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Exploring the Role of Nationality, Gender and Educational Level on the Possible Selves of Greek and UK Young Adults from Divorced and Intact Families

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ABSTRACT

Research suggests that parental divorce affects offspring's later life. The present study explores the long-term effects of parental divorce on UK and Greek young adults' possible selves concerning future family life, friendships and occupation taking account of the mediating role of nationality, gender and educational level. The sample consisted of 332 Greek and UK postgraduate University students. They completed a questionnaire concerning possible selves. The findings showed that culture rather than the status of parental family was the main factor differentiating between individual's possible selves. There were few gender differences although the individual's educational level appeared to be a significant mediating factor particularly for the Greek participants. The findings are discussed in relation to cross-cultural differences in attitudes towards divorce.

INTRODUCTION

In the recent past, there has been considerable interest in the effects of parental divorce on young people's personality, self-esteem, self-satisfaction, intimate relationships and expectations of them,

and attitudes towards marriage and career (Franklin et al., 1990; Gabardi and Rosen, 1992; Bolgar et al., 1995). Research with college students has shown that students from divorced families tended to have more sexual partners (Gabardi and Rosen, 1992), were more 'tough minded', more distant in their family relationships (Weiss, 1988) and reported lower levels of trust and altruistic love (Sprague and Kinney, 1997) than those from intact families. The students also indicated that they were determined not to repeat their parents' pattern of divorce (Karagiannopoulou, 1998) and reported adopting various strategies to achieve this (Darlington, 2001).

Studies examining psychological well-being have also suggested that divorce has negative effects. Glenn et al. (Glenn and Shelton, 1983; Glenn and Kramer, 1985, 1987) reported that on a scale measuring happiness, self-rated health and self-satisfaction in a range of life domains including families and friendships, men and women from divorced families compared with their counterparts in intact families were significantly more likely to have lower scores. There was no evidence that these negative effects diminished with age. The reported effects on self-esteem were mixed. Some studies demonstrated negative effects (Wallerstein and Blakslee, 1989; Holdnack, 1992), others reported no differences (Kalter et al., 1985; Gabardi and Rosen, 1992; Nelson et al., 1992), while some identified only moderate effects on a small percentage of divorcees' offspring who had left home (Chase-Lansdale et al., 1995).

Concerning gender differences, early research using varying methodology and clinic based data, focused on the effects of divorce on subsequent relationships and suggested a 'sleeping effect' where adolescents and young adult women from divorced families tended to enter into short-lived sexual relationships and were engaged in dating and sexual intercourse earlier (Hetherington, 1987). Young men were likely to avoid relationships, or throw themselves into short-lived relationships (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980). There was also evidence of the inter-generational transmission of marital instability (Pope and Mueller, 1976; Mueller and Pope, 1977; Wallerstein, 1991; Glenn and Kramer, 1987); lower commitment to marriage and a tendency, for females, especially, to get married at an early age (Glenn and Kramer, 1987). Gabardi and Rosen (1992) also found that men from divorced families desired and experienced more sexual involvement than their female counterparts across several dating situations while Marlar and Jacobs (1992) identified significant gender by marital status interactions in total Marital Role

Expectation Inventory (MREI) scores and sub-scores. Males with married parents were more companionship oriented than males with divorced parents; females with divorced parents were more companionship-oriented while females with married parents were more traditionally oriented in their marriage role expectations.

However, not all the research supports these findings. For example, Franklin et al. (1990) reported a lack of interaction between family status and gender in long-term outcomes regarding beliefs about the self and others (self-worth, marital optimism, benevolence of people). Shook and Jurich (1992, p. 157) studying the effects of parental divorce on young adult college students' self-esteem indicated that females from divorced families rated themselves higher in self-esteem than their counterparts from intact families, although the difference was not significant. Buchanan and Brinke (1997, p. 45) reported that for both men and women those brought up in restructured, lone (including divorced families) and disadvantaged/restructured families were slightly less satisfied with their lives in adulthood than individuals brought up in birth families.

In keeping with current psychological thinking, which acknowledges the complex interactions which invariably lead to any psychological phenomenon, Buchanan and Brinke (1997) reported that the context of parenting experiences had more impact than the structure of the family (intact, remarriage/restructured, lone/single parent family) and that independent factors (e.g. qualifications, employment, belonging to a non-manual social class) could protect against psychological problems or increase the risks. They suggested that social attitudes towards divorce have modified over time as the rate of divorce has increased and that the effects of divorce need to be viewed within the context of the particular society within which the divorce is embedded. This study took up this challenge by comparing the effects of divorce on young people in Greece and the UK. In Greece, the family continues to play a central role in social and cultural life, education is highly valued, the country is less strong economically than the UK and has a markedly lower rate of divorce (0.9 for 1000 inhabitants, Great Britain has the highest rate of divorce in Europe, 2.7 for 1000 inhabitants, Eurostats, 2000).

No previous research has focused on the long-term effects of divorce on career aspirations or the relationships at work of divorcees offspring. Orientations to work, relationships formed there and attitudes towards education to achieve career objectives may be influenced by prior family experiences, particularly when they are negative. The workplace may come to be viewed as

providing opportunities to develop self-esteem, and contribute to emotional stability where close emotional relationships within a family are viewed cautiously. To explore these issues, the possible selves of young adults from divorced families concerning their careers and occupational lives are studied taking account of educational level and gender as this has been found to be an important factor in the short (e.g. Amato and Keith, 1991) and long-term (Bolgar et al., 1995; Gabardi and Rosen, 1992).

The effects of divorce on the individual are considered in relation to 'possible selves'. These are conceptions of the self in a future state. The repertoire of possible selves contained within an individual's self-system are the manifestations of enduring goals, aspirations, motives, fears and threats which regulate behaviour (Markus and Nurius, 1987). They provide specific cognitive form, organization, direction and self-relevant meaning to these dynamics. In representing selves in the future they function as incentives for behaviour through their influence on an individual's 'working self- concept' (Markus and Nurius, 1986). Possible selves, therefore, may illuminate the processes mediating the effects of parental divorce (Carson et al., 1987). The research described here focused on differences in possible selves in relation to family life, friendships, occupational aspirations and relationships with colleagues. The aims of the study were:

- to identify differences in possible selves between Greek and English young adults;
- to explore the nature of possible selves reported by individuals from divorced and intact families;
- to explore the interactions between cultural and family status effects;
- to identify any gender differences;
- to identify the effects of educational level on the possible selves reported by divorcees' offspring and individuals from intact families.

METHODOLOGY

The sample

Three hundred and thirty two volunteers, post-graduate University students, aged 25-35 took part in the study. From divorced families 90 Greek and 80 from the UK and from intact families 95 Greek and 67 from the UK. The sample was an

opportunity sample drawn from students studying on masters or doctoral programmes in a range of subjects at universities in the UK and Greece. A snowball technique was adopted with initial respondents suggesting other contacts. This approach was adopted because:

- the study dealt with a sensitive and possibly traumatic experience therefore a personal approach to take part in the research was felt to be appropriate;
- issues of confidentiality meant that it was not possible to gain access through any institution or organisation (e.g. courts, single parent institution) which may have provided a way of contacting people who fitted the sampling requirements;
- the study could not be incorporated into a large scale longitudinal survey which followed families for several years for ethical and confidentiality reasons.

A self-report questionnaire was designed based on in-depth interviews with 24 individuals from divorced and intact families from Greek and UK families. The questionnaire explored issues relating to family life; friendships; occupational relationships and occupation/career as separate dimensions. The interview analysis revealed sub-categories for each main area of focus. The statements included in the questionnaire were derived directly from the statements made by the interviewees. Issues relating to family life and relationships emerged as most important during the interviews and formed the largest category in the questionnaire. The main categories and subcategories included in the questionnaire are given below with example statements for each.

Family life (12 subcategories, 4 statements in each)

Divorced future self – It is unlikely that a marriage will last forever. Divorce is a definite possibility; I don't think of myself getting divorced in the future.

Self avoiding parental mistakes – Keeping in mind my parents' mistakes will protect me from an unhappy marital life; I behave so as to avoid the mistakes that my parents made during their married life.

Ideal self regarding future family life – I think that I will be an ideal husband/wife; I think of myself having an ideal family life.

Highly protective/authoritative parent – I will try to protect my children even if this means being overprotective; I am going to protect my children as far as I can although I know that this may not be the best way to bring them up.

Optimistic-pessimistic self with regard to relationships and future family life – I do not see any reason why I should be unhappy in the future in my family; I think people can be happy with family life.

Keen to have a family – I would like to have a family; having a family is the main priority in my life.

Independent self in future family life – I won't allow myself to be dominated by my spouse; I am able to compromise if necessary in my married life.

Self in control of future family life – Relationships with partners go wrong for reasons you cannot predict or prevent; I don't think that people are capable of controlling their family life, especially their relationship with their partner.

Cautious self regarding future relations with partners – I don't think that I'll ever be sufficiently sure of somebody to get married to him or her; It is very difficult to trust somebody to be your permanent partner in life.

Satisfied with relations with partners – I am very satisfied with my personal life with partners; I am not happy with the relationships that I have had.

Capable self regarding success in future family life – I think that people are capable of making a contribution to their family happiness; I feel perfectly capable of having a happy family life in the future.

Confident about accomplishing his/her image of future family life – I like to think that my married life is going to be excellent; I think of myself as having an ideal family life.

Friendships (4 subcategories 4 statements in each)

Friendship not perceived as significant in participants' lives (detached or temporary) – Friendships always change. They are not permanent; I can't rely on friendships because they do not last for ever.

Cautious self regarding friendships – I have to select my friends carefully; Friendships are risky for me.

Self setting conditions on getting involved in friendships – I don't like to get very close to people quickly because I want to be perfectly sure of them; I have criteria that people must meet in order for me to be friends with them.

Self open to new friendships – I like making new friends and socializing with people; I easily make new friends.

Occupational relationships (2 subcategories 3 statements in each)

Self open to socialization with colleagues – I am not interested in making friends at work; I think there are interesting people at work with whom I can make friends.

Unstable self in future occupational relationships – Occupational relationships change from day to day; Relationships with colleagues at work may change depending on their behaviour towards me.

Occupation/career (5 subcategories 3 statements in each)

Self-avoiding competition – I hate occupational environments where colleagues are antagonistic towards each other; I cannot see myself working in a highly competitive environment.

Alternative selves with regard to choices of occupation – I will not allow myself to do jobs which are different from those I have planned; I cannot imagine myself doing a different job to the one I am doing or training for.

Self having control over future career – In your career it is likely that you will experience situations that you cannot change; Career success is something that depends to a great extent on factors you cannot control.

Ambitious self – Reaching the top of my occupation is not very important to me; I am ambitious in relation to my career.

Confident self regarding future occupational life – I think if somebody is determined to get something s/he can get it; I am afraid of not being able to cope with everything I am expected to do in my work.

Participants responded to statements on a 6 point scale from strongly agree, rated 6 to strongly disagree rated 1. There was overlap in the issues explored by the statements in each of the four areas. For this reason, the initial stage of the analysis was designed to refine the categories.

Analysis of data

The data analysis required a tighter configuration of the sub-scales of the questionnaire. Factor analysis was rejected as a means of undertaking this because of the relatively small number of respondents in relation to the number of questions. Pearson's r correlation coefficients were computed for all the questions to identify those which shared common variance. To establish 'key questions' (ones highly correlated with many others) a cut-off point of 0.4 was chosen, while the cutoff for inter-correlations between the questions to be included in the same group was a correlation higher than 0.3. The process of grouping was as follows:

- significant correlation coefficients of more than 0.3 were identified
- questions with correlation coefficients of more than 0.4. were identified. These questions were treated as 'key' around which a group was likely to develop.

The analysis demonstrated that the initial loose constructs did distinguish between different exemplars of possible selves with no overlap between family, friendship, occupation, and occupational relationships. Each category was independent of the others. The

final categories that emerged from analysis of the statements regarding family were:

1. Being satisfied in relationships
2. Being optimistic about relationships
3. Being confident about making relationships work
4. Being committed to family life
5. Being highly protective towards children
6. Self-avoiding parental mistakes in their own family life

The categories that emerged from the statements regarding friendships were:

1. Being undemanding with friends
2. Readily becoming involved in friendships
3. Being prepared to be committed to friendships
4. Making close relationships with friends
5. Being permanently involved in friendships

The categories that emerged from the statements regarding occupational life were:

1. Ambition
2. Focus on a particular occupation
3. Open to socializing with colleagues
4. Stable-consistent relationships with colleagues

RESULTS

A series of analyses of variance were undertaken to explore the research questions. The statements demonstrating statistically significant differences between nationality and marital status groups are reported below.

Comparison of the possible selves of Greek and UK young people

Table 1 shows that the UK participants were significantly less oriented to family life, less confident about their ability to make relationships work, held a less positive model of marriage and a less positive representation of themselves as being able to avoid making the same mistakes as their parents, although they were

TABLE 1
Comparison of mean scores of Greek and English individuals in relation to possible selves

Statements	Greek (N=185)		UK (N=147)		Value of F	Sig
	Means	SD	Means	SD		
Attached-committed to friendships	43.8	7.96	46.2	8.09	5.27	.022
Keen on friendships, not cautious	22.2	4.07	25.0	5.14	24.63	.001
Undemanding with friends	5.4	1.84	7.8	2.18	87.61	.001
Prepared to be committed to friendships	12.4	3.21	13.9	3.00	14.57	.001
Career oriented	21.7	4.68	19.9	5.52	7.56	.006
Focused on a particular occupation	6.3	2.40	4.9	2.12	21.73	.001
Keen on close relationships with colleagues	19.3	3.76	21.2	3.95	15.58	.001
Open to socializing with colleagues	9.2	2.17	9.9	1.85	7.38	.007
Stable/consistent in relationships with colleagues	10.1	2.83	11.3	2.84	11.57	.001
Confident about making relationships work	13.5	2.69	12.2	2.77	13.73	.001
Committed/positive model of marriage	34.3	4.49	30.4	5.11	45.54	.001
Confident of self avoiding parental mistakes	18.4	3.08	16.7	3.25	19.15	.001

more confident about friendships. The Greeks were more career oriented and more focused on a particular occupation than their UK counterparts but they tended not to see work as a place for developing close relationships.

Comparison of possible selves of young people from divorced and intact families

Table 2 sets out the differences in possible selves between young people from divorced and intact families. There were considerably fewer significant differences than when cultural differences were compared. Divorcees' offspring reported being more positive about friendships, more keen on developing new friendships and more undemanding with friends than their counterparts from intact families. They had a less positive representation of self striving to avoid parental mistakes.

TABLE 2

Comparison of possible selves of individuals from divorced and intact families (whole sample).

(N=332)	Participants from intact families N=162		Participants from divorced families (N=170)		F.	Sig.
	Means	S.D.	Means	S.D.		
Keen on friendships, not cautious	22.3	4.85	24.0	4.64	8.89	.003
Undemanding with friends	5.7	2.34	6.8	2.33	13.86	.042
Self avoiding parental mistakes	18.2	3.49	17.4	3.08	4.03	.046

Comparison of possible selves of Greek and UK young people from divorced families

Table 3 indicates that relationships outside the family environment (friends and colleagues) seemed to be more

important for English than Greek divorcees' offspring while Greek individuals scored higher than their UK counterparts on the possible selves relating to family life. The trend of the findings reflects those in Table 1 indicating strong cultural influences.

TABLE 3

Comparison of possible selves of Greek and UK young people from divorced families

(N=170)	Greek (N=90)		UK (N=80)		F	Sig
	Means	SD	Means	SD		
Keen on friendships, not cautious	22.87	3.90	25.46	5.08	13.71	.001
Undemanding with friends	5.81	2.02	9.12	2.08	52.92	.001
Prepared to be committed to friends	12.70	3.29	14.12	3.01	8.23	.005
Keen on further relationships with colleagues	19.37	3.91	21.90	3.92	17.38	.001
Open to socializing with colleagues	9.05	2.19	10.32	1.79	16.22	.001
Focused on a particular occupation	6.51	5.29	14.98	2.36	15.5	.001
Stable/consistent in relationships with colleagues	10.32	2.98	11.58	3.00	7.38	.007
Committed/positive model of marriage	34.30	5.05	30.34	5.42	23.33	.001
Self avoiding parental mistakes	18.11	2.96	16.66	3.06	9.44	.002

Comparison of possible selves of Greek and UK young people from intact families

The pattern of responses, depicted in Table 4, is similar to that for the respondents from divorced families. The significant differences were related to issues about developing friendships

and socializing with colleagues. Greek offspring of intact families scored higher than their UK counterparts on career orientation, ambition, being confident about relationships at work and on avoiding parental mistakes in their future family life.

TABLE 4

Comparison of possible selves of Greek and English individuals from intact families.

(N= 162)	Greek (N=95)		UK (N=67)		F	Sig
	Means	SD	Means	SD		
Keen on friendships, not cautious	21.41	4.15	23.80	5.23	7.09	.009
Undemanding with friends	5.00	1.60	7.05	2.37	24.69	.000
Career oriented	21.95	4.00	18.66	5.36	12.13	.001
Ambitious	15.73	3.35	13.77	4.74	5.90	.017
Focused on a particular occupation	6.21	2.18	4.88	1.82	8.32	.005
Confident about making relationships work	13.71	2.71	11.91	2.75	11.44	.001
Committed/positive model of married	34.43	4.20	31.05	4.89	14.94	.000
Self avoiding parental mistakes	19.00	13.23	17.11	3.65	6.91	.01

Explorations of interactions between nationality and family status

There were few significant interactions between nationality and family status. They are outlined in Table 5. The UK respondents from intact families were significantly less ambitious. The UK respondents from divorced families were more likely to be keen on developing friendships than those from intact families while the reverse applied to the Greek respondents. This was particularly marked in response to becoming readily involved in friendships.

TABLE 5

Interaction of status of parental family by individual's nationality on possible selves regarding future occupation and relationships with friends.

	Greek (N=185)		UK (N=147)		F	Sig
	Intact families (N=95)	Divorced families (N=90)	Intact families (N=67)	Divorced families (N=80)		
	Means	Means	Means	Means		
(N=332)						
Ambitious Keen on friendships, not cautious	15.30	15.13	13.92	15.41	4.59	.033
Readily becoming involved in friendships	19.60	19.32	21.07	21.89	4.92	.027
	9.46	9.08	9.65	10.25	6.33	.012

Gender differences

Table 6 shows that divorcees' female offspring were more keen on developing relationships with colleagues and being involved in stable/consistent relationships with them, than their male counterparts.

Greek females were also keener on relationships with colleagues (mean 19.83, SD 3.48) than Greek males (mean 18.38, SD = 4.22) ($F = 4.5$, $df = 1,150$, $p = .036$).

For the English sample, males were more ambitious and oriented to career than females (Table 7). Males also reported themselves more satisfied in relationships than their females counterparts.

Overall, although gender differences are indicated in the literature as a demographic characteristic which affects many dimensions of offspring's lives (Shook and Jurich, 1992), the findings reported here do not indicate many significant gender effects on the possible selves explored in the study.

TABLE 6

Possible selves differentiating between male and female divorcees offspring.

Greek and English divorcees offspring (d.f. = 1/N=164)	Females Mean	S.D.	Males Mean	S.D.	F	Sig
Keen on relationships with colleagues	21.10	3.85	19.43	4.47	6.27	.013
Stable, consistent relationships with colleagues	11.36	2.82	9.92	3.33	8.03	.005

TABLE 7

Possible selves differentiating between English males and females.

English participants from divorced and intact families (d.f.=1/ N= 110)	Females Means	S.D.	Males Means	S.D.	F	Sig
Satisfied in relationships	16.58	4.32	18.49	3.57	4.89	.029
Career oriented	18.53	5.50	21.28	5.34	5.60	.02
Ambitious	13.49	4.44	16.47	14.18	11.58	.001

Exploration of interactions between gender and the status of parental family for Greek and UK participants

Tables 8 and 9 indicate only few significant interaction effects between individual's gender and the status of parental family on possible selves concerning relationships with friends, colleagues, career and family. For the UK sample, Table 8 indicates that males from divorced families scored lower on being close to friends than their counterparts from intact families, while females from divorced families scored higher than males and their counterparts

from intact families. Also, the difference in scores of males and females from intact families is considerably smaller than for divorcees' offspring. They appear to be almost equally oriented to friends (Table 8). Both male and female UK divorcees' offspring scored higher on socialising with colleagues than their counterparts from intact families although this was more marked for the females.

For Greek participants the significant interaction effects of gender and the status of parental family concern the possible self regarding avoiding parental mistakes. Females from divorced families scored higher (mean 18.34) but almost equal to their counterparts from intact families (mean 18.28) on the possible selves about avoiding parental mistakes whereas males from divorced families scored considerably lower (mean 17.53) than their counterparts from intact families (mean 20.12). In contrast, Greek females from intact families (mean 18.28) were less oriented than males from intact families (20.17) to working towards avoiding parental mistakes ($F = 6.41$, $df = 1,150$, $p = .012$). Explanations for such gender differences, are likely to be complex and may depend on the gender identity of males and females in Greek society. In divorced families, females were more oriented than males to avoiding parental mistakes.

TABLE 8

Interaction effects of English participants' status of parental family by gender on possible selves regarding future relationships with friends and colleagues.

English participants X Gender (N=105)	Intact females	Intact males	Divorced females	Divorced males	F d.f. (1)	Sig
Attached-committed to friendships	46.00	47.56	47.45	43.60	4.90	.029
Making close relationships with friends	19.21	19.80	20.00	18.05	6.25	.014
Open to socialising with colleagues	9.79	9.44	10.47	9.65	5.01	.027

Individual's educational level

Tables 9, 10, and 11 indicate that the individual's educational level affected a number of possible selves reported by divorcees' offspring and UK and Greek participants when explored separately.

Not surprisingly, higher educated divorcees' offspring were more career oriented, ambitious and focused on a particular occupation than their lower educated counterparts (Table 9). This was also the case for UK participants (Table 10). Highly educated divorcees' offspring (Table 9), UK (Table 10) and Greek individuals (Table 11) were also more open and keen on developing relationships with colleagues.

Divorcees' higher educated offspring were also more positive regarding being involved in stable/consistent relationships at work. These findings may be perceived as complementary to the possible selves reported by highly educated individuals regarding family life. The higher educated participants were less positive

TABLE 9

Possible selves differentiating between lower and higher educated divorcees' offspring.

Greek and English divorcees offspring (d.f.=1/N=164)	Lower educated		Higher educated		F	Sig
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
Committed to family/positive model of married	34.69	5.91	31.34	4.82	14.86	.000
Highly protective towards children	15.58	4.22	11.41	3.94	38.86	.000
Career oriented	19.07	5.44	21.94	4.96	9.90	.000
Ambitious	13.95	4.25	25.92	3.87	8.52	.000
Focused on a particular occupation	5.11	2.34	6.01	2.37	4.50	.03
Keen on relationships with colleagues	19.18	4.51	21.23	3.83	10.00	.000
Open to socialising with colleagues	9.10	2.60	9.92	1.87	15.24	.018
Stable/consistent relationships with colleagues	10.07	3.36	11.31	2.87	6.01	.01

TABLE 10

Possible selves differentiating between higher and Lower educated English individuals.

English participants from divorced and intact families (d.f.=1/N=110)	Lower educated Mean	S.D.	Higher educated Mean	S.D.	F	Sig
Highly protective towards children	15.34	4.90	12.04	3.76	9.33	.003
Ambitious	12.15	4.23	15.34	4.31	7.96	.006
Career oriented	17.09	5.41	20.34	5.32	4.83	.03
Keen on relationships with colleagues	18.30	4.12	21.80	3.83	11.66	.000
Open to socialising with colleagues	8.68	2.13	10.00	1.72	7.18	.000

towards relationships and family than their lower educated counterparts. This was the case for divorcees' offspring overall and UK and Greek samples when explored separately. The common possible self for all the sub-samples affected by individual's educational level was related to being highly protective towards children. Greek higher educated individuals were more satisfied in relationships than their lower educated counterparts (Table 11) which may be related to their self-concept and the perception of their ability to cope with problems in relationships.

For the Greek sample, Table 11 indicates that individuals' educational level affected more possible selves than those affected by gender. These concern future friendships, relationships with colleagues and family life. Orientation and eagerness for social interactions may relate to greater self-confidence perhaps related to the value placed on education in Greek society (Tsoukalas, 1996; Milonas, 1998).

Exploration of interactions between divorcees' offspring educational level and nationality (Greek, English)

Individuals' educational level but not gender indicated significant interaction effects with the nationality (Greek and English) of divorcees' offspring (Table 12). Education seems to be a mediating

TABLE 11

Possible selves differentiating between higher and lower educated Greek individuals.

Greek participants from divorced and intact families (d.f.=1/N=150)	Lower educated Mean	S.D.	Higher educated Mean	S.D.	F	Sig
Satisfied in relationships	15.79	4.91	17.81	4.08	5.82	.017
Committed to family, positive model of married	36.51	4.64	33.60	4.27	11.21	.001
Highly protective towards children	15.38	4.18	12.41	4.08	13.53	.000
Attached-committed to friendships	41.28	8.89	44.65	7.39	4.26	.041
Prepared to be committed to friendships	11.08	3.63	12.92	2.89	8.70	.004
Keen on relationships with colleagues	17.80	3.88	19.91	3.61	7.89	.006
Open to socialising with colleagues	8.25	2.65	9.52	1.94	7.99	.005

factor for representations of selves regarding future friendships and being satisfied in relationships.

Table 12 also shows that lower-educated Greek divorcees' offspring scored lower than their English counterparts on the possible self regarding being satisfied in relationships. Highly educated Greek divorcees' offspring scored higher than their English counterparts on this possible self (Table 12). Education seems to have a positive influence on the representations of Greek individuals from divorced families regarding relationships. English individuals do not seem to benefit from higher education in terms of their representations of selves regarding being satisfied in relationships. Lower-educated English divorcees' offspring scored higher than their higher-educated counterparts; higher educated Greek divorcees' offspring scored higher than their lower educated counterparts.

TABLE 12

Significant interaction effects of nationality of divorcees offspring by their educational level on the possible selves regarding future relationships/family and friendships.

Greek and English divorcees offspring X Educational level (N=164)	Greek Lower educated	Greek Higher educated	English Lower educated	English Higher educated	F d.f (1)	Sig
Satisfied in relationships	16.50	18.15	19.21	16.76	7.36	.007
Prepared to be committed to friends	10.92	13.42	14.39	13.94	8.57	.000
Permanently involved in friendships	10.65	13.01	13.26	12.75	7.30	.008

Furthermore, English lower-educated divorcees' offspring scored higher than their Greek counterparts on the possible selves regarding being prepared to be committed to and permanently involved in friendships (Table 12). Higher educated English divorcees' offspring scored higher than their Greek counterparts regarding being prepared to be committed to friends. However, they scored lower than their Greek counterparts on possible selves concerning being permanently involved in friendships. Table 12 indicates that although the Greek and English higher educated individuals scored similarly on the possible selves about future friendships, the lower educated Greek divorcees' offspring scored considerably lower than their English counterparts. This pattern of scores reflects the differences in possible selves between the two nationalities. English individuals are more oriented to relationships with friends and colleagues than their Greek counterparts. Table 12 also shows that Greek highly educated individuals perceive themselves more prepared to be committed to friendships and permanently involved in them than their lower educated counterparts. However, English highly educated participants scored lower on the possible selves regarding friendships than their lower educated counterparts.

The statistical analysis indicated a significant interaction effect between the status of parental family (divorced-intact) and indi-

vidual's educational level only for the Greek sample. Only one possible self was affected. This possible self concerned relationships with colleagues. Divorcees' offspring who were lower educated scored lower (mean 8.92) than their counterparts from intact families (mean 10.27) on the representation of self regarding being involved in consistent and stable relationships with colleagues. Also, highly educated individuals from divorced families scored higher (mean 10.89) than those from intact families (10.09) on being involved in consistent and stable relationships with colleagues ($F = 4.16$, $df = 1,149$, $p = .043$).

DISCUSSION

The study indicates that there are stronger links between the possible selves of young people related to their culture than to the effects of parental divorce. Greek divorcees' offspring continue to be more oriented towards family than their UK counterparts reflecting the dominant role of the family in Greek society (Georgas, 1990; Kongidou, 1995). UK divorcees' offspring's greater orientation to friends and colleagues seems to reflect a life style where the family has less importance and where work has become a major place of reference in terms of developing constructions of self (Burns, 1995; Markus and Kitayama, 1991). Increasingly, this may be a reflection of the greater length of time which people in the UK spend at work compared with their European counterparts.

The narrow career focus evidenced by the Greek participants may be understood in terms of the well educated nature of the sample and the less developed Greek economy. Despite this focus on career, the Greek participants perceived themselves as more oriented to family than their English counterparts. Career seemed to play a role in their lives as a place for self-actualisation but not as a place for developing relationships as alternatives to family. The research also suggests that friends may come to act as a substitute for family in societies where the family has lost its importance (McLanahan and Bumpass, 1988). The relative detachment from the family of UK young people from divorced families and their orientation to relationships outside the family contrast with the Greek divorcees' offspring's orientation to personal relationships/family life. This may also be related to independent and interdependent constructions of self in the Greek/Mediterranean (Mousourou, 1985) and English/Western cultures respectively. Alternatively, divorcees' offspring may seek consistency, security,

predictability and stability in those aspects of life which are well-developed and dominant within their society. In the UK, where there are many employment opportunities, this may include career enhancement and relationships with colleagues and friends, while for Greek participants where employment and career prospects are less positive and the family is more dominant solace may be sought in wider family relationships.

The study provides some indicators of how the inter-generational transmission of marital instability suggested by previous studies may occur (Pope and Mueller, 1976; Mueller and Pope, 1977). Overall, divorcees' offspring had lower scores on avoiding parental mistakes, which indicates a less positive possible self concerning future marital life, and higher scores relating to relationships outside the family and career concerns, which indicate their orientation to these aspects of life. The experience of parental divorce seems to reduce commitment to intimate relationships while also engendering a focus on relationships external to the family, often related to work. It is easy to see how these 'possible selves' can activate patterns of behaviour which will lead to the breakdown of marriage (Cantor et al., 1986; Markus and Nurius, 1986, 1987), providing a link between self-concept and motivation. Increasingly, it seems that the perceptions of self of the offspring of divorcees do not depend on being involved in intimate marital relationships (Doumani, 1989). These effects seem to be further enhanced when the dominant culture within society has rejected the family as central and embraced individuality.

The study provides limited information regarding gender differences in the long-term effects of parental divorce on possible selves. The data from the UK sample revealed that divorcees' female offspring were more oriented towards relationships with people outside the family (friends and colleagues) than their male counterparts and individuals from intact families. In the Greek sample, males had lower scores on avoiding parental mistakes in their personal family life than females and their counterparts from intact families. Explanations for these gender differences are likely to be complex and may depend on the particular circumstances of the divorce in conjunction with the social representation of divorce in society.

In the UK sample, the findings indicate a relative detachment of UK divorcees' female offspring from family life and may therefore illuminate the higher percentage of divorce in divorcees' female offspring (Gleen and Kramer, 1987). The females are orientated towards other reference groups, friends and colleagues, and the

possible selves relating to the development of relationships with friends compared to individuals from intact families. The findings support the notion of females having socio-centric self-schema where relationships with people form a part of the self while the individualistic self of males is expressed by a lesser orientation to close relationships with friends. Divorcees' male offspring scored similarly to males and females from intact families on being open to socialising with colleagues, although lower than their female counterparts. However, this possible self did not relate to deep involvement in such relationships (Joseph et al., 1992; Curry et al., 1994). The higher rating on possible selves of divorcees' female offspring's orientation to friends does not support previous findings. The earlier literature indicates them becoming more solitary within personal relationships than those from intact families (Weiss, 1988). Some earlier research also indicates lack of differences in relationships with friends reported by individuals from divorced and intact families (Demo and Acock, 1988).

Although the findings for females do not support earlier research, the study shows that UK divorcees' offspring were more career oriented than their counterparts from intact families. According to the theory of possible selves, the clearest and strongest representations of selves respond to relevant cues in the environment integrating them into future possible selves. This in turn may enhance goal related performance (Markus and Ruvolo, 1989). Those individuals whose strongest possible selves are related to occupation will invest time and energy in that, possibly at the expense of family life. Existing schemata predispose individuals to be biased towards information relevant for them. The rest tends to be ignored (Neisser, 1976). The findings of this study suggest that career may provide an alternative to family life in early industrialised, urbanised and highly individualistic societies for those who have experienced parental divorce. This may then lead to the divorce pattern repeating itself.

From the evidence relating to possible selves and its implications, Greek male divorcees' offspring are more likely to be divorced in the future than their female counterparts or males from intact families. Divorcees' male offspring scored considerably lower on avoiding parental mistakes than males from intact families and lower than their female counterparts. This may lead to them being less sensitive to environmental cues which may promote happy married life so that the desired end state does not easily form a unit with the self. According to the theory of possible selves (Markus and Ruvolo, 1989), this may result in reduced effort being expended by the individuals towards this goal. In contrast,

female divorcees' offspring scored almost equal to those from intact families.

Although, the study did not indicate interactions between nationality and individual's gender, there were significant interaction effects concerning nationality and divorcees' offspring educational level. The lower educated Greek divorcees' offspring scored the lowest on the possible selves regarding being satisfied with personal relationships, being prepared to be committed to friends and being involved in close friendships. The negative social attitude and the stigma attached to individuals involved in a divorce in Greece may lead to lower self-esteem (Frable et al., 1990; Crocker et al., 1991), particularly for those with low levels of education, which is highly valued in Greece. This, in turn, may lead to less positive representations of selves relating to important domains of life, e.g. personal relationships and close friendships, than their counterparts who live in a society where divorce is not perceived as stigmatising. The low score of Greek lower educated divorcees' offspring on being involved in friendships may be of great importance since friends could provide an alternative point of reference in their lives (McLanahan and Bumpass, 1988). Consequently, lower educated Greek divorcees' offspring may be particularly vulnerable after parental divorce.

For the Greek highly educated divorcees' offspring, the social stigma may have less of a negative impact on their possible self relating to being satisfied with relationships. The high value set on education in Greek society (Tsoukalas, 1996) may have an ameliorating effect in relation to stigma. What may underlie the difference is the individuals' personal social learning history (Cantor and Kihlstrom, 1987). Education and qualifications may act as protective factors for self-esteem in a society where education is highly valued. For those in the UK with higher levels of education, this is not the case. Perhaps, the high rate of divorce in English society and personal experience of parental divorce gives rise to perceived negative future prospects for relationships. English divorcees' offspring live in an environment where divorce is commonplace and within everyone's experience either personal or vicarious. This may affect the perceptions of the children of divorcees of their self-efficacy in long term personal relationships, since the information they perceive from the environment, about the nature of family life is generally negative. This may lower their judgments of their capabilities and undermine their efforts (Brown and Inouye, 1978; Bandura, 1982). Highly educated individuals may be more likely than their lower educated counterparts to be aware of these factors.

The lower educated Greek and higher educated English individuals are more dissatisfied with current relationships. Assuming that being dissatisfied with current relationships comprises a domain of one's overall self-identity, perhaps these individuals perceive themselves achieving a less positive marital life in the future. This may influence the extent to which they are motivated to work towards that end. This is supported by the finding that the lower educated Greek individuals scored lower than their English counterparts while higher educated Greek individuals scored higher than their English counterparts on the possible selves regarding being prepared to be committed and close to friends. Education may play a mediating role here. Less educated individuals may perceive themselves as less effective because of their self-perceptions. The perceptions of others are likely to reinforce negative possible selves linking with earlier research which suggested that prejudice and discrimination against members of stigmatised groups will result in lowered self-esteem and diminished self-concept for the stigmatised (Crocker et al., 1991).

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