**Theme: Border Crossing, Cultural Negotiations, and the Search for Identity**

This research project connects to Border Crossing in a metaphorical way where children in families who are separated or divided have plenty of crossings of values, morals, and beliefs from two different sides after the divorce. Children are exposed to two different perspectives which are both important to the child; therefore crossing from one side to the other unconsciously. The children begin to behave differently with both parents trying to please one and one’s own set of values. The cultural negotiations is how they have one culture at one point as a way of life in their home when both parents are together and suddenly it all changes with the divorce of their parents. They find themselves divided into two separate cultures or way of living where they try to fit in the guidelines for both.

Most children in divorced families tend to have an identity crisis the first few years, they are impacted by the struggles of a divorce and it’s hard for them to grasp a firm hold of the change at such a fast pace. Divorce and other family problems shape children and their identity as individuals.

**Major Research Questions**

- Why do children go through an identity crisis when their parents are going through a divorce?
- How do the struggles of a divorce or a separation in the family form the children’s identity and self?

**It’s natural to wonder why we are the way we are. Is a person more prone to be aggressive because of their genetics or the environment they were raised in as a child?**

- Scientists have confirmed that your innate qualities and genetics (nature) and environment and unique experiences (nurture) impact who you will become in life. However, how much does each contribute to a person’s behavior?

**Conclusion**

Today, one-quarter of young adults between the age of 18 and 35 are grown children of divorce. These 15 million young people across America have a very different take on divorce. Most of them are relatively successful. They don’t see themselves as victims or damaged goods. Most have graduated from high school, maybe gone to college or beyond, gotten jobs, gotten married, had kids. When they hear the debate about damaged children of divorce, they chime, “That’s not me,” they say. Many factors come into how the children are going to grow from this experience like if they have to pass through custody problems etc.

It turns out that any kind of divorce, whether or not it’s amicable, gives children an entirely new and burdensome job. After a divorce, the parents no longer have to confront their different worlds — their different values, beliefs and lifestyles. In fact, their inability to handle that challenge may have led to the divorce. But the big job of making sense of the parents’ two different worlds does not go away once the divorce papers are signed. Instead, this job gets handed to the child alone. Many grown children of divorce in a research said they had to grow up negotiating two totally separate worlds. They rose to the challenge by becoming a different person with each of their parents. They had a mom-self and a dad-self inside them and pulled out the one they needed depending on where they were that day. They had to grow up fast and often felt much less emotionally safe than their peers with married parents, even compared with some whose parents were unhappily married.

This silent conflict between two worlds went to the heart of the child’s identity. The children of divorce come to feel like divided selves with their family. As an example, personally, I come from a divided home, I understand how my parents divorce shaped me into the person I am today. The first years of a divorce are always hard on all of the family members emotionally. This actually gave me an insight of what I wanted my career to be. I want to help families who are going through divorce with their cases. I decided my goal was to be a family lawyer. My parents divorce shaped me as a person and helped me understand and grow in ways that now I know were different and I am thankful for it. Every persons identity is shaped by the different environments and stages of their life that they pass through.

**Bibliography**


**As humans we are affected by both our genes and environment. Both create and shape who we are; our identity. When we pass through a chaotic life struggle or have a great experience with someone, our identity is being shaped by how it affects us emotionally. Home life and the environment in the home have a lot to do with the development of a persons identity especially as a child. When a children’s parents go through a divorce they are highly affect emotionally and their world changes in an instant. The third perspective assumes that conflict between parents before and during the separation period is a severe stressor for children. It may be helpful to understand a little about divorce and the typical effects it has on men and women and children. The divorce rate in the United States is the highest in the world. Fifty percent of marriages end in divorce. Sixty-seven percent of all second marriages end in divorce. As high as these figures are, what is also true is that the divorce rate appears to dropping. The reasons for this change are not clear. Many people cannot afford to divorce many people cannot afford to marry. Another reason is that “baby boomers,” who accord for a large proportion of our population are no longer in their 20s and 30s, the ages when divorce is most prevalent. The 40s and 50s is more satisfying that a married life. Divorce is associated with an increase in depression—people experience loss partner, hopes and dreams, and lifestyle. The financial reality of divorce is often hard to comprehend: the same resources must now support almost twice the expenses. Children’s psychological reactions to their parents’ divorce vary in degree dependent on three factors: the quality of their relationship with each of their parents before the separation, the intensity and duration of the parental conflict, and the parents’ ability to focus on the needs of children in their divorce. Many times however the parents are too caught up in their own emotional distress to notice their children’s. Older studies show boys had greater social and academic adjustment problems than girls. New evidence indicates that when children have a hard time, boys and girls suffer equally; they just differ how they suffer. Boys are more externally symptomatic than girls, they act out their anger and their frustration and hurt. They may get into trouble in school, fight more with peers and parent. Girls tend to internalize their distress. They may become depressed, develop headaches, stomach aches, and have changes in their eating and sleeping patterns.**

**Project Summary**

Divorce also has some positive effects for children. Single parents are often closer to the children than married parents were. This can also be negative as when a child takes on much responsibility because one or both parents are not functioning well as a ‘parent,’ when a parent talks to a child about how hurt they are by the other parent putting pressure and emotional distress on the child. Often a separated parent will make an effort to spare quality time with the children and pay attention to their desires (Disneyland, small gifts, phone calls, etc.). And you can imagine that some children might find some benefit in celebrating two Christmases and birthdays each year. If both parents remain, they may help twice as many supportive adults/nurture. At the very least, when parents can control the conflict during their divorce process and after, the children can experience freedom for daily household tension between parents. The decision to end a relationship can be traumatic, chaotic, and filled with contradictory emotions. There are also specific feeling attitudes, and dynamics associated with whether one is in the role of the initiator or the receiver of the decision to breakup. For example, it is not unusual for the initiator to experience fear, relief, distance, impatience, resentment, doubt, and guilt. Likewise, when party has not initiated the divorce, they may feel shock, betrayal, loss of control, victimization, decreased self-esteem, isolation, anger, a desire to “get even,” and wishes reconcile.

To normalize clients experiences during this time, a lawyer may to know that typical emotional stages have been identified with ending a relationship. It may also be helpful understand that marriages do not breakdown overnight; the breakup is not the result of an incident; nor is the breakup the entire fault of one party. The emotional breaking up process typically extends over several years and is conditioned by a variety of factors. Children may be experiencing different stages in the emotional process while in the same stage of the physical (or legal) process.