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## The Coparental Relationship of Divorced Spouses: Its Effect on Children's School Adjustment

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THE COPARENTAL RELATIONSHIP OF DIVORCED SPOUSES: ITS EFFECT  
ON CHILDREN'S SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT

by

Joan Wood

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
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I wish to express my loving thanks to my husband, Milton, whose support and pride has been a great source of my strength. And finally, I wish to lovingly express my gratitude to my sons, Mark and Hal, for their patience and understanding of my needs and commitments.

## VITA

Joan Wood is the daughter of George Rabens and the late Emylyne Rabens. She was born on October 25, 1940 in Chicago, Illinois. Joan has been married since 1964 to Milton Wood. She is the mother of two boys, Mark and Hal.

Joan attended both elementary school and high school in Chicago. She majored in psychology at the University of Illinois at Champaign and graduated Phi Beta Kappa in 1962. From 1962 to 1964 Joan attended Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, and received a master's degree in Industrial and Labor Relations. Following her graduation from Cornell, Joan was employed by the Chicago Civil Service Commission as a training coordinator and by the United Packinghouse Workers labor union as a research assistant.

Between the years of 1966 and 1977, Joan devoted her time and energy to raising her two boys, now 19 and 21. In 1977 she returned to the work force on a part-time basis and was employed by the University of Chicago as a research interviewer. In 1978 Joan returned to school at Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago and was employed by Omni House Youth Services Bureau as Director of Research and Evaluation. Joan graduated from Northeastern Illinois University with a M.A. in Counseling in 1980.

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Since 1983 Joan has been a part-time faculty member at Northeastern Illinois University of Chicago. She has been a practicum supervisor and has taught undergraduate and graduate courses in industrial psychology, child psychology, counseling frameworks, and family counseling. Since 1984 Joan has also been employed by Roberta G. Sachs, Ph.D., Ltd. where she provides psychotherapeutic services for individual adults, adolescents, couples, and families.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### The Statement of the Problem

Recent years have seen a dramatic increase in the divorce rate in the United States. Census figures indicate that the divorce ratio more than doubled from 1970 to 1981 and more than tripled since 1960 (Guidubaldi, Perry, Cleminshaw, & McLoughlin, 1983). In 1983 there were 1,179,000 divorces granted in the United States (National Center for Health Statistics, 1984). Glick (1979) predicted that by 1990 33 percent of our nation's children will experience divorce of a parent before the age of 18. Hetherington (1979) projected that 40 to 50 percent of the children born in the 1970's will spend some time living in a single parent family. As the incidence of divorce has risen, the consequences of parental divorce for children have increasingly become a focus of study for researchers and mental health professionals who serve the needs of children (Guidubaldi & Perry, 1985).

According to Goldsmith (1982, p. 299), "a major problem confronting clinicians who work with post-divorce families is the absence of a conceptual framework to guide their work." She suggests the application of General Systems Theory as a framework for understanding post-divorce families. General Systems Theory, first proposed in the 1930's by Ludwig von Bertalanffy, a biologist, is an attempt to provide a theoretical model for describing all living systems (Okun & Rappaport, 1980).

Using the General Systems Theory paradigm, the married family is viewed as a system (Goldsmith, 1982), a set of interdependent parts which influence one another through a feedback process. This feedback process functions to maintain the equilibrium of the system and to restore equilibrium when it is threatened. The system is viewed as non-summative, greater than the sum of its individual parts. A change in any one part of the system is believed to effect changes in all members of the system and in the system as a whole. In the married family system, symptomatic behavior of individual family members is viewed as a by-product of relationship struggles. Children frequently display symptoms of the family's pathology more overtly than other family members (Jones, 1980).

The General Systems Theory paradigm can also be appropriately applied to divorced family systems. Goldsmith (1982) views the post-divorce family as a system with many of the same functions as the original married system. Relationships between members may change following divorce, but the system is altered rather than dissolved. Other investigators (Ahrons, 1981; Hess & Camara, 1979) also perceive divorce as changing, but not terminating, a relationship. Even when family members have little or no direct interaction, they may remain interdependent (Goldsmith, 1982). The notion that the relationship between former spouses may continue to have an important impact on their children's adjustment is seen as consistent with General Systems Theory. As with the married family, symptomatic behavior of individual family members is related to dysfunction within the system, and children are often "selected" as symptom bearers.

The divorce literature, which will be reviewed in the following chapter, indicates that there is increasing interest in exploring the consequence for children of marital dissolution. However, according to Hess and Camara (1979), the design of many studies focuses only on differences in children from divorce and intact families. They contend that most investigations "provide little information about the quality of communication, trust, and emotional support that link family members to one another or about how such processes affect children" (p. 80). Other investigators point to empirical evidence that the consequences of divorce are not uniform and agree that there may be other factors which mediate its effects on children. A number of these investigators focus on family process variables, including various aspects of the co-parental relationship.

#### The Importance of the Study

The focus in this research is consistent with the General Systems Theory assumption that individual symptomatology is related to dysfunction with the system. In addition, therefore, to comparing the adjustment of children from divorced and intact families, this investigation will explore the impact on children of the coparental relationship. It is believed that this is an important direction for divorce research and that information of this type will be helpful to teachers, to mental health professionals who counsel post-divorce families and to divorced parents who are striving to develop ways of relating which will benefit their children.

### Definitions

A divorced family will be defined as one in which there has been a divorce and in which the custodial parent has not remarried. In all cases the custodial parent will be the mother.

An intact family will be defined as a two-parent nuclear family in which there has never been a divorce.

A child's school behavior will be defined as his/her score on the Walker Problem Behavior Identification Checklist, a 50-item behavioral scale which will be completed by the child's classroom teacher. School behavior has been chosen as an independent measure of child adjustment. According to Emery (1982), one serious methodological flaw of many studies is the use of non-independent data; that is, the same judges have evaluated both the parents' relationship and the child's adjustment.

Frequency of coparental interaction will be defined as a parent's score on Goldsmith and Ahron's 10-Item Frequency of Coparental Relationship Scale (Ahrons, 1981; Goldsmith, 1980).

Degree of conflict will be defined as a parent's score on a four-item scale which elicits responses about both overt and covert types of hostility.

Amount of support will be defined as a parent's score on a six-item scale which elicits responses about the parent's perception of the amount of support he/she is receiving from his/her spouse or ex-spouse.

The support and conflict scales together comprise the Quality of Coparental Communication Scale (Ahrons, 1981; Goldsmith, 1980).

Amount of trust between ex-spouses will be defined as a parent's score on Larzelere and Huston's eight-item Dyadic Trust Scale. According to Larzelere and Huston (1980, p. 595), "trust has been defined as a belief by one person in the integrity of another." These researchers suggest that dyadic trust, which they have empirically distinguished from generalized trust, is an integral feature on intimate human relationships. They found dyadic trust to be positively associated with love and with depth of self-disclosure.

#### Limitations of the Study

This study will include data from a middle class sample of suburban families with at least one child in grades two through four. The findings of this study cannot be generalized to children of other ages, nor can the results be generalized to a non-middle class sample. It is recognized that school behavior may not accurately reflect behavior in other environments, such as the home, although there is empirical evidence (Walker, 1983) of a strong relationship between Walker Problem Identification Checklist scores and independent ratings of children's behavior in the home. Further there is some evidence (Blechman, 1982) that teachers' knowledge of parents' marital status may bias their assessment of a child's performance. This study was purposive and did not control for a number of possibly influential factors, such as gender and time since divorce. The presence in the divorced group of 12 boys and 22 girls is a limitation in that a number of studies (Guidubaldi, Perry, Cleminshaw, & McLoughlin, 1983; Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1979) have reported greater adjustment problems for boys than for girls. It should be noted, however, that

the establishment of separate norms by the Walker Problem Behavior Identification Checklist developers controls for some of the sex-related differences. Other limitations of this investigation include the exclusive use of self-report assessments of the parental relationship, a single outcome measure of children's post-divorce adjustment, and possible sampling bias due to self selection of respondents. Finally, only one spouse (the custodial mother) completed the relationship instruments.



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

#### Introduction

The following review of the literature will begin with an examination of the relationship between separation/divorce and children's emotional and behavioral adjustment. Studies suggesting that children suffer negative consequences as a result of their parents' separation/divorce and studies suggesting that divorce per se is not injurious to children will be reviewed. Possible methodological explanations for these contradictory findings will be suggested.

The idea that the effects of divorce on children may be mediated by individual, familial, and social factors will be presented. The principal focus in this review will be on one mediating variable, parental conflict. Studies will be reviewed which examine the differential impact of divorce on children as a result of the degree and type of parental discord.

Several research approaches have been utilized in investigating the possibility that parental conflict rather than parental separation may be the explanation for the frequently found association between divorce and childhood problems. Researchers have compared children who have lost a parent through death with children whose homes are broken by divorce. They have also compared children from conflictual

unbroken homes with children from broken homes. The relationship between parental discord and children's adjustment in intact homes has been investigated. Finally, there have been a number of studies of the relationship between post-divorce conflict of parents and children's adjustment. Studies utilizing all of these approaches will be included in this review. Several recent attempts to identify other aspects of the post-divorce parental relationship which may be important for children's adjustment will be discussed.

### Effects of Divorce on Children

#### Studies Showing Negative Effects of Divorce on Children

A number of studies have suggested that children typically suffer negative consequences as a result of their parents' separation/divorce. Felner, Stolberg, and Cowen (1975) investigated the impact of two types of crisis-producing experiences, death and divorce, on primary grade school children. Both groups were compared to demographically matched controls. Each crisis group had significantly higher overall school maladjustment scores than their control groups. The separation/divorce group had significantly more aggression and acting out problems than the controls. These effects remained when initial maladjustment differences were ruled out.

Stolberg and Anker (1983) studied children living with their divorced mothers (N=39) and children living with their natural parents (N=40). All of the children were between the ages of six and sixteen. Using multiple criterion measures completed by parents and children, the investigators found significant differences in cognitive/perceptual characteristics and behavior pathology between

children from divorced and intact families. Lower levels of prosocial, school related behaviors and higher levels of inappropriate interpersonal behavior patterns were demonstrated by the divorced group.

Hodges, Buschbaum, and Tierney (1983) studied preschool children from divorced (N=30) and intact (N=60) families using the Parent Checklist of Child Behavior as the criterion measure. Being from a divorced family was significantly related to higher maladjustment ratings.

Guidubaldi and Perry (1984) examined the predictive significance of divorced vs. intact family status of 115 kindergarten children and also assessed the relative predictive value of divorce independent of socioeconomic status. The criterion measures were cognitive, academic, and social assessments. Divorced status was the most consistent and powerful predictor variable. Children from divorced homes tended to have significantly lower academic and personal-social competences. In addition, divorce added significant amounts of individual variance to the socioeconomic status predictors of social and academic competence.

Guidubaldi, Perry, Cleminshaw, and McLoughlin (1983) studied 341 children from divorced and 358 children from intact families. These children were randomly selected from first, third, and fifth grade classrooms. The investigators' multifactor, multisource approach included pencil and paper assessment instruments, psychologists' ratings, teachers' ratings, parent-child interview material, and standardized tests. Consistent differences were observed between

divorced and intact groups on both social-emotional and academic-intellectual criteria. Boys from divorced families were found to experience greater behavioral, social, and academic difficulties than boys from intact families. Girls, however, showed very little divorce rated maladjustment.

A follow-up study two years later (Guidubaldi & Perry, 1985) which included 110 subjects from the original sample found that the boys at an average of six and a half years after the divorce were continuing to do less well than their male counterparts in intact families on a number of mental health criteria. No differences between the groups were found for girls.

Hetherington, Cox, and Cox (1978) examined family responses to the crisis of divorce and patterns of family recovery over the two-year period following divorce. Their final sample consisted of 24 families in each of four groups (intact families with girls, intact families with boys, divorced families with girls, divorced families with boys). A multimethod, multimeasure approach was used to assess family interaction. The measures included interviews with parents, structured daily records of parents, observations of parents and children interacting in the laboratory and at home, behavior checklists completed by parents, parent rating scales of child behavior, and a battery of personality scales administered to the parents. All measures were taken at two months, one year, and two years post-divorce. Behavior checklists indicated that children of divorced parents exhibited more negative behaviors than children from intact families. These findings were corroborated by home and

laboratory observations and by parents' ratings of children's behavior. Children in divorced families were more dependent, disobedient, aggressive, whining, demanding, and unaffectionate than children in intact families. These behaviors were most marked in boys and had largely disappeared in girls by two years post-divorce.

Hess and Camara (1979) found significant differences between divorced and intact families on measures of children's stress and work effectiveness at school, as measured by interviews with family members and a behavioral checklist completed by parents. All families (N=32) had children between nine and eleven years of age. Children of divorced families showed greater stress and less productive work styles. Aggression was also higher for these children. There were no significant differences in social behavior. On both stress and aggression, differences were greater for boys than for girls.

The finding of differential effects of divorce according to sex, with boys showing greater vulnerability, is in accord with the conclusions of other investigators (Kalter, Riemer, Brickman, & Chen, 1985). However, a recent review of divorce research (Kalter et al, 1985) suggests that adverse effects for females are more likely to be found when adolescent and adults subjects are studied, when one looks at long term effects, and when the dimensions investigated are related to feminine self-esteem. It has also been suggested (Block, Block & Morrison, 1981; Emery, 1982) that disorders of overcontrol are more common for girls and are not as easily identified.

Wallerstein and Kelly (Kelly & Wallerstein, 1976; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1975, 1976) reported on a major study of 60 families with 131

children between the ages of two and a half and eighteen. They used a clinical approach in their investigation of the effect of parental divorce on children. The children and their parents were studied by a clinical team shortly after their parents' separation and a year later. A major contribution to this investigation has been the delineation of different outcomes for children of different ages (Levitin, 1979). Preschoolers (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1976) were found to typically react with denial. Children of seven and eight tended to demonstrate pervasive sadness (Kelly & Wallerstein, 1976), and children of nine and ten felt shame and anger (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1976). At one year follow-up, nearly half of the preschool group, over one-third of the seven and eight year old children, and half of the nine and ten year old children were either continuing to display the dysfunctional behaviors of the initial interview or were in an even more deteriorated psychological condition (Levitin, 1976).

Wallerstein (1985) studied 40 individuals from her initial sample over a period of ten years. At the time of follow-up all of these young people were entering or had already entered young adulthood. Wallerstein concluded that some psychological effects of divorce are long lasting. A significant number of the group continued to regard their parents' divorce as a major influence in their lives and to feel burdened by memories of the marital rupture and by feelings of sadness, resentment, and deprivation. They were frequently apprehensive about repeating their parents' negative experience with matrimony.

### Studies Indicating Divorce is not Directly Harmful to Children

Many investigators challenge the assertion that divorce directly causes harmful effects for children. Burchinal (1964) investigated the effects of family structure on the adjustment and developmental characteristics of adolescents. Subjects were 1494 seventh and eleventh grade children in one metropolitan area. Burchinal compared personality and social relationship scores (obtained from answers to questionnaires completed by parents) of adolescents from unbroken families, adolescents living with mothers only, and adolescents in three types of reconstituted families. Burchinal did not differentiate divorced families from other mother-headed families. Nonsignificant differences were found for the majority of relationships tested. Burchinal concluded that at least for this sample family dissolution was not the "overwhelming influential factor in the children's lives that many have thought it to be" (p. 50).

Blechman, Berberian, and Thompson (1977) reported that in a sample of approximately 3700 high school students, single parent family status made small, nonsignificant contributions to students' self-reported level of drug use. The hypothesis that single parent family status affected the adolescent's selection of peers and thereby affected drug use was also tested and rejected. As in the previous study, these investigators did not distinguish between divorced and other types of single-parent families. Similarly, Schulz and Wilson (1973) reported frequency of drug use by peers accounted for 70 percent of the variance in adolescents' drug use. Family structure accounted for a "trivial" portion of the variance.

Kohn and Rosman (1973) studied 287 kindergarten boys and found significant correlations between family intactness and scores on two scales measuring cognitive functioning. However, regression analysis showed that social class and race accounted for most of the variance in overall cognitive functioning. Blechman's (1982) findings support Kohn and Rosman's data. Blechman systematically reviewed the literature on the effects of father absence on cognitive development and concluded that the data does not substantiate the view that children of divorce are affected more negatively than children from intact families. When children with two parents were found to perform less well, inadequate controls for socioeconomic status were also found.

Raschke and Raschke (1979) reviewed the research literature on the effects of divorce on children. They too concluded that when socioeconomic status is held constant differences due to family structure disappear. These findings are contradicted by those of Guidubaldi, Perry, Cleminshaw, and McLoughlin (1983), and Guidubaldi and Perry (1983), previously described. These investigators found significant effects of divorce even when socioeconomic status was controlled. They believe that contradictory findings of previous studies may be due to differences in criteria and possible sampling bias.

Morrison (1974) investigated parental divorce as a factor in child psychiatric illness. His subjects were 72 children from intact families, 34 children from divorced families, and six children whose parents were permanently separated. Evaluations of the children's



marital health status was performed by the Child Psychiatry Division of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Iowa College of Medicine. He found no clear relationship between marital status of parents and symptomology in the children.

Hodges, Wechsler, and Ballantine (1979) studied 26 preschool children from divorced homes and 26 from intact homes using as the criteria of adjustment parent reports, teacher reports, and direct observations. Few statistically significant differences were found between the two groups. For children of divorce, younger parents, limited financial resources, and geographic mobility predicted maladjustment, while these variables were not related to maladjustment for the intact families.

Rosen (1979) studied 92 white, middle class, English speaking subjects, ages nine to 28, whose parents had divorced in the ten year period prior to the investigation. The sample was drawn from divorce records. There was also a demographically matched control group. As assessed by clinical interviews with parents and their children and by projective tests, there were no significant differences between the two groups.

Bernard and Nesbitt (1981) reported on two pilot studies which attempted to measure the emotional reactions of children through the use of their imaginations in hypothetical "frustrating" situations. In the first study subjects were 56 rural children, ages six to 12. Nineteen of the children had experienced divorce and/or disruption (particularly fighting between parents), nine had experienced disruption alone, and the remainder were from non-disruptive (as

reported by the children) intact families. Children from intact families showed more anger and resignation/acceptance responses than children from divorced or disrupted families. Children from divorced and intact families exhibited more passive aggressive responses.

In the second pilot study, the investigators studied 70 urban children ranging in age from six to 12. There were 35 children who had experienced divorce and a matched group from intact families. No significant differences were found between the two groups. There was no evidence to suggest that children from divorced families are more hampered emotionally than children from intact families. The investigators agreed that it cannot be concluded that children's responses to their hypothetical situations represent their actual behavior in real situations. Nevertheless, based on their data and other research findings, they believe that divorce per se is an unreliable predictor of mental illness, delinquency, and negative emotional consequences. Blechman (1982) also contends that at some point an accumulation of findings of no difference between children from one and two parent families should be taken seriously enough to consider the hypothesis of psychological risk among children living in one parent families not supported.

#### Explanations for Contradictory Findings

It is apparent that there is considerable controversy in the professional literature about the effects of divorce on children. Herzog and Sudia (1973) contend that methodological flaws render useless much of the research on father absence. Yet, they say, flawed studies continue to be used as support for the view that one parent

families are detrimental to children. A number of other researchers have also pointed to methodological weaknesses to account for inconsistent and contradictory findings. These include the use of single outcome measures (Levitin, 1979); use of measures of unknown reliability and validity (Block, Block, & Morrison, 1981; Emery, 1982; Guidubaldi, Perry, Cleminshaw, & McLoughlin, 1983; Guidubaldi & Perry, 1985; Kanoy & Cunningham, 1984; Porter & O'Leary, 1980); lack of adequate controls for factors such as social class, age, education, and sex (Guidubaldi et al, 1983; Guidubaldi & Perry, 1985; Kalter, 1976); failure to use comparison groups (Guidubaldi et al, 1983; Levitan, 1979); the tendency to discuss correlational results in a causal way (Blechman, 1982; Kanoy & Cunningham, 1984); inadequate sampling procedures (Bernard & Nesbitt, 1981; Blechman, 1982; Block et al, 1981; Hodges & Bloom, 1984; Levitan, 1979); and the use of non-independent data (Berg & Kelly, 1979; Emery, 1982; Porter & O'Leary, 1980; Santrock & Tracy, 1978).

Researchers have shown increasing interest in studying the effects of mediating variables on children's adjustment following divorce. Variables which have been investigated include frequency and quality of contact with the non-custodial parent (Goldsmith, 1982; Jacobson, 1978a; Kurdek, Blisk, & Siesky, 1981; Pett, 1982); age of the child (Beal, 1980; Guidubaldi et al, 1983; Hodges & Bloom, 1984; Kelly & Wallerstein, 1976; Kurdek, 1981; Reinhard, 1977; Rohrlich, Ranier, & Berg-Cross, 1977; Tessman, 1978; Wallerstein, 1984, 1985; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1980); gender of the child (Blisk & Siesky, 1981; Guidubaldi et al, 1983; Hetherington, Cox, &

Cox, 1977, 1979, 1985; Hodges & Bloom, 1984; Hodges, Weschler, & Ballantine; Kalter, 1979; Kelly & Wallerstein, 1976; Tuckman & Regan, 1966; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1980; Wallerstein, 1984, 1985); the mother's mental health (Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1978; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980); the financial situation of the family (Hodges, Wechsler, & Ballantine, 1979; Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1978, 1982); time since divorce (Hodges & Bloom, 1984; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Warren, Ilgen, Grew, Konanc, & Amara, 1985); and the quality of the interaction within the family system (Herz, 1980; Hess & Camara, 1979; Jacobson, 1978a, 1978b; Tessman, 1978).

#### Parental Conflict

One mediating variable which has received considerable attention is parental conflict. There is some evidence which suggests that parental conflict, rather than parental separation/divorce per se may be the explanation for the frequently found association between divorce and childhood problems. Herzog and Sudia (1971) reviewed the professional literature on the association between divorce and children's adjustment for the previous two decades. They found that there were varying conclusions about the existence and strength of the relationship between broken homes and children's adjustment. However, they concluded, "a recurrent finding is that when family functioning and climate are analyzed, they loom as more important than the number of parents in the home" (p. 65). At least 13 of the studies they reviewed suggested that adverse consequences popularly attributed to the effects of father absence are more pronounced among children of troubled unbroken homes than among children of presumably less

stressful one-parent homes. Several research approaches have been utilized in investigating the possibility that parental conflict rather than parental separation may be the explanation for the frequently found association between divorce and childhood problems.

#### Studies Comparing Children From Divorced and Bereaved Homes

Comparisons of children whose homes are broken by death and those whose homes are broken by divorce or separation have revealed more behavior problems for the latter group. Douglas, Ross, Hammond, and Mulligan (1966) studied delinquent behavior in a large sample of boys eight to 17 years of age from all parts of Great Britain. In this sample, there were 296 boys in all type of broken families, 51 of whom were delinquent. The families broken by divorce or separation produced the highest incidence of delinquency, 23 percent, as compared with 12 percent of those in families broken by death. This difference could not be explained by social class differences.

Gibson (1969) studied the family circumstances of 411 eight year old boys retrospectively to birth and then until their fourteenth birthdays. There was a significant association between broken homes and delinquency, as determined by records of indictable offenses and reports of parents, teachers, and police. The association was especially strong for homes broken by desertion rather than death.

Parish and Nunn (1981) examined relationships between children's self concept and their evaluations of their mothers, fathers, step-fathers, and their custodial families. The sample consisted of 132 children who volunteered to participate. Each child rated his/her parents and step-parent on a personal attributes inventory and his/her

family on "another inventory." Significant correlations were found between children's self-concepts and evaluations of parents in "unhappy" and "divorced" families but not in "happy" and "father loss by death" families. The researchers concluded that both family process and structure are important variables mediating self-concept.

In a study of primary school children, Felner, Stolberg, and Cowen (1975) compared the behavioral patterns associated with parental divorce/separation and parental death. They found that bereaved children displayed greater shyness, timidity, and withdrawal, whereas children from divorced families manifested more aggressive, antisocial problems.

Tuckman and Regan (1966) obtained data on family structure for 1767 children between six and 17 years of age referred to outpatient psychiatric units in Philadelphia. Children from intact families were under-represented in the clinic sample as compared to families from five types of broken homes. However, for the "significant referral problems," children from bereaved homes were most like children from intact homes. For problems of anxiety and neurotic symptoms, the bereaved home had the highest incidence of referrals, followed by the married, the separated, the divorced, and "other." For problems of habit formation, the married family had the highest referral rate, followed by the widowed, the separated, the divorced, "other," and the unmarried. For problems involving aggressive behavior, divorced homes had the greatest percentage of referrals, followed by the unmarried, the separated, "other," the married, and the widowed. For antisocial behavior, divorced families also showed the highest proportion of

referrals, followed by the unmarried, "other," the separated, the widowed, and the married.

A number of the studies comparing children from divorced and bereaved families suggest that both family types are associated with negative consequences for children. However, there are consistent findings of aggressive, antisocial behavior for children who have experienced divorce. This suggests that something other than separation is having a significant effect on the children (Emery, 1982) and gives impetus to the further investigation of variables, such as parental conflict, which differentiate these family types.

Studies Comparing Children from Conflictual Unbroken Homes and Children from Broken Homes

If parental discord is associated with behavioral and emotional problems in children, then the prevalence of such problems should be at least as great for children living in intact conflictual homes as for children living in broken homes. A few studies have suggested that this is the case and that, in fact, living in a conflictual unbroken home may be even more damaging than living in a single-parent home. The first two studies reported do not, however, distinguish between types of broken homes (bereaved, divorced, etc.).

Nye (1957) studied high school aged youth from broken homes and conflictual unbroken homes. He found no differences in self-reported school adjustment between these children. However, there was a significant difference between the two groups in reported incidence of psychosomatic illness and delinquent behavior, with children from single parent homes reporting superior adjustment to children from

conflictual two parent homes. Nye's study makes the case that parental conflict is sufficient to produce both delinquent and psychosomatic reactions, while living with a single parent does not count as an automatic strike against a child. These findings prevailed even when socioeconomic status was controlled (Longfellow, 1979).

During the 1930's McCord, McCord, and Thurber (1962) made direct observations of 255 boys over a five year period. Fifty-five of these boys were from various types of mother custodial single parent families. In 1956 and 1957 investigators read case records and rated the boys and their parents retrospectively on a number of demographic, personality, and relationship variables. The 150 boys from the original sample whose parents were living together were used for the control group. The boys from intact homes were divided into two groups, 30 whose parents "quarreled constantly," and 120 whose homes were "relatively tranquil." Boys from conflictual intact homes showed almost as much sex role disturbances as children from broken homes. A significantly higher proportion of the boys from conflictual intact homes than those whose parents were in less conflict and those whose fathers were absent were gang delinquent. The investigators concluded from these results that the negative effects which have been presumed to result from paternal absence can largely be attributed to certain parental characteristics such as intense conflict.

Berg and Kelly (1979) compared the measured (self-reported) self-esteem of children from divorced families with that of children from intact-accepted families (those who view their family life as



desirable) and intact-rejected families (those who view their family life as not desirable). There were 19 children, equal numbers of boys and girls, ranging in age from nine to 15, in each group. The investigators made the assumption that families where there is "much marital strife" can be expected to generate "rejected" perceptions on the part of the children. Children from divorced families and children from intact-accepted families were found to have significantly higher self-esteem scores than children from intact-rejected families. Children from divorced homes were not found to have self-esteem levels significantly lower than children from intact-accepted families. According to the investigators, the findings of their study suggest the importance to children's self-esteem of post-divorce family relationships.

Hetherington, Cox, and Cox (1979b) studied 48 divorced parents and their preschool children and a matched group of 48 intact families over a two year period (two months, one year, and two years following divorce). Assessment measures included structured diary records of parents, observations of parents and children interacting in the laboratory and at home, checklists of children's behavior, and a battery of personality scale on the parents. The children were observed in school. Peer and teacher ratings of the children's behavior and measures of the children's sex-role typing, cognitive performance, and social development were obtained. The intact families were divided into two groups according to intensity of parental discord. In the first year following divorce, children in the divorced families were found to be functioning less well than

those in high discord intact families who, in turn, evidenced more problems than those in low discord intact families. Children from divorced families were found to be more oppositional, aggressive, lacking in self-control, distractible, and demanding of help and attention at home and at school. There was a significant reversal, however, by two years post-divorce, with boys from high discord intact families showing more acting out, aggressive behavior and less prosocial behavior, such as helping, sharing, and cooperation, than boys from divorced families. Boys from divorced families, however, displayed more problem behavior than boys from low discord intact families. The effects of marital discord were less marked for girls than for boys. The investigators concluded that in the long run it is not a "good idea" for parents to remain in a conflictual marriage for the sake of their children, although this may appear to be the case in the short run.

Rutter (1971) reviewed previous research and concluded that separation from a parent did not have consistently negative effects but conflict did. A poor marital relationship characterized by conflict and lack of warmth was associated with a high incidence of antisocial behavior in children regardless of social class. Longfellow (1979) reviewed the literature on parental conflict and child adjustment and concluded that living with two parents whose relationship is conflictual is more detrimental to a child's adjustment than living with a single parent.

Studies Investigating the Relationship Between Parental Conflict in Intact Homes and Children's Adjustment

According to Rutter (1971, 1981), research suggests that it may be discord and disharmony rather than family dissolution, which leads to antisocial behavior. To test this, he believes that it is first necessary to show that parental discord is associated with behavior deviance in children even when the home is unbroken. A number of research studies have explored this association.

Rutter (1971) interviewed 103 families with nine to 12 year old children on the Isle of Wight. He found that both lack of warmth (between parents and between parents and children) and active discord, as assessed by interviews with parents, were associated with deviant behavior in children. Rutter also found in a sample of 60 families that the rate of deviant behavior in boys was significantly higher when the parents had a "bad" marital relationship. In girls this association was not found.

Johnson and Lobitz (1974) studied the relationship between marital discord, as measured by the Locke-Wallace inventory, and child deviance, as measured from home observation data. Subjects were 17 families with boys between the ages of 2.4 and 12.5 years of age. There were at least 13 intact families. The initial sample consisted of four single parent families, but the report is not clear as to whether four, or less than four, single parent families were included in the final sample. Subjects were referred by a child psychology clinic. There was a consistent negative correlation between marital adjustment and child deviance. This relationship was significant for

fathers and both parents together, but not for mothers.

Porter and O'Leary (1980) obtained data on overt marital hostility, general marital adjustment, and children's behavior from the mothers of 64 children referred to a child psychological clinic. Overt marital hostility, but not general marital adjustment, was found to be positively correlated with many behavior problems of boys. Neither general marital adjustment nor overt marital hostility was related to behavior problems of girls.

Block, Block, and Morrison (1981) used a longitudinal design to evaluate the relationship between parental agreement-disagreement in socialization values and the ego and cognitive development of the child, as independently measured. Parental agreement on socialization values was operationalized as degree of congruence between fathers and mothers on Q-sort measures describing their child rearing practices. Personality characteristics of the children were described by their nursery and preschool teachers. Parental agreement on child rearing issues was found to be related to the quality of psychological functioning in boys and girls. However, only for boys was agreement positively related to both ego resiliency and ego control. For girls parental agreement was negatively related to ego control and was essentially independent of ego resiliency. According to the investigators, their findings are consistent with much of the divorce literature, which suggests that the impact of marital discord and divorce tends to be more pervasive and more enduring for boys than for girls. These findings are also in agreement with those of Emery and O'Leary (1982). In a sample of 50 children, they found that

children's perceptions of marital discord were strongly related to conduct problems, as assessed by their parents, in boys but not in girls. Even when girls perceived conflict between their parents, they did not display associated increases in conduct problems.

Oltmanns, Broderick, and O'Leary (1977) investigated the relationship between marital adjustment, as measured by a marital adjustment test, and children's behavior, as measured by a behavioral rating checklist completed by parents. Subjects were 62 children referred to a behaviorally oriented child psychological clinic. The same measures were provided for 31 nonreferred children and their parents. For the clinic sample, there was a significant negative relationship between parents' marital satisfaction and children's behavioral deviance.

Emery and O'Leary (1984) reviewed the research relevant to the relationship between marital discord and childhood problems. They were unable to locate a single published study which utilized a nonclinic sample, independent assessors of the marriage and child, and measures of established reliability and validity. Their (1984) investigation was designed to assess the relationship between marital discord in nonclinic two parent families and children's behavior at home and at school, as independently assessed. The subjects were 32 mothers and their children, all second through fifth grade students. Mothers and teachers completed a behavior problem checklist, and mothers completed two marital inventories. Although a number of significant correlations were found between marital adjustment and both mothers' and teachers' ratings of children's adjustment, these

correlations were consistently low in magnitude. The investigators' review of previous research suggests that these results are quite comparable to those typically reported for nonclinic samples. In comparing the correlations for mothers' and teachers' ratings, 16 of the correlations between marital discord and childhood problems were significant when mothers rated the children, whereas only six of the correlations were significant when teachers did the rating. The researchers conclude that the need for independent ratings is legitimized by these findings and speculate that there may be a "halo effect" leading mothers in unhappy marriages to perceive their children as more poorly adjusted. Alternatively, however, they offer situational specificity as a possible explanation. They suggest that children may respond to family conflict more noticeably in the environment in which the conflict occurs, the home. In regard to the effects of marital discord on children, the investigators conclude that the weak association in this and other nonclinic samples suggests that marital discord is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for the development of children's behavior problems. They call for the consideration of more complex models and for research focusing on substantive issues, such as what form of marital discord is related to what types of behavior problems.

Christensen, Phillips, Glasgow, and Johnson (1983) studied 36 families who indicated that they had a "problem" child between four and 12 years of age, exhibiting behaviors such as noncompliance, aggressiveness, hyperactivity, and temper tantrums. Nine nonproblem families were also studied. Correlational analyses showed a strong

association between marital discord, as measured by a marital adjustment inventory, and the parents' assessment of children's behavior. The nonproblem families and 15 of the problem families also participated in home observations. No significant relationship was found between observed negative behavior and parental perceptions of child behavior problems. This data supports Emery and O'Leary's (1984) speculation that there may be a "halo effect" which leads unhappy parents to perceive their children as poorly adjusted and underlines the need for the collection of independent data.

#### Studies Investigating the Relationship Between Post-Divorce Conflict and Children's Adjustment

According to Emery (1982), parental conflict does not terminate with the marriage and may, in fact, increase after the divorce. Rutter (1981) also challenges the idea that divorce necessarily brings conflict to an end. Recent studies have investigated the effects on children of continued parental conflict subsequent to family dissolution. Researchers are interested in determining if children of divorced parents who continue to have conflict beyond divorce have more problems than children whose parents have a less conflictual relationship. Both the amount and type of conflict to which children are exposed has been investigated and would appear to be important determinants of the effect of the conflict on the child (Emery, 1982).

Kopf (1970) studied 52 eighth grade father-absent boys and their mothers. He found that mothers' attitudes, negative or positive, toward fathers, were significantly related to the boys' adjustment, as measured by a questionnaire developed by the investigators. A

negative attitude of the mother toward the father was associated to low adjustment ranking of her son.

Wallerstein and Kelly (1975) found degree of conflict prior to divorce not related to post-divorce adjustment of a sample of middle class preschool children. However, if parents continued to conflict after divorce, children's adjustment was negatively affected. Wallerstein and Kelly obtained their data from clinical interviews with parents and teachers, child observations, and school records. Interpretations have relied heavily on subjective judgments and clinical skills (Levitan, 1979).

Hetherington, Cox, and Cox (1976, 1978, 1979a, 1979b) studied 48 divorced parents and preschool children and a matched group of 48 intact families. Families were studied through interviews, rating scales, and standardized tests at two months, one year, and two years post-divorce. The researcher used replicable instruments, some of which had been previously standardized, and sophisticated analytic techniques (Levitan, 1979). The investigators reported (1979b) on the impact of interparental conflict on the social development of children in both types of families. The sample of divorced and intact families was divided into two groups each according to the degree of conflict, high or low. Boys from the high conflict divorced families showed more problems than boys in any of the other groups at two months, one year, and two years post-divorce. The girls from high conflict divorced families showed more problems than girls in any of the other groups at two months and one year post-divorce. However, they showed no differences from girls in the high conflict intact families at two



years post-divorce. Further analyses revealed that under conditions of marital conflict children in intact families who had a good relationship with at least one parent were less likely to develop behavior problems. However, even with a positive relationship with both parents, there were some adverse effects of marital conflict, especially for boys. In single parent families, only a positive relationship with the mother seemed to "buffer" the negative effects of conflict between the parents.

Jacobson (1978a) sampled 38 children ranging in age from three to 13, all of whom had experienced a marital separation in the 12 month period prior to the first research interview. Custodial parents responded to a semistructured "Hostility Schedule," which consisted of questions concerning hostility behavior expressed between parents before and after the divorce. Parents also completed a behavior checklist which assessed deviant and prosocial behavior of the children. Significant associations were found between the amount of interparent hostility prior to the separation and children's adjustment. A number of trends suggested that the greater the amount of the hostility, the greater the maladjustment of the child. When those parents who had no contact with each other for the two week period prior to the data collection were excluded, a significant relationship was also found between interparent hostility during this period and children's adjustment. Overall, however, the strongest associations were between interparent hostility prior to the separation and children's adjustment. Jacobson also found that the specific interparent behavior most likely to be associated with

children's adjustment was "one or both parents physically attacked the other" (before separation). Parents reported that children were present for a higher proportion of interparent hostility prior to the separation.

Nelson (1981) investigated the effects of a "wide array" of potential moderating variables on the post-divorce adjustment of divorced women and their children. Thirty-one children were included in the study. A self-report inventory was used to assess children's social-emotional adjustment. A behavior problem checklist completed by the child's mother and teacher and a self-appraisal inventory completed by the children were the measures of children's behavioral adjustment. There were also three measures of the mother's adjustment. One of the moderator variables investigated was the divorced mother's self-reported current relationship with her ex-husband. The mother responded to questions dealing with the emotional and financial support provided by the ex-husband, agreement on child rearing and visitation privileges, how well the divorced partners were getting along, and the number of court visits regarding post-separation conflicts. For divorced mothers, the current relationship with and positive feelings about the ex-husband were the strongest moderators of their post-divorce adjustment. However, divorced mothers' ratings of their happiness in marriage was a stronger moderator of children's post-divorce adjustment than the current relationship of the mother to her ex-spouse. These findings lend support to those of Jacobson (1978a) who found that interparent hostility prior to separation was more strongly related to children's

behavioral adjustment than interparent hostility following separation. Nelson refers to Jacobson's interpretation that parents had less contact after separation and therefore less opportunity for conflict. Thus, children may experience less stress from post-separation conflict while parents may continue to experience and be strongly affected by it.

Lowenstein and Koopman (1978) studied the self-esteem of 47 boys between the ages of nine and 14 living with single parents. Results suggested a trend but not a significant correlation between their self-esteem, as measured by a self-report inventory, and the perceived quality of the parents' relationship, as reported by the custodial parent.

Hess and Camara (1979) included in their sample 32 families with children between the ages of nine and 11. Sixteen were from divorced families, and 16 were from intact families. Divorced families were identified through court records and intact families from the classrooms in which the children were enrolled. Children, both parents, and teachers were interviewed. Information about school performance was obtained through school records and teacher ratings. For the divorced and intact groups together, level of parental harmony was found to be as closely related to child outcome as was divorce. Commonality analysis indicated that family process variables rather than family structure were the best predictors of child outcomes. For example, level of aggressive behavior was predicted much more successfully by information about level of parental harmony, mother-child relationships, and father-child relationships than by

knowledge about the structure of the family. It should be noted that level of parental harmony, although an important factor, did not turn out to be the most important predictor variable. From this analysis it appeared that parental harmony was less important as an outcome variable than the affective relationships maintained after the divorce between the child and his/her parents. This is roughly consistent with Jacobson's (1978b) finding that in the year following parental separation the variable that accounts for the most variance in child adjustment is attention by parents in regard to dealing with the separation. In Hess and Camara's sample, however, most parents had been divorced between one and one and a half years.

Ellison (1983) interviewed mothers, fathers, and one child between the ages of eight and 12 in 10 divorced and 10 intact families. A Parental Harmony Scale and a Children's Psychosocial Adjustment Scale were constructed from the interview data. Parental Harmony scores were obtained by a team of two raters (for each set of parents) trained in the use of the scale. Children's psychosocial adjustment scores were similarly obtained. Ellison found a significant relationship between parental harmony and children's psychosocial adjustment.

Hodges, Buchsbaum, and Tierney (1983) studied preschool children, 26 boys and 34 girls from intact families and 18 boys and 12 girls whose parents had divorced. The mean number of years since separation was two and a half. Mothers' ratings of degree of conflict about parenting were greater at a statistically significant level in divorced families than in intact families. For divorced families,

there was no relationship between conflict over parenting and adjustment of the child, as measured by behavior checklists completed by custodial parents and teachers. For intact families, however, conflict over parenting was related to greater dependency, poor task orientation, and general maladjustment at school. The investigators emphasize that the focus of this study was more limited than in previous studies in that the question of conflict was limited to parenting issues only and did not include conflict in general. They suggest that future studies need to expand the levels of measurement instead of relying on self-reports, expand the number of measurements over longer periods of time, include custodial and noncustodial fathers, and include a larger number of parenting measures as well as measures of greater sensitivity. They conclude that differences between children of divorced and intact families are not clear and suggest that variables relevant to both types of families may be more predictive of adjustment than factors specifically relevant to divorced families.

Fry and Trifiletto (1983) interviewed 150 adolescents from lower to lower-middle class families where families had been divorced for a period of 12 to 16 months. Factor analyses of the contents of the interviews revealed four primary stress factors. Overall, the items included in the cluster labeled "family conflict and distress" had the highest factor loadings.

Slater and Haber (1984) investigated the effect of self-reported family conflict on the adjustment and self-concept of 150 adolescents, as measured by three self-report measures. Subjects were divided

according to family structure (divorced or intact), gender, and degree of conflict (high or low). Results suggested a significant relationship between high conflict and adjustment, with high conflict producing lower self-esteem, greater anxiety, and less feeling of control. For both the divorced and intact groups, low conflict did not appear to affect adjustment.

Johnston, Campbell, and Mayes (1985) clinically assessed 44 children six to 24 years of age who were the focus of post-separation and post-divorce conflicts over their custody and care. In general, these children, particularly the younger ones, were highly distressed and symptomatic. However, they did not exhibit the aggressiveness and conduct disorders typically described in the divorce literature. Rather, many manifested anxiety, tension, depression, psychosomatic illness, constriction of affect, lack of autonomy, and problems of ego-integration and in the development of a cohesive sense of self. The researchers also reported on the data obtained from questionnaires and standardized measures which indicated that the following factors, together, were highly predictive of emotional and behavioral problems: (a) the amount of involvement of the child in the dispute, (b) the degree of the child's role reversal with the parents, (c) the amount of disagreement between the parents, and (d) the duration of the dispute over the child.

Much of the current research suggests that children's psychological and behavioral maladjustment following divorce is associated with parental conflict before the divorce and/or continuing parental conflict following divorce. However, there are problems in

the way conflict has been conceptualized and measured which may confound the interpretation of research data. According to Johnston, Campbell, and Mayes (1985), in many studies conflict has been equated "most crudely" with divorce or with various measures of marital satisfaction, including some items about hostile attitudes and physical violence. However, it is very possible, they maintain, that different kinds of conflict have different consequences for children. These investigators emphasize that conflict has content, attitude, and behavioral dimensions, that it can be subtle or overt, and that it can mean different things to different people. They call for more focused studies that control for the type of parental conflict and for the degree to which children are exposed to and involved in parental disputes.

#### The Continuing Relationship Between Divorced Spouses

Although there is a considerable agreement that a harmonious relationship between former spouses is preferable, the specific dynamics of a successful, post-divorce relationship remain largely unexplored (Ahrons, 1981). According to Goldsmith (1982), while spouses may end their marital relationship, they continue to influence one another as parents. Goldsmith believes that in the past this impact may have been minimized or ignored because it seemed inconsistent with the marital termination. The divorced couple, she maintains, may alter the structure of their relationship in the direction of greater separation but at the same time develop or maintain a relationship which is highly dependent around child rearing functions.

According to Ahrons (1981), amicable divorce is usually perceived as an indication of unresolved marital issues and hanging on to the marriage. Mental health professionals, as well as the public, she says, continue to view post-divorce bondings as pathological or quasipathological. Clingempeel and Repucci (1982), for example, concluded that a mutually supportive relationship between parents immediately after divorce may prolong their psychological adjustment. Brown (1979) found that clinicians have considerable difficulty accepting positive feelings between ex-spouses, particularly when love is expressed. Kressel and Deutsch (1977) interviewed 21 "highly experienced" therapists and found that few were in favor of continued post-divorce involvements between ex-spouses other than those necessitated by parenting. "Seemingly pleasurable post-divorce interactions were seen as suggesting an unconscious wish to 'hang on' to the marriage."

Goldsmith (1980) did in-depth semistructured interviews with 129 former spouses in mother custody families. Self-report scales were developed from the interviews to assess various aspects of the coparental relationship. Goldsmith found that most individuals who experienced positive feelings for their former spouse did not view themselves as unable to separate. Further, positive feelings were found to be associated with a more successful coparental relationship. Those spouses who felt caring, compassion, and even loving feelings were also more cooperative and supportive in their parenting relationship. Goldsmith contends that it is critical to distinguish between positive feelings and continued attachment which is



dysfunctional in nature. She concludes:

..clinicians should not prejudge and label positive feelings as "inappropriate" rather, they should help former spouses (who themselves are confused about having positive feelings toward someone they have recently divorced) to understand that such feelings are commonplace and may actually facilitate their postdivorce family life (p. 319).

Ahrons (1981) also maintains that a continued relationship between divorced spouses may create mechanisms for successfully carrying out child rearing functions and may also satisfy many adult relationship needs. Much research, she concludes, is needed to clarify the normative processes of divorce and post-divorce family reorganization.

#### The Present Investigation

The present investigation will attempt to build on the research discussed in the preceding review and discussion. This investigation will address some of the methodological weaknesses of many current studies of the effects on children of the relationship between divorced spouses. A nonclinic population will be used, as well as a comparison group of intact families and independent assessments of the children's adjustment and the quality of the marital relationship. Custodial mothers will evaluate the parents' relationship, and teachers will behaviorally assess children's school adjustment. This study will examine the relationship between parental conflict and children's post-divorce adjustment. However, in an effort to broaden the understanding of healthy post-divorce functioning, other aspects of the coparental relationship will also be investigated.

The remaining chapters will present the methodology utilized in this investigation (Chapter III), the analysis of the data (Chapter IV), and the conclusions and recommendations (Chapter V). The following questions will be addressed: (1) Are there differences between divorced and intact

families in children's adjustment?; (2) How does the relationship between divorced spouses affect children's adjustment; and (3) Are structure of the family or parental relationship variables most predictive of children's post-divorce adjustment. In attempting to answer these questions, the following null hypotheses will be tested:

1. There is no significant difference in the school behavior of children from intact and divorced families.
2. There is no significant relationship between specific coparental relationship variables (frequency of coparental interaction, quality of coparental relationship and dyadic trust) and children's school behavior.
3. There is no significant difference in the relative contribution to children's school behavior of the coparental relationship variables (frequency of interaction, quality of coparental relationship, and dyadic trust) and the structure of the family (divorced or intact).

## CHAPTER III

### METHOD

#### Subjects

The sample for this investigation is purposive. This type of sample is characterized by the use of judgment and a deliberate attempt to obtain a representative sample (Kerlinger, 1973). Subjects were initially located by sending letters (see Appendix A) to all parents of second, third, and fourth grade students in seven suburban elementary schools. These letters briefly described the purpose of the study and the requirements for participation. Letters supporting the study from the principal of one school and the district assistant superintendent for instruction of the six other schools were attached (see Appendices B and C). The investigator contacted by telephone those parents who indicated that they would be interested in receiving further information. Of this group, those who agreed to participate and who met the inclusion criteria were used in the study.

The subjects in the final sample were a group of 32 divorced, mother-custody families with 12 boys and 20 girls in second, third, or fourth grade. Families in which the mother had remarried were excluded. There was also a control group of 37 intact families with 19 boys and 18 girls in second, third, or fourth grade.

#### Procedure

Whenever possible, fathers and mothers were asked to participate

in the study. In the intact group both parents completed three scales asking for their perceptions of their relationship. However, only nine of the divorced fathers completed the scales. In some instances custodial mothers refused to provide information as to the whereabouts of their ex-spouses. In other cases the fathers were contacted by letter (see Appendix D) and/or phone but refused to participate. Because of the difficulty in engaging divorced fathers, it was decided that, for both groups, only mothers' responses would be used in data analysis.

Jacobson (1978), in her study of the relationship between interparent hostility and child adjustment, refers to the difficulty in obtaining data from noncustodial parents. In her investigation the parent of custody was asked to provide information about both her perceptions of the interparent relationship and the perceptions of her ex-spouse. Although Jacobson is aware that there is no way to be absolutely clear about distortions, she expresses confidence in the validity of her data. She tested the agreement between ex-spouses in a number of cases where she did have access to two parents and found a high degree of concurrence.

All parents who agreed to cooperate in the investigation were visited by the investigator in their homes. The investigator completed a parent information form (see Appendix E). Parents were asked to read and sign a consent form for themselves (see Appendix F) and a parental consent form (see Appendix G) which permitted their child's teacher to assess the child's school behavior using the Walker Problem Identification Checklist. They were also asked to complete

and return by mail three scales designed to elicit information about the current relationship with their spouse or ex-spouse. These scales are the Dyadic Trust Scale, the Frequency of Coparental Interaction Scale, and the Quality of Coparental Relationship Scale. Eight of the divorced mothers were unable to complete this scale because of lack of contact with their ex-spouses.

The support of teachers in seven schools was initially elicited through their respective principals. The investigator delivered Walker Problem Identification Checklists and accompanying letters (see Appendix H) to the primary teacher of every child whose parent gave consent for his/her participation. Copies of the consent form were given to each teacher. Teachers were provided with return envelopes and asked to mail the completed forms to the investigator.

#### Instrumentation

The Frequency of Coparental Interaction Scale (see Appendix I) is a ten-item scale which asks spouses or ex-spouses to indicate the frequency with which they discuss, plan, or talk about specific child related issues. Frequency of interaction is indicated on a five-point continuum ranging from 1 (always) to 5 (never). A sixth response category indicates "does not apply." Two items of this scale (h and i) are not appropriate for intact families. The total score for this scale is the mean score for all items which elicit a response of one through five. A low score indicates a high frequency of coparental interaction. The coefficient alpha for this scale is .93 for women and .92 for men, indicating a high degree of overall reliability (Ahrons, 1981).

The Quality of Coparental Relationship Scale (see Appendix J) is a ten-item scale which asks spouses or ex-spouses about their parenting relationship. This scale consists of two subscales, which indicate spouses' or ex-spouses' perceptions of the conflict and support in their relationship. Responses are made on a five-point continuum ranging from 1 (always) to 5 (never). The conflict subscale items are reverse scored. A sixth response category indicates "does not apply." Two items of the scale (d and e) are not appropriate for intact families. The total score for the Quality of Coparental Communication Scale is the mean score for all items which elicit a response of one through five. A low score on the scale indicates low conflict and high support. The coefficient alpha for this scale is .74 for women and .75 for men.

To evaluate the validity of this self-report measure, clinical interviewers assessed 54 divorced couples on the quality of their coparental relationship. These couples also completed the Quality of Coparental Relationship Scale. The interviewers' and subjects' responses were highly correlated. For men the correlation was .43 and for women .58, both associations significant at the .001 level. According to Ahrons (1981), this "suggests that the subjects' self-report data provided a valid indicator of the quality of the coparental relationship" (pp. 419-420).

The Dyadic Trust Scale (see Appendix K) elicits information about the degree of trust felt by one individual for another. Subjects are presented with eight statements and asked to indicate on a seven-point continuum the degree to which the statements reflect their thinking

about another individual, in this study their spouse or ex-spouse. Five of the items (3, 4, 5, 7, 8) are reverse scored to reduce response bias. The total dyadic trust score is the mean response to all items. A high score indicates a high degree of trust.

According to the researchers who developed the Dyadic Trust Scale, it is "unidimensional, reliable, relatively free from response bias, and designed to be consistent with conceptualizations of trust from various perspectives" (Larzelere & Huston, 1980, p. 595). Factor analyses were utilized to determine that dyadic trust is a unidimensional construct. The item-total correlations are high, ranging from .72 to .89. The scale has been found to have a reliability of .93 (coefficient alpha) and low correlations with a social desirability measure ( $r = .00$ , n.s.) and with two measures of generalized trust, a person's belief about the character of people in general ( $r = .17$ ,  $p < .05$ ;  $r = .02$ , n.s.).

The construct validity of the Dyadic Trust Scale was investigated by exploring self-report correlates of dyadic trust. The sample used in the evaluation of these associations consisted of 195 dating persons and 127 married persons. The latter group included 45 divorced partners. Dyadic trust scores and scores on an instrument assessing love between partners were found to be strongly related. Using individual scores, the correlations were high for dating partners ( $r = .45$ ,  $p < .001$ ), for married partners ( $r = .48$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and for the entire sample ( $r = .47$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Using couple scores, the correlations were "substantial" for dating couples ( $r = .51$ ), for married couples ( $r = .58$ ), and for the total sample ( $r = .55$ ), all

significant ( $< .001$ ). Scores on a self-disclosure measure were also strongly related to dyadic trust for dating persons ( $r = .19$ ,  $p < .05$ ), for married persons ( $r = .40$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and for the entire sample ( $r = .25$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

The discriminant validity of the dyadic trust scale was investigated by examining whether dyadic trust scores were more closely associated than were measures of social desirability and generalized trust with indicators of interpersonal intimacy. In all cases, dyadic trust was found to correlate more than social desirability and generalized trust with love and depth of self-disclosure.

Dyadic trust scores generally varied by relationship status, with divorced partners tending to have less dyadic trust for their ex-spouses than married persons for their current spouses. Nevertheless, 36 percent of the divorced individuals trusted their ex-partners more than they distrusted them.

The Walker Problem Behavior Identification Checklist (WPBIC) (see Appendices L and M) assesses children's behavior in school. The WPBIC has separate scales to measure the presence of the following behaviors: acting out, withdrawal, distractability, disturbed peer relations, and immaturity. The total score provides a measure of overall behavioral functioning. Teachers are presented with 50 items indicative of problem behavior and asked to indicate (by circling numbers to the right of the items) which behaviors they have observed during the last two-month period. Total WPBIC scores and subscale scores are computed and converted to standard scores. The WPBIC has



separate T-score conversions according to grade in school and gender. In the present investigation, there were four cases in which a family had twins in the appropriate age grouping. In these cases the scores on the WPBIC subscales and the total score were defined as the averages of the individual scores of the twins.

The WPBIC has been normed on samples of preschool/kindergarten, primary (grades 1, 2, and 3) and intermediate (grades 4, 5, and 6) students. There are separate T-score distributions by gender for each age grouping. A T-score of 60 has been selected as a cutoff point, indicating the need for further evaluation.

Both split-half and test-retest reliability of the WPBIC has been assessed. The split-half reliability coefficient was .98 with a standard deviation of 10.53 and a standard error of measurement of 1.28. Three estimates of test-retest reliability (stability) were made. Stability coefficients for the total score ranged from .66 (over a two-month interval) to .86 (when students were tested twice within a four week period). According to the test developer, these results suggest that WPBIC "reliability is satisfactory when judged against the standards used to assess behavior checklists and instruments of this type" (Walker, 1983, p. 7).

Five types of validity have been assessed since the development of the WPBIC: content, criterion, construct, factorial, and item validity. In regard to content validity, it is reported that care was taken to ensure that the WPBIC measured maladaptive behavior in the classroom and that the items were behavior specific, not requiring raters to make inferential judgments.

A number of studies were reported which examined the criterion-related validity of the WPBIC. These studies provide support for the criterion-related validity of the measure in that there appear to be strong empirical relationships between WPBIC scores and independent assessment of students' behavior in both home and school settings.

Six studies provided support for the construct validity of the WPBIC. The instrument was found to be sensitive to behavior changes produced by systematic intervention procedures.

The factorial validity of the WPBIC was examined by factor analyzing (principal factor method with orthogonal varimax rotation) the data obtained from the normative sample of students in grades 4, 5, and 6. This procedure yielded five principal factors corresponding to the five WPBIC subscales.

In assessing the WPBIC's item validity, item variance indices, item total indices, and intercorrelations among the 50 items were computed and suggest that the WPBIC is able to make significant discriminations among individuals and to measure separate functions of the same behavior domain. According to the test developer, the items are not "excessively duplicating one another" (Walker, 1983, p. 14).

#### Design and Statistical Analysis

Three types of variables were of major interest: (1) family structure (divorced or intact); (2) coparental relationship variables (amount of trust between parents, frequency of coparental interaction, quality of coparental relationship); and (3) children's adjustment (in the school setting).

Hypothesis I stated that there is no significant difference between divorced and intact families in children's school behavior. This hypothesis will be analyzed by comparing the means of the divorced group and the intact group on the outcome measure, children's scores on the Walker Problem Behavior Identification Checklist (WPBIC). The statistical analysis will be accomplished using analysis of variance.

Hypothesis II stated that there is no significant relationship between the coparental relationship variables (amount of trust between parents, quantity of coparental interaction, and quality of coparental relationship) and children's school behavior. This hypothesis will be analyzed by relating the mothers' scores on the coparental relationship scales and the children's scores on the WPBIC. The statistical analysis will be accomplished by Pearson product-moment correlation.

Hypothesis III stated that there is no significant difference in the relative contributions to children's school behavior of the coparental relationship variables (amount of trust between parents, frequency of coparental interaction, and quality of coparental relationship) and structure of the family (divorced or intact). This hypothesis will be analyzed by investigating the relative abilities of the coparental relationship variables (amount of trust between parents, frequency of coparental interaction, and quality of coparental communication) and of family structure to predict children's adjustment. The statistical analysis will be accomplished by regression analysis.

Chapter III has described the methodology of this research investigation, including sample selection, instrumentation, design, and statistical procedures. Chapter IV will present the data collected by the researcher and the results of the statistical analyses. Chapter V will summarize the goals of the study, the methodology, and the results. Conclusions will be drawn, and some suggestions made regarding potentially fruitful directions for future research.

## CHAPTER IV

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Chapter IV presents and summarizes the findings of this investigation. The chapter consists of three sections. The first section compares the school behavior of children from divorced and intact families. The second section discusses the relationship between selected coparental relationship variables (frequency of coparental integration, quality of the coparental relationship, and trust between parents) and children's school behavior. The third section discusses the relative contribution to children's school behavior of the coparental relationship variables and of family status (divorced or intact).

#### Section I: Hypothesis I

The first null hypothesis was: There is no significant difference in the school behavior of children from intact and divorced families.

Children's behavior in school was assessed by teachers' responses on the Walker Problem Identification Checklist (WPBIC). The WPBIC has separate scales to measure the presence of the following behaviors: acting out, withdrawal, distractibility, disturbed peer relations, and immaturity. The total score provided a measure of overall behavioral functioning. Teachers were presented with 50 items indicative of problem behavior and asked to indicate which behaviors they have observed during the last two-month period. Walker Problem

Identification Checklist (WPBIC) summary scores are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Teachers' Ratings of Children's Behavior on Walker Problem

Identification Checklist (WPBIC)

Child Outcomes (WPBIC)	Divorced (n=32)		Intact (n=37)		Significance
	X	SD	X	SD	
Acting Out	51.59	11.27	48.24	5.50	n.s.
Withdrawal	49.28	7.83	47.35	3.43	n.s.
Distractibility	50.78	9.92	48.43	7.96	n.s.
Disturbed Peer Relations	52.56	11.57	48.35	6.35	n.s.
Immaturity	53.03	10.43	47.95	7.20	.05
Total Problem Behavior	51.03	11.02	47.05	5.02	n.s.

The null hypothesis of no significant difference in the school behavior of children from divorced and intact families failed to be rejected for four of the five WPBIC subscales and for total problem behavior. However, as indicated in Table 1, one significant difference was found between the divorced and intact groups in children's WPBIC scores. There is a significant difference between children from intact and divorced homes on the Immaturity subscale of the WPBIC, with the divorced group exhibiting more immature behaviors.

Items included in the Immaturity subscale are as follows:

1. Is listless and continually tired.
2. Other children act as if he/she were taboo or tainted.
3. Apologizes repeatedly for himself/herself or his/her behavior.
4. Reacts to stressful situations of changes in routine with general body aches, head or stomach aches, nausea.
5. Has nervous tics: muscle-twitching, eye-blinking, nail-biting, hand-wringing.
6. Has enuresis (wets bed).
7. Complains of nightmares, bad dreams.
8. Expresses concern about something terrible or horrible happening to him/her.
9. Steals things from other children.
10. Weeps or cries without provocation.

According to the findings of this investigation, children from divorced homes are more likely to exhibit these behaviors than children from intact homes.

Referring again to Table 1, Total Problem Behavior differences for the divorced and intact groups approached, but did not reach, statistical significance, with children from divorced homes exhibiting more problem behaviors. Differences between the two groups on the Acting Out, Withdrawal, Distractibility, and Disturbed Peer Relations subscales all suggest that there might be greater problem behavior for the divorced group, but none of these differences attained statistical significance. Despite the higher mean scores for the children from divorced homes, there was considerable overlap between the two groups,

and there was particularly high variability in the WPBIC scores of the children from divorced homes.

Many previous studies have found significant differences in acting out, particularly for boys, with children from divorced families exhibiting more acting out behaviors. A significant difference in acting out was not indicated by the present study. To explore the possibility that the presence of fewer boys than girls in the divorced group may have influenced this result, the mean WPBIC scores for each sex were examined. Table 2 presents the mean WPBIC scores by sex and family status. Table 3 presents the significance levels for the differences between the means.

For both the divorced and intact groups, the mean Acting Out scores for girls were higher than the mean Acting Out scores for boys. For the divorced group the mean score for girls was 54.45, and the mean score for boys was 46.83. For the intact group the mean score for girls was 50.89, and the mean score for boys was 45.74. For both groups combined the mean score for girls was 51.76, and the mean score for boys was 46.16. The fewer number of boys in the divorced group was not, therefore, responsible for the finding of no significant difference in acting out behavior.

## Section II: Hypothesis II

The second null hypothesis was: There is no significant relationship between specific coparental relationship variables (Frequency of Coparental Interaction, Quality of Coparental Relationship, and Dyadic Trust) and children's school behavior.

As discussed in Section I, on all but one WPBIC subscale and on



Table 2

Teachers' Ratings of Children's Behavior on Walker Problem IdentificationChecklist (WPBIC) by Family Type and Sex of Child

Child Outcomes (WPBIC)	Divorced				Intact				Both Groups Combined			
	Boys (n=12)		Girls (n=20)		Boys (n=19)		Girls (n=18)		Boys (n=30)		Girls (n=37)	
	X	SD	X	SD	X	SD	X	SD	X	SD	X	SD
Acting Out	46.83	4.53	54.45	13.12	45.74	2.35	50.89	6.61	46.16	3.34	52.76	10.57
Withdrawal	47.83	5.20	50.15	9.07	47.79	3.81	46.89	3.01	47.81	4.32	48.61	7.01
Distractibility	45.17	4.39	54.15	10.84	45.53	7.40	51.50	7.54	45.39	6.32	52.89	9.89
Disturbed Peer Relations	47.42	4.91	55.65	13.32	47.84	6.36	48.89	6.48	47.68	5.76	52.45	11.05
Immaturity	49.33	7.25	55.25	11.54	48.53	9.88	47.33	4.43	48.84	8.37	51.50	9.67
Total Problem Behavior	45.50	4.10	54.35	12.54	45.32	4.36	48.89	5.13	45.39	4.19	51.76	10.03

Table 3

Gender Contrast on Teacher Ratings of Children's Behavior by Family Type

Child Outcomes (WPBIC)	Divorced			Intact			Both Groups Combined		
	X Boys	X Girls	Significance	X Boys	X Girls	Significance	X Boys	X Girls	Significance
Acting Out	46.83	54.45	n.s.	45.74	50.89	.01	46.16	52.76	.001
Withdrawal	47.83	50.15	n.s.	47.79	46.89	n.s.	47.81	48.61	n.s.
Distractibility	45.17	54.15	.05	45.53	51.50	.05	45.39	52.89	.001
Disturbed Peer Relations	47.42	55.65	.05	47.84	48.89	n.s.	47.68	52.45	.05
Immaturity	49.33	55.25	n.s.	48.53	47.33	n.s.	48.84	51.50	n.s.
Total Problem Behavior	45.50	54.35	.05	45.32	48.89	.05	45.39	51.76	.05

the composite measure of Total Problem Behavior, there was more variability within groups than between the divorced and intact groups, and there was particularly high variability, as evidenced by the standard deviations, within the divorced group. The next step, then, was to examine variables other than family structure which may mediate children's behavioral responses to divorce. The variables selected for this investigation (Frequency of Coparental Interaction, Quality of Coparental Relationship, and Dyadic Trust) assess mothers' perceptions of their relationship with their spouse or ex-spouse.

The Frequency of Coparental Interaction Scale is a 10-item scale which asks spouses or ex-spouses to indicate the frequency with which they discuss, plan, or talk about specific child related issues. Frequency of interaction is indicated on a five-point continuum ranging from 1 (always) to 5 (never). A sixth response category indicates "does not apply". The total score for this scale is the mean score for all items which elicit a response of one through five. A low score indicates a high frequency of coparental interaction. Two items of this scale are not appropriate for intact families.

The Quality of Coparental Communication is a 10-item scale which asks spouses or ex-spouses about their parenting relationship. This scale consists of two subscales which indicate spouses' or ex-spouses' perceptions of the conflict and support in their relationship. Responses are made on five-point continuum ranging from 1 (always) to 5 (never). A sixth response category indicates "does not apply". The total score for the Quality of Coparental Communication is the mean score for all items which elicit a response of one through five. A

low score on the scale indicates low conflict and high support. Two items of this scale are not appropriate for intact families.

The Dyadic Trust Scale elicits information about the degree of trust between spouses or ex-spouses. Respondents are presented with eight statements and asked to indicate on a seven-point scale the degree to which the statements reflect their thinking about their spouse or ex-spouse. The total dyadic trust score is the mean response to all items. A high score indicates a high degree of trust.

Mothers' ratings of their relationship with their spouse or ex-spouse, using the three coparental relationship measures described above, are presented in Table 4. There were significant differences between responses of mothers from divorced and intact homes on all three coparental relationship measures. As compared to mothers in intact homes, mothers from divorced homes indicated that they and their ex-spouse interacted less on parenting issues, that they perceived their relationship with their ex-spouse as more conflictual and less supportive, and that they had less trust in their ex-spouses' intentions and motives. All differences between the responses of the mothers from divorced and intact homes were significant at the .001 level of confidence. Correlations for the divorced group between coparental relationship variables and children's Walker Problem Identification Checklist (WPBIC) scores are presented in Table 5.

Table 4

Mothers' Ratings of Their Relationship With Their Spouse or  
Ex-Spouse on Three Coparental Relationship Measures

Coparental Relationship Measures	Divorced		Intact		Significance
	X	SD	X	SD	
Frequency of Coparental Interaction	3.594	1.039	1.523	.482	.001
Quality of Coparental Relationship	2.971	.662	1.841	.440	.001
Dyadic Trust	2.764	1.540	6.378	.729	.001

The hypothesis of no significant relationship between the coparental relationship variables and children's school behavior was rejected for the divorced group, the intact group, and both groups combined. For the divorced group five significant associations were found between coparental relationship variables and children's WPBIC scores. Frequency of Coparental Interaction was significantly related to both Acting Out and Immaturity, with less interaction between parents related to greater problem behavior in these two areas. There was also a significant relationship in the expected direction between Dyadic Trust and Immaturity, less trust being associated with greater immaturity. Finally, there was an association in the expected direction between Dyadic Trust and Total Problem Behavior. Less trust was found to be related to a higher overall incidence of problem behavior. It should be noted that two of the five associations for

Table 5

Walker Problem Behavior Identification Checklist Correlations of  
Coparental Relationship Variables with Children's (WPBIC) Scores:  
Divorced Group

Child Outcomes (WPBIC)	Frequency of Coparental Interaction	Quality of Coparental Relationship	Dyadic Trust
Acting Out	.38*	.10	-.26
Withdrawal	.14	.21	-.20
Distractibility	-.04	-.21	.04
Disturbed Peer Relations	.15	-.37*	-.21
Immaturity	.41**	.13	-.39*
Total Problem Behavior	.29	-.06	-.24*

\*p < .05

\*\*p < .01

A low score on the Frequency of Coparental Interaction Scale indicates a high frequency of coparental interaction.

A low score on the Quality of Coparental Relationship indicates a high quality relationship (high support/low conflict).

A high score on the Dyadic Trust scale indicates a high degree of trust.

High WPBIC scores indicate a high incidence of problem behavior.

the divorced group between coparental relationship variables and children's school behavior involved the Immaturity subscale of the WPBIC. This scale was identified in the discussion of Hypothesis I as the only subscale which successfully differentiated children of divorced and intact families.

There was one significant correlation for the divorced group which was not in the expected direction. Quality of the Coparental Relationship was related inversely to Disturbed Peer Relations, with a higher quality relationship (low conflict/high support) related to poorer peer relations.

Correlations for the intact group are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Walker Problem Behavior Identification Checklist Correlations of Coparental Relationship Variables with Children's (WPBIC) Scores:  
Intact Group

Child Outcomes (WPBIC)	Frequency of Coparental Interaction	Quality of Coparental Relationship	Dyadic Trust
Acting Out	.41*	.35*	-.23
Withdrawal	.06	-.27	-.03
Distractibility	-.22	.37*	-.19
Disturbed Peer Relations	-.08	.05	.07
Immaturity	-.05	-.02	-.07
Total Problem Behavior	.28*	.24	-.16

\*p < .05

\*\*p < .01

For the intact group there were four significant associations between coparental relationship variables and children's WPBIC scores. Frequency of Coparental Interaction was significantly related to Acting Out and to Total Problem Behavior, with lower frequency of coparental interaction related to greater incidences of acting out and overall problem behavior. Quality of the Coparental Relationship was significantly related to both Acting Out and to Distractibility, with a lower quality relationship (high conflict/low support) related to more acting out behavior and greater distractibility.

As described in Chapter III, the Quality of Coparental Relationship measure is comprised of two subscales, Coparental Conflict and Coparental Support. For the intact group (Table 8), the subscale Coparental Support was the most important contributor to the association between Quality of the Coparental Relationship and Acting Out. The correlation between scores on this subscale and Acting Out scores was significant at the .01 level. The subscale Coparental Conflict was the most important contributor to the association between Quality of the Coparental Relationship and Distractibility. The association between Coparental Conflict scores and Distractibility scores was significant at the .05 level. Correlations of children's WPBIC scores with Quality of Coparental Relationship subscale scores and total scores are presented in Table 7 (divorced group), Table 8 (intact group), and Table 9 (both groups combined).

The correlations for both groups combined between coparental relationship variables and children's Walker Problem Behavior Identification Checklist (WPBIC) scores are presented in Table 10.



Table 7

Correlations Between Quality of Coparental Relationship Total Scores  
and Subscale Scores and Children's Walker Problem Behavior  
Identification Checklist (WPBIC) Scores: Divorced Group

Child Outcomes (WPBIC)	Quality of Coparental Relationship	Subscales	
		Conflict	Support
Acting Out	.10	.05	.09
Withdrawal	.21	.23	.12
Distractibility	-.21	-.11	-.25
Disturbed Peer Relations	-.37*	-.33	-.32
Immaturity	.13	.13	.06
Total Problem Behavior	-.06	-.05	-.09

\*p < .05

Table 8

Correlations of Quality of Coparental Relationship Total Scores and  
Subscale Scores with Children's Walker Problem Identification

Checklist (WPBIC) Scores: Intact Group

Child Outcomes (WPBIC)	Quality of Coparental Relationship	Subscales	
		Conflict	Support
Acting Out	.35*	.12	.42**
Withdrawal	-.27	-.21	-.23
Distractibility	.37*	.29*	.27
Disturbed Peer Relations	.05	.06	.02
Immaturity	.02	-.11	.07
Total Problem Behavior	.24	.09	.27

\*p < .05

\*\*p < .01

Table 9

Correlations of Quality of Coparental Relationship Total Scores and  
Subscale Scores With Children's Walker Problem Identification  
Checklist (WPBIC) Scores: Divorced and Intact Groups Combined

Child Outcomes (WPBIC)	Quality of Coparental Relationship	Subscales	
		Conflict	Support
Acting Out	.21	.12	.23*
Withdrawal	.10	.12	.06
Distractibility	.15	.15	.12
Disturbed Peer Relations	.01	-.03	.03
Immaturity	.21	.16	.21
Total Problem Behavior	.18	.11	.18

\*p < .05

Table 10

Correlations of Coparental Relationship Variables with Children's  
Walker Problem Identification Checklist (WPBIC) Scores: Divorced  
and Intact Groups Combined

Child Outcomes (WPBIC)	Frequency of Coparental Interaction	Quality of Coparental Relationship	Dyadic Trust
Acting Out	.38***	.21	-.30**
Withdrawal	.21*	.10	-.22*
Distractibility	.13	.15	-.13
Disturbed Peer Relations	.24*	.01	-.27*
Immaturity	.38***	.21	-.39***
Total Problem Behavior	.36***	.18	-.31**

\*p < .05

\*\*p < .01

\*\*\*p < .001

Coparental relationship variables were found to have a greater impact on children's WPBIC scores when both groups were combined. For the divorced and intact groups together there were 10 significant relationships between coparental relationship variables and children's WPBIC scores. All were in the expected direction. Frequency of Coparental Interaction was significantly associated with Acting Out, Withdrawal, Disturbed Peer Relations, Immaturity, and Total Problem Behavior. There was no significant association between Frequency of Coparental Interaction and the Distractibility subscale of the WPBIC. Dyadic Trust was also significantly related to Acting Out, Withdrawal, Disturbed Peer Relations, Immaturity, and Total Problem Behavior. Again, there was no significant association between the coparental relationship variable, in this case Dyadic Trust, and the Distractibility subscale of the WPBIC. For the Quality of Coparental Relationship variable, there were no significant associations, although all relationships did possess the expected directionality.

### Section III: Hypothesis III

The third null hypothesis was: There is no significant difference in the relative contribution to children's school behavior of the coparental relationship variables (Frequency of Coparental Interaction, Quality of the Coparental Relationship, and Dyadic Trust) and structure of the family (divorced or intact).

The relative contribution of the coparental relationship variables and of family structure to children's school behavior were determined by stepwise multiple regression analyses. Results of the regression analyses for the divorce group, the intact group, and both

groups combined, using .05 and .10 standards for inclusion are presented in Tables 11, 12, and 13 respectively.

For the divorced (Table 11) group there were no significant predictors of children's WPBIC scores using the .05 level of confidence. For the intact group (Table 12) Frequency of Coparental Interaction was indicated as a significant predictor of Total Problem Behavior, accounting for 12 percent of the variance in this measure. Quality of the Coparental Relationship was also found to be a significant predictor variable, accounting for 14 percent of the variance in Distractibility. When both groups were combined (Table 13), one variable appeared in the regression. Frequency of Coparental Interaction was selected as a significant predictor of two dependent measures, Acting Out and Total Problem Behavior. Frequency of Coparental Interaction accounted for eight percent and seven percent of the variance in these measures respectively. For both groups combined, Dyadic Trust was also found to be a significant predictor variable, accounting for 11 percent of the variance in Immaturity.

Although, as reported, there were a number of significant predictor variables for the intact group and for both groups combined, none of the coparental relationship variables accounted for a large proportion of the variance in children's school behavior. Of particular note, however, is that when both groups were combined, structure of the family was not found to be a significant predictor variable, whereas two of the three coparental relationship variables were selected as significant predictors. The hypothesis of no significant difference in the relative contribution to children's

Table 11

Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis: Coparental RelationshipVariables and Children's Walker Problem Behavior IdentificationChecklist (WPBIC) Scores: Divorced Group


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Dependent Variable WPBIC	Variable Entered	Multiple R	R-Squared
Acting Out			
.05	None		
.10	None		
Withdrawal			
.05	None		
.10	None		
Distractibility			
.05	None		
.10	None		
Disturbed Peer Relations			
.05	None		
.10	Quality of Coparental Relationship	.36	.13
	Dyadic Trust	.54	.29
Immaturity			
.05	None		
.10	None		
Total Problem Behavior			
.05	None		
.10	None		

---

Table 12

Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis: Coparental Relationship  
Variables and Children's Walker Problem Behavior Identification  
Checklist (WPBIC) Scores: Intact Group

Dependent Variable WPBIC	Variable Entered	Multiple R	R-Squared
Acting Out	.05	None	
	.10	None	
Withdrawal	.05	None	
	.10	None	
Distractibility	.05	Quality of Coparental Relationship	.37
	.10	Quality of Coparental Relationship	.37
Disturbed Peer Relations	.05	None	
	.10	None	
Immaturity	.05	None	
	.10	None	
Total Problem Behavior	.05	Frequency of Coparental Interaction	.34
	.10	Frequency of Coparental Interaction	.34



Table 13

Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis: Coparental Relationship  
Variables and Children's Walker Problem Behavior Identification  
Checklist (WPBIC) Scores: Divorced and Intact Groups Combined

Dependent Variable WPBIC	Variable Entered	Multiple R	R-Squared
Acting Out			
	.05		
	Frequency of Coparental Interaction	.28	.08
	.10		
	Frequency of Coparental Interaction	.28	.08
Withdrawal			
	.05	None	
	.10	None	
Distractibility			
	.05	None	
	.10	None	
Disturbed Peer Relations			
	.05	None	
	.10	Dyadic Trust	.23
		Quality of Coparental Relationship	.39
			.15
Immaturity			
	.05	Dyadic Trust	.33
	.10	Dyadic Trust	.33
			.11
Total Problem Behavior			
	.05	Frequency of Coparental Interaction	.26
	.10	Frequency of Coparental Interaction	.26
			.07
			.07

school behavior of the coparental relationship variables and family structure is, therefore, rejected.

When confidence levels for inclusion in the regression equations were lowered to .10, Quality of the Coparental Relationship and Dyadic Trust were indicated as predictors of Disturbed Peer Relations for both the divorced group and both groups combined. As reported in the discussion of Hypothesis II, for the divorced group, the association between Quality of the Coparental Relationship and Disturbed Peer Relations was not in the expected direction. For both groups combined, lowering of the confidence levels did not result in the selection of family structure as a significant predictor variable.

#### Summary

The results of this investigation suggest that coparental relationship variables may be more significant influences on children's school behavior than the marital status of their parents. In this regard: (1) only one significant difference was found in the school behavior of children from divorced and intact families; (2) regression analyses did not select family status as a significant predictor of problem behavior; and (3) correlational and regression analyses indicated a number of significant relationships between coparental relationship variables and children's school behavior, although associations were uniformly low in magnitude. The implications of these findings will be discussed in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY

#### The Problem

The dramatic rise in the divorce rate in the United States has stimulated increased interest in the consequences of divorce for children. Initial efforts in this area were largely centered on determining the direct effects on children of marital dissolution. More recently, however, frequent findings of no difference between children of divorced and intact families have encouraged investigators to examine the mediating effects of various individual, interpersonal, and situational factors. The coparental relationship, and in particular the presence of a harmonious or conflictual post-divorce relationship, has increasingly become a focus of study.

Researchers and clinicians who view the family as a system have suggested that the family system is changed following divorce but not dissolved. In this view post-divorce families may continue to be interdependent, even when contact is minimal, and the post-divorce relationship between parents may continue to have a significant effect on children's adjustment.

The focus in the present study is consistent with the General Systems Theory assumption that children's symptomology is related to dysfunction within the family system. In addition, therefore, to comparing the adjustment of children from divorced and intact

families, this investigation has explored the impact on children's behavior of the continuing coparental relationship and has attempted to assess the relative importance to children's adjustment of this relationship and of the family structure (divorced or intact). In addition to the conflict/harmony dimension, which has received considerable attention in previous research, this investigation has examined the relationship to children's adjustment of two additional aspects of the coparental relationship, frequency of coparental interaction and degree of trust between parents.

### Method

#### Subjects

The sample for this study was purposive. Subjects were located by sending letters explaining the study and the inclusion criteria to parents of second, third, and fourth grade students in seven suburban elementary schools. Of this group those who agreed to participate and who met the inclusion criteria were included in the study. Subjects in the final sample were a group of 32 divorced mother-custody families (12 boys and 20 girls) and a group of 37 intact families (19 boys and 18 girls).

#### Procedure/Instrumentation

Parents were asked to complete three scales asking for information about their current relationship with their spouse or ex-spouse. These scales were the Frequency of Coparental Interaction Scale, the Quality of Coparental Relationship Scale, and the Dyadic Trust Scale. Because of the difficulty in eliciting the cooperation of non-custodial divorced fathers, it was decided that, for both

groups, only mothers' responses would be used in data analyses.

The support of teachers in the seven schools was initially obtained through their respective principals. Parents who participated in the study signed releases which permitted the teachers to assess their children's school behavior by completing a behavioral rating scale, the Walker Problem Behavior Identification Checklist (WPBIC).

### Design and Statistical Analysis

Three types of variables were of major interest: (1) family structure (divorced or intact); (2) coparental relationship variables (Frequency of Coparental Interaction, Quality of Coparental Relationship, Dyadic Trust; and (3) children's school behavior (as determined by teachers' ratings on the Walker Problem Behavior Identification Checklist).

Hypothesis I stated that there is no significant difference between divorced and intact families in children's school behavior. This hypothesis was analyzed by comparing the means of the divorced group and the intact group on the outcome measure, children's scores on the Walker Problem Behavior Identification Checklist. The statistical analysis was accomplished using analysis of variance.

Hypothesis II stated that there is no significant relationship between the coparental relationship variables (amount of trust between parents, frequency of coparental interaction, and quality of coparental relationship) and children's school behavior. This hypothesis was analyzed by relating the mothers' scores on the coparental relationship scales and the children's scores on the Walker

Problem Behavior Identification Checklist. The statistical analysis was accomplished by Pearson product-moment correlation.

Hypothesis III stated that there is no significant difference in the relative contributions to children's school behavior of the coparental relationship variables (amount of trust between parents, frequency of coparental interaction, and quality of coparental relationship) and the structure of the family (divorced or intact). This hypothesis was analyzed by investigating the relative abilities of the coparental relationship variables and of family structure to predict children's school behavior. The statistical analysis was accomplished by regression analysis.

### Results

This investigation first examined the differences in children's school behavior between the divorced and intact groups. One significant difference was found, in the Immaturity subscale of the Walker Problem Behavior Identification Checklist, with children from divorced families exhibiting more immature behaviors than children from intact families. This investigation next examined the relationship between three coparental relationship variables (Frequency of Coparental Interaction, Quality of the Coparental Relationship, and Dyadic Trust) and the outcome measure, children's WPBIC scores. When the divorced and intact groups were analyzed separately, a number of significant associations were found, all but one in the expected direction. Less frequency of coparental interaction, a poorer quality relationship, and less trust were all found to be related to an increased incidence of specific problem

behaviors and/or overall problem behavior. However, coparental relationship variables were found to have an even higher association with children's WPBIC scores when both groups were combined. There were a greater number of significant associations, all in the expected direction. Both frequency of coparental interaction and dyadic trust were related to four of the five WPBIC subscales and to total problem behavior with less frequency of interaction and less trust related to a greater incidence of problem behaviors. Finally, the relative contribution to children's school behavior of the coparental relationship variables and family structure was investigated. For the divorced group there were no significant predictors of children's WPBIC scores. Although there were a number of significant predictor variables for the intact group and for both groups combined, none of the parental relationship variables accounted for a large proportion of the variance in children's school behavior. Of particular note, however, is that when both groups were combined, structure of the family was not indicated as a significant predictor variable, whereas two of the three coparental relationship variables were selected as significant predictors.

In summary, the results of this investigation suggest that coparental relationship variables may be more significant influences on children's school behavior than the marital status of their parents. In this regard: (1) only one significant difference was found in the school behavior of children from divorced and intact families; (2) regression analyses did not select family status as a significant predictor of problem behavior; and (3) correlational and

regression analyses indicated a number of significant relationships between coparental relationship variables and children's school behavior, although these associations were consistently low in magnitude.

### Discussion

This investigation found only one significant difference between children from divorced and intact families. This was in the Immaturity subscale of the Walker Problem Behavior Identification Checklist. The finding of greater immaturity on the part of children from divorced homes is consistent with the observation of Hetherington, Cox, and Cox (1976) that divorced parents, both fathers and mothers, make fewer maturity demands upon their children. These investigators found that parents' maturity demands tend to increase after the first year post-divorce. Professionals who work with post-divorce families need to be alert to possible difficulties in this area. Parents may need assistance in developing firmer and more consistent expectations for mature behavior while at the same time providing for their children the needed support and nurturance.

Some research has suggested that teachers tend to base their judgments of a child's performance not on their observations of the individual child but on their knowledge of his or her family background (Blechman, 1982). According to Blechman (1982), teachers' ratings of children's performance have consistently favored children from two-parent families. Although thus far, according to Blechman, there is not concrete evidence that "teachers are using anything but information about socioeconomic status when they rate the progress of



children from different family types" (p. 186), she believes that this trend should not be ignored. The data of the present study lends support to those researchers who have concluded that there is not a clear direct relationship between divorce and children's dysfunction. Premature labeling of children as problems or potential problems on the basis of family structure appears, therefore, to be unwarranted and may, in fact, be damaging.

Findings of this investigation are consistent with the many studies which have concluded that the coparental relationship following marital dissolution affects children as much, or more, than the divorce per se. The data is also consistent with General Systems Theory assumption that children's dysfunction is related to disturbance within the family system. These findings suggest that amicable post-divorce relationships are not necessarily "pathological" or "quasipathological", as frequently perceived by the public and mental health professionals (Ahrons, 1981). Rather, post-divorce bonding and support, particularly related to child rearing, may be highly beneficial for parents and children. As suggested by Ahrons, a continued relationship between divorced spouses may create mechanisms for successfully carrying out child rearing functions. Clinicians, then, may be able to contribute to successful outcomes for children by (1) helping parents to understand that relationships which are satisfying for them can also benefit their children and (2) assisting parents to develop and maintain positive coparenting relationships. Clinicians should be aware that individually oriented treatment of children from divorced homes may be less effective than treatment

which takes place at the family or parental level.

Although the results of this investigation suggest that a continuing coparental relationship is an important mediator of children's adjustment to marital dissolution, the results are consistently low in magnitude. In this regard, it is important to consider the possible limitations of both the coparental relationship measures and the measure of children's behavioral adjustment. The coparental relationship scales appear to have been designed to provide information about how spouses and/or ex-spouses view their relationship. They may not, however, elicit information about the dynamics which are most important to children's post-divorce functioning. Alternatively, they may not elicit information about the coparental relationship variables most highly related to the behavioral problems assessed by the WPBIC. In this regard, a single outcome measure of children's adjustment may have been inadequate in view of the wide variety of cognitive, affective, and behavioral problems which children may display.

A number of directions for future research would appear to be fruitful. As suggested by Emery (1982), the taxonomy of child problems and of coparental relationship problems and the instruments for assessing them need to be further developed. Although this task, Emery acknowledges, is an extremely difficult one, it would permit the development of more complex models relating specific types of coparental relationship problems to specific problems of children. Independent assessment of children's behavior, in addition to teacher ratings, is also suggested in that this would eliminate the possible

response bias of those with prior knowledge of the children's family background. Similarly, assessment by outside observers of the coparental relationship is recommended to supplement the self-report measures. Other potential mediating variables, such as social support networks, parental psychopathology, and visitation patterns need to be measured and controlled as relevant variables (Emery, 1982). Finally, longitudinal research, in which the dependent measures are administered at different times post-divorce is important so as not to ignore the very real possibility of change over time.

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## APPENDIX A

## LOYOLA UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Water Tower Campus \* 820 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60611 \* (312) 670-3020

Dear Parent:

This letter is being sent to all parents of second, third, and fourth grade students. Its purpose is to tell you about a research project which I am coordinating under the auspices of Loyola University of Chicago.

We will be looking at both divorced families and intact families (where no divorce has occurred). The purpose of the study is to gather some important information about how parents in these families relate to each other and about how their relationship affects their children. This information will be useful to parents, teachers, and other professionals for understanding and/or working with families.

As a parent, your participation will involve completing a few short forms, which will take approximately one half hour of your time. All of the information will be completely confidential. If you are interested in hearing more about this project, I will be pleased to contact you personally with additional information.

Your willingness to participate will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Joan I. Wood

Please fill in the information below and return in the enclosed self-addressed envelope, or feel free to call me at 459-5096.

-----  
I am interested in hearing more about the research project.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

APPENDIX B

**PRAIRIE SCHOOL**

SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 96  
1530 BRANDYWYN LANE  
BUFFALO GROVE, ILLINOIS 60090

CINDY KALOGEROPOULOS  
PRINCIPAL

PHONE:  
312 634-3144

March 12, 1985

Dear Parents:

Joan Wood is a doctoral student at Loyola University and a parent in District 96. I have approved her request to ask for parent and student volunteers from our school to serve as subjects for her dissertation study. I am sure that Mrs. Wood will be most appreciative of your help. Please call me if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,



Cindy Kalogeropoulos  
Principal

CK:av

APPENDIX C

COOK COUNTY  
COMMUNITY CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 21

999 WEST DUNDEE ROAD

YOUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS... THERE IS NO BETTER PLACE TO LEARN!

WHEELING, ILLINOIS 60090

312 537-8270

BOARD OF EDUCATION

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Dr. John S. Barner  
Superintendent  
David J. Kroeze  
Assistant Superintendent  
Instructional Services

March 13, 1985

Dear Parents,

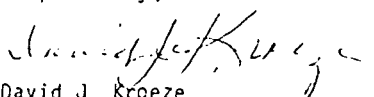
Mrs. Joan Wood is conducting a doctoral dissertation at Loyola University. She has asked our district to participate in this study. After reviewing it, we believe the findings from this study could be informative and beneficial to the field of education and our district. We have given approval for Mrs. Wood to gather information (in 2nd-4th grades) from our district. Hence the attached information.

I want to clarify that no parent or child is obligated in any way to participate in this study. Likewise, no information will be given on your child without your express permission and involvement.

We ask that you take a few moments to read the attached information and decide whether this study interests you. If you are not interested you will not be imposed on any further.

Thank you for your help and consideration.

Respectfully,

  
David J. Kroeze  
Assistant Superintendent  
for Instruction

DJK:fga



## APPENDIX D

## LOYOLA UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

*Water Tower Campus \* 820 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60611 \* (312) 670-3030*

Dear:

Enclosed is a copy of a letter which was sent to all parents of 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grade students at \_\_\_\_\_ School. This letter briefly describes a research project which I am coordinating under the auspices of Loyola University of Chicago. The purpose of the project is to gather some important information about the co-parental relationship in both single-parent and two-parent families. Your ex-spouse has agreed to participate in this project and has given us permission to contact you.

We we are asking for your cooperation in filling out three short questionnaires. These are identical to the questionnaires already completed by your ex-spouse. For our data to be as accurate and complete as possible, we need the perspectives of both parents, and we will be very grateful for your participation.

I have enclosed the three forms which we would like you to complete. I have also provided a return envelope. If you have any questions, please contact me at: 459-5096.

Sincerely,

Joan I. Wood

## APPENDIX E

## PARENT INFORMATION

---

Name of parent

---

Name of parent

---

Address  

---

---

Address  

---

---

Phone

---

Phone

---

Marital status

---

Marital status

If parents divorced/separated, length of time since separation \_\_\_\_\_

## CHILD INFORMATION

---

Name of child

---

Age

---

Sex

---

Name of school

---

Grade

---

Name of teacher

APPENDIX F

## Consent Form

I, \_\_\_\_\_, state that I am over 18 years of age and that I wish to participate in a program of research being conducted by Joan Wood, who has fully explained to me the procedures involved and the need for the research; has informed me that I may withdraw from participation at any time without prejudice; has offered to answer any inquiries which I may make concerning the procedures to be followed; and has informed me that I will be given a copy of this consent form.

I freely and voluntarily consent to participate in the research project.

---

(Signature of Investigator

---

(Signature of Volunteer

---

(Date

---

(Date)

APPENDIX G

## Parental Consent Form

I, the parent or guardian of \_\_\_\_\_,  
a minor \_\_\_\_\_ years of age, consent to his/her participation  
in a research project being conducted by Joan Wood under the  
auspices of Loyola University of Chicago. I understand that  
my child's participation will involve assessment on the  
Walker Problem Behavior Checklist by \_\_\_\_\_.  
child's teacher

This assessment is without risk and is part of a  
program of research on family relationships.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of parent/guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



APPENDIX H

## LOYOLA UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

*Walker Tower Campus \* 820 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60611 \* (312) 676-3030*

May 6, 1985

Dear

Enclosed are Walker Problem Behavior Checklists and release forms related to my research on the coparental relationship and its impact on children's school adjustment. I have also enclosed return envelopes.

I appreciate your participation in my study. I know that your involvement represents a significant involvement of time and energy. I look forward to sharing my data and conclusions with you.

If you have any questions, please contact me at:  
459-5096

Sincerely,

Joan Wood

P. S. Some additional releases and checklists may be forthcoming.

APPENDIX I

0.27. Which of the following are shared, that is discussed, planned or talked about between you and your (former) spouse?

1=always; 2=usually; 3=sometimes; 4=rarely; 5=never; 6=doesn't apply;

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. making major decisions regarding your children's lives.<br>EXAMPLES _____<br>_____      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| b. making day to day decisions regarding your children's lives.<br>EXAMPLES _____<br>_____ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| c. discussing personal problems.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| d. discussing school and/or medical problems.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| e. planning special events in your children's lives.                                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| f. talking about your children's accomplishments and progress.                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| g. talking about problems you are having in raising the children.                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| h. discussing how the children are adjusting to the divorce.                               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| i. discussing problems you are having with the co-parenting relationship.                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| j. discussing finances in regard to your children.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

APPENDIX J

Q.31. Tell me the answer that best reflects your thinking about your parenting relationship with your (former) spouse at the present time.

	always	usu- ally	some- times	rarely	never	DK/NA
a. when you and your (former) spouse discuss parenting issues how often does an argument result?	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. how often is the underlying atmosphere one of hostility or anger?	1	2	3	4	5	6
c. how often is the conversation stressful or tense?	1	2	3	4	5	6
d. if your (former) spouse has needed to make a change in visiting arrangements, do you go out of your way to accommodate?	1	2	3	4	5	6
e. does your (former) spouse go out of the way to accommodate any changes you need to make?	1	2	3	4	5	6
f. do you feel that your (former) spouse understands and is supportive of your special needs as a parent?	1	2	3	4	5	6
g. do you and your (former) spouse have basic differences of opinion about issues related to child rearing?	1	2	3	4	5	6
h. when you need help regarding the children, do you seek it from your (former) spouse?	1	2	3	4	5	6
i. would you say that <u>your (former) spouse</u> is a resource to you in raising the children?	1	2	3	4	5	6
j. would you say that <u>you are</u> a resource to your (former) spouse in raising the children?	1	2	3	4	5	6

## APPENDIX K

Indicate your thinking about your current relationship  
with your (former) spouse.

	Very True						Not At All True
My (former) spouse is primarily interested in his/her own welfare.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
There are times when my (former) spouse cannot be trusted.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My (former) spouse is perfectly honest and truthful with me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel that I can trust my (former) spouse completely	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My (former) spouse is truly sincere in his/her promises.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel that my (former) spouse does not show me enough consideration	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My (former) spouse treats me fairly and justly.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel that my (former) spouse can be counted on to help me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



APPENDIX L

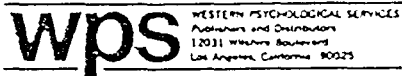
# Walker Problem Behavior Identification Checklist

Revised 1983

Hill M. Walker, Ph.D.

Published by

FEMALE



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: M F Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Classroom: \_\_\_\_\_

Rated by: \_\_\_\_\_ Position of Rater: \_\_\_\_\_

### INSTRUCTIONS

Please read each statement and circle the number to the right of the statement if you have observed that behavior in the child's response pattern during the last 2-month period. If you have NOT observed the behavior described in the statement during this period, do NOT circle any numbers.

**Example:**

	Scale					
1. Has temper tantrums . . . . .	<table border="1" style="display: inline-table; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20px; height: 20px; text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="width: 20px; height: 20px; text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="width: 20px; height: 20px; text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="width: 20px; height: 20px; text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="width: 20px; height: 20px; text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5		
2. Has no friends . . . . .	<table border="1" style="display: inline-table; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20px; height: 20px; text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="width: 20px; height: 20px; text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="width: 20px; height: 20px; text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="width: 20px; height: 20px; text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="width: 20px; height: 20px; text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5		

In the example, statement 1 is considered to be present and statement 2 is considered to be absent.

### PROFILE ANALYSIS CHART

Children	Scale I: Antisocial			Scale II: Attention Deficit			Scale III: Conduct Disorder			Scale IV: Delinquency			Children with 2 or more
	Prob	Comm	Comm	Prob	Comm	Comm	Prob	Comm	Comm	Prob	Comm	Comm	
1	30	12-18	17-24										
2	20	24	18										
3	30	20	18										
4	32	18	16										
5	22	14	11										
6	21	17	12										
7	20	16	11										
8	18	13	11										
9	18	14	11										
10	14	13	8										
11	13	12	8										
12	14	11	8										
13	13	10	8										
14	11	9	8										
15	11	9	8										
16	10	9	8										
17	9	8	8										
18	9	8	8										
19	8	8	8										
20	8	8	8										
21	8	8	8										
22	8	8	8										
23	8	8	8										
24	8	8	8										
25	8	8	8										
26	8	8	8										
27	8	8	8										
28	8	8	8										
29	8	8	8										
30	8	8	8										

	SCALE				
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Complains about others' unfairness and/or discrimination towards her.	.3				.2
2. Is listless and continually tired.			.1		
3. Does not conform to limits on her own without control from others.				.1	
4. Becomes hysterical, upset, or angry when things do not go her way.	.3				
5. Comments that no one understands her.			.2		
6. Perfectionistic; meticulous about having everything exactly right.				.3	
7. Will destroy or take apart something she has made rather than show it or ask to have it displayed.					.4
8. Other children act as if she were taboo or tainted.			.1		
9. Has difficulty concentrating for any length of time.			.2		
10. Is overactive, restless, and/or continually shifting body positions.					.2
11. Apologizes repeatedly for herself and/or her behavior.	.1				
12. Distorts the truth by making statements contrary to fact.			.1		
13. Underachieving; performs below her demonstrated ability level.			.2		
14. Disturbs other children: teasing, provoking fights, interrupting others.		.1			
15. Tries to avoid calling attention to herself.	.2				
16. Makes distrustful or suspicious remarks about actions of others toward her.					.3
17. Reacts to stressful situations or changes in routine with general body aches, head or stomach aches, nausea.	.1				
18. Argues and must have the last word in verbal exchanges.			.1		
19. Approaches new tasks and situations with an "I can't do it" response.					.3
20. Has nervous tics: muscle-twitching, eye-blinking, nail-biting, hand-wringing.	.1				
21. Habitually rejects the school experience through actions or comments.					.1
22. Has enuresis (wets bed).				.4	
23. Utters nonsense syllables and/or babbles to herself.			.1		
24. Continually seeks attention.				.2	
25. Comments that nobody likes her.				.4	
26. Repeats one idea, thought, or activity over and over.	.2				
27. Has temper tantrums.				.3	
28. Refers to herself as dumb, stupid, or incapable.		.2			
29. Does not engage in group activities.	.2				
30. When teased or irritated by other children, takes out her frustration(s) on another inappropriate person or thing.	.4				
31. Has rapid mood shifts: depressed one moment, manic the next.	.1				
32. Does not obey until threatened with punishment.					.1
33. Complains of nightmares, bad dreams.				.3	
34. Expresses concern about being lonely, unhappy.	.3				
35. Openly strikes back with angry behavior to teasing of other children.					.1
36. Expresses concern about something terrible or horrible happening to her.		.4			
37. Has no friends.	.1				
38. Must have approval for tasks attempted or completed.	.1				
39. Displays physical aggression toward objects or persons.				.1	
40. Is hypercritical of herself.			.1		
41. Does not complete tasks attempted.		.3			
42. Doesn't protest when others hurt, tease, or criticize her.				.3	
43. Shuns or avoids heterosexual activities.					.1
44. Steals things from other children.		.4			
45. Does not initiate relationships with other children.	.1				
46. Reacts with defiance to instructions or commands.					.1
47. Weeps or cries without provocation.				.1	
48. Stutters, stammers, or blocks on saying words.					.1
49. Easily distracted away from the task at hand by ordinary classroom stimuli (minor movements of others, noises, etc.).			.1		
50. Frequently stares blankly into space and is unaware of her surroundings when doing so.			.1		

=  +  +  +  +

Total      Scale 1      Scale 2      Scale 3      Scale 4      Scale 5

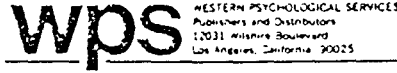
APPENDIX M

# walker Problem Behavior Identification Checklist

Revised 1983

Hill M. Walker, Ph.D.

Published by



MALE

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: M F Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Classroom: \_\_\_\_\_

Rated by: \_\_\_\_\_ Position of Rater: \_\_\_\_\_

## INSTRUCTIONS

Please read each statement and circle the number to the right of the statement if you have observed that behavior in the child's response pattern during the last 2-month period. If you have NOT observed the behavior described in the statement during this period, do NOT circle any numbers.

Example:

- 1. Has temper tantrums .....  1  2  3  4  5
- 2. Has no friends .....  1  2  3  4  5

In the example, statement 1 is considered to be present and statement 2 is considered to be absent.

## PROFILE ANALYSIS CHART

F.Scores Over 100 100	Scale I: Anxiety/Out			Scale II: Withdrawn			Scale III: Disruptive			Scale IV: Depressed/Peer Rejection			Scale V: Inattention			Total Score			F.Scores Over 100 100	
	Prob. 6	Grade 1-3	Grade 4-6	Prob. 6	Grade 1-3	Grade 4-6	Prob. 6	Grade 1-3	Grade 4-6	Prob. 6	Grade 1-3	Grade 4-6	Prob. 6	Grade 1-3	Grade 4-6	Prob. 6	Grade 1-3	Grade 4-6		
100																				
95																				
90																				
85																				
80																				
75																				
70																				
65																				
60																				
55																				
50																				
45																				
40																				
35																				
30																				
25																				
20																				
15																				
10																				
5																				
0																				

Raw Score

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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Printed in U.S.A.

	SCALE				
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Complains about others' unfairness and/or discrimination towards him.	3				2
2. Is listless and continually tired.			1		
3. Does not conform to limits on his own without control from others.				1	
4. Becomes hysterical, upset, or angry when things do not go his way.	3				
5. Comments that no one understands him.			2		
6. Perfectionistic: meticulous about having everything exactly right.				3	
7. Will destroy or take apart something he has made rather than show it or ask to have it displayed.					4
8. Other children act as if he were taboo or tainted.			1		
9. Has difficulty concentrating for any length of time.			2		
10. Is overactive, restless, and/or continually shifting body positions.					2
11. Apologizes repeatedly for himself and/or his behavior.					
12. Distorts the truth by making statements contrary to fact.	1				
13. Underachieving: performs below his demonstrated ability level.			1		
14. Disturbs other children: teasing, provoking fights, interrupting others.			2		
15. Tries to avoid calling attention to himself.		1			
16. Makes distrustful or suspicious remarks about actions of others toward him.	2				
17. Reacts to stressful situations or changes in routine with general body aches, head or stomach aches, nausea.					3
18. Argues and must have the last word in verbal exchanges.	1				
19. Approaches new tasks and situations with an "I can't do it" response.			1		
20. Has nervous tics: muscle-twitching, eye-blinking, nail-biting, hand-wringing.					3
21. Habitually rejects the school experience through actions or comments.	1				
22. Has enuresis (wets bed).				4	1
23. Utters nonsense syllables and/or babbles to himself.			1		
24. Continually seeks attention.				2	
25. Comments that nobody likes him.				4	
26. Repeats one idea, thought, or activity over and over.	2				
27. Has temper tantrums.				3	
28. Refers to himself as dumb, stupid, or incapable.					
29. Does not engage in group activities.		2			
30. When teased or irritated by other children, takes out his frustration(s) on another inappropriate person or thing.	2				
31. Has rapid mood shifts: depressed one moment, manic the next.	4				
32. Does not obey until threatened with punishment.	1				
33. Complains of nightmares, bad dreams.					1
34. Expresses concern about being lonely, unhappy.				3	
35. Openly strikes back with angry behavior to teasing of other children.	3				
36. Expresses concern about something terrible or horrible happening to him.					1
37. Has no friends.		4			
38. Must have approval for tasks attempted or completed.	1				
39. Displays physical aggression toward objects or persons.	1				
40. Is hypercritical of himself.				1	
41. Does not complete tasks attempted.			1		
42. Doesn't protest when others hurt, tease, or criticize him.		3			
43. Shuns or avoids heterosexual activities.				3	
44. Steals things from other children.					1
45. Does not initiate relationships with other children.		4			
46. Reacts with defiance to instructions or commands.	1				
47. Weeps or cries without provocation.					1
48. Stutters, stammers, or blocks on saying words.				1	
49. Easily distracted away from the task at hand by ordinary classroom stimuli (minor movements of others, noises, etc.).			1		
50. Frequently stares blankly into space and is unaware of his surroundings when doing so.			1		

=  +  +  +  +   
 Total Score      Scale 1 Score      Scale 2 Score      Scale 3 Score      Scale 4 Score      Scale 5 Score

APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by Joan Wood has been read and approved by the following committee:

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Dr. Manuel S. Silverman  
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Dr. Todd Hoover  
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Professor & Chairman, Counselor Education, Northeastern  
Illinois University

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

March 20, 1987  
Date

Gloria J. Lewis  
Director's Signature