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A COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENTAL ANALYSIS OF CHILDREN'S

UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS:

FRIENDSHIP, MARRIAGE, AND DIVORCE

By

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ABSTRACT

A COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENTAL ANALYSIS OF CHILDREN'S
UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS:
FRIENDSHIP, MARRIAGE, AND DIVORCE

By

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This study was an attempt to investigate the development of children's understanding of social relationships. Two specific issues were addressed: (1) children's perceptions of whom they might choose to befriend, marry, or divorce; and (2) children's perceptions of issues which might help to consolidate or threaten a marital relationship. Impetus for the focus and design of this research stemmed from the rising interest in social cognitive developmental theory, a growing body of research on person perception, and reports on children's perceptions of familial roles.

The sample consisted of 40 subjects, divided across four cells according to age and sex. The mean age was 8 years 2 months for the younger group and 13 years 10 months for the older group. All were from intact middle class homes. Data were obtained by using an individualized interview format. The questions examined children's perceptions of a friend, possible spouse, and possible ex-spouse, motivation for marriage and divorce, characterization of on-going marital and post-marital process, personal attitudes toward marriage,

and the process of marital problem solving. The analysis was in part structural, attempting to delineate the cognitive framework underlying children's reasoning about relationships. Major variables were Social Penetration, Personal Involvement, and Evaluative Direction. The analysis was also descriptive, focusing on the specific material that children raised. A pool of seventeen content categories were used.

Children's inferential ability showed improvement with age for two of the three social relationships examined. Psychological intimacy was cited by older children as being particularly important in friendship, while acceptance, equality, and role enactment were noted as major factors in divorce. In contrast, both age groups tended to highlight superficial issues such as appearance when discussing marriage. Children's ability to construe others in non-egocentric terms did not show an age effect. All subjects tended to respond in a non-egocentric manner. An age effect was not found for the Evaluative Direction scale, with all subjects tending to focus on the presence of qualities rather than on their absence.

Boys and girls showed equal facility in egocentric/decentered thinking. Similarly, no sex effect was found for the Evaluative Direction scale. However, for the dimension of Social Penetration, an interaction was found between sex and social relationship. Girls were more likely to make inferential statements in regard to friendship, but this did not carry over to their perception of a spouse or ex-spouse.

Comparison was also made across social relationships. Children gave the most insightful descriptions for friends, but described spouses in the most decentered terms. An ex-spouse tended to be described in terms of qualities that were lacking.

In discussing issues contributing to marital solidarity and marital tension, children saw people marrying on the basis of affective involvement, but divorcing on the basis of behavioral incompatibility. Their expectations for marriage included the sharing of time, parenthood, and financial responsibility. Their expectations for divorce included physical separation of the partners, a change in lifestyle and parental relationship for the children, and resumption of responsibility for oneself. Children tended to perceive couples as generally satisfied and expected to get married themselves. However, they were very sensitive to marital tension, especially that precipitated by issues about affective expression, childrearing, and finances.

These results were discussed in terms of cognitive-developmental theory, with particular reference to the distinction between cognitive skill and cognitive performance. Implications were also presented for discussion about the intercorrelation of cognitive skills and generality of inference across different aspects of the social domain. Finally, the significance for future research and therapeutic intervention were noted.

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I would like to express my appreciation to the members of my committee: Dr. Ellen Strommen, chairperson, Dr. Lucy Ferguson, Dr. John Hunter, and Dr. John McKinney.

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I am grateful to Dr. Ferguson, not only for her ideas and help in this project, but also for her model of developmental and clinical interests. My only regret is that I did not manage to work with her more. My thanks go also to Dr. Hunter who supported the design of this study, contributed much to its conceptualization, and who spent many sunny days indoors helping me plan the statistical analyses. My debt to Dr. McKinney extends well beyond this project. John has contributed much to my development both as a professional and as a person. I am especially appreciative of the confidence and friendship he has given me for so many years.

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INTRODUCTION

In modern society, children are continually exposed to information, debate and controversy about marital relationships. Parents present a primary model of marital behaviors and attitudes. The popular media, music, television and the press, are flooded with reference to relationships and lifestyles. Educational curricula now frequently encompass classes on marriage and family life. Dating has become increasingly prevalent among young adolescents and it seems as if the age at which children begin to show heterosexual interests is being pushed steadily lower.

This study was an attempt to investigate the development of children's understanding of social relationships, especially their concepts of marriage and divorce. Two specific issues were addressed: (1) children's perceptions of whom they might befriend, marry, or divorce; and (2) children's perceptions of issues which might help to consolidate or threaten a marital relationship. The anaysis was in part structural. It attempted to delineate the cognitive framework underlying children's reasoning and perceptions about relationships. The analysis was also descriptive. It attempted to appreciate the richness and variety of ideas and attitudes expressed by children.

The significance of this study lies in its potential contribution to primary and secondary intervention. Cognition plays an

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important role in shaping an individual's behavior. Analysis of children's cognition about marital relationships may facilitate explanation and prediction of patterns in family interaction. Similarly, the attitudes of adults have their roots in childhood beliefs. Analysis of the ideas and attitudes exhibited by children may help to reveal the developmental origins of adult notions about marital relationships. The significance of this study lies also in its potential contribution of cognitive developmental theory. Particularly relevent are questions about the interrelationship of social cognitive abilities and the generality of various types of social inference.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Unfortunately, there is a limited context of literature specifically relating to children's understanding of marital dynamics in which to embed the present study. However, impetus for the focus and design of this research stemmed from three main sources: the rising interest in social cognitive-developmental theory, a growing body of research on person perception, and the ongoing investigations of children's perceptions of familial roles.

Development of Social Cognitive Understanding

The theoretical and empirical literature exploring how children learn about the physical world around them has become voluminous over the past decade. For the most part, such work has been carried out within an organismic paradigm. Stimulated by work of Piaget, the focus of analysis has been on the internal cognitive processes used in constructing knowledge about the world (Baldwin, 1969a; Flavell, 1963, 1970; Kuhn, 1978; Piaget, 1970; Wallach, 1963; Sigel, 1964). Theoretical and empirical literature on social development is perhaps equally voluminous. However, such work has been carried out largely within a mechanistic paradigm (Kahn, 1978). The focus of analysis has been on the child's overt social behavior and on the external stimuli which influence its acquisition and expression. In contrast, it is only in very recent years that interest in social

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cognition has come to the fore. Although interpersonal behavior and dynamics received some attention within Piaget's theoretical framework, there are now repeated calls for further investigation of the application and adaptation of his concepts to analysis of children's social understanding and reasoning (Damon, 1977; Kohlberg, 1969; Kuhn, 1978; Lee, 1975; Selman, 1976a; Shantz, 1975; Youniss, 1975).

A basic premise of cognitive developmental theory is that the child interacts with the environment by extracting information and organizing it into meaningful patterns and schemas. These concepts serve as filters through which subsequent experiences are evaluated and interpreted. Development involves the gradual elaboration and modification of these cognitive representations into more comprehensive and integrated systems of understanding (Flavell, 1970). Hence, the goal has been to describe a sequence of cognitively based stages or qualitatively distinct ways of organizing and understanding the social world. Particular attention has been addressed to identifying cognitive stages which may show an invariant sequence of development, cohesion across different social issues, and universality across subject groups.

Although the relationship between physical and social cognition has been subject to intense theoretical debate (Damon, 1977; Kohlberg, 1969; Lee, 1975; Piaget, 1970; Selman, 1976a; Shantz, 1975; Youniss, 1975), much of this investigation has been based on the general assumption that the course of development of social and physical concepts is likely to be parallel or at least descriptively similar. More specifically, children's understanding of the social world is expected to reflect both a gradual decline in idiosyncratic, global

and egocentric thinking, and a rise in logical, causal, and abstract reasoning. A search of the literature revealed a large and increasing number of exploratory attempts to examine such developmental patterns in children's organization of thoughts about social issues. The preponderance of effort has been focused on moral development (Kohlberg, 1969) and perspective taking skills (Flavell, 1968, 1974). However, there are also data extant on a wide range of topics, including the child's concept of death (Childers & Wimmer, 1971), defense mechanisms (Chandler, Paget & Koch, 1978; Whiteman, 1967), emotional disorders (Coie & Pennington, 1976; Hoffman, Mersden & Kalter, 1977; Kalter & Marsden, 1977; Maas, Marecek & Travers, 1977; Marsden & Kalter, 1976; Novak, 1975); gender identity, sexuality and reproduction (Bernstein & Cowan, 1975; Kahn, Nash & Brucken, 1978), maternal attachment (Marvin & Greenberg, 1978), physical illness (Campbell, 1975; Neuhauser, Amsterdam, Hines & Steward, 1978); politics (reviewed by Flavell, 1970); self-concept (Bannister & Agnew, 1977; Lewis & Brooks-Gunn, 1979; Mohr, 1978), social institutions, customs, and conventions (Furth, Baur & Smith, 1976; Turiel, 1975), and religion (reviewed by Flavell, 1970). There have also been investigations of somewhat more esoteric social issues, such as esthetics (Spiegel, 1950), ambivalence (Harter, 1977), queues (Moessinger, 1977), excuses (Leahy, 1978), kindness (Baldwin & Baldwin, 1970) and fantasy (Morison & Gardner, 1978; Shapiro, Sherman & Osowsky, 1980).

Despite steady expansion of the boundaries of social cognitive investigation, there has been little attention given to the child's

understanding of marital relationships. However, theoretical specu-
lation and empirical data on related social phenomena underscore the
value of such research and provide ample support for hypothesizing
that the child's reasoning about marital dynamics should similarly
reflect a cognitive developmental progression.

Development of Person Perception Skills

A particularly pertinent area of social cognitive research is
that generally labeled person perception. Other rubrics include
attribution process, impression formation, and naive psychology. The
question addressed is how people are conceptualized as individuals--
that is, what properties are attributed to them and how is such
information organized.

Research on person perception has a long history. Initial
efforts emphasized the judgmental aspects of person perception and
focussed on factors correlated with an individual's empathic ability,
insight, or accuracy in appraising the responses of others (Bruner &
Tagiuri, 1954; Taft, 1955). However, this line of research declined
following major methodological criticism (e.g., Cronbach, 1955), and
was replaced by a more phenomenological approach. Beginning with
the work of Heider (1944, 1958) and attribution theory, Kelley (1955)
on personal construct theory, and the research of Asch (1946) and
Bieri (1955), increasingly refined attempts have been made to study
the cognitive processes involved in person perception. Emphasis has
been placed on examining the type of impressions an individual forms
about another and the conceptual sophistication of such evaluations.

Extensive investigation based on adult populations conclusively indicate that person perception is affected by a vast array of factors (Bieri, Atkins, Briar, Leaman, Miller & Tripodi, 1975; Crockett, 1965; Gardner & Schoen, 1962; Livesley & Bromley, 1973). Among these determinants are the type, valence and congruency of attributes possessed by the other person, the relationship between the observer and the person perceived, as well as a host of stable characteristics and transitory psychological states on the part of the perceiver.

The development of person perception style and skill is still a comparatively unworked area. There has been no systematic analysis of children's concepts of human behavior and personality comparable to the study done with adults. However, there is a small but growing body of research on this topic, examining both the structure and content of children's perceptions.

Structural Analysis

Structural analysis attempts to delineate stages in how children reason about social issues. Research has focused on several theoretical cognitive constructs.

Cognitive complexity. The cocept of cognitive complexity, introduced by Bieri (1955, 1961), has received a number of different definitions. In this context, it may be defined as the capacity to construe social behavior in a multi-dimensional way. A cognitively complex percept is based on a more highly differentiated system of dimensions for describing others' behavior than a cognitively simple

percept (Bieri et al., 1975; Crockett, 1965). This has been operationalized in terms of the number of dimensions children use in their portrayal of another, and the degree to which they are differentially applied to people.

Research has tended to show a correlation between age and cognitive complexity. Kohn and Fiedler (1961) had high school and college freshmen rate significant others on twenty bipolar adjective scales. Younger subjects tended to apply similar ratings across stimulus objects, whereas older subjects tended to develop a more unique profile for each subject. Looking at children age 8 to 16, Signell (1966) and Vacc and Greenleaf (1975) found a progressively increased ability to give detailed description of roles (Adapted Role Repertory Test). Similar results were also found in studies using a more unstructured methodology. Bigner (1974) found that across preschool to eighth grade, children's free descriptions of siblings became longer and contained more descriptive elements. Scarlett, Press and Crockett (1971) found this same trend in children's free descriptions of peers. In addition Bigner (1974) and Scarlett et al. (1971) found a significant correlation between cognitive complexity and the valence of the person being described. Figures who were liked by the subject tended to be described in a more complex fashion than those with negative valence. Unfortunately, data on cognitive complexity as operationally defined in this context are difficult to interpret because of a possible confounding interaction between age and verbal fluency.

Social penetration. The concept of social penetration has been discussed at length by Altman and Taylor (1973). In brief, it refers to the development of social exchange, gradually progressing from superficial, nonpersonal areas to more intimate and deeper interchange. People tend to let themselves be known gradually, at first revealing less intimate information and only later sharing more personal aspects of themselves. Cognitive developmental theory predicts a parallel progression in the development of skill in perceiving others. Between the preoperational stage and the stage of formal operations, children shift from largely concrete, superficial thinking to more abstract reasoning (Piaget, 1970; Werner, 1948).

In an early study, Gollin (1958) scored the extent to which children age 8 to 17 made inferences which accounted for diversity of behavior. At all ages, girls were more likely than boys to ascribe motives or introduce some underlying condition to explain the observed behavior. However, for both sexes, inferences were more commonly found among older children. The method used by Bigner (1974) and Scarlett et al. (1971) was discussed above. Both studies rated the children's descriptions on a four-point scale in terms of emphasis on concrete or abstract elements. Scarlett et al. (1971) found that by fifth grade, most subjects were describing peers in abstract terms. The nature of the relationship between the subject and person described (liked/disliked) was not found to have a significant effect. Bigner (1974) found that it was not until eighth grade that abstract dimensions predominated in descriptions of siblings. Disliked siblings tended to be described at a higher cognitive

level than liked siblings. Significant sex differences were also
found, with girls using more abstract terms than boys. In a widely
cited study, Yarrow and Campbell (1963) used a seven-point scale to
rate the organization of descriptions of roommates at summer camp
given by children age 8 to 13. There were no significant sex dif-
ferences, but age trends were apparent. Older subjects tended to
give well-integrated personality portraits involving implicit and
explicit inferences about behavior, while younger children tended to
give reports consisting of vague, global generalizations. Also using
a rather detailed scoring analysis, Peevers and Secord (1973) found
a similar developmental progression in their rating of children's
descriptions of peers. However, in this study, boys were found to
give somewhat more differentiating descriptions than girls. Peevers
and Secord (1973) also reported that disliked peers were described
in more dispositional terms than liked peers.

In sum, these studies give definite support to the argument
that with age children become more penetrating in their social per-
ceptions. However, the degree of penetration seems to depend on
the type of person being described and that person's relationship to
the observer. At this point, data on sex differences are still
ambiguous.

Evaluative consistency. This cognitive construct refers to the
extent to which children are able to integrate discordant and incon-
gruent attributes shown by another person. This issue has not been
extensively investigated. The study by Gollin (1958) discussed above

makes indirect reference to it. However, Peevers and Secord (1973) directly rated the extent to which children recognized and articulated both desirable and undesirable qualities in liked and disliked peers. As one might expect, very young subjects (kindergarten) tended to give rather inconsistent responses, perhaps because they did not perceive the inconsistencies or did not see a need to be consistent. Older subjects (grade 11) also tended to give inconsistent descriptions, most likely because of a greater tolerance for and ability to integrate disparate characteristics. In contrast, early and late latency age subjects tended to give rather one-sided evaluations. No differences in evaluative consistency were found between liked and disliked peers.

Personal involvement. This concept refers to the social perspective, egocentric or decentered, that children use in person perception. Interest in perspective taking skill grew out of the classical studies on conservation. Piaget (1970) noted that children gradually become able to focus on several dimensions of a situation and to relate these dimensions. This topic has been a perennial favorite for theoretical speculation and research. Selman (1976a) goes so far as to argue that social intelligence depends upon the individual's ability to take the role of or put himself in the place of another. Tomes of research have been published on developmental stages in children's ability to consider another's visual, intentional and affective experience. Early data were reviewed by Flavell (1968), and more recent work by Shantz (1975). Much effort has also

been given to examining the relationship between perspective taking skills and a variety of social cognitions and behaviors, such as moral judgment (Selman, 1971b), aggression (Dodge, 1980), and altruism (Rushton & Wiener, 1975).

Several studies have also examined the relationship between perspective taking skill and person perception. Despite use of a rather crude two-point scale, Bigner (1974) and Scarlett et al. (1971) found that children's descriptions became less egocentric with age, reflecting an increasing ability to distinguish between self and other. Peevers and Secord (1973) used a more refined scale which looked at whether the child used an egocentric, mutual, or decentered frame of reference. A similar developmental trend was found. However, the effects of the object's valence are less clear. Bigner (1974) found that liked siblings were described in egocentric terms. In contrast, Peevers and Secord (1973) reported that egocentric terms were more likely to be applied to disliked peers.

Perhaps the most detailed examination of the contribution of perspective taking skills to person perception has been made by Selman (1977, 1976a, b, 1971a; Selman, Jaquette & Lavin, 1977; Selman & Byrne, 1974; Cooney & Selman, 1978). While Selman and his colleagues have begun to examine how perspective taking functions as the structural basis for reasoning about individual (Selman et al., 1977), group dynamics (Selman et al., 1977) and even parent-child relationships (Cooney, 1978), primary emphasis has been given to analysis of friendship. As friendship might be considered a

prototype of dyadic relationships, this work is especially relevant to the present study. Hence, it is reviewed in some detail.

Data were obtained by interviewing children about their reactions to movie characters who were confronted by an interpersonal dilemma. Although this methodology can be criticized for being somewhat restricted in the range of information presented to and requested from the child, the technique is within social cognitive tradition, adapted from the classic design of Kohlberg (1969). Results indicated a close association between the child's level of perspective taking skill and his/her reasoning about friendship.

Selman elaborated the concept of perspective taking to include four stages of development. At level 0, the children are egocentric, typically unable to realize that others have a different perspective from their own. This is reflected in children's conceptions of friendship by their failure to recognize its subjective or evaluative nature (e.g., that friendship might be based on enjoying play with another). At level 1, the subjective stage (about age 6 to 8), awareness of differences in perspectives emerges. However, the child tends to focus on only one perspective rather than coordinate perspectives. In analysis of friendship, the notion of subjectivity and reciprocity begin to appear, albeit of a primitive, unidirectional nature. Friendship is seen as being established and maintained on the basis of a positive subjective reaction to the actions of another (e.g., a friend is someone who gives to you). At level 2, the self-reflective level (about age 8 to 10), the child

tends to alternate between social perspectives, but cannot process or integrate them simultaneously. Children begin to recognize the need for mutual cooperation in friendship, but only so far as it serves mutual self-interests. At stage 3, the mutual perspectives level (age 10+), perspectives are coordinated, as if viewed from a third party position. At this level, friendship is described as involving mutual concern about well being, rather than the more egocentric notion of self-interest.

In related research, Youniss (1975; Youniss & Volpe, 1978) focused specifically on affirmation, the process by which children communicate about the initiation and establishment of friendship. Using a structured technique, Youniss found similar developmental shifts in children's reasoning. His data underscore the children's growing understanding of the mutuality and reciprocity involved in friendship and increasing recognition of the other person as distinct from themselves.

In sum, this literature on personal involvement suggest that perspective taking skill may be a powerful determinant of the cognitive sophistication of children's perceptions of others. However, firm conclusions cannot be drawn about sex differences or the effects of the stimulus object's relationship with the observer.

Content Analysis

Content analysis complements structural analysis by providing a descriptive characterization of the terms in which the child experiences his social world. Although content analysis is of high

interest to the clinician, it has not been favored by the researcher. This may reflect the latter's pejorative notion that it yields so-called "soft" descriptive data, not easily subjected to quantification or statistical procedures. However, there are a few relevant studies which have focused on content.

On the basis of nonsystematic observations, Watts (1944) concluded that 6 to 7 year old children tended to be most concerned with superficial characteristics, especially appearance. Analyses of personality were extremely crude, with liked peers being described as kind, good or nice, and disliked peers characterized as unkind or bad. Yarrow and Campbell (1963) reported that children age 8 to 13 were most descriptive of peers' interpersonal behavior. The most frequently mentioned interaction categories were those dealing with physical and verbal sociability, conformity, play, and affiliation. Some reference was also made to appearance, but this and other non-interactive categories were featured in only half the descriptions given by subjects. Age trends in the use of categories did not occur except for the dimensions of aggression and domination, which were more likely to be used by older subjects.

Content analysis has also been made of children's concepts of friendship. Bigelow (1977; Bigelow & LaGaipa, 1975) asked Anglo-Canadian and Scottish children to write essays illustrating their expectations for best friends. Developmental changes were found on several dimensions. During early latency, friendship appeared to be based on common activities, propinquity and a cost-reward balance determined by overt behaviors. Later, friendship is seen as a

contractual relationship, violation of which may lead to its severance until compensation of some type has been exchanged. Finally, friendship is considered as a long-term relationship based on unconditional positive regard, empathy, understanding and trust. Sex differences were not found except that girls were more likely to refer to altruistic behaviors. Although widely cited, these data cannot be readily interpreted. The method did not take into account the tremendous variance in writing skill that might be expected across children age 6 to 14. However, there does seem to be some validity to the developmental trend, as similar results have been noted by Berndt (1978). Berndt's method only required subjects (kindergarten to grade 6) to give verbal descriptions of friendship. Children of all ages expected friends to share, help, cooperate rather than quarrel, and to engage in common activities. However, issues of intimacy, loyalty, trust and personality were more likely to be mentioned by older subjects. Sex differences were found on two categories. Girls stressed intimacy and faithfulness more than boys. Remarkably congruent age patterns have also been reported by Selman et al. (1977) and Damon (1977), in studies based on children's responses to hypothetical dilemmas. Unfortunately, these reports did not include analysis of sex differences. Finally, Hayes (1978) focussed on conceptions of friendship held by preschool age children. Content analysis indicated that propinquity, common activities, play skill, evaluation and possessions were all used as a basis for liking friends. Dislike of another was typically based on his/her rule violation, aggression, and aberrant behavior.

To a degree, content analysis might seem merely to reflect
patterns already articulated through structural analysis, especially
developmental trends in social penetration. However, the value of
content analysis is that it is multi-dimensional. Hence, it gives
credit to the richness of children's cognition. Furthermore, it takes
into account subtle shifts and variance within a developmental level
and across sex groups, although the issue of sex differences has not
been well investigated to date.

Development of Familial Role Perceptions

Considerable attention has been given to parental role function-
ing. Not only have familial experiences been recognized as important
influences on the child's socialization and personality style, but
it has also been argued that the perception of parental roles may be
an important initial step in the child's developing cognition about
social roles (Brim, 1957).

Research in this area has evolved through several stages of
focus. Most early work was concerned with the relationship between
child development and the way parents' perceived themselves as carry-
ing out their role. Many of these studies were retrospective.
Recognizing the methodological problems inherent in such a design,
however, investigators moved to making direct observations of
parental behaviors or at least having parents give reports on their
current functioning.

However, such research has been criticized on two counts (Dubin
& Dubin, 1965). Studies often failed to examine children's actual

responses to parental behavior. Children cannot be assumed to respond in a uniform manner. Furthermore, investigators failed to examine children's interpretation of their experiences. It cannot be assumed that the child's perception of his/her parents is necessarily congruent with parents' self-perceptions. There is now a growing body of research exploring the extent to which and manner in which children understand the parental behavior they observe and experience. Much of this work has been reviewed by Dubin and Dubin (1965), Goldin (1969), and by Livesley and Bromley (1973).

A great variety of descriptive variables have been used in analysis of parental roles. However, recent factor analytic work suggested that three orthogonal factors appear to constitute a stable framework within which to investigate child-rearing behaviors. These factors have been labeled by Schaefer (1965a, b) as Acceptance versus Rejection, Psychological Autonomy versus Control, and Firm versus Lax Limits. In a slightly different model, Seigelman (1965) labeled the orthogonal factors as Loving, Demanding, and Punishment.

Research has indicated that children have differing percepitons of maternal and paternal roles. There is remarkable consensus across studies (e.g., Emmerich, 1959; Kagan, 1956; Kagan & Lemkin, 1960) that fathers are seen as more punitive, more feared, more dominant, and less nurturant than mothers. Perceptions of parents also vary by sex of the child. In his review of literature, Goldin (1969) noted that boys have a less positive perception of both parents than do girls. For example, such studies have indicated that in comparison to girls,

boys see fathers as showing less affection, less approval, less avail-
ability, and more aggression. Mothers are seen as more dominating
and more punishing.

Of particular relevance to the present study in research indi-
cating that the age of the child is a critical factor in his/her
perception of parents. Children are aware of parental behaviors from
a very early age. Hartley (1960) reported that even children as young
as 3 years of age were able to make distinctions between maternal
and paternal roles, albeit at a crude level. Dubin and Dubin (1965)
concluded that with age children's perceptions become more realistic,
that is, more congruent with observed parental behavior. Studies have
also shown that with age, children come to take more subtle dimen-
sions into account. For example, Emmerich (1961) reported that
children showed less stereotyping. Other studies (e.g., Emmerich,
1959; Hess & Torney, 1962) noted that older children become able to
characterize parents along dimensions such as relative power, or
dominance, rather than being restricted to behavioral descriptions.
The child's ability to differentiate between role characteristics
and role enactment has not been widely investigated, although Sowers
(1937) noted that adolescents could make such a distinction. How-
ever, Dubin and Dubin (1965) argued that there may be a relative
progression in the development of children's perceptions, moving from
focus on individual behavior, to perceptions of classes of behaviors
that are seen as characteristic of a role, and finally to an ability to
make generalizations about role functions.

While the above discussion has focused on perceptions about parental roles, there is also a wealth of literature on perceptions about marital roles. Although the latter work has dealt almost exclusively with adult samples, it is relevant in perhaps providing a basis for discussion about how "realistic" are children's perceptions about marital issues, at least as measured in the present study.

The major focus of much of this literature has been on delineating factors which facilitate or impede marital satisfaction. In a review of classic studies, Hicks and Platt (1970) noted that marital happiness tends to be associated with a variety of demographic variables such as higher occupational income, and educational levels, and especially husband-wife similarity in socioeconomic background, age, and religion. However, with the development of role theory, more recent investigations have examined the relationship between role expectations/enactment and ratings of marital happiness.

Nye and Berardo (1973) developed a family paradigm including seven roles: provider, housekeeper, sexual, recreational, kinship, supportive, and parental. There is agreement across studies that well-functioning marriages are characterized by spouses who have similar role expectations, or at least are willing to compromise (e.g., Hicks & Platt, 1970; Locke & Williamson, 1958; Scanzioni, 1968). Stuckert (1963) noted that the husband's role definitions and expectations may be more important to the early success of a marriage than the wife's. Investigators have also attempted to evaluate the relative contribution of the various aspects of marital

process to marital satisfaction. In several surveys of middle-class couples, companionship, defined broadly to encompass recreational, supportive, and intimacy needs, is seen as most critical (e.g., Bouerman, 1957; Chadwick, Albrecht & Kunz, 1976; Locke & Williamson, 1958; Orden & Bradburn, 1968). Housekeeping was credited with having little impact on marital happiness. Research has also indicated that while parenting is seen as an important aspect of marital role, it is simultaneously described as a frequent source of marital tension (Chadwick et al., 1976; Hicks & Platt, 1970).

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND HYPOTHESES

A major element missing from social cognitive literature to date is an examination of how children perceive and understand the adult world around them. This issue is of paramount importance. Children are constant observers of adult interaction, and the interpretations they make are a primary factor in the socialization process. They integrate such observations into their current functioning and the effects of these early observations may certainly be manifested when they too acquire adult status.

Hence, the present study investigated one aspect of children's understanding of the adult world, their concept of marriage and divorce. More specifically, it first examined children's perceptions of relationship partners. This is the basic question of person perception--what sort of person does the child see as attractive to marry, or as likely to provoke divorce. To compare this to children's understanding of their own social activities, examination was also made of the type of person they are likely to befriend. By way of further elaboration, this study also examined children's perceptions of motivations for marriage and divorce, and their characterization of on-going marital and post-marital process.

The second basic focus of this study was on children's expectations about marital role enactment. In particular, analysis focused

on couples' modes of handling differences in point of view about role performance. This issue was selected because problem solving is obviously a primary issue in relationship maintenance. Indeed, extant data on friendship highlighted children's expectations for cooperation and tension resolution. Finally, this study examined children's personal attitudes toward marriage.

As this study was exploratory, hypotheses could only be formulated in general terms.

1. An age effect was anticipated, reflecting developmental trends in the child's reasoning abilities. In particular, it was expected that children's perceptions of relationship partners would show a decline in egocentrism and a rise in ability to make inferences about underlying personality features.

2. The design also included examination of sex differences. Although extant literature on social cognition makes frequent mention of this variable, the direction of effect is not clear. Hence, no specific hypotheses were formulated for the present study.

3. Social cognitive literature also includes mixed results about effects for the stimulus object's valence (liked/disliked). This variable was included in the design through comparison across marriage and divorce. However, the direction of effect could not be anticipated.

4. This study also examined differences between children's understanding of relationships in which they are actively engaged (friendship) and relationships of which they are only a third party

observers (marriage and divorce). Although this point has not been discussed in this report, it is the obvious hypothesis that familiar experiences are likely to be understood at a higher cognitive level than more foreign experiences.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a 2 x 2 design. The first independent variable was sex. The second independent variable was age, including subjects 7 to 8 years old (Grade 2), and 13 to 14 years old (Grade 8).

The dependent variables were derived from the subjects' responses regarding three types of social relationships: friendship, marriage and divorce. This was considered a repeated measures factor. Additional dependent variables were derived from the subjects' responses regarding four aspects of marital role: housekeeping, economic provision and expenditure, childrearing, and affective expression. This was also considered a repeated measures factor.

Subjects

Subject criteria included socioeconomic status, family structure, and age. To participate in the study, the subject had to be of a middle class, intact family. An intact family was defined as one in which both natural parents resided and which had no history of marital separation. Furthermore, only subjects 7 to 8 and 13 to 14 were included.

These age groups were chosen for investigation as they were likely to correspond with two major Piagetian stages of development, concrete and formal operations. Age 7 was selected as the lower limit in order to ensure that the children had developed the requisite

verbal skills to complete the interview. Initial plans for this study also included preschool children, 4 to 5 years of age, corresponding to Piaget's preoperational stage of cognitive development. However, pilot testing raised serious doubts about their verbal competence. Such children tended to give very brief and inarticulate responses, especially in reference to marriage and divorce. While this might indicate that their concepts of such social relationships have not developed beyond at best a simplistic level, it might also merely reflect their verbal limitations. Hence, this young age group was dropped from investigation at this time. A less verbally demanding methodology would be required for the data to be considered meaningful.

The sample was drawn from communities in the environ of a large university. Names of prospective subjects were obtained from school class lists provided by several families in the area. The mothers of all prospective subjects who met the selection criteria were contacted by phone to seek permission for their child's participation. The rate of refusal was very low and usually attributed to scheduling difficulties. A copy of the explanatory letter given to parents at the time of their child's participation is available in Appendix A.

The final sample consisted of 40 subjects, divided across the four cells according to age and sex. The younger group ranged in age from 7 years 8 months to 8 years 11 months, with a mean age of 8 years 2 months. The older group ranged in age from 13 years 0 months to 14 years 11 months, with a mean age of 13 years 10 months.

All children came from middle class backgrounds as judged by family residence.

Interview Schedule

Data were obtained by using an individualized interview format. Each child was asked a series of set questions, some open-ended, and others restricted to a multiple-choice response. There was a total of fourteen questions.

Five aspects of children's understanding and attitudes about friendship, marriage and divorce were examined:

1. Perceptions of a friend, a possible spouse, and a possible ex-spouse

2. Perceived motivation for marriage and divorce

3. Characterization of on-going marital and post-marital process

4. Personal attitudes toward marriage

5. The process of marital problem solving

The last portion of the interview encompassed exploration of the perceived contribution of various aspects of marital role to marital tension, the likelihood of its resolution, and the range of possible problem-solving techniques.

A copy of the interview questions is provided in Appendix B. It will be noted that the question regarding friendship was placed first in the interview schedule. This was done to help reduce the subjects' anxiety. Friendship was likely to be a more familiar and less threatening topic for children than marriage and divorce.

The interview format and final interview schedule were developed on the basis of extensive pilot testing. Several other experimental techniques were considered and tried. One pilot design presented subjects with a descriptive narrative and situational dilemmas and then assessed their reactions using an open-ended format. This is a standard technique in cognitive developmental research, popularized by the work of Kohlberg (1969) and more recently by Selman (e.g., 1976a). Another pilot design called for subjects to be interviewed, but included only a multiple-choice response format. This method is also popular, and its advocates cite the reduced dependence on verbal skill as a prime advantage. Methodological issues were extensively discussed earlier in this report. One of the major criticisms of techniques mentioned above is that they impose a priori restraints on the type of data collected and presuppose that the material the investigator presents and the response options he/she provides are indeed the most relevant for the child. This caveat seemed particularly pertinent to the present study. Because of the dearth of literature on children's perceptions of marriage and divorce, the present study represented an exploratory venture. The largely open-ended interview format was adopted on the recommendation that it best taps the potential richness of the child's ideas and expression.

Procedure

All subjects were tested individually at their homes. Typically, one or both parents were also in the house. The study was explained to them and written permission obtained for their child's

participation. Verbal agreement to participate was also obtained from each subject. No subject refused to be involved in the study. Indeed, the subjects were strikingly cooperative, attentive and intrigued by the somewhat novel situation. All subjects were inter- viewed in a quiet room in which the confidentiality of their responses was ensured. A brief period was always spent establishing rapport.

Each interview took approximately thirty minutes. The study was introduced by a short explanation that the investigator was inter- ested in what children thought about different types of people and the ways they behave toward each other. Every attempt was made to ensure that the subjects understood the interview questions. Most questions included several alternate phrasings. After receiving an initial response, the investigator used a series of prompts to facili- tate further responsiveness. The goal was to tap the subjects' most elaborated or highest level of understanding. The prompts were strictly nondirective and included the usual phrases such as "tell me more" or "what else do you think?" It was not until subject had apparently exhausted his range of responses that the next question in the series was presented. Response were recorded verbatim. An attempt had been made in pilot testing to have subjects write their responses. However, this design was discarded because of readily apparent discrepancies between their verbal and writing skills.

Data Coding

Subjects' responses on the open-ended interview quetions were divided into units of information, each containing reference to a

discrete behavior, characteristic, or evaluation. These units were used as the basis for data analysis. A systematic coding system was developed to achieve quantification or descriptive analysis of the response elements. Some of the coding categories were adopted from scoring protocols used in related studies. Alterations and additions were developed by the investigator on the basis of pilot results and the specific issues addressed in the present study. Coding was done independently by the investigator and an experienced graduate student in clinical psychology. Definitions and examples of the coding categories are presented in Appendix C.

RESULTS

Inter-Coder Agreement

The consistency of the data coding was calculated according to the most stringent procedure. For each category the number of units on which the coders were in agreement was compared to the total number of units being coded. Consistency was extremely high. Coefficients ranged across categories from 80% to 100%, with 35 out of 42 categories showing consistency at 90% or higher.

Person Perception in Friendship, Marriage, and Divorce

Descriptions of a friend, a possible spouse, and a possible ex-spouse were examined from both structural and content perspectives.

Structural Dimensions

Personal involvement. This dimension refers to the frame of reference used in describing others. It assesses the degree to which the subject maintains himself/herself as the pivot focus. Three levels of Personal Involvement were distinguished: (1) egocentric-- descriptions which are narcissistic and subjective; (2) mutual-- descriptions which make reference to the relationship between the subject and others; and (3) other-oriented--descriptions which are objective and decentered (Peevers & Secord, 1973). These categories were assumed to lie along a developmental continuum.

Scores were assigned according to the most prominent mode of response, the level containing the highest number of response units. It was hypothesized that this would tap the child's most likely level of day-to-day conceptualization. In cases of a tie in prominence rankings, the score for the higher level in the three-point scale was assigned.

Means and standard deviations for each subject group are reported in Table 1. The results were examined using a 2 x 2 x 3 analysis of

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores for Personal Involvement Scale

			Friendship	Marriage	Divorce
	Girls:	$\overline{X}$	2.4	2.8	2.0
Young		SD	.84	.63	.33
	Boys:	$\overline{X}$	1.8	3.0	2.8
		SD	1.03	0	.96
	Girls:	$\overline{X}$	2.1	3.4	1.8
Old		SD	.89	.96	1.03
	Boys:	$\overline{X}$	2.1	2.8	2.0
		SD	.74	.63	.33

variance for age, sex, and social relationship, with repeated measures on the last factor. A summary of the analysis is presented in Table 2. There was a signifiant main effect for the type of social relationship ($F_{2,64}$ = 8.866, p < .001). However, main effects for

Table 2:   Analysis of Variance for Personal Involvement Scale

Source	df	MS	F
Age	1	12	1.125
Sex	1	.3	.281
Age . Sex	1	.3	.281
Error Between	36	1.067	
Social Relationship	2	6.1	8.866*
Age . Social Relationship	2	.3	.436
Sex . Social Relationship	2	1.2	1.744
Age . Sex . Social Relationship	2	.4	.581
Error Within	64	.680	

* p < .001

age and sex were not significant and there were no interaction effects.

Post hoc analysis was done using the Scheffé technique for multiple comparisons between means. Signficant differences were found between the degree of Personal Involvement in friendship and marriage (t_{obs} = 3.525, p < .05) and between divorce and marriage (t_{obs} = 3.715, p < .05). Subjects across age and sex groups tended to describe marriage in more objective and decentered terms than they described friendship and divorce.

Social penetration. This dimension refers to the depth of the child's insight. It assesses the degree to which the subject goes beyond surface characteristics to make inference about internal qualities. Three levels of Social Penetration were distinguished: (1) external orientation--descriptions which focused on appearance or possessions; (2) behavioral orientation--descriptions which focus on action and activities, and (3) internal orientation--descriptions which focus on inferred traits and attitudes. These categories were also assumed to lie on a developmental continuum, with the more penetrating levels assumed to require greater insight and integration.

Scores were assigned using the same procedure as for Personal Involvement. Each subject was credited for his/her most prominent mode of response, and in the case of tied frequencies, the higher level in the three-point scale was scored.

Means and standard deviations for each subject group are given in Table 3. A 2 x 2 x 3 analysis of variance was performed for age, sex, and social relationship, with repeated measures on the last factor. Table 4 presents a summary of these results. The main effects for age and sex were significant. The main effect for the type of social relationship was not significant. However, there were significant interaction effects between type of social relationships and sex ($F_{2, 64}$ = 8.0, p $\leq$ .001), and among type of social relationship, age and sex ($F_{2, 64}$ = 8.0, p $\leq$ .001). That is, older children were more likely to make inferences about covert features than younger children. Furthermore, girls showed greater penetration than boys on friendship, but not on marriage and divorce.

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores for Social Penetration Scale

			Friendship	Marriage	Divorce
	Girls	$\overline{X}$	2.6	2.1	2.3
Young		SD	.99	.48	.89
	Boys	$\overline{X}$	2.0	2.1	2.4
		SD	.81	.84	.66
	Girls	$\overline{X}$	3.0	2.7	2.4
Old		SD	.68	.62	.0
	Boys	$\overline{X}$	1.8	2.6	2.6
		SD	.7	.62	.63

Table 4: Analysis of Variance for Social Penetration Scale

Source	df	MS	F
Age	1	2.15	6.2*
Sex	1	2.13	6.14*
Age . Sex	1	.28	.808
Error Between	36	.347	
Social Relationships	2	.055	.159
Social Relationships . Age	2	3.065	1.0
Social Relationships . Sex	2	.605	8.0*
Social Relationships . Age . Sex	2	3.04	8.0*
Error Within	64	.342	

$*p < .05$

$**p < .001$

Evaluative direction. This dimension has not been previously studied in terms of person perception. It refers to whether the descriptions of others were given in affirmative or negative terms. This does not imply reference to whether the evaluation was positive or negative. Rather, it takes into account whether the subject focused on the presence or absence of a characteristic. Whether children show a developmental trend in their use of affirmative or negative structure has not been delineated in previous research. Hence, this dimension was considered dichotomous in the present study, with a score for each subject assigned according to the most prominently used category.

The proportion of subjects using each category is reported in Table 5. Separate chi-squares were computed for each type of social

Table 5: Evaluative Description Scale--Percentage of Subjects Using Affirmative Descriptions

		Friendship	Marriage	Divorce
Young	Girls	100	90	80
	Boys	100	100	60
Old	Girls	100	90	60
	Boys	100	90	90

relationship to determine age and sex differences. None of these analyses was significant. Hence, subject groups were combined to examine differences in Evaluative Direction across friendship, marriage, and divorce using Cochran's Q test for related proportions. This analysis showed a significant effect (Q = 37.22, p < .001). The chi-square analog of the Scheffé test was then used as the post hoc comparison procedure for the Cochran test (Marascuilo & McSweeney, 1977). Results revealed significant differences between friendship and divorce (p < .05), and between marriage and divorce (p < .05). Subjects tended to describe divorce in largely negative terms, whereas friendship and marriage were more likely to be described in affirmative terms.

Content Dimensions

Subjects' descriptions of a friend, possible spouse, and possible ex-spouse were each coded along twelve content dimensions. These categories referred to: Possessions, Proximity, Appearance, Social Behavior, Activities, Personality, Psychological Intimacy, Acceptance-Equality, Affective Involvement, Compatibility, Parenthood, and Sexuality. This coding system was adapted from the work of Bigelow (1977; Bigelow & LaGaipa, 1975) and Hayes (1978). These categories were not assumed to lie in a developmental continuum. Hence, each content dimension was considered separately.

Analysis was based on a frequency count of the use/nonuse of each category. Credit for usage was given regardless of the number of descriptive units so categorized. For the most part, descriptions

were coded along several dimensions, with subjects rarely giving emphasis to a particular category. Hence, the notion of a most prominant mode of response for each subject was not applicable.

The proportion of subjects using each category are presented in Table 6. The effects of age and sex on each dimension were examined using chi-squares. Significant effects were found for several categories. With regard to friendship, girls were more likely than boys to be concerned about Personality factors (X^2 = 6.547, p < .05), and the older subjects were more likely than younger subjects to be concerned with Psychological Intimacy (X^2 = 8.025, p < .01). With regard to divorce, descriptions given by older subjects were more likely than those of younger subjects to contain reference to issues of Acceptance-Equality (X^2 = 22.94, p < .001), and issues about appropriate Social Behavior (X^2 = 5.013, p < .05). There were no age or sex differences in descriptions given for a marriage partner.

Cochran's test for related proportions was used to compare across descriptions of a friend, possible spouse, and possible ex-spouse. For infrequently used categories, the Binomial test was substituted according to Siegel's (1956) recommendation. Where there were no age or sex differences, analysis was done on the total sample. Significant effects were found for Appearance (Q = 12.846, p < .001), and for Sexuality (p < .01). For girls there was a significant effect for Personality (Q = 9.8, p < .01). For older subjects there were significant effects for Acceptance-Equality (Q = 7.091, p < .05), and for Psychological Intimacy (Q = 7.091, p < .05).

Table 6: Content Analysis for Person Perception in Friendship, Marriage and Divorce--Percentage of Subjects Using Each Category

	Friendship				Marriage				Divorce			
	Young		Old		Young		Old		Young		Old	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Possessions	20	30	10	10	10	30	20	0	0	10	0	30
Proximity	10	0	20	20	0	0	10	0	10	10	20	0
Appearance	10	20	0	30	60	60	30	50	0	10	0	0
Social Behavior	40	20	30	30	20	10	30	30	30	20	70	50
Activities	50	50	40	40	50	10	50	10	0	0	10	0
Personality	90	40	70	30	60	60	50	70	40	40	40	60
Psychological Intimacy	0	10	50	40	0	0	30	10	0	0	0	20
Acceptance-Equality	10	0	0	0	10	0	40	10	10	10	40	30
Affective Involvement	20	20	10	20	20	0	10	0	20	10	10	10
Compatability	20	40	60	60	10	10	50	20	50	20	20	30
Parenthood	--	--	--	--	30	10	10	10	10	10	10	0
Sexuality	--	--	--	--	0	0	0	0	10	20	20	10

The chi-square analog of the Scheffé test was again used as the post hoc comparison procedure for the Cochran test (Marascuilo & McSweeney, 1977). Appearance was more likely to be featured in descriptions of a spouse than in descriptions of a friend (p < .05) or an ex-spouse (p < .05). Sexuality was more at issue in divorce than in marriage (p < .05). Taking age and sex differences into consideration, Psychological Intimacy was more likely to be mentioned by older subjects in reference to friendship than marriage (p < .05) or divorce (p < .05). This relationship did not hold for the younger subjects. There were significant differences for older subjects in use of the category Acceptance-Equality between divorce and marriage (p < .05) and between marriage and friendship (p < .05). Personality characteristics were more likely to be cited by girls in the context of friendship than divorce (p < .05). This pattern was not found for boys.

Motivation for Marriage and Divorce

Children's perceptions about why adults marry and divorce were each coded along ten content dimensions. These categories referred to: Appearance, Possession, Activities, Compatibility, Social Behavior, Independence, Depth-Commitment, Affective Involvement, Sexuality, and Parenthood. Analysis was based on a frequency count of the use/nonuse of each category.

The proportion of subjects using each category are presented in Table 7. Chi-square analyses revealed little effect for age and sex on children's explanations of why people marry and divorce. The

Table 7: Content Analysis for Motivation for Marriage and Divorce--Percentage of Subjects Using Each Category

| | Marriage | | | | Divorce | | | |
| | Young | | Old | | Young | | Old | |
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Appearance	0	20	20	0	0	0	0	0
Possessions	0	0	20	0	0	10	0	0
Activities-Interests	10	10	20	20	0	0	0	10
Compatability	0	0	10	0	30	60	80	40
Social Behavior	0	10	0	10	10	10	20	10
Nurturance-Independence	10	0	0	0	10	10	10	10
Depth-Commitment	0	20	20	20	10	0	20	10
Affective Involvement	90	80	100	80	80	20	30	40
Sexuality	10	10	0	0	10	20	10	20
Parenthood	10	0	0	10	0	0	0	10

only significant difference was between young girls and boys, with the former group placing more emphasis on the issue of Affective Involvement in divorce ($X^2 = 5.0$, $p < .05$).

A comparison of the reasons given for marriage as opposed to divorce was done using McNemar's test for two related proportions. For categories which were infrequently used, the Binomial test was substituted according to Siegel's (1956) recommendation. Significant differences were found on only two categories. Children were likely to perceive marriage as resulting from Affective Involvement ($p < .05$). In contrast, divorce was seen as a function of the degree of Compatibility ($p < .05$).

Characterization of Marital and Post-Marital Process

This portion of the interview attempted to tap the child's perception of on-going marital and post-marital process. This was first examined by asking open-ended questions. The data were coded along ten content dimensions. These categories encompassed: Proximity, Possessions, Financial Responsibility, Responsibility for Self, Parenthood, Sexuality, Compatibility, Independence, Affective Involvement, Depth-Commitment. As in the content analysis delineated above, analysis was based on a frequency count of the use/nonuse of each category.

The proportion of subjects using each category are presented in Table 8. Age and sex differences on each dimension were examined using chi-square analyses, or in the case of low frequency usage, using Fisher's Exact Probability Test (Siegel, 1956). Few age and

Table 8: Content Analysis for Characterization of Marriage and Divorce--Percentage of Subjects Using Each Category

	Marriage				Divorce			
	Young		Old		Young		Old	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Proximity	40	30	40	40	50	60	30	50
Possessions	10	0	0	30	10	0	10	20
Financial Responsibility	0	30	0	30	10	0	10	10
Responsibility for Self	0	10	0	10	40	0	0	30
Parenthood	30	30	0	10	20	20	40	10
Sexuality	10	0	10	10	10	10	10	0
Compatibility	0	0	20	10	0	0	20	0
Independence	0	0	0	10	0	0	20	20
Affective Involvement	30	20	10	0	30	50	40	20
Depth-Commitment	10	0	80	30	0	0	0	20

sex differences were revealed. The only significant age difference was that older subjects were more likely than younger subjects to characterize marriage in terms of the Depth-Commitment involved in the relationship (X^2 = 9.643, p $\leq$ .01). The only significant sex difference was that young girls were more likely than young boys to describe divorce as entailing Responsibility for Self (p < .05).

On-going marital and post-marital process were compared using McNemar's test for related proportions or the Binomial test in cases of low frequency category usage (Siegel, 1956). Marriage in contrast to divorce tended to be characterized in terms of Affective Involvement (X^2 = 4.9, p < .05) and for older subjects, in terms of Depth-Commitment (X^2 = 4.9, p < .05).

Children's perceptions of on-going marital and post-marital process were also examined using a more structured methodology. Particular interest was focused on children's perceptions of the affective state of people who were married or divorced. Data were obtained using a four-point scale, ranging from very happy/satisfied to very unhappy/dissatisfied.

Means and standard deviations for each subject group are given in Table 9. A 2 x 2 x 2 analysis of variance was performed for age, sex and social relationship, with repeated measures on the last factor. Table 10 presents a summary of the analysis. There was a main effect for social relationship ($F_{1,36}$ = 34.93, p < .001). Married persons were perceived to be happier than divorced persons. Age and sex differences were not significant.

Table 9: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores for Rating of Affective State in Marriage and Divorce

			Marriage	Divorce
Young	Girls	$\overline{X}$	4.0	1.6
		SD	.0	.7
	Boys	$\overline{X}$	3.7	2.2
		SD	.68	1.23
Old	Girls	$\overline{X}$	4.0	1.6
		SD	.0	.52
	Boys	$\overline{X}$	3.8	1.7
		SD	.42	.68

Table 10: Analysis of Variance for Affective State in Marriage and Divorce

Source	df	MS	F
Age	1	.2	.318
Sex	1	.05	.079
Age . Sex	1	.2	.318
Error Between	24	.629	
Social Relationship	1	88.2	34.93*
Social Relationship . Age	1	.45	.178
Social Relationship . Sex	1	1.8	.713
Social Relationship . Age . Sex	1	.45	178
Error Within	36	2.525	

*p < .001

Personal Attitude Toward Marriage

Each subject was also asked about his/her own future plans about marriage. The data were coded into dichotomous categories. These referred to: Positive Expectations or Negative Expectations (i.e., expectations of marrying/not marrying in the future).

The proportion of subjects using each category is reported in Table 11. Chi-square analyses were performed to isolate age and

Table 11: Personal Attitude Toward Marriage--Percentage of Subjects with Positive Expectations

	Young	Old
Girls	80	90
Boys	30	60

sex differences. As might be expected, girls were more likely than boys to anticipate getting married in the future (X^2 = 5.385, p < .05). No other differences were significant.

Marital Tension and Problem Solving

The final portion of the interview examined children's perceptions about the sources of marital tension and means for its resolution. Four major aspects of marital role were highlighted: housekeeping, financial provision and expenditure, childrearing, and affective expression.

Importance of Marital Agreement

Subjects were asked to rate the importance that husbands and wives agree on each aspect of marital role. The four-point scale range from not at all important to very important.

Means and standard deviations for each subject group are cited in Table 12. The results were examined using a 2 x 2 x 4 analysis of variance for age, sex and marital role, with repeated measures on the

Table 12:   Mean and Standard Deviation Scores for Ratings of Impor-
tance of Marital Agreement

			Financial	House-keeping	Child-rearing	Affect
Young	Girls	$\bar{X}$	4.0	3.7	4.0	3.9
		SD	.0	.48	.0	.32
	Boys	$\bar{X}$	3.5	3.5	4.0	3.9
		SD	.71	.97	.0	.32
Old	Girls	$\bar{X}$	3.7	3.5	3.9	4.0
		SD	.48	.53	.32	.0
	Boys	$\bar{X}$	3.8	3.3	4.0	3.9
		SD	.42	.68	.0	.32

last factor. A summary of the analysis is given in Table 13. There was a significant main effect for marital role ($F_{3,109}$ = 10.766, p <.001). However, effects for age and sex did not approach significance. Post hoc comparisons across aspects of marital role were

Table 13: Analysis of Variance for Ratings of Importance of Marital Agreement

Source	df	MS	F
Age	1	.1	.345
Sex	1	.4	1.38
Age . Sex	1	.225	.776
Error Between	36	.29	
Marital Role	3	1.841	10.766*
Marital Role . Age	3	117.0	.684
Marital Role . Sex	3	.15	.877
Marital Role . Age . Sex	3	.242	1.415
Error within	109	.71	

*p < .001

performed using the Scheffé technique. Significant differences were found between the perceived importance of marital agreement around issues of housekeeping and that of childrearing (t_{obs} = 5.307, p < .05) and affective expression (t_{obs} = 4.749, p < .05). That is, consensus about childrearing and affective expression was seen as more important across all age and sex groups than was housekeeping.

Likelihood of Marital Tension

Subjects were requested to rate how often they thought couples had difficulty reaching agreement on housekeeping, financial issues, childrearing, and affective expression. The four-point scale ranged from never to all the time.

Table 14 shows means and standard deviations of the ratings

given by each group of subjects. As above, a 2 x 2 x 4 analysis of

Table 14: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores for Ratings of Likeli-
hood of Marital Tension

			Finances	House-keeping	Child-rearing	Affect
Young	Girls	$\overline{X}$	2.2	3.0	3.4	3.0
		SD	.79	.82	1.35	1.15
	Boys	$\overline{X}$	2.3	2.7	3.2	3.2
		SD	.48	.95	1.30	.92
Old	Girls	$\overline{X}$	2.8	2.3	2.3	2.2
		SD	.42	.48	.68	.63
	Boys	$\overline{X}$	2.9	2.6	2.8	2.4
		SD	.56	.70	.79	.62

variance was used for age, sex and marital role, with repeated

measures on the last factor. The results indicated a significant

interaction between age and marital role $(F_{3,109} = 9.936, p < .001)$.

Other interaction effects and main effects were not significant

(Table 15). Post hoc comparisons across marital role were performed

separately for the two age groups. Based on the Scheffé technique,

significant differences were found between ratings given by the

younger subjects for financial issues and those given for childrear-

ing $(t_{obs} = 3.601, p < .05)$ and affective expression $(t_{obs} = 2.915,$

Table 15:   Analysis of Variance for Ratings of Likelihood of Marital
            Tension

Source	df	MS	F
Age	1	4.557	3.759
Sex	1	.507	.418
Age . Sex	1	1.057	.872
Error Between	36	1.212	
Marital Role	3	1.006	2.367
Marital Role . Age	3	4.223	9.936*
Marital Role . Sex	3	.073	.172
Marital Role . Age . Sex	3	.34	.8
Error within	109	.425	

*p < .001

p < .05).   Young children tended to view marital couples as having
relatively little difficulty reaching agreement on financial matters.
In comparison, issues of childrearing and affective expression tended
to be viewed as much more problematic for couples to agree upon.
Older subjects showed no significant differences in their ratings
across aspects of marital role, viewing them as relatively equal
contributors to marital tension.

Likelihood of Tension Resolution

In this section of the interview, subjects rated how easily they
thought marital problems could be resolved.   A four-point scale was

used, ranging from problems being very difficult to very easy to solve.

Table 16 shows the means and standard deviations of ratings given by each group of subjects. A 2 x 2 x 4 analysis of variance was

Table 16: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores for Ratings of Like-lihood of Tension Resolution

			Finances	House-keeping	Child-rearing	Affect
Young	Girls	$\bar{X}$	2.2	2.8	2.1	2.6
		SD	.42	1.14	.99	.82
	Boys	$\bar{X}$	2.6	2.5	2.2	3.2
		SD	.96	.71	.63	1.14
Old	Girls	$\bar{X}$	2.4	2.8	2.6	2.8
		SD	.48	.63	.96	.79
	Boys	$\bar{X}$	2.0	2.2	1.9	2.0
		SD	.47	.63	.73	.82

performed for age, sex and marital role, with repeated measures on the last factor. This analysis is summarized in Table 17. The data yielded a main effect for marital role ($F_{3,109}$ = 3.644, p < .05). Dispute about finances and childrearing were seen as more difficult to resolve than disputes over housekeeping or affect. There was also a significant interaction effect between age and sex ($F_{1,36}$ = 5.272, p < .01). Boys became slightly more optimistic about disputes with

Table 17:   Analysis of Variance for Ratings of Likelihood of Tension
            Resolution

Source	df	MS	F
Age	1	1.407	.87
Sex	1	1.087	.672
Age . Sex	1	8.525	5.272**
Error Between	36	1.617	
Marital Role	3	2.19	3.644*
Marital Role . Age	3	.273	.454
Marital Role . Sex	3	.313	.521
Marital Role . Age . Sex	3	.267	.444
Error within	109	.601	

   *p < .05

   **p < .01

age while girls became less optimistic. There were no other signifi-

cant effects.

Means of Problem Resolution

The final portion of the interview required subjects to suggest
ways couples could try to solve their marital problems. This mate-
rial was coded along four content dimensions. These included:
Apology, Denial, External Aid, and Mutual Discussion. Analysis was
based on a frequency count of the use/nonuse of each category.

The proportion of subjects making reference to each category are
presented in Table 18. Age and sex differences were investigated

Table 18:   Types of Problem Resolution--Percentage of Subjects Using
            Each Category

		Apology	Denial	External Aid	Discussion
Young	Girls	10	40	20	60
	Boys	10	50	10	40
Old	Girls	10	20	40	40
	Boys	0	30	50	50

using chi-square analysis. No signifiant age differences were found. However, there was a significant effect for sex with regard to use of discussion as a means of problem solving (X^2 = 5.833, p < .05). Girls were much more likely than boys to offer this as a means for reducing marital conflict.

DISCUSSION

The following discussion reviews these findings and attempts to interpret them in view of data and arguments in the literature and in view of this study's hypotheses regarding the effects of age, sex, object valence (liked/disliked), and familiarity of relationship on social cognition. The data reported in this study highlight two major issues: (1) the cognitive structure and content of children's perceptions of whom they might befriend, marry, or divorce; and (2) children's perceptions of issues which may help to consolidate or threaten a marital relationship.

Cognitive Structure and Content: Marriage, Friendship, and Divorce

This study looked at three structural elements underlying children's reasoning about social relationships: Personal Involvement, Social Penetration, and Evaluative Direction. Cognitive developmental literature makes strong predictions about the effects of age on the first two of these structural elements. Prior research shows that in reasoning about the physical world and some aspects of the social world, children become increasingly competent in inferential and nonegocentric thought.

The results of this study are only partially consistent with these predictions. Considering the Social Penetration scale, the

data are in the expected direction when children are describing friends or a possible ex-spouse. For these social relationships, older children showed greater ability to go beyond surface characteristics and focus on more inferential aspects of the partner and relationship than younger children. Content analysis illustrated the types of covert factors to which children become sensitive. Psychological intimacy was cited by older children as being particularly important in friendship. When considering divorce, older children noted the importance of feeling equal and accepted in a relationship, and awareness of societal expectations about the marital role. All of these dimensions require considerable social insight. However, an age effect was not found for marriage. Older children did not describe a marriage partner in more inferential terms than younger children. One possible explanation is suggested by the content analysis. There was a strong pull across age groups to describe a marriage partner in terms of appearance, a very superficial dimension.

While children's inferential ability as measured by the Social Penetration scale showed improvement with age for two of the three social relationships examined (friendship and divorce), children's ability to construe others in decentered terms did not show an age effect. Across friendship, marriage, and divorce, younger and older subjects did not differ in the extent to which they used an egocentric/decentered frame of reference to describe others. Both age groups tended to respond in a nonegocentric manner. This was

surprising as the development of skill in social penetration and decentered reasoning are usually thought to be correlated.

In part this may reflect the ceiling of the scale used. However, another likely explanation for the lack of an age effect on the Personal Involvement scale is that the wording of the interview question tended to specifically foster decentered thinking from both young and older children. Extant person perception studies which report a developmental trend toward decentered thinking (e.g., Bigner, 1974) have phrased the interview question in terms of "what makes someone your friend." Among young subjects, this phrasing has tended to pull for descriptions of what friends give to you or what friends share together. These types of responses fall toward the low end of the egocentric/decentered continuum. In contrast, this study asked subjects to describe the "sort of person" a friend, spouse, or ex-spouse would be. This wording may make the task of decentering easier for younger subjects by attuning them to describing the person per se, rather than describing the person in relation to him/herself. Hence, the young subjects in this study were able to match the cognitive level of older subjects, giving responses falling toward the more sophisticated end of the egocentric/decentered continuum.

Cognitive theory has not dealt with developmental trends in children's use of affirmative or negative structure (Evaluative Direction) in person perception. One might hypothesize that affirmation is a more sophisticated structure in that the child is required to have a richer repertoire of responses, rather than just relying

on negation. However, the results of this study did not indicate any developmental trends.

In addition to age differences, this study also examined whether there are sex differences in conceptualization of marriage, friendship, and divorce. Boys and girls showed equal facility in their egocentric/decentered thinking. Similarly, no sex effect was found in terms of the Evaluative Direction scale. However, for the dimension of Social Penetration, an interaction was found between sex and the way children characterized a friend, spouse, or ex-spouse. Girls were found to be more likely to make inferential statements in regard to friendship, but this did not carry over to their perceptions of a spouse or ex-spouse. The direction of sex difference effects in regard to friendship are consistent with previous research (e.g., Gollin, 1958; Bigner, 1974; Scarlett et al., 1971). With few exceptions, girls have been found to use more "abstract terms" to describe others than do boys. The content analysis included in the present study allows one to be more specific. Girls were found to make reference particularly to personality traits.

These results can be understood in light of research on children's friendship behaviors. Friendships among boys tend to be casual and activity oriented. In comparison, friendships among girls tend to be more enduring, more intensive, and used in more ego-supportive ways. One might anticipate that the nature of the friendship interchange among girls promotes, and in turn is promoted by, their intuitive perceptual style.

Explanation for the absence of sex differences on the Social Penetration scale for marriage and divorce is more difficult. The results can perhaps best be interpreted in terms of Vygotsky's (1962) distinction between "spontaneous" and "scientific" concepts. According to Vygotsky, the former are based on everyday experience, while the latter are acquired through tuition. Children's notions about friendship are most likely to be derived from their direct experiences. As discussed above, this may differ for boys and girls, leading to differences in their levels of conceptualization about the relationship. However, the concepts of marriage and divorce are less familiar to children and hence their thinking about these relationships is more likely to be a function of tuition. Such learning experiences are likely to be the same for both sexes.

In addition to examining age and sex effects within each of the structural dimension, this study also compared these dimensions across children's concepts of friendship, marriage and divorce. It had been hypothesized that children would show greatest cognitive sophistication on friendship because it is more familiar to them. As discussed above, support for this hypothesis was found, at least for girls, on the Social Penetration scale. However, on the Personal Involvement scale, marriage was found to be described in more decentered terms than were friendship and divorce.

This finding may be understood in terms of the cognitive sophistication of the stereotypic way these relationships are conceptualized. Description of a marriage partner tends to elicit the social

ideal endlessly popularized in the media (visions of the fair lady
or the knight in shining armor). For example, in the content analy-
sis, a spouse was more likely to be described in terms of appearance
than were a friend or an ex-spouse. Hence, for marriage, children
may use a social (i.e., decentered) rather than a personal (i.e.,
egocentric) frame of reference. In contrast, the stereotype for
divorce has a more narcissistic flavor (the partner who failed to
meet one's needs). Once again, the content analysis supports this
hypothesis. Children were most likely to make reference to issues
of personal acceptance and equality when describing an ex-spouse.
They also made more reference to sexuality in terms of divorce than
of marriage. These factors are likely to lead to a predominant use
of an egocentric frame of reference. For friendship, social stereo-
types may also have narcissistic overtones. Perhaps more influential
is their own experience in such relationships. The content analysis
highlighted children's frequent reference to mutual interchange.
Hence, rather than eliciting a more sophisticated level of concep-
tualization, familiarity may in fact promote use of egocentric frame
of reference to describe friends.

Marriage, friendship, and divorce were also compared in terms
of Evaluative Direction. Children were found to describe divorce
in more negative terms than they did friendship and marriage. This
finding is consistent with the point made above that divorce has a
narcissistic pull. By describing divorce partners in terms of quali-
ties which they lack, children emphasized the notion of failure to

meet expectations. In contrast, marriage and friendship were described in predominantly affirmative terms, emphasizing the presence of qualities and behaviors.

Issues Contributing to Marital
Solidarity-Marital Tension

To this point, the discussion has centered on the cognitive level of children's understanding of friendship, marriage, and divorce relationships. This study also analyzed what factors children perceived as facilitating or threatening marital accord.

All children described the decision to marry primarily as a function of affective involvement, loving the partner. Few other sources of motivation were mentioned. As might be expected, older children had a somewhat more sophisticated notion of love than did younger children. Older children tended to elaborate that marital love embodies a commitment to the relationship and that it differs in depth from other types of caring (e.g., for friends or family). As might also be expected, young girls tended to be more attuned to affective issues than young boys. While marriage was seen as a function of affective involvement, all children described the decision to divorce as a function of compatibility, not getting along with the partner. For the most part, the question of compatibility was couched in behavioral rather than affective terms.

The expectations children held for marriage included spending much time together, having children, and assuming financial responsibility. The latter expectation is particularly interesting, in that

it may reflect children's perception of marriage as a symbol of acquiring adult status. The expectations children held for divorce included physical separation of the partners, a change in lifestyles and parental relationship for the children, and resumption of responsibility for oneself. This latter point was emphasized more by young girls than young boys, perhaps reflecting the former's adoption of stereotypes about a woman's greater dependency in a marital relationship.

For the most part, children tended to be optimistic about marriage. They perceived couples as typically being satisfied with their relationships. They also saw themselves as likely to marry in the future, although young boys were somewhat more ambivalent on this point than young girls. However, the children were also clearly sensitive to the possibility of marital tension.

This study examined children's perceptions about four possible sources of marital tension: finances, childrearing, housekeeping, and affective expression. All children recognized the importance of marital agreement on affective expression and young children especially mentioned this as a frequent source of tension. All children also recognized the importance of marital agreement about childrearing, and perceived disagreements on this point as particularly hard to resolve. However, young children perceived childrearing issues as a more frequent source of stress than did older children. This perhaps reflects the greater egocentrism of younger children, and the greater demands that young children make upon

parents. This finding is consistent with research on adults' perceptions of children as a stress on the marital relationship. Children also perceived that financial issues might be hard to resolve. However, older children were more likely than younger children to see this as a frequent source of tension.

Finally, this study examined children's perceptions about how couples might be able to resolve their differences. All children, but especially girls, recommended discussion and attempts at problem solving. There was a trend for older subjects to suggest seeking help from an outside party.

<div align="center">

Implications for Future Research and
Therapeutic Intervention
</div>

In sum, this study has interesting implications for cognitive developmental theory. The inconsistency in developmental trends on the Social Penetration scale and the Personal Involvement scale suggests that these are two independent constructs and may not be as highly correlated as one might assume. A child showing inferential thinking style may not necessarily show a tendency to decenter. The results of this study also suggest that children show considerable divergence in the type of reasoning they apply to the various concepts in the social world. This is consistent with documentation of the decalage across understanding about different aspects of the physical world.

These trends underscore that investigators must interpret data with caution. There is clearly little justification given in this

study for the pervasive practice of generalizing from research on a particular social facet to the child's overall understanding of social cognition. By the same argument, there is still less justification for hypothesizing that developmental trends in children's cognition about the physical world will necessarily be congruent with the development of social cognition. Additional research is needed in order to explore the generality or interrelationship within and across domains of cognition.

Furthermore, the decalage found in this and other studies questions the frequent practice of interpreting data in terms of the development of cognitive "skill." As children were found to deal with different social situations at varying degrees of cognitive sophistication, it may be more appropriate to talk about developmental trends in the child's cognitive 'performance." Additional research is needed in order to determine what factors facilitate a higher or lower level of cognitive reasoning about an issue. The present study suggested that the degree and nature of a child's familiarity with a social situation may be a significant factor. For example, it would be of major value to examine the effects of divorce on children's cognition about social relationships. Finally, when considering cognitive "performance," there is also need for research using a range of methodological procedures. The present study highlighted the impact of even subtle differences in the wording of the interview questions.

This study also has implications for therapeutic work with children and families. The results highlighted how early the

developmental origins of adult notions about relationships may date, suggesting the value of primary intervention. Processing about issues such as marriage and divorce cannot be considered the sole prerogative of adults or even adolescents. Young children are also very much involved in such issues and intervention should be directed at this age group. The results also highlighted how sensitive children are to marital tension. Of particular relevance is the children's perception of themselves as a source of such tension. It is perhaps not surprising then that clinicians so frequently encounter children who feel responsible for parental divorce. It is also significant to note how the children generally perceive the expression of affect, especially love and caring, as problematic. Once again, it should be underscored that concerns on this count may be acquired at a very early age. Perhaps the most encouraging note is that children frequently cited mental health professionals as a possible source of help. Whether such a positive attitude has been acquired by the children through their own contact with counselors in the school system, or acquired through socialization by parents and others, it would appear that mental health professionals may have come some way in countering prejudice against requrests for a provision of such services.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

LETTER TO PARENTS

Dear Parents:

In recent years, families have undergone many changes and a variety of family life styles have developed. Because the family is of major importance to the child, researchers are increasingly involved in learning how families operate.

I am conducting a research project on children's perceptions about how families operate, especially how parents relate to one another. Families of course vary considerably and people actually behave and feel toward others in a whole range of ways. However, I am interested in learning what children notice about relationships in families.

The project takes about 20 minutes and can be done at your home at any convenient time. The child is asked a series of open-ended questions about various apsects of families, especially parents. For example, there are questions on family roles, family problem solving, and what helps to make marriages happy or unhappy. All questions deal with families in general and not with the child's own family.

I am looking for children age 7 to 8 and 13 to 14 who might be interested in participating in this study. I have found that children usually enjoy participating in research and are very willing to share their ideas on the topics explored in this project. Naturally, all materials will be kept confidential.

If you would like to participate in this study or would like more information, please contact Claire Lowry at 332-8981 (home) or at 355-9561 (department).

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Subject Number:
Date of Interview:
Date of Birth:
Age:

1. Do you have a best friend? What sort of person is he/she?
   What is he/she like?

2. Suppose you were going to get married, what sort of person would
   you want to marry? What would that person be like?

3. How is being married to someone different from just being friends
   with someone?

4. Why do you think two people would decide to get married?

**Sometimes people feel that they don't want to be married to each
  other any more and they decide to get a divorce.**

5. Suppose you were married, what sort of person might make you
   feel unhappy? What sort of person might make you not want
   to be married any more?

6. How is being divorced from someone different from being married
   to that person? What changes when people stop being married?

7. Why do you think two people might decide to get a divorce? Why
   might they decide not to stay married any more?

8. When people who are married have problems, what should they
   do to help solve them? What could they try to do to make things
   better?

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People who are married have to decide about a lot of things.

9. How important do you think it is for people who are married to agree about:

   (a) earning and spending money?

1	2	3	4
not at all important	mostly not important	sort of important	very important

   (b) looking after the house/apartment?

1	2	3	4
not at all important	mostly not important	sort of important	very important

   (c) looking after the children?

1	2	3	4
not at all important	mostly not important	sort of important	very important

   (d) showing care and affection?

1	2	3	4
not at all important	mostly not importnat	sort of important	very important

10. How often do you think people who are married have trouble deciding about?

(a) earning and spending money?

1	2	3	4
never	sometimes	often	all the time

(b) looking after the house/apartment?

1	2	3	4
never	sometimes	often	all the time

(c) looking after the children?

1	2	3	4
never	sometimes	often	all the time

(d) showing care and affection?

1	2	3	4
never	sometimes	often	all the time

11. How hard do you think it is for people who are married to solve problems about:

(a) earning and spending money?

1	2	3	4
very hard	sort of hard	sort of easy	very easy

(b) looking after the house/apartment?

1	2	3	4
very hard	sort of hard	sort of easy	very easy

(c) looking after the children?

1	2	3	4
very hard	sort of hard	sort of easy	very easy

(d) showing care and affection?

1	2	3	4
very hard	sort of hard	sort of easy	very easy

12. How do you think most people feel about being married?

1	2	3	4
very sad	sort of sad	sort of happy	very happy

13. How do you think most people feel after they decide to stop being married and get divorced?

1	2	3	4
very sad	sort of sad	sort of happy	very happy

14. Do you think you will get married when you grow up? If no, why not?

APPENDIX C

DATA CODING MANUAL

DEFINITIONS AND EXAMPLES OF CODING CATEGORIES

Structural Dimensions

These categories deal with the cognitive framework underlying person perception in friendship, marriage, and divorce.

Personal Involvement

This dimension refers to the frame of references used in describing others. It assesses the degree to which the subject maintains himself/herself as the pivotal focus.

1. Egocentric--descriptions which are narcissistic and subjective--"A friend makes me feel good"; "I'd divorce someone who didn't give me enough money."

2. Mutual--descriptions which make reference to the relationship between the subject and others--"As friends, we are really close"; "A friend is someone who does things with me."

3. Other-oriented--descriptions which are objective and decentered--"I'd marry someone who had a good character"; "My friend likes bowling."

Social Penetration

This dimension refers to the depth of the child's insight. It assesses the degree to which the subject goes beyond surface characteristics to make inferences about internal qualities.

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1. External Orientation--descriptions which focus on appearance or possessions--"My friend brings over toys to play with"; "When I marry, I'd have a nice house and a pool."

2. Behavioral Orientation--descriptions which focus on actions and activities--"I'd divorce someone who didn't know how to behave in public and always got drunk"; "A friend is someone you do things with."

3. Internal Orientation--descriptions which focus on inferred traits and attitudes--"He's generous and caring"; "He wouldn't mean to ever hurt me."

Evaluation Direction

This dimension takes into account whether the subject focused on the presence or absence of a characteristic.

1. Affirmative--presence of a characteristic--"I'd want the person I marry to be fun-loving and respectable"; "My friend has lots of toys."

2. Negative--absence of a characteristic--"I'd divorce someone who didn't love me or wasn't kind"; "I wouldn't be friends with someone who didn't take me places."

Content Dimensions

Content analysis attempts to appreciate the richness and variety of ideas and attitudes expressed by children. Twelve of these were used to score person perception in friendship, marriage, and divorce. Ten were also used to score children's characterization of ongoing

marital and post-marital process. The final entry refers to the four categories used to code children's problem-solving suggestions.

Possessions--"My friend has a dog I play with"; "I'd want to marry a rich man."

Proximity--"I'm friends with Sally because she lives next door"; "I'd divorce someone who was never around at home."

Appearance--"I'd marry a cute girl"; "If my wife got fat I'd hate it."

Social Behavior--"I couldn't stand being married to someone who was rude"; "It is nice to have friends who get along with each other."

Activities--"Jenny and I go to ballet class together"; "We do lots of things together."

Personality--"My friends are always really terrific"; "I'd want my wife to be sensitive and perceptive."

Psychological Intimacy--"I think married people should be able to talk to each other about anything"; "I'd trust my friend with any secret."

Acceptance-Equality--"I wouldn't want to be married to someone who was always nagging me to be different"; "A person has to respect you for it to work out."

Affective Involvement--"A friend is someone you really care about"; "If you hate someone, there is no point staying married."

Compatibility--"We got along well and liked the same things"; "Divorced people are always fighting and can never decide about things."

Parenthood--"I'd want to make sure that who ever I married wanted kids"; "I wouldn't stay with someone who was mean to the children."

Sexuality--"You have to be attracted to someone to get married"; "I'd separate from someone who was running around with other men."

Independence--"If I was married, I'd still want to be able to have my own life"; "People get married to get away from home."

Depth-Commitment--"A marriage means that you want to stay with that person no matter what"; "It is a very special relationship because you know that person better than anyone else does."

Financial Responsibility--"When you get married, you have to pay for a house and everything else"; "You need to have a job before getting married."

Responsibility for Self--"When you get divorced, you have to start taking care of yourself again"; "Being divorced is hard because there is no one there to help you out."

Problem Solving

Apology--"You can buy her flowers or candy"; "Say you are sorry."

Denial--"Just forget about it and start over"; "Stop fussing and ignore it."

External Aid--"You can talk to your minister or a psychiatrist"; "Go talk it over with someone neutral who can talk to both of you without getting mad."

<u>Discussion</u>--"People have to talk about their problems together to figure things out"; "Problems don't go away unless you work at them."

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