

*October 30, 2005*  
*Sunday PostOpinion Books*

## **DIVORCE HURTS**

By **CHRISTINE B. WHELAN**

**Between Two Worlds:**  
By Elizabeth Marquardt

**THERE'S** no such thing as a good divorce — just read "Between Two Worlds."

Cataloguing results from national survey research and vignettes from her own childhood, Elizabeth Marquardt attempts to contradict the current conventional wisdom that parents who don't fight in front of their children, who share custody and communicate well can make divorce no big deal for the kids.

It hurts to read stories of children struggling to choose which parent to live with, or the confusion of keeping secrets about mommy's new boyfriend or daddy's new car. But Marquardt says she's focusing on that pain not to blame parents who divorce, but to call attention to the needs of the child-victims. Unfortunately, her book stops short of offering real solutions.

One-quarter of the adult population have parents who divorced, and Marquardt, a social researcher and a child of divorce herself, finds that young adults who come from divided families are more likely to struggle with insecurities, fears and loneliness stemming from their parents choice to end their marriage.

Together with sociologist Norval Glenn, Marquardt conducted phone interviews with a random sample of 1,500 adults between 18 and 35, and 71 in-person interviews with a handpicked group of college graduates.

In both samples, half of the respondents had parents who divorced before the kids turned 14, and the other half came from intact families. Clear charts at the end of the book detail all her results, comparing the responses of children who grew up in different kinds of

married or divorced arrangements, daring readers to find themselves within the statistics.

According to the results, children of divorce are more likely to feel that they weren't understood as a child, and less likely to respect their parents. And there's a threefold difference in loneliness: More than 40 percent of young adults from divorced families say they were alone a lot as a child, compared to 14 percent from intact families.

Simply because children of divorce are more likely to report a sense of loneliness doesn't necessarily prove that divorce was the main cause. It is nearly impossible to isolate one variable as the reason why a certain person holds a specific opinion — but by presenting repeated examples and personal stories, Marquardt builds a strong anecdotal case. Divorce can undermine the everyday consistencies of childhood that make kids feel safe and secure. Marquardt argues that even asking children to negotiate between different household rules — there's no set bedtime at mom's, but at dad's it's lights out at 9 — forces kids to choose which parent's advice is correct. Children of divorce are also less likely to be religious — and more likely to have a conflicted attitude relationship with God, Marquardt reports.

For children of divorce, reading Marquardt's book might provide relief that others share similar pain. But without concrete solutions for parents about how to avoid damaging their children during a divorce, her results lay a heavy guilt trip on millions of parents who have made that choice. Perhaps it's a necessary wake-up call.

*Dr. Christine B. Whelan is writing a book about high-achieving women and marriage, to be published by Simon & Schuster.*