

University of Nigeria – Ibadan  
Ibadan, Nigeria

**THE IMPACTS OF RELIGION AND EDUCATION ON THE SELF-ESTEEM OF  
ADOLESCENTS FROM DIVORCED AND INTACT FAMILIES IN NIGERIA**

By

**COMFORT N. OFODILE (née OBIORA)**

**THESIS**

**Presented to the Faculty of University of Nigeria - Ibadan**

**School of Social Welfare**

**Department of Social Welfare and Health Services**

**in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of**

**MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK (MSW)**

**THE UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA - IBADAN**

June, 2005

## **DEDICATION**

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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## **ABSTRACT**

A child who is not granted a familial environment that is fundamentally consistent and harmonious will be more than likely to develop inconsistently, primarily psychologically and, perhaps even physically, in comparison to the accepted standards. This would idealistically make for a scenario within which the child grows into an adult who is underdeveloped or rather, has not been given the chance to develop the behavioral and character traits considered as normal or average. It is barely surprising, thus speaking and considering the implications of this, that divorce is an issue that must be addressed as immediately and urgently as possible by all branches of the Nigerian governments.

Researchers of self-esteem have debated the effects of parental marital status on the self-esteem of adolescents and children in general, and the results have supported differing points of view. To further investigate this topic, the purpose of this Thesis was to examine the various impacts of religious, educational, and demographic factors on the self-esteem [and self-actualization] of adolescents from divorced and intact families. Some of the factors investigated were parental marital status, traditional norms and customs, gender, tribal affiliation, and age-group. And where necessary and appropriate, the Igbo native laws, customs, and traditions were used for clarification.

Findings suggested that there were no significant differences between gender and tribal affiliations on the self-esteem of adolescents from divorced and intact families in Nigeria. Of noteworthy significance was that the Nigerian adolescents from intact and divorced families experienced painful emotional stressors and economic difficulties before and during marriage and, after divorce because of native laws and customs, extended family system, traditional/cultural norms, political influence, religious upbringing, and spousal age at marriage. For obvious reasons, children see divorce as something very traumatic. It is recommended that divorced parents should make time to instill in their child(ren) that both father and mother will still be and act like their parents, discipline them when needed, protect them from harm, follow consistent rules, not lean on the child(ren) for support but will provide support for the child(ren), and love the child(ren) and will remain in their lives. Implications on research and counseling were noted.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The features and characteristics of the sociological infrastructures within which most Nigerians contemporaneously survive and interact are dramatically advanced and developed in comparison to their European counterparts. This is something that is especially accentuated when considering the extent to which contentions in concern to such social issues as tribal/ethnic and sexual oppressions and discrimination currently prevail. While it would have been considered normative for a woman in Nigeria to be beaten into submission by her man [do you really think so?] - - boyfriend, husband, 'Sugar Daddy,' and/or father -- in the not so distant past; such an instance today would bring forth [most definitely in the Western cultures] a media frenzy, which may also lead to a court case based on physical abuse or assault. And yes! Nigeria and the rest of the third world countries are no different. In spite of the evident evolution that the mass societal entity has experienced; however, the prevalence of various social ailments, not unlike and usually relational to those who have been mentioned, continues to be experienced. If you think men are from 'Starbucks' and women are from 'Daycare,' then I urge you to try laying a finger on your spouse ... Go figure!

### **Purpose and Objectives of the Thesis**

The purposes of this Thesis are to convince all educators and religious personnel at all levels of the crucial importance of treating every child [and learner] with the utmost respect in the classroom and, to teach and treat all children equally within the four walls of an educational sphere. To satisfy these purposes, the following objectives were generated:

- 1) To enumerate and elucidate the causes, reasons, and effects of divorce in Nigeria.
- 2) To show, from a religious and educational perspectives, that respectful treatment of children from divorced families (and all learners for that matter) leads to enhancement of their self-esteem, identity formation, and hence to their self-actualization.
- 3) To note the significance of the father-figure in the status-formation of divorced children and the self-esteem and self-actualization of all learners.
- 4) To point out the roles of educational institutions and teachers as a nexus where self-esteem could be nurtured and, surrogate parents and role models.
- 5) To indicate the clear link that exists between religious and educational philosophies.
- 6) To cite instances of Jesus' respectful treatment of learners, illustrating the connection between religious and educational psychology.
- 7) To suggest the steps Christian and secular educators can take to improve the self-esteem and self-actualization of their learners.
- 8) To assist religious leaders and educators in their efforts to integrate faith and learning by emphasizing the importance of respectful treatment of learners.
- 9) To stimulate all educators to follow Jesus' example of respectful treatment of learners in their own classrooms, so that the learners may not only enhance their sense of self-worth, but achieve their full academic and spiritual potential.
- 10) To offer suggestive strategies to help children and adolescents cope with the advent of divorce.
- 11)



### **Categorization of Familial Relationships: From *Ezi Na Uno* to *Umunna***

The nuclear family and extended family relationships in Nigeria are entirely blood-relationships. These relationships begin with the marriage of a man to a woman. The man [husband (*Di*)] and the woman [wife, (*Nwunye*)] become father [*Nna*] and mother [*Nne*]. The children or siblings of the same mother and father are the [*Umunne Ofu-Nne Ojiji*].

In a Polygamous family, there will be [*Umunne Ofu-Nna Ojiji*], being the siblings of the wives, with the same father. Together, they are all half-brothers and half-sisters. The eldest son in this type of family is the [*Di Okpala*] and takes charge of the family in succession to his father. All of these members are of the same [*Ezi Na Uno*] of the same household of the father in a compound [an *Ngwulu*]. This is the first or the inner ring or cluster of the extended family. Then there come the descendants of the sons of each of the wives who trace their blood relationship to the same great, great, great grandmother or the ancestral mother, with the same great, great, great grandfather or the ancestral father. These are the siblings within the *Umunna* [or *Umunne nime Umunna*]. This is the second or middle ring or cluster of the extended family system or kindred. Following this middle layer are the members of the rest of the *Umunna* kindred extended family who are the descendants of all the brothers and half-brothers or sons of all the mothers of a polygamous family, who trace their blood relationship to the same great, great, great grandfather or the ancestral father. This is the wider or outer layer of the *Umunna* [*Oli Na Nna*] kindred extended family.

The eldest male member of the *Umunna* kindred becomes the patriarch of the *Umunna* kindred extended family. He receives deep respect for age and seniority. He also

receives annual obeisance and tributes from all the male members of the kindred for his seniority. He also has a particular plot of land as the eldest, which is cultivated and tended for him, and planted with only annual crops by the communal labor of the kindred. At his death, the land passes over to the next eldest, after his family shall have reaped the crops.

All the relationships described above, which are of the father's side or patrilineage [*Umunna*] system also exist on the mother's side of the patrilineage [*Ikwunne*] system. They also exist on the reverse in the matrilineage [*Oli Na Nne*] system. Yet, there are systems that are described as "Double Lineage System," whereby the members have the best of both systems.

*Ikwu* [link] is the relationship that exists or connects the members of any level of the extended family relationship, either of the father's [*Umunna*] or the mother's [*Ikwunne*] side. Maintaining connection with relations [*Iri Ikwu ma obu*] is the process of tracing/linking and connecting with one's relations of the father's or mother's lineage.

*Ikwu-Nne* are the relations on anybody's mother's side. *Ikwu Nna* are the *Umunna* kindred extended family of the father. *Ikwu-Nne Nna* are the relations of the father on his mother's side.

Then there are the in-laws [*Ndi Ogo*], who have also become members of the extended family through marriages with the sons and/or daughters into the families. There is also the marriage of the daughters to men outside their paternal families. In Nigerian customs, especially the Igbo customs, the in-law relationships connect, not only the husband and wife, who are married, but also the siblings of the nuclear or conjugal families, as well as of all the layers or clusters of the extended families relationships.

Anybody who falls outside of these categories and definitions does not belong to that extended family system. With these native laws and customs, it seems natural that marriages in Nigeria would be much preserved, compared to the Western cultures. Why then are divorce rates in Nigeria, even among those living abroad, are almost the same with those of the Western civilization?

**Distinguishing *Ezi Na Uno* from *Ama*, *Ebo*, *Ogbe*, *Onuku*, *Obodo*, *Ngwulu*, etc.**

*Ezi Na Uno*, therefore, is not the extended family system, per se. It is the nucleus of the extended family system. The extended family comprises the *Umunne and the Umunna* congregations of as many *Ezi Na Uno* or nuclear, conjugal families as there are in that lineage. These include the brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces, uncles, aunties and cousins, extending to as many generations as could be traced and connected, who have their origins from the same ancestral father and mother, as well as the in-laws.

There is also the neighborhood [*Ogbe*] within which several *Umunna* live. Several neighborhoods or *Ogbe* make up the village [or *Ama*]; several *Ama* or villages make up the community [or *Onuku*]; and several *Onuku* or communities comprise the town [or *Obodo*] or the autonomous community. Whence, several *Obodo* or towns constitutes the clan [or *Ebo*] of which many clans or *Ebo* make up the ethnic/tribal group [Ana] or the land. In some cases, having met some criteria, an *Onuku* or a community is authorized by a local and/or a state government to become an autonomous community of its own. In most instances, *Ezi* can be differentiated from *Ama* in the sense that: “While *Ezi and Ulo* are culturally complementary, *Ezi and Ama* are structurally opposed but functionally interactive. *Ama*, is the path to *Ezi* and it does not discriminate between the “good and the evil of the land,” which it carries to the *Ezi*. It is, therefore, compelling to

limit "evil traffic" at the *Qnu Obu* by ritual fortifications." Because there are many dialects of a particular language in Nigeria, most customs would prefer to say that: "*Ezi N'ulo* is not just a bundle of material cultural traits; it is a people -- people united by a bond of kin network and interlocking functions and reciprocities. They refer to this network of people as *Ezi na Ulo*, an extended family.

There are significant differences here in the explanations and use of the terminologies of: *Ezi*, *Uno*, *Ezi na Uno*, *Ama*, from one dialect to another. For example, in the Old Anambara Riverine Area Dialect in Iboland, *Ezi na Uno* refers to the compound and the house inside it in which a nuclear or conjugal family lives. That is, *Ezi* is the space around the house and *Azu Uno* is the backyard. The whole of the space inside the fence-walls of the house is known as the *Ngwulu* or the compound. *Uno* is the house inside the compound or *Ngwulu*. This is the home of the nuclear or conjugal family and cannot at the same time be the home of the *Umunna*, which is the extended family kindred. On the other hand, *Ama ma obu Ilo* means all the spaces outside the *Ngwulu* or compound and *Ama ma obu Ilo* also means the village square or playground. *Ilo* also means the road in some *Igbo* dialects. *Ezi*, by different pronunciations, also mean a pig or a woman's menstrual period. And consistent with these connotations and denotations, *Ilo*, by different tonal inflections, means an enemy, the eyelashes of an elephant, or the bark of a kind of elephant grass used in basket weaving.

### **The British Influence in Nigeria and Its Aftermath**

Although Britain's political withdrawal from Nigeria was a peaceful process achieved by international pressures, the four and a half centuries of political, economic,

religious, and social suppression of the Nigerian people had taken its toll. Life as the Nigerians had known it changed, and the lives of its women would never be the same.

These statements ring true to this day. Even after the British left Nigeria in 1960, the traditional Nigerian way of life did not fully return. The sexist mindset that had resulted in unreasonable rules stayed behind. The Nigerian women today are still feeling these reverberations of colonialism; they are still seen as second-class citizens and the less powerful gender. For many, life is frustrating, unstable, and unfair. Nonetheless, Nigerians still get married and have children, only to be divorced in the future.

Though Nigerian girls and boys are given equal opportunities during primary and secondary education, higher education is proportionally segregated based on gender. Boys are expected to excel in mathematics and science while girls are considered strong in literature and the arts. High schools give girls who excel at “male subjects” the idea that they are abnormal, and many feel forced into reading and language studies. In many cases, there are female literary scholars who once had the potential to excel in the sciences; but were either compelled or denied the right to pursue their dreams.

While men have the whole spectrum of jobs to choose from, women are restricted to certain jobs. The Nigerian society pressures them to hold ‘female occupations,’ such as primary school teachers, nurses, and secretaries. Fewer women train for the elite professions (i.e., Sciences, Engineering and Engineering Technology, Law, Medical, Computational Sciences, etc.). University statistics show that many women choose to study language arts while men focus on engineering and other science or mathematical science courses (Ikegulu, 1999, 2001). The fact that young Nigerian girls are not asked,

“What do you want to be when you grow up?” as boys are makes many of them feel frustrated. They express low self-esteem and actualization.

Most studies have assessed the differential effects of self-esteem of adolescents in relation to parental marital status (married, divorced/separated, or widowed/widowed), socioeconomic status, age-group, family emotionality, and school performance. With divorce on the rise, the issue of how divorce affects children has been the topic of interest over the years. Research indicated that divorce has long-term effects on the total family, but especially on children. According to Whitehead (1993), children do not recover after divorce and the disturbance of the family can have long-term psychological effects. It has been demonstrated that divorce has had an impact on issues such as anxiety and conflict (Slater & Haber, 1984), social desirability (Allen, Stoltenberg, & Rosko, 1990), self-concept, self-esteem, and self-actualization (Beer, 1989), family cohesiveness (Allen et al., 1990; Lanz, Iafate, Rosnati, & Scabini, 1999), school performance and grade point average (Beer, 1989) and achievement motivation (Allen et al., 1990).

Addressing the crucial relevance of the divorce issue as it relates to children and adolescents is very important to the mental and social development of the child. Consider for instance, the issue of divorce, which tends to be a significant current social ailment, especially as a result of the fact that it has an impact on the collective pool of children/minors within a given society. This, moreover, is something that is especially emphasized upon when considering it in light of the fact that the party that tends to be the most crucially impacted in the case of married couple separating [on the pretext of a divorce] is invariably the kid(s). This is since, in spite of the fact that each of the spouses suffer both emotional and psychological blows as a result of seeing a relationship

[typically] built on love deteriorating as a result of particular contentions; it is the child or children who are immediately affected as a result of a major rift in the parental guidance they had come to see as central to their existence.

The reason why divorce is a devastating experience for the children is that it is the children of today [within a given societal structure] that are to grow into the adults of tomorrow. The relevance of this lies within the fact that the upbringing of children, in concern to the features and characteristics of their school and home lives, comes to have an immediate effect upon the adults that they have grown into. It is apparent, thus speaking, that a child who has had a significant portion of his/her early life made inconsistent as a result of an atypical familial contention such as divorce would have to be compelled to do without his/her parents. Considering that childhood is one of the most crucial developmental stages of an individual's life renders the issue of divorce one that is crucial in today's Nigerian society.

### **Background and Significance**

During my literature review for this Thesis and throughout my research in education, psychology, and religion, I focused on the relationship between the educator and the learner, and the powerful influence this relationship has on the development of a child [the learner]. I was particularly interested in the potential of the educator to make up for hindrances in the learner's development (such as an inadequate father-figure), and help such "restrained" children or learners to establish stable identities and fulfill their potential.

My research findings revealed that children or learners who were "restrained in their becoming" (i.e., blocked in their development), inevitably had poor self-esteem

(Lanz, et al., 1999; Morrison, 1994; White, 1921, 1943, 1950/1952, 1988/1989; Whitehead, 1993). Their bad behaviour and poor academic performance tended to improve astonishingly when their self-esteem and/or self-actualization is bolstered and they are treated kindly and with respect.

My observations of many lecturers in the secular institutions in which I studied, shocked me by the disrespectful way they treated and spoke about children or learners. I also discovered that the majority of educators are not sufficiently aware of the part they play as significant role models for learners. Consequently, I devised a strategy by which educators can assist learners on their path towards becoming fully actualized individuals with firm identities. This strategy is largely based on the **respectful treatment of learners**, acknowledging them as people of worth, meeting their needs, and on the role modelling of mature behaviour on the part of the lecturer.

When I started my graduate program at the University of Nigeria, Ibadan, I was impressed with the fact that the philosophy I had developed for myself was exactly in line with the philosophy of education espoused by constructivists and most ardent religious scholars. It was exciting to find a strong emphasis on Christ in the Classroom and the integration of faith and learning. Now at last I can fully put into practice my research findings, and inspire other educators who have the same values and goals as I have.

Thus I have decided to take this opportunity to share my findings with you, and show “The Impacts of Religion and Education on The Self-Esteem of Adolescents from Divorced and Intact Families in Nigeria.” That is, I wanted to show how well religious doctrines relate to educational philosophies. Furthermore, Christ's own respectful treatment of children or learners was investigated with a view to helping educators treat



their learners as Christ would do. Finally, I hope to encourage you by suggesting some strategies which you can use in your own classroom to improve the self-esteem of your students, helping them simultaneously to establish solid identities and motivating them towards the realisation of their full potential, their self-actualization.

### **Causes and Reasons for Divorce in Nigeria**

After more than 16 years of military rule that resulted in the tree-year Biafran-Nigerian War, which was characterized by corruption, an underdeveloped infrastructure, misallocation of resources, and misappropriation of funds, power was peacefully transferred in Nigeria to a civilian government, and a new constitution was adopted in 1999. This oil-rich country has the human and natural resources to prosper and sustain its population of about 140 million. Nigeria is the most heavily populated country in Africa, yet it remains one of the poorest countries in the world. More than two out of three Nigerians live on less than US \$1 a day [i.e., the prevailing currency conversion rate is about US \$1 to Nigerian ₦130], and life expectancy is approximately 52 years for males and 60 years for females. The HIV/AIDS epidemic has had a devastating effect on the country; approximately 3.6 million adults and children are living with HIV, and 1.8 million children have been orphaned because of AIDS. Nigeria, particularly northern Nigeria, has some of the highest rates of early marriage in the world. The Child Rights Act, passed in 2003, raised the minimum age of marriage from 15 to 18 for girls. Age at marriage for males still remains at approximates between 30 to 40 years. However, federal law may be implemented differently at the state level; and to date, only a few of the country's 36 states have begun developing provisions to execute the law. To further complicate matters, Nigeria has three different legal systems operating simultaneously - -

civil, customary, and Islamic - - and state and federal governments have control only over marriages that take place within the civil system.

Domestic violence is a widespread problem; some studies report that up to 81 percent of all married women admit experiencing some form of verbal or physical abuse by their husbands. Research suggests that the lower the age at marriage [for females], the higher the risk of domestic violence. Some of these causes have been linked to Nigerian [African] religion and culture.

Issue of Dowry and the Role of the Man and Woman: The payment of dowry is a common practice in Africa, while dowry payments date back to Bible days, its meaning has changed. Dowry is now seen as purchasing the woman [i.e., right to privy], so the woman is seen as a property and not a helpmate. For many years when women were uneducated, men got away with treating them as a property. But with women lawyers, doctors, and other highly placed professionals, things are changing.

Because of the dowry, women are being treated different. Nigerians joke that a woman's place is in the kitchen. African men force respect out of their spouse by beating them instead of getting it through good leadership. The leadership role of a man is generally interpreted as that of a boss and servant, instead of the role stated in the Bible, as servant-leader, which Christ Himself demonstrated in [John chapter 13](#) when He washed the feet of His disciples.

Men and women are equal before God and men are only the leaders in their households as Christ is over the churches. Women who earn more than their husbands is a new concept that many people do not know how to deal with because for decades,

African men (and indeed men all over the world), have tied leading their households to financial dominance or more earning capacity.

Conflict Resolution: Africans have always resolved conflicts by going to the elders in the village or among the extended family. While this has served us well and I still recommend it, it's becoming a problem for us to do because this elders, for the most part, do not deal with the issues (e.g., adultery, household leadership, respect of property, etc.) brought before them because they are guilty of such atrocities themselves; thus, they only pacify the wife and husband. Because of our spiritual believes, we do not believe in airing our dirty laundry, which means help is not sought for marital problems until it is too late and when help is sought, a lot of emphasis is placed on what the "devil" did instead of taking responsibility for what happened and fixing it. Every marriage will have problems and, the faster you seek help, the better for your marriage.

Influence of Extended Family System: The extended family system has tremendous influence on a Nigerian [an African] marriage. A couple once told me that the husband's mother told both of them separately not to reveal what they earn to each other. In my speaking engagements, people have revealed to me how their husbands or wives listened to other families in another country (e.g., Cameroon, America, London, Ghana, Togo, etc.) and not to the spouse they live with here in Nigeria. One man actually told his wife that until he finished building a house in Nigeria they will continue to live in apartment with three kids; and when I ask him when he was moving back to Nigeria, he said not for a long time, but he believed building a house for his parents while his kids live in a bad neighborhood and go to a bad school district is the best thing. Many women

soon challenge the reasoning behind such thinking by refusing to combine their income (which is needed to face the bills in western countries - - you cannot bribe NEPA men to go away if you don't pay your bills). A lot of women also, choose not to combine their income with the husband because they think, it is the husband's job to pay bills - they'll rather buy the latest fashion and its accessories from Switzerland or Austria.

Extreme of the Women: While most of the dominance is men related, the women have also bought into the lies of the national organization of women (NOW). I do give marriage counseling and would not tell any woman to stay in an abusive relationship. I would suggest you separate (if physical or emotional abuse is involved) while seeking help from professional counselors or your church or mosque (hopefully your Pastor or Imam will know when to refer you for professional help). Divorce is not the better option. The man is still the head of the home ([Ephesians 5: 22](#) - leader among equals) and he should be accorded such respect. Don't usurp his authority because you earn more or throw him out because he is a Taxi Driver or a Labourer. You will get more done by gently nudging him to do things and occasionally showing tough love when necessary.

Spousal Age at Marriage: A high prevalence of child marriage exists in Nigeria. Nationwide, 20 percent of girls were married by age 15, and 40 percent were married by age 18. Child marriage is extremely prevalent in some regions; in the Northwest region, 48 percent of girls were married by age 15, and 78 percent were married by age 18. Although the practice of polygamy is decreasing in Nigeria, 27 percent of married girls aged 15–19 are in polygamous marriages. Married girls receive little or no schooling and virtually no married girls are in school; only two percent of 15–19-year-old married girls

are in school, compared to 69 percent of unmarried girls. Some 73 percent of married girls compared to eight percent of unmarried girls received no schooling, and three out of four married girls cannot read at all.

Large spousal age differences are common and may limit married girls' autonomy and decision-making ability. The younger a bride is, the greater the age difference between her and her spouse. In Nigeria, the mean age difference between spouses is 12.0 years if the wife marries before age 15, compared to 8.5 years if the wife marries at or after age 20. Spousal age differences are even greater when the girl is a second or third wife. In polygamous marriages, the mean age difference between spouses is 17.5 years, compared to 8.8 years in monogamous marriages.

First births have elevated risks. The youngest first-time mothers and their children are especially vulnerable to poor health outcomes. Eighty-four percent of first births to adolescent girls in Nigeria occur within marriage. Among married girls aged 15–19, 62 percent have already given birth. Almost one out of four married girls gave birth before age 15.

Women and Politics: Nigerian society virtually forbids women from holding political leadership positions or actively participating in politics. As of now, less than one percent of the political offices in Nigeria are held by women. They are allowed to vote, as they always have been, and help candidates run for office, but that doesn't make up for the political power that they lack. But the caliber of modern Nigerian woman is different from her past ancestors. Most of them accept their secondary, subservient status without much thought. They appear unconcerned about issues with wider political and social implications.

It is unsettling how many modern Nigerian women have a sense of political apathy compared to their grandmothers. What is the cause of this? Part of it may be the economic issues that women are facing as well.

Women and the Economy: The British gave the Nigerians little guidance on surviving economically in their absence. Their female domestic servants were simply sent home to cook, clean, and care for their children. Many of the men did not help in taking care of the traditional economic duties of the women, leaving the women very busy with chores and the family financially weakened. The low male income was not enough to support the entire Nigerian family without the women's financial input. However, society does not approve of them being overly active or productive in the economic system.

About one-half of women in Nigerian villages are being left by their husbands. Nowadays, most men do not cultivate land; instead, they go to cities to look for work and a 'better life.' The women left behind are normally helpless and have many mouths to feed. Many are forced to turn to subsistence farming. It is a hard and unforgiving life

that these women do not deserve. For some it is nothing but a game of survival. The joys and jokes that had filled the souls and spirits of men and women who attended work on the farm in pre-colonial times have been replaced by worn, tired faces. Work has simply become a way of expressing life and the desire to continue living.

In cities, life is not much better for women. A few fortunate educated women can acquire jobs. However, higher levels of education are hard to attain due to the colonial legacy. Some start their own small businesses such as shops and restaurants with the help of family funds, but money is often short as well. The only remaining choice is to become a petty trader, which many take. Petty traders carry small items, hoping to sell one to a passerby. This earns them a relatively small profit, just enough to make them remain below the poverty line. For many of these women, life is rough and they must fend for themselves and their children. The motor parks are infested with pan-handlers who sometimes rob these petty traders of their meager income.

Family and the Man-Woman Relationships: Since pre-colonial times, the traditional Nigerian family has dramatically changed. Families have gone from extended to nuclear; large to small. As the family relationship with their descendent group weakens, a sense of loyalty and security is lost.

Polygamy was gradually abandoned as Nigerians adopted Christianity, leaving many of today's relationships monogamous. Monogamy creates smaller families, which is good in many ways because it eliminates the jealousy that a wife would have for another wife and it gives birth to loving relationships. However, it also confines women. Many feel pressured to give birth to sons or risk 'expulsion' from the husband's family. As Mazi/Chief Charles Obikulu reflects on his grandmother's words: "She's only a

woman. I know in my heart that her achievements will not matter to her husband's relatives; they will judge her by the kind of family she was born into, the man she marries, and the children -- preferably males -- that she bears." After five years of marriage, one woman who gave birth to two beautiful daughters was sent away by her husband because she was unable to produce a male heir for him. Go Figure! This is Nigerian tradition at its best.

To top off this tension, many Nigerian men do not seem to know what they want. They are confused and stuck between two conflicting cultures and their ideas; traditional Nigerian and Western cultures.

Romance between Husband and Wife: My maternal grandfather had three wives that I did know and this is typical of men in his days. If they showed favoritism to one of the women, that woman was in trouble with the other wives. A man who is able to have sex with three different women does not need romance (men give romance to get sex, while women give sex to get romance, period!) For Africans, it is a 'game of nix,' a taboo to observe your parents in a romantic interlude; if anyone does that, we call them names "woman wrapper" or "Ruth". What gets on my nerves is when African men tell me that being romantic is a 'Western thing,' then I refer them to the Bible, which was written thousands of years ago and it has nothing to do with Western culture.

Being romantic with your wife or husband is the way to maintain and sustain your marriage. Women were created by God to be an emotional creature, while men are logical or analytical. For centuries, the African culture has forced women to work opposite the function of their God given hormone "estrogen." If an African woman asks



her husband for sex - - which often happens during her ovulation period - - she is called  
"Ashawo."

Divorce and the Treatment of Widows: Nigerian society frowns upon divorce. Women who divorced their husbands are ostracized by the husband's family as well as the society. Many believe that it dishonors the law of God. Consequently, many women trapped in unhealthy relationships do not divorce. Such negative repercussions make most modern-day Nigerian women choose to endure the abuses of an unhappy marriage rather than incur public outrage. Divorced women are often not allowed to see their children, and if they hold any position in the society, they are taken away. If a woman loses her husband [by death], she must fight alone against her husband's brothers for money or even her own children. She is not likely to remarry, because many men will not want to deal with the problems from her first husband's family.

Disinheritance of Wives and Daughters: The Disinheritance of the Girl-child and women in Nigerian cultures is, in effect, the disinheritance of daughters and wives, who are the very people that should be considered first. The case against certain tribal cultures, such as the '*Omenana Igbo*,' of disinheriting daughters and wives, more so widows in Iboland, cannot be more succinctly put than by Justice Niki Tobi, in his lead judgment in the Anambara State Appellate Court, on 10<sup>th</sup> April 1997. This was when he showed a change of heart and leadership, by taking the bull by the horns. He came up with a pioneer and landmark decision, in the *Mojekwu vs. Mojekwu* Case, in the *Nnewi Oli-Ekpe* Appeal Case, appealed from the lower Court. In the judgment, which was clearly in favor of the girl-child and women, he wrote:

“All human beings – male and female - are born freely, without any inhibition on grounds of sex; and that is constitutional. Any form of societal discrimination on ground of sex, apart from being unconstitutional, is antithetic to a civil society built on the tenets of democracy, which we have freely chosen

as a people. We need not travel all the way to Beijing to know that some of our customs, including the *Nnewi* “*Oli-Ekpe*” custom, relied upon by the appellant, are not consistent with our civilized world in which we all live today, including the appellant. In my humble view, it is the monopoly of God to determine the sex of a baby and not the parents. Although the scientific world disagrees with the divine truth, I believe that God, the Creator of human beings, is also the final authority of who should be male or female. Accordingly, for a customary law to discriminate against a particular sex is to say the least an affront to the Almighty God Himself. Let nobody do such a thing. On my part, I have no difficulty in holding that “*Oli-Ekpe*” custom of *Nnewi* is repugnant to natural justice, equity and good conscience.” (Found at <http://writersblock.biafranigeriaworld.com/oyibo-e-odinamadu/2005apr06-aka-ikenga-ohanaeze-2004-asaba-retreat-part5.html>)

The judgment has been acclaimed everywhere as a landmark decision. Some other such judgments followed. See Law And Practice Relating to Women’s Inheritance Rights In Nigeria: An Overview by Joy Ezeilo, University of Nigeria Nsukka, Enugu Campus.

### **Some Definitions and Terminology**

Adolescent years are a time of change, and change in different areas. In U.S. society, this is a period when many young people start to separate themselves from their families, exploring who they are as individuals, distinct from the relations they have had with other family members. They test their world and themselves to see what their relationship is with friends and community. Many question or push against the beliefs that they have learned from their parents or guardians. They also look for others with whom they can fit in—close friends, church groups, gangs, school clubs, and sports teams.

Table 1

Definition and Terminology

<b>Emancipation:</b>	Freeing of the child by the parents
<b>Identity:</b>	The self, the ID
<b>Restrained in becoming:</b>	Blocked/hindered in development
<b>Self-actualization:</b>	Self-realisation; fulfillment of potential
<b>Self-concept:</b>	Combination of identity and self-esteem
<b>Self-esteem:</b>	Self-respect; self-worth
<b>Self-transcendence:</b>	Moving beyond the self
<b>Significance Attribution:</b>	Giving of meaning

NOTE:

- These findings apply not only to restrained adolescents but to youths as well.
- All words in bold throughout the text have been supplied by the writer of this article.
- The masculine pronouns he, his, him should be taken to include the feminine gender at all times.

Adolescents also experience physical changes in their bodies, many of which are directly linked to their sexuality. And in the majority the U.S. culture, sexuality, even for adults, is a difficult issue. The fact that many people feel uncomfortable talking about it, especially with non-adults, combined with media images of sex in terms of violence or power, and teenage sexual activity spoken about only in negative terms, makes sexuality for many teenagers very confusing. As adolescents learn what their communities and the dominant culture value, they may face even more struggles. In this context, issues of bias and oppression must be confronted. While researchers have shown that toddlers are already internalizing power structures and knowledge of who "fits" and who doesn't, these issues take on particular significance as teenagers feel their way toward their own identity.

For the purpose of this Thesis, the term "divorced" referred to the legal separation/divorce of the biological parents of the children; therefore, these children would have been living with only one of his/her biological parents. The term "intact"

referred to a family in which both biological parents are still married; that is, live in union with their children. The term “self-esteem” referred to one’s internal feelings and evaluations of self, based on one’s perceived image. Other definitions and terminologies are as indicated in Table 1.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES**

Research indicated varying results on the topic of divorce and the self-esteem of adolescents. Some research indicated significant differences between the self-esteem of children of divorced families and that from intact families. To compare children from divorced homes with children of intact homes, Bynum and Durm (1996) surveyed adolescents, ages 13 to 18, by having the participants complete a demographic questionnaire and the Culture-free Self-Esteem Inventory (Battle, 1992). Results indicated that even though both groups tended to have a high level of self-esteem, the group from intact families scored significantly higher than those from divorced families. Beer (1989) conducted a study that indicated self-esteem was significantly impacted by divorce. The participants, 61 children from grades five and six, were given the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (Coopersmith, 1984), a demographic questionnaire, and other personality inventories. Beer found that children from divorced homes scored significantly lower on the self-esteem inventory than those from intact homes.

Conversely, other research findings indicated that there was no significant difference in the self-esteem of children of divorced families and that of intact families. Durm, Giddens and Blandenship (1997), conducted a study using the Culture-free Self-Esteem Inventory (Battle, 1992). The sample studied included 108 students, ages 15 to 19. Although there was a significant difference in self-esteem in the gender of the adolescents, girls had significantly lower self-esteem than boys and there was no significant difference in the self-esteem scores in relation to parental marital status. Hofmann and Zippco (1986) compared self-esteem scores from the Coopersmith Self-

esteem Inventory (Coopersmith, 1984) from children of divorced and intact families. There was no significant difference in the scores. Gonzalez, Field, Lasko, Harding, Yando, and Bendell (1995) administered several scales measuring intimacy with parents and peers, self-esteem, depression, and risk-taking to 440 adolescents. Although there were slight differences in the variables, no significant differences were found in self-esteem.

### Overview and Introduction

The literature appeared to support opposing points of view. There were those who supported the hypothesis that adolescents' self-esteem was affected by divorce, while there was an equal amount of literature that did not support this hypothesis. The literature on the factors that contributed to overall self-esteem suggested examining self-esteem in relation to school success. According to McCombs & Forehand (1989), divorce was identified as one of the most stressful events in the lives of adolescents. They added that while school success was only one factor that contributed to the overall stress experienced by adolescents with divorced parents, it was noted as one of the most sensitive indicators that contributed to stress and self-esteem. Moreover, school performance following a divorce was not the same for all individuals (McCombs & Forehand, 1989). However, they pointed out, there are buffers or extraneous/concomitant variables that mediate the impact of the divorce on school success. The two buffers identified were: (a) extended school days, and (b) after school programs. It was suggested that certain school programs or extracurricular activities may reduce academic gaps

between those children of divorced and intact families and thus indirectly affect self-esteem.

The Women's Educational Equity Act (WEEA) Program has funded many projects that address the issue of self-esteem among women and girls. Innovative research materials and curricula developed in these projects are distributed by the WEEA Publishing Center (Please See the Website at <http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/familydevelopment/DE6779.html>).

An educational focus on self-esteem begins in early childhood. One of the publishing center's most recent publications, *Creating Sex-Fair Family Daycare: A Guide for Trainers*, offers activities and guidance to day care providers to help promote gender equity and positive self-image with the children they care for. Daycare providers, by promoting non-stereotyped play, communicate positive messages to children to reinforce that it is okay to cross the sex-stereotyped boundaries (The Educator's Guide, 2000).

*Maximizing Young Children's Potential* helps educators and parents identify sex-role stereotypes and change their interactions with young children. The manual shows teachers how to use workshops to address issues of inequity and create a nonsexist environment for the children in their classrooms and it also includes training resources and an extensive bibliography for both parents and educators (Please See the Website at <http://www.drheller.com/pm.html>).



The transition from childhood to adolescence is a difficult time for girls and affects their performance in school. There is a strong relationship between math and science and adolescent self-esteem. *Add-Ventures for Girls: Building Math Confidence* is a recent WEEA publication chosen as an Exemplary Math Material by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Science, Mathematics, and Environmental Education. Its experiential exercises help girls feel more comfortable with and more able to succeed in mathematics. *Add-Ventures for Girls* provides methods to combat the internal (attitudinal) and external (societal) barriers girls face which prevent them from reaching their mathematics potential (Slater & Haber, 1984; Traille, 1999).

Developing self-concept in middle school can lay important groundwork for healthy self-esteem through adult life. *Fair Play: Developing Self-Concept and Decision-Making Skills in the Middle School* by Florida State University, is a curriculum for middle school students in grades 6-9. It helps participants improve female and male self-concepts, learn to make sound decisions, communicate effectively, solve problems, and get along with others. It easily integrates into language arts, physical education, math and science or social studies classrooms (Slater & Haber, 1984; Traille, 1999; Tucker, 2001).

Dropping out can be prevented by helping students deal with self-esteem issues early in their school career. *Going Places: An Enrichment Program to Empower Students*, published in 1991 and based on a project conducted in the San Diego City Schools, is a middle school curriculum that targets those students most at-risk of dropping out. The 18-week program addresses such topics as self-worth, success, values, and communication. Each topic builds upon the previous one to create a bridge between

students' low self-esteem and lack of belief in school success to positive self-image and, eventually, high school graduation (Slater & Haber, 1984; Traille, 1999; Tucker, 2001; Van-Ransburg, et al., 1981; White, 1988, 1989; Worthington, 1999).

Adolescence is a time of diverse and complex feelings for young women. Those feelings can be extremely complicated if that teen woman is also a mother. Educational Equity Concepts, Inc., has developed two videos to address the issues of education, work, love, and money as they relate to teenagers and parenting. *Mixed Messages: Teens Talk about Sex, Romance, Education, and Work* stars strong inner-city women who have courageously faced their problems, continued their education, and participated in nontraditional work programs. In *Breaking Stereotypes: Teens Talk About Raising Children* teen mothers eloquently discuss strategies for raising their own children free of sex-role limitations (Please visit the Websites at <http://www.drheller.com/pm.html> and <http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/familydevelopment/DE6779.html>).

. Recognizing that single mothers confront special challenges in managing their lives and the lives of their children, this resource guide offers fun activities for mothers to do with their children as well as exercises and suggestions for single mothers on how to establish and maintain a positive and healthy self-image (Poddar, 1988).

Adulthood is often the culmination of self-esteem issues for women. Because of societal barriers and negative messages created in early years, many women believe they have few options for self-sufficiency. *The Woman Within* examines the role of a positive self-image for a woman's personal growth. It presents activities to allow women to be

comfortable with themselves and to use that comfort to make changes in their lives (National Center for Health Statistics, 1999, 2001; Pearson, 1988; Reilly & Lewis, 1983).

Self-esteem for young women with disabilities can be a double bind. *Barrier Free: Serving Young Women with Disabilities* by Linda Marks and Harilyn Rousso in conjunction with the YWCA of New York City, addresses these issues surrounding disabled young women. The book is a step-by-step training manual for groups that wish to provide services to teenagers with disabilities. It discusses the topics of sexuality, independence, career development, and role models in relation to adolescent girls with disabilities. It also combines exercises with practical, real-life examples of the obstacles facing young women with disabilities and how they can be overcome (Hofman & Zippco, 1986; Huntley, 1991; Johnson, et al., 1992; Slater & Haber, 1984).

Educational Equity Concepts, Inc., directed a project with funds from the WEEA Program entitled Educational Resource Center: Furthering Opportunities for Women and Girls with Disabilities. Project staff is collecting information and making it available to educational institutions and organizations as well as individual women and girls who are disabled. Information will include existing documents identifying problems and issues surrounding disabilities; successful model programs in educational institutions; and practical strategies and resources to help institutions increase the enrollment of women and girls with disabilities (Please visit the Website at <http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/familydevelopment/DE6779.html>).

## An Affront to God: Discrimination, Abuse, and Violence against Women and Children

Nigerian men and the Christian Church should stop the affront to God by discriminating, abusing, segregating, and suppressing women who also are created in God's own image as themselves. See the Story of Creation in Genesis One, which activity preceded the story in Genesis Two, which is really an after-thought. The story in Genesis Two should not have any relevance at all, without the first and original story in Genesis One cancelled. However, there is no record anywhere that the first Story of the Creation of human beings, Man and Woman in God's Own Image, was ever cancelled or abrogated by God.

If the second story should have any relevance at all, does it mean that two women were created, one in each story, while only one man was created, and who was featured in the two stories? It is the story in Genesis Two that Christian men - - Christian leaders and Church hierarchies - - prefer and that is the one they push to the forefront, read and quote in the churches, That is the one they rely on to oppress and subjugate women. However, all we know is that, as Christian women recapitulate in one of the choruses they sing at funerals: "*Adam ebuteli anyi onwu! Obu mmehie Adam! Adam egbu-go-kwa-ni-anyi-o! Obu mmehie Adam!* (TRANSLATION → '*Adam has brought us death! It is the transgressions of Adam! Adam has killed us! It is the sins of Adam!*')

They should also stop the affront to God by bringing violence on children, oppressing and suppressing them and depriving them of proper childhood and growing up slowly as they should in the care and nurture of their proper parents and guardians. After all, God gave them to parents to care for, nurture and bring up in the love and fear of Him.

See the Gospel according to [Saint John 20: 1-18](#). Prejudices against women in Jewish culture and under the Roman government extended to the church hierarchies by their suppressing the stories of the presence and roles of women as disciples of Jesus. They also minimized the relevance and importance of the fact that it was a woman, the most outstanding one among them, who they have branded a prostitute, that saw two Angels in The tomb after Christ had risen; and that it was to her that the Risen Christ showed Himself first; that it was she that the Risen Lord made His Emissary, whom He sent to go tell the cowardly and cowering Men Disciples, in their hiding place, that He had risen; and that he would meet them in their hiding place in Galilee. The hiding place was the Upper Room, which was the Room of the Last Supper. Though Peter ran to the Tomb with John and other Disciples when they heard the Good News, yet the Risen Lord did not let them, not even Peter, see Him until He met them in their hiding place.

The facts that there were women among the people who were present at the ascension; who received the flame of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost in the Upper Room; and among the three thousand who were baptized by Peter afterwards. Therefore, women were very much in the stream of grace. But all these were suppressed and obliterated from the Scriptures.

The Upper Room is the Room of the Last Supper. The Holy Men of God, in their spotless white, crimson red and purple robes, and golden crowns, were very busy celebrating the Last Supper and baptizing believers without women, as well as in suppressing women in every other way, while the Upper Room was taken by Moslems. All the Crusades of the Middle Ages, which they deny included women, could not secure

the Upper Room for Christians. It is still in the hands and control of Moslems to this day, while the Holy Men of God are busy suppressing women!

If it had been to a man that the Risen Christ showed Himself first, only God knows that women would not be allowed into the churches at all by men. The story of the appearance of the Risen Christ first to a woman could not be obliterated or suppressed by the Christian Church leaders and hierarchies. Thereafter, the presence and activities of women were obliterated from the Scriptures by the early Roman churches, probably the Roman Catholic Church. They have edited the Scriptures out of its originality, have continued to do so, resulting in what we know now as the Bible. They have also continued to tell incomplete Bible stories and to give wrong interpretations to the Scriptures.

To cap it all up, Saul of Tarsus, who received a dramatic and miraculous conversion, and became Saint Paul afterwards, instituted his own Gospel while playing up to the galleries of the Jewish and Roman authorities. He said and wrote more to damage the existence of women and their image as human beings, who are also created by God in His own Image, in Jesus' own Church! For instance, in [I Corinthians 14: 34](#), he wrote:

“Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is a shame for a woman to speak in the church. That anybody who ignores his word will be ignored. (There was no mention of the situation where women are not married/do not have husbands or no longer have husbands. He did not also say who will ignore the people who ignore his words).”

And in [I Corinthians 11: 4](#), he wrote that:

“Any man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonours his head  
A woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonours her head.  
A man is the image of God. A woman is the glory of man. A woman is created for  
a man. For this reason, a woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head.  
The sign of authority is her hair or hair covering. In the Lord, a woman is not  
independent. A woman came from a man, and a man is born of woman. Long hair  
is a curse on a man. Long hair is a glory to a woman.”

Saint Paul forbade women to show their hair, which he said is their glory, in the church. That is why women of Nigeria, especially Muslim women are condemned for wearing head-ties on their heads, in the Masque and elsewhere, at all times. This drudgery is also extended to little girls by overzealous and misguided Church Wardens and Ushers. The covering of hair has also been extended to women in the Courts in Nigeria. According to Saint Paul, the sign of the authority of men over women is her long hair and the covering of her hair. The only saving grace is that, in Nigerian culture, as indeed in all the tribes and/or ethnic groups of Nigeria, women have come to regard long hair as a way of beautifying themselves. Head-ties have also come to be regarded as part of their outfits.

The foregoing are the portions of the scriptures commonly read in the churches and preached on ceremonial occasions, especially at the ones that concern women the most, such as on Mothering Sundays [Mothers’ Day]. But when the same Saint Paul had another dramatic and miraculous conversion, which brought him to a change of heart and new statements, such as the one in [Galatians 3: 26-29](#), he acquiesced:

“For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek; there is no longer slave or free. There is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise, it does not seem to have any meaning or effect on most of the Holy Christian Churchmen and the Church hierarchies, who ignore it, while considering the appropriateness of priestly ordination of women.”

And the other pronouncement is in his Epistle to the Philippians as recorded in [Philippians 4:8-9](#), when Saint Paul stated:

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Most of the Holy Churchmen, leaders and hierarchies did not take it from him or believe him.”

Also when James, the brother of Jesus, was eventually converted and believed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, he wrote in his Epistle to all the Jews scattered all over the world, in [James 1: 27](#): “Pure religion and undefiled before God is this: To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world, the Holy Churchmen and Church hierarchies did not also take it from him or believe him. Rather, right before their eyes and under their noses and in their charges, widows are being oppressed and punished, and orphans are neglected and abused, children kidnapped and sold into slavery without the Holy Men of God running to their rescue.”

### **The Impact of Divorce on the Family System**

Divorce has a major impact on the family system. Every individual of the family will suffer short and long term effects. There is much debate over whether a divorce is



the wise choice in the midst of infidelity, physical, psychological and/or sexual abuse at the hands of their spouse. It can be argued that divorce is the best solution for the children of high conflict, aggressive and hostile marriages. The fact remains that divorce carries with it many negative effects on children, teens, spouses, parents and the extended family members. Divorce impacts the careers of people and the well-being of society. Long-term negative consequences are experienced regardless of the accepted Biblical grounds for the allowance of divorce. Marriage partners choose defense mechanism instead of healing to endure the conflict of a marriage gone badly. It would be wise for all people to recognize the damage caused to the family by divorce (Amato & Keith, 1991).

People still choose divorce in the face of overwhelming data that verifies the harm it causes. Everett Worthington (1999) described the state of mind and digression couples take when moving toward divorce. He states: "Defenses help people cope with pain. They also shove the partners farther down the slippery slope toward disengagement and divorce. When interactions become fixed into long-term stable patterns, partners conclude that the relationship is poor. From then onward, they search for data that support their conclusion. They ignore data that disapprove their conclusions. Whatever the partner does that might be construed as positive, the spouse discounts as being temporary, done at the instigation of the counselor, or failing to reflect the partner's true feelings. Conclusions about the relationship provide the backdrop against which the people interpret the next day's interaction." He concludes, "Threatening divorce sets people thinking about the possibility, and what people think about can become a reality. People pay attention to the negative aspects of their relationship selectively once they

begin to think about divorce, and they look for alternatives and selectively focus on the positive aspects of the alternatives" (pp. 51 & 244).

People do not consider the great consequences to all the members of the family when they take the path of divorce as their solution to their problems. They will justify in their own minds the right to end the marriage, regardless of the obvious pain it will cause. To those who are considering divorce as the solution to their misery of being married, let me encourage you to consider the facts first (Gonzalez, et al., 1995; Gottman, 1994; Hawley, 1996; Henson & Eller, 1999).

Consistent with the research findings and results from the reviewed literature are the facts indicated by Fagan and Rector (2000):

- 1) Social science research reveals that the effects of divorce not only impact a child into adulthood, but they also affect the next generation of children as well.
- 2) Children from divorced families drop out of school at twice the rate of children of intact families.
- 3) The single best predictor of teen suicide is parental divorce and living in a single parent household.
- 4) Children of divorced parents are significantly more likely to become delinquent by the age 15, than are children whose own parents are married.
- 5) Drug use in children is lowest in the intact married family.
- 6) There is a lower rate of graduation from high school and college and fewer college courses finished.

- 7) Children of divorced read, spell, and have math skills that are lower than intact families.
- 8) Children of divorce repeat a grade more frequently than children of intact families.
- 9) The college attendance rate is 60% lower for children of divorced families compared to children of intact families.
- 10) Divorce has been found to be associated with a higher incidence of depression, withdrawal from friends and family; aggressive, impulsive, or hyperactive behavior; and either withdrawing from participation in the classroom or becoming disruptive.
- 11) Adult children of divorced parents experience mental health problems significantly more often than do the adult children of intact families.
- 12) Children younger than five years of age are found to be vulnerable to emotional conflicts occurring during the separation and divorce of the parents.
- 13) Older children often withdraw from their home and seek intimacy away from the home.
- 14) If divorce occurs when they are teenagers (12 to 15 years of age), they tend to react by attempting to avoid growing up or by attempting to speed through adolescence.
- 15) Teenagers tend to experience increased aggression, loss of self-confidence, and loneliness.
- 16) Boys of divorced families are more likely to be depressed than girls.

- 17) The child's emotional suffering can be played out over the next three decades of the child's life.
- 18) Divorced fathers are less likely to have a close relationship with their children; and the younger the children at the time of the divorce the less likely the father will have regular contact with the children.
- 19) 40% of parents are so stressed by the divorce that their child-rearing behavior suffers. They frequently change from rigid to permissive behavior and from emotional distant to emotionally dependent.
- 20) After divorce, the children usually become more emotionally distant from both the custodial and non-custodial parent.
- 21) Boys, living with their mothers, respond with more hostility to parental divorce than girls do.
- 22) Girls fare worse when living with adult men, either their father or stepfather.
- 23) As adults, children are 50% less likely to be close to their parents as children of intact families.
- 24) Divorce diminishes the capability of children to handle conflict.
- 25) Married children of divorce are more likely to be unhappy, to escalate conflicts, to reduce communication with their spouses, to argue, to shout when arguing, and to assault their spouses physically when they argue.
- 26) Fear of peer rejection is twice as likely among adolescents of divorced families.
- 27) Children of divorced parents do more poorly in ratings by their parents and teachers on their peer relationships, hostility toward adults, anxiety, withdrawal, inattention, and aggression compare to children with intact families.

- 28) Clinical depression rates overall were highest among divorced women, but divorced men showed the highest rates among those who had been previously depressed. Depression was more acute among those divorced who did not have a consistent conflict, and among those who were socially isolated.
- 29) 50% of divorced men in American pay their full support consistently.
- 30) 25% of divorced men make partial inconsistent payments
- 31) 25% of divorced men pay no support.
- 32) The probability of divorce for children of divorced parents is twice the risk of children of intact families.
- 33) Daughters of divorced parents tend to divorce more frequently than do the sons of divorced parents, with the risk being as high as 87% during the earlier years of marriage for daughters of divorced parents than for intact families.
- 34) When the parents of both spouses have divorced, the risk of divorce is increased by as much as 62% in the early years of marriages, which declines to 20% by the 11<sup>th</sup> year of marriage.
- 35) Following a divorce, children are more likely to stop practicing their faith (Hawley, 1996; Hetherington, 1993; Holmes, 1975; Huntley, 1991; Sire, 1990; Tucker, 2001) and women and children suffer most economically (The Educator's Guide, 2000).
- 36) According to the U.S. Census figures, 21 percent of recently divorced women were below the poverty line, compared to only nine percent of recently divorced men (Pearson, 1988; NCHS, 1999, 2001).

## **Scriptural Denotation**

Our Lord Jesus Christ offers encouragement to those who are being hammered by the damaging effects of divorce. The Scriptures encourage those who are victims of divorce to continue their lives in hope of a healed future. The affects of divorce remain for many years, but there is life after divorce. In many ways divorce is more difficult to overcome than the loss of a loved one to death. Complete healing can come to all parties of divorce when they allow the marvelous grace of God to bathe their wounds.

The information that describes the impact of divorce on the family is very discouraging. These statistics can devastate an individual and can bring on mental, physical and spiritual depression. Therefore consider the following Scripture before considering the effects of divorce on the family. There is hope in Christ Jesus for a better future for you and your family members. Please spend the next few moments considering the following Scriptures from the New King James version of the Holy Bible (1981 1989) and the Life Application Bible and the New International version (NIV) of the Men's Devotional Bible (1993).

- I. "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart." [Galatians 6:9 NKJV](#).
- II. "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. Trust in the Lord forever, for in YAH, the Lord, is everlasting strength." [Isaiah 26:3-4](#).

- III. "But those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not be faint." [Isaiah 40:26](#).
- IV. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." [Proverbs 3:5-6](#).
- V. "We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed ? always carrying about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body." [II Corinthians 4: 8-10](#).
- VI. "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." [Matthews 6:33](#).

### **Impacts on Parents and the Total Family**

The parental process suffers greatly due to divorce. Usually one of the parents will lose the opportunity to grow in their opportunity to parent children. The fact that one parent will be limited in time spent with their children hinders the learning curve of parenting. These parents do not have the opportunity to exercise parenting skills in step-parent situations due to external forces placed upon them by the non-custodial parent of the step-children. Usually one parent will sacrifice this portion of parenting. This is difficult for both parents even in the best of circumstances. Facing the loss of the parental role, as one has known it, creates tremendous amounts of turmoil. The non-custodial parent may feel that the custodial parent has won. This leads to hateful and nasty custody

battles, conflicts about visitation and support, and property settlement (Fagan & Rector, 2000).

Parents experience a change of environments. The parental process suffers because of change of environment. Many times parents find themselves moving to a different house in a different part of town. The loss of familiar surroundings shakes their sense of safety and security. Usually this scenario is increased due the need of each parent to survive in their new life. Their friends become his or her friends, relationships need to be redefined, and new relationships formed. These circumstances can leave a person deeply hurt, both emotional and psychologically. Many times the emotional and psychological wounds play out in property distribution. The fight is not over who gets the dishes. The underlying problem is dealing with the breakup of a family system (Gottman, 1994).

The parental process also suffers because of the feelings of failure toward keeping their covenant with each other and God. Many parents try to deny this truth, but it plays a major role in the parental skills. Parents have a hard time mentoring their children with a cloud of failure hanging over their heads. Overcoming this loss of expectation, and acknowledging that the marriage has failed affects not only the current episodes of their life but future ones also. It involves taking oneself out of the marriage psychologically. This can become the arena for continued expressions of unresolved feelings and negative reactions to other losses that come in the life cycle (Gallagher & Waite, 2000).



I believe Dr. Tim Clinton and Dr. Gary Sibcy address these possible circumstances in their discussions on attachment behaviors (Clinton, 1999; Clinton & Sibcy, 2002):

"Relationships define the quality of our lives. If we have safe, secure marriages, we're generally happy and fulfilled; if our marriages are tortured seas of strife and mistrust, we're generally sad, confused, in pain. If our relationships with our children are sensitive, open, and loving, woven together with strong, resilient filaments, they can weather the storms of teen rebellion and those awkward years that follow. But if our relationships with our children are forced and dissonant, each side mistrusting the other, rebellion can become open warfare, and the years that follow can deteriorate into permanent estrangement."

A question often asked is: "Does divorce diminish the parent's ability to raise their children in a safe environment? Divorce does seem to diminish parenting skills and practices. Career changes impact parenting. Usually one or both parents find themselves being hurled back into the work place. The ability to earn a substantial income affects the parental role in families of divorce. Careers are influenced by divorce through legal statutes, financial and economic status, child-care considerations, medical problems, age, gender-related issues and many other factors. Only a few cases arise where the supported parent does not have to work to meet the demands of raising children. This takes away from time with the children and thus creates many changes within the family of divorce. The older the parents the more handicapped they become in the workplace. The challenge of being away from the workplace due to family life limits their recent work experience, limits the entry-level positions into the workplace due to their age, and increases their need to continue their education because of their lack of computer proficiency. Research

shows, for example, that women with multiple roles, such as mother and wage earner have increased self-doubt, anxiety, guilt, and depression. In addition, Gallagher and Waite (2000) found in their research that many women face this burden in the parental role. The current, shocking poor financial situation facing women and children after divorce effectively pushes many wives away from investments in their families and toward investments in their own earning power- as a kind of insurance against divorce (Banks, 2002; Worthington, 1999).

### **The Emotional Impacts on the Spouses**

Divorce just does not suddenly happen. John Gottman contributes this demise to negatives in a relationship that tear down the fibers of marriage (Gottman, 1994):

"It's important to keep in mind that negativity comes in many different guises. A marriage can be harmed by too much of it or certain types of it. Namely, when negative energy includes great stubbornness, contempt, defensiveness, or withdrawal from interaction, the results on the marriage can be devastating. And when a couple fails to find the equilibrium of a stable marital style, then they are vulnerable to having those corrosive, negative forces eat away at their marriage."

Usually it is the result of years of difficulty and indecision. Once the pain, bitterness, and confusion of a broken relationship reach the separation stage, divorce may be inevitable. Both spouses have a flood of emotions ranging from anger to uncertainty. Divorce is a drastic step for a couple to take. The results of which involve strong feelings of sadness, anger, anxiety, guilt, betrayal, embarrassment and shame. Clinton and Sibcy

(2002) alluded to this as '*boiling emotions*' that damage communication between two people:

"One family expert characterized the process of divorce negotiations as 'one of the most demanding tasks that rational beings are expected to perform.' And based on what I've seen, he's right. And there's little wonder why. In some form or another, the battle over the things of divorce brings together a rush of boiling emotions ' including abandonment, anxiety, betrayal, inadequacy, loneliness, rage."

Divorce is a stigma stamped on the name of each spouse that follows them for the entire life. They are marked as failures by the Christian community, and considered a statistic in the masses of society of people who could not make it. Divorce must be mourned just like a death, and yet, its results will never fade. The long-run effects of divorce on the spouses affect every aspect of their life. Their social life takes a dramatic change. Their "ecosystem of sorts is shaken." Again, John Gottman (1994) illustrates this in his exposure in dealing with couples:

"The balance between negativity and positivity seems to be the key dynamic in what amounts to the emotional ecology of every marriage. Like the atmosphere or oceans, the health of an intimate relationship is an ecosystem of sorts, one where there are crucial rates of emotional exchange. If these rates are in balance, love thrives; when they get far out of balance, then the love between a couple can start to wither and die, like an endangered species starved of its basic nutrients."

Suddenly they find themselves alone in a very corrupt world of dating. The guilt of a failed relationship with a person they promised their life to bleeds over into any new relationship they form. The stress is demanding as they try to balance their recovery from divorce, the pressure of their children to refrain from any new relationships with the

opposite sex, and their own emotions. Jealousy and rejection become major triggers for uncontrollable outburst of anger and/or depression. This is especially true if their former spouse seems to move on with their life. Self-esteem and one's ability to trust the opposite sex freezes them in place. They feel stuck in place with issues of future relationships, remarriage, and step-parenting hovering over them, like a storm cloud waiting to pour rain. They are literally on a rollercoaster of emotions. Godly counsel can help them formulate a plan to climb out of this episode in their life, but they will always be scarred.

### **Impacts on the Extended Family and Family Caregivers**

Divorce is far reaching and impacts every section of families. The grandparents, stepparents and family caregivers are no exception to this fact. Many times these people are refused access to the children they have loving attachments with. They are made to feel as intruders in the life of these children. Great conflict can occur when these loved ones attempt to see each other. Visitation from the extended family system is a large issue for all the participants of divorce and it excludes no one.

Federal and state legal mandated visitation rights extended to grandparents and other family caregivers have become a popular issue in recent years in most third and industrialized nations. The legal system has responded to this issue. All 50 states currently have some type of visitation laws for grandparents. Stepparents and caregivers can petition the courts for visitation with loved ones. There are limitations, however, on who and when they may visit. The challenge is that no law or legal system can legislate peaceful solutions to wounded hearts of loved ones who desire to spend time with each

other but are hindered by others. This hostility can cause great harm to a child who longs for a relationship with those they are accustomed to seeing.

The 2000 US Supreme Court's decision in the case of *Troxel vs. Granville* opened the door for non-parental persons to petition the courts for visitation rights. The court agreed that parents have a fundamental right to make decisions about raising their children, but the court did not agree that the permissive visitation statute of Washington State was unconstitutional. Many states do not see the visitation of non-parental members of the family as a severe restriction on the right of parents to control the rearing of the children. The results on the children in these situations are far reaching. I find in my ministry to family members of divorce where visitation is denied to the grandparents or other caregivers to cause marked behavioral symptoms in the children. Children may display (Craig, 1989; Fagan & Rector, 2000; Hetherington, 1993; Johnson, Kolondny, & Masters, 1992; Worthington, 1999):

- Anger and Resentment
- Refusal to follow simple rules, such as cleaning their rooms
- Decline in school performance
- Withdrawal from other significant others
- Distrust of other adults
- Lack of respect for people in authority
- Lack of respect for rules
- Lying and Disorderliness
- Secretive habits, such as writing letters, phone calls, etc.
- Inability to form healthy attachments
- Inability to express their feelings in the presence of the custodial parent and Hatred
- Bashing of their custodial parent in presence of grandparents or caregivers
- Inappropriate views of reality that form as a result of pressure

from grandparents or others to children  
know the home situation of these

Even after the divorce is final, it goes against the nature of children to accept this truth. As we have learned, children try everything to reunite the parents. Grandparents and others can harm the stability of children of divorce by promoting a sense of false hope in these children's mind. Instead, children of divorce need support that is honest and stable. They need to realize that others can be trusted, and that promises can be kept. Grandparents have the opportunity to build trust for others into these children by allowing them to observe what a safe and secure relationship provides for them. Grandparents, sometimes, are the only link to a child's understanding of God's plan for healthy relationships. This link to love is vital in the life of a child and their early attachment formulation. Dr. Clinton and Sibcy spoke strongly to this necessity of a nurturing childhood:

"The Genesis account reminds us of the power of His love and of love itself, as well as the fact that He's given us other intimate relationships like those with our spouses, our children, our parents (grandparents) ' those who are supposed to be there for us through thick and thin ' to help fill our hearts and our longings."[\[18\]](#)

The only hope for the divorced family is to break the vicious cycle of out-rights dependability and utter dependency being started in our generation.

Although Scriptures make it clear, and psychological research confirms that people are not islands unto themselves. The effects of sins passed from generation to generation, and attachment theory helps describe how this process unfolds. [\[19\]](#). And according to

[Deuteronomy 5:9](#), "For I, the Lord your God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me." The testimony of lasting relationships can and do help children of divorce to experience the goodness of marriage.

### **The Impacts on Age Groups of Children**

If the marital conflict results in a divorce, the scars run deeper. Yes, there are marriages where this is truly the only way to stop the fighting. And many books based on studies of post-divorce families have tried to paint a picture that it's not as bad as we thought. Well, it is at least as bad as we think it is, if not worse. The positive outcomes are said to occur when there is post-divorce cooperation between the parents. So how many amicable marriages are you aware of? Besides, we are still just learning about the long-term effects of growing up in a divorced family, especially on the ability of individuals to trust the vows of marriage.

Children of divorce families are at great emotional disadvantage. Their longing for their parents to keep the family intact outweighs the solutions offered to them for recovery. These children never lose their desire for their parents to remarry. The exposure to marital conflict, the chronic tension, abusive behavior, and direct involvement of these children in the breakup of the family brings significant emotional and medical problems.

Children have a more difficult time processing their emotions than do adults. Children of divorced families have less parental attention, less love and supervision, and therefore, they struggle more with feelings of inadequacy and insecurity. Much of the

Table 2

The Impacts of Divorce on Various Age Groups

<p>The Impact of Divorce on Infants: Birth to 18 Months</p> <p>The aftermath of divorce on infants can be identified in their behavior. Infants notice the change within the home in the energy level and emotional state of the parent. Older infants realize when one parent is missing from the home.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More irritability, crying and fussing</li> <li>• Changes in their sleeping habits, napping, and other daily routines</li> <li>• Nervous and fearful</li> <li>• Uneasy stomach</li> <li>• Loss of appetite</li> <li>• Irregular eating habits</li> </ul>
<p>The Impact of Divorce on Toddlers: 18 Months to 3 Years</p> <p>The impact on toddlers is readily seen.</p> <p>Toddlers recognize when one parent no longer lives at home and may attempt to show empathy to the sad parent.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty is seen in separating from parents</li> <li>• Anger</li> <li>• Loss of learned skills such as toilet training</li> <li>• Sleeping and napping routines change</li> <li>• Nightmares</li> <li>• Irregular habits forming</li> <li>• Wanting more attention than normal</li> <li>• An increase in crying</li> </ul>
<p>The Impact of Divorce on Pre-Schoolers: 3 to 5 years</p> <p>The impact is seen through</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uncertain feelings about the future</li> <li>• Feeling a sense of responsibility</li> <li>• Keeping anger trapped inside</li> <li>• Nightmares</li> <li>• Unpleasant thoughts or ideas</li> </ul>
<p>The Impact of Divorce on Elementary Children: 6 to 12 Years.</p> <p>Elementary school children need help to process the feelings of abandonment and loss of their loved one. They undergo the same challenges of ...</p> <p>Elementary children are also more likely to act out their pain than adults. This behavior can be expressed in any of the following</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Fear · Anger · Grief · Depression · Elation</li> <li>· Worries about physical concerns · Shame</li> <li>· Hopes of reconciliation · Sadness</li> <li>· Financial trouble · Anticipation</li> <li>Anxiety · Embarrassment · Self-blame</li> <li>· Abandonment</li> </ul>



<p>ways .....</p> <p>These can also be strong indicators of depression in the child. Divorce can cause children to develop a distorted view of themselves and of their world.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical complaints, such as headaches, nausea, or sore muscles</li> <li>• Recurrent thoughts of running away from home, or actually running away</li> <li>• Alcohol or substance abuse</li> <li>• Frequent absences from school</li> <li>• Poor performance in school</li> <li>• Frequent outbursts of shouting, crying, or irritability</li> <li>• Lack of interests in friends</li> <li>• Difficulty with relationships</li> <li>• Fear of death, or fascination with death</li> <li>• Social isolation</li> </ul>
<p>The Impact of Divorce on Teenagers: 13 to 18 Years.</p> <p>The results on the teen are evident ...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anger and hatred</li> <li>• Confusion over staying at home to help their caregiver or leaving the home to quickly in order to not be a burden on the family</li> <li>• Loss of identity</li> <li>• Parentified (becoming the parent to their siblings)</li> <li>• Regression to childhood or appears to be much older and mature than their age allows</li> <li>• Disassociate with peers their own age</li> <li>• Very rebellious, antisocial behavior</li> <li>• Conflict with parents or Parental Alienation Syndrome</li> <li>• Money worries</li> <li>• Questioning the validity of marriage</li> <li>• Loneliness</li> <li>• May try to take advantage of both parents</li> </ul>

time they have less information about what is happening. Parents tend to keep them in the dark. However, children face many of the same emotions and experiences as do adults of divorce. They understand the concept of one parent no longer living with the family, and

that one parent no longer loves the other. They need help to process the feelings of abandonment and loss of their loved one. They undergo the same challenges of:

Divorce is a difficult adjustment for all concerned but it is especially difficult for the teenager. By nature they are already experiencing many changes in their physical and mental makeup. Divorce is not an added burden that they accept very well. Erik Erikson's (1968) Model of Psychosocial Development has eight stages. He viewed the person as moving through a series of eight psychosocial crises over the course of the life span and each crisis takes on a unique significance at the given period of the life cycle. Each stage builds upon the former to influence the future. The person's health depends upon the successful resolution of the crises before them. The Identity vs. Role Confusion (puberty to young adulthood) stage is when an adolescent resolves the crisis of identity in their life. Divorce throws a monkey wrench into their development into adulthood. Divorce confuses their need for clear boundaries between themselves and their parents. The lack of a stable home and the loss of their secure and safe haven can cause maladjustments in their developmental pattern. The person will have difficulty forming healthy intimacy.

These behaviors are the result of the teen's sense of responsibility for the divorce and their attempt to fix the family. They have a need to protect their parents at all cost or action. They deeply need the attachment relationship, which God intended them to have.

Relationships define the quality of our lives. If we have safe, secure marriages, we're generally happy and fulfilled; if our marriages are tortured seas of strife and mistrust, we are generally sad, confused, in pain. If our relationships with our children are sensitive, open, and loving, woven together with strong, resilient filaments, they can

weather the storms of teen rebellion and those awkward years that follow. But if our relations with our children are forced and dissonant, each side mistrusting the other, rebelling can become open warfare, and the years that follow can deteriorate into permanent estrangement. Attachment is an overarching system that explains the principles, the rules, and the emotions of relationships "How they work and how they don't, how we feel when we are with the ones we love the most.

### **The Impacts on Siblings**

Brothers and sisters take on different behaviors once divorce has occurred. Many factors affect their behavior. Basically, they fear being abandoned by their parents. Drs. Clinton and Sibcy refer (2002) to this as a fundamental human reaction:

"Fear of abandonment is the fundamental human fear. It is so basic and so profound that it emerges even before we develop a language to describe it. It is so powerful that it activates our body's autonomic nervous system, causing our hearts to race, our breathing to become shallow and rapid, our stomachs to quiver, and our hands to shake. We feel a sense of panic that will not be assuaged until we are close to our caregivers ' until we regain a feeling of security."

Many times children will retreat into a responding mode that never regains a sense of safety or a place of '*Safe Haven.*' They react to the possible lack of attention from their parents due to the time involved in the divorce process by one of two ways - - either, they become more closely attached to the sibling or they engage in conflict with them.

Divorce will bring the best or worse out in a person. Children are no exception to this rule. Their emotional stress of going through a divorce can cause great confusion and

anger in the life of a child. Some children can find nurturance and support in the sibling and some cannot. Thus Amato and Keith (1991) raised the question:

"Do children of divorce have differences from children from intact families that require help to adjust to? The answer is yes. In 1991 Amato and Keith examined the results of 92 studies involving 13,000 children ranging from pre-school to young adulthood to determine if there were measurable differences in these children. Their findings show that children of divorced families have differences relating to their stability in society."

Hetherington (1993) found that with behavioral problems, 90 percent of adolescent boys and girls of intact families were within the normal range of problems and ten percent had serious problems that would require some type of help. The percentages of divorced families were 74 percent of the boys and 66 percent of the girls in the normal range and 26 percent of the boys and 34 percent of the girls were in the range for needing help.

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION**

On the humble, British influence caused Nigerian women to lose their equality to men; these problems can still be seen today. Women maintain the right to vote and have equal opportunities in primary and secondary education, but there is much wrong with the ways they are treated. Most women are no longer forced into unwanted, polygamous marriages, but many are left by their husbands. Since women are handicapped politically and economically by law, many single mothers are impoverished because they are not able to support their families. The lives of the Nigerian women today are hard, but there is hope for the future. No! Women are not from Daycare and men are not from Starbucks.

Certain adolescents are restrained in their becoming due to a variety of family, school, and relational factors, such as inappropriate adult role models, repeated failures and poor communication skills. Restrained adolescents display inadequate identity formation, partly because they are still endeavouring to define an ownership of their identity, instead of having reached the point of refining and stabilising their identity.

Through their behaviour in family, school, and other relationships they plead for assistance in the formation of their identity, especially at school, where their plea is often misinterpreted as misbehaviour or attention-seeking, if not completely ignored. Restrained adolescents consequently resort to their own ineffective efforts towards a meaningful existence.

By means of a qualitative investigation, it was found that:

- The identity formation of restrained adolescents is on the whole unsatisfactory in every respect. That is to say, they attribute inadequate meaning to life,

- themselves, and their problems; they are not sufficiently involved in what they do, and they are bound by the infantile dispensation of their worldly experience; are controlled by their feelings and moods.
- ❑ Parents of restrained adolescents tend to be inadequate, particularly their fathers, who are non-available, either literally or figuratively. Alcoholism, neglect and abuse are common.
  - ❑ Teachers of restrained adolescents are generally unaware of the significant role they can play in their identity formation, and need sensitisation and assistance in this area.
  - ❑ Adolescents restrained in their becoming demonstrate specific identity formation needs, especially in their relationships with self and with adults.
  - ❑ Teachers are in the position to provide support, not by means of additional scholastic guidance programmes, but through their approach to these adolescents, to their teaching and education in general (Sutcliffe 1996: v-vii).

### **Application of the Repugnant Test Clause**

The British colonials saw the oppressive ways of the customary and traditional practices, and instituted the Repugnancy Test Clause, as part of the Nigerian Legal System in 1900. It provided for the overriding of any customary and traditional laws and practices in the Nigerian courts if it is in conflict with natural justice and equity. Also, customary and traditional laws should be overridden if they are in conflict with the written and official laws, and the rights of women and children. Unfortunately, the Test Clause was left by the courts and law enforcement agencies to lie dormant for one whole century until Justice Niki Tobi's landmark Decision in 1997; and just before it was re-introduced in the 1999 Constitution. The Repugnancy Test Clause, of course, applies only to cases appealed from the lower to the higher courts.

## **The Impacts of Divorce on Children Directly Involved**

For obvious reasons, children see divorce as something very traumatic. This is something that is especially justified when considered in light of the fact that they [children] are often [and understandably] concerned with their own security rather than their parent's happiness. This, in turn is something that leads to the spawning of a host of psychologically impacting questions along the lines of 'What if they both leave me? What is it that I did wrong? Did I cause the divorce? Now what's going to happen to me?' It must be taken into consideration here that one of the more fundamental reasons due by which the occurrence of divorce tends to affect children on such a crucial level is the inevitable establishment of a whole new family structure. It must be taken into account, subsequently, those occasions as the 'first birthday, the Mother's/Father's Day, the first day in school, the first Christmas, the first anything spent without a former spouse is traumatic' (Allen, et al., 1990; Barney & Kaford, 1987; Battle, 1992; Pearson, 1994).

Since the former spouse will always represent a crucial half of the parental combination in the mind of a child or children, this being one of the prime reasons upon which stepfamilies bring forth a host of contention. Stepfamilies can be very complicated. The number of children that are involved, and how the children get along with the new step-parent are very important factors to consider when dealing with the structure of a stepfamily. This set of contentions, moreover, is primarily resultant to the fact that a child or children abruptly thrust into the settings of a stepfamily will inevitably tend to the face compatibility issues with the step-father, step-mother or step-siblings (Lanz, et al., 1999; McCombs & Forehand, 1989; Reilly & Lewis, 1983).

Furthermore, it must also be taken into consideration that the extent to which children tend to be impacted, respectively, by divorce is something that is defined and governed, primarily, by a set of variables. In spite of these variables, it must be considered that the one variable that children tend to be especially affected by is change (The Educator's Guide, 2000, Tucker, 2001) because children have come to see the particularly contemporary parameters of their existence as something that is central to their world(s). The parents, siblings, home and hobbies that they are typically given to are something of a proverbial anchor of their actuality. It is quite evident, thus speaking, that a change within any of the given patterns will bring cause a change in the temperament and/or psychological stability of the child as he/she sees the shape of his/her world being altered as a result of a particular intrusion such as divorce. The following is a list of the variables that immediately influence the depth of the impact that a particular divorce would have on the child or children involved:

- The amount of involvement with the nonresidential parent;
- The situation before the divorce or separation;
- The residential parent's ease in adjusting to the divorce;
- Parenting skills of both parents, agreement on child rearing, and discipline;
- Approval and love from both parents;
- Openness to discussing the divorce with parents;
- Degree of conflict between parents;
- Economic hardship;
- Added stress factors such as moving, changing schools, parental remarriage.

#### Is Divorce the Only Way Out?

Children who have the misfortune of experiencing a divorce tend to be psychologically impacted in as much as being incapable, for obvious reasons, of seeing any affection for them within their parent (s). Although this sentiment is one that is especially subtle, the consistence with which it develops is something that is hard to



ignore because it eventually makes for a negativistic lack of the proper family norms and values that must be ingrained within the child(ren) in particular. It would, however, be extremely relevant to also consider here that research has shown that serious open parental conflicts within the home probably cause more harm than a divorce, especially in the case of such a consistent and everlasting conflict. That is to say that given the circumstances, a loving single-parent home can sometimes reflect the better alternative to two fighting parents in spite of the fact that children need close contact with both parents. And while it is sometimes easier if the parents are separated, this is a notion that tends to be accentuated even further when it is considered in light of the fact that it is hard for bitterly angry people to work together to provide wise, coordinated post-divorce co-parenting (Tucker, 2001; Whitehead, 1993; Worthington, 1999). It must also be taken into account that children who have frequent contact with divorced parents that are still communicative enough to be still fighting are also at a very serious risk. Indeed, the more contact they have and the more switches between mother's and father's homes, especially if they are still warring over custody and visitation, the more behaviorally and emotionally disturbed the children become (Johnson, Kolodyn, & Masters, 1992; Slater & Haber, 1984; Tucker, 2001; Whitehead, 1993; Worthington, 1999)

It is quite apparent, that in spite of the fact that divorce tends to have an ultimately disadvantageous and deteriorative impacts on the children directly involved; divorce may sometimes be the only way out of a marital relationship that would be even more harmful in the case of lasting. Moreover, as has already been indicated, research also shows that children from divorced families are more likely to consider divorce as a solution to their own marital problems (National Center for Health Statistics, 1999, 2001; Sire, 1990).

This is something that makes it quite evident when considering that though divorce is sometimes the healthier solution, it is generally and fundamentally an unhealthy experience for all involved. For instance, the fact that one of the greatest fears of a child, on par with change, is that of being abandoned and being left alone. This is a fear (anxious-apprehension) that is parallel to the fear of the dark in its utmost primitiveness; while a child fears being alone, the inherent fear of the dark is related to this in as much as the fact that a child cannot distinguish the presence of another person nearby, consequently, making for the sensation of being alone and abandoned.

It must be considered, therefore, that the fear of being abandoned is one of the most forthright phobias that is impacted on a child experiencing parental separation. It is barely surprising, considering the inconsistent and fickle nature of the education, psychological, and religious profile of children that they tend to develop a realistically impounded fear that the loss of one parent may lead to the inevitable loss of the other as well. In addition to this, it is extremely hard for children to adjust to a situation within which they are forced to choose sides. While neither of the parents may wield hostilities in regard to the other, it becomes downright impossible for the parent in custody to interact with the child or children without indicating a modicum of negativity towards the other spouse. It is expressly for this reason that parents need to make maximally sure that their children are convinced that both mother and father will still be and act like their parents (mom and dad), discipline them when necessary and protect them from harm, follow consistent rules and not lean on the child(ren) for support but will provide support for the child(ren), and will both love the child(ren) and will remain in the child's [children's] life [lives].

## The Legal Ramifications for Divorce

Divorce is primarily viewed as a legal event, but first and foremost, it is an emotional event. The legal system treats divorce as if it were only a matter of reasonable men and women and their attorneys rationally arguing different points of view. It accounts for only one part of a complex problem, but it misses what's most important: the fact that divorce signifies a highly emotional major life change that affects nearly every single aspect of a person's life.

The law holds no answers for many of the truly fundamental dilemmas of divorce. The legal system handles the legal part of divorce, but never recognizes divorce for what it truly is -- an important emotional event -- the solutions the court system comes up with are at best partial. Some of the questions that divorce raises about managing the present and planning for the future cannot be answered by the law [Judges and Attorneys]. They are practical questions that find their answers in the personal and individual choices within the family system.

The legal system is notoriously adversarial. If a problem is tough, the ultimate legal solution is to get tough in court and tougher mentally and emotionally. However, getting tough in court has very little to do with truly solving the real and long-lasting problems of divorce, especially, when your children are in the trenches, the warfront. The legal system has no way to contain, much less extinguish, the emotional fires that often occur in a divorce. It is not the job of attorneys to take care of the emotional consequences that accompany divorce; even though some do act as divorce counselors for

extra fees. But the current legal system provides no way to help people manage and understand their feelings. Instead, the adversarial process can make matters worse.

In court, it sometimes boils down to one story against another with the understanding that in the final analyses, someone will be the winner and someone will be the loser. The reality is, everyone loses, especially the innocent and most vulnerable ones, the children.

The courts are incredibly overloaded and understaffed. Today's courts are jammed with divorce cases that have gotten out of hand. They are not equipped to handle all of the problems that divorce brings. Once a hotly contested case gets to court, the court has to decide how to deal with it. Like a hot potato, the situation gets passed back and forth while the attorneys make deals for settlements. No one wants to touch it; and if they do, it will cost you a pretty penny. When the case finally gets to the family court, the judge may have only fifteen to twenty minutes to consider the entire divorce case. Imagine a marriage of about 12 or more years and a separation battle of no more than two years being reduced to an infinitesimal twenty-minute court hearing.

In the current legal system, children become property instead of people. How a couple's divorce affects their children is a critical part of the legal process for any divorcing family. Yet, in the current legal court system, the needs of the children are barely heard. Parents get caught up in fights over the children, and what is best for the children is forgotten, amidst the emotional tumults and devastating phobias that have descended upon the children directly involved and cloud the judgments of their parents.

Children of divorce often get lost in the legal shuffle. Attorneys are not child welfare specialists, so how can they advise divorcing people about their children? If decisions involving the children are brought to the attention of the courts, the issues often are taken up in a tone of adversarial debate instead of thoughtful deliberation. The lawyers often think of divorce as only a legal process, the financial advisors regard it a monetary puzzle, and the counselors consider it a challenging emotional dilemma. Each is responsible for his/her own area of expertise in the divorce. Each has a unique perspective about what is involved in divorce and what is most important to consider. Guided by different priorities, each acted synergistically, addresses only a part of the whole without considering the resultant impacts on the children directly involved.

The result is frustration, miscommunication and misunderstanding, and conducts unbecoming of the parties involved. The wives often seek alimony, 'polimony,' palimony, and/or 'oligomony' at the expense of their husbands with the notion, 'I'm gonna stick it to him.' Efforts are at cross-purposes, so time and money are wasted. A meaningful understanding of the family's situation is never achieved. The effects of the children directly involved are foregone alternatives.

### **Statistical and Factual Data Relating to the Impacts of Divorce**

The obviously detrimental implications of the increasing prevalence of divorces in the US is emphasized upon rather dramatically when considering that 'each year, over one million American children suffer the divorce of their parents; moreover, half of the children born this year to parents who are married will see their parents divorce before they turn 18' (Fagan & Rector, 2000; National Center for Health Statistics, 1999, 2001).

Furthermore, according to the 2000 survey of families, ‘only 42 percent of children aged 14 to 18 live in a preferentially consistent family’ (Fagan & Rector, 2000). In addition to this, current evidence in social science journals has been increasingly indicating that the devastatingly debilitating physical, emotional, and financial effects that divorce is having on these children will last well into adulthood and affect future generations. Speaking in terms of some of the more obviously detrimental consequences that divorce tends to have on the generic functionality of kids, moreover, it would be relevant to consider that (Fagan & Rector, 2004)

- Children whose parents have divorced are increasingly the victims of abuse.
- Children of divorced parents perform more poorly in reading, spelling, and math.
- Families with children that were not poor before the divorce see their income drop as much as 50 percent.
- Religious worship, which has been linked to better health, longer marriages, and better family life, drops after the parents divorce.

It must also be acknowledged that the psychological and sociological impacts of divorce include a heightened tendency for the development of introverted characteristics. This is something that is emphasized when considering that it has been conclusively proven that divorce creates more stress for children due to the necessitation of moving, changing schools and habitats or friends, and having an increase in short-term problems with their parents. This means that children from divorced families are at greater risk of developing adjustment problems. Put more concisely, this means that children [in divorced families] tend to have exceptionally greater chances to suffer from problems associated with adjusting to typically essential educational and social bonds and relationships. It would, moreover, also be relevant to acknowledge that the degree and

nature of the impacts that a divorce may have on children is something that is largely governed and influenced by the intrinsic temperament of the children directly involved.

This is something that is made even more evident when considering it in light of the fact that children react in different ways with the onset of divorce. Some will be extremely sad and show signs of depression and even sleeplessness. And while some children may become psychologically scarred from the experience still others may not be emotionally affected at all. It is imperative to consider that, in addition to the temperament of the kid (s) the extent and nature of the impact is secondarily influenced by how well the parent (s) are able to handle the situation (Kalter, 1989). It is important therefore, to consider that ‘not all children respond the same way and parents need to be sensitive to each child's personality and needs’ (Pearson, 1988, p. 290).

#### Further Analyses: The Temperament Factors and Relative Adjustment Issues

It would be of utmost relevance to take into account the fact that children tend to typically be affected by divorce-related issues upon a psychological level. The introduction of change into a familial connection as intrinsically taken for granted as that of parent(s) and child(ren) is a factor that tends to be fundamentally and socially disturbing to the child's conceptualization of his/her surrounding. It is utterly natural for a child to place all of his/her faith and trust in the individuals that he/she has perceived as parents since birth. This understandably leads to the inception of severe psycho-social conflict when the brain comprehends an instance of one parent going away and consequently upsetting the harmony of the familial structure that the child perceived as being the center of his/her world. This deteriorative relevance of the upheaval of the structural features of family, moreover, is something that is emphasized upon even more

strongly when considering that the effects of divorce are common in adult children too. The effects of divorce are not isolated to adolescents and minors; indeed, contrary to popular belief, adult children too, tend to be affected with equal significance in the case of their parents going through or considering a divorce.

For example, the implications of the fact that adult children tend to be more perceptive in concern to distinguishing why the divorce is happening. While the connotations of this would appear to be positivistic, it must here be acknowledged that this exceptional level of comprehension only serves to render the situational impacts graver. This is since 'adult children tend to recognize the social, moral and/or ethical implications of their parents' behavior' (Little, 2004). The subsequent capability of coming to terms with their parents' mistakes, and accepting parental behavior and attitudes that they may not agree with ironically tends to render the situation even more difficult for adult children. In spite of the fact that adult children may not blame themselves 'as many small children do, adult children often blame themselves by thinking they could have prevented the divorce if they had realized what was going on' (Little, 2004). It is quite apparent, thus speaking, that the prime causal factor as a result of which children of all ages are affected by divorce is the perception of the structure of one of the most relevant social ties being shattered.

#### Importance of Father-Figure in Self-Esteem of Learners

The literature strongly agrees on the fact that having an adequate, caring, supportive Father-figure significantly improves the self-esteem and sense of self of adolescents and learners. As a rule, restrained adolescents (male and female) strongly identify with at least one male teacher, whom they see as a male role model, and who influences



their identity formation positively. This indicates the deep need of restrained adolescents for a surrogate father-figure, in lieu of an adequate father (Gonzales, et al., 1995; Hawley, 1996; Hofman & Zippco, 1986; Reilly & Lewis, 1983; Traille, 1999).

One can relate this to the improvement we experience in self-respect when realising that we have the most adequate, caring and supportive "Father-figure" in the universe!

#### Inadequate Parenting of Restrained Learners

To discover the role of teachers as surrogate parents of restrained learners, it is necessary to first define the role of the parents of restrained learners. In theory, parents of restrained adolescents seem to know what the role of parents should be in adolescents' identity formation, but they admit that they have not been successful in fulfilling that role. There is shifting of the blame onto each other or onto teachers, to excuse themselves from their ultimate responsibility. Parents of restrained adolescents are mostly in agreement as to the significance of the teachers' role in their adolescents' identity formation. Some parents go so far as to equate the significance of the teachers' role with their own. Others are even tempted to load the responsibility of their sons' and daughters' identity formation squarely on the shoulders of their teachers. Yet, because of their inability to understand fundamental factors relating to roles and relationships, parents of restrained adolescents cannot make meaningful contact with teachers (Van-Ransburg, Kilian, & Landman, 1981; Whitehead, 1993; Worthington, 1999).

The mother, in many cases, is the stronger contributor to the identity formation of these adolescents, the father frequently having an inverse effect on their identity formation in being a role model of how not to be. In most studies, the fathers

were usually accused by their sons or daughters of not being good examples of what adults should be, but it could be that a mother may also not be a laudable exemplar of adulthood (Van-Ransburg, Kilian, & Landman, 1981; Whitehead, 1993; Worthington, 1999).

The extent to which restrained adolescents' identity formation needs are met by some parents is minimal. Although the mothers of these restrained adolescents, as a rule, respond admirably to meeting their needs, those needs which only fathers can fulfill, usually remain unmet. This state of affairs is a major negative factor in the identity formation of restrained adolescents (Van-Ransburg, Kilian, & Landman, 1981; Whitehead, 1993; Worthington, 1999).

### **The Role of Teachers in the Identity Formation of Restrained Adolescents**

In my [the writer's] own experience as a teacher, those students whose behaviour was the worst (usually described as "attention-seeking") by other teachers, were the ones she singled out for special attention. The reason these learners were looking for attention she traced to their crying need for acknowledgement and to be noticed. In other words, they needed boosting of their self-esteem, according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Reilly & Lewis 1983, p. 207). When treated with respect, each of these learners unfailingly, registered a gain in self-worth. Their enhanced feelings about their worth always resulted in huge improvements in behaviour and academic achievement (Lanz, et al., 1999; Pearson, 1988; Poddar, 1988; Reilly & Lewis, 1983; Sire, 1990).

The author [writer] herself experienced being an adolescent who was unusually influenced by teachers, largely as a result of having inadequate parental role models. Especially during adolescence, these teachers played an essential part in helping her form

realistic views of herself and her potential. Teachers were the ones who helped her see herself as a scholar, as an athlete, and eventually as a teacher. Teachers not only taught her who she really was, but coaxed her to actualise her full potential as an educator. Furthermore, female teachers had the most lasting influence, underlining the awareness that identification with a respected teacher of the same gender would seem to be significant in forming self-attitudes.

There would also seem to be far too many teachers who minimise their role, are unaware of their influence, or blindly deny that they play any part whatsoever in restrained adolescents' identity formation. This scenario unveils the need for teachers to understand the true nature of their role in adolescents' identity formation.

There are admittedly those teachers who are aware of restrained adolescents' needs, and they do go some way towards meeting them. However, it seems fair to conclude that if teachers were more acutely aware of the role they play in the identity formation of adolescents who are restrained in their becoming, they would have more impact on their ultimate becoming (Barney & Kaford, 1987; Battle, 1992; Beer, 1989). Cadwaller (1974), Fagan and Rector (2000), and Gonzalez, et al. (1995) suggested that it revolves upon the teacher not only to initiate relationships with learners, but also to sustain these relationships. White (1921, 1943, 1950) lifted the influence of teachers beyond the lives of the students to the lives of others they will come in contact with. "As the teacher awakens in the minds of his pupils a realisation of the possibilities before them, as he causes them to grasp the truth that they may become useful, noble, trustworthy men and women, he sets in motion waves of influence that, even after he himself has gone to rest, will reach onward and ever onward, giving joy to the sorrowing,

and inspiring hope in the discouraged. As he lights in their minds and hearts the lamp of earnest endeavour, he is rewarded by seeing its bright rays diverge in every direction illuminating not only the lives of the few who daily sit before him for instruction, but through them the lives of many others" (White 1943, p. 104).

With respect to the role of teachers, restrained adolescents communicate the requirement of having smaller classes at school so that teachers can pay them more individual attention (the advantage of private Christian education!). They also want their teachers to understand them, believe in them and encourage them, and be more interested in them as persons than in the work. They, furthermore, demonstrate the needfulness of having at least one special teacher to talk to about those things they feel they cannot speak to their parents about (the advantage of our "mentoring" system). There is, concomitantly the implied need for teachers to afford restrained adolescents the opportunity to express their feelings, and to know themselves and discover their true identity by way of essays, discussions and relevant exercises (Sutcliffe 1996:276).

*This kind of attention to the learners as unique individuals who are worthy of acknowledgement, is critical to the establishment of their identities, as well as to their sense of self-esteem.*

Henson and Eller (1999, p.112) supported the needfulness of respectful treatment of learners with the following belief: "They firmly believe in treating students like fellow human beings who have feelings just like they do. They [students] don't appreciate being embarrassed or humiliated or confronted with problems in front of their peers. But they [students] do respond to kindness, encouragement, a friendly tease, and a smile. We try to teach manners in our classrooms by being mannerly to our students."

### Teachers as Role Models

Considering the inadequacy of the parental role models of restrained adolescents, it behooves the teacher to take up the position of the much needed role model. Certain requirements are essential for this role. According to research findings, the teacher's own identity, self-concept and personality, the relationship with religion and parents of pupils, and subject knowledge were all shown to have a significant influence on the identity formation of adolescents, especially those who are restrained in their becoming (Holmes, 1975; Huntley, 1991; Morrison, 1994; Pearson, 1988; Poddar, 1988; Reilly & Lewis, 1983; Slater & Haber, 1984; Whitehead, 1999).

White (1943, p. 230) was more specific on the relationship of the teacher to religion: "Every Christian teacher should have an intelligent understanding of what Christ is to him individually. He should know how to make the Lord his strength and efficiency...." White (1943, p. 31) went even further in explicating the teacher's religious qualification: "In order that the teacher may accomplish the object of his work, he should be a living embodiment of truth, a living channel through which wisdom and life may flow. A pure life, the result of sound principles and right habits, should therefore be regarded as his most essential qualification" Whence, the teacher is not a mere purveyor of information, but a role model, a caring person, a facilitator, an inspirer of vision, and many other things that are central to Christian education (The Educator's Guide, 2000; Tucker, 2001; White, 952,1988/1989). It is important for the classroom to be student-centred rather than teacher-centred. Furthermore, the value of each student must be communicated through classroom atmosphere and teacher emphasis. A spirit of

acceptance must be modelled by the instructor (and possibly enforced) until a feeling of being genuinely appreciated sets in on the part of the students (Morrison, 1994, p. 31).

Pearson (1988) stated very eloquently that we "need to be models of those who have found a way through life, not sought to escape from it;" and White (1950, 1989), under inspiration, has much to say about the character of the teacher as a role model for students. "In order to exert the right influence, he should have perfect control over himself, and his own heart should be richly imbued with love for his pupils, which will be seen in his looks, words, and acts" (White, 1950, p. 39).

#### Link between Christian and Secular Educational Philosophy

When He [Christ] says "be ye therefore sober," that obviously means to think. Do not let anything cloud your mind, hindering your ability to think straight. We cannot give in to our feelings, sentiment, public opinion, or even to the particular needs of our closest friends or family. Thinking properly would be thinking according to the Scripture. This is also the essence in all educational endeavours - - behaviorism, cognitivism, socio-behaviorism, constructivism, metaphysics, religious education, and so on. It was interested to discover a very definite connection between Christian and secular educational philosophy. To me this link indicates that *our philosophy of education has well-established educational and religious foundations*. A major premise of Christian teaching is that education is primarily directed towards self-actualization [the fulfillment of one's potential], and that the educator is merely a guiding influence (van-Rensburg, Kilian & Landman (1981, p. 262). These authors indicated that "the educator's responsibility consists of making his subject conscious of his own personal duty and then

helping him to accomplish it. The urge towards competence is promoted by the acceptance of responsibility."

The rationale behind secular educational philosophy, especially the constructivism, is also to develop in students the whole of their human potential, and bring them into harmony with their Creator [God] and fellow mankind, so that they may perform the church's unique mission to the world.

The Christian philosophy of education is summed up in the well-known quotation by White (1952, p. 13): "True education means more than the pursuit of a certain course of study. It means more than a preparation for the life that now is. It has to do with the whole being and with the whole period of existence possible to man. It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers. It prepares the student for the joy of service in this world and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come".

The twin focus then in our particular philosophy of education as in our secular educational institutions, is (a) the preparation for **service** in this world, and for the world hereafter (i.e. realisation of our full potential), and (b) the **holistic** development of the souls, mind, body, and spirit.

In both Christian and secular education, the various components of the learner are often mentioned as being important to development, that is: the cognitive (intellectual), affective (emotional), social (humane), normative (moral), and physical components. Hence, a holistic approach to education, as espoused by the constructivists' life-world

model, is essential, from the point of view of both secular and Christian education as well.

When looking at the main concepts dealt with in education, in general, it becomes apparent that there are many similarities with the Christian and secular educational philosophy. Education, in general, and psychology of education, in particular, have first and foremost to do with pedagogic **relationships**; that is, the relationships of the learner with the teacher, with him or herself, with the subject matter, with peers, and with his or her environment, and even with God (Morrison, 1994; Pearson, 1988; Poddar, 1988; Reilly & Lewis, 1983; Sire, 1990). In other words, general and educational psychology, as well as Christian education all have to do with the whole "lifeworld" of relationships in which the learner engages during the educational process. For education to be successful, all of these relationships should ideally be satisfied.

As Christian educators, relationships are also extremely important. We see our whole duty on earth as summed up in our respectful relationship to God (first four Commandments) and to our fellow man (last six Commandments).

Secular education rests largely on a learner-centred approach, whereby the many levels of the learner's **needs** must be met if effective education is to result. What did Jesus do? He first saw to people's physical and emotional needs before teaching them anything spiritual. In line with secular education, which says our lower-order needs must be met first before our highest need for self-actualization can be addressed, thus, our general educational philosophy also maintains that all our human dimensions must be taken into account if we are to achieve our full human potential.



According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Reilly & Lewis, 1983, p. 207), self-esteem needs are on the 4<sup>th</sup> level out of five in our self-esteem continuum. That is, self-esteem is a very important higher-order need that must be addressed before we can become the best person we are destined to become. Hence, my emphasis on treating learners with respect in order to develop their self-esteem. And hence, Jesus' very careful and respectful treatment of every learner He encountered!

The educational philosophy advocated by White (1943, 1950, 1989) and the one implied in the Bible, put the **needs** of the student at the very focal point of the educational endeavour (Morison, 1994; Reilly & Lewis, 1983; Traille, 1999). This point is confirmed by Cadwallar (1974). However, there is one major difference between secular education and Christian philosophy of education, and that is what makes it unique when compared with every other Christian (or otherwise) philosophy of education. White (1952, p. 30) explained that "in the highest sense, the work of education and the work of redemption are one.... To aid the student in comprehending these principles, and in entering into that relation with Christ, which will make them a controlling power in the life, should be the teacher's first effort and his constant aim."

Again, however, Christian philosophy of education takes the meeting of students' needs one step further - - into the realm of the spiritual: The student "can find help in but one power. That power is Christ. Cooperation with that power is man's greatest need. In all educational efforts, should this cooperation not be the highest aim?" (White, 1952, p. 29).

Finally, the emphasis in this Thesis is on the important role of teachers in the identity formation of restrained adolescents. In our Christian philosophy of education,

these concepts simply go under different names. What Christian educators should aim to do, is partly to help students discover their true identity as sons and daughters of God and, to set them on the path of forming firm, stable new identities in Christ. They must enthusiastically seek to create a strong sense of self-esteem and self-worth as blood-bought heirs of eternal life.

### **Concluding Remarks**

So the truth that I discovered in my literature reviews about secular educational institutions - - educational psychology - - I have found are being put into practice in a marvellous way in Christian education as well. I have discovered for myself that all truth is God's truth, no matter what guise it takes, and the source of all truth is God (Sire, 1990, p. 141).

#### **Jesus Treats Learners with Respect**

Jesus is our example in all things (1 Peter 2:21), so if He treated learners with respect, it is our privilege to do the same.

**Nicodemus (John 3:1–21):** Because of the economical style of the gospels, it might often appear as if Jesus is being abrupt, even rude to Nicodemus and others who asked Him questions. Yet Ellen White tells us in her book *Steps to Christ* (1921:13) that He always spoke the truth kindly and with love. As He spoke the necessary words of censure, there were tears in His voice. "He exercised the greatest tact and thoughtful, kind attention.... He was never rude, never needlessly spoke a severe word, never gave needless pain to a sensitive soul." He would never break a bruised reed; He would never snuff out a smouldering wick ([Isaiah.42:3](#)).

"Nicodemus had come to the Lord thinking to enter into a discussion with Him, but Jesus laid bare the foundation principles of truth. He said to Nicodemus, "[it] is not theoretical knowledge you need, so much as spiritual regeneration. You need not to have your curiosity satisfied, but to have a new heart" (White, 1988, p.171). Yet, Christ spoke with such solemn dignity and, both expression and tone expressed such earnest love, that Nicodemus was not offended as he realized his humiliating condition" (White 1898:173).

In the same way, when our students appear keen to discuss the "theory" of religion, they more than likely have the same need as did Nicodemus – to be born again. It is our privilege to lift up Him who draws all men unto Himself (1 John 1:29). "Not through controversy is the soul enlightened. We must look and live" (White 1989, p. 171).

**Woman of Samaria - at the Well (John 4:4–30):** Jesus broke the social code on two counts and spoke to a woman and a Samaritan. In the classroom, we need to override social codes and cultural prejudices in the interests of education. It is our unconditional acceptance of learners that builds their sense of self-worth. Dio-Selmon (1996, pp. 5-6) expounds this point well: "It was Christ's **acceptance** of the adulterous woman that won her for God. When the Samaritan woman, a lifetime prostitute, came to Jacob's well, Jesus did not neglect her. Jesus did not judge her social status or her character but sought the opportunity to transform her character. With Jesus, there was no partiality, no differences in social status or position, and no discrimination. Every one was equal. *A teacher's work is similar to [that of] Jesus.*

An accepting attitude may be defined as the willingness of a teacher to accept students with their weaknesses and strengths. An attitude of acceptance is nothing but a

teacher's willingness to assist students in their struggle with class work. Acceptance is patiently teaching students when they do not understand the subject matter. Acceptance means neither being irritated nor uttering discouraging words that will demoralize a student. An accepting attitude is continually supporting students to keep working hard at their schoolwork. It is being flexible enough for the young people to come and receive help and support when they need it.

"The hatred between Jews and Samaritans prevented the woman from offering a kindness [some water] to Jesus; but the Saviour was seeking to find the key to this heart, and with the tact born of divine love, He asked, not offered, a favour. The offer of a kindness might have been rejected; but trust awakens trust" (White 1988, p.184). In a similar way, the Spirit of God will grant us this "tact born of divine love", so that we may have the discernment to find the key to unlock our students' spiritual needs. As Jesus characteristically used everyday objects from nature to focus the minds of His learners on heavenly things (White 1943:240), we may do the same in the classroom.

**Jews - The Synagogue in Capernaum (John 6:54-65):** Jesus met the Jews' criticisms by pointing them repeatedly to the truth - "I tell you the truth..." We can do the same in our classrooms, instead of becoming defensive when students criticise and question us. "Instead of being irritated or offended when students do not meet expectations, teachers [can] help students to meet the expectations of the school and the teacher" (Dio-Selmon, 1987).

Just as many of the Jews were offended when Jesus spoke the truth to them, so will many of our students be. They may even turn against us and seek to discredit us on the campus, as did the Jews to Jesus. But "the servant is not greater than his master"

[\(Matthew 10:24\)](#). Let us not withhold truth and hard sayings in order to flatter and pamper our students, no matter how difficult this might be. Their eternal destiny is at stake.

**Mary Magdalene (John 12:4-8); Caught in Adultery (John 8:5-11):**

Jesus understood the weakness of Mary and He knew her heart. The Spirit of God will give us the same discernment. Let us not condemn or judge our students, but read behind their behaviour to see their true needs, desires and motives.

Christ saw that Mary was "embarrassed and distressed. He knew that in this act of service [the anointing of His feet] she had expressed her gratitude for the forgiveness of her sins, and He brought relief to her mind" (White, 1988, p. 56). Reprimanding students in front of their peers may embarrass them unnecessarily. Speaking to them privately helps their integrity and self-esteem (Hawley, 1996).

"Christ hates the sin, but loves the sinner. This will be the spirit of all who follow Him. Christian love is slow to censure, quick to discern penitence, ready to forgive, to encourage, to set the wanderer in the path of holiness, and to stay his feet therein" (White, 1988, p. 462). Pray to God that we will have the attitude of Christ towards our students who are caught in sin, "neither do I condemn you....Go now and leave your life of sin" ([John 8:11](#)).

**Disciples: Last Supper; Feet Washing; Asleep in the Garden; Jesus' Prayer (John 13:1-17; John 17:6-19):** Jesus humbled Himself and took the role of servant to His disciples at the table and when washing their feet. He was not too proud to silently role-model the kind of behaviour He wanted to teach them. This same quiet attitude should be ours. "This action opened the eyes of the disciples. Bitter shame and

humiliation filled their hearts. They understood the unspoken rebuke and saw themselves in altogether a new light" (White, 1989).

Regarding the servant role of the teacher, Dio-Selmon (1987) noted that servant-leadership classroom management creates respect for the teacher, students, and for the school (Gallagher & White, 2000).

When Jesus' disciples were sleeping during the time He needed their support, He showed His "humanness" by asking them to watch and pray with Him. We as teachers must show that we are human too. Furthermore, Jesus prayed for His disciples. How do we feel when another person prays aloud for us? We need also to pray aloud for and with our students. This will enhance their self-esteem, dignity and identity as loved children of God.

**Peter's Reinstatement: "Feed My Sheep" (John 21:15-19):** When Peter denied knowing Christ, Jesus did not say anything. He simply looked at Peter with great love and disappointment, and gave him another chance. "The Saviour's manner of dealing with Peter had a lesson for him and for his brethren. It taught them to meet the transgressor with patience, sympathy, and forgiving love. Although Peter had denied his Lord, the love which Jesus bore him never faltered. Just such love should the under-shepherd feel for the sheep and lambs committed to his care" (White, 1989).

Let us follow Christ's example toward our students, by not censuring them too harshly, and always giving them another chance to fulfill their potential in the building up of His kingdom. If a student has not managed to submit work that is up to expectation, allow the student to resubmit the work and help to bring them up to the required standard.

Jesus gave Peter the chance to prove his repentance from his disloyalty by requiring him to "feed my sheep" ([John 21:17](#)).

If students have done wrong, give them something to do which will be proof of their repentance. For example, if students have been dishonest in an examination, let them make reparation by doing an extra project along the lines of honesty. This will help to restore their damaged self-esteem, and affirm their identity as loved children of God.

### **Strategies for Enhancing Self-Actualization of Adolescents and Divorced Children**

Actualization (a short-term endeavour) in one minor area can instigate actualization in other areas, and eventually have a major influence on the child's becoming (a long-term endeavour). One of the tools the student uses to compensate is to counterbalance his/her weaknesses by capitalising on his/her strength. It will be the teacher's work to find his strong points. It is risky to send a student into the world with no skill, no unique knowledge, and no means of compensating. He/she must be able to say, 'I may not be the most popular student in school, but I am the best trumpet player in the band!'" (Poddar, 1988).

### **Discriminatory Practices against Women and Children in Nigeria**

It is not known when the oppression and subjection of women and children in Nigerian culture started because there were no written records. But it would do the Republic of Nigeria, including the nation of "[Ndi Igbos](#)" and all Christian communities in this universe, a world of good if they would stop oppressing and suppressing women (i.e., their mothers, sisters, wives, nieces, cousins, in-laws, and daughters). It would also create new life in them if they would stop disrespecting and segregating women because of their monthly cycles [[Menstruation](#) or Men's Frustration]. If for no other reason, this should

be one single reason why women should be respected and honoured, for without it, humankind would simply be extinct.

Besides, a woman's menstruation is not any dirtier or more sordid than a man's daily production and spilling of semen. Women are hygienic with their own biological discharges but men are not. For the woman it is a four-day lunar-monthly cycle only for the child-bearing period of her life. If biological discharges are a curse, for a man it is a daily occurrence as long as he lives. Now, which is a greater curse that demands discrimination, segregation and cleanliness? In this regard of biological discharges, women have been treated by men as a dog, given a bad name by men, and have been hung by men, in the traditional practices as well as in the Christian churches, with No One to run to their rescue!

#### Papal Apology or Confession to Womankind

The damage to the Church, the Scriptures and women [womankind] done by the Roman Catholic Church by the resolutions of the Council of Trent (Circa 1545-1564), especially those of the third Session, which could not be amended even by the subsequent Councils, and which were affirmed by Pope John XXIII, in its entirety, at the beginning of Vatican II and signed by all the Bishops, cannot be shoved aside by Pope John Paul II with a wave of the hand and his simplest apology of year 2000. The present Pope needs to render a public apology to all women and say a special mass for the womankind.

But if the Biblical errors of omission were to be rectified, and the injunctions in the New Testament in favor of women, widows and orphans acknowledged and implemented, only such an action would give relevance to the apology of the Pope in the year 2000 to women for the responsibility of the Roman Catholic Church in the



suppression, oppression and the deprivation of women of their human rights. So far what we have heard is only a confession of wrong-doing. The much needed restitution to give body and meaning to the apology for the oppression, suppression, subjugation and deprivation of women are still, conspicuously, absent. Otherwise, the apology is meaningless. Only such an action as suggested would, no doubt, restore dignity and respect to women in every nation and culture.

Only such a change of heart and policy by Christian men and the Church hierarchies will save women from facing the stone wall and kicking against it and against the pricks, to which they have been condemned for ages. This is in their efforts to gain recognition and a respectable place alongside men in the Church of Jesus Christ and elsewhere in God's world. The subjugation of women was neither the intention of God, the Almighty Creator at the Creation, nor of Jesus the Christ in His life, ministry and resurrection. But it has been the purpose of His Holy Men Servants, who claim to represent Him, but who are very arrogant, selfish and chauvinistic in their disobedience to His Will and Purpose for women!

#### Secular Educators' Roles as Self-Esteem Boosters

It is the privilege of teachers to assist learners who are restrained in their becoming in realising their potential, although their full potential will never be achieved on this earth. Teachers should be optimistic about a student's education. Since it is most frequently as a result of broken homes and unstable relationships with parents that children are restrained in their becoming, the task of guiding children towards actualization often rests on the shoulders of the teacher – especially today, when an alarmingly small proportion of families are in tact.

First of all, the child's, also the family's, physical and basic needs should be attended to since no person can transcend the concrete situation if the primary struggle is to survive. If a family is sufficiently provided for, teachers can educate properly and children can actualise their potential. According to Gaikwad (18CC:43), long before the academic basics including the "3R's - - Responsibility, Respect, and Recognition" can be taught to learners, there is another fundamental set of "3R's" that need to be taught. They are Relatedness, Respect, and Responsibility. Learners who master these skills and attitudes have a sense of self-esteem and self-worth. This correlates not only to positive behaviour, but also to greater academic achievement.

Christ-centered behaviour in the classroom includes being sensitive and sympathetic to the needs of a student. Respecting the opinions of students as worthy of respect is important. Respect begets respect. Respecting students' opinions will increase students' respect for the teacher. Therefore, a wise teacher will reason with students instead of imposing opinions on them. Give them alternatives to choose from and let them bear the consequences of their own behaviour" (Dio-Selmon, 1996, p.12). Children from "disadvantaged settings" should be assisted to actualise themselves as well as possible, in the fields of their strengths and interests. Minor successes in actualization will obviously have a positive effect on their becoming in general.

Poddar (1988) again referred to White (1988) by saying: "It is pleasing to God that you should cultivate self-respect by living so that you will be approved by you own conscience, and before men and angels. [In other words, teach students to do what they know to be right, and you will help them build their self-esteem and fulfill their spiritual potential]. It is necessary for teachers to *look behind children's unacceptable behaviour*

*for the apparent reasons and their unmet needs.* They should help children realise their potential in the following ways:

If teaching the subject English, for example, the teacher could promote adequate significance attribution by choosing comprehension passages dealing with issues of immediate interest to the learner, such as music; by debating issues such as abortion and selecting set books which highlight important moral principles such as honesty. Once the learners' interest is aroused and they see the meaningfulness of English classes, they will become involved in learning themselves. They will be motivated to do well at this subject as they see the relevance of it to their daily life and the world of work. As they experience the pleasure of success in one subject, they will experience the incentive to achieve in other areas of their lives, thereby building a healthy self-esteem. A healthy self-esteem is a very important step towards self-transcendence, which occurs when learners lose themselves in the joy of learning for its own sake.

By teaching the value of group-work, the teacher may facilitate relationships among children who are adjusting to divorce or remarriage in their homes (Barney & Kaford, 1987). In this way learners who are restrained in their becoming because of relational difficulties may be assisted in overcoming these restraints and actualising themselves completely. Moreover, *through group-work each student gets the chance to discover his or her strengths and weaknesses, thereby gaining a clearer sense of identity.* In addition, *one of the main benefits of group-work (or "co-operative learning") is higher self-esteem based on self-acceptance.*

Teachers' relationships with restrained adolescents favourably influence these adolescents' identity formation if positive meaning is attributed to these relationships by

the restrained adolescents. To be successful, teachers of such adolescents ought to consistently personify adult values and standards. Physically, they will keep themselves healthy and vital, affectively warm and kind, cognitively well-informed and organised, cognitively strong in taking decisions and making a variety of choices open to adolescents, and normatively honourable and reliable. Furthermore, if they enlist the interest of adolescents, then identity formation and self-actualization will be the result.

Teachers of restrained adolescents should nurture a good relationship with themselves, in other words build a solid identity, healthy self-concept and self-esteem. Furthermore, a sound religious relationship, good relationships with the restrained adolescents' parents, and with the restrained adolescents themselves, are prerequisites in order that restrained adolescents might attribute significance to their relationships with teachers. Restrained adolescents attribute the correct meaning to their own gender identity, especially when teachers have a sure sense of their own masculinity or femininity, and treat male and female restrained adolescents equally.

Moreover, teachers of restrained adolescents should help them attribute significance to their particular life-worlds, and thus, understand who they are in relation to others.

#### Christian Educators' Roles as Self-Esteem Enhancers

The answers Christian educators give students about the meaning of life are based on our Christian worldview. This worldview gives a clear reason for being and a definite purpose for life. Furthermore, our aim as educators to bring back genuine relevancy requires us to live what we believe to be true, and be able to give the reason "in season and out of season" – [2 Timothy 4:2](#).

The elements of authority, mutual understanding and trust ought to be in operation in meaningful relationships between teachers and restrained adolescents, as this will contribute to the identity formation of the latter. Generally, restrained adolescents prefer to remain uninvolved with adults by virtue of their disillusionment with a parent or parents, and even with teachers. They avoid physical involvement in sport, affective involvement with peers and teachers, cognitive involvement with academic work, cognitive involvement with career choices, or for that matter, any choices whatsoever, and normative involvement with adult standards and rules.

If effective identity formation is to be achieved, the involvement of restrained adolescents must be engaged by teachers in as many of the above areas as possible. Even involving adolescents in one of these areas tends to have a corresponding effect on other areas. For example, getting an adolescent physically involved in sport usually leads to improved self-esteem which has an advantageous outworking on the academic self-concept and accordingly on identity formation. Encouraging involvement in art or music may have a good influence on adolescents' career choice, or normative involvement in moral debates may result in better relationships with adults and their norms. "Have class discussions on ethics and values in the classroom. This might include such areas as respect for others and their belongings ... and how students want others to treat them" (Henson, 1999, p.113).

If teachers involve students in a variety of activities, restrained adolescents are assisted in defining their special interests, and consequently themselves. Thus, for teachers of restrained adolescents, vigorous involvement in all the good things life has to offer appears to be a primary objective if identity formation is to be the result. In

Adventist institutions the emphasis placed on spiritual activities is especially important in helping students reach the highest level of development. "It is when intellectual and spiritual power are combined that the highest standard of manhood is attained" (White, 1943, p. 66).

Happy experiencing in relationship with teachers is particularly important for restrained adolescents, because they are inclined to have unhappy relationships at home. Dio (1996:6) mentions how important a cheerful attitude on the part of the teacher is in helping us witness for Christ. He admonishes: "No anxiety should be brought to the classroom. A depressed looking appearance has a negative influence on learning."

Dio-Selmon (1987) suggests that all can be made interesting and exciting to young people by a teacher who has learned how to create a relationship with students in which the needs of the teacher are respected by the students and the needs of the students are respected by the teacher.

The experiencing of congenial, trusting relationships with teachers, in which there is mutual knowledge of each other, respect and unconditional acceptance, is fundamental to restrained adolescents if they are to progress satisfactorily in the formation of their identities. "We need to create such respect for persons in the classroom that students feel free on occasion to expose their pain and their passion" (Pearson, 1988).

The inspired advice of Ellen White is: "Teachers and students are to come close together in Christian fellowship. The youth will make many mistakes, and *the teacher is never to forget to be compassionate and courteous*. Never is he to seek to show his superiority. The greatest of teachers are those who are most patient, most kind. By their simplicity and their willingness to learn, they encourage their students to climb higher

and still higher "(White, 1943, p. 269). Also, White (1943, p.93) contended that: "The teacher who is severe, critical, overbearing, and heedless of others' feelings, must expect the same spirit to be manifested toward himself. *He who wishes to preserve his own dignity and self-respect must be careful not to wound needlessly the self-respect of others.* This rule should be sacredly observed toward the dullest, the youngest, and the most blundering students. What God intends to do with these apparently uninteresting youth, you do not know."

### **Strategies for Fostering Self-Esteem of Adolescents and Divorced Children**

Teachers should therefore do all in their power to make restrained adolescents' experience of their involvement in class- and extra-mural activities pleasant. Especially academic activities are ideally experienced as enjoyable by way of teachers making success possible. Small successes lead to larger successes, which build self-esteem and a positive student-identity. Consequently the constituting of agreeable relationships between teachers and restrained adolescents is of great importance in the identity formation of the latter. The application of the following strategies will more than definitely redeem and instill lost hope in the minds, souls, and spirits of the affected adolescents and children of divorce:

- 1) **Listen carefully when students speak:** Remain open-minded and objective. Consider their messages carefully. Avoid interrupting a student, or offering unsolicited advice or criticism.
- 2) **Respect students' personal space:** Students may feel threatened and become agitated if you violate their personal space.
- 3) **Use friendly gestures, not aggressive ones:** Avoid "finger-pointing." Open, upturned palms may be more appropriate and effective.

- 4) **Use preferred name** Ask each student how they would like to be addressed in the classroom. Only in rare instances would their chosen name be inappropriate.
- 5) **Get on their level:** Try to adopt their physical level. If they are seated, try kneeling or bending over, rather than standing over them [This naturally refers to younger learners only].
- 6) **Ask questions rather than make accusations:** This assumes that the student is a responsible person. "Are you ready to begin?" rather than "Put your magazine away. It's time to start class." Use a concerned and kind tone.

Other strategies include:

- Help learners to base their self-esteem on Christ rather than on the opinion of their peers.
- Help them measure themselves not only against others but with the standards set by God. Tell them: "God plus you makes the whole person. *God's sacrifice for you equals worth!*"
- Examine your own attitudes because a sizeable portion of learners' self-esteem emerges from the way they think you see them. They also can detect your unspoken attitudes. When the students are convinced that they are loved and respected, they are inclined to accept their own worth as people.
- Make a conscious effort to "catch students doing good." Commend them for their positive attitude and good behaviour as frequently as possible, both in private and in public.
- Encourage learners to set goals for themselves.
- Give extra time to students who are struggling academically.
- Let slow learners learn at their own speed.
- Allow each learner to determine his or her own learning style. [This will enhance the sense of having a choice and free agency, in turn creating a feeling of self-worth and clear identity]. "No man or woman is fitted for the work of teaching who is... arbitrary, or dictatorial" (White, 1943, p. 233).
- Teachers must discipline students with respect and love [like God does].
- One way to damage self-esteem is to avoid punishment altogether. Poddar quotes Ellen White on this point (1943, p.155): "Teachers should not allow disregard of their word to pass unnoticed. Let them be sparing of censure."
- We should seek to preserve students' self-respect through helping them see their fault and enlisting their own will for its correction. We can also encourage self-respect and a desire to be useful by asking the older to assist the younger, the strong the weak, and, so far as possible, let all be called upon to do something in which they excel (Herbert Douglas, 2001:10, cited in Ellen White).



## **An Appeal to Christian and Secular Educators**

It has been shown in this Thesis that the teacher has a powerful part to play in building the self-esteem of students of all ages. A healthy self-esteem not only contributes positively towards the establishment of learners' identities, but also towards the fulfillment of their total and spiritual potential.

When students' religious relationships are fulfilled, it will contribute toward their spiritual security and the establishment of their identity. Yes, if we seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, all things will be added to us ([Matthew 6:33](#)). Let Christian educators and teachers are sure that they themselves have a well-established, stable identity, a healthy self-concept, self-esteem and self-image; a cheerful personality, robust relationships and a balanced life, before trying to incorporate these principles into the lives of their charges!

Respect for learners is fundamental to the integration of faith and learning because our respectful treatment of learners strengthens their faith in a God who loves them enough to die for! Finally, Sire (1990) advises that "as we do become activists, attempting to put into action the lifestyle and principles that emerge from our search [for the good], we need to **respect** all others as made in the image of God. No moral program, no spiritual principle, takes precedence over the dignity of any person - - believer or not, intellectual friend or enemy."

## **The Religious Implications of Divorce on the Family System**

The impacts of divorce on the family are obvious. The statistics and data describing the effects of divorce on the institution of marriage and individual lives are well documented. The National Center for Health Statistics (1999, 2001) reported that 42

percent of children aged 14 to 18 live in a first marriage - - an intact two-parent family. The percentage has not made a major improvement in these later years. The very thing the Bible claims is taking place in our society. The Scriptures declare in the Seventh Commandment, "You shall not commit adultery" ([Deuteronomy 5:17](#)). The Bible also says in the Tenth Commandment, "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife; and you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field, his male/female servants, his ox/oxen, his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's" ([Deuteronomy 5:21](#)). When people turn from these principles, the Golden Rule of God, our families soon fall prey to failure and, thus, the moral decay of society. The Bible clearly describes the ultimate outcome of the downfall of the family system. [Romans 1: 28 -32](#) states, "And even as they did not retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do the things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteousness of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them." The strong willed actions of instigators of divorce have a dreadful future in the presence of God, according to those verses. They practice their crimes against the partners of the family with only their interests in mind. You may rest assured that God has marked these individuals, and they shall reap what they have sowed. [Galatians 6:7-10](#) proclaims, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to the flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who

sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in doing season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith."

The partner of the family who was willing to accept their responsibility in the decline of their marriage, and who wanted to keep the family intact can find favor in God's eyes. God is merciful and forgiving to all who will confess and repent of their sin. [1 John 1:9](#) promises, "If we confess our sins, He [God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." King David expresses the cry of the abandoned partner of marriage, "Deliver me from the guilt of the bloodshed, O God, the God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of your righteousness" ([Psalm 51:14](#)). My brethren, fellow country men and women, always remember that divorce does bring with it a mountain of emotional stress associated with the final demise of what God has put together; and that aftermath of a painful divorce brings forth rippling effects that affect every members of the family. For the hurting of divorce, there is always life after divorce.

### **Generalities and Recommendations**

It is as a result of this that the child, sometimes out of a sentiment of bitterness at the decision of the parent (s), tends to develop negativistic views of the societal surrounding (s) within which he or she interacts. It is not uncommon for the child to place a part, sometimes even a major part, of the blame for the parents' divorce upon the particularly respective society. It is, moreover, as a result of this that children from divorced families tend to experience fluctuations in concern to the temperamental and

coping traits. These fluctuations tend to yield significant negativity in as much as being crucially hindering to the development of social bonds and relationships necessary to a socially harmonious existence (Slater & Haber, 1984; Traille, 1999). This is something that can be avoided in as much as ensuring, as far as possible, that the child understands the implications of the divorce and why it was a measure that was necessary to take. This is an especially relevant measure since it considerably helps in regard to calming the tumultuous stream of emotions that children experiencing divorce are usually experiencing.

It is essential, in this case, for the parent (s) to welcome rather than avoid the issue of discussing the features and characteristics of the divorce. It must be considered that avoiding a discussion of the issue would only make for a gradual increase in the propensity of increasing psychological unrest and consequently, dysfunction. It is of utmost relevant for parents need to help their children understand that the family will learn to adapt to the inevitably new schedules, new environments, and new ways of communicating (Behrnan, & Quinn, 2004). It is essential, in order to ensure that the child is minimally affected by divorce, for the parent (s) to:

- Encourage the child to talk about how he or she feels.
- Answer all questions about changes taking place, and keep lines of communication open.
- Be sensitive to signs of depression and fear. Seek professional help if depression is prolonged.
- Plan special time together.
- Reassure your child that everything will be all right, just different.
- Keep daily routines intact.
- Respect but monitor the child's privacy.
- Don't dwell on adult problems.
- Encourage the child to say how he or she feels; avoid expressions like 'be brave', 'don't cry' etc.

Thus speaking and taking into consideration all that has been said and discussed to the impact that divorce does and may have on children of all age groups, it is quite apparent that this impact tends to invariably be disadvantageous. This, moreover, is something that has repetitively been illustrated and emphasized upon within the entirety of this paper. In addition to this, furthermore, it would be noteworthy and relevant to simultaneously acknowledge the immoral disadvantageousness of embarking upon a relationship as relevant as that of marriage only to have it disintegrate a respective period of time later. It must be taken into account that divorce must be reserved as the last resort in concern to settling a marriage that has corroded as a result of respectively particular contentions and disagreements. Parents should be considerate and logical about making decisions with no regard to the impact that these decisions could bring to bear upon their child or children. It would be unfair to children to have issues of their safety and well being ignored upon the pretext of the parent (s) being more mindful of the stress and objectives that they [parents] are going through.

Similarly, parents forcing children into undesirable situations without first attempting to discuss the situation with the child in order to facilitate better adjustment capabilities is something that must be avoided at all costs. It would, moreover, be conclusively apt to consider that the most effectual countermeasures in regard to addressing the impact that divorce has on kids would be to strive to get the kid to understand why exactly the divorce was a necessary measure. Children must be reassured that the divorce only took place due to a lack of consistence between the two parents and must be strongly maneuvered away from the notion that they are in any way responsible. Even the smallest and most insignificant suggestion of this sort would undoubtedly make

for an exceptional heightening of inferior complexes and introverted traits within the character profile of the child. Most importantly, this would make for a significant degree of self-demoralization and a lack of self-esteem upon the grounds of seeing oneself as being the conductor of familial inconsistency and disunity.

According to the U.S. National Center for Health Statistics (1999, 2001), divorce occurs to about 1.5 million American children each year. Most divorcing parents ask themselves some tough questions about what the divorce will do to their children and wonder how the children will make sense of what is happening.

How will the children react to both parents as the family changes? Will they adjust well to a new marriage partner, and perhaps to stepsiblings? Will their grades suffer? Will they withdraw from their friends, and perhaps suffer permanent emotional harm?

“No matter what age a child is, he or she will have more difficulty adjusting to divorce if there is continued conflict between parents,” explains Huntley (1991), “Other factors that add to this difficulty include: loss of contact with a competent, non-custodial parent; financial stress; a change of address; loss of continuity in school and home routines; and psychological problems in the custodial parent.”

According to Huntley, a survey of literature showed that some studies have found negative effects, other studies have found no effects, and even a few studies show positive effects of divorce on children. “Research shows that children of divorce are more likely to show more behavioral problems, more psychological symptoms, lower academic achievement, more social difficulties, and poorer self-concepts than children from intact families,” says Huntley. But many psychologists and family counselors caution that the

overlap between children of divorce and children of intact families is great, and the children from these two groups look more alike than different. The better question to ask is “for which child does divorce has a negative impact?”

Huntley cited an overall trend in the research that has been conducted that boys seem to have more difficulty dealing with divorce than girls, and that younger children have more difficulty with the divorce than older children. Preschool children have a developmental disadvantage in understanding the meaning of divorce and may respond with confusion and anxiety. “It is not unusual to see regression to earlier stages of behavior, such as thumb-sucking or wetting the bed, in these children. They may foster the belief that if they had only been better-behaved, the parent would not have left.”

Children who are in elementary school have a better understanding of the loss and may experience sadness and depression. “There is a continued fantasy that the parents will get back together. Adolescents may feel anger and blame toward a parent but are also uncertain about their own ability to stay in a relationship,” explains Huntley. Here are some tips suggested by Huntley for children coping with divorce and new familial situations, regardless of gender or age:

#### Going through a Divorce: A Child’s Perspective

- Don’t put me in the middle. If you need to talk to each other, please do it yourself.
- Don’t make me take sides. You may not have a husband/wife anymore, but I still have a mom/dad. When possible, tell me something positive about my parent.
- Unless there is an abusive situation, allow me to have access to both parents. Take this into account when you are deciding where to live.
- The better you get along with each other, the better I will be able to cope with the divorce.
- Ask me how I am doing and what I need. Even though you are going through your own loss, I need help talking about what is going on.

- Try to keep everything else in my life the same. It is stressful enough to lose a parent to divorce, but even tougher to move to a different school, a new neighborhood, and a new home.
- Remember that I am your child. Although you have gone through a divorce, my role is not to replace your spouse or be a friend. Continue to treat me as your child.
- If you need to talk to somebody about what you are going through, find a friend or a therapist. It is too much for me to carry your burden as well.
- No matter what my age is, this is still a loss for me. I may show my grief in many different ways, including anger, depression, anxiety, or acting-out behavior. Please get me help if I am having difficulty.
- I long for continuity, routine, and tradition. Although our family has changed, keep as many traditions and routines the same as possible.

It seems that almost all people may be found to be restrained in some way or other, depending on the norm stated, even if it is a subjective norm. This might be because a person rarely if ever experiences the ideal situation for becoming – indeed the nature of this world is imperfect and we are all born into potentially restraining circumstances.

Learners restrained in their becoming typically have a faulty self-identity, low self-esteem and a negative self-concept. An inadequate self-concept, according to the literature, is the factor, which to the greatest extent prevents self-actualization. Self-transcendence is not a characteristic of learners restrained in their becoming, since these children have not succeeded in surmounting their physical imperfections, their cognitive limitations, their negative affective experiences or their relational difficulties. In short, they have not moved beyond themselves.

My studies suggested that the restraining influences in a child's life can mostly be traced to unsatisfactory relationships with parents, teachers, peers, siblings, self or schoolwork – especially relationships with parents, and not to poverty, as was previously assumed. The children selected as being restrained in their becoming, without exception had broken homes, which was adversely affecting their actualisation (v.d. Spuy



1992:112-113). The chief need of the child restrained in his or her becoming emerged as the security and protection an adequate father figure (all be it a teacher) can provide.

The actualization of a child restrained in, for example, emancipation as an aspect of their becoming, is affected in every respect. The children's significance attribution (giving of meaning) is inadequate since they do not see the sense in the many unnecessary rules of their parents, which govern their coming and going. These rules are experienced as cramping. This feeling results in listless, indifferent involvement at school (Heatherington, 1993; Holmes, 1975; Jerabek, 1996).

Because children experiencing inadequate emancipation are so involved in pleasing their parents, they do not possess sufficient drive or motivation to please their teachers and their involvement with their schoolwork suffers.

Inadequately emancipated children feel so trapped by their parents that their experiences are of necessity unpleasant, so much so that they would prefer to leave home. Their unhappiness causes their schoolwork to suffer, which creates more unpleasant experiences and a damaged self-concept, effectively limiting self-actualization. A negative self-concept is concomitant with inadequate emancipating (freeing of the child by the parents), since children who are not afforded the room/space to live their own lives and be their own person, cannot feel good about themselves or develop confidence in their own abilities. Self-transcendence also becomes impossible when emancipation is inadequate since the learners have not been freed to live above their present restrictive world. In fact, it is often their parents' unconscious goal to prevent them from self-transcendence because with self-transcendence comes the children's realisation of the independent self and release from their parents.

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