

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

U·M·I

University Microfilms International
A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600

Order Number 9224841

**Divorce experiences of African-American working women: Their
use of social work services in a union setting**

Molina, Olga, D.S.W.

City University of New York, 1992

Copyright ©1992 by Molina, Olga. All rights reserved.

U·M·I
300 N. Zeeb Rd.
Ann Arbor, MI 48106

A

**DIVORCE EXPERIENCES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN WORKING WOMEN:
THEIR USE OF SOCIAL WORK SERVICES IN A UNION SETTING**

by

OLGA MOLINA

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Social Welfare in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Social Welfare. The City University of New York.

1992

© 1992
OLGA MOLINA
All Rights Reserved

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Social Welfare in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Social Welfare.

April 29, 1992 Michael J. Smith
Date Michael Smith
Chair of Examining Committee

April 29, 1992 Harold Weissman
Date Harold Weissman
Executive Officer

Paul Keys

Lucretia Phillips
Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract**DIVORCE EXPERIENCES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN WORKING WOMEN:
THEIR USE OF SOCIAL WORK SERVICES IN A UNION SETTING**

By

Olga Molina

Adviser: Professor Michael Smith

The study examined the effect of divorce on working - class Black women and the degree to which the provision of social work services can ameliorate divorce's negative effects. The sample population selected were 30 divorced African American working women, members of District Council 37, American Federation of State and County Municipal Employees, (AFSCME), labor union. All of the women had received free legal and social work services at the Municipal Employees Legal Services (MELS) to obtain a divorce.

One hour face-to-face interviews were used to explore, in-depth and describe the predivorce, divorce, and postdivorce phases from the women's perspectives. The structured interviews focused on the women's ability to adapt to divorce on six areas of functioning: emotional, interpersonal, financial, parental, occupational, and educational.

The findings demonstrate a marked improvement from the predivorce to postdivorce phase of divorce adjustment on all

areas of functioning, except financial. The postdivorce financial problems faced by African American working women was the result of low salaries, lack of child support payments, in many instances, and lack of alimony. The consequences of divorce are usually compounded by problems of discrimination and poverty. However, the women had a wide range of supportive cultural networks, such as their strong belief in God, close family relationships, strong achievement orientation, 50% returned to college, and their improved occupational functioning, which enabled them to adjust better to divorce.

In addition, all of the clients, (100%), were very satisfied with the social work services at MELS, which included individual, group, and children's short-term counseling during the divorce process. The women's openness to professional social work services offered by their labor union helped improve their adjustment to the divorce. If it had not been for the MELS program, most of the clients could not have afforded the legal or social work services they needed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge Gerald Mann, Administrator of the District Council 37 Municipal Employees Legal Services Plan, Sheila Menashe, Director of Support Services and Joseph Tronolone, Assistant Director of Support Services for their support of this research project. My thanks to the doctoral committee, Dr. Paul Keys, Dr. Lucretia Phillips and special thanks to the chairman of the committee, Dr. Michael Smith for all of their help.

I also want to thank the women in this study. They generously gave their time and allowed me to interview them in order to help other women in similar situations.

I am also fortunate to have supportive friends and family who were very helpful throughout my years in the doctoral program.

Finally, all of my love and thanks to my husband, Manolo Molina, who has been there for me in every way a person can be there for another.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	viii
Chapter	
1. Review of Divorce Literature	1
2. Rational for the Study	29
3. Methodology	55
4. Findings	44
5. Conclusion	150
Appendix	
A. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	182
B. DEMOGRAPHIC DATA	191
C. INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT	196
D. QUESTIONS USED TO OPERATIONALIZE CONCEPTS	198
Bibliography	207

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1-16.	Demographics Characteristics of Respondents ..	82-87
17.	Emotional Stages of Divorce	98
18.	Interpersonal Issues	106
19.	Financial Issues	111
20.	Parental Functioning	116
21.	Occupational Functioning	123
22.	Educational Functioning	125
23.	Social Support Networks	134
24-26.	Characteristics of Social Work Services	149

CHAPTER 1

REVIEW OF DIVORCE LITERATURE

Introduction

The divorce process demands a number of fundamental changes for everyone involved. During this process it is expected that the family has to struggle with intense feelings of sadness, anger, ambivalence and guilt, as well as with the practical issues of managing finances, adapting to new living arrangements, and if children are involved, agreeing on visitation and custody. All of these changes produce considerable stress during the divorce crisis, even though the divorce may also be an opportunity for positive personal growth.

The high rate of divorce in this society makes it essential for social workers and other professionals to understand its effects in order to help families during this process. In addition, divorce research may be instrumental in developing social policies that will enhance the quality of life of divorcing families.

Demographic Information

The United States has the highest marriage and divorce rate in the world (Carter & Glick, 1976; Norton & Glick, 1979). Every year more than one million marriages end in divorce, and more than three quarters of these families include children (National Center for Health Statistics,

1984). In 1990, there were 15,128,00 currently divorced persons in the United States, eight percent of the total population (Bureau of the Census, 1990). Statistics show that the divorce rates have increased rapidly in recent years. Between 1860 and 1960 the divorce rate increased only gradually, except for a temporary rise following World War II (Thornton, 1982). However, between 1960 and 1980 the rate more than doubled. The number of divorces reached an all-time high of 1.21 million in 1981 and has leveled off in the 1980s (National Center for Health Statistics, 1983). Despite this level of stabilizing during the 1980s, it is estimated that divorce will soon involve half (50%), of the people in this country (Glick, 1988).

In 1990, the ratio of divorced persons was 142 per 1,000 married persons, three times the ratio in 1970 (Bureau of the Census, 1990). The number is higher for women, 166 per 1,000, compared with 118 per 1,000 for men. The ratio is higher for women because they are less likely to remarry than men after the divorce.

The divorce rates are reported to be even higher for black Americans. The proportion of adults who are currently divorced is significantly higher for blacks than for whites because divorced blacks tend to be slower to remarry. The divorce ratio for blacks was 282 per 1,000, compared with 133 per 1,000 for whites (Bureau of the Census, 1990). Nevertheless, research indicates that divorce is increasingly

cutting across all social, economic, religious, and racial categories (Norton & Glick, 1979).

Furthermore, with the increase of divorce there is also a high percentage rate of marriage; four out of five who divorce remarry, usually within three years of the divorce ("Changing USA Families," 1984; Glick, 1980; Weingarten, 1980). However, the divorce rate is higher for remarried couples than for first married ones. Despite the high divorce rate, divorce is not usually considered to be a positive life event in most societies. Although people may be more accepting of divorce due to its increase, yet, traditional views regarding the nuclear family as the "norm" and other families as "deviant" consider divorce as negative. Many mental health workers hold this view and therefore their role has been to attempt to hold marriages and families together. This role is still the focus of many mental health practitioners today. It is no wonder then, that in spite of the high divorce statistics, there are currently very few programs specializing in social services for divorced families.

Studies on the Causes of Divorce

During the past decade, the reasons or "causes" for divorce have been analyzed from various perspectives, such as historical, sociological, and psychological, even though there is clearly an overlap in these categories. Variables that

have been studied include age at first marriage, race, income, social class, and personality.

Although there are numerous self-help books on the topic of divorce, the professional literature provides little research on divorce to guide the practitioner. One exception is Robert Weiss's (1975) qualitative study of the divorce process. Another excellent study on divorce was written in 1956 by William Goode using data collected in 1948 (Kitson & Raschke, 1981). While it has been cited as an excellent study of divorce, it has been critiqued by the sampling Goode chose. His sample only consisted of mothers 38 years of age or younger and did not include men, older women, or women without children.

Since divorce has been given little attention as a primary subject of study, what we learn from the research literature about divorce usually comes from studies focusing on other topics such as mental health (Gurin, Veroff, & Feld, 1960; Srole, Langner & Michael 1963; Campbell, Converse, & Rodgers, 1976), race relations (Moynihan, 1967; Crain & Weissman, 1972), economic and occupational surveys (Ross & Sawhill, 1975; Hampton, 1979; Cherlin, 1979), and population control (Bumpass & Sweet, 1972). Some researchers have used the U.S. Census data in their studies (Udry, 1966, 1967; Bernard, 1966; Carter & Glick, 1976). While the information obtained from the Census figures is important in revealing who divorces, it does not explain why people divorce and what

consequences they deal with after the divorce.

In reviewing the literature on divorce, several important methodological problems emerge in most of the studies. According to Doris S. Jacobson (1986), much of the literature does not differentiate between separation and divorce, and use both words interchangeably. The studies usually include small samples, and the selection has often focused on mothers and omitted women without children and especially men. In addition, most studies have included middle-class white subjects only. Very little information is known about the causes or consequences of divorce in African American families even though the divorce rates have been reported to be higher. Of the very few studies of divorce in African American families, a recent study of post-divorce adjustment of African American middle-class women found the church to be a significant social support network for the women (Huddleston-Bryant, 1983).

Most divorce studies have been cross-sectional which can result in biases. For instance, these studies show a "snapshot" of marital status at a given point and the subjects report their previous marital statuses. There are very few longitudinal studies of divorce. Following divorced individuals over several years would be important since most people who divorce remarry, and consequently issues concerning causation, or conclusions about the effects of divorce cannot be appropriately examined.

According to Kitson and Raschke (1981), conclusions about the causes of divorce and post-divorce adjustment have usually been based on research using samples of people currently divorced. Of the few studies regarding children of divorced parents, most focus on the first or second year after the divorce (D.S. Jacobson, 1986). Given these biases, a review of the studies focusing on the causes of divorce from the historical, sociological, and social psychological factors will be presented, since they seem to be the most prevalent in the divorce literature.

Historical Factors

Frequent explanations for the high divorce rate have been attributed to several historical factors. Social trends, such as declining religious influences, industrialization, the "sexual revolution," the women's liberation movement, and changes in the divorce law, e.g. "no fault divorce," are commonly stated (Rice & Rice, 1986). However, many correlations have led to wrong assumptions in relation to the causes of divorce. For instance, with the increase of women employed outside the home, the women's movement has been thought to have contributed to the increase in divorces. Since it is thought that women in a better economic position would be more willing to put an end to an unhappy marriage. Instead, what has been found is that more divorced women (75%) than married women (55%) work outside the home. Working may

not necessarily predict an increase in divorce, yet, divorce may predict that more women have to work outside the home. Therefore, the supposed correlation between working women and divorce was an assumption made as the increase in divorces roughly paralleled the increase in women entering the labor market (Rice & Rice, 1986).

Industrialization has also been cited as a contributor to the higher divorce rate. Although most industrialized countries show an increased divorce trend (Goode, 1963), Japan's divorce rate has decreased with industrialization.

The liberalization of the divorce laws in some states is another factor thought to increase the number of divorces. Nevertheless, in their research, Wright and Stetson (1978) did not find much difference in divorce rates between states with and those without liberalized divorce laws.

Sociological and Social Psychological Factors

Occupational status, education, and income appear to be related to divorce. Contrary to a common assumption, in general the rate of divorce is higher for people in lower status occupations, with lower incomes, and with less education. However, for women, and especially for black women, the divorce rate increases for those who have a post-graduate education (Carter & Glick, 1976).

Within different occupations Rosow and Rose (1972) found varying divorce rates. Reviewing twelve high status

professions they found divorce to be highest for authors, followed by social scientists, architects, college faculty, lawyers and judges, engineers, chemists, editors and reporters, accountants and auditors, dentists, physicians, and natural scientists. Additional research on divorce and occupations is needed in order to gain more knowledge regarding the effects of various occupations on divorce. Rosow and Rose speculated that work-related stress may have an impact on marriage and consequently on increase in divorces. It may also be that a divorce status may effect a person's profession.

In regard to ethnicity, more information is available on black Americans than other ethnic minority group. It has been reported that blacks have a higher divorce rate than whites (Norton & Glick, 1979). Although these statistics may be misleading since blacks tend to remarry less than whites. Moreover, in a study conducted by Hampton (1975) using a sample of 5,000 families in which income, home ownership, and family size -- all factors highly correlated with race -- were taken into account, black families experienced divorce 6% less than whites. Income patterns, gender, and race may also be related to divorce. Black men with high incomes and black women with low incomes tend to divorce more often than whites of similar incomes. White women earning high incomes show the highest divorce rate (Carter & Glick, 1976; G.F. Jacobson, 1983). According to Kitson & Raschke (1981), despite the high

divorce rate for blacks, other than economic, there is practically no research on the causes or effects of divorce among blacks. Kitson & Raschke go on to say that divorce research matching economic factors between blacks and whites may be one way of gaining more knowledge on the issues relating to race and divorce.

One study has investigated the coping ability of black and white women during the separation and divorce process in relation to their sex role attitudes (P. Brown, L. Perry, E. Harburg, 1977). The sample consisted of 75 black and 178 white women living in Detroit, Michigan or its nearby suburbs. The women were interviewed twice during the separation/divorce process (70% had filed for divorce, 50% were separated). First, they were interviewed when they contacted a court-related counseling service and then four months later. The sample contained a higher percentage of more educated black women than white which reflects a common sampling problem. Fifty-five percent of the black women and forty-five percent of the white women were employed outside the home. The results indicated that black and white women did not differ in the degree of traditionality in their sex role attitudes on any of the three factors examined: (1) women in the home; (2) traditional family roles; and (3) job inequality. Both, black and white women's sex role attitudes became more non-traditional between the first and second interviews. Black and white women did differ in the degree of

relationship between their traditional sex role attitudes and its effect on their psychological outcomes during divorce. Non-traditional white women experienced more positive psychological outcomes than traditional white women. However, for black women there was no significant difference in their psychological outcomes between traditional and non-traditional sex role attitudes.

In this study, black women had a significantly higher self-esteem than white women. Perhaps this relates to their views on divorce since fewer black women than white felt that divorce was a stigma. On the other hand, black women scored significantly lower than white women on adjustment to divorce. This may relate to a difference in economic resources since more black women than white were dissatisfied with the money available during the marriage. The study did not look at the differences between socio-economic levels.

One study that examines the relationship of socio-economic factors to post-divorce adjustment is Toni L'Hommedieu's exploratory-descriptive research (1984) of the divorce experiences of working and middle class women. She found that women in both groups experienced similar feelings of loneliness, fear of the future, and guilt. While both groups reported feelings of low self-esteem there was a difference in their perception regarding this feeling. For working class women, the low self-esteem developed from their thoughts which blamed them for the divorce. In contrast, the

middle-class women, described experiencing feelings of low self-esteem before entering the marriage. The study concluded that, as expected, working class women had more financial difficulties than middle class women.

The working class women had to apply for welfare benefits and for child support payments in court while middle class women received child support payments immediately after the divorce.

One similarity between both groups was the expressed need for intimacy and the fear of rejection. Another interesting finding revealed women's differing perceptions of their post-divorce adjustment. Middle class women measured their adjustment by their achievement as independent individuals and in their professional careers. Working class women measured their adjustment by their parenting abilities and by how well their children had coped emotionally with the divorce. All the women in the study had at least one child, and all had been divorced between one and a half and two years. There are, however, several serious limitations to this study. The sample population of 12 women is too small to make any definite conclusions. In addition all the women were white. Nevertheless, this is one of the very few studies on divorce that has included working class women despite the higher percentage of divorces among the working class than among the middle class.

Age at first marriage has also been shown to be related

to divorce. People who marry in their teens are twice as likely to divorce as those who marry in their 20s (Norton & Glick, 1979). The divorce rate is also higher for women who marry in their 30s. The insufficient research on this topic makes it difficult to understand the reasons for these findings. Furthermore, when controls have been used for age, pregnancy before marriage has been correlated with divorce (Bumpass & Sweet, 1972).

Other studies have found that children of divorced parents are more likely to divorce than children of parents who remain married (Pope & Mueller, 1976), even though the relationship between these two variables has been weak. Since the divorce rate is so high, the issue of intergenerational transmission is an interesting one to study.

People are now demanding more from a spouse than in the past. Economic security and marital status are not enough to keep a person in a marriage. Companionship, sexual intimacy, trust, mutual respect, shared parenting, other mutual obligations and shared goals are some of the positive factors that people expect from a marital relationship.

Some of the negative factors in a marriage may be family violence, verbal and/or psychological abuse, extra-marital affairs, addictions, frustrations, increasing dissatisfaction, tension or stress. These problems in a marriage often lead to a loss of trust, a damaged self-esteem and other painful feelings that mark the beginning of a crisis period which

leads to a separation or divorce. These factors have been mentioned by people who are divorcing as the "causes" for their divorce.

It is difficult to determine the causes of divorce given the numerous factors involved and the complexity of their relationships. Furthermore, if people who divorce are asked to state what led them to it, they are more likely to mention a few specific events leading to the divorce (Weiss, 1975), than to mention some of the other factors discussed so far in this paper. Kitson & Raschke (1981) suggest that more research is needed to link "self-described causes of divorce to the demographic antecedents of divorce" (p. 15).

The Consequences of Divorce

Even though there is more divorce research devoted to the "causes" or factors leading to divorce, there is a growing number of studies examining the consequences of divorce. Part of the reason for the minimal research focusing on the consequences of divorce has been the real methodological difficulties in terms of time and expense involved in divorce outcome research, as opposed to the relatively easy access to data available on factors that correlate to divorce.

Much of the research regarding consequences of divorce has reported the negative issues rather than the positive opportunities for personal growth. In fact, many studies have examined the physical and mental health of the divorced, and

have concluded that they are more likely to have physical and psychological problems than those who remain married. Most of these studies were done in the 1970s. However, these findings need to be viewed in the context of how society perceives divorce. Although almost 50% of marriages end in divorce there is still a stigma attached to people who divorce. Labels such as "a broken home," an "intact family" and others used by many persons, including some mental health professionals, maintain the stigma and stereotype attached to divorce. Subsequently, this view may contribute to the reported loss of self-esteem, role confusion, and health/mental health problems experienced during the divorce process.

Without longitudinal data it is difficult to assess the cause and effect relationship between health/mental health problems and divorce. Furthermore, most studies do not control for the stage of the divorce process of subjects, which is very important since proximity to the separation is highly correlated with stress (Sprenkle & Storm, 1983). One study comparing the widowed and the divorced observed how the divorced experienced more feelings of stigma and less emotional support from others (Kitson, Lopata, Holmes, and Meyering, 1980). One of the few longitudinal studies is Wallerstein's ten-year study of sixty middle-class white families in the midst of divorce, living in one county of California. The findings show that divorce is not a

short-term crisis. It is a profoundly life-changing event for all, including the parents and children.

It is more realistic to say that the consequences of divorce on families takes many different forms. While divorce affects both adults and children in many ways, some families are able to cope with divorce successfully and others are not. However, the proportions of these differences are unknown. In summary, divorce and the presence of psychological distress are obviously interactive since each one can influence the other.

The Effects of Divorce on the "Self"

In discussing the consequences of divorce, the influences of the cultural and community context have an effect on the "self" of divorcing individuals. Society's ambivalence towards divorce is transmitted to individuals who are contemplating a divorce, as well as people in general. On one hand, our culture emphasizes self-realization, individualism, and narcissism which may encourage higher divorce rates (Weiss, 1975). On the other hand, other cultural values and attitudes in our society, such as intimacy exert considerable pressure on individuals to remain married. The goal in relationships is to be close, yet separate; to be intimate, yet autonomous; to find the "self," yet merge with the "other." Most people want to be individuals, but not everyone is willing to give up togetherness to achieve more

individuality. Especially, when people who attempt to be more of a "self" in a relationship are responded by important others that they are wrong. Sometimes people who divorce fall under the rubric of being called selfish. For this reason, a divorce usually requires a well thought-out direction and a tolerance for intense feelings because one may be inclined to give up the effort and remain married.

Moreover, there are no norms or rituals for the divorced. Some have suggested a special ceremony or ritual for a divorce, as is common for other life events (Johnson, 1977). In addition to the lack of rituals, there is a lack of kinship structures and social mores that would help people know what to expect and how to act after a divorce. Not only does one lose a spouse in divorce, but also a certain degree of one's identity or "self," as society has defined it. Part of the kinship structure and friendship network may disappear. This network is often dependent upon the status of being married. The separation from a spouse, parent-in-laws, other spouse's relatives, married friends, and sometimes one's own children can create role confusion, isolation, and an identity crisis. Divorce then cannot be understood except in relation to the culture of which it is a part.

Divorce has been viewed as a crisis in which individuals must grapple with and redefine their identity. Hoffman (1980) states that stress and crisis is the prelude to what we call "transformation." In fact, the crisis may lead to a better

sense of "self." However, one of the most difficult tasks faced by divorcing persons is the identity crisis (Wiseman, 1975). They often feel that their lives have fallen apart.

Loneliness and a loss of purpose in life can be overwhelming. This may be intensified by the long-married and mother whose identity revolved completely around her marriage, family, and her role and status as a homemaker. The transition from a married status to a single or single-parent one is a difficult one. Especially if being married is more socially acceptable in the culture, and is the basis for one's social acceptability. According to Weitzman, "being the wife of a doctor or corporate executive, for example, can be the anchor of one's identity and the major source of one's self-esteem" (1985, p. 335).

Wallerstein and Kelly's research on the consequences of divorce found that for upper-middle-class women the divorce experience affects their sense of "self," as well as their economic class. "For these women, all of them left by their husbands, the moorings of their identification with a certain social class, and with it the core of their self-esteem --formerly exclusively determined by the husband's education, occupation, and income -- were shaken loose" (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980, p. 23). Vocational identity maybe part of this, especially for women who find a need to work outside the home after a divorce. Women may not have the necessary work skills or paid employment history to be marketable in the labor

force. Inevitably, many women will obtain low-paying jobs that are of low status adding to their changed "selves."

According to Weiss, since divorced men usually maintain their occupational roles after divorce, they are less likely than women to feel a transition between their former and present selves in regard to this aspect of divorce adjustment. "The occupational role affords a man structure, and opportunity to engage with others socially, and a self-definition to which his marital status is largely irrelevant" (Weiss, 1975). However, very few divorce studies have focused on working women. Therefore, the results Weiss found for men could also be true for women. Furthermore, marital status may have an affect on reaching certain occupational attainments. The relationship a person's occupation has to divorce adjustment is an interesting area of study. More research is definitely needed on this topic.

In regard to gender differences, in my clinical practice with divorcing men and women, I have observed that both men and women experience similar painful feelings during the divorce process. Some of the divorce research which focuses on gender differences in adjustment to divorce may benefit from the work of Hochschild (1975) who developed a theory of the sociology of emotions. She states that individuals report feelings that are socially acceptable within their gender. Thus, responses to questionnaires may be based on how individuals think they ought to be responding. It may also

be, as Hochschild points out, that individuals actually work on their feelings to respond appropriately to each circumstance.

Developing a new self-identity through the divorce process also involves a sense of autonomy and an ability to see oneself as a growing human being. This can be very difficult for people who married very young and never had a period of living alone and the opportunity to grapple with the issue of "Who Am I?" Sometimes people think that they can find themselves through their spouse or their marriage. Thus, the role loss in a divorce brings a sense of confusion about one's place and identity. People need to identify themselves as a separate person apart from their spouse. The shift is from thinking in terms of "we" to "I." Often, people who have divorced report feeling as if they were half a person (Krantzler, 1974).

Another area of difficulty for the self is the role conflicts and role shifts experienced by the divorced parent. The parent wonders, "Should I try to be both a mother and father to my children?" (whatever this means). In some cases there may be strong feelings of needing to compensate to the children for the divorce, with guilt adding to the demands of the situation. Here again we observe how the social beliefs in our culture which label divorced families as "broken" affects the reality of how families cope with divorce. The parents' behavior then leads the children to respond

accordingly to the expected "troubled" behavior. For the absent parent, feelings of guilt and anxiety are usually intense. There is also the fear of losing one's relationship with the children (which does occur at times) and the status within the family which has served as a source of self-definition.

While single parents try to juggle shifting roles, they must also deal with their actions and attitudes of others. Many divorced persons find themselves dropped from past friendships at a time when they need most the support of others. In spite of the increasing acceptance of divorce in our society, much stigma remains which labels divorced people as deviants, failures, or threats to married couples. Consequently, divorced people may internalize these perceptions and see themselves the same way. The rhetoric or language available in our culture influences the way people feel.

Rom Harré (1986) suggests that two social matters impinge heavily on the personal experience of emotion: the local language; and the local moral order. He points out that not only are emotions generated through language, but also emotions sustain and endorse cultural systems of belief and values. According to Goffman, the stigmatized person holds the same beliefs about identity that we do. Even though the person may feel "normal," he or she may perceive not being accepted on "equal grounds." In addition, "the standards he

has incorporated from the wider society equip him to be intimately alive to what others see as his failing, inevitably causing him, if only for moments, to agree that he does indeed fall short of what he really ought to be. Shame becomes a central possibility..." (Goffman, 1963, p. 7).

Despite these negative consequences, divorce gives the opportunity for positive outcome and growth of the "self". A real advantage of the divorce crisis is the enhanced chance for effecting change in the self (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1977). This can be the time for people to reassess their relationships in general. Many persons can begin choosing friends who are more nurturing and reject those who are destructive. Persons who have taken a submissive role during their marriage and in many of their relationships, can become more assertive and increase their self-esteem. They can become more in touch with suppressed aspects of themselves, thus becoming more whole. During this time, people reevaluate their male or female identity and develop qualities to enrich their overall personality. Specifically, four areas of identity have been delineated as being affected by the divorce process -- "personal, vocational, social, and sexual" (Wiseman, 1975, pp. 209-10). Thus, the divorce process has definite consequences for the self. The self is affected at many levels throughout the divorce: personal, familial, social, cultural, intra-psychic, cognitive, emotional, and spiritual. These levels do not occur in a linear form or in

stages but rather I believe they are interactive since each influences the others.

Research on the Outcome of Divorce Therapy

Divorce therapy started emerging in the 1970s as professionals became aware of the high divorce rate and the need to help individuals and families during the divorce process.

Divorce therapists are found in various professional disciplines, such as psychology, psychiatry, social work, and educational counseling. Divorce therapy has roots in the concepts of marital and family therapy, grief therapy, and crisis intervention theory. Some authors have stated that there is little uniqueness to divorce therapy itself. "Nevertheless, specialized knowledge of the common patterns in the divorce process does seem central to effective clinical work in this area" (Gurman & Kniskern, 1981, p. 694).

As more people divorce in this society, the view that divorce is a sign of individual pathology has been more challenged. As society reaches a greater acceptance of divorce, perhaps more professionals will specialize in divorce therapy since helping people to divorce, rather than to marry, or stay married, still raises questions to therapists who believe that remaining married is a sign of a better psychological development.

The sociological research on divorce has been the subject

of several important literature reviews (Kitson & Raschke, 1981; Levinger & Moles, 1979; Price-Bonham & Balswick, 1980). In addition, there are articles summarizing divorce adjustment theories (Salts, 1979); the impact of divorce on children (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980); and the divorce therapy process (Brown, 1976; Kaslow, 1981). Furthermore, there is an excellent review of the empirical research on the outcome of divorce therapy (Sprenkle & Storm, 1983).

A review of the studies focusing on the empirical research related to divorce therapy reveals that there are essentially five areas in which divorce therapy outcome research have been categorized: mediation, consumer evaluation, divorce groups, separation techniques, and marriage counseling with divorce as an unintended outcome (Sprenkle & Storm, 1983). However, there are very few empirical studies (between two and six) in each category.

Mediation research has primarily focused on evaluating programs geared to helping couples mediate child custody or visitation disputes, and to compare the outcome with the traditional legal system method of resolving such cases. The results of the six studies reviewed indicate an overall higher rate of satisfaction among the couples who were involved in the mediation counseling compared to the ones who did not participate in mediation and were in the legal/court system. However, the studies conclude that mediation is not suited for all couples. For instance, couples who are very hostile, with

a high level of conflict, or with unresolved feelings of separation may not benefit from mediation. In general, couples who are willing to cooperate, who feel they are able to negotiate for themselves, and for whom money is not an issue are better suited for the mediation method. These findings are very important since divorce mediation has become very popular in recent years.

Conciliation courts counseling has the goal of reconciling the couple, unlike the mediation counseling. Most of the couples involved are contemplating divorce, but request marital counseling. Three of the four studies compared the two or more experimental counseling groups to a no-treatment control group. The results were recorded three, four, and nine weeks after the initial treatment, and in some cases, the experimental groups had a significantly greater number of reconciliations than the control groups. One study which measured the reconciliation status of couples nine months after the initial treatment found no significant differences between the experimental and control groups. It may be that although couples were motivated to attempt a reconciliation, probably due to ambivalent feelings regarding a divorce, the marital conflicts re-emerged after the initial "honeymoon" period ended following the beginning stages of counseling.

The two consumer evaluation studies reviewed in the literature examine the client's satisfaction with the marital or divorce counseling services offered to them in the

court-related counseling centers. The results of both studies indicate that the majority of clients rated the agency as "helpful," 75% in the Brown and Manela study (1977). and 60% in the Lee study (1979).

The six divorce group studies are evaluations of short-term group treatment. The clients who participated were in the process of a divorce. However, there were no controls for the stage of divorce. Two of these studies focused on a divorce education approach (Young, 1978a, 1978b). Eighty-four percent of the participants reported the service to be of some or great value. The other four studies measured the participants' divorce adjustment using different instruments. The results indicate a significant improvement in self-esteem in the experimental groups. In addition, Fisher (1976) and Thiessen et al., (1980) report significantly increased divorce adjustment in participants measured by the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale (Fisher, 1976).

The two studies in the separation technique category examined the results of a three-month structured separation program in which, among other things, participants were instructed to have separate bedrooms or separate residences. However, the criteria for the outcome is unclear in both studies. Although the participants were satisfied with the results of the treatment, 67% in the Toomin (1972) study and 44% in the Green et al., (1973) study decided to divorce. Given the methodological limitations of these studies the

results may not be very conclusive.

The two studies of marriage counseling with divorce as an unintended outcome compared the effectiveness of two types of therapy: individual and conjoint. The results indicate that individual treatment rather than conjoint treatment is more effective for clients who are separated or who are seeking a divorce. For clients who remain married, conjoint therapy is more effective. These studies have limitations because they used very small samples that were not random.

CONCLUSION

In general, despite the high divorce rate there are very few studies focusing on divorce and divorce therapy. The existing research has serious methodological problems. Special attention has to be paid to the sample selection. There has been a disproportionate amount of research using only middle-class white subjects who live in suburban areas. Unfortunately, in many cases researchers did not control for client variables even when social background characteristics were collected. For example, Brown and Manela's (1977) study had a large sample size which included blacks as well as low-income subjects, but the results were not examined by race or income. The same is true for gender and age. Very few studies include men, older women and women without children.

It may be beneficial to study women and men from different racial groups other than white and of different

socio-economic class in order to begin understanding how race and socio-economic level affects the divorced. This is particularly important since there is a reported higher divorce rate among the working class and blacks. In addition, obtaining further knowledge of the cultural influences impacting on the divorced might offer more insight and be of help to social work practitioners assisting families through the divorce process.

Soon almost half of the adults in this society will have experienced at least one divorce in their life. These individuals and their families may seek professional help during the divorce process. Therefore social workers and other helping professionals need to focus more on divorce research and its implications for practice. Divorce therapy itself needs to be the primary focus of studies. Methods of intervention that will aide people who are divorcing need to be developed and tested.

Thus far, much of the research has been done in marital counseling or other forms of therapy with an emphasis on reconciliation rather than helping the clients reach the decision to divorce and assisting them through the divorce process. Perhaps this is an indication of the stigma that divorce still carries in the society and how it is reflected in the design of the available research on this topic. Studies of the publics' attitudes toward divorce and divorce therapy maybe interesting in order to determine the degree of

current stigma concerning these issues.

More basic research using experimental methods will enable us to learn if divorce therapy is effective compared to no treatment. So far there have been no studies, to my knowledge, of the effectiveness of divorce therapy, that is, of individuals or couples who seek help to alleviate the emotional and practical issues they face during the divorce process. Different treatment modalities and theoretical approaches need to be compared to obtain a greater depth of knowledge in this emerging field. Qualitative studies may be helpful since they tend to provide a richness of information not usually acquired in quantitative research. As can be easily gathered by this review of the literature, more divorce research needs to be done.

CHAPTER 2

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Much research has been undertaken to learn more about the problems and the possible solutions for those experiencing a divorce. Most of the effort and attention, however, has focused on the needs of white middle and upper-class families to the almost total exclusion of African American and working-class families. In a recent review of the divorce literature, Kitson et. al., suggest that the absence of research on African Americans and divorce is striking, especially, given the high rates of divorce among African Americans (1989).

Considering the number of divorces among the working-class as compared to the middle class and the number of divorces among African Americans compared to whites, we are left with a dearth of information about the impact of divorce on working-class African American families. It is likely that the needs of working-class African Americans are at variance with those of their wealthier counterparts, as well as of white Americans. Services developed out of the research on the "white middle-class divorce experience" may be unresponsive to working-class African Americans' needs. Often, the latter, "fall through the cracks," the characteristic situation of working-class persons in relation to social programs and service responses.

This research project would partially fill that gap by

examining the needs, possible social service responses, and the effects of those services on working-class African American working women who are divorced. The opportunities for service and research are unique. Situated in a program where working-class African Americans arrive at a prepaid social/legal services to obtain a divorce, the project will have a varied population of divorcing working women: of all ages(18 to 65), some women with children and others without, just separated to long abandoned, involved in short marriages or in long ones, as well as ones who initiate the divorce and others whose husbands have initiated the divorce action.

The objective is to collect data sufficient to, ultimately, develop social services responsive to this population of divorcing women. The proposed study is viewed as a necessary step in an arena where the research opportunities can lead to much needed information for practice. It would also serve other union settings and agency sites interested in meeting the under serviced needs of working-class African American families. The services and resources currently available to divorcing women are, for the most part, inappropriate to the study population.

THE DIVORCE PROBLEM

The divorce process demands a number of fundamental changes for everyone involved. During this process it is expected that the family has to struggle with intense feelings

of sadness, anger, ambivalence, and guilt, as well as with the practical issues of managing finances, adapting to new living arrangements, and if children are involved, agreeing on visitation and custody. All of these changes produce considerable stress during the divorce crisis, even though the divorce may also be an opportunity for positive personal growth.

The United States has the highest marriage and divorce rate in the world. The proportion of children living with two parents has declined since 1970, mostly because of the rise in divorce. In 1990, seventy-three percent of children under 18 lived with two parents, compared with 85% in 1970 (Population Profile of the U.S., 1991). The divorce rate, in part, has contributed to the rapid increase in single-parent families. The proportion of children living with one parent has doubled, from 12% in 1970 to 25% in 1990 (Population Profile of the U.S., 1991). Children with divorced parents makeup the largest share of children living in a single-parent household. Of the 15.9 million children living with one parent, 87 percent live with their mothers, and 13 percent with their fathers. A very high rate, approximately 60% of children in clinical treatment and 80% of adolescents in inpatient psychiatric treatment programs are from divorced families (Henricks, 1991).

The divorce rates are reported to be much higher for African Americans than for whites. The number of divorces for

African American married persons increased from 92 for every 1,000 persons in 1971 to 233 in 1981; for whites the comparable increase was from 48 to 100 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1983).

The persons who contemplate divorce have frequently experienced family violence, verbal and/or psychological abuse from their spouse, and lack of financial and emotional support which leads to a loss of trust, a damaged self-esteem and other painful feelings that mark the beginning of a crisis period leading to the separation and divorce. Some persons may turn to alcohol and drugs in their attempts to cope with the marital problems. Others may isolate themselves from friends and relatives due to feelings of shame or fear of ridicule. These and other behaviors are self-destructive and ultimately have an adverse affect on the children.

The psychological problems most commonly reported by persons who are divorcing are symptoms of depression such as depressed mood, feelings of guilt, loneliness, low work efficiency, trouble sleeping, somatic concerns, and feelings of incompetence. Zill (1978) reports that children of divorce have twice the risk of receiving psychiatric attention as compared to children from two-parent families.

Divorce does not only affect the individuals and families involved, but also society as well. Many women have to apply for welfare benefits including food stamps and Medicaid, for themselves and their children following a marital separation.

Others turn to the courts to apply for child support payments. Child care services, both for pre-schoolers and for school aged children, are increasingly critical since more women are working or need time for job training, increased education, or to search for employment opportunities. As the homeless population grows and includes more families with children, housing allowances and related policies will become even more important than at the present time. These resource costs are compounded by the mental and physical health of the divorced and their children who have a higher risk of these problems than those in other marital status groups. Federal, state, and local tax dollars are spent on social programs for divorced persons and their children who are in need of these services.

The socioeconomic circumstances of divorced persons, especially, low income, contributes to the distress and difficulty in adjusting to the divorce. For women, divorce has become a major route to poverty. Mothers with children heading one-parent households in 1982 accounted for 55 percent of all family households with children who reported living below the poverty level, even though these families only made up 19 percent of all family households with children (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1983b). A high proportion of these women are divorced.

Financial problems intensify the difficulty in finding time for child rearing, a task that divorced women with

custody usually do without the help of another adult in the house. Lack or insufficient child support and spousal maintenance add to the intense stress experienced during the divorce crisis. For minority families, the risks associated with divorce are usually compounded by problems of discrimination and poverty.

THE LEGAL PROBLEM

As the divorcing couple becomes involved with lawyers, the legal ramifications of their decision may become an additional source of confusion and stress. Much has been written about how the legal profession interacts with divorce clients. Lawyers are trained to defend their clients' interests and attack those of the spouse; they are not trained in family or marital dynamics (Kressel and Deutsch, 1977). The result is that lawyers often contribute to escalating the marital conflict, rather than to alleviate it.

There are numerous legal problems that face people who are divorcing. Recently legislative changes designed to improve the position of women in divorce have evolved. These changes mainly relate to the division of property and custody of children, which are considered the highest stakes in divorce.

The 1980 New York Equitable Distribution Law requires the division of marital property. The division of property is an important element of the new law with special impact on women,

especially African American women. The new law requires the division of the marital home, either immediately, or where children are involved, that the custodial parent retain temporary possession of the home until the children's emancipation at which time the division occurs. This is in contrast to the earlier law under which women were generally favored and given most of the marital property. While more equitable on its surface, the new law makes divorce even more problematic. For African American working women a house or co-op may be the sole financial acquisition of the marriage. Often, because of the difficulty in obtaining a higher educational background and the economic position of African American men, African American women may have been more stable financial contributors to their families. This makes a 50-50 division of the marital home potentially more unjust. The inclusion of pension and savings acquired during the marriage poses a similar problem. The African American woman may be the person in the marriage with a longer work history, able to become part of a pension system and thus liable to have more to lose from divorce.

The potential loss of years of hard work thus place African American women in a more vulnerable position concerning the marital home. In many instances, even if a African American woman is awarded the marital home, she probably cannot afford the mortgage, up-keep of the house, and other associated expenses. Her child support payments will

probably be somewhat low. In cases where her ex-husband works off the books, or is self-employed she will be unable to prove his income accurately and may windup with virtually no child support. Other women may have been married to men who are unemployed, and therefore will not be able to receive any child support. The U.S. Bureau of the Census (1983a) reports that 69 percent of white and 34 percent of African American women with children are awarded child support and of these only about half are paid in full.

All in all, women, especially working African American women from low socioeconomic status, have a great deal to lose financially from the new divorce law. As a result, many women face financial difficulties. Female workers still earn, in many instances, considerably less than the average white male. The severe crisis in low-income housing availability which has meant over-priced expensive apartments, and landlords who bar women with children are additional sources of anxiety for divorced women.

Custody of children is increasingly an issue for women in divorce cases. The presumption that the mother is best suited to be the custodial parent has, at least theoretically, been challenged. Consequently, the issue of custody is being raised more and more, though sometimes as a smoke screen for other unresolved emotional issues, as well as to gain leverage in a divorce, or to avoid paying child support.

Raising the issue of custody is time consuming,

emotionally draining and expensive legally. A custody battle usually increases hostility and embitterment between spouses and ultimately adversely affects the children. This is not to say that in some instances men are not the better parent. It is only to point out that custody is being used over and over again as a bargaining issue without fully considering the implications of raising it.

Moreover, where poor women are pitted against middle or upper-middle class men for custody the situation is very difficult. Sometimes, finances and "background" are allowed to prevail over emotional stability in obtaining custody of the children.

Several personality characteristics also contribute to the problems experienced during the divorce process. Research indicates that overt and prolonged hostility between divorcing adults increases emotional disturbance. Attachment to a former spouse, which includes longing and yearning for the former spouse, wishing a reconciliation, and seeking ways to interact with a former spouse, is associated with more distress. Prolonged ambivalence about the divorce, which leads to frequent vacillation about the divorce and unrealistic assessments about the probability of a reconciliation, also increases the stress during this crisis. Some persons cannot control their disputes and may use their children as pawns during the divorce. Others lose their self-confidence, as well as the confidence in their parenting

skills.

A primary factor adding to their difficulties is the lack of a constructive social support network. Often, due to the problems encountered in the marriage, divorced women have been isolated from their close friends and relatives. This isolation and lack of support usually augments their low self-esteem which affects relationships with others, as well as with their children. While most women want to start a new and more rewarding life after the divorce, they sometimes lack the support networks and necessary skills to cope during this transition. Despite the high divorce rate, society does not help prepare people to deal with the consequences of this crisis, leaving many individuals and their children on their own to cope with intense social, economic, and emotional problems.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

In the early 1970's, District Council 37 of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), established a members' assistance program responsive to the needs of its membership. At that time, a Management Information System was instituted by social workers to monitor members' needs and reorient services accordingly. The data indicated that out of every four problems brought by members to the Personal Services Unit one required legal assistance. Most of the members could not afford to pay the high cost of

legal fees, yet, they were not eligible for legal aide due to their incomes. Based on that finding, shared with the Union's General Counsel, the Industrial Social Welfare Center of the Columbia University School of Social Work and the Columbia University School of Law proposed to the Ford Foundation a pilot research program to determine the feasibility for establishing a prepaid social and legal service program for union members.

The research demonstration was funded and led directly to the establishment of the Municipal Employees Legal Services Plan (MELS) in its present form. MELS' permanent program is financed entirely out of per capita contributions made by New York City and other public employers pursuant to collective bargaining agreements. MELS is administered by a trust fund of the union, which delivers services through its own staff of about 70 lawyers, 12 social workers, 25 legal assistants, clerical and managerial staff.

MELS developed as an innovative social and legal unit grounded in an understanding that concomitant to many legal problems are social troubles that require social work interventions. The close working relationship and mutual respect shared by the staff lawyers and social workers is reflected in the structure of the unit. Top administration, in addition to the Administrator, involves a tripartite division of labor between a Director of Law Services, Director of Social Services, and a Director of Systems and Planning.

Similarly, the staff is organized into eight interdisciplinary teams consisting of a supervising attorney, a senior attorney, several staff attorneys, a paralegal, one or more social workers, and at times a social work student.

Union members in need of services call MELS, once verified as eligible, are given an appointment to see a lawyer. On intake, the member makes out an initial Client Information Form which records clients' responses to questions such as: As a result of this problem, have you - had problems with family or relatives? Had problems with friends or neighbors? Has this problem interfered with your household tasks? schoolwork? social activities? job? health?

The client then proceeds through MELS for his/her initial visit with the lawyer. Lawyers at MELS are trained to view the total needs of a client and to indicate the availability of social services, to discuss the personal as well as the legal aspects of the client's problems. If the lawyer notices any affirmative responses on the Client Information Form which is indicative of the need for social services, the lawyer attempts to make a referral to a social worker. The client is informed of the array of services available and is advised of MELS' interest in and ability to extend beyond the legal arena. All clients are assured that legal assistance is not contingent on accepting social work assistance.

Rooted in an atmosphere of union-based concern and responsibility to clients, the MELS program routinely collects

information from clients documenting their presenting problems. In this context, research on the impact of divorce is most appropriate because of the accessibility of a large and heterogeneous population of divorcing persons; the availability of vast amounts of supplemental information on the clients; and because of the positive rapport established between the service unit and the client population.

Number and Types of Clients Served

The MELS program is geared towards employees of the City of New York and related agencies who are represented in collective bargaining by District Council 37. Retirees are also included in this program, as are the spouses and dependent children of employees and retirees. The total union membership population is 130,000.

District Council 37 is the largest union of municipal workers in New York City, comprised of all city workers except teachers and the uniformed services. Its members are the 40,000 clerical employees in all city agencies; the lunchroom workers, paraprofessionals and school aides, ambulance technicians, dietary aides, and other workers in the City hospitals; blue collar workers who maintain the highways, the water system, the sewers, the parks and the zoos; professional and white collar workers performing many kinds of jobs, from social workers, accountants and public health nurses, to computer programmers and cashiers, and many others. The

average DC 37 salary is just over \$16,000 a year; salaries range from \$5,500 to the high-eighties, with many more in the lower brackets than in the higher. The majority of the DC 37 membership is female and a large number represent racial and ethnic minorities, predominantly African American. About 15 percent of the members subsist on incomes just above the poverty level. They are considered the working poor; the majority are females, head of households, with at least one child age 18 or under.

Several socioeconomic factors add to the stress of this population. For example, the housing crisis in New York City which has meant a high rise in rents for apartments. Many of the members' rent is about 50 percent of their monthly take-home pay. Lack of affordable child care services and the high numbers of sexually abused children in these facilities are additional sources of anxiety for the members. Many pay as much as \$100.00 a week to have their children cared for while they are working. Unfortunately, others may tend to leave their children alone and unattended in their homes due to the lack of financial resources.

Chemical dependency problems also affect persons who are divorcing. Approximately 800 members per year are referred for treatment of alcohol or drug abuse to clinics by the social workers employed in the Personal Services Program of the union. In addition, about 1,000 members per year seek the services of an attorney in MELS to obtain a legal separation

or a divorce. Of these, approximately 70 percent are women with at least one child.

Demographic Changes and Their Implications

The Civil Rights legislation and affirmative action programs which brought more minorities, disabled workers and women into the labor market have changed the composition of the work force. In 1950 women made up 28.6% of the work force, by 1981 they were 43.7%. The most dramatic change has been in the increase in labor force participation by women with young children. More than 60% of all mothers with children ages three and older were in the labor force in 1985 ("Labor Force Activity of Mothers", 1985). African American married women with children continue to have a higher rate of labor force participation than white women. In 1984, the rates of working married mothers were 69% for African American, 56% for white, and 47% for Hispanic women.

Older women's participation in the labor force has also increased substantially. In 1960, 36% of women ages 45-64 were working, and by 1982 the rate was 47.8%. Akabas attributes this increase to the escalating divorce rates that have brought long-time homemakers into the labor market (1982). In fact, between 1960 and 1980 the divorce rates rose by 112%.

These demographic changes in the labor market create new issues in the world of work that warrant close attention, and

social workers have already started building coalitions to promote family policies that reflect the needs of contemporary working families.

As Akabas notes, in citing the work of Rosabeth Kanter, the notion of "separate worlds" is a myth (Akabas, 1982). Theorists can no longer separate work and family because these roles are interactive. Social workers are well aware of the fact that we help the "whole" person to achieve a higher level of functioning in all aspects of their lives. However, in order to understand better the connection between work, family, job productivity, and personal well-being we need to know more about the nature of work itself and how it affects our clients as workers (Perlman, 1982).

In a discussion about the number and types of clients served it is important to mention that not all people have the same opportunities to become workers in our society. Certain groups have suffered from discrimination and there are still obstacles that need to be overcome. Even though more women, minorities, and disabled workers have entered the labor market, these groups still earn less income than white men. In addition to income, the types of jobs they hold and the overall working conditions may also differ in status and responsibilities. Furthermore, the percentage of African American men over 16 who are employed has dropped from 74% in 1960 to 56% in 1980 (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 1983 in Neff, 1985, p. 288). Therefore, African American men,

especially, are still facing severe barriers to the world of work. How will industrial social workers in trade union settings address these complex issues? The profession's dual commitment to personal and social change may serve as a guide to resolve the needs that our clients and their families confront in their roles as workers, "or as workers in job jeopardy."

Relevant Legislation and Policy

Since the reemergence of industrial social work after the 1960s significant legislative changes concerning the world of work have taken place. One of these was affirmative action supported in the Civil Rights Act of 1963. As mentioned earlier, this title influenced the demographic changes in the composition of the workforce. More opportunities opened for women and minorities to enter the labor market. The Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973 gave disabled persons the opportunity to enter the job market. In 1970, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency offered workers protection from hazardous work conditions.

In addition, the Age and Discrimination in Employment Act and the Older Americans Act addressed the concerns of the aged and protected such workers against discrimination. This legislation responded to Americans' growing awareness that certain groups have been prevented from remaining in the labor

market and are in need of laws to protect their rights.

In the 1980s, legislative action has not emphasized workers' rights as it did in the 1960s and 1970s. However, social workers are committed to the needs of today's workers who may be in vulnerable positions. The new composition of the working population suggests that many workers and their families may require additional support to assist them in their roles as workers and as family members. There is a growing concern for work/family policies to provide benefits such as: child care, paid parental leave, and flex-time. However the Reagan/Bush era legislation transferred social service responsibility to the private sector. Social workers are attempting to respond to the needs of workers by filling the gaps in community services at the workplace and in the union-setting programs in which they are employed. In addition to providing direct services, social workers are in a significant position to influence social policy which expands workers' entitlements. More labor unions and corporations are increasing the social services available to workers. It is interesting that as government decreases its allocation to social welfare programs, the social work profession is increasing its services in the industrial social work field.

We can perhaps look at divorce as a symptom of the problem since the larger issue may be the lack of community and government support provided to assist the family unit in

this society. However, sometimes we need to deal with the symptom of the problem because action is needed.

To summarize: social policy emphasizing workers rights in the 1960s and 1970s opened the door to new groups in the labor market. The social work profession responded by offering services to workers and their families in the workplace or within labor union settings. There is ample opportunity for social workers to expand the services that are currently provided and to influence the continued development of policies that will benefit workers and their families.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

This study is concerned with how the provision of social work services impacts on the divorce process of working-class African American women. The primary purpose of the study is to explore the perceptions and experiences of African American working-class women, following their divorce. The emphasis is on attempting to understand the complexities of the causes and consequences of the divorce process from the point of view of the participants in order to enhance effective social work interventions. The overall objective is to gather information for a culturally and class sensitive practice. The framework for the theoretical underpinnings of this study encompasses the social and economic conditions affecting African American family structure, family strengths of African Americans, characteristics of African American working-class families,

and exchange theory is presented to explain divorce among African American families.

Social and Economic Conditions Affecting Black Families

Every year the National Urban League publishes "The State of Black America." The publication covers a wide range of social and economic issues affecting African American families in this country. The major issues covered in the 1989 edition relevant to this study include:

- Unemployed black husbands doubled from 84,000 to 188,000 between 1969 and 1985.

- Poverty rates among black two-parent families have risen more rapidly than among single-parent families.

- Each percentage rise in unemployment was correlated with a comparable increase in one-parent families.

- Rising drug abuse has led to an increase in family violence.

- In 1987 52% of black children lived in families headed by women, compared to 37% in 1970.

- Blacks are over represented among the thousands of homeless families.

In general, these severe social and economic conditions have adversely affected African American families. Changes in this advanced industrial society have had a significant impact on life and experience in the inner city. These changes have resulted in an increased unemployment rate for African

American men causing further changes in the family structure of African Americans. It is quite obvious from the above findings that joblessness has a direct relationship to family instability. In addition, an assumption can be made that joblessness is related to other social problems, such as chemical dependency and homelessness which can cause family break-up. According to Robert Hill, although alcohol abuse has long been associated with spousal abuse and divorce, its devastating effects have been omitted in African American family studies (1989, p.56). Moreover, racial discrimination and insufficient education limit the employment opportunities for African American families. All in all, despite civil rights legislation and affirmative action, African American families have suffered sharp social and economic problems in the 1980s.

Family Strengths of African Americans

Given the unique experiences of African Americans in this nation, one can assume that their cultural backgrounds serve an important function in the ability to cope with the living conditions confronted in order to maintain stability within the community. Robert Hill has identified these coping abilities as "family strengths." African American families have demonstrated: strong kinship bonds, strong work orientation, adaptability of family roles, strong achievement orientation, and strong religious orientation (Hill, 1971).

These strengths have been necessary for African American families' survival in the larger hostile environment. As Leon Chestang has stated: "The concept of the Black experience finds its origin in the minority status of this group and the prevailing social attitudes toward them... Suffice it to say that it is negative and it is pervasive" (Chestang, 1973, p.3). Chestang goes on to describe three characteristics that comprise the Black experience: (1) social injustice, the denial of rights legally granted; (2) societal inconsistency, the institutionalized disparity between word and deed; (3) personal impotence, the impotence felt by African Americans to affect changes in their lives (Ibid., p.4).

These conditions in the broader society, in part, have led to the development of character structure and family strengths of African Americans. Such social conditions and strengths explain the unique family structure and, we may assume, certain consequences for the marital relationships including the divorce process of African American. This study is guided by the need to understand how the divorce process of working-class African American women is colored, given the uniqueness of the Black experience.

Characteristics of Working Class Black Families

Charles Willie has been most helpful in describing the characteristics of working-class African American families from his observations of middle-class, working-class and

lower-class African American families. He suggests that relationships between husband and wife are characterized by more equalitarian roles since cooperation for survival is essential. In addition, the children usually cooperate by sharing household tasks and teenagers by working part-time after school to supplement the parent's low income. Despite racial discrimination and limited employment opportunities, working-class African American families have learned to endure. Willie discusses Robert Merton's theory in which he identifies five kinds of adaptation by individuals to social organizations: conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism, and rebellion (Willie, 1980, p.). He concludes that working-class African American families are the innovationists because they believe in the socially sanctioned goals but must be creative and improvise new ways in order to reach such goals. Clearly, the creative innovationists, as Willie calls the members of the working-class African American families have developed means of coping with problems confronted in society that may be transferable in helping them deal with the consequences of divorce.

Exchange Theory

Robert Staples has presented exchange theory to, among other things, explain the high rate of divorce among Black families (Staples, 1985). He argues that African American women will end their marriage when the costs of such a living

arrangement outweighs the benefits. Essentially, Staples suggests that the dominant factors that contribute to family conflict are structural constraints and ideological preferences. The structural constraints consist of the shortage of marriageable African American men, due to social conditions confronting them such as: unemployment or underemployment, drug and alcohol addictions, incarceration, and a wide gap in educational attainment between men and women (Staples, 1981, in McAdoo). The ideological preference of most African Americans, according to Staples, is to marry and maintain a traditional nuclear family. He states that the desire to marry or remain married indicates the high value that marriage has for African Americans. In fact, "among Black women age 65 and over, only 3.5% had never married, compared with 6.9% of white women" (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1978, in Staples, 1985, p. 153).

The central thesis is that the dissonance between African American family ideology and actual family arrangements is caused by the structural conditions which prevent the fulfillment of African American family ideology.

Exchange theory focuses on the rewards and costs that lead people to do what they do. Certain types of family structures exist when there is an exchange of rewards; however, family structures that are costly to one or both parties are less likely to continue (Blau, 1964). Moreover, the desire to maintain a marital relationship is contingent on

the individual's perception of the benefits that can be attained, as well as of the anticipated costs (Blau, 1964, in Staples, 1985).

There are a number of factors that place African Americans at risk for divorce. For instance, the higher rate of urbanization, earlier age at marriage, earlier fertility, higher education and income levels for the wife and lower incomes for the husband (Cherlin, 1981). Hampton's study found that the highest percentage of marital disruption was among wives with incomes accounting for 40% or more of the total family's income (1980). He concluded that the pressures that push many African American men out of the social institutions in this society also work to push them out of the family institution. This, of course, is not to say that there are many strong African American families. In four out of five African American families, the husband earns a higher income than the wife (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1983). In addition, family life continues to be the source of most satisfaction, while their job offers the least satisfaction (Gary, Beatty, Berry, Price, 1983, in Staples, 1985). It is only to point out that the deteriorating economic and social status of African American men is linked to the increase of the divorce rate among African American families.

Clearly, the problem of racism pervades the fabric of our society and economy. The continued racism towards African Americans is at the heart of a fundamental social problem

leading to greater family conflicts among African Americans. To enhance the social and economic functioning of African American families, this country must make a major commitment to eradicate racism in all its forms - individual, institutional, and cultural. Firm actions must be taken to remove racial barriers - intended and unintended - from all of the societal institutions.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

To examine the impact of divorce on working-class African American women and the degree to which the provision of social work services can mediate divorce's negative affects, African American working women covered by benefits of District Council 37, AFSCME who had divorced were studied. These women are city workers who have available to them a prepaid legal/social work program, MELS, through which they are entitled to a variety of legal and social services.

MELS is a most appropriate site for the conduct of research on the consequences of divorce on working-class African American women because:

- Clients who come to MELS can be identified at the point at which divorce is initiated. The information maintained in the files is relevant to detail how the initiation of a legal divorce affects African American working women over time.

- The social services offered through MELS provides an important measure to assess extent of utilization by divorcing women as well as an important mediating variable to assess the impact of such utilization on individuals experiencing divorce.

The purpose of the study was to explore and describe the divorce experiences from the perspectives of working-class African American women. It explored what happens to women

undergoing a divorce, the social services they use and those they need.

The major objectives of the study are:

1. To generate a description of divorce experiences of African American working women.
2. To investigate the relationship of socio-economic and cultural factors to post-divorce adjustment of African American women.
3. To study the social work services offered to divorcing African American women at MELS and explore client satisfaction with these services.
4. To explore the emergence of additional legal problems.

Insight into the following questions is sought:

1. What are the central themes developed out of the divorce experiences among working African American women?
2. What are the differences and/or similarities in the perceptions of the divorce experiences among African American working women?
3. What are some of the financial, employment, educational, and emotional conditions facing divorced working women?
4. What were they able or unable to do once they divorced that they could not do during the marriage? (e.g. obtain better or worse paying job, return or not to school, obtain child care services or have a lack of these

services, socialize more or less with family and friends, pay or not pay bills, better or worse communication with children, other?)

Study Design

For this study, the follow-up evaluation method using face-to-face interviews was the data gathering technique. In their book, Research Techniques for Clinical Social Workers, Epstein and Tripodi (1980) discuss the use of the follow-up evaluation method: "Follow-up" evaluations are studies which take place after treatment has been completed and the client's relationship with the agency has been terminated." (p.166). This research method, basically, is an assessment of the impact of services on clients. "Frequently, these data gathering efforts take place weeks or months after treatment has been terminated so that judgments can be made about whether treatment gains have persisted over time or whether the client's condition has deteriorated without continued treatment" (Epstein & Tripodi, 1980.).

The research design selected for this study was an ex post facto design. The data collection took place after the clients had terminated with the legal and social work services received in the MELS union program to obtain a divorce. In his book, Program Evaluation in the Human Services, Smith (1990) describes the use of this study design in evaluative research. He suggests the ex post facto design is an

appropriate evaluation method when studying program outcome from the perspective of the clients.

Follow-up evaluations do not establish causal links between service interventions and client outcomes because measures are only taken after service has been terminated and, as a result, pre/post test comparisons of client change are unavailable. Another disadvantage to the follow-up evaluation method is the lack of a control group. The lack of comparison of a treated with an untreated group cannot produce hard findings on the effects of treatment per se. However, if more than one treatment approach is studied, it has the advantage of showing whether one approach produces better results than another. Therefore, such information may be more useful to practitioners than knowledge of the effectiveness of their efforts in general.

Despite the disadvantages mentioned, follow-up surveys of client samples represent an efficient method for assessing client conditions after services have been terminated and for assessing client satisfaction with the services they have received. Although this approach sacrifices certainty of knowledge about the causal relationship between service and client outcome, it is relatively inexpensive to implement, it does not intrude data collection devices and procedures into the provision of social work services, and it does not involve denial of services which is necessary for creating a control group (Epstein and Tripodi, *Ibid.*, pp. 166-167). Using

interviews, the follow-up evaluation method examined the conditions facing divorced African American women and examined client satisfaction with the social work service benefits that these working women received at MELS during the divorce process. This type of descriptive - exploratory research questions are important for answering questions about a group of clients in which little is known. The types and numbers of additional legal and personal problems were documented using information derived from client's interviews. The study also had a process dimension because the interview questions asked about the pre and post divorce experiences therefore it added a longitudinal aspect. In addition to the face-to-face interview, a self-administered questionnaire was used to obtain a description of demographic and family characteristics of clients.

Sampling Plan

African American working women selected for this study utilized both legal and social work services to obtain a divorce through DC 37 MELS program. Approximately one thousand clients per year seek legal services for a divorce at MELS and about ten percent of these clients also receive social work services. Of the one hundred cases, sixty were African American women. The sample was further reduced to 35 because some women had moved or changed jobs and there was no way to contact them. A total of 35 women were contacted and

out of those, 30 participated in the study. There was a need to recruit women whose social work cases were still opened in order to interview a total of thirty women. Therefore, out of the thirty women, five still had opened social work cases in the divorce unit when they were interviewed for this study. The women were contacted by phone and asked to volunteer to participate in the study. During the initial telephone conversation, all women heard the same introduction and were given the opportunity to discuss any concerns they had. After the introduction, the discussion focused on the purpose of the study (the need for understanding what divorced African American working women deal with during the divorce process so that appropriate social services can be recommended for women desiring help). The interview procedure and what was required of them (one to one and a half hours to answer questions in a face-to-face interview) was explained. See Appendix A for the interview questions. The importance of their participation was mentioned and the fact that their decision to participate was totally voluntary was emphasized. An appointment for the interview was scheduled with the women who volunteered. Before the interview the women signed a consent form (Appendix C). After they were interviewed, they were asked to answer a questionnaire (Appendix B) to gather demographic data.

The type of sampling strategy used in this study was a purposive sample. MELS clients are referred to social workers by lawyers usually during the clients' initial interview to

MELS. This type of referral process can affect the selection of the population who gets social services allowing for a certain amount of selection biases, therefore, a purposive sample seemed to be the most feasible sample strategy given the restraints of the agency setting. By using the purposive sampling strategy an attempt was made to vary the sample by age (18-35, 36-49, 50 and over), number of years married, number of years divorced, amount of social services (2-4 sessions, 5-9 sessions, 10 and over), type of service (individual, or both individual and group), children or no children, and whether the client or her spouse initiated the divorce because the sample was self selected. Selection of a sample group can affect the outcome of the results if those who are selected did better in the program. Another disadvantage to a non probability sample is that it does not reflect the total population of cases. However, this type of sampling strategy does not deny services to any client because it does not have a control group, therefore, it is more humane.

Data Collection Plan

The literature indicates that divorce is a crisis that is usually resolved over time. The issues that emerge through this process, which extends from the pre-divorce experience to post-divorce adjustment were explored in this study. The

interview was designed to explore the pre-divorce experience of the marriage, the experiences during the divorce action, and the post-divorce experience. This gives the study a longitudinal perspective even though all the data was collected at one time point.

In the interviews an effort was made to engage the interviewees by regarding them as "experts" in the area of divorce in order to help the researcher gain a better insight into the experiences of working-class African American women who have divorced. Several questions were posed in terms of what the interviewee would tell another woman involved in a divorce. The interviews were approximately one hour in duration. The primary investigator interviewed each person and took notes during each interview.

An interview has definite drawbacks as a research instrument. Because results are based on the self-report of the women, inferences must be curtailed. Some of the data gathered in this study is retrospective in nature due to the time the events occurred, therefore, increasing the amount of distortions of an individual's divorce experience. In addition, personal interviews are very costly and time-consuming reducing the size of the sample that can be studied.

Nevertheless, face-to-face interviews present a greater opportunity to obtain an accurate understanding of a person's divorce experience. It allows for personal contact which may increase the likelihood of an interviewee sharing more

information if the researcher offers support and encouragement. Face-to face interviews also obtain more in-depth data. Since the researcher is an experienced social worker in the area of divorce counseling with the population chosen for this study, we might assume that it facilitated the interaction during the interview and allowed appropriate assessment of the interviewee's responses and an ability to probe accordingly. However, since the researcher is also a social worker on this service it might elicit a more positive response in relation to questions about the social work services at MELS. According to Epstein and Tripodi, the face-to-face interview is more likely to offer the most complete, accurate, and unbiased information than any other method of data collection (Ibid., p. 178). The interview format was pretested with a few former clients to determine if the questions were clear.

Study Variables

The impact of divorce (independent variable) was assessed on two outcome measures: the emergence of additional legal and personal problems (dependent variables). In addition, the financial, employment, educational, and emotional needs of African American working-class divorced women were explored during the interviews. A self-administered questionnaire was used to obtain a description of demographic characteristics of the sample. The demographic variables that were observed were

age, number of years married, number of years divorced, previous divorces, number of children, who initiated the divorce (the client or the spouse), changes in household composition, income, level of education, job title, and spouse's income, education, and job title.

Place of birth was another variable as there are a number of clients who were born in the south or in the Caribbean. There is sufficient evidence in the literature about the distinct cultural differences and experiences between northern, southern and Caribbean Blacks to make this an important variable to observe on how it relates to the divorce process of working women.

A structured interview was developed to be administered face-to-face. The questions focused on the pre-divorce experience of clients in order to explore the client's perception of the "causes" for the divorce, e.g. spouse's unemployment, drug addiction, other. The experiences during the initiation of the legal process and the post-divorce adjustment were also asked during the interview to explore the consequences of the divorce.

Besides exploring the impact of divorce on working-class African American women, an important area of investigation concerned the extent to which individuals undergoing a divorce opt to use social work services, and how the utilization of services mediates the impact of divorce. Do social work services, for those who elect to utilize them, stem the

negative consequences of divorce?

To answer this question a description of who uses the services offered by MELS was made, and then the impact of different interventions designed expressly for the divorcing population were compared. The first part concerned the social work services utilization typology and the second concerned those clients who received individual counseling services only, those who had both individual and children's services and those who received both individual and group services. Very few clients, if any, received group services only, therefore, this service alone could not be compared.

Using information routinely maintained by MELS, a measure of social work service utilization was derived for each study participant to ascertain level of utilization and its relation to the outcome measures mentioned earlier.

Data Analysis Plan

Several steps were taken to analyze the qualitative data that was collected from the open-ended questions in the interview. For a detailed description of qualitative data analysis and interpretation see Patton's text, Qualitative Evaluation Methods, (1988). All notes taken during the interviews, including descriptions of the individuals interviewed, nonverbal gestures, postures, facial expressions and quotations were reviewed. As many descriptive categories as possible were generated to order the collected data. After

the data was classified and labeled, different categories were refined. Descriptions of the divorce experiences of the women interviewed were written up in a narrative form to let the reader know what the divorce was like from the participants point of view. The participants satisfaction with social work services offered at MELS was also reported.

To analyze the data collected from the structured questions in the interview, it was necessary to quantify it by finding out how many in each category and by using basic descriptive statistics. Univariate analysis, that is the examination of the distribution of cases on one variable at a time, was utilized to describe the data and report the findings. To further analyze and interpret the data, a presentation of particular themes from emergent patterns in the data were organized and reported as major trends. Basic descriptive statistics such as the mean, median, mode, percentages and standard deviation were used to quantify categories. The findings are reported by discussing typical, extreme, or varied cases. The purpose was to study variations in how participants respond to and are affected by the divorce process and the social work services offered at MELS. See Appendix C which lists the questions used to operationalize areas of divorce experiences that were studied.

THE IMPACT OF THE SETTING

Research conducted in a service setting is usually designed around the constraints imposed by the service delivery model. MELS is a service setting founded on a norm of "entitlement" for all. MELS is housed in a legal unit which, by law, has no access to the non-covered spouse of a divorcing couple.

The research design of this study made an attempt to accommodate the research constraints of this environment and use the multiplicity of resources that were available. Because no service could be randomly distributed, or withheld, an experimental study could not be conducted. An after only the follow-up evaluation using face-to-face interviews was most appropriate.

CONCEPTS

DEFINITION OF TERMS

- I. Divorce Experience - This study will concentrate on the participant's reactions to the specific event of divorce. There are various conceptions of divorce in terms of stage theory. Basically all conceptions refer to three phases of the divorce experience. Fisher's (1973) conception will be used in this study: the predivorce experience of the marriage; the divorce experience; and the postdivorce experience.

- II. Post-Divorce Adjustment - In this study, post-divorce adjustment is seen as occurring with regard to the adult's ability to adapt to the impact of divorce on various areas of functioning. The interview is designed to tap those areas which are seen as most central to the particular women who take part in this research. The six areas of functioning that conceptualize post-divorce adjustment in this study are:
 - (1) Emotional - Guided by an understanding of grief and mourning process. Such feelings as sadness, anger, and guilt are central to the divorce experience.
 - (2) Interpersonal - Includes a social support network. Relationship with relatives, ability to socialize, and opportunities for dating.

- (3) **Financial** - Whether the divorce has restricted the finances. Do women with minor children receive child support payments? Do they receive alimony payments from ex-spouse? Has the household income increased, decreased or remained the same since the divorce?
- (4) **Parental** - Adapting to life as a single parent whether custodial or noncustodial. Has the divorce affected or not affected their ability to care for the children? Are they able to do things with or for the children that they could not do during the marriage?
- (5) **Occupational** - Ability to maintain work outside the home. Did their employment cause problems between them and their husbands? Has the divorce affected their ability to work? Have there been any changes in work performance after the divorce?
- (6) **Educational** - Ability to obtain desired level of education. Has the divorce affected their ability to continue education?

III. **Culture** - The concept of culture, as used in this study, is one defined by Marvin Harris (1968): Culture is a behavior pattern associated with particular groups of people (Spradley, 1979). Culture refers to the way of life followed by a people. It consists of the rules which generate and guide behavior (Valentine, 1968).

To determine whether the participants have met most of the criteria for adequate post-divorce adjustment the data derived from the in-depth interviews will be checked. The following framework, based on Robert Hill's research with African American families, will encompass the cultural factors that will be investigated:

African American Cultural Factors Used to Investigate Relationship to Post-Divorce Adjustment

- (1) **Strong Kinship Bonds** - Whether participants perceive relationships with relatives, extended family, and friends of the family as emotionally close and helpful.
- (2) **Strong Religious Orientation** - Whether participants perceive their religious faith to be a source of strength during the divorce crisis.
- (3) **Strong Work Orientation** - Whether participants place a strong emphasis on occupational aspirations and ability to work.
- (4) **Strong Achievement Orientation** - Whether participants have college aspirations for themselves.

CHAPTER 4**FINDINGS****THE AGENCY SETTING**

The District Council 37 Municipal Employees Legal Services Plan, known as MELS, is a program of personal civil legal services and related social services for workers represented by District Council 37 of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) and its retirees.

The Plan has been in operation since 1977 and serves approximately 140,000 union members and retirees. Spouses and dependent children of covered persons are also eligible for MELS' services.

MELS is a prepaid plan, administered by a trust fund of the union, which delivers services through its own staff of 70 lawyers on staff, 25 legal assistants, law and social work students, clerical and managerial staff. Lawyers refer clients to staff social workers if they need counseling or other help with personal or family problems which are often connected to the legal problems. Approximately one hundred cases per year are opened by MELS' social workers in the divorce unit which is ten percent of the total annual legal cases for that unit.

MELS' lawyers give advice and representation on a wide range of civil legal problems. The legal problems which MELS covers include: landlord/tenant eviction matters, debt

problems, including bankruptcy, problems arising from purchase of goods and services, including home improvements, credit ratings, door-to-door sales and public utilities. In addition, it covers real estate transactions concerning a member's primary residence, wills, divorce, separation and annulment, family law problems, adoption, name change, and problems arising from claims for government benefits such as Social Security, food stamps, etc. Divorce cases make up twenty five percent of the total legal cases.

The services provided by MELS are financed out of per capita contributions made to a trust fund by New York City and other public employers, pursuant to collective bargaining agreements.

Legal and social work services are delivered by teams of lawyers, social workers and legal assistants, headed by supervising attorneys. Every client is entitled to social work services regardless of the type of legal case. Each team specializes in one area of the law. The Director of Law Services supervises the work of the Plan's legal staff; The Director of Support Services supervises the work of the Plan's social work staff. The chief executive of the Plan is called the Administrator and Chief Counsel.

LEGAL PROBLEM OFTEN LINKED TO SOCIAL OR PERSONAL PROBLEM

Union members coming in to see MELS lawyers are often troubled about financial problems, or marital or family

problems. Some may be facing eviction. Because MELS has found that its clients' legal problems are often closely linked to personal family, social or work problems, MELS also has social workers on its staff to counsel clients. MELS believes that when these personal problems are associated with the client's legal problem, the services of the lawyer and the social worker working together provide more effective assistance to the client than the services of the lawyer alone. Some examples illustrate how this collaboration between lawyer and social worker works:

Divorce

A typical situation involves supportive help for a woman with three children who for years has been unhappy in her marriage. She sees a lawyer to get legal advice about divorce, but in fact she is indecisive about whether to proceed with the divorce. Here the social worker provides counseling, helping the client explore her situation so she can determine whether she wants to move ahead with a divorce at this time. If the client decides not to divorce but is in need of further counseling, the social worker makes a referral to a community agency. Long-term therapy is not offered at MELS.

If divorce is decided upon, the MELS social worker continues to provide emotional and practical assistance to the client while the lawyer proceeds with the divorce. The social worker assists the client in dealing with her children's

response to divorce, in adjusting to her new financial circumstances, and in adapting to her new life situation.

Domestic Violence

A woman with two small children comes to MELS because she has been threatened and hit by her husband, with whom she is still living. The lawyer who interviews her suggests going into family court for an Order of Protection. The client is frightened and unsure about what to do. She is also worried about her children, and about her safety at home and on the job. She agrees to meet with a social worker to discuss her fears and concerns.

The social worker helps the client look at ways to deal with the immediate crisis. The social worker meets for several sessions with the client to provide supportive counseling. In addition to the feelings of terror, the client may also feel helpless, embarrassed and isolated. Helping the client sort out her feelings, in a caring atmosphere, can enable the client to assess her strengths. The counseling also helps the client set realistic goals based on her own individual situation and helps her make changes which will end an abusive family life. Clients are referred to Battered Women's Shelters when necessary.

Seeking a Change in Custody

A man comes to MELS to seek custody of his 13-year-old daughter. She has been living with her mother, but has asked to live with her father. The daughter has lived with her

mother since her parents divorced three years ago. The lawyer encourages the father to see a social worker so the client can explore what change in custody might mean to him and his daughter. The 13-year-old is anxious about going to court and choosing between her parents. Her father's love and patience make her feel reassured, yet she loves her mother too and doesn't want to hurt her.

The social worker provides counseling and practical help to both the client and his daughter. A family study is completed, giving the social worker and lawyer a more complete picture of the relationships among the family members and between the family members and their neighborhood. The social worker talks with the client and his daughter individually and together, to discuss their plans, feelings, and concerns. The social worker might appear in court at the request of the lawyer to testify about the desire and ability of the father to have his daughter live with him permanently. The social worker might then refer the father to a single-parent men's group or for individual or father-daughter therapy.

Social Work Services Are Voluntary

Social workers at MELS provide a very real help to union members with personal and social problems connected to their legal problems. All social work services, however, are voluntary and are by the choice of the members. Whether a member chooses to use social work services or not, has no bearing on the conduct of the legal case.

MELS hires its own staff lawyers and social workers to serve its members. Staff professionals advise, counsel and represent members on covered matters, and work exclusively for MELS.

OCCUPATIONAL SOCIAL WORK IN TRADE UNION SETTINGS

Occupational social work in the United States has been associated with workers and trade unions throughout its history. Members Assistance Programs are staffed by professional social workers who offer services to workers at the union's headquarters, at the workplace, or within the union members' communities.

Social workers view their clients as workers and as family members. This interconnection is addressed by the service delivery models implemented in Members Assistance Programs.

District Council 37 Municipal Employees Legal Services plan is one example of the diversity that can be seen of the service delivery patterns that have emerged in response to the commitment by the social work profession of helping union members and their families meet their broad needs.

The primary goal of most Members Assistance Programs is to protect the union members' jobs by enhancing their social and personal functioning. There is now a recognition that a person's life affects his or her work and vice versa. For instance, child care, health, divorce, retirement and other

aspects of a person's life affect the work performance. The organization's response to these personal aspects affects the workers' ability to juggle both work and family. According to Akabas, "Employers depend on a labor force; trade unions are formed out of the labor force. Therefore, employers' (and unions') concern about the health and functional capacity of their workers (or members) and their families is a suitable concern" (1982, p. 32).

The DC 37 MELS program to benefit union members who are divorcing is in keeping with the field's commitment to a broad-brush approach and its concern with the interconnection between the union member as worker and as a family member. This is in contrast to the earlier models of Employee Assistance or Members Assistance programs which primarily serviced clients who had chemical dependency problems. MELS' innovative legal/social work program can serve as a model for other union-based Members Assistance Programs or Employee Assistance Programs serving workers who are going through the crisis of a divorce. At this time, there are several labor unions throughout the country offering members free legal services as part of the benefits package.

SAMPLE POPULATION OF STUDY

The sample population chosen for this study were African American working women who are members of DC 37 labor union and received both legal and social work services at MELS (located in the union headquarters) to handle their divorce cases. It was limited to African American working women across the age spectrum (21 - 65) because they make up more than 50% of the clients with legal/social work cases for a divorce. The sample was a selective group of women who chose social work services during the divorce action.

To participate in this study the women who had already obtained a divorce volunteered to be interviewed (face to face). The one hour interviews explored the women's divorce experiences and their ability to adapt to divorce on various areas of functioning: emotional, interpersonal, financial, parental, occupational and educational. These areas of functioning were chosen because of the relevance to the client group receiving legal and social work services. The responses of the total sample of 30 women were content analyzed to analyze trends in the data.

CLIENTS' CHARACTERISTICS

All of the women interviewed were African American and all of their ex-spouses, except for one Latino, were also African American. The union members who utilize District Council 37's legal/social work services are predominantly

African American, therefore, this sample reflects the overall racial composition of the clients.

The majority of the clients, approximately seventy percent, were thirty eight years old or older. Their ages ranged from 27 to 59 with the mean age at 41 years old. Their ex-spouses' age was similar ranging from 27 to 61 years old.

The level of education of the clients and their ex-spouses was reported by the highest grade completed. The majority of the clients (50%) had some years of college. Two out of thirty were college graduates. A high number, twenty-seven percent, had a high school diploma. The percentages for the ex-spouses education varied with only twenty-three percent having some college. Thirty-three percent were high school graduates.

Most of the clients were working - class. All the clients work in the public sector for the City of New York. The majority were employed as clerical workers (63%), 20% were school service workers and 17% were health care workers. Sixty seven percent of the clients had annual incomes from \$15,000 to \$25,000. Their incomes ranged from \$5,000 to \$35,000 per year. In contrast, thirty-five percent of their ex-spouses were unemployed. Forty-five percent were employed as blue collar workers and 20% were professional white collar workers. Fifty percent of the ex-spouses had annual incomes from \$30,000 to \$50,000. Their incomes ranged from \$20,000 to more than \$50,000, much more than the women.

The majority, fifty-seven percent, of the clients reported feeling that neither themselves nor their ex-spouses suffered discrimination at work. However, ten percent of the women said they were discriminated at work because of their race. A higher number, (23%) reported their husbands as having been racially discriminated in the workplace.

The years married for these couples ranged from one to thirty-seven. Forty percent had been married twenty or more years and 27% married for less than five years. Most had been married for some time. The mean number of years married was fourteen. This was the first marriage for all but one of the women. For seventy-seven percent of the clients the divorce had finalized one year or less at the time they were interviewed for this study and 23% from two to five years. The majority of the clients were recent divorcees with the mean number at 1.1 years.

Eighty percent of the clients had children of the marriage. The majority (63%) had one to three children and 17% had four to six with 2.1 years as the mean. Although 90% of the women with children have sole child custody only 40% receive child support payments. Furthermore, only three of the thirty women (10%) were receiving alimony payments at the time of the interview.

Most of the women (83%) live alone or with their children, none had remarried. However, their ex-spouses' living arrangement differs significantly. Only twenty percent

live alone. The majority (40%) live with another woman and 13% more are remarried. Therefore, most women are entirely on their own caring for the well-being of their children without the help of another adult in the house and in many cases providing total financial support. In fact, for the majority of the women (57%) the divorce restricted their finances. It is interesting that even though 50% of the women reported their husbands' lack of employment as causing problems in the marriage only ten percent mentioned financial problems as the main problem that led to the divorce. Other problems such as family violence and husbands' extra marital affairs were considered to be the main problems they faced during the marriage. See Tables 1-16 for a summary of demographic characteristics of respondents.

Table 1

Clients' Ages	Frequency	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
27-30	5	16.7	16.7
31-39	8	26.7	43.3
40-49	13	43.3	86.7
50-59	4	13.3	100.0
Total	30	100.0	
Mean 41.1	Median 40.0		
Range 32.0	Mode 38.0		

Table 2

Clients' Birth Place	Frequency	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
United States	18	60	60
West Indies	12	40	100
Total	30	100.0	

Table 3

Clients' Occupation	Frequency	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Clerical Workers	19	63.3	63.3
School Services Workers	5	16.7	80.0
Health Care Workers	6	20.0	100.0
Totals	30	100.0	

Table 4

Clients' Income	Frequency	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Less than \$15,000	4	13.3	13.3
\$15,000 - \$20,000	9	30.0	43.3
\$20,000 - \$25,000	11	36.7	80.0
\$25,000 - \$30,000	3	10.0	90.0
\$30,000 or More	3	10.0	100.0
Total	30	100.0	

Table 5

Clients' Education	Frequency	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Less than H.S. Graduate	4	13.3	13.3
High School Graduate	8	26.7	40.0
Some College	16	53.3	93.3
College Graduate	2	6.7	100.0
Total	30	100.0	

Table 6

Years Married	Frequency	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
1 - 10	11	36.7	36.7
11 - 20	10	33.3	70.0
21 - 37	9	30.0	100.0
Total	30	100.0	

Table 7

Years Separated From Spouse	Frequency	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
One Year or Less	18	60.0	60.0
Two - Three	9	30.0	70.0
Four or More	3	10.0	100.0
Total	30	100.0	
Mean 1.8	Median 1.0		
Range 9.0	Mode 1.0		

Table 8

Years Divorced	Frequency	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
One or Less	23	76.7	76.7
Two - Five	7	23.3	100.0
Total	30	100.0	
Mean 1.1	Median 1.0		
Range 5.0	Mode 1.0		

Table 9

Number of Children	Frequency	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
None	6	20.0	20.0
One	4	13.3	33.3
Two	9	30.0	63.3
Three	6	20.0	83.3
Four or More	5	16.7	100.0

Table 10

Monthly Amount of Child Support	Frequency	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
None	9	30.0	30.0
\$100 - \$200	2	6.7	36.7
\$200 - \$300	6	20.0	56.7
\$400 or More	4	13.3	70.0
Not Appropriate (No Children Under 21)	9	30.0	100.0
Total	30	100.0	

Table 11

Alimony	N	Percentage
Yes	3	10
No	27	90
Total	30	100

Table 12

Clients' Living Arrangements	Frequency	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Remarried	0	0	0
Live Alone	7	23.3	23.3
Live with Children	18	60.0	83.3
Live with Adult Relatives	5	16.7	100.0
Total	30	100.0	

Table 13

Spouses' Living Arrangements	Frequency	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Remarried	3	13.3	13.3
Live Alone	6	20.0	33.3
Live with Another Woman	12	40.0	73.3
Live with Adult Relatives	2	6.7	80.0
Live with Children	2	6.7	86.7
In Drug Rehab	1	3.3	90.0
Homeless	1	3.3	93.3
Unknown	3	10.0	100.0
Total	30	100.0	

Table 14

Spouses' Occupation	Frequency	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Blue Collar	12	40.0	40.0
White Collar	5	16.7	56.7
Retired	1	3.3	60.0
Full Time Student	1	3.3	63.3
Unemployed	11	36.7	100.0
Total	30	100.0	

Table 15

Spouses' Income	Frequency	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
None	8	34.8	34.8
\$10,000 - \$20,000	3	13.0	47.8
\$20,000 - \$30,000	4	17.4	65.2
\$30,000 - \$50,000	6	26.1	91.3
\$50,000 or More	2	8.7	100.0
Total	30	100.0	

Table 16

Spouses' Education	Frequency	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Less than H.S. Graduate	10	23.3	23.3
High School Graduate	10	33.3	66.7
Some College	8	26.7	93.3
College Graduate	2	6.7	100.0
Total	30	100.0	

WOMEN'S DESCRIPTION OF THE MAIN PROBLEMS LEADING TO DIVORCE
TYPES OF CASES

In order to describe the depth of problems experienced by such a client group in a union setting, the major types of cases were grouped into some broad categories. Several types of cases were found based upon the main problems that led to the divorce. The four major types of cases were identified, with the first two having the greater frequencies: (1)12 cases (40%) of family violence, (2)10 cases (33%) husbands' extra marital affairs, (3)5 cases (17%) alcohol or drug addiction of clients or spouses, (4)3 cases (10%) financial problems during marriage.

The results of the data are presented for each of the six areas of functioning listed above during the three phases of the divorce experience: the predivorce, divorce, and postdivorce. Any emerging patterns for the issues that come up during the divorce adjustment period were observed and reported below.

FAMILY VIOLENCE

Forty percent (40%), twelve cases, of the total sample were battered wives. These are the types of things they said led them to seek a divorce:

- The abuse, mental and physical. My husband threatened my life. I was treated like a prisoner. If I did anything he didn't want me to do, I was punished by him

hitting me.

- The abuse - verbal, physical, mental and sexual.
 - Abusive beatings, couldn't agree on nothing.
 - The final blow was he had assaulted me with his fist.
- My mother-in-law didn't particularly like me and she put fire under the pot.

MARITAL AFFAIRS

Thirty-three percent (33%), ten women, said their husbands' marital affairs was the main reason for the divorce. The following are typical descriptions:

- Well, my husband wasn't faithful. He was neglecting me. He wasn't paying attention to the kids and I just couldn't continue living with him.
- I was tired of the way I was being treated. The affairs, because the women was calling me at the house and were verbally abusive to me.

DRUG ADDICTION

Five women, (17%), attributed their spouses' or their own drug or alcohol addiction as the main problem causing the divorce. However, the responses in this group show that there was an overlap of problems, particularly, family violence and financial. These are a few of their remarks:

- That was the drug problem. It was the stealing of household furnishings and money. Then there were

arguments which started to get violent with hitting. He was addicted to heroin and eventually to crack or whatever.

- He was a cruel person you know. He was mentally abusive. He tried to get physical. That I won't take. He abused alcohol, he abused coke and that reefer!

- My cocaine addiction was a problem because as a result of me being high a lot there was no communication. I just didn't give a damn about anything and the money problems came from using the cocaine.

FINANCIAL

It was significant that only three women, (10%), mentioned financial problems as the main cause of their divorce. It appears that for this type of case, there is also an overlap of problems, mainly drug or alcohol addiction and possibly extra-marital affairs. This is what they said:

- He wouldn't work. He couldn't hold a job. He was jealous, he's possessive. I was taking care of all the bills and he was just there.

- I had all the bills to pay. He had left and refused to pay the bills. I had the house and my son to take care of.

PREDIVORCE EMOTIONAL ISSUES

Most of the women described feelings of fear, sadness, low self-esteem, guilt, anxiety, isolation and frustration about the marital relationship during the predivorce phase. During the second phase, the divorce phase, the responses to the emotional issues were often extreme. Many of the same feelings described during the predivorce phase were intensified. However, by the postdivorce phase, most of the women's feelings changed to more positive ones. For instance, many expressed feelings of happiness, freedom, better self-esteem and glad about their decision to divorce. Typical responses in the predivorce phase were:

Feelings of Isolation

- I was afraid sometimes when he was around. He had me under great restrictions. I couldn't even talk to my next door neighbor. I was very isolated even though I was working full-time.

Feelings of Low Self-Esteem

- I feel that I just want to get out of it with a sound mind. In a way I had a low self-esteem. He made me feel that I was never going to make it without him.

- I had very low self-esteem. I had nothing to be happy about. I was just existing. Inside of me, I was dying.

Feelings of Insecurity and Fear

- Very insecure and scared too. Because he's a violent person. He cursed a lot, throw things around, knock me

around! I felt I was getting nothing out of the marriage.

- Actually, I didn't think much about myself. All I used to think about was them kids. Only a few women (10%) felt self confident in spite of the violence at home. One response summarizes this pattern:

- I always felt about myself the way I feel now. Because I knew the things he had to say were him and not me and I'm not going to allow nobody to hurt me.

Feelings of Ambivalence

In spite of the above, about 75% of the women had some feelings of ambivalence towards a divorce. A typical response was:

- Sometimes I would think to myself, you must be crazy. Why are you here? You don't have any children. But then I would go to the Kingdom Hall meeting and would listen to something and I would go home and try to make the marriage work.

EMOTIONAL ISSUES DURING DIVORCE

During this phase many of the same feelings described during the predivorce experience are intensified. For instance, feelings of sadness are described with words such as hurt and pain. Terrified is used to express feelings of fear. Not only is fear due to the violence it also has to do with fear of living alone. Many of the women had never been on

their own before. A typical response was:

- I was hurt. The fact that all these years I tried to make this marriage work and it didn't. I was afraid of what he was going to do to me. I was just terrified of the man. I didn't want him to hurt my family. I was angry. When I got married I was in love. I wasted my young years on this marriage and on this man.

Intense Feelings of Ambivalence, Hate and Fear of Aloneness

- Sometimes I was sure the divorce is what I wanted and other times I wasn't so sure. It was like a battle trying to free myself from this guy. I should call him an animal (laughing). I still hate him. Sometimes I said I don't want to be alone. It's like starting all over again. But eventually I made a decision and stuck with it.

Acute Crisis

During this phase the women face the greatest risk of being battered, therefore it is not surprising that their descriptions of their feelings are so dramatic. Many of them are in acute crisis during this time due to their realistic assessment of the potential danger they are confronting. One response summarizes this trend:

- I felt good about starting the divorce but I was frightened because my husband threatened that I'd be dead before the divorce and he gets violent at times. He said, if you divorce me I'll kill you first and kill myself.

He made another remark that he'd see the house burnt to the ground before he'd let me have it.

Feelings of Anger and Loss

In this phase the key feelings are anger and loss, which were not mentioned by the women when describing the predivorce experience. A typical response was:

- I was angry, bitter. Bitter in the sense that I felt, why did I have to leave? Why wasn't he man enough to leave? It would've been a lot easier if he left. I was disgusted because all those years and then you wind up with nothing. It's like it never existed.

During this phase too, women who have children become preoccupied with their children's reactions to the pending divorce. In general, there are intense feelings of anger and disappointment about ending the marriage.

- I felt resentment. I hated my husband. I didn't think I would go through that. When I got married I got married for life. I got different opinions from people making me confused. I knew I had to do it. I didn't want my kids to grow without their father.

Unrealistic Expectations of Marriage

- Anger, rage, pain and hurt. This was my childhood sweetheart and I had believed in the lived happily ever after but because of all the turmoil of the abuse that went on in the marriage it was disappointing and I was hurt because I loved him. I truly loved him.

POSTDIVORCE EMOTIONAL ISSUES

For the majority of women, (90%), the feelings changed to ones that were more positive. Many reported feelings of happiness, freedom, better self-esteem, more relaxed, and basically relieved and glad the divorce was over. Ten percent of the women expressed realistic concern about the effect of the divorce on their children, as well as the difficulty of being a working single parent. In general, all the women had an excellent postdivorce emotional adjustment. Typical responses for those who felt happy and free during the postdivorce phase were the following:

Happiness and Freedom:

- I feel free. You know the freedom. When you're free you can explore. The freedom means a lot.
- Happy! Very happy, I couldn't be happier. I'm having the best time of my life. My kids are happier, I'm happier. It make us a better family. The children are all closer.
- Great! One big word GREAT! I just feel good, I just feel a lot better. My mind is more relaxed, I really just feel great.
- Well, I'm happy that I did, that I'm free of this person. I'm just more relaxed. I don't have to wake up during the night and find him laying on my bed. My daughter and I have a chance to do the things we always wanted to do. To share things with no interference and

no criticism.

Worried about the Effect of the Divorce on Children

There were a few women (10%) who were not as happy about the divorce, even with the violence experienced during the marriage. They expressed mixed emotions, particularly on the effect of the divorce on their children.

- I'm glad it's over. I'm glad that it happened. The only thing I'm not so happy about is that my children don't have their father's guidance, the little that he used to give.

- Well, its kind of like ... it's been accepted. I kind of look at it as it was the necessary thing to do. It's just part of the process. I'm happy and I'm sad for my daughter because I wish she had the father at home but on the other hand she doesn't experience anymore horrible things in the house. She doesn't have to see blood. There always was blood because somebody was always getting hurt. We both got hurt (referring to herself and her ex-husband).

Sadness and Difficulties of Divorced Parents

One young participant had a different experience about the emotional consequences of the divorce for herself and her children. She expressed feelings of sadness based on the reality of the divorce.

- I don't feel nothing because I came out with nothing. Well, I came out with two kids. I feel sad because now

I have to raise two kids by myself and it's hard to find someone now. With two kids, most people don't want an already made family. So in that sense I wish my marriage would have worked. My kids wish they had a father there instead of a mother alone. Things are different now discipline wise and financial wise.

Summary of the Emotional Issues

Most women interviewed had accepted the divorce by this postdivorce phase and were feeling content about their decision to divorce. However, the emotional process these women undergo from the divorce, through divorce and into postdivorce is certainly a very painful one. Most of the feelings of fear, sadness, low self-esteem, anxiety, guilt and anger expressed by the women during the predivorce and divorce phases were diminished by the postdivorce experience. In fact, it seemed many women are now functioning emotionally better than during their predivorce phase. Somehow, knowing that they have survived the violence at home as well as the crisis of divorce enhances the emotional stability and self-esteem of the women. Overall, the women have adjusted very well to the emotional area of functioning. See next page for a chart of the emotional stages of divorce for African American working women during the three phases of divorce: the predivorce, during divorce, and postdivorce phases.

Table 17**EMOTIONAL STAGES OF DIVORCE FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN**

<u>PREDIVORCE</u>		<u>DIVORCE</u>		<u>POSTDIVORCE</u>
Fear	=====>	Terrified	=====>	Freedom
Sadness	=====>	Depressed	=====>	Happiness
Ambivalence	=====>	Angry	=====>	Great
Insecurity	=====>	Anxious	=====>	Relaxed
Low self-esteem	=====>	Hurt	=====>	Improved self-esteem

Divorce and Postdivorce Interpersonal Issues of Divorced African American Working Women

Relationship With Relatives

The women's relationship with relatives varied. The responses show three different trends. Many women, (60%), felt they got closer to their family including parents, brothers, sisters, in-laws, and other family members. Thirty percent felt the relationship with relatives remained the same. The other ten percent felt their relationships with family or in-laws worsened after the divorce.

Closer to Relatives

- For some strange reason I'm closer to my in-laws than before. I guess they wanted me out of that marriage too.
- It affected my relationship with my family in a positive way. They was glad.
- They were very supportive. They were always there. I could visit anytime. If I needed help financially they were there for me, mostly my sister. Before I didn't have to ask for financial help that often.
- My relationship with relatives changed for the better. I talk to people more than I normally would have; my mother, my brother, friends, and other family members.

No Change in Relationship with Relatives

Some (30%) felt the relationship has remained the same with their family as well as with their ex-spouse's family. Typical responses were:

- Well, I maintain the same relationship with his family as well as my family. It's been the same.

- It affected my sister and my mother. They wasn't pleased because they don't like divorce either, but they know before I did, that I had to get it. I made them unhappy because if I was unhappy they was unhappy. They knew the treatment I was getting - the violence - they knew and some of my friends too.

Worse Relationship With Relatives

Others (10%) report that their relationship is not close with their family and that it never was close. In some cases, the women feel withdrawn from their ex-husband's relatives, therefore, feeling the relationships with them have worsened. Still, for a few women, the relationships with some relatives have improved after the divorce. But with other members of the family there has been a distancing. The following two quotes represent this trend:

- I don't know. Since I've been divorced I realize that what he used to say about my family was true. They are trying to live my life, whom I should see, what I should do. They seem to think they know what is best for me more than I know what is best for me. I get along worse with them now. But I feel I am more in control of my life and do what I want to do, instead of what they want me to do.

- I got closer to my sister-in-law. But there were

others in the family that hated me because of the divorce, like my ex-husband's cousins and brothers. They really hated me because they feel that they never know the truth. My family feel I did the right choice.

Opportunities For Dating

In relation to dating, several trends were found in the data. The responses varied from women not wanting to date yet, to women who date often. However, most of the women, (70%), reported having opportunities for dating but not feeling ready to start dating yet. Those who date more often, (30%), have a wide variety of feelings towards dating which ranged from being turned off from dating to dating being the best thing that has happened to them. Overall, the women in this study showed greater difficulty in adjusting to dating than to the other areas, such as relationships with relatives, ability to socialize, and social supports that are included in the area of interpersonal functioning. As expected, part of the reason for not dating was the women's distrust of men. A typical response was:

- Yes (I've had opportunities), but I'm not yet ready. I don't know I'm just not ready. I still have that trust and my kids are still young. Trust is something that is going to be there for a long time. Can I trust him not to abuse my children?

Even many of the women who have dated still feel distrustful towards men and consequently avoid dating.

- Yes, I have dated. For years it was only him (husband). He used to say a lot of negative things to me and I used to believe it. It's not that I don't have opportunities for dating, it's that I shy away from it.

- Yeah once. That didn't work out. This particular guy who has been bothering me for five years. He then disappeared. I've lost confidence in the guys because they turn around and they just ditch you. So I'm not interested in anybody right now.

Some women preferred to put their energies into working and parenting.

- Well, everyone in my family tells me to go out and date but I don't feel comfortable playing the field. I don't think I could do that right now. I'm just wrapped up in seeing that my daughter has a better life. I develop all my energy on my kids and my work and feel more satisfied just doing that.

Those who date more often (30% of total sample) report different experiences. There is a wide variety of their feelings about dating. The responses vary from being turned off from dating to dating being the best thing that has ever happened.

Turned Off From Dating

- With me dating is not so great. Maybe its something with the '90s but everybody wants to come to your house. People don't believe in going out to the movies or take you to dinner. Maybe I've been out of it for a while. Maybe I'm meeting the wrong guys. Some of them can be very nice. But to me it's a total turn off. Well, it's just Uhh. They are not so important.

Dating Is The Best Thing That Has Ever Happened

- Most men I'm meeting are married and they claim they're happily married but I wonder. But it (dating) does help too because it's someone to talk to, to listen to, and to exchange thoughts with them. Especially if the person is intelligent. I think its the best thing that has ever happened to me because I was so isolated. The person I'm dating is married. His wife is in the West Indies but its okay with me because I don't think I'm getting married again.

Summary

In spite of the varied experiences the women have had dating, the theme that seems to run across the board for almost all of them is fear of getting hurt again in an intimate relationship and a lack of trust towards men. However, most women have only been divorced for about one year, therefore, the fact that they are recent divorcees may affect their desire to date. Not wanting to yet, may in fact

be a sign of emotional strength and maturity.

ABILITY TO SOCIALIZE

The women's ability to socialize has increased after the divorce. However, the majority of women socialize much more than they did when they were living with their husbands. The women feel free to socialize more now and are able to do what they want because their husbands can no longer control their behavior or isolate them from friends and relatives. Given the great social restrictions the women had to face during their marriage it is remarkable how well they have adjusted to this area of functioning. Considering that many of the women in this study have children, it is also surprising that only one mentioned having difficulty in obtaining child care as affecting her ability to socialize more. Perhaps the women's relatives provide more help with child care now since many reported they got closer to their family after the divorce.

In general, their increased socialization seems to be the biggest area of improvement in the postdivorce interpersonal functioning. Only one woman reported that the need to have child care arrangements caused restrictions in her ability to socialize more. She said:

- Well in some way its restrictions because I have to pre-plan in order to provide a baby sitter and sometimes I've had to make cancellations because of inconveniences.
- The women's ability to socialize improved significantly

for all the other women. Here is what they had to say:

- I socialize more. Well, I go out for dinner dates and I go visiting more and I have company over. I couldn't do that before because my husband would be rude to the visitors - not in words but in action - walks around and he would not speak to anybody. He would display an angry facial expression and make people uncomfortable which was embarrassing.

- I socialize more. My girlfriends come over now more. I get to see them in their house. When he was there they didn't visit me because of him. They didn't like his attitude.

- Well, I go out more now. I do things that my husband never liked me to do. Go out to the theater, go out with my friends, hang out in the village.

- I could socialize all I want. I can go where I want. I could say what I wanna say. I can travel - nothing is holding me back. Before, he's the only one who could do these things and if you tried he'd say, you're stupid or you don't need to do this or that. I was restricted with him.

Table 18

Postdivorce Interpersonal Issues	N	Percentage
Relationship with Relatives - Improved	18	60%
Relationship with Relatives - Same	9	30%
Relationship with Relatives - Worse	3	10%
Total	30	100%
Women who are dating	9	30%
Women who are not ready to date	21	70%
Total	30	100%
Women who socialize more after divorce	29	97%
Women who socialize less	1	3%
Total	30	100%

Social Support Networks

An opened ended question as well as a checklist asking what helped them the most to cope with difficulties during the divorce were used to identify the women's social support network. Overall, the women seek help from a wide range of support networks available to them and are pleased with the results they obtain. Their ability to be so flexible and resourceful is an important factor in their adaptability to the crisis of divorce and reflects strength within their interpersonal area of functioning. Surprisingly, all the women identified the social work services at MELS as one of the most helpful support networks for them during the divorce process. Typical responses in this category were:

- My counseling sessions because I was able to express my feelings. I could get angry, I could cry, just anything to get it off my chest.
- Well, believe it or not, meeting with the social worker at MELS. Counseling was the only escape I had. Talking to a friend too, but you tend to let up a little bit of that because you don't want to chase them away with all your stories and all your hardships.
- The first step I took is to come and speak to someone. That's when I came here to see a lawyer and to make my mind up. And start talking about it, involved with interacting with people. And the social work counseling was a great help.

In addition to the social work counseling, all of the women mentioned several sources of social support networks, such as support from family members, faith in God and their involvement in church activities, and supportive children. The following responses typify this pattern:

Believe in God and a Supportive Family

- God, my therapist, my family, my children. My brothers and sisters and father. Even my in-laws were supportive.
- I guess if I wasn't a praying person I don't know what would have happened. Well, the only thing I do is go to church and come back and take care of my grandchildren and that's it.
- My kids. They were always there. When I go home its good to know they are there. Coming here talking to the social worker helped me get over the anger. And I think God too, that helped a lot, just knowing that you can pray and that free my mind and helped me relax.
- My mother was my best friend throughout this. My lawyer helped me.

Some women (33%) also mentioned receiving support from friends, co-workers or supervisors, and participating in educational activities as helpful social networks for them.

One response summarizes this trend:

- My support system. Friends that I could call on and having co-workers I could talk to. Going back to school and meeting people with positive attitudes.

FINANCIAL ISSUES

For most of the women (57% of the total sample), the divorce created financial difficulties. After the divorce the women have to pay all the bills on their own with only one paycheck instead of two. Their incomes are low and a lot less than what their ex-spouses earn. In fact, most of the women only earn about one half of their ex-spouses salaries.

The belongings accumulated through years of hard work are often lost by many women during the separation. Because the law does not allow marital property to be divided until the resolution of a divorce, many women lose their apartments, furniture and other valuable belongings during the long wait, since most of them need to be safe from the violence they cannot afford to wait.

In contrast, 23% of the women reported their finances had improved after the divorce and for the remaining 20% the divorce did not affect their finances at all. It seems that the women's ability to continue working outside the home after the divorce and their improved job performance may account, in part, for their financial circumstances not being further restricted by the divorce. In addition, thirty-five percent of their ex-spouses were unemployed, therefore, for these women the divorce may not have affected their financial problems as much as it did for those who were used to having two paychecks. The women who faced greater financial problems after the divorce responded like this to the questions of the

financial issues:

- Restricted, it definitely did! Well, I have to do it all on my own now.
- Restricted because I have to pay for my furniture which is in storage plus I have to pay my rent.
- Now money is tight because he's not paying child support since last year.
- I basically function from paycheck to paycheck.

The majority of the women are one paycheck away from homelessness even though all of them work full-time. Because many face violence at home they had to move out and are now paying higher rents. Others may be temporarily living with relatives and have had to store their furniture which can be as costly as a month's rent in New York City.

- Moving out. That was difficult. I was angry. I was in a situation where I was forced to move out because he accumulated \$6,000.00 of rent arrears.
- I lost most of my furniture because when they evicted him I lost a whole living room set, all kitchen stuff, a washing machine, a freezer. So I really lost a lot.

Many women do not receive any child support payments. These women with children may have to wait several months before the court system can start sending regular child support payments to them because in most instances these are not given voluntarily by the ex-spouse. Of course, having to seek attorneys and going to court several times to obtain

child support means taking time off from work which in the short run is leaving the women with less money in their paychecks and perhaps adding problems on the job for more frequent absenteeism.

Only 40% of the women in the total sample reported receiving child support payments for their minor children. Of these women, seven percent (7%) receive less than \$200.00 per month; twenty percent (20 %) receive \$200.00 to \$300.00 per month; and only thirteen percent (13%) get \$400.00 or more per month. The median amount of monthly child support is \$200.00. These child support payments are very low considering that the monthly amount includes money for all the children of the marriage. Of the total study sample, 20% of the women have no children. Twenty percent (20%) have one child, 30% two children, 20% three children and 10% four to five children of the marriage. The median number of children is two. For some women, the financial problems are the most difficult consequence of the divorce for them.

-Going on welfare, being in a shelter. That has been, I think, the biggest thing that happened to me, that change there.

Table 19

Postdivorce Financial Issues	N	Percentage
More Financial Problems	17	57%
Same Amount of Financial Problems	6	20%
Less Financial Problems	7	23%
Total	30	100%

PARENTAL FUNCTIONING

Only ten percent (10%) of the women said they have difficulty disciplining the children without the help of the father. The majority of the women (40%), of those who have children, do not think the divorce affected their ability to care for the children. All of the women mentioned a number of things they are able to do for their children now that they could not do during the marriage. These things range from spending more time to spending more money. Overall, they feel closer and are able to communicate better with their children.

To sum up, almost all the women express satisfaction with their ability to care for their children. The women and children seem freer to relate more openly to each other, therefore improving the mother/child relationship. Surprisingly, many women are able to spend more time with their children after the divorce than during the marriage, even though they all work outside the home. With the absence of the physical or psychological abuse in the home the family feels closer and stronger. The women's parental functioning is adequate and they have been able to adapt to the demands of single-parenting very well. Their role as mothers offers them one of the greatest satisfactions in comparison to the different types of functioning explored in this study. Their responses were:

-It didn't affect me. I took care of my kids in my usual way.

- No, it hasn't. I'm still functional and all my efforts are basically put towards taking care of her.

Many women (30%) reported that the divorce has made it possible for them to take better care of their children. It seems that because the mothers and children are not dealing with tension at home anymore they have more time to talk to each other without the feelings of fear, sadness, and anger they had before the separation.

- The only thing it did to me is it makes me care more for them. It makes me have a better relationship with them. When I was with my husband we weren't so close as now. Now they are more open. When I was with my husband they used to cry a lot. Now they don't cry.

- It helped me to care more for my children. I work more and I give more. We talk and it helped me to deal with them. To encourage them for the future and they try to meet me. We are going to make it! Only ten percent (10%) of the women said they have difficulty disciplining the children without the help of the father.

- Raising my child. Well, he's not very supportive (her ex-husband) so I have had to be the one to lay down the law for my child and at the same time be the warm loving mother.

- He talked one time and they listened. I talk three times before they listen - that's how it's different. All of the women mentioned a number of things they are

able to do for their children now that they could not do during the marriage. Typical responses were:

- I spend more time with them. They get everything. I'm more happy so I can relate with them better. I can talk with my daughter about any and everything. We are like friends -we get along great. I think they are becoming spoiled now though.

- Well, we are able to talk more. We could be more affectionate now towards each other. At one time their father did not allow them to be affectionate with me. He felt they shouldn't be because boys should be strong and a strong man don't be all affectionate, or the old term, a momma's boy. I don't feel that way.

- Well, during the marriage I was limited. Now, if my kids want to do something I find a way to pay for it. My kids get a better fairness to do what they choose to do. If they want to learn to play drums, violin, piano, they can do it. They are learning this now. If the father found out, if he had to pay money he never encouraged them.

According to the women, the divorce has both negative and positive consequences on the children. Most of the negative consequences, however, occur during the pre-divorce, or during the divorce phases. Whereas the positive consequences are usually during the post-divorce phase. Some of the difficulties perceived by the mothers were as follows:

- For the children I think it was the separation and for hearing the fights and for bringing my daughter always in between whenever we were having a conversation. He didn't have any consideration for her.

- The time I got my husband arrested. My son really got upset behind that.

- For my daughter it's having mommy live in one place and daddy in another and having to be schlepped back and forth.

- Having to be without their father. Well they don't have a father no more because he doesn't visit them. It doesn't seem to bother them no more because it seems they are accustomed to me.

The postdivorce positive consequences were:

- My daughter is doing better in school. Her grades are up again. I could see she's not as nervous as before. She's not so isolated. She has friends and went out and got a job.

- They are happy that their father isn't there cursing, abusing and using threats at me.

- My daughter has been admitted to a good college.

- That they are free. That they're able to express themselves when they want to. They are just a lot more happier now.

- It's hard to say. The only thing is that she's not a witness anymore to those terrible fighting scenes. Those

are only memories for her now.

Only one woman could not describe any positive consequence of the divorce on her children. She said:

- I don't know. They are the ones who can answer that.

I haven't seen anything positive yet. I hope soon.

Table 20

Postdivorce Parental Functioning	N	Percentage
Difficulty Disciplining Children	3	10%
Same Ability to Care for Children	12	40%
Able to Take Better Care of Children	9	30%
Women with no Children	6	20%
Total	30	100%

OCCUPATIONAL FUNCTIONING

Perhaps the biggest similarity the African-American women in this sample have is that they are all working for the City of New York and are members of the largest labor union of the city, District Council 37 of the American Federation of State and County Municipal Employees (AFSCME), totalling approximately 130,000 members. Therefore, their ability to maintain work outside the home and whether the divorce affects their job performance is a very significant sub-category in their overall divorce adjustment.

The results of the data for the divorced women is presented below describing their own perceptions of their occupational functioning during the predivorce, divorce, and postdivorce experience.

Predivorce

All the women in the entire sample of thirty began to work outside the home before marriage. And all except a few returned to work within three or four months after the birth of each child. Sixty seven percent (67%) said their employment did not cause any problems in their marriage. Many women expressed intense feelings of resentment toward their ex-spouses as they described their predivorce occupational experience. For many women their spouses also abused them by controlling their finances thereby limiting the chances of escaping from the marriage. Another issue that was uncovered here was the connection between the violence and alcohol abuse

for some of the women's ex-spouses. Very few had mentioned any form of substance abuse as a problem that led to the divorce. However, it is obvious that this problem interfered enormously in the marital relationship and possibly in their spouses' ability to maintain work outside the home. This interesting pattern in the responses emerged:

- No, he wanted me to work! He was drinking and he wasn't giving me anything so I had to go to make ends meet.

- No, he loved that I work. I couldn't even stay home sick!

- No, 'cause when he was out of work if he needed any money for clothes or spending money I gave it to him.

- No, he was happy! He took all my money. I didn't even have a chance to cash my check.

The other thirty three percent (33%) of the women said their employment did cause problems between them and their spouse during the marriage. Several patterns were found in the data. For some, the problem began when the wife got a promotion or a higher paying job:

- Not at first, only when I got promoted, that seemed to bother him a little bit. For everything he brought it up - you think you're better than anybody because you're a supervisor.

- Yes it did in a way. He seemed to resent that I was working, especially when I started working for the city.

Even though he wasn't working it bothered him that I was. He told me sometimes he really resented it. At first he was working and making more money than me, but he couldn't hold a job because he dranked but wouldn't admit that. But then, they fired him and wouldn't take him back. He blamed the employers. Sometime it may be true that it was their fault. But then again, he had a very nasty mouth.

For other women the problem was that their spouses seemed to be jealous of the ability they had to socialize in their job site. This is also typical of the batterer's need to isolate the spouse from people who may offer some form of support. One response highlights this pattern:

- He would always say that this job is no good for you, or the people you work with are no good. He always made the decisions of what I do or don't do. The longest job I had was for six years because sometimes he would come to the job and harass me. Especially if the work environment consisted of a lot of men.

Still others had problems with their husbands about how the labor at home was going to be divided. This problem can be particularly difficult because in many instances both marital partners worked full-time. The limited amount of resources such as day care, after school programs and other social services available to working class families in large cities is continually shrinking and exacerbates marital

problems. Typical responses of the women were:

- Yes, only when I had to work weekends and he didn't want to stay home and baby sit.
- Yes, every job! He would first tell me that I would need to go out to work to help with the finances. Then, when I worked he would complain about the housework not being done, the children being neglected and that I was socializing more, that I was always tired. I never could please him!

Occupational Functioning During Divorce

Thirty-three percent (33%) of the women responded that their decision to divorce affected in a negative way their ability to work during the legal divorce phase. The women had difficulty concentrating at work due to the intensified feelings of fear, shame, sadness and anger experienced by them during this time of emotional crisis. It is during this phase that most of the couples separate and one of the spouses moves out of the marital home with or without the children. Therefore, the proximity to the physical separation and an increased risk for violence may account for the acute crisis which takes place in this phase, both at home and in the workplace.

- It did affect because I was out on a medical leave for a while. I couldn't concentrate. It was very stressful.
- The only thing it affected was my pride.

- My work production has gone down because I'm constantly thinking of what he's going to do. Is he going to come to my job and harass me? Or is he going to go on with his life and don't bother me at all?

In contrast, for another 33% of the women, the decision to divorce seemed to improve their ability to work. In fact, their employment provided an emotional outlet for them. It helped them increase their self-esteem and feelings of independence.

- The job really helped me. I looked forward to going to work. I didn't have time to think about anything else. I think if I didn't have the job I would've gone bananas.

- It makes me more determined to work because I have to support the kids and my kids depend on me.

The emotional and financial security the job offers working African-American women helps tremendously in adjusting to the marital separation.

- I was glad that I had a job because a lot of women may not have a job and then they have to find employment. So that helped a lot. I think too what helped was I had to be independent. I think that made me stronger. There was days when I felt I did lose concentration. I did try harder some days.

The other one third of the women in the study sample did not think that the divorce affected their ability to work. It is significant to note that all of the women maintained their

jobs during the divorce process. Only one woman asked for a temporary leave of absence to recover from a depression. She returned to work before the divorce was finalized. Even though some women had to go through great odds to maintain their ability to work because of their husband's harassment on the job, such as threatening phone calls during working hours, unexpected appearances during lunch hours, following them after work, and so on, the majority were able to function exceptionally well in their occupations during the divorce.

Post-Divorce Occupational Functioning

Most of the women (67%) reported improved post-divorce work performance. Of these women 20% had received promotions at work after the divorce. It seems that for many women, not having to deal with the physical, verbal and psychological abuse experienced during the marriage and during the second divorce phase helped them improve their ability to work. This information should be very important for employers since in the long range battered and divorced women can be very productive workers after the resolution of the divorce. Having Employee or Members Assistance Programs can be cost effective. Typical responses were:

- My performance has improved. I can think more clearly, I pay more attention to what I'm doing and my accuracy is better.
- I notice that I didn't feel that much tired and

stressful. I feel more relaxed and it wasn't a burden to get up to go to work. That stress and depression are over and it feels good now. I haven't got a promotion yet but I plan to take a test for a promotion soon.

- I got a promotion. I got a better evaluation.
- Well, I got an award for being an outstanding worker. No promotion, no money yet. Can't figure that one out yet.

Not having to deal with the physical, verbal and psychological abuse experienced during the marriage has helped them improve their ability to work. This last response summarizes the occupational area of functioning:

- In a sense it (the divorce) made my ability to work. I feel more good now about going to work. Could you believe he would find arguments and fights for me not to go to work? He'd say, oh you running to that white man's job! He wanted me to stay home too when he was off work.

Table 21

Occupational Functioning During Divorce Process

<u>During Divorce</u>		<u>Postdivorce</u>
Difficulty concentrating at Work	==>	Better Concentration at Work
Emotional Problems Affect Work Performance	==>	Improved Work Performance
Lower Work Production	==>	Increased Productivity
Less Accuracy	==>	Better Accuracy
No Job Promotions	==>	Some Job Promotions

EDUCATIONAL FUNCTIONING

For many of the women the divorce affected in a positive way their ability to complete the desired level of education. It is significant that fifteen women (50%) returned to school after the divorce. All of the women feel that the divorce helped them move ahead in the attainment of further education. In general the women are free to achieve their desired level of education during the postdivorce phase. This is an area of functioning that makes them feel proud and it does much to improve their self-esteem.

A few quotes illustrate this trend:

- Well I'll tell you something, most of the time it (the divorce) has made me do positive things. I realized I was free and I could do things and be what I perceived myself to be. I went back to school and I have maintained good grades in college.

- I always wanted an education. He just never wanted me to have one.

- The only thing it did it makes me determined to go to school. I'm already going to a community college. It affected me in a positive way. Now everything I do has a reason. When I was with him I used to do things to satisfy him and I felt negative. He made me feel negative when I was married to him.

By returning to school many of the women's self-esteem has improved. However, ten percent of the women had to stop

their education because of the lack of time or lack of child care. One response summarizes this other trend:

- I have to take care of the kids. Most of the time I have to work overtime to support my family. So it does affect me because I don't have the time.

Table 22

Postdivorce Educational Functioning

Returned to College	N	Percentage
Yes	15	50%
No	15	50%

SUMMARY

To sum up, the findings demonstrate a marked improvement from the predivorce to postdivorce phase of divorce adjustment in five areas of functioning: emotional, interpersonal, parental, occupational and educational. The financial problems faced by women during the postdivorce phase is the only area that has restricted instead of enhanced the women's ability to adapt to divorce. Low salaries and in many cases lack of child support or alimony contribute to the financial problems of the divorced families. Within the interpersonal functioning, one area which needs improvement is the women's opportunities for dating. Most women expressed a great distrust towards men in general, even those who have dated. However, most women have only been divorced for about one year, therefore, the fact that they are recent divorcees may affect their desire to date. All in all, the working women have not only been able to maintain their employment and all other important areas of functioning throughout their divorce process, they have improved significantly and have made great efforts to enhance their postdivorce adjustment.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL FACTORS AFFECTING POST-DIVORCE ADJUSTMENT

This research project has targeted African American working women who live and work in New York City. Because of the insufficient research on Black and working class divorced families in urban settings, of special interest is the socioeconomic class and cultural factors affecting this group's divorce adjustment. It is important to know how these factors affect the divorce experience in order to design client services that will benefit the population served.

Women Face Discrimination In Court

The divorced women were asked whether they faced discrimination in court to obtain their divorce. Three forms of discrimination were examined: socioeconomic class, race and gender. Thirty seven percent had not been to court. Out of the remaining forty three percent who had been to court for the divorce, half felt discriminated because of their socioeconomic class. Another twenty percent felt racial discrimination. A greater number (27%) perceived that the discrimination in court was due to their gender. Many expressed dissatisfaction with the legal system because it protects men more than women, especially black women. Additionally, the women felt humiliated having to go to court to obtain child support because they felt that their ex-spouses ought to have given money voluntarily. One woman reported the following:

- I felt like I didn't belong there (in court). To me it was very degrading. I felt like I know what I was doing wasn't wrong. But at the same time I felt like a nobody because he (ex-spouse) was giving only fifty dollars a week for the little boy and he knew I was paying school fees and \$50.00 wasn't enough. I just felt like I didn't belong there. And not only that, all the people that were there were people who were in need, that's what Black means, they were Black and Hispanic. But it seems there is no place in society because if I could take care of myself financially the way I like to I would not go there. Other women felt betrayed by their husbands and ashamed of having to resort to the courts in order to divorce.

- Yes, well I thought we could discuss this (the divorce). But as far as him doing this to me as a black woman and his wife and the mother of his two daughters. I felt very discriminated. Him being a Black man. He was so pro-black and had been active in the movement since the '60s and I was used by him. His was all a front. I've kept active in the movement for my people. Other women felt totally dissatisfied with the equitable distribution results, whether it was to divide their assets or resolve who was going to keep the house or condo.

- I think the financial part of it because I lost the house.

- The results of the divorce. For me to have to go seven years, go on the stand twice and all the nine yards. And for me to walk out feeling numb, disappointed and I really felt discriminated against (by the judge). I really felt it was a conspiracy and a BIG WASTE OF TIME.

According to one woman, going to court was the most difficult consequence she dealt with during the divorce process.

- Having to go in front of a judge to court. I never get to tell my story.

The Most Difficult Consequences of Divorce For African American Women

There were several types of responses given by the women to this question: As an African American woman, what have been the most difficult consequences of the divorce for you to deal with? The greatest difficulty mentioned was financial problems.

- That I had to pay my rent and what I was making wasn't enough. I couldn't keep my kids in college because with what I was making I couldn't even feed them.

Emotional problems were also mentioned.

- Being by myself. I was with somebody so long I didn't know how to act. Alone, alone, loneliness.

- Trying to regain my confidence in myself. Issues of child custody were also difficult consequences of the divorce for the women.

- My son deciding to live with his father.
- Worrying about him taking my baby because he would tell everybody he was going to take him. He doesn't really wanna see the kids, just to annoy me.

Divorce Affects Black Working Women In Unique Ways

Most of the women think that a divorce affects Black working women in unique ways. For instance, because they are employed, they worry about losing their jobs.

- It does! I put it on the back burner so that it wouldn't affect me on my place of employment because I knew I needed it to support my children.

Financial concerns and dealing with how society views Black divorced women are other unique ways that affect the women.

- Yes, because we don't get any money unless you married a rich one.
- Financially we're used to getting along with two incomes now. Whatever you're used to, his contribution you don't get now. You have to do it all by your lonesome. It doesn't matter whether you make \$15,000 and he made \$15,000 or \$40,000 and 40,000, you're losing one income.
- As a Black woman it's expected of a Black woman and her spouse not to get along or not to get married in respect to society. For me to have to say that I'm divorced it hurts because I didn't want it that way. And when I say

I'm divorced I get no "Oh I'm sorry," its like "so what."
 - In a way it will if she doesn't exercise her rights as far as alimony and equitable distribution. If not, she'll be taking on a greater responsibility than she will really be prepared to handle, especially if there's children in the home. There's a breakdown in the Black family and its affecting our children. A lot of Black women may not admit it but it's tearing us all.

Advice To Other African American Women Who Are Thinking About A Divorce

The women were asked what they would tell other African American women who are thinking about a divorce. The responses ranged from not wanting to give any advice to saying that a divorce improves self-esteem. Suggestions for getting professional help and saving money were the most frequent. The following responses cover the different advises that were given:

- Well I don't really try to give too much advice. I wouldn't give advice because the situation wouldn't be the same. Because what worked for me doesn't have to necessarily work for somebody else and God, I feel so good I don't want them to blame me if they divorce and don't feel as good as me.
- If you know in your heart that it's not going to work, go for it because you'll feel good about yourself.
- Well I would tell them not to get a divorce for any

little thing. But if there was abuse whether it was the children or the women, or the man is not supporting the wife it's really something to think about, especially if the man is an alcoholic. The situation may not resolve.

- I would say to them don't stay married so long like I did for 21 years. Nobody is worth sacrificing your health for.

- If you really think you want a divorce go ahead and find one. It makes you a better person, a more independent person and a happier person.

- If you are considering it save your money. Have a nest egg. Save your money so you have some when you need it.

- Get counseling, whether or not they want or not want the divorce. And believe in yourself and if you're not working get yourself a job. Get involved in things that will help you get rid of the lonesome time. And of course, if you want to get back to school go right ahead.

- Be strong, be courageous. It takes a lot of courage. Have the strength to endure, I should say, patience most of all.

None of the women recommended not to get divorced. On the contrary, there was a lot of encouragement to go ahead with the divorce because it makes one more independent and it frees women from an unhappy marriage. It is obvious by the responses that the women feel good about their own decision to divorce.

SUPPORTIVE NETWORKS

To explore the networks that were most helpful to the women during the divorce an open-ended question and then a checklist were used to obtain the results. Several networks were mentioned in response to the open-ended question. Sixty percent of the women said that the most helpful network was the social work services at MELS. Support from family was the most helpful network for 17% of the women. For another ten percent, support from friends helped them cope during the divorce. The fourth network mentioned was religion.

The women reported practicing a wide range of religions. Seventeen percent were Catholic, 17% Baptist and another 17% Pentecostal. Ten percent were Protestant, 10% Methodist, and 10%Episcopalian. Two were Jehova Witnesses and one Muslim.

The responses from the checklist differed somewhat from the open-ended God, not social work services, gave these women the emotional support they needed. Sixty percent checked their belief in God as most helpful. Twenty-seven percent reported the social work services at MELS as the most helpful. The remaining thirteen percent had a combination of networks such as family, friends and minister.

Table 23**Supportive Social Support Networks During Divorce**

	N	Percentage

Social Work Service at MELS	17	60%
Family and Children	6	17%
Faith in God	4	13%
Friends and Co-workers	3	10%

Total	30	100%

SUMMARY

To sum up, socioeconomic class and cultural factors do affect the women's divorce adjustment. One might assume that the women do not face financial problems because all of them work outside the home. However, even though the women have worked all of their adult lives their earnings are low and in many cases not enough to support the family. Yet, precisely because they are full-time workers most don't receive alimony payments in spite of the fact that forty percent of the women had been married for over twenty years and felt entitled to receive an adequate financial settlement out of the divorce.

Unlike their white counterparts, older African American women are not long-time homemakers needing to come into the labor market after a divorce. African American women continue to have a higher rate of labor force participation than white women. However, African American women worry about losing their job during the divorce because they have to take time off from work to go to court or because they suffer from lack of concentration or other emotional problems that affect their work performance. It has been said that older women face greater difficulties following a divorce than younger women. However, for African American working women the results seem to be different. Younger African American women suffer more stresses from the divorce and more financial difficulties because they earn less income and, in most cases, they have custody of the children but not enough child support. One of

the reasons for the lack of child support is because African American men are still facing severe barriers to the world of work. Thirty-five percent of the women's ex-spouses in this sample were unemployed. In addition, the re-marriage rate for African American women is less than for white. Therefore, it is more likely that young African American divorced women with children will have to support themselves with only one paycheck. In addition to the financial problems, the women have no partner to share responsibilities at home.

According to the women's perception, the cultural factors that affected post-divorce adjustment for them were a combination of a strong religious orientation, close relationships with family, friends and ministers. All these supportive networks were identified by the women as being helpful to them during the divorce crisis. Although not specifically mentioned by the women, their strong achievement orientation particularly their educational aspirations, 50% of the women returned to college, and their occupational functioning, many reported increased work performance and job promotions, also affect their divorce adjustment in a positive way. Furthermore, the women's openness to receiving the professional social work services offered by their labor union is another factor that enabled them to adjust well to the divorce process. In fact, the majority of the women (60%) reported that the social work service at MELS was the most helpful network they had during the divorce.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SOCIAL WORK SERVICES AT MELS

Any study of social work services must take into account the characteristics of those services, otherwise it does little good to state that the service has better or worse results, if it is not specified. The task-centered approach developed by William Reid and Laura Epstein (Reid & Epstein, 1972) is the practice approach utilized by social workers to assist union members during their divorce process.

Task-centered casework is a time-limited approach focusing on helping clients to deal with problems of living. The problems may be individual as well as social. The task-centered approach is a planned short-term casework approach in which the worker and client agree to meet for a limited number of sessions to work on specific goals discussed during the initial interview. In the task-centered approach, a high value is placed on the importance of research-based practice.

Therapeutic strategies to assist clients in adjusting to divorce using the task-centered approach focus on the present and key aspect of the client's problem. Assessment and engagement of the client must be quick because of the time limiting nature of treatment.

The task-centered approach utilized in MELS capitalizes on the member's ego strengths and their potential for independent problem-solving. The social worker assists members in attaining a sense of empowerment by emphasizing

their healthy areas of functioning and their potential strengths.

CASE ILLUSTRATION

Mary was a 44 year-old African American woman who had been married for 21 years. She had been employed as a secretary for about ten years. Her 46 year-old husband, Sam, was a police officer. Mary and Sam had known each other since their late teenage years. They had three children ages 11, 17 and 19. Sam began physically abusing Mary during her last pregnancy, and the violence had increased in frequency and severity over the years. Although Mary had made several attempts to leave Sam, she had taken him back each time.

Mary came to MELS seeking a divorce after one of Sam's violent rages, when the two oldest children had also become the target of his violence. During the initial legal interview the lawyer suggested social work counseling to Mary, to which she agreed.

The social worker and Mary agreed to meet for eight sessions of divorce counseling. The first three sessions would include the three children and the last five would be for individual counseling for herself. During the initial interview Mary began exploring her feelings about herself, her family, and her relationship with her husband, and identified the problems she wanted help with. Mary and the social worker agreed on the following goals to be worked on within the eight sessions: finding temporary shelter for Mary and her children

because she did not feel safe to return to her home during the present crisis, trying to obtain a job transfer to ensure safety from her husband who in the past had gone to her place of employment threatening to hurt her, obtaining financial assistance from a DC 37 union fund, and a referral to a short-term women's divorce group led by the same social worker and held at the union to increase assertiveness, self-esteem and alleviate her isolation during this emotional process. The loss of Mary's self-esteem due in part to her husband's abusive behavior towards her also raised issues for Mary about her personal adequacy, causing her to question her ability to take care of herself. The social worker recognized the client's inner resources, explored all the viable choices available to her and the positive and negative consequences of those choices; helped the client gain some insight of her behavior; and actively reinforce the client's past attempts in her efforts to separate from the destructive marital relationship.

The social worker and client's task were to collaborate with the client's union representative towards helping the client obtain a job transfer to another city department. The union representative was able to negotiate the transfer by speaking to the managerial staff where the client was employed and explained the need for an immediate transfer due to the nature of the crisis the client was facing. The client was able to move temporarily with her children to a safe home for

battered women. The safe homes project is a service provided by the union in conjunction with Victim Services Agency which involves using union members' homes who have volunteered to participate in this project and have been pre-screened to provide temporary shelter to members and their children. The client was also able to receive some money from a fund the union implemented to assist members who are in a financial crisis. This money alleviated some of the client's financial difficulties until she was able to begin receiving child support. The client also attended a number of group sessions and was emotionally supported by other women in the group. Her youngest child was able to attend a group offered by a social work student to children of victims of domestic violence during the same time that his mother was in the divorce group. The two oldest were also referred to an adolescent center for counseling and preparation for a high school equivalency diploma.

By the end of the eight social work counseling sessions the client's appearance had improved. Her self-esteem had improved as she became more assertive and felt more in control of her life. She was happy in her new work site and was taking some courses offered in the union's education department to improve her clerical skills. She was beginning to establish new relationships at work and in school. She reported that her relationship with her children had also improved as they were able to speak more freely. She and her

children were able to return to their home because the client obtained legal exclusive possession of the marital apartment. The divorce papers had been served to her husband and a court date was pending.

Throughout this time the social worker and lawyer worked closely together to assist the client. It is crucial for a social worker in a legal setting to have a strong sense of professional identity because the values and ethics of the legal and social work professions differ and thus may conflict with each other. In the above case, the client was ready separate from her husband and start legal action. If the client would have been more ambivalent, the focus of the social work service would certainly have been different. In such case, the social worker would have collaborated with the lawyer asking for more time to leave the legal case opened and inactive in order to allow the client time to make a decision. The social worker would provide supportive counseling allowing the client to ventilate and explore her ambivalent feelings while remaining non-judgmental and objective.

SOCIAL WORK SERVICES AT MELS AND CLIENT SATISFACTION

The majority of the clients (73%) received individual short-term counseling. Seventeen percent received individual counseling for themselves and their children. The remaining ten percent had both individual and group services. In some cases the clients were also given financial assistance to help them pay for part of the \$274.00 needed for the court fees in order to initiate a divorce.

The number of years the clients first came to MELS ranged from one to seven at the time they were interviewed for this study. The mean number of years was 2.5 and 67% had been to MELS two years or less.

All of the clients (100%) said the social work services were helpful. According to the clients perception, the social work services helped in numerous ways. The clients felt they could trust their social worker. They received help with feelings of ambivalence, anger, and guilt. In addition to the emotional support the clients improved their self-esteem. In general, the social work services helped clients get through the divorce process. The social work services helped with divorce in 28 out of 30 cases (93%). The remaining seven percent responded that they were helped with another problem which in both cases was chemical dependency. All the clients felt satisfied with the social work services. The counseling ranged from three to twenty-one sessions. The mean was twelve sessions. The length of time of social work service was from

two to twenty months with the mean at 8.4 months. Ninety percent of the clients reported being very satisfied with the amount of social work services received. The other ten percent were satisfied but wanted more time which is not necessarily a negative experience if they want to prolong it. All the clients said if they return to MELS and needed social work services they would see the social worker again. In addition, one hundred percent expressed that it is good that the union offers the legal/social work program as part of their benefits package. The most important part of the services for 57% of the women was the free legal service. The other 43% of the clients felt that the opportunity to receive social work services was the most important part of this benefit. The findings are reported below for the type of social work services the clients had at MELS.

Clients Who Received Individual Services

-Oh yes. It helped build me as far as my self-esteem. And it helped me see things from a different perspective. The social worker helped me see that it wasn't all my fault without really taking any sides.

- It led me to get an order of protection. He (the social worker) was very supportive and he showed interest in me.

- Yes, first of all it was reassurance through the fact that I'm not the first person going through this. Other people do. Being assured, social worker understood what

I was feeling. They even cried with me. I don't think I would have gone through the divorce without counseling. I would have given up and gone off the deep end.

- It helped in a sense that I knew I had someone to talk to outside my family and friends.

- Yes, it made me see more clear and face my problem. Because at one point I just felt like giving up. I was going to stab him (husband) because he was harassing me. I knew I could talk to somebody who was listening and give me a positive outlook.

Clients Who Received Individual And Group Services

These clients also expressed feeling helped. The group enabled the clients to share with other women who had similar experiences which helped them feel less isolated.

- Yes, it made me see that my problems were minute compared to others because there were a lot of physically battered women and sometimes I just sat there with my mouth opened. You could express your opinions and your emotions with other women who were also going through a divorce.

- Yeah, because it helped me to talk about it openly and to share with other people and to know from other persons that I'm not the only one going through this condition ... this problem.

There was one client who felt individual services helped more than the group.

- It was helpful but I didn't get as much from group as I did from individual counseling.

Clients Who Received Individual And Children's Services

Some clients ask the social workers at MELS for counseling services for their children. When the issues of custody or visitation cannot be worked out by an agreement between lawyers, MELS' attorney ask the social worker for a custody evaluation. Besides meeting with the client and her children, a home visit is usually done to determine if the client has sufficient parenting skills to obtain sole custody. The following responses are from those clients who received both individual short-term therapy for themselves and for their children at MELS.

- He liked the social worker so much he still ask me for her.

-It helped them to understand why their father did not visit them and how they could deal with themselves and others.

- That helped too because he (son) started opening up and speaking more than he used to. Apparently, the social work services helped the mother/child relationship.

One hundred percent of the clients felt the social worker understood their situation because the worker was trustworthy, compassionate and professional. They responded:

- The social worker sure made me feel that she understood. She is the type of person that has patience.

She talked to me. I didn't feel she was analyzing me. She made me feel comfortable talking with her and that means a lot to me.

- She understood because of the questions that she asked. Her attitude and in general the whole ... very compassionate, very professional.

- Yes she understood my situation. Sometimes its not always what people say. I could tell the social worker's heart was really in it.

When asked what was the most helpful thing the social worker did, there were five different answers each with twenty percent (five cases). Social worker:

- (1) was caring.
- (2) listened.
- (3) helped improve client's self-esteem.
- (4) offered helpful feedback.
- (5) encouraged client to talk.

The following quotes express how clients felt understood.

- Listen that's the truth. Listen and let me cry my heart out the way I wanted to.

- Provided me with an option of staying in the relationship or ending the relationship.

- Convinced me that I ... when I came here I didn't think my cocaine use was a problem. Social worker convinced me to go to the rehab place and the more I talked to her what was happening to me financially, emotionally, in my

marriage, the more she pointed out to me and convinced me that the coke use was a contribution and the reason for the problems. I couldn't compromise. I blamed everything on my husband because I was too high to see that I wasn't responding right.

Table 24**Number of Years Clients First Came to MELS**

Years	Frequency	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
1	12	40.0	40.0
2 - 3	10	33.3	73.3
4 - 5	6	20.0	93.3
7	2	6.7	100.0
Total	30	100.0	

Table 25**Number of Sessions Clients Met with Social Worker**

Sessions	Frequency	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
3 - 5	5	16.7	16.7
6 - 10	6	20.0	36.7
11 - 15	12	40.0	76.7
16 - 21	7	23.3	100.0
Total	30	100.0	
Mean 11.7	Median 12.0		
Range 18.0	Mode 12.0		

Table 26**Duration of Social Work Services at MELS**

Months	Frequency	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
2 - 6	11	36.7	36.7
7 - 11	12	40.0	76.7
12 - 20	7	23.3	100.0
Total	30	100.0	

ADDITIONAL TYPES OF LEGAL HELP

Fifty percent of the clients had additional types of legal cases as a result of the divorce. Of those clients, 23% had housing or debt and bankruptcy cases. Twenty percent had family law cases for child support or orders of protection. The other seven percent had both housing and family cases. The high amount of clients needing legal assistance demonstrates the value of the free legal services. Most of the clients cannot afford legal services outside the union program. Fortunately the MELS program helps clients maintain their apartments and resolve both financial and family problems which in most cases are the result of the marital separation or divorce. Therefore, the legal/social work program helps clients adapt better to the post-divorce phase.

CHAPTER 5**CONCLUSION****SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of divorce on working-class African American women and the degree to which the provision of social work services can ameliorate divorce's negative effects. The sample population selected for this study were African American working women, members of District Council 37, AFSCME, labor union. The women received both legal and social work services at the Municipal Employees Legal Services Plan (MELS) to obtain a divorce. The women are city workers who had available to them a prepaid legal/social work program, MELS, through which they were entitled to a variety of legal and social services.

A total of 30 women volunteered to participate in the study. The data gathering technique used was one hour face-to-face interviews with each of the participants. The interviews explored the divorce experiences from the perspectives of working-class African American women. In order to generate a description of divorce experiences of African American working women the interviews focused on the women's ability to adapt to divorce on six areas of functioning: emotional, interpersonal, financial, parental, occupational, and educational. Since the study also has a longitudinal aspect, the interview questions gathered information on the three phases of the divorce process: the predivorce, divorce,

and postdivorce.

TYPES OF CASES

In order to describe the depth of problems experienced by the clients, several types of cases were identified based upon the main reasons for the divorce. The four main types of problems that led to divorce for the clients studied were: (1) family violence (40%) 12 cases, (2) extra marital affairs (33%) 10 cases, (3) alcohol or drug addiction of clients or spouses (17%) five cases, (4) financial difficulties during marriage (10%) three cases.

These findings suggest that there was a high level of conflict and hostility in the predivorce phase for most couples.

EMOTIONAL FUNCTIONING

The responses to the emotional issues were often extreme. Typical responses during the predivorce phase were feelings of isolation, low self-esteem, feelings of insecurity, fear of spouse, and ambivalence about starting legal action for a divorce.

In the second phase, during divorce, most of the same feelings were intensified. For instance, terrified was used to express feelings of fear. Many women had intense feelings of ambivalence and fear of living alone. Feelings of anger and loss which were not mentioned by the women during the predivorce phase were key feelings described in this second

phase. Many women were in acute crisis during this time as a result of the proximity to the actual marital separation. It was also at this time that legal action for the divorce was initiated. The results indicate that during this phase the women face the greatest risk of being battered.

For most women the feelings during the postdivorce phase showed a great improvement. Typical responses were feelings of happiness, freedom, and increased self-esteem. A few women expressed realistic sadness about their children growing up without their father at home. However, everyone had accepted the divorce by this phase as the necessary thing to do. Most of the feelings of fear, anger, low self-esteem, depression and anxiety were diminished by the postdivorce phase. In fact, it seemed most women were functioning better emotionally in the postdivorce phase than during the predivorce phase. Overall, the women's postdivorce adjustment to the emotional area of functioning was excellent.

INTERPERSONAL FUNCTIONING

Four different areas of interpersonal functioning were explored: the women's relationship with relatives, opportunities for dating, ability to socialize and social support networks. Most women felt they got closer to their family by the postdivorce phase. Many women described their parents, brothers, sisters and even their in-laws as very supportive emotionally and in some cases they helped

financially. The second trend found that for some women the relationships with relatives had not changed during the divorce process. For a few clients, the relationships with their relatives had worsened by the postdivorce phase.

Most of the women reported having opportunities for dating but not feeling ready to start dating yet. Overall, the women showed greater difficulty in adjusting to dating than to the other subcategories, such as relationship with relatives and ability to socialize, that are included in the interpersonal area of functioning. It seemed that part of the reason was the women's distrust of men.

Those women who dated more often expressed a wide variety of experiences. The responses varied from being turned off from dating to dating being the best thing that had ever happened. In spite of the varied experiences the women have had dating, a common theme for almost all of them was a lack of trust towards men.

The women's ability to socialize increased after the divorce in all but one case. For this woman, the need to have child care restricted her ability to socialize more.

However, almost all of the women socialize much more than they did when they were married. Many women are able to invite family and friends to their house for company. They were unable to have company or to visit anyone due to their husband's disapproval.

In general, the women feel free to socialize more during

the postdivorce phase. They are able to do what they want because their husbands can no longer control their behavior or isolate them from friends and family. Given the great social restrictions the women had to face during their marriage it is remarkable how well they adjusted to this interpersonal area of functioning. It was surprising to find only one woman expressing difficulty to obtain child support. It may be that their relatives help with child care since many women responded they got closer to their family after the divorce.

Social Support Network

The women were asked what social support networks helped them the most to cope with difficulties during the divorce process. An important finding was that most of the women defined the social work counseling at MELS as the most helpful network to them. They valued the opportunity to talk to a professional about the divorce. A typical response was: "Well, believe it or not, meeting with the social worker at MELS. Counseling was the only escape I had. Talking to a friend too, but you tend to let up a little bit of that because you don't want to chase them away with all your stories and all your hardships."

Overall, the women had a wide range of support networks which included family, friends, co-workers, faith in God and participation in church activities. The women's resourcefulness is a strength which enabled them not only to

cope with the divorce but to further improve and develop their interpersonal functioning throughout the three phases of the divorce process.

FINANCIAL ISSUES

For most of the women (57% of the total sample), the divorce created financial difficulties. They have to pay all the bills on their own now with only one paycheck instead of two. Many of their incomes are low and a lot less than what their ex-spouses earn. The figures will be given later in the discussion about socioeconomic factors that affect divorce adjustment.

Another important reason for the postdivorce financial problems is that half of the women with children were not receiving any child support payments. Some women had to move in with relatives until they are able to live on their own.

For some women, the financial problems are the most difficult consequences of the divorce. The belongings accumulated through years of hard work are lost by many during the separation. Many women lose their apartments, furniture and other valuable belongings because they need to abandon the house in order to be safe from the violence. One response captures the crises the women face: "Going on welfare, being in a shelter. That has been, I think, the biggest thing that happened to me, that change there."

Surprisingly, for almost half of the women in the study

the divorce did not restrict their finances. In fact, for 23% of the women the financial circumstances improved from the predivorce to the postdivorce phase. Many of these women had been married to men who were unemployed for long lengths of time. Others received job promotions raising their salaries during the postdivorce phase.

PARENTAL FUNCTIONING

Many women (30%) reported that the divorce made it possible for them to take better care of their children. The findings indicate that only ten percent (10%) of the women said they have difficulty disciplining the children without the help of the father. All of the women mentioned a number of things they are able to do for their children after the divorce that they could not do during the marriage. These things range from spending more time to spending more money. Overall, during the postdivorce phase the women are able to get closer and communicate better with their children.

Many of the women measure their parental functioning by how well their children have adjusted to the divorce. The women reported that their children's school performance improved, some entered college or got jobs. Others said their children feel happier, are less isolated from friends, are less nervous, and are freer to communicate more openly.

Having to adjust to single-parenting is a very difficult transition. One of the negative consequences of the divorce that affects parenting was expressed by a few women concerned

about their children growing up without their father. One woman said: "Having to be without their father. Well they don't have a father no more because he doesn't visit them. It doesn't seem to bother them no more because it seems they are accustomed to me." On the other hand, another woman said: "It's hard to say. The only thing is that she's not a witness anymore to those terrible fighting scenes. Those are only memories for her now." To sum up, almost all the women expressed satisfaction with their ability to care for their children during the postdivorce phase. In fact, many said the divorce helped improve their relationship with their children and as a result the family feels closer and stronger.

OCCUPATIONAL FUNCTIONING

One of the biggest similarities the African American women in this study had was that they were all working for the city of New York. Therefore, their ability to maintain work outside the home and whether the divorce affected their job performance made the occupational area of functioning a significant factor in their overall divorce adjustment.

The results indicate that thirty-three percent (33%) of the women felt their decision to divorce affected, in a negative way, their ability to work during the divorce phase. The women had difficulty concentrating at work and their work productivity decreased because of the intensified feelings of fear, shame, sadness and anger experienced by them during this

time of emotional crisis. The proximity to the marital separation, the initiation of the legal divorce and an increased risk for violence during this phase makes life difficult both at home and in the workplace.

Surprisingly, for another 33% of the women, the decision to divorce seemed to improve their ability to work. Their responses indicated that their employment provided an emotional outlet for them which helped them increase their self-esteem and feelings of independence. The emotional and financial security the job offered working African American women helped them adjust better to the divorce.

The remaining one third of the sample did not think the divorce affected their ability to work. A significant finding was that all of the women maintained their jobs during the divorce process.

By the postdivorce phase, most of the women (67%) reported improved work performance. Of these women, 20% had received promotions at work after the divorce.

Many women said that since the stress and depression during the divorce phase were over they could now function better at work because they could think more clearly, concentrate better, and have better accuracy. Overall, the findings indicate marked improvement in the women's postdivorce occupational functioning.

EDUCATIONAL FUNCTIONING

For many of the women the divorce affected in a positive way their ability to complete the desired level of education. Fifteen women (50%) of the total sample returned to school after the divorce. This is an incredibly high rate. Most of the women are enrolled in college courses to complete their bachelor's degree. Many of them had to quit college during their marriage because their husbands discouraged them from going. One woman's response illustrates this finding: "I always wanted an education. He just never wanted me to have one."

Only ten percent of the women had to stop their education during the postdivorce phase because of a lack of time or lack of child support. In general the women feel free to pursue their desired level of education during the postdivorce phase. This area of functioning does much to help increase their self-esteem.

POSTDIVORCE ADJUSTMENT

In this study postdivorce adjustment was seen as occurring with regard to the client's ability to adapt to the impact of divorce on various areas of functioning. The interview was designed to tap those areas which were seen as most central to the particular women who took part in this research.

To sum up, the findings demonstrate a marked improvement

from the predivorce to postdivorce phase of divorce adjustment in five areas of functioning: emotional, interpersonal, parental, occupational and educational. The financial problems faced by African American women during the postdivorce phase is the only area that has inhibited instead of enhanced the women's ability to adapt to divorce. Low salaries and in many cases lack of child support or alimony contribute to the financial problems of the divorced families. Within the interpersonal functioning, one area which needs improvement is the women's opportunities for dating. Most women expressed a great distrust towards men in general, even those who have dated. However, most women have only been divorced for about one year, therefore, the fact that they are recent divorcees may affect their desire to date. All in all, the African American working women who participated in this study have not only been able to maintain their employment and all other important areas of personal functioning throughout their divorce process, but they have improved significantly and have made great efforts to enhance their postdivorce adjustment.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL FACTORS AFFECTING POST-DIVORCE ADJUSTMENT

A major objective of this study was to investigate the relationship of socio-economic and cultural factors to post-divorce adjustment of African American working women.

Therefore, this study targeted African American working women who live and work in New York City. Because of the insufficient research on Black and working class divorced families in urban settings, of special interest is the socioeconomic class and cultural factors affecting this sample's divorce adjustment. We need to know how these factors affect the divorce experience in order to improve services for this client population.

CLIENT'S CHARACTERISTICS

A questionnaire was used to obtain demographic data and family characteristics of clients (see Appendix B). There were several interesting patterns reported by the clients in the questionnaires. The clients were generally African American women in their late - thirties who were employed as clerical workers earning approximately \$15,000 to \$25,000 per year. Most of the clients had a high school diploma and a few years of college. Eighty percent of the clients had children. The majority had about two children of the marriage. Although 90% of the women had sole custody of the children only half received child support payments. Generally, the clients had been married for about fourteen years. About three quarters of the clients had been divorced for one year at the time they were interviewed for this study. Most of the women (83%) lived alone or with their children and none were remarried.

The ex-spouses were African American men in their

late-thirties who were usually employed as blue collar workers. Their earnings were about \$30,000 to \$50,000 per year, much more than the women, even though their level of education was lower with less than a quarter having some college. On the other hand, thirty-five percent were unemployed. In contrast to the women's postdivorce living arrangement, only twenty percent of the men lived alone. Most lived with another woman and 13% were remarried.

Given the women's low incomes and the fact that many are women head of households who do not receive any child support, most face financial difficulties after the divorce. This is in spite of the fact that they all work full-time outside the home. It seems that for Black working women financial problems are not the cause of the divorce but rather one of its consequences.

Discrimination in the Workplace

The interview explored the clients' perceptions of being discriminated at work. Only 10% of the women felt they had been racially discriminated on the job. However, 23% of the women reported their ex-spouses had suffered racial discrimination in their place of employment. Given the high unemployment rate of the ex-spouses (35%), racial discrimination may well be part of the unemployment problem.

Court Experiences

The divorced women were asked whether they faced discrimination in court to obtain their divorce. Three forms of discrimination were examined: socioeconomic class, race and gender. The women considered their socioeconomic class to be the least form of discrimination they experienced. Only 13% of the women who had been in court reported class discrimination. Another twenty percent felt racial discrimination. A greater number (27%) experienced gender discrimination in court. Many expressed dissatisfaction with the legal system because it protects men more than women, especially black women. In general, some women experienced feelings of shame and humiliation in court and were angry with the outcome of the financial aspect of the divorce settlement.

The Most Difficult Consequences of Divorce For African American Women

The responses given by the women seemed like typical responses of any woman, not necessarily African American. The greatest difficulty perceived by the women was financial problems, followed by emotional problems such as feelings of loneliness and low self-esteem. Issues of child custody were also difficult consequences of the divorce for some women whose children decided to live with their father, or in cases where the ex-spouses threatened to take custody away from the clients.

Divorce Affects Black Working Women In Unique Ways

Most of the women think that a divorce affects Black working women in unique ways. For instance, because they are employed, they worry about losing their jobs. They know that as Black women it will be harder for them to get a job. Financial concerns such as going from a two paycheck to a one paycheck household and having to deal with low incomes were also reported to be ways a divorce affects Black working women in unique ways.

The women also see divorce in broader terms, therefore, they are profoundly affected by how society views Black divorced women. The following two statements illustrate this point:

- As a Black woman, it's expected of a Black woman and her spouse not to get along or not to get married in respect to society. For me to have to say that I'm divorced it hurts because I didn't want it that way. And when I say I'm divorced I get no "Oh, I'm sorry," its like "so what."
- There's a breakdown in the Black family and its affecting our children. A lot of Black women may not admit it but it's tearing us all.

Advice To Other African American Women Who Are Thinking About A Divorce

The responses ranged from not wanting to give any advice to saying, "Go for it because you'll feel good about yourself."

Suggestions for getting professional counseling and saving money were the most frequent advises. In general, there was a lot of encouragement to go ahead with the divorce because it increases one's self-esteem and independence, as well as it frees a woman from an unhappy marriage.

Supportive Cultural Networks

To sum up, socioeconomic class and cultural factors do affect African American women's divorce adjustment. For these families, the consequences of divorce are usually compounded by problems of discrimination and poverty.

According to the women's perception, the cultural networks that affected a positive postdivorce adjustment were a combination of a strong religious orientation, especially their believe in God, close relationships with family, friends and ministers.

Other cultural factors that positively affected the women's postdivorce adjustment was their strong achievement orientation, particularly their educational aspirations, 50% returned to college, and their occupational functioning.

Moreover, the women identified the social work services received at MELS as the most helpful social support network during the divorce process. Therefore, it is very likely, that the women's openness to professional counseling offered by their labor union also enabled them to adjust better to the divorce.

SOCIAL WORK SERVICES AT MELS AND CLIENT SATISFACTION

Besides exploring the effect of divorce on African American working-class women, an important area of investigation of this study concerned the social work services offered to divorcing African American working women at MELS and their satisfaction with these services.

The social work practice approach at MELS is a planned short-term treatment service. The findings indicate, that generally, the clients were in counseling for about twelve sessions. The length of time of social work services was approximately eight months. Typically, appointments were scheduled twice per month. Most of the clients were interviewed for this study two years after they first came to MELS.

The types of social work services varied. Most of the clients (73%) received individual short-term counseling. Seventeen percent received individual short-term counseling for themselves and their children. The other ten percent had both individual and group short-term services.

The clients all felt satisfied with the social work services. Ninety percent were very satisfied with the amount of social work services received. The other ten percent were satisfied but wanted more time which was not necessarily a negative response if they expressed desiring to prolong the services.

All of the clients (100%) reported the social work services

were helpful. According to the clients' perception, the social work services helped in numerous ways such as in alleviating feelings of ambivalence, anger and guilt. The clients felt they improved their self-esteem and received emotional support to help them get through the divorce process. A typical response was: "I don't think I would have gone through the divorce without counseling. I would have given up and gone off the deep end."

In addition, one hundred percent of the clients felt the social worker understood their situation because the worker was perceived to be trustworthy, compassionate and professional.

The clients identified the following five most helpful things the social worker did: (1)was caring. (2)listened. (3)helped improve client's self-esteem. (4)offered helpful feedback. (5)encouraged client to talk.

To sum up, the responses were all extremely positive of the social work services. All the clients said if they return to MELS and needed social work services they would see a social worker again. Furthermore, all the clients felt it was good of the union to offer the legal/social work program as part of the benefits package. For 57% of the clients, the most important part of the services was receiving free legal service. The other 43% of the clients felt that the opportunity to receive social work services was the most important part of this benefit.

ADDITIONAL TYPES OF LEGAL CASES

Another objective of this study was to explore the emergence of additional legal problems. The findings indicate that a very high number of clients (50%) had additional types of legal cases as a result of the divorce. Of those clients, 23% had housing cases for non-payment of rent or debt and bankruptcy cases. Twenty percent had family law cases for child support or orders of protection. Another seven percent had both housing and family court cases.

The clients who utilize the services available in this innovative legal/social work program in a union setting, MELS, are able to mediate the negative consequences of divorce. If it had not been for this program, most of the clients could not have afforded the legal or social work services they needed.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS IN RELATION TO THE DIVORCE LITERATURE

Although socially, divorce is not considered a positive life event in most societies, professionals working with divorced individuals have found that divorce may be an opportunity for positive personal growth (Krantzler, 1974). Similarly to Krantzler's conclusions, this study found that for African American working women, divorce had a positive outcome. However, it is also true, that although there is a lot to gain from a divorce, it is one of the most difficult crises faced by individuals during their adulthood.

In discussing the consequences of divorce, the influence of the cultural and community context affects the "self" of divorcing persons. Wallerstein & Kelly's (1980) study, which had a sample of upper middle class women, found the divorce experience affected the women's identity. Not only does one lose a spouse in divorce, but also a certain degree of one's identity or "self," as society has defined it. The separation from a spouse, the spouse's family, married friends, sometimes one's children, and in many instances, one's own home creates isolation and an identity crisis. In fact, other studies have found that one of the most difficult tasks faced by divorcing persons is the identity crisis (Wiseman, 1975).

In spite of the increasing acceptance of divorce in our society, much stigma remains which labels divorced families as "broken" or as failures. According to Goffman (1959), the stigmatized person holds the same beliefs about identity that we do. Shame becomes a central issue for stigmatized persons. For divorced African American working women, the feelings of shame are not only part of the divorce process, but also part of being perceived by others in our society as holding a minority status because of their race and gender. One significant statement which illustrates this point was given by one of the women interviewed for this study: "As a Black woman it's expected of a Black woman and her spouse not to get along or not to get married in respect to society. For me to have to say that I'm divorced, it hurts because I didn't want

it that way. And when I say I'm divorced I get no "Oh, I'm sorry," its like "so what."

However, the variety of emotional reactions experienced by the working African American women in this study, which included fear of the future, guilt, anger, and disappointment of having to divorce, were similar to the findings of other divorce studies (Krantzler, 1976, Weiss, 1977, L'Hommedieu, 1984). Feelings of loneliness and a loss of purpose in life can be overwhelming for divorced persons. Nevertheless, Hoffman (1980) states that a crisis may lead to a better sense of "self."

It seems that divorce may affect one's sense of self regardless of social class. Wallerstein & Kelly's study of upper middle class White women reported the divorce affected their identity. Wallerstein & Kelly also state that the divorce crisis may enhance the chance of a positive change in the self.

L'Hommedieu's research (1984), examined the relationship of socio-economic factors to postdivorce adjustment of working-class and middle-class white women. She found the women in both socio-economic classes had feelings of loneliness, fear and guilt. Similarly, many working-class African American women in this study stated that such feelings as loneliness and guilt were the main emotions for them during the divorce process.

In contrast to L'Hommedieu's finding that working-class

women's low self-esteem had developed from their thoughts which blamed them for the divorce, this study found the women's low self-esteem had probably developed from the verbal and psychological abuse received during the marriage. This finding also differs from L'Hommedieu's research which concluded that middle-class women perceived having a low self-esteem before entering the marriage.

L'Hommedieu's study also found that, as expected, working-class women had more financial difficulties after the divorce than middle class women. For instance, the working-class women had to go to Family court for child support payments while middle-class women received child support payments voluntarily immediately after the divorce. Working-class women had to apply for welfare benefits, unlike the African American women of this study. Although her study included working-class women, most of them did not work during the marriage. This may explain why many of them had to apply for public assistance after the marital separation.

However, it is interesting to note that Wallerstein's study found the upper middle class white women had financial difficulties after the divorce. Similar findings were reported by Weitzman (1985), who concluded that divorce is a major route to poverty for women. Women In Transition (1975), also discussed the unreliability of child support which adds to the financial problems experienced by divorced women.

In relation to divorce adjustment, L'Hommedieu found the middle class women in her sample, measured their divorce adjustment by how well they were doing in their professional careers. The working class women measured their adjustment by their parenting abilities and by how well their children had coped emotionally with the divorce. In contrast, the women in this study measured their divorce adjustment by both, their careers and their children, for those who had children. Furthermore, they also measured their postdivorce adjustment by how well they themselves were coping emotionally.

Brown's et. al., (1977) study of Black and White women's coping ability during divorce found significantly lower scores for Black than for White women on adjustment to divorce. This is in contrast to the findings of this study, which showed a positive outcome for Black working women's divorce adjustment. One area of postdivorce adjustment which needs improvement for the women in this study is in interpersonal issues, particularly their opportunities for dating. However, other studies have also found that women do not trust men after a divorce (Weiss, 1977, L'Hommedieu, 1984). Krantzler (1974) also reports this pattern to be present in the postdivorce workshops he has led. He describes the distrust of men as stemming from women's fear of rejection.

The literature, which is based primarily on middle-class white divorced parents, discusses a variety of problems faced by single-parents who often feel inadequate about their

parenting abilities (Wallerstein, 1989). However, 90% of the African American working-class women in this study did not question their ability to parent. L'Hommedieu also reported the working-class women did not mention having any problems disciplining their children after the divorce. Weiss (1975) found that women often feel closer to their children after the divorce. L'Hommedieu's study found the women and their children formed a family unit after the marital separation which helped them go through the difficulties of the divorce process together. Similarly, in this study, many women reported the divorce has made it possible for them to take better care of their children.

In relation to social support networks, Huddleston-Bryant's study (1983) found the church to be a significant social support network for divorced middle-class Black women. Similarly to the findings on this study, which also found church activities, as well as belief in God, to be a very significant support network for the working-class women.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

It is necessary for practitioners to recognize that, at the time of divorce African American working women have a need for emotional support based on the crisis confronting their lives which affects them both at home and in the workplace. Practitioners should be aware of the importance of building clients' self-esteem which, in most cases, has suffered due to

the psychological and sometimes physical abuse during the marriage. Women need to be encouraged to realistically evaluate their self-worth.

In addition, practitioners need to help clients resolve intense feelings of ambivalence, anger and guilt and guide women to accept the divorce in a constructive way and to trust their decision to divorce, if that is what they choose. Social workers can help women understand the different phases of the divorce process to allow time to deal with the loss of the marriage and adjust to the many changes in their new lifestyle.

African American working women have immediate practical needs, such as financial assistance, child care needs and sometimes housing. Collaboration between social workers and lawyers is crucial to assist clients. Social work services need to start very early on, preferably at the onset of the legal case. The long wait of the legal system makes divorce especially problematic for battered women.

Legal issues are additional sources of stress for African American working women, particularly, going to court. Even in cases where the courts have awarded child support, it is often not paid in full. Some women were married to men who were unemployed, and therefore received no child support. Equitable distribution places many Black working women in a more vulnerable position concerning the marital home. Ten percent of the women with children lost custody battles to their

ex-spouses. It seems that finances was allowed to prevail over emotional stability in obtaining custody of the children. Overall, society does a mal service for the social welfare of divorced families. More joint legal/social work programs are needed. If it had not been for MELS' free program, most of the clients could not have afforded the legal or social work services they needed.

Social work practitioners need specialized knowledge of expected patterns in the divorce process for effective clinical work. However, specialized knowledge of African American culture, values and family diversity is equally crucial for practice with this population.

The task-centered approach has much potential for social work practice with African Americans and other minority status groups who are oppressed (Chestang, 1980). An essential feature of the task-centered approach is the need for the client and worker to agree on specific issues as the focus of their work. Particularly, because the necessity to deal with practical problems of daily living, such as the need for housing, child support, or help in negotiating institutional systems. An aspect of the worker's role is the advocate. Another dimension of the social worker's role is the teaching of specific knowledge and skills for problem-solving.

One of the limitations of the task-centered approach is its focus on the client's cognitive abilities. Social work practice is not so rationalistic. My own departure from this

practice approach consists of helping clients, not only with understanding how they think about a particular problem, but how they feel about it. Therefore, emphasis is given to the content as well as the process of the social work practice intervention. Professionalism entails viewing the client within a holistic perspective. Identification of the client's ego strengths is essential in building upon and enhancing those strengths. I view providing emotional support and guidance as primary roles for workers.

Practitioners serving minority status populations need to consider that African Americans and other minority groups suffer from serious assaults on their self-esteem and dignity because of their experience and status in society (Chestang, 1977). Respect for the client as a person assumes a unique importance to African American clients. I place a greater emphasis on the worker/client relationship than is proposed in the task-centered approach. Perlman has been influential in this respect, who states that relationship is the heart of helping people (Perlman, 1979).

Lastly, the literature has called attention to the special character of African American culture and social functioning (Billingsley, 1968; Chestang, 1980; Hill, 1971; Solomon, 1976; Logan, Freeman, McRoy, 1990). This focus implies a culturally specific perspective, even though, the knowledge, skills, and values needed by practitioners serving African American clients are parallel to serving clients in

general. However, there are specific attributes I have found helpful that can enhance social workers' practice with African American clients. These attributes are summarized by Chestang(1980) as follows:

- (1) Developing an orientation toward self-assessment of one's own practice.
- (2) The capacity to tolerate and respond to diversity.
- (3) Seek to expand substantive knowledge of the minority experience (pp. 6-8).

This study was guided by the need to understand how the divorce process of working-class African American women was colored given the uniqueness of the Black experience in this society. Given the findings of this study, it seems the racism towards African Americans continues to be a grave social problem leading to greater family conflicts among African Americans. The problems affecting inner city families, such as increased chemical dependency, family violence and infidelity seem to contribute to the number of divorces among African American working women.

Staples (1985) thesis, that structural conditions prevent the fulfillment of Black family ideology seems to partly explain the high divorce rate among African Americans. Certainly, the deteriorating economic and social status of Black men seems to be linked to the increase of divorce on African American families. The high percentage of unemployed ex-husbands, (35%) in this study's sample, seems to be an

indication that African American men, especially, are still facing severe barriers to the world of work. Furthermore, even though more African American women have entered the labor market, they still earn less income than African American working men and especially White men. The women's low salaries is a major reason they face financial difficulties after the divorce. Work/family policies need to ensure these social conditions change for the good of all working divorced families.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

A most valuable study would be a follow-up study, of the women in this sample, done five and ten years after the divorce. The purpose of the study would be to compare the women's perceptions of the divorce at the time of this study with their perceptions much later in the postdivorce adjustment phase. Of particular interest would be how their perceptions of the divorce have changed. In order to find out if their conditions have changed, and if there are any differences in their divorce adjustment. This would be similar to Wallerstein's (1989) popular follow-up study of divorce among white upper middle-class families.

Another study of the MELS program using a pre-post test design would be beneficial in examining how the program affects clients' postdivorce adjustment. In a pre-post study, the results provide much more information for program

evaluation than this study which used the ex post facto design. A pre-post study could also track changes made by clients in such areas as self-esteem and depression.

Studies using a sample of African American men would add insight into their divorce experiences and the results could be compared to the women's experiences to explore any gender differences. The results could also be compared to studies of white divorced men.

A study of African American children's reactions to their parent's divorce would add valuable information concerning divorce experiences of African American families. It is quite possible that the children's postdivorce adjustment may not yield the same positive outcomes found in this study. Different types of custody arrangements could be studied to compare how they affect the children's psychosocial functioning.

Other socio-economic groups other than working-class could be studied to examine the influence of socioeconomic factors on post-divorce adjustment of other African Americans.

The effect of divorce on other ethnic groups such as Latino would be very beneficial since very little is known about the impact of divorce on this population. Studies of different ethnic groups could further examine cultural factors affecting divorce adjustment.

The relationship a person's occupation has to divorce adjustment is an interesting area of study. Especially, since

studies on the causes of divorce have found that occupational status, education and income appear to be related to divorce. Studies within different working class and middle class occupations would enhance the available divorce literature. So far, to my knowledge, studies have focused on high status, upper middle-class professions (Rosow and Rose, 1972). This is in spite of the fact that divorce is higher for people in lower status occupations, with lower incomes, and with less education. Studies of how different occupations and work settings affect divorcing individuals could do much to further our understanding of the complexities of the causes and consequences of divorce on working families.

Research on the outcome of divorce therapy has reported significantly increased divorce adjustment in participants who received postdivorce short-term group treatment (Fisher, 1976). Studies of marriage counseling with divorce as an unintended outcome have compared the effectiveness of two types of therapy, individual and conjoint. The findings indicate that individual treatment rather than conjoint treatment is more effective for clients who are separated or who are seeking a divorce. Yet, there are virtually no studies of the outcome of divorce therapy on clients who receive individual services, such as in this study.

Thus far, much of the research on the outcome of divorce therapy has been done on post-divorce groups to help clients cope with the divorce, rather than on individual therapy to

help clients reach the decision to divorce and assist them throughout the divorce process. More basic research using experimental methods is needed to learn if individual divorce therapy is effective compared to no treatment, or to other forms of treatment.

APPENDIX A**INTERVIEW****I. PARTICIPANT'S PRE-DIVORCE EXPERIENCE**

1. Thinking back, how long ago did you come to MELS, to this program?

2. Why did you come?

3. What were the main problems that led to the divorce?
____ Affairs
____ Addictions
____ Family Violence
____ Financial Problems
____ Other (Specify)

4. What was it like in those early days when you were thinking about a divorce?

5. How did you feel about yourself when you were living with your ex-spouse?

II. PRE-DIVORCE EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE

6. When did you begin to work outside the home?

_____ Before Marriage

_____ Stopped to Raise Children and Returned

_____ After Marriage (State Years) _____

7. Did your employment cause problems between you and your husband?

_____ Yes

_____ No

Comment: _____

8. Did your husband's employment (or lack of) cause any problems in your marriage?

_____ Yes

_____ N O

Comment: _____

9. Did you or your spouse suffer discrimination at work/careers? (explain) If so, in what way did it affect the marriage?

III. PARTICIPANT'S EXPERIENCES DURING THE DIVORCE

10. Could you describe your feelings during the beginning legal actions of the divorce?
11. Did you go to court? Yes No Why not?
12. As an African American woman, did you feel discriminated when you went to court? Yes No Explain
13. Do you think you would be treated differently in court if you were a professional?
14. Do you think women are generally treated differently in court?
15. How has the decision to divorce affected or not affected your ability to work? Yes No Explain
16. How has the decision to divorce affected or not affected your ability to care for your children? Yes No
17. How has the decision to divorce affected or not affected your health / mental health? Yes No
18. How has the decision to divorce affected or not affected your ability to continue education? Yes No

19. How has the decision to divorce affected or not affected
your relationship with relatives? ____ Yes ____ No

IV. PARTICIPANT'S POST-DIVORCE EXPERIENCES

20. As an African American woman, what have been the most difficult consequences of the divorce for you to deal with? for your children?
21. What are some of the positive consequences of the divorce for you? for your children?
22. Do you think a divorce might affect black working women in any unique ways?
23. Have you had opportunities for dating?
24. What are you able to do with (and for) your child since the divorce that you could not do during the marriage?
25. Have there been any changes in your employment or in your work performance after the divorce? (demotion or promotion)
26. Has the divorce helped you to move ahead or restricted your finances? _____ move ahead _____ restricted _____
- 26a. Has the divorce helped you to move ahead or restricted your attainment of further education? _____ move ahead _____ restricted

- 26b. Has the divorce affected your ability to socialize? _____
more _____ less Explain
27. How do you feel about the divorce now? for self? for
family?
28. What would you tell other African American women who are
thinking about a divorce?

V. EXPERIENCE WITH SOCIAL WORK SERVICES AT MELS

1. Why did you seek social work services at MELS?

2. What type of social work services did you receive at MELS?
 - a. _____ individual counseling
 - b. _____ group counseling
 - c. _____ counseling for the children
 - d. _____ help to apply for benefits such as: Food Stamps, Emergency Assistance to Families, Section 8 housing subsidy, disability, etc.
 - e. _____ financial assistance from union fund to help pay court fees
 - f. _____ budget counseling
 - g. _____ crisis counseling due to domestic violence h. _____ referred to other union programs
 - i. _____ social worker advocated with lawyer regarding legal case
 - j. _____ help with problems on the job
 - k. _____ referral to other agencies
 - l. _____ other (specify)

- 2a. Did that service help you? (For each type of service) If so, how? If not, why not?

3. Did you feel the social worker:
- a. Understood your situation?
 - b. Didn't understand your situation?
 - c. Wanted to understand but couldn't?
 - d. Didn't care?
- Why?
- 3a. What was the most helpful thing social worker did for you?
4. Did the social work services you received help you deal better with your divorce? Yes No Why?
5. Are you satisfied with the social work services you received? Yes No (please explain)
6. How many times did you meet with the social worker?
(Record actual number of times).
- 6a. Over how long a period of time?
7. How satisfied are you with the amount of social work help you have received?
8. If you return to MELS, would you want to see a social worker again? Yes No Maybe Explain

9. Do you think it's a good idea to have legal/social work services as part of the benefits offered by your labor union?

_____ Yes _____ No

What is the most important part of that?

10. As a result of your separation/divorce did you have additional legal cases opened at MELS?

_____ Yes _____ No If so, which type?

11. Which ones of the following helped you the most to cope with difficulties during the divorce?

- a. Attended church activities _____
- b. Had faith in God _____
- c. Received advice from a minister _____
- d. Shared difficulties with family _____
- e. Received support from friends _____
- f. Knew that my family has the strength to solve our problems _____
- g. Received information and advice from co-workers or supervisor _____
- h. Participated in educational activities _____
- i. Sought professional counseling _____

APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

1. What is your age? _____ years of age (last birthday)
2. What is your birth place? _____
state (Country, if not USA)
3. What is your ethnic background or country of family
origin? _____
4. If not born in the USA, how long have you been living in
this country? _____
5. What is your religious background?
 - _____ 1. Catholic
 - _____ 3. Muslim
 - _____ 4. Protestant
 - _____ 5. Other (Specify: _____)
 - _____ 6. None
6. What is your present occupation? _____
_____ full-time
_____ part-time
7. What was the total income for your household over the
past year?
 - _____ 1. Less than \$5,000.
 - _____ 2. \$5,000 - \$7,999.
 - _____ 3. \$8,000 - \$11,999.
 - _____ 4. \$12,000 - \$14,999.
 - _____ 5. \$15,000 - \$19,999.
 - _____ 6. \$20,000 - \$24,999.
 - _____ 7. \$25,000 - \$29,999.

- _____ 8. \$30,000 - \$34,999.
- _____ 9. \$35,000 - \$49,999.
- _____ 10. \$50,000 or more
8. How much formal education have you had? (highest grade completed?)
- _____ 1. 8th grade or less
- _____ 2. Some high school (9th - 11th grade)
- _____ 3. High School graduate or GED
- _____ 4. Technical Training after high school
- _____ 5. Some college
- _____ 6. College graduate
- _____ 7. Other (Specify: _____)
9. Are you currently taking any academic courses?
- _____ Yes _____ No
- If yes, please specify academic program: _____
10. How many children do you have? _____
- If any, how many are from the last marriage? _____
11. What are your children's ages? _____
12. How many children live with you? _____
13. How many children live with your ex-spouse? _____
14. How many children live with other relatives? _____
15. What custody arrangement do you have for your children?
- Sole custody _____ Joint custody with spouse _____
- Ex-spouse has custody _____
- Other (explain) _____
16. Do you receive child support payments for your minor

- children? Yes _____ If yes, what amount? _____
 If no, what is the reason? _____
 Are the payments always on time?
17. Do you receive alimony payments from your ex-spouse?
 Yes _____ Amount _____ No _____
18. Do you own a house or rent an apartment? _____
19. How much rent/mortgage do you pay on a monthly basis?
20. How many years were you married? _____
21. Were you separated from your spouse before the divorce?
 Yes _____ No _____ If yes, for how long? _____
22. How long have you been divorced?
 Years _____ Months _____
23. Was this your first marriage? _____
 If no, how many other times have you been married? _____
 How many other times have you divorced? _____
24. Was this your ex-spouse's first marriage? _____
 If no, how many other times was he married? _____
 How many other times was he divorced? _____
25. Have you remarried since your last divorce? _____
26. Do you have any children since your last divorce? _____
27. Did you change jobs since your divorce? _____
28. Did you take on a second job since your divorce? _____
29. Has your personal income increased, decreased, or
 remained the same since your separation/divorce?
 _____ increased
 _____ decreased

- _____ same
30. Has your total household income increased, decreased or remained the same since your divorce?
- _____ increased
- _____ decreased
- _____ same
31. Did you begin the divorce action or did your ex-spouse begin it? _____
32. Now that you are divorced, do you consider your family to have more, less, or the same amount of strengths as in a two-parent household?
- _____ more
- _____ less
- _____ same
33. What is your current living arrangement?
- _____ living alone
- _____ living with my children
- _____ living with relatives (explain)
- _____ living with a roommate
- _____ other (explain)

Please complete information about YOUR EX-SPOUSE:

34. Occupation _____
- Income _____
- Highest grade of education _____
- Race _____

Place of birth _____

Age _____

Any children previous to your marriage _____

Ages _____

Current living arrangements _____

APPENDIX C**Informed Consent Statement**

The purpose of this research project is to obtain a description of the divorce experience from the perspective of Black working women and to study the impact that social work service utilization has on the divorce adjustment of women who are union members of District Council 37 and received legal/social work services as part of the benefits offered by the union. I agree to participate in this study which I understand to be part of a student doctoral project to be submitted to the Hunter College School of Social Work of the City University of New York. I understand the data provided by me will be limited to the use of writing a doctoral dissertation or other research-related usage authorized by Hunter College School of Social Work. This study is not sponsored by District Council 37 or MELS. I understand that written notes will be taken during the interview and the results from all interviews will be published, but all identifying marks, including my name, will be removed. I also understand that I am free to decline to respond to any questions that I do not feel completely comfortable in answering. The interview is confidential, and my responses will not be shared with anyone. I understand that my participation or non-participation in this project will have no affect on my eligibility for services from MELS or upon the representation I may be currently receiving from MELS. The

fact of my participation or non-participation will not be known by any other MELS staff member. If I have any additional questions I will contact the investigator or the chairperson of the doctoral committee whose name and address has been provided to me. I understand my participation is voluntary and I may discontinue participation at any time. I have the right to express my concerns or complaints to the Human Subjects Committee at Hunter College School of Social Work, City University of New York.

Subject's Signature _____

Date Signed _____

Investigator _____

Olga Molina, A.C.S.W.
DC 37 MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES
LEGAL SERVICES PLAN
125 Barclay Street
New York, New York 10007
(212) 815-1140

Chairperson of Dr. Michael Smith
Doctoral Committee 129 East 79th Street
New York, NY 10021

APPENDIX D**OBJECTIVE #1: DESCRIPTION OF DIVORCE EXPERIENCES**

Questions used to operationalize areas of divorce experiences that will be studied.

From Appendix B: Interview

Subheading I. Participant's Pre-Divorce Experience

Question #3. What were the main problems that led to the divorce?

Question #4. What was it like in those early days when you were thinking about a divorce?

Question #5. How did you feel about yourself when you were living with your ex-spouse?

Subheading II. Pre-Divorce Employment Experience

Question #6. When did you begin to work outside the home?

Question #7. Did your employment cause problems between you and your husband?

Question #8. Did your husband's employment (or lack of) cause any problems in your marriage?

Question #9. Did you or your spouse suffer discrimination at work/careers?

Subheading III. Participant's Experiences During The Divorce

Question #10. Could you describe your feelings during the beginning legal actions of the divorce?

Question #11. Did you go to court?

- Question #12. As an African American woman, did you feel discriminated when you went to court?
- Question #13. Do you think you would be treated differently in court if you were a professional?
- Question #14. Do you think women are generally treated differently in court?
- Question #15. How has the decision to divorce affected or not affected your ability to work?
- Question #16. How has the decision to divorce affected or not affected your ability to care for your children?
- Question #17. How has the decision to divorce affected or not affected your health / mental health?
- Question #18. How has the decision to divorce affected or not affected your ability to continue education?
- Question #19. How has the decision to divorce affected or not affected your relationship with relatives?

Subheading IV. Participant's Post-Divorce Experience

- Question #20. As an African American woman, what have been the most difficult consequences of the divorce for you to deal with? for your children?
- Question #21. What are some of the positive consequences of the divorce for you? for your children?
- Question #23. Have you had opportunities for dating?

- Question #24. What are you able to do with (and for) your child since the divorce that you could not do during the marriage?
- Question #25. Have there been any changes in your employment or in your work performance after the divorce?
- Question #26. Has the divorce helped you to move ahead or restricted your: finances? attainment of further education? ability to socialize?
- Question #27. How do you feel about the divorce now? for self? for family?

OBJECTIVE #2: RELATIONSHIP OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL FACTORS TO POST-DIVORCE ADJUSTMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN

Questions used to operationalize areas of objective #2. From Appendix A: Demographic Data

Socio-economic factors

- Question #6. What is your present occupation?
- Question #7. What was the total income for your household over the past year?
- Question #8. How much formal education have you had?
- Question #9. Are you currently taking any academic courses?
- Question #16. Do you receive child support payments for your minor children?
- Question #17. Do you receive alimony payments from your ex-spouse?
- Question #18. Do you own a house or rent an apartment?

- Question #19. How much rent/mortgage do you pay on a monthly basis?
- Question #28. Did you take on a second job since your divorce?
- Question #29. Has your personal income increased, decreased, or remained the same since your separation/divorce?
- Question #30. Has your total household income increased, decreased, or remained the same since your separation/divorce? Question#34.What is your ex-spouse's occupation?
- Question #35. What is your ex-spouse's income?
- Question #36. What is your ex-spouse's highest grade of education?

From Appendix B: Interview

Socio-economic factors

Subheading II: Pre-Divorce Employment Experience

- Question #7. Did your employment cause problems between you and your husband?
- Question #8. Did your husband's employment (or lack of) cause any problems in your marriage?

Subheading III: Participant's Experiences During Divorce

- Question #15. How has the decision to divorce affected or not affected your ability to work?

Question #16. How has the decision to divorce affected or not affected your ability to continue education?

Subheading IV: Participant's Post-Divorce Experiences

Question #25. Have there been any changes in your employment or in your work performance after the divorce?

Question #26. Has the divorce helped you to move ahead or restricted your: finances? attainment of further education? ability to socialize?

Questions Used to Operationalize Cultural Factors

From Appendix A: Demographic Data

Question #2. What is your birth place?

Question #3. What is your ethnic background or country of family origin?

Question #4. If not born in the USA, how long have you been living in this country?

Question #5. What is your religious background?

Question #33. What is your current living arrangement?

Question #37. What is your ex-spouse's race?

Question #38. What is your ex-spouse's place of birth?

Question #42. What is your ex-spouse's current living arrangement?

From Appendix B: Interview Questions

Cultural Factors

Subheading III. Participant's Experiences During The Divorce

Question #16. How has the decision to divorce affected or not affected your ability to care for your children?

Question# 19. How has the decision to divorce affected or not affected your relationship with relatives?

Subheading IV. Participant's Post-Divorce Experiences

Question #20. As an African American, what have been the most difficult consequences of the divorce for you to deal with? for your children?

Question #22. Do you think a divorce might affect black working women in any unique ways?

Question #28. What would you tell other African American women who are thinking about a divorce?

Questions Used to Operationalize Post-Divorce Adjustment

From Appendix A: Demographic Data

Question #25. Have you remarried since your last divorce?

Question #26. Do you have any children since your last divorce?

Question #32. Now that you are divorced, do you consider your family to have more, less or the same amount of strengths as in a two - parent household?

From Appendix B: Interview Questions

Divorce Adjustment

Subheading III. Participant's Experiences During Divorce

Question #15. How has the decision to divorce affected or not affected your ability to work?

Question #16. How has the decision to divorce affected or not affected your ability to care for your children?

Question #17. How has the decision to divorce affected or not affected your health / mental health?

Question #18. How has the decision to divorce affected or not affected your ability to continue education?

Question #19. How has the decision to divorce affected or not affected your relationship with relatives?

Subheading IV. Participant's Post-Divorce Experiences

Question #21. What are some of the positive consequences of the divorce for you? for your children?

Question #23. Have you had opportunities for dating?

Question #26. Has the divorce helped you to move ahead or restricted your: finances? attainment of further education? ability to socialize?

The following three questions were used to operationalize psychological divorce adjustment. Responses from the three will be compared to assess whether there was any improvement

between pre-divorce, divorce, and post-divorce stages.

Subheading I. Participant's Pre-Divorce Experience

Question #5. How did you feel about yourself when you were living with your ex-spouse?

Subheading II. Participant's Experiences During The Divorce

Question #10. Could you describe your feelings during the beginning legal actions of the divorce?

Subheading III. Participant's Post-Divorce Experiences

Question #27. How do you feel about the divorce now? for self? for family?

OBJECTIVE #3: TO STUDY THE SOCIAL WORK SERVICES OFFERED AT MELS AND EXPLORE CLIENT SATISFACTION WITH THESE SERVICES

From Appendix B: Interview Questions

Subheading V. Experience With Social Work Services At MELS

Questions to Conceptualize: Study Social Work Services

Question #1. Why did you seek social work services at MELS?

Question #2. What type of social work services did you receive at MELS?

Question #2a. Did that service help you? If so, how? If not, why not?

Question #6. How many times did you meet with the social worker?

Question# 6a. Over how long a period of time?

Questions to Conceptualize: Client's satisfaction with Social Work Services

Subheading V. Experience With Social Work Services At MELS

- Question #3. Did you feel the social worker:
- Understood your situation?
 - Didn't understand your situation?
 - Wanted to understand but couldn't?
 - Didn't care?
- Question #3a. What was the most helpful thing social worker did for you? Why?
- Question #4. Did the social work services you received help you deal better with your divorce? Why?
- Question #5. Are you satisfied with the social work services you received?
- Question #7. How satisfied are you with the amount of social work help you have received?
- Question #8. If you return to MELS, would you want to see a social worker again?
- Question #9. Do you think it's a good idea to have social work services as part of the benefits offered by your labor union?
- What's the most important part of that?

OBJECTIVE #4: THE EMERGENCE OF ADDITIONAL LEGAL PROBLEMS

Subheading V. Experience With Social Work Services At MELS

- Question #10. As a result of your separation or divorce did you have additional legal cases opened at MELS?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Akabas, Sheila. "Social Work and The Workplace," Practice Digest, Special Issue (September, 1982).
- Bernard, J. "Marital stability and patterns of status variables." Journal of Marriage and the Family, 1966, 28, 421-429.
- Blau, P. Exchange and Power in Social Life. New York: John Wiley, 1964.
- Brown, P. Psychological distress and personal growth among women coping with marital dissolution. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan, 1976.
- Brown, P., & Manela, R. "Client satisfaction with marital and divorce counseling." The Family Coordinator, 1977, 26, 294-303.
- Bumpass, L.L., & Sweet, J.A. "Differentials in marital instability: 1970." American Sociological Review, 1972, 37, 754-766.
- Campbell, A., Converse, P. E. & Rodgers, W.L. The quality of American life: Perceptions, evaluations and satisfactions. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1976.
- Carter, H., & Glick, P.C. Marriage and divorce: A social and economic study (Rev. ed.). Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976.
Changing USA Families. Family Therapy News, 1984, 15(2), 16.
- Cherlin, A. "Work life and marital dissolution." In G. Levinger & O.C. Moles (Eds.), Divorce and separation: Context, causes, and consequences. New York: Basic books, 1979.
- Cherlin, H. Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981.
- Chestang, Leon W. "Competencies and Knowledge in Clinical Social Work: A Dual Perspective." Patricia Ewalt (ed.). Toward A Definition of Clinical Social Work. Washington D.C.: National Association of Social Workers, 1980, pp. 1-12.
- Ciarlo, James A. et. al., "Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale," Assessing Mental Health Treatment Outcome Measurement Techniques. Rockville, MD: National Institute of Mental Health, 1986.

- Crain, R. L., & Weisman, C.S. Discrimination, personality and achievement: A survey of northern blacks. New York: Seminar Press, 1972.
- Epstein, I., & Tripodi. Research Techniques for Clinical Social Workers. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980.
- Fisher, B.F. Identifying and meeting needs of formerly married people through a divorce adjustment seminar. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Northern Colorado, 1976.
- Gary, L., L. Beatty, G. Berry, and M. Price. "Stable Black Families." Final Report, Institute for Urban Affairs and Research. Washington, D.C.: Howard University, 1983.
- Glick, P. C. "Remarriage: Some recent changes and variations." Journal of Family Issues, 1980, 1, 455-478.
- "The Role of Divorce in the Changing Family Structure: Trends and Variations." Children of Divorce: Empirical Perspectives on Adjustment, 1988, Ed. Wolchik and Karoly. New York: Gardner Press, Inc.
- Goffman, Erving. Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity, Glencoe, Ill: Free Press, 1959.
- Goode, W. J. "Marital satisfaction and instability: A cross-cultural class analysis of divorce rates." International Social Science Journal, 1962, 14, 507-526.
- Greene, B. L., Lee, R. R. & Lustig, N. "Transient structured distance as a maneuver in marital therapy." Family Coordinator, 1973, 20, 15-22.
- Gurin, G., Veroff, J., & Feld, S. Americans views their mental Health. New York: Basic Books, 1960.
- Gurman, A. S., & Kniskern, D. P. (Eds.) Handbook of family therapy. New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1981.
- Hampton, R. L. "Marital disruption: Some social and economic consequences." In J. N. Morgan (Ed.), Five thousand American Families. (Vol. 3). Ann Arbor: Institute for Social Research, 1975.
- Hampton, R.L. "Husband's characteristics and marital disruption in black families." The Sociological Quarterly, 1979, 20, 255-266.
- "Institutional Decimation, Marital Exchange and

- Disruption in Black Families." Western Journal of Black Studies 4 (Summer), 1980, pp. 132-139.
- Harree, Rom (ed.), The Social Construction of Emotions, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- Henricks, Lorraine. Caught In The Crossfire: The Impact of Divorce on Young People. Washington D.C.: PIA Press, 1991.
- Hill, Robert. "The Strengths of Black Families." New York: National Urban League, Research Department, July 1971.
- "Critical Issues For Black Families By The Year 2000," The State Of Black America, 1989. Edited by Janet Dewart. New York: National Urban League, 1989, pp. 41-61.
- Hochschild, Arlie R. "Emotion Work, Feeling Rules and Social Structure," AJS, Vol. 85, No. 3:551-575.
- Huddleston-Bryant, B. Post Divorce Adjustment of Middle Class Black Women. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of California, Los Angeles, 1983.
- Jacobson, D.S. "Divorce and Separation," ESW, 1986.
- Kaslow, F.W. "Divorce and divorce therapy." In A.S. Gurman & D.P. Kniskern (Eds.), Handbook of family therapy. New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1981.
- Kitson, G.C., Lopata, H.Z., Holmes, W.M., & Meyering, S.M. "Divorcees and widows: Similarities and differences." American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 1980, 50, 291-301.
- Kitson, G.C., & Raschke, H.J. "Divorce research: What we know; what we need to know." Journal of Divorce, 1981, 4, 1-37.
- Kitson, G.C., Babri, K.B., Roach, M.J., & Placidi, K.S. "Adjustment to Widowhood and Divorce: A Review." Journal of Family Issues, 1989, Vol. 10 No. 1, March, pp. 5-32.
- Kressel, K., & Deutsch, M. "Divorce Therapy: An In-Depth Survey of Therapists' Views," Family Process, 16:Dec. 1977, 413-43.
- "Labor Force Activity of Mothers of Young Children Continues At Record Pace." (1985, September 19). Bureau of Labor Statistics News.

- Lee, B.E. "Consumer evaluation of a family court service." Conciliation Courts Review, 1979, 17, 49- 54.
- L'Hommedieu, T. The divorce experience of working and middle class women. Ann Arbor, Michigan, UMI Research Press, 1984. "Marital Status and Living Arrangements." Population Profile of the United States. U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1991.
- Logan, S.M.L., Freeman, E.M., McRoy, R.G. Social Work Practice With Black Families: A Culturally Specific Perspective. New York: Longman, a division of Addison Wesley Publishing Co., Inc., 1990.
- "Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March, 1990." U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1990.
- Miller, Dorothy C. Helping the Strong: An Exploration of the Needs of Families Headed by Women. Maryland: National Association of Social Workers, 1987.
- Moynihan, D.P. "The Negro family: The case for national action." In L. Rainwater & W.L. Fancey (Eds.), The Moynihan report and the politics of controversy. Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1967.
- National Center for Health Statistics. Monthly Vital Statistics Report, Vol. 32, No. 2, March 25, 1984. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984.
- Neff, Walter S., Work and Human Behavior 3rd Edition, (Hawthorne, N.Y.: Aldine Publishing Co., 1985).
- Norton, A.J., & Glick, P.C. "Marital instability in America: Past, present and future." In G. Levinger & O.C. Moles (Eds.), Divorce and separation: Context, causes and consequences. New York: Basic Books, 1979.
- Patton, Michael, Q. Qualitative Evaluation Methods. California: Sage Publications, Inc., 1980.
- Perlman, Helen Harris, "The Client as Worker: A Look at an Overlooked Role," in Akabas and Kurzman, (Eds.), Work Workers and Work Organizations: A View From Social Work (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1982), Chapter 5.
- Pope, H., & Mueller, C.W. "The intergenerational transmission of marital instability: Comparisons by race and sex." Journal of Social Issues, 1976, 32, 49-66.

- Price-Bonham, S. & Balswick, J. "The noninstitutions: Divorce, desertion, and remarriage." Journal of Marriage and the Family, 1980, 42, 959-972.
- Radloff, Lenore S. "The CES-D Scale: A Self Report Depression Scale for Research in the General Population" Applied Psychological Measurement, Vol. 1, 1977, pp. 385-401.
- Rice, J.K., & Rice, D.G. Living through divorce: A developmental approach to divorce therapy. New York: The Guilford Press, 1986.
- Rosow, I., & Rose, K.D. "Divorce among doctors." Journal of Marriage and the Family, 1972, 34, 587- 598.
- Ross, H.L., & Sawhill, I.V. Time of transition: The growth of families headed by women. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 1975.
- Salts, C.J. "Divorce process: Integration of theory," Journal of Divorce, 1979, 2, 233-240.
- Smith, Michael, J. Program Evaluation in the Human Services. New York: Springer Publishing Company, Inc., 1990.
- Sprenkle, D.H., & Storm, C.A. "Divorce therapy outcome research: A substantive and methodological review." Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 1983, 9, 239-258.
- Srole, L., Langner, T.A., Michael, S.T., Opler, M.K., & Rennie, T.A.C. Mental health in the metropolis: The midtown study (Vol. 1). New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1962.
- Staples, Robert. "Race and Marital Status: An Overview," Harriette Pipes McAdoo (Ed.). Black Families (Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, Inc., 1981), Chapter 10.
- Staples, Robert (Ed.) "Changes in Black Family Structure: The Conflict Between Family Ideology and Structural Conditions," The Black Family: Essays and Studies, Third Edition. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1986, pp. 20-28.
- Toomin, M.K. "Structured separation with counseling: A therapeutic approach for couples in conflict." Family Process, 1972, 11, 299-310.

- Udry, J.R. "Marital instability by race, sex, education, and occupation using 1960 census data." American Journal of Sociology, 1966, 72, 203-209.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census (1983). America's Black Population, 1970 to 1982: A Statistical View. July 1983, Series P10/POP83. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census. (1983a). Child Support and Alimony, Current Population Reports (Series P-23, No. 123). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Wallerstein, J.S., & Kelly, J.B. Surviving the break-up: How children and parents cope with divorce. New York: Basic Books, 1980.
- Wallerstein, J.S., & Blakeslee, S. Second Chances: Men, Women & Children A Decade After Divorce. New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1989.
- Weed, J. (1980). "National Estimate of Marital Dissolution and Survivorship." United States Vital and Health Statistics, 3(19).
- Weinbach, R.W., & Grinnell, R.M. Statistics for Social Workers. New York: Longman Inc., 1987.
- Weingarten, H. "Remarriage and well-being: National survey evidence of social and psychological effects." Journal of Family Issues, 1980, 1, 533- 559.
- Weiss, Robert S. Marital Separation, New York: Basic Books, 1975.
- Weitzman, Lenore J. The Divorce Revolution, New York: The Free Press, 1985.
- Willie, Charles. "Socioeconomic Characteristics: The Black Family And Social Class," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 44 (January 1974): 50-60.
- Wiseman, Reva S. "Crisis Theory and the Process of Divorce," Social Casework 56 (April, 1975): 205-12.
- Young, D.M. "The divorce experience workshop: A consumer evaluation." Journal of Divorce, 1978, 2, 37-43. (a)
- Young, D.M. "Consumer satisfaction with the divorce workshop: A follow-up report." Journal of Divorce, 1978, 2, 49-56. (b)

Zill, N. Divorce, Mental Happiness and the Mental Health of Children: Findings from The FCD National Survey of Children. Paper prepared for the National Institute of Mental Health Workshop on Divorce and Children, Bethesda Md., February, 1978.