neal, 1983; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). However, there has been little research on children's understanding of marriage and divorce as a domain of social knowledge that is important in its

own right, even for children with nondivorced parents. Because the family is central to the life of the child, the study of children's understanding of marriage and divorce can provide a significant window through which we may observe the development of children's knowledge of their social world.

This window is important because for children, understanding of marriage and divorce constitutes an especially challenging type of social knowledge. In contrast to their understanding of friendship or of morality, for example, children's cognition of marriage and divorce is vicarious and anticipatory rather than participatory, requires juggling a variety of weak cues, rather than allowing for direct immersion and experimentation, and, with the exception of parental remarriage, is limited to the one model of marriage provided by their parents. In addition, children's understanding of marriage and divorce is often a concern of divorcing parents, who confront difficult questions of what to tell children about the marital separation, and how to address the questions about divorce, remarriage, and stepfamilies that arise over the course of the child's and the family's development.

Furthermore, the study of children's cognitions of marriage and divorce may help explain why, in the United States, persons whose parents divorced are more likely to divorce than those whose parents did not (i.e., Glenn & Kramer, 1987; Kobrin & Waite, 1984). Studies measuring high school and college students' views about marriage and divorce suggest that children of divorced parents are more willing to divorce than children of nondivorced parents (Ganong, Coleman, & Brown, 1981; Greenberg & Nay, 1982; Kinniard & Gerrard, 1986). Although adolescents may be more able to assess realistically the issues that led to their parents' divorce, and to anticipate their own future marriages, children in elementary school are at least as likely as adolescents, or even more likely, to be influenced by their family experiences. One purpose of this study, then, was to assess whether family structure differences in attitudes associated with the intergenerational transmission of divorce would be apparent as early as middle childhood.

In addition to measuring the effect of family structure on children's evaluative attitudes about marriage and divorce, this study also assessed developmental differences in children's reasoning about various aspects of these issues, as well as about remarriage and stepfamilies. These issues have important implications for providing children with age-appropriate divorce- and remarriage-related information. In addition, a substantial percentage of the American population is affected by the increasing prevalence of stepfamilies (Select Committee of Children, Youth, & Families, 1987). Although resistance to forming a close relationship with a stepparent is common in families with preadolescent children (Hetherington, Arnett, & Hollier, 1988), developmental and family researchers have conducted few studies of children's perspectives on remarriage and stepfamilies (for exceptions, see East, 1989; Halperin & Smith, 1983).

Evidence from prior studies indicates reliable age-related trends in the way children reason about their own parents' divorce (Kurdek, 1986; Kurdek & Berg,

1983; Kurdek & Siesky, 1980; Neal, 1983; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980) and about family roles and relationships (Borduin, Mann, Cone, & Borduin, 1990; Brodzinsky, Singer, & Braff, 1984; Gilby & Pederson, 1982; McGurk & Glachan, 1987; Newman, Roberts, & Syre, 1989; Piaget, 1928; Wedemeyer, Bickhard, & Cooper, 1989). Consistent with developmental trends in interpersonal reasoning (Selman, 1980; Shantz, 1983), these findings indicate that older children's views of their parents' divorce and of the family are more likely than those of younger children to be differentiated, abstract, and psychological. The present investigation extends this research by studying children's understanding of divorce in both children with divorced and nondivorced parents, as well as being one of only a handful of studies to examine comprehensively children's or adolescents' understanding of marriage (i.e., Ganong et al., 1981; Paddock-Ellard & Thomas, 1981), remarriage, and stepfamilies (i.e., Ganong & Coleman, 1987; Gross, 1986, Kurdek & Sinclair, 1986).

Although this approach draws on previous studies of the development of children's understanding of their parents' divorce (Kurdek & Berg, 1983; Kurdek & Siesky, 1980), this study differs by concentrating on differences among children in late preschool and middle childhood, rather than studying samples with an age variation from middle childhood to late adolescence. The age range of 5 to 10 years was chosen so as to capture the transition in cognitive development that appears around the ages of 6 or 7 years (see Kenny, 1983 for a review). Because of their use of concrete operations, children of this age start to describe themselves and others using more conceptual and traitlike attributes, rather than relying on observable attributes (Harter, 1990; Kenny, 1983). Having symbolic representation as the dominant mode for representing information, the 7-year-old child is capable of contemplating possibilities beyond concrete reality (Bruner, Olver, & Greenfield, 1966). In addition, the 5- to 10-year-old age group is important because evidence suggests that the content of descriptive traits becomes increasingly interpersonal with development across middle childhood (Rosenberg, 1979).

This study provides a qualitative analysis of children's understanding of marriage and divorce in order to provide information about what children in three different age groups think, and to provide data for consideration of the cognitive skills involved. As Kurdek (1983) has recommended, we used a clinical interview format from which quantitative scores could be derived. It was hypothesized that due to developmental differences in children's cognitive abilities— especially differences in the nature of self-description (Harter, 1990), social perspective-taking (Selman, 1980), conceptualization of interpersonal relationships (Damon, 1977), and representational skills (Kenny, 1983)—older children would express more complex understanding of marriage, divorce, and remarriage than would younger children.

It must also be considered that a child grappling with parental divorce, trying to make sense of new family situations, may express more complex reasoning about marriage and divorce than a child whose parents have not separated.

Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) posit that one consequence of parental divorce is that the strengths and deficiencies of the family become a focus of the child's conscious attention and thought. According to Selman (1980), while children are likely to ignore information that is too complex to assimilate, their systematic exposure to slightly more advanced reasoning creates an optimal developmental environment. Thus, it was expected that children with divorced parents would express more complex understanding of marriage, divorce, and remarriage than children of nondivorced parents.

Empirical reports of children's understanding of their own parents' divorce (Kurdek, Blisk, & Siesky, 1981; Kurdek & Siesky, 1980; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980) do not indicate that gender should be an important determinant of children's understanding of marriage and divorce. However, the results of Selman (1980) suggest that girls 5- to 7-years-old may show greater insight into interpersonal relationships than their male peers, and there are indications that girls' concepts of family are somewhat more complex than boys' (Wedemeyer et al., 1989). In addition, different child socialization patterns may cause issues of marriage and parenthood to be more salient to girls than to boys (Eccles & Hoffman, 1984). Thus, one purpose of this study was to explore more directly gender differences in children's reasoning about marriage, divorce, and remarriage.

There is some evidence that girls express more positive attitudes toward marriage than do boys (Ganong et al., 1981; Paddock-Ellard & Thomas, 1981). However, investigators have found few gender differences in attitudes toward divorce (Ganong et al., 1981; Kurdek & Siesky, 1980; Paddock-Ellard & Thomas, 1981; Reinhard, 1977) or toward stepparents (Ganong & Coleman, 1987; Kurdek & Sinclair, 1986). Therefore, it was hypothesized that, in this study, too, girls would express more positive attitudes toward marriage than boys. However, analyses of gender differences in attitudes toward divorce, remarriage, and stepfamilies were considered exploratory. Similarly, given the exploratory nature of this part of the study, there were no specific predictions of how children's evaluative attitudes toward marriage, divorce, remarriage, and stepfamilies would be affected by age.

In sum, the purpose of this research is to examine children's understanding of and attitudes toward marriage, divorce, remarriage, and stepfamilies as domains of social knowledge, and to extend previous research by examining the relation of age, gender, and family structure to children's reasoning and attitudes about these issues. "Understanding" was operationalized as the degree of complexity in children's reasoning about marriage, divorce, remarriage, and stepfamilies. "Attitudes" were operationalized as the children's conclusions, or opinions.

METHOD

Subjects

The subjects were 119 white children (54 boys and 65 girls) ages 61 months to 125 months in kindergarten ($n = 33$, $M = 69$ months, $SD = 5.1$), second grade

($n = 45$, $M = 92$ months, $SD = 5.0$), and fourth grade ($n = 41$, $M = 116$ months, $SD = 5.2$). According to parents' reports, 87 children lived with never-divorced biological parents. Thirty-two children with divorced parents lived either with single divorced or separated mothers ($n = 22$) or with remarried mothers and stepfathers ($n = 10$). The distribution by grade of children living with never-divorced biological parents was 28 (14 boys, 14 girls), 32 (15 boys, 17 girls), and 27 (14 boys, 13 girls), in Grades K, 2, and 4 respectively. The distribution of children living with divorced mothers was 5 (3 boys, 2 girls), 13 (7 boys, 6 girls), and 14 (3 boys, 11 girls), in Grades K, 2, and 4 respectively.

Family socioeconomic status (SES) was calculated from parents' reports using Hollingshead's four-factor index of social status (Hollingshead, 1975). The mean SES for the total sample was 56 ($SD = 10.30$), which is at the lowest end of the highest social class.

Procedure
Letters and consent forms describing the project were sent to the families of children in kindergarten, second, and fourth grades at four public elementary schools in a midwestern university city. The parental consent rate was 33%.[1] To ensure that all responses would be independent, only data from one randomly selected child per family were included in the study.

All children were interviewed privately at their schools by one of seven interviewers, who were either undergraduate psychology majors or graduate students in developmental psychology. All interviewers, except for the principal investigator, were blind to the hypotheses of the study. The interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed verbatim without references to the subjects' name, age, and grade.

The Marriage and Divorce Interview
Because no measure of children's general understanding of marriage and divorce existed for elementary-aged children, a 35- to 40-min semistructured interview was developed. Questions applicable to both children of nondivorced and divorced parents were adapted from studies of children with divorced parents that had used open-ended interviews or questionnaires about children's reasoning about parental divorce (e.g., Kurdek & Berg, 1980; Kurdek et al., 1981; Kurdek & Siesky, 1980; Wallerstein, 1984, 1985, 1987; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Additional questions were formulated to reflect issues in the sociological literature concerning marital expectations, marital commitment, and the acceptance of

---

[1]Although the sample is skewed toward children of nondivorced parents and children from families with upper-middle-class incomes, according to school and city reports this sample is representative of the city's population of public elementary school children. The majority of the nonparticipants could not be interviewed because the study was conducted before and after school hours on the schools' premises.

divorce in American society (e.g., Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Lewis & Spanier, 1979; Veroff, Douvan, & Kulka, 1981).

To assess both children's understanding of, and evaluative attitudes toward, marriage, divorce, and remarriage, children were asked, respectively, open- and close-ended questions about five main themes in reference to a story line illustrated with paper dolls. These themes were marriage (and its opposite, singleness), divorce of a childless couple, divorce of a couple with two young children, remarriage, and stepfamilies.

Since it was important to select those topics likely to be salient for ages 5 to 10 years, the interview was designed to be both comprehensive and basic. The questions focused on the following areas: children's understanding of the concepts of marriage, divorce, remarriage, and stepfamilies; the possible nature of the family relationships; the motives underlying marriage, divorce, and remarriage; the advantages and disadvantages of these family situations for the children and adults involved; and beliefs concerning the acceptability of divorce, of remarriage, and of being single. These issues were thought to represent the central concerns for parents and elementary school-aged children during these transitional events (see also Kurdek & Siesky, 1980; Neal, 1983), and to be the type of information necessary for parents and mental health professionals to have if they want to understand and address children's concerns about these family situations. For example, some of the questions asked about marriage concerned the reasons why people marry, whether and why the subject planned to marry, whether being married means living happily ever after, what it is like to be married, and the qualities associated with good and bad marriages and spouses. Interviewers used follow-up probes for all "I don't know" responses and for statements that were unclear or ambiguous (e.g., "People marry to be together") but whose underlying meanings might be quite different (e.g., "that means they live together in the same house" versus "because they trust each other, they believe in each other"). The questions asked in the interview to assess children's understanding are presented in the Appendix. It should be noted, however, that a continuous narrative with paper doll characters was used to organize the interview. To help the subjects identify with the stepchildren in the narrative, the stepchildren dolls were of the same sex as the subject.

To control for doll gender effects, the order of presentation of questions was counterbalanced using two forms. For each theme, half of the children were presented questions about the female characters before the male characters, and the other half were questioned about the male characters first.

The interview was scored using two coding systems—one to measure subjects' level of understanding and one to assess subjects' evaluative attitudes. All coders were blind to the hypotheses of the study and to the subjects' age, grade, and parents' marital status.

Coding Children's Understanding of Marriage and Divorce. The scoring and description of levels of children's understanding for each of the five themes

of the interview was influenced by Piaget's (1928) developmental models, Selman's (1980) research on the growth of interpersonal understanding, Shantz's (1983) notion of differentiation in the development of children's descriptions of others, and Damon's (1977) three stages of friendship conceptions. To develop sample responses for each level of understanding, this conceptual literature was merged with results from empirical and clinical studies of children and parental divorce, especially that of Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989).

Two coders scored each of the five themes separately. The first step in scoring understanding was the coder's delineation of each interview response that was both pertinent to an issue and sufficiently informative and unambiguous to be codable. After identifying all scorable issues, each coder assigned level scores by comparing a given response to the level-by-level sample responses and definitions provided in the manual. If the statements expressed with regard to a theme were predominantly at a single level, the theme was scored at Level 1, 2, 4, or 6. If the theme reflected a mixture of statements from two or more levels, it was scored at either Level 3 or Level 5, as described subsequently. It was necessary to delineate these "oscillation levels," adapted from Selman's (1980) study of interpersonal understanding, to describe children who demonstrated the capability for higher level reasoning but either could not or chose not to use this ability consistently during the interview.

Agreement between two coders within 1 point on the 6-point scale averaged 93% over 20 randomly selected interview protocols, ranging from 90 to 100% across the five themes. All disagreements were discussed and resolved before data analysis.

Description of Levels of Understanding of Marriage and Divorce. The following six levels of understanding were developed for each theme.

Subjects whose reasoning was coded as Level 1 showed no or little understanding of the material in the interview.

A child with Level 2 understanding described marriage and divorce in terms of obvious physical details, rather than in terms of underlying motives. Typically, good spouses and stepparents were described by their appearances, by their possessions, or by their presents (e.g., a good stepmother would "buy the little girl toys"). Often, these children expressed the belief that one fight might end a marriage. Subjects with this type of reasoning could express feelings (e.g., "It's sad" to be divorced) and showed understanding of perceptible divorce-related changes (e.g., "They don't live together anymore").

Level 3 was conceptualized as an oscillation level between Levels 2 and 4. Forty to 60% of the subjects' responses were coded as Level 4 understanding and the remainder as mainly Level 2 reasoning.

Level 4 understanding can be described as practical and inferential. Children whose responses were coded at this level extended the inferences drawn from the concrete facts to a description of the use of these traits. Thus, at Level 4, the "nice husband" of Level 2 can "sometimes offer to cook the dinner or offer to go

shopping for the mom." Subjects with Level 4 reasoning emphasized everyday activities and concerns, such as money, working, raising children, and getting things done (e.g., divorce can be good because "sometimes you can do more things than if you are married because if you have kids like my brother, you can never get anything done"). These subjects could thoughtfully name some good and bad consequences of marital situations.

Level 5 was conceptualized as the oscillation level between Levels 4 and 6. Children whose understanding was coded at this level sometimes expressed psychological reasoning, focused on people's thoughts and intentions. However, 40 to 60% of the subjects' responses could be described as Level 4.

The child who expressed Level 6 understanding was consistently able to take the perspective of child and spouse, was aware of the interpersonal conflicts and ambivalent feelings that can occur in marriage, divorce, remarriage, and step-families, and had perceptive, abstract, and psychological responses (e.g., remarriage can be bad because "sometimes you can't stop the things that happened in your last marriage. I mean, they might just, well, come up behind you and say 'Boo!', and then happen all over again"). Compatibility of interests and personality often were seen as the basis for selecting a spouse, and good spouses and family members were described as understanding or supporting each other (e.g., a good husband "cares about you just the way you are and doesn't want you to change").

Coding Children's Attitudes Toward Marriage and Divorce. Attitude categories were derived initially from the socialization literature on children's reasoning about their parents' divorce, were substantiated with transcripts from pilot interviews with 20 children ages 5 to 10 years, and were confirmed with 30 randomly selected protocols from the main study. The majority of the subjects' responses were coded using variants of dichotomous positive/negative scales because most of the attitude questions called for "yes/no" or "good/bad" type of responses. Individual transcripts were coded by two undergraduates, with 93% agreement being obtained between the coders' ratings of 30 additional randomly selected transcripts across all 16 marriage and divorce attitude questions. All disagreements were resolved through conference.

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

Cronbach's alpha (α) for children's levels of understanding scores on the five themes of the marriage and divorce interview was .90. To evaluate the consistency of reasoning levels across themes for children with different demographic characteristics, α coefficients were computed separately for children of each gender, parents' divorce status, and grade. These data indicate that boys (α = .90) and girls (α = .89) showed similarly consistent reasoning across the five

themes, as did children with nondivorced (α = .91) and divorced (α = .84) parents. Although high consistency among theme scores is evident for children in kindergarten (α = .84) and fourth grade (α = .87), that among children in second grade appears to be more moderate (α = .71).

A 2 (Order) $\times$ 3 (Grade) $\times$ 2 (Parents' Divorce Status) $\times$ 2 (Gender) multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) performed on level of understanding scores on the five themes of the interview did not show a significant main effect for order of presentation of characters, nor any significant interactions. Thus, order of presentation was not included in subsequent analyses.

Children's Understanding of Marriage and Divorce

Since this study employed intercorrelated outcome variables that represent a system of meaningful constructs (Huberty & Morris, 1989), a multivariate, rather than univariate, analytic approach was used. A 3 (Grade) $\times$ 2 (Parents' Divorce Status) $\times$ 2 (Gender) MANOVA performed on the five themes of the interviews indicated a highly significant overall main effect for grade, $F(10, 208)$ = 3.89 p < .001.[2] Univariate F tests indicated that the grades differed significantly on each theme.[3] Table 1 presents the number of children by grade level that were categorized at each level of understanding of marriage and divorce. Orthogonal contrasts performed to test for the presence of linear and quadratic trends found only the linear trend significant, F (5, 103) = 22.27 p < .001, indicating that with increasing grade, there is a gradual change in children's understanding of these domains. The multivariate analysis did not reveal significant main effects for parents' divorce status or child's gender, nor any significant interactions.

Children's Attitudes Toward Marriage

As a result of the categorical nature of the data, the χ^2 statistic and logit analyses were used to assess the relationship between subjects' grade, parents' divorce status, and gender to their responses on all marriage and divorce attitude questions. Because there were no interactions among the independent variables, and results from the two types of analyses were similar, only the χ^2 analyses are presented.

---

[2]Because of the small size of the remarried-mother sample (n = 10) relative to the single-divorced-mother sample and nondivorced sample, two sets of MANOVAs were conducted to detect differences between the remarried-mother and single-divorced-mother samples. The first analysis compared the three family groups, whereas the second analysis combined the two divorced samples to compare the differences between the divorced and nondivorced groups. Because the results from the analyses were similar, only the comparison between the two divorced and nondivorced groups is reported.

[3]Univariate F values (2, 107) for the themes of marriage, divorce, divorce with children, remarriage, and stepfamilies were, in order, 13.12, 6.84, 17.32, 6.23, and 6.51, and all were highly significant at p < .01.

TABLE 1
Percentage of Children by Grade at Each Level of Understanding
of Marriage and Divorce

Grade and Theme	Level of Understanding						M
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Kindergarten (n = 33)							
Marriage	12	55	24	9	0	0	2.30
Divorce	6	49	24	21	0	0	2.61
Divorce w/children	12	55	24	9	0	0	2.30
Remarriage	12	42	33	12	0	0	2.45
Stepfamilies	24	21	36	18	0	0	2.48
Second Grade (n = 45)							
Marriage	0	20	51	22	7	0	3.16
Divorce	0	16	33	44	4	2	3.44
Divorce w/children	0	16	40	44	0	0	3.29
Remarriage	0	20	22	58	0	0	3.38
Stepfamilies	0	16	24	53	7	0	3.51
Fourth Grade (n = 41)							
Marriage	2	5	22	54	12	5	3.83
Divorce	2	7	17	54	17	2	3.83
Divorce w/children	0	5	15	54	24	2	4.05
Remarriage	2	5	32	44	15	2	3.71
Stepfamilies	0	5	22	37	29	7	4.12
Mean age[a]	6;1	6;9	7;7	8;5	9;6	9;11	7;10

Note. Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding out to the nearest whole number.
[a]Mean age = years;months.

Table 2 presents the percentage of children in each grade who expressed the designated attitudes toward marriage, divorce, remarriage, and stepfamilies. Only those responses expressed by at least 10% of the children of one grade level are included in the table. Chi-square analyses performed to determine developmental differences in children's attitudes toward marriage found two differences among subjects in kindergarten, second, and fourth grade. As Table 2 illustrates, significantly more younger than older children believed that marriage means living happily ever after, χ^2 (6, N = 118) = 25.71, p < .001, and that being single is mainly bad, χ^2 (10, N = 116) = 19.05, p < .05.

Chi-square and logit analyses also were performed to determine whether attitudes toward marriage varied as functions of parents' divorce status and gender, but no other main effects or interactions were significant.

Children's Attitudes Toward Divorce

Chi-square analyses indicated significant developmental differences for four of seven divorce attitudes (see Table 2 for statistical information). Older children were more likely than younger children to advise divorce as a solution to an unhappy marriage, but were no more likely to expect to divorce themselves.

TABLE 2
Percentage of Children's Responses by Grade to Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage, and Stepfamilies Attitude Questions

		Grade		
Question	K	2	4	χ^2
Do you think you'll ever get married?				7.69
Yes	69	84	76	
No	22	4	7	
I don't know	9	11	17	
Being married mean living happily ever after?				25.71***
Yes	59	22	9	
No	31	58	61	
Depends on couple	6	20	27	
When people are married—good or bad?				12.04
Good	88	89	78	
When people are single—good or bad?				19.05*
Good	32	27	15	
Bad	45	30	29	
Depends on the person	3	11	24	
Both good and bad	3	25	20	
Don't know	13	5	5	
When is it okay to divorce?				23.57**
Child names a reason	52	64	82	
Never	0	19	5	
Don't know	44	17	11	
When people are divorced—good or bad?				7.51
Good	22	20	20	
Bad	67	62	54	
Both good and bad	9	11	12	
Should unhappy couple stay married or get divorced?				23.70***
Stay married	50	14	10	
Get divorced	47	81	83	
Do you think you might ever get divorced?				7.60
Yes/possibly	27	42	39	
No	52	33	27	
Don't know	21	18	27	
With two children, should unhappy couple stay married or get divorced?				7.77**
Stay married	52	29	22	
Get divorced	42	69	61	
Depends on couple	0	0	12	
If you have children, might you ever get divorced?				6.78
Yes/possibly	28	40	28	
No	66	44	46	
Don't know	3	9	18	
Single mom to raise two children—easy or hard?				10.87*
Hard	82	96	95	
Easy	12	0	0	

TABLE 2 (*Continued*)

Question	Grade K	2	4	χ^2
When people get remarried—good or bad?				16.04
Good	66	73	61	
Bad	22	11	5	
Both good and bad	9	11	12	
Depends on situation	0	4	17	
Does child doll like or not like step-mother?				27.19**
Likes her	64	71	50	
Doesn't like her	21	11	10	
Both likes and doesn't like	3	7	18	
Depends on stepmother	0	2	20	
Don't know	12	4	0	
Having a stepmother—good or bad?				28.82**
Good	53	70	46	
Bad	22	7	13	
Both good and bad	3	16	18	
Depends on stepmother	3	5	21	
Don't know	16	0	0	
Does doll child like or not like step-father?				12.60
Likes him	64	64	63	
Doesn't like him	18	11	10	
Both likes and doesn't like	3	11	8	
Depends on stepfather	0	9	10	
Don't know	15	2	5	
Having a stepfather—good or bad?				19.74*
Good	69	77	40	
Bad	9	5	15	
Both good and bad	19	9	23	
Depends on stepfather	0	9	10	

Note. Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding out to the nearest whole number and to the omission of responses not given by at least 10% of the children at a grade level.
*$p < .05$.   **$p < .01$.   ***$p < .001$.

Children with divorced parents (53%) were significantly more likely than children with nondivorced parents (31%) to think that they might get divorced from their future spouses, χ^2 (3, $N = 119$) = 7.97, $p < .05$, although not if they were to have children (39% and 30% respectively). Chi-square and logit analyses indicated that there were no significant differences between children with divorced and nondivorced parents on other divorce attitudes, nor were there any significant differences between boys and girls.

Children's Attitudes Toward Remarriage and Stepfamilies
Chi-square analyses indicated significant grade differences for three of five questions. Second-graders were more likely than the kindergarten or fourth-grade students to assert that having a stepmother or a stepfather is "mainly good," and that the doll child would like having a stepmother (see Table 2 for statistical information).

Chi-square and logit analyses were performed to determine whether attitudes toward remarriage and stepfamilies varied as functions of parents' divorce status and gender, but no other main effects or interactions were significant.

DISCUSSION

Children's Understanding of Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage
The results of the present study indicate very clear developmental differences between the ages of 5 and 10 years in children's reasoning about marriage, divorce, and remarriage. A small number of kindergartners showed little understanding of these family issues. It is possible that these children may have had fewer language skills, and fewer or less-developed strategies for processing social content than their classmates. A number of neo-Piagetian theorists have hypothesized a separate developmental level (e.g., Fischer, 1980) and spurts in language ability (e.g., Peters & Zaidel, 1981) between the preoperational years of ages 4 to 6.

The majority of kindergartners described good spouses and stepparents in terms of observable actions and appearances, although often these were behaviors typically unrelated to marriage (e.g., to be a good wife, "Sue can play tennis"; Andy "could be an engineer like my daddy"). This ability to describe others in terms of their superficial appearances and possessions is typical of Piaget's (1967) preoperational period.

The majority of second- and fourth-graders tended to express concern for the daily activities of everyday life, such as raising children, doing chores, working, and fighting. These children described good spouses and stepparents in terms of their abilities and skills, their helpfulness (driving children around, making household repairs), and their practical contributions to the household, such as their salary or the ability to cook. The decrease in reliance on immediate perceptual information and the increase in the use of social attributes to describe others in relationships are paralleled by the ability to coordinate concrete skills that emerges at 6 or 7 years of age (Fischer, 1980; Kenny, 1983) and the increasingly interpersonal content of traits that children in middle childhood apply to themselves (Rosenberg, 1979).

Finally, a minority of fourth-grade children between the ages of 9 and 10 reasoned psychologically about hidden motives and abstractly about complex feelings, and were able to discuss divorce and remarriage from the perspective of both children and adults. They also described family members in terms of their

feelings and their emotional support for each other (e.g., a good husband "lets his wife know that he'll be there for her . . . He should look out for what she needs, and she should look out for what he needs"). These children's descriptions of ideal relationships in which inequities are resolved justly, and spouses care for each other in mutual love and interdependence, show the hallmarks of Piaget's stage of formal operations that is typical of early adolescence. This level also includes the ability to appraise and reconcile multiple important considerations that Damon (1977) has described in 10- to 12-year-old children's reasoning about social relations and roles. Longitudinal research that directly examines the relations among level of cognitive development, social perspective-taking, descriptions of others, and children's reasoning about marriage and divorce would enable psychologists to better determine the cognitive abilities that are forces for developmental changes in children's social knowledge.

Although it is possible that children in this study may have been parroting ways of talking about marriage and divorce that they did not really understand, one could argue also that the open-ended interview method may have underestimated the knowledge that would have been revealed by a recognition task. The developmental findings presented here are consistent with studies reported in the social cognition literature about children's reasoning about other content areas, such as family roles and relationships (Borduin et al., 1990; Gilby & Pederson, 1982; McGurk & Glachan, 1987; Wedemeyer et al., 1989), morality (Damon, 1977; Piaget, 1967), friendship (Damon, 1977; Keller & Wood, 1989; Selman, 1980), and other people (Barenboim, 1977; Piaget, 1928), and are understandable within the general context of children's acquisition of social knowledge (Damon, 1977; Kenny, 1983; Kurdek, 1986; Piaget, 1967; Selman, 1980; Shantz, 1983). The findings of this study, however, add to this previous literature by demonstrating children's ability to make integrated inferences about complex, anticipatory social relationships (e.g., spousal) and family situations (e.g., step-families) of which they are not directly a part.

In this study, children who experienced their parents' divorce did not express greater understanding of marriage, divorce, and remarriage than children whose parents had not separated. Although we sampled only a circumscribed area of the subjects' knowledge, other studies asking different questions also have found that specific family experiences have little effect on children's concepts of family (Borduin et al., 1990; Newman et al., 1989; Wedemeyer et al., 1989), adoption (Brodzinsky et al., 1984; Newman et al., 1989), and their definitions of the word "divorce" (Newman et al., 1989). From a Piagetian and social-cognitive perspective (Damon, 1977; Piaget, 1928; Selman, 1980; Shantz, 1983), these findings suggest that knowledge of the social world results from a strong, normative cognitive-developmental process of construction. In addition, the frequency of divorce suggests that the majority of school children are exposed to divorce in the families of friends, relatives, or classmates, regardless of their own family status (Select Committee, 1987; Wallerstein, 1984). It is possible, too, that subjects with divorced parents expressed reasoning that was lower than their optimum

level of understanding because of anxiety and associated defensive processes (Selman, 1980) that exclude affective information from linguistic processing (Pennebaker, 1989). For children who are capable of more complex conceptualization, affect may nullify any true effects of experiential learning. Future research assessing the influence of affect on children's processing of social relationships could explain how such "defensive exclusion" (Bowlby, 1980) is manifested in cognition. For example, children who have an insecure working model of themselves and others (Bowlby, 1980) may express less complex understanding of marriage and divorce.

Consistent with previous research in social cognitive development (Kurdek et al., 1981; Kurdek & Siesky, 1980; Shantz, 1983; Weeks & Thornburg, 1977), there were no gender differences in children's understanding of marriage, divorce, and remarriage, despite indications that girls are socialized for marriage and parenthood to a greater extent than are boys (Eccles & Hoffman, 1984; Huston & Alvarez, 1990). Some theorists have proposed that social pressures for sex-appropriate behavior are relatively benign during middle childhood, especially for girls (Hill & Lynch, 1983; Huston & Alvarez, 1990).

Children's Attitudes Toward Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage, and Stepfamilies

Developmental differences were observed in children's attitudes toward marriage and divorce, from being less to being more realistic, especially between kindergarten and second grade. For example, children who believed in the myth that marriage means living happily ever after were more likely to be in kindergarten than in second or fourth grade. Older children were more likely than younger ones to provide an example of "when it is okay to get a divorce," believe that an unhappy married couple should get divorced, believe that they might divorce, and state that it is mainly hard to be a single mother of two children. It is likely that skills consolidated during the ages 6-to-7 transition in cognitive development, particularly the abilities to coordinate social perspectives, to infer and describe other people's thoughts, feelings, and motives, and to reason more complexly about marriage and divorce, enable older children to consider the dynamics and difficulties of family relationships when forming their opinions about these family issues.

It is possible, too, that age differences in children's attitudes toward marriage and divorce reflect time-related differences in the incorporation of an American "family mythology" (Ganong et al., 1981). As children's social cognitive skills develop, parents, other adults, friends, mass media, and organized religion may become more effective in transmitting marital and divorce attitudes to children. The hypothesis that children are socialized to adopt a set of cultural beliefs regardless of their own personal and family experiences may explain why differences between subjects with divorced parents and their peers from intact families were confined to their beliefs about the success of their own marriages.

Children from divorced families were more likely than children from non-

divorced families to view divorce as a possibility for themselves, although not if they were to have children. This result suggests some disinhibiting effect of parental divorce, and is consistent with socialization theory that stresses the importance of parental role models (e.g., Spanier, 1989) and with studies of undergraduates that found that students with divorced parents are less optimistic about the success of their own future marriages and consider divorce more acceptable than students with nondivorced parents (Franklin, Janoff-Bulman, & Roberts, 1990; Greenberg & Nay, 1982; Kalter, Riemer, Brickman, & Chen, 1985). It is likely that this greater willingness to divorce is one variable that explains why "divorce seems to run in families" (Glenn & Kramer, 1987, p. 811). As Emery (1988) speculated for marital role behaviors, the scripts for marital attitudes may be written as early as middle childhood.

Subjects' positive and considerate attitudes toward stepparents, along with previous data describing children's and adolescents' perceptions of their step-parents (East, 1989; Ganong & Coleman, 1987; Wilson, Zurcher, McAdams, & Curtis, 1975), support the idea that the majority of preadolescent stepchildren are willing to form an attachment with a stepparent (Hetherington, Stanley-Hagan, & Anderson, 1989), especially with a stepfather. However, these attitudes vary with developmental status. Fourth-grade children, able to conceptualize interpersonal relations in terms of reciprocal attitudes and actions (Selman, 1980), were more likely than younger children to express some reservations about having a stepparent with particular personality traits or behaviors (e.g., the response, "it depends on the stepmother").

The data do not support the predicted gender differences in children's attitudes toward marriage. As discussed earlier, it may not be until adolescence that girls express more positive attitudes toward marriage than do boys (see Ganong et al., 1981; Paddock-Ellard & Thomas, 1981). In addition, the possibility of a cohort effect is suggested by large social surveys that indicate that sex role attitudes became more egalitarian during the 1970s and 1980s (Thornton, 1989).

Similarly, there were no gender differences in children's attitudes toward divorce or stepfamilies. This result is consistent with previous studies of children's and adolescents' perceptions of their parents' divorce (Kurdek & Siesky, 1980) and of their relationships with their stepparents (Ganong & Coleman, 1987; Halperin & Smith, 1983).

Future Directions and Implications
This research suggests that a critical area of study is the longitudinal socialization process of children's understanding of and attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and remarriage. This approach would enable psychologists to map out the developmental antecedents behind changes in understanding, and to study whether individual children's attitudes toward marriage and divorce remain consistent or change between middle childhood and adolescence. Research on adolescents' conceptions of their relationship with their parents and the political system (Cowan, 1978; Turiel, 1983) leads one to predict that in the transition to formal

operational thought, adolescents may reconceptualize marital relationships in less absolute and more multifaceted ways and question social expectations as bases for following marital conventions.

These results have implications for parents' discussions of divorce and remarriage with their children. If one of the main mechanisms of social construction is interpersonal discussion (Youniss, 1981), the finding that there was no difference between the understanding of children who had experienced parental divorce and those who had not suggests that divorced parents may not be discussing the divorce with their children as much as mental health professionals might like to believe. It is possible, too, that when parents and children do discuss marriage, divorce, and remarriage, children are understanding much less than what their parents think they do. This interpretation is supported by reports that parents emphasize disclosing information and explaining their ideas at the expense of not understanding their children's views or their grasp of the knowledge presented (Brodzinsky, Schechter, & Brodzinsky, 1986; Hunter, 1985). To the extent that parents hold exaggerated beliefs about their children's understanding, discussions of these family issues may be terminated prematurely.

Yet, it is clear from this and other studies that a discussion of divorce cannot be a one-time affair. Because the child's ability to reason about marriage and divorce differs depending on age, parents must continually reinterpret divorce information in a way that is appropriate for the child's level of understanding. Similarly, to be able to deal with children's concerns about divorce and step-families, mental health professionals need to be informed about developmental differences in children's understanding of and attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and stepfamilies. The work of Lazarus and Folkman (1984) suggests that children's interpretation of their situations may determine to a large extent how successfully they cope with family-related stress.

The results concerning children's attitudes also have important implications for parents, as well as for educators and mental health professionals. Since the majority of 5- to 10-year-old children believe that being married does not necessarily mean living happily ever after, that divorce is the logical solution to an unhappy marriage, and that there are acceptable reasons for obtaining a divorce, we might want to consider whether these children, when they are adults, will find it difficult not to divorce. Therefore, it could be argued that children should be prepared as much for marital instability as they often are for romance.

REFERENCES

Barenboim, C. (1977). Developmental changes in the interpersonal cognitive system from middle childhood to adolescence. *Child Development, 48,* 1467–1474.

Bellah, R.N., Madsen, R., Sullivan, W.M., Swidler, A., & Tipton, S.M. (1985). *Habits of the heart.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Borduin, C.M., Mann, B.J., Cone, L., & Borduin, B.J. (1990). Development of the concept of family in elementary school children. *The Journal of Genetic Psychology, 151,* 33–43.

Bowlby, J. (1980). *Loss: Sadness and depression.* New York: Basic Books.

Brodzinsky, D.M., Schechter, D., & Brodzinsky, A.B. (1986). Children's knowledge of adoption: Developmental changes and implications for adjustment. In R.D. Ashmore & D.M. Brodzinsky (Eds.), *Thinking about the family: Views of parents and children* (pp. 205–232). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Brodzinsky, D.M., Singer, L.M., & Braff, A.M. (1984). Children's understanding of adoption. *Child Development, 55,* 869–878.

Bruner, J.S., Olver, R.R., & Greenfield, P.M. (1966). *Studies in cognitive growth.* New York: Wiley.

Cowan, P.A. (1978). *Piaget: With feeling.* New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.

Damon, W. (1977). *The social world of the child.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

East, P.L. (1989, April). *Children's relationships with parents and siblings in two-parent, one-parent, and step-parent families.* Paper presented at the meetings of the Society for Research in Child Development, Kansas City, MO.

Eccles, J.S., & Hoffman, L.W. (1984). Sex roles, socialization, and occupational behavior. In H.W. Stevenson & A. Siegel (Eds.), *Child development research and social policy* (pp. 367–421). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Emery, R.E. (1988). *Marriage, divorce, and children's adjustment.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Fischer, K.W. (1980). A theory of cognitive development: The control and construction of hierarchies of skills. *Psychological Review, 87,* 477–531.

Franklin, K.M., Janoff-Bulman, R., & Roberts, J.E. (1990). Long-term impact of parental divorce on optimism and trust: Changes in general assumptions or narrow beliefs? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 59,* 743–755.

Ganong, L.H., & Coleman, M.M. (1987). Stepchildren's perceptions of their parents. *Journal of Genetic Psychology, 148,* 5–17.

Ganong, L.H., Coleman, M.M., & Brown, G. (1981). Effect of family structure on marital attitudes of adolescents. *Adolescence, 16,* 281–288.

Gilby, R.L., & Pederson, D.R. (1982). The development of the child's concept of the family. *Canadian Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 14,* 111–121.

Glenn, N.D., & Kramer, K.B. (1987). The marriages and divorces of the children of divorce. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 49,* 811–825.

Greenberg, E.F., & Nay, W.R. (1982). The intergenerational transmission of marital instability reconsidered. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 44,* 335–347.

Gross, P. (1986). Defining post-divorce remarriage families: A typology based on the subjective perceptions of children. *Journal of Divorce, 10,* 205–217.

Halperin, S.M., & Smith, T.A. (1983). Differences in stepchildren's perceptions of their stepfathers and natural fathers: Implications for family therapy. *Journal of Divorce, 7,* 19–30.

Harter, S. (1990). Developmental differences in the nature of self-representations: Implications for the understanding, assessment, and treatment of maladaptive behavior. *Cognitive Therapy and Research, 14,* 113–142.

Hetherington, E.M., Arnett, J.D., & Hollier, E.A. (1988). Adjustment of parents and children to remarriage. In S.A. Wolchik & P. Karoly (Eds.), *Children of divorce: Empirical perspectives on adjustment* (pp. 67–107). New York: Gardner Press.

Hetherington, E.M., Stanley-Hagan, M., & Anderson, E.R. (1989). Marital transitions: A child's perspective. *American Psychologist, 44,* 303–312.

Hill, J.P., & Lynch, M.E. (1983). The intensification of gender-related role expectations during early adolescence. In J. Brooks-Gunn & A.C. Petersen (Eds.), *Girls at puberty: Biological and psychological perspectives* (pp. 201–228). New York: Plenum.

Hollingshead, A.B. (1975). *Four-factor index of social status.* Unpublished manuscript, Yale University, Department of Sociology, New Haven, CT.

Huberty, C.J., & Morris, J.D. (1989). Multivariate analysis versus multiple univariate analysis. *Psychological Bulletin, 105,* 302–308.

Hunter, F.T. (1985). Adolescents' perceptions of discussions with parents and friends. *Developmental Psychology, 21*, 433–440.

Huston, A.C., & Alvarez, M.M. (1990). The socialization context of gender role development in early adolescence. In R. Montemayor, G.R. Adams, & T.P. Gullotta (Eds.), *From childhood to adolescence: A transitional period?* (pp. 156–179). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Kalter, N., Riemer, B., Brickman, A., & Chen, J.W. (1985). Implications of parental divorce for female development. *Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry, 24*, 538–544.

Keller, M., & Wood, P. (1989). Development of friendship reasoning: A study of interindividual differences in intraindividual change. *Developmental Psychology, 25*, 820–826.

Kenny, S.L. (1983). Developmental discontinuities in childhood and adolescence. In K. Fischer (Ed.), *Levels and transitions in children's development* (pp. 81–95). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kinniard, K.L., & Gerrard, M. (1986). Premarital sexual behavior and attitudes toward marriage and divorce among young women as a function of their mothers' marital status. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 48*, 757–765.

Kobrin, F.E., & Waite, L.J. (1984). Effects of childhood family structure on the transition to marriage. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 46*, 807–816.

Kurdek, L.A. (1983). Concluding comments. In L.A. Kurdek (Ed.), *Children and divorce* (pp. 83–87). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kurdek, L.A. (1986). Children's reasoning about parental divorce. In R.D. Ashmore & D.M. Brodzinsky (Eds.), *Thinking about the family: Views of parents and children* (pp. 233–276). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Kurdek, L.A., & Berg, B. (1983). Correlates of children's adjustment to their parents' divorces. In L.A. Kurdek (Ed.), *Children and divorce* (pp. 47–60). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kurdek, L.A., Blisk, D., & Siesky, A.E. (1981). Correlates of children's longterm adjustment to their parents' divorce. *Developmental Psychology, 17*, 565–579.

Kurdek, L.A., & Siesky, A.E. (1980). Children's perceptions of their parents' divorce. *Journal of Divorce, 3*, 339–377.

Kurdek, L.A., & Sinclair, R.J. (1986). Adolescents' views on issues related to divorce. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 1*, 373–387.

Lazarus, R., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping.* New York: Springer.

Lewis, R.A., & Spanier, G.B. (1979). Theorizing about the quality and stability of marriage. In W.R. Burr, R. Hill, F.I. Nye, & I.L. Reiss (Eds.), *Contemporary theories about the family: Vol. 1* (pp. 268–294). New York: The Free Press.

McGurk, H., & Glachan, M. (1987). Children's conception of the continuity of parenthood following divorce. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 28*, 427–435.

Neal, J.H. (1983). Children's understanding of their parents' divorces. In L.A. Kurdek (Ed.), *Children and divorce* (pp. 3–14). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Newman, J.L., Roberts, L.R., & Syre, C.R. (1989, June). *A child's-eye view of "family": Theoretical and practical implications.* Paper presented at the meetings of the Jean Piaget Society, Philadelphia.

Paddock-Ellard, K., Thomas, S. (1981). Attitudes of young adolescents toward marriage, divorce, and children of divorce. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 1*, 303–310.

Pennebaker, J.W. (1989). Stream of consciousness and stress: Levels of thinking. In J.S. Uleman & J.A. Barth (Eds.), *Unintended thought* (pp. 327–350). New York: Guilford.

Peters, A.M., & Zaidel, E. (1981). The acquisition of homonymy. *Cognition, 8*, 187–207.

Piaget, J. (1928). *Judgment and reasoning in the child.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Piaget, J. (1967). *Six psychological studies.* New York: Random House.

Reinhard, D.W. (1977). The reaction of adolescent boys and girls to the divorce of their parents. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology, 6*, 21–23.

Rosenberg, M. (1979). *Conceiving the self.* New York: Basic Books.

Select Committee of Children, Youth, & Families. (1987). *Divorce: The impact on children and families* (No. 63-820). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Selman, R.L. (1980). *The growth of interpersonal understanding.* New York: Academic.

Shantz, C.V. (1983). Social cognition. In J.H. Flavell & E.M. Markman (Eds.), P.H. Mussen (Series Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology: Vol. 3, Cognitive development* (pp. 495–555). New York: Wiley.

Spanier, G.B. (1989). Bequeathing family continuity. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 51,* 3–13.

Thornton, A. (1989). Changing attitudes toward family issues in the United States. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 51,* 873–893.

Turiel, E. (1983). *The development of social knowledge: Morality and convention.* Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Veroff, J., Douvan, E., & Kulka, R.A. (1981). *The inner American.* New York: Basic Books.

Wallerstein, J. (1984). Children of divorce: Preliminary report of a ten-year follow-up of young children. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 54,* 444–458.

Wallerstein, J. (1985). Children of divorce: Preliminary report of a ten-year follow-up of older children and adolescents. *Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry, 24,* 545–553.

Wallerstein, J. (1987). Children of divorce: Report of a ten-year follow-up of early latency-aged children. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 57,* 199–211.

Wallerstein, J.S., & Blakeslee, S. (1989). *Second chances: Men, women, and children a decade after divorce.* New York: Ticknor & Fields.

Wallerstein, J., & Kelly, J. (1980). *Surviving the breakup: How children and parents cope with divorce.* New York: Basic Books.

Wedemeyer, N.V., Bickhard, M.H., & Cooper, R.G. (1989). The development of structural complexity in the child's concept of family: The effect of cognitive stage, sex, and intactness of family. *Journal of Genetic Psychology, 150,* 342–357.

Weeks, M.E., & Thornburg, K.R. (1977). Marriage role expectations of five-year-old children and their parents. *Sex Roles, 3,* 189–191.

Wilson, K.L., Zurcher, L.A., McAdams, D.C., & Curtis, R.L. (1975). Stepfathers and stepchildren: An exploratory analysis from two national surveys. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 37,* 526–536.

Youniss, J. (1981). Moral development through a theory of social construction: An analysis. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 27,* 385–403.

APPENDIX: QUESTIONS ASKED TO ASSESS UNDERSTANDING OF MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE, AND STEPFAMILIES

Theme of Interview	Question
Marriage	1. What does that mean, to say that they (the dolls) are married?
	2. Why do you think Sue and Andy got married?
	3. Can you think of any other reasons why people get married?
	4. Do you think you'll ever get married? Why/why not?
	5. When do you think you might get married? Why then?
	6. What do you think it's like to be married? Why is it (child's answer)?

(continued)

APPENDIX   (*Continued*)

Theme of Interview	Question
	7. What are some good things about being married?
	8. What are some bad things about being married?
	9. What do you think it's like for Bob/Jill to be single? Why is it (child's answer)?
	10. Why do you think Bob/Jill is not married?
	11. What are some good things about being single?
	12. What are some bad things about being single?
	13. What things might make Sue and Andy's marriage happy?
	14. What things might make Sue and Andy's marriage unhappy?
	15. For Andy to be a good husband, what should he be like? What things could he do?
	16. What kind of person do you think makes a good husband?
	17. For Sue to be a good wife, what should she be like? What things could she do?
	18. What kind of person do you think makes a good wife?
Divorce of childless couple	19. What does that mean, to say that they're getting divorced?
	20. Why do you think they are getting divorced?
	21. What are some other reasons why some married people get divorced?
	22. When do you think it's okay to get a divorce?
	23. Do you think you might ever get divorced from your husband/wife? Why/why not?
	24. If Sue and Andy are unhappy being married, should they stay married or should they get divorced? Why/why not?
	25. Can you think of something that might make you feel you'd have to have a divorce from your husband/wife?
	26. What are some good things about being divorced?
	27. What are some bad things about being divorced?
Divorce of couple with two children	28. (With 2 children) If Sue and Andy are unhappy being married, should they stay married or should they get divorced? Why is that?
	29. If you have children, do you think you might ever get divorced? Why/why not?
	30. If you have children, can you think of something that might make you feel you'd have to have a divorce from your husband/wife?
	31. What are some easy things about Sue raising the two children herself?
	32. What are some hard things about Sue raising the two children herself?

APPENDIX   (*Continued*)

Theme of Interview	Question
Remarriage	33. What does that mean, to say that she (the doll) is getting remarried?
	34. Why do you think Sue is getting married again?
	35. What are some good things about getting remarried?
	36. What are some bad things about getting remarried?
	37. Why do you think Andy is getting married again?
Stepfamilies	38. What does that mean, to say that Sue is Brian's/Beth's stepmother? What's a stepmother?
	39. Do you think Brian/Beth mostly likes or mostly doesn't like having Sue as a stepmother? Why is that?
	40. What are some good things about having a stepmother?
	41. What are some bad things about having a stepmother?
	42. For Sue to be a good stepmother, what should she be like? What things could she do, to be a good stepmother?
	43. What kind of person do you think makes a good stepmother?
	44. What does that mean, to say that Andy is Jane's/Joey's stepfather? What's a stepfather?
	45. Do you think Jane/Joey mostly likes or mostly doesn't like having Andy as a stepfather? Why is that?
	46. What are some good things about having a stepfather?
	47. What are some bad things about having a stepfather?
	48. For Andy to be a good stepfather, what should he be like? What things could he do?
	49. What kind of person do you think makes a good stepfather?