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The Effects of Divorce and Associated Stressors on Children and Adolescents

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## Abstract

Four factors were looked at to determine how children of divorce are affected by their parents divorce. The Family Environment Scale (FES) assessed family environment, Social Support Scale for children (SSSC) assessed social support, and the Life Events Checklist (LEC) assessed appraisal of the stressors shown to co-occur with divorce. The Behavioral Assessment Scale for Children, second edition (BASC-2; parent and self-reports) measured the criterion of this study, behavioral and emotional functioning. The sample consisted of 91 children and their parents from the Mankato area public schools. Hierarchical multiple regressions indicated a main effect of the appraisal of co-occurring stressors on participants' emotional symptoms scores suggesting that the greater the amount of stress experienced the lower the emotional functioning regardless of divorce status. Results did not support the hypothesis that family environment, social support, and appraisal of stressors are protective factors. Nothing indicated that children who experienced divorce were any different than their peers who did not, suggesting that any child who has experienced high levels of stress will likely display functional difficulty.

### Professional Biographies

Sarah K. Sifers completed her doctorate in clinical child psychology at the University of Kansas, subsequently completing a postdoctoral internship at Family Therapy Institute Midwest. She has ten years of experience working in a variety of therapeutic settings with children and their families. She is currently an assistant professor at Minnesota State University Mankato, where she teaches classes on child and adolescent development and clinical psychology. Her research interests include resilience in children, particularly family environment and spirituality, and ethics in psychology, specifically cultural competence and research ethics. She has presented and published several journal articles on these topics and a textbook, *Abnormal Psychology*.

Aaron Brownlee just graduated with his bachelor's degree in psychology, with honors, from Minnesota State University, Mankato; where he will be continuing his education in the clinical psychology master's program. His research interests are in child resiliency, especially how movement may help to develop positive protective factors. He has presented at both undergraduate and professional conferences.

Since the first court ruling, divorce statistics have been on the rise. Divorce currently affects between 33 and 50 percent of American couples (Amato, 2003; Dykeman, 2003). The prevalence of divorce has led to concern about the children who experience divorce. Many of these children are assumed to be users of illicit substances (Simons, Lin, Gordon, Conger, & Lorenz, 1999), have low academic achievement, be more likely to have a teen pregnancy, suffer from social isolation, and exhibit externalizing and internalizing behavior problems (Hipke, Wolchik, Sandler, & Braver, 2002). Additionally, there are assumptions of children with divorced parents being more likely to drop out of school or fall victim to adult mental health problems (Hipke et al, 2002) or be angry, demanding, noncompliant, lack self-regulation, have low social responsibility and diminished achievement (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 1999; Nair & Murray, 2005). How, despite these observations by past researchers on the public's opinion regarding children of divorce, do some overcome tragic traps in development and become well-adjusted contributors to society?

To answer such questions what occurs during divorce must first be identified. The first thing to note is that divorce is not a single, static event, but a series of transitions that modify the lives of the children it touches (Hines, 1997). The greatest realizations to make when studying the effects of divorce is that the series of events experienced by the children is never the same experience as other children; and children never respond to their experiences the same way. Due to divorce and its various life-altering side effects being so closely related, it is important to observe these side effects to determine which factors pose the greatest difficulties in development. More specifically, society must identify what leads to difficulties of some children of divorce and the steps that can be taken to minimize such negative effects. However, not all

children suffer the assumed negative outcomes of divorce (Hetherington, 1989; Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan; 1999; Kelly & Emery, 2003).

In fact, it is estimated by Amato (2003) that between 75 and 90 percent of children who experience parental divorce lead lives that are indistinguishable from their peers. For a select few, divorce even seems to have benefited their development. These children appear to mature faster, are more independent, more responsible, and better able to make decisions than children in non-divorced families (Hines, 1997). Often the development of such characteristics fosters relationship development that has a beneficial effect on the stressed parent-child relationship. Should the parent-child relationship undergo a state of reparation, it often allows for an increase in the capability of maintaining other close relationships because the child is able to form a more secure attachment than might have been possible without such experience. This means that children have overcome the negative effects of their parents' divorce and are now well-adjusted and will no longer be disadvantaged due to a situation over which they had little control. Specific variables past research indicate impact a child of divorce include: positive relationship with parents, global social support (Booth & Amato, 2001), and primary appraisal of the divorce (Amato, 2003).

### *Family Environment*

There are four factors that appear to ease children's transitions into the divorced family: family environment, social support, appraisal, and events that co-occur with divorce. First, positive family environment may foster the ability to cope with the divorce because it allows for an open, accepting environment where the child can explore and express his or her feelings about the divorce as well as other developmental transitions he or she may be experiencing (Hines, 1997). Support within the family system may be provided by parents, siblings, or other members

of the extended family. Family environment is defined in terms of the degree of personal growth, nature of interpersonal relationships, and organization of the family unit (Sifers, 1997).

Moos and Moos (1994) defined these concepts further in their measure of family environment. Regarding family relationships, the components highlighted that are most relevant to understanding the impact of divorce are aspects of the family relationships: cohesion, expressiveness, and conflict. Cohesion is considered to consist of levels of commitment and support; expressiveness is family members' direct ability to express their feelings; and conflict is the presence of openly expressed anger and interpersonal conflict (Moos & Moos, 1994).

Dreman and Ronen-Eliav (1997) pointed out that higher levels of cohesion and adaptability should be positively related to adjustment. When expressiveness is allowed it provides an open environment for exploration (Hines, 1997), possibly fostering positive outlets for emotions experienced by children. Where as minimized conflict appears to be helpful in overcoming life transitions (Farber, Felner, & Primavera, 1985).

Personal growth, independence and intellectual-cultural orientation appear to be particularly relevant to divorced families. Independence was defined as the ability to act assertively and be self-sufficient and intellectual-cultural orientation looks at involvement in intellectual and cultural activities (Moos & Moos, 1994). Independence, as social responsibility and freedom from the influence of others, were found to be factors of resilience (Chen & George, 2005). Youth who engaged in intellectual activities, such as attempting to determine how divorce had occurred, were shown to be more resilient than those who had not (Chen & George, 2005).

The most relevant domain of system maintenance is exertion of control. Moos and Moos (1994) consider control to be a set of rules and procedures for the family unit. Children's



adjustment is related to positive parenting environment, which includes firm and consistent control (Chen & George, 2005).

Past research indicates that higher levels of cohesion and adaptability are positively related to adjustment (Dreman & Ronan-Eliav, 1997). A sense of being able to express oneself and minimized conflict have been found to be helpful elements in the family to aid in overcoming such a life transition. Farber et al. (1985) stated that family cohesion and conflict proved to be the most salient predictors of adaptive outcomes; in families that were less cohesive and those that were more conflict-filled children reported higher levels of anxiety. The same study provided a unique note that individuals who sought out family members more frequently for support in dealing with transitions were more anxious (Farber et al., 1985). When children are exposed to parental conflict it does more than provides a behavior to model, it also minimizes the amount of support and communication that children are exposed to. This lack of support increases the chances that children will fall victim to the negative effects of divorce because parents are not able to be emotionally open to a child's needs (Chen & George, 2005).

Chen and George (2005) also expressed that social responsibility and freedom from the influence of others appear to be elements of resilience. This means that increased independence and social involvement will likely foster an improved ability to overcome the possible negative effects of divorce. They also stated that children who made attempts to determine how a divorce occurred were found to be more resilient (Chen & George, 2005).

Research has noted that family conflict in intact and divorced families is correlated with reports of less cohesion, organization, and expressiveness (Kurtz & Derevensky, 1993). It would then seem that when high levels of conflict present within the family it is more difficult to provide an environment of support that would allow for self expression. High conflict and high

control scores have been found to be positively correlated with depression. This is possibly due to the increase in stressors experienced by the children in such situations (Sifers, 1997).

Combining elements of Farber et al. (1985) and Kurtz and Derevensky's (1993) studies suggests that the limited ability of the family to provide support may press an individual to seek support elsewhere, which would be more beneficial. Furthermore, children who perceived having more support from within the family did report lower levels of anxiety (Farber, et al., 1985; Kurtz & Derevensky, 1993). This leads into the investigation of the role of social support in coping with parental divorce.

### *Social Support*

A second variable shown to minimize the negative effects of divorce is the presence of global social support; this is any type of support that may be offered to the child within or outside the family. This support is most likely offered by friends, peers, school officials, and other adults in the community. In a study based on family stress and behavioral problems, Wasserstein and La Greca (1996) found that children viewed friends as good providers of companionship and social support. This is different for less intimate peer relationships. Classmates had no moderating effects for children dealing with parental discord (Wasserstein & La Greca, 1996), possibly due to their limited exposure to the individual. Hetherington (1989) asserted a similar perspective, stating that utilizing friends who had supportive family environments as an escape from their own family stresses was quite beneficial to children coping with parental divorce.

An interested, supportive adult in the community also has been shown to act as a buffer against the development of a child's behavioral problems (Hetherington, 1989). This is most likely because children then have a consistent, and often same-sex, role model that may have

otherwise been lost due to divorce. This adult may, in some way, take the role of a non-custodial parent whose importance had been eroded in the mind of the child due to the absence of that parent (Kelly & Emery, 2003). This role may best be filled by an adult from school or an extracurricular activity. It is evident that social support is a significant contributor to the well-being of a child post-divorce, but the context of that support must be positive in order to combat the probability that a child will develop behavioral problems (Hetherington, 1989) or become involved in an antisocial or delinquent peer group (Simons et al., 1999).

### *Appraisal*

A third variable possibly effecting how a child copes with parental divorce is his or her view, or appraisal, of the divorce. Evidence suggests a child who appraised his or her parents' marital dissolution as a positive event often overcomes the negative effects of divorce better than a child who appraises the divorce negatively (Amato, 2003). According to Sheets, Sandler, and West (1996), there are three components that affect situation appraisal. These are goal relevance, or the reason the child should care; goal congruence, the child's view of the event as positive or negative; and the type of ego involvement, or the way in which children view themselves as being involved. The child's view may be highly affected by the amount of stress parents place on the child by utilizing him or her as leverage in arguments or pressuring the child to side with one parent or the other. A fear of this type of situation can predict depression and deviant behaviors (Sheets et al., 1996).

Evidence appears contradictory regarding how stress effects a child's appraisal of divorce. Some researchers have suggested children who are exposed to a lot of pre-divorce parental disagreement are apt to have stress-related issues that carry over after the divorce, but they are more likely to have a positive appraisal of the divorce (Simons et al., 1999). The

alternate view states that if a child is unaware of the distress in a parent's relationship, he or she is apt to suffer greatly upon learning of the divorce because it would be unexpected and unwanted, thus instilling a negative appraisal of the divorce (Amato, 2003).

### *Divorce-related Stress*

A fourth variable that impacts children's adjustment to divorce are the stressors that co-occur with the divorce. A sudden change in the family often impacts how a child copes with divorce. This is unfortunate because children share the same losses as parents do post-divorce, thus limiting the amount of potential positive influence provided by a parent. The first loss that appears to impact a child is that of finances (Wolfinger, Kowaleski-Jones & Smith, 2003). Due to this loss of income, many children suffer from being removed from a familiar environment to one that is unknown and likely in a lower socioeconomic area. This transition may affect appraisal or the amount of social support available to the child after the divorce. Due to limited resources, this new environment also may have ineffective schooling and well established antisocial subcultures that allow for the reinforcement of delinquent behaviors (Simons et al., 1999).

A lack of financial independence and a division of family means children often lose material objects, which may contribute to their negative appraisal of the divorce (Sheets et al., 1996). Unfortunately, the idea of joint physical custody, living in two separate environments, may not be the answer to this problem. The child may be required to part with objects of comfort and familiarity when transitioning between these living environments. This may cause an increase in the level of stress experienced by the child regarding visitation by the parent that is requiring they part with the object of comfort (Sheet et al., 1996). This is another potential situation that affects the child's appraisal.

### *Hypothesis*

This study has four hypotheses. 1.) Limited exposure to divorce related stressors will foster fewer internalized and externalized behavioral symptoms, fewer emotional symptoms, as well as increased adaptive skills. 2.) Being surrounded by a positive family environment will minimize internalized and externalized behavioral symptoms, fewer emotional symptoms, and an increase in adaptive skills. 3.) Positive social support will minimize internalized and externalized behavioral symptoms, fewer emotional symptoms, and an increase in adaptive skills. 4.) Positive appraisal of the divorce and most of the associated events will minimize internalized and externalized behavioral symptoms, fewer emotional symptoms, and an increased in adaptive skills. Experiencing any of these situations independently or in conjunction should facilitate improved coping and behavioral outcomes.

### Methods

#### *Participants*

There were a total of 91 child-parent pairs from an upper Midwestern town. The ethnic composition of the participants was 94.6% Non-Latino Caucasian, 4.3% multi-racial, and 1.1% Native American children. The community's ethnic distribution of the was 92.55% as white, 1.9% African American, 2.81% Asian, 2.22% Latino, 1.36% multi-racial, .34% Native American, and .94% of other ethnicities (Mankato, MN, 2007). Participants' families earned an average of \$83,464 a year and ranged from \$10,000 to \$300,000. Median family income for the city has been stated to be \$47,297 (Mankato, MN, 2007). The sample population is fairly representative of the community population regarding ethnicity. However, participants were of a higher socioeconomic status than the population on average.

Children were between the ages of 7 and 14, with a mean age of 10. The gender distribution was 53.3% girls and 46.7% boys. The parents that participated in the study were not as evenly distributed with 87.6% of adult participants being women.

To identify whether participants had undergone a parental divorce their parents marital status was extrapolated the information from the demographic questionnaire (see appendix 3). Families that did not list a mom and a dad in the home were assigned to the divorced group. All 91 children lived with their mothers, just under half (44%) with a father, 6.6% with a step-father (in divorced group), and 11% resided with a non-family member in addition to their mothers.

The city's household makeup stated that 23.6% of the population had children under the age of 18, 36.7% were married couples, 8.8% were female householders with no male present, 51% lived with a non-family member, and the average family size was 2.9 members (Mankato, MN, 2007).

It appears our study included a greater number of non-father residences than the community as a whole. Our sample also contained a smaller number of non-family member residences than represented in the community.

### *Measures*

*Behavioral Assessment Scale for Children (BASC-2).* The BASC-2 (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2004) was administered to both the parent and child to assess emotional and behavioral functioning. Four subscales of the measure that were outlined by its creators were used. This was done because the scale has multiple reports which aided in the accuracy of the study, as well as for a more complete understanding of the child. The emotional symptoms index and personal adjustment indexes were taken from the child report measure. Additionally the behavioral symptoms index and adaptive skills index were taken from the parent report. In past

research, the parent report scales showed an internal reliability between .70 and .95, which is moderate to very high. Test construct validity is stated to be between .30 and .84. The range of validity in regard to other measures is attributed to differences in construct definition. The self-report version of the measure has a reliability of .63 to .96. The construct validity is stated to be between .29 and .86, again this variation is attributed to differences in construct definition (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2004).

The behavioral and adaptive indexes were of primary concern in this study. By utilizing these subscales it was possible to assess children's adaptive skills, behavioral symptoms, internalizing and externalizing issues, school problems, emotional symptoms, personal adjustment, aggressive behavior, anxiety, conduct problems, depression, social skills, relationships, locus of control, and other confounds relating to divorce. The child measure was utilized because of its greater ability to determine personal adjustment of the children in our sample, since children have been shown to be better able to evaluate and report their internalizing problems than their parents (Nauta, Scholing, Rapee, Abbott, Spence, & Waters, 2004). The parent report for the BASC-2 was utilized because of its greater ability to assess the child's externalizing behavioral symptoms and adaptive skills because parents' better evaluate externalizing behaviors (Nauta et al., 2004).

*Life Events Checklist (LEC)*. The LEC (Johnson & McCutcheon, 1980) was utilized to assess stressors commonly experienced by children of divorce. It asks participants if they had experienced a certain event in the last 12 months, if the event was good or bad, and offers a 4 point Likert Scale from 0 to 3 to indicate how good or bad the event was (0 being not bad at all and 3 being really bad). There were 44 questions in the measure ranging from divorce to friendship issues. There were also two additional questions left open should an event have

occurred that was not presented in the measure but the participant felt a need to mention. Based on prior research nine events that have been shown to co-occur with divorce were selected for comparison: moving, changing schools, experiencing divorce, increased parental conflict, parent separation, limited contact with a parent, parent getting a new job, gaining a new step-parent, change in family income, and losing a close friend. The reliability of the LEC has been stated to be .72. Its construct validity appeared to be linked with stress-related measures in other dependant scales, but there has been no score given to describe the validity of the measure (Brand & Johnson, 1982). Presence or absence of the events and event valence (positive or negative perception of the event) were utilized from this measure.

*Social Support Scale for Children (SSSC)*. Social support perceived by children was measured by use of the SSSC (Harter, 1985). It is another self-report measure composed of 24 items that assessed the presence or absence of support from parents, teachers, classmates, and close friends. The teacher support subscale and close friend support subscales, as outlined by the authors, were used from this measure. In order to discourage social desirable responding, this test has two statements that are read to the child. The child then informs the research assistant which statement is most true for them. In the final step, the child identifies if that statement was really true or sort of true for him or her. The consistency of this measure has been stated to range from .72 to .88(Harter, 1985).

*Family Environment Scale (FES)*. The FES (Moos & Moos, 1994) was completed by a parent and consisted of 90 true/false items that assessed family relationships, personal growth, and system maintenance. This measure is useful in determining the type of environment in which the children live. The family relationships subscale, as it was outlined by the measure's authors, was utilized. Internal reliability of the measure was rated between .61 and .78, which is moderate, and



construct validity has been stated to be adequate. There is some dispute over the exact constructs this measure should correlate with; some inconsistencies have been shown across studies (Moos & Moos, 1994).

### *Procedures*

Participants were recruited by fliers that were distributed in the local elementary and middle schools. These fliers were given to children from grades three to nine, thus allowing us to reach the target population of children and adolescents ranging in ages from 8 to 14. Participants, once data collection was complete, were reimbursed for their time and efforts by receiving \$5 that was funded to the project through a grant written for a larger study on child resilience.

All measures were administered in a quiet, comfortable room at the child's school by trained research assistants. After a parent or guardian consented (appendix 1) to the research in the presence of the child, the guardian was given the demographic form (appendix 3), BASC-2 Parent Report Scale, and the FES to complete in a separate location from the child. Children ages 12 to 14 then read the research assent form aloud to a research assistant and verbally stated they understood what the research was about and signed the assent form (appendix 2). The assent form was read to children from age 8 to 11 by a research assistant. Upon signing the assent to participate in the research the data collection began. Children under the age of twelve were read each question in the self report version of the BASC-2, LEC (appendix 4), and the SSSC as a research assistant recorded their answers. Children age twelve and over read the assent form aloud as a measure of the child's capability of self-administering the measures. If the child was able to read the assent form fluently, he or she then read and completed each measure with a research assistant present to explain the directions and answer any questions the child may have had. If an adequate reading level was not demonstrated, the child administration procedure was

implemented. All measures were administered in a different order to combat test fatigue and ordering effects.

## Results

A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to evaluate whether social support, family environment, appraisal, and divorce related stress act as risk or protective factors for children experiencing divorce. The scores used were taken directly from the subscales of the measures that were utilized as they were written (see table 1). In the first step main effects were entered, and in the second step main effect were reentered as well as the interaction effects. However, interaction terms were not centered. The results indicated a significant main effect for stressful life events; as stressful life events increased emotional functionality decreased (see table 2). In an attempt to determine which, if any, stressors caused the greatest effect on behavioral functionality a second regression analysis was conducted. This analysis failed to identify any single stressor as creating an interaction effect.

Similar regression analyses using child report adaptive skills and parent report emotional symptoms index skills and adaptive skills did not indicate any significant main effects or interaction effects.

## Discussion

As seems quite intuitive, the results indicated encountering distressing experiences has negative implications for children, regardless of their parental marital status. Post hoc t-tests comparing the two sample populations, children who experienced divorced and those who did not, indicated that there was no significant difference between these groups in behavioral symptoms, adaptive skills, number of stressors, or valence of stressors experienced. This finding does however, coincide with other research that states or alludes to children who experienced

divorce being indistinguishable from their peers who had not experienced parental divorce regarding behavioral symptoms or number and appraisal of life stressors (Amato, 2003; Hetherington, 1989; Hetherington and Stanley-Hagan, 1999; Kelly and Emery, 2003). Thus, it could be that the level of functioning for children with divorced parents is influenced by other variables that are similar to their peers from intact homes rather than divorce-specific variables. This study did not control for time since divorce, so it also could be that the children who did not experience significant divorce-related stress had adjusted to the divorce and were functioning accordingly.

Another possibility for why no evidence indicating divorce induces disruption in children's lives is the nature of the divorce children in the sample experienced. It is reported that when associated with increased stress, conflict, and adversity children and adolescents who experienced divorce show more problems than in non-divorced families; even those that are high in conflict (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagen, 1999). Furthermore, divorce is becoming a more typical social experience (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagen, 1999) meaning that it is less stigmatizing and perhaps less stressful for children.

Sifers (1997) noted some considerations that may explain why family environment and social support were not found to have an effect in this study; family environment and social support may actually be additional stressors (Sifers, 1997). Having positive family environment while experiencing parental divorce means that what had been an asset for a child may now be a source of distress. Additionally, friends can be a source of social support and still encourage antisocial or otherwise maladaptive behavior (Sifers, 1997).

When considering the presence or absence of protective factors in family environment and social support individual child appraisal plays a role (Sheets et al., 1996; Jackson, Sifers,

Warren, & Velasquez, 2003). It has been suggested that children who interpret stressful events positively may be more likely to adapt effectively after the event; this has applied to studies that compared appraisal with available support as well (Jackson et al., 2003). These findings, in conjunction with our results of non-divorced or divorced groups experiencing any difference, implied there is another event which fostered resiliency in the sample children who experienced divorce in this region that was not measured.

### *Limitations*

The current study faced a few limitations. First, the way in which children who experienced divorce were identified was not ideal. The current sample was not directly questioned about having experienced divorce. This is due to a larger data being used from a larger project. The demographic questionnaire did not ask about divorce status. Rather, if two parents were not listed as residing with the child on the demographic form, the child was assigned to the divorced group. The way groups were identified means the divorced group could also encompass children who were born into a single parent family and had never actually experienced a divorce. It is also possible that there were children whose parents were separated but not divorced or who simply do not live together.

Secondly, the time since divorce occurred is unclear. Studies have suggested that a restabilization occurs between two and four years post divorce (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagen, 1999; Dreman & Ronen-Eliav, 1997). Knowing the length of time since divorce would have helped us in determining how to group our participants, and evaluate when restabilization occurred. By knowing this, three groups could have been tested: newly divorced, long term divorced, and non-divorced children. Thus being a possible explanation for why no difference

was found between our divorced and non-divorced groups, assuming our divorced group had experienced restabilization.

Finally, a more diverse sample would be preferable. In other divorce research there have been differences noted in various ethnic groups (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 1999). The current sample does portray a decent picture of the population from which data was collected, but cannot be said to accurately represent all children of divorced parents in America.

Additionally there are some other missing populations that could have been of assistance in diversifying our sample, such as: children who do not attend public schools, children in other geographic regions, children in urban and rural settings, and children of upper and lower socioeconomic status. By tapping these populations it may have been possible to increase the generalizability of the research.

#### *Future Research*

Other approaches could expand the current study. First, using an older sample population would likely allow researchers to better evaluate the effects of global social support. The mean age of the current sample was ten years old. By utilizing an older sample it may be possible to better determine the effects of global social support because older adolescents would be more likely to utilize such resources. Levitt, Levitt, Bustos, Crooks, Santos, Telan, Hodgetts and Milevsky (2005) showed that friends offer an increased amount of support as children transition from mid-childhood to early adolescence. They suggest this happens simultaneously with the increased demands of autonomous activity and the push/pull to identify with a peer group (Levitt et al.; 2005).

Second, using a longitudinal design would allow for pre-divorce and post-divorce measures being attained. This would allow for a greater ability to predict how divorce would

affect the children who experience it, as well as effectively measuring the when family restabilization occurred. This would allow researchers to better evaluate the coping strategies used by the children regarding divorce and the co-occurring stressful life events.

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Table 1

*Mean Scores of Participants*

Variable	N	Mean	SD
Family Relationships	82	53.63	5.39
Friend Support	91	3.6	.51
Teacher Support	91	3.67	.37
Appraisal Valence	90	1.49	.23
Parent BSI	89	51.69	9.65
Parent ASC	89	51.58	8.14
Child ESI	89	45.74	7.91
Child PA	89	55.09	9.09

Parent BSI= parent behavioral symptoms index, Parent ASC= parent adaptive skills index, Child ESI= child emotional scales index, Child PA= child personal adjustment index

Table 2

*Hierarchical multiple regression- Child Emotional Symptoms Index as Criterion*

Variable <sup>a</sup>	Standardized B	Model R <sup>2</sup>	Model F	(df)	Change R <sup>2</sup>
Step 1 : Main Effects		.183	3.0*	(5, 67)	
FR	-.097				
CFS	.136				
AVLE	.032				
DRS	.168				
Step 2 : Main Effects and Interaction		.257	2.144*	(10,62)	.074
FR	.153				
CFS	-2.93				
TS	-3.01				
AVLE	12.34*				
DRS	3.31*				
DivXFR	-.28				
DivXFSUP	3.30				
DivXTSUP	3.0				
DivXPA	-.194				
DivXStre	-1.8				

FR= family relationships, CFS= close friend support, AVLE= average valence of life events, DRS= divorce related stressors, TS= teacher support, DivXFR= divorce status and family relationships, DivXFSUP= divorce status and friend support, DivX TSUP= divorce status and teacher support, DivXPA= divorce status and primary appraisal, DivXStre= divorce status \* stress \*  $p < .05$

## Appendix 1

## Resiliency Study

### Parent Consent for Research

Please print CLEARLY

Name of parent or guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

I am the legal guardian of \_\_\_\_\_ . I consent for her or him to participate in a research project on children's experiences related to dealing with stress. I understand that Sarah K. Sifers, Ph.D. from the Psychology Department at Minnesota State University Mankato (MSU) is director of the project. I understand that participation in this study includes the following commitment for my child and me:

- 1) Read and sign this consent form.
- 2) My child will complete questionnaires about his or her thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and experiences related to resiliency (takes about 45 minutes).
- 3) I will complete questionnaires about our family and my child's behavior (takes about 45 minutes).

#### Procedures

I understand that my child will be asked questions about his or her thoughts, feelings, behavior, and experiences. I understand that I will be asked questions about our family and my child's behavior. I understand that I can contact Dr. Sifers at 389-5755 or [sarah.sifers@mnsu.edu](mailto:sarah.sifers@mnsu.edu) about any concerns I have about this project. I understand that I also may contact the MSU Internal Review Board Administrator, Anne Blackhurst, at 389-2321 or [anne.blackhurst@mnsu.edu](mailto:anne.blackhurst@mnsu.edu) with any questions about research with human participants at MSU.

#### Confidentiality

All information obtained in this project will be kept private by the staff of this research project. All information will be stored in a locked file cabinet. It can be viewed only by authorized research staff members. I understand that no information about my child will be released and no names will be recorded other than the consent forms. By law, the only times when information will not be kept confidential is if my child or I state that we are in imminent danger of harming ourselves or others, or in suspected cases of child abuse.

#### Risks and Benefits

I understand that the risks of participating in this study are minimal. I understand that participating in this study will help the researchers better understand children's resiliency. I understand that I can request a copy of the study's results (but not my child's results), which would be mailed to me after the end of the study.

#### Right to Refuse Participation

I understand that participation in this project is voluntary and my child and I have the right to stop at any time.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

With my signature, I affirm that I am at least 18 years of age and I have received a copy of the consent form to keep.

Appendix 2

## Resiliency Study

### Child Assent for Research

I would like to ask you some questions about your thoughts, feelings, behavior, and experiences. This will help me to understand how children react to their experiences.

Your name or other information that lets people know that the information is about you will not be used. Your answers will not be shared with your parents or anyone else, unless you are in danger of being hurt or hurting someone. If you have any questions about this project, you can ask them at any time.

You can refuse to be in the study and neither your parents nor the research staff will be upset. You can stop answering questions at any time and no longer be in the study just by letting me know you want to quit.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix 3

Demographic Questionnaire

1. What is your gender?                      male                                      female
2. Taking into account all sources of income (wages, interest, government assistance, child support, etc.) please estimate the total family income on a yearly basis before taxes. \_\_\_\_\_

**Answer the following for the primary wage earner in the family:**

3. Kind of work (for example, store clerk, farmer, electrical engineer) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Most important activities (for example, filing, supervising, teaching) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Kind of business (for example, shoe store, farm, auto dealership) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Answer the following about your child:**

6. Your child's age \_\_\_\_\_
7. Your child's ethnicity \_\_\_\_\_
8. Your child's gender \_\_\_\_\_

**Answer the following about your family:**

9. The relationship of people in your home to your child (for example, mother, father, sister, brother, grandparent, parent's significant other, uncle, friend of the family)

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

## Appendix 4

**Life Events Checklist**

**Please read:** I am going to read a list of things that sometimes happen to people and I want you to tell me if any of these things have happened to you in the past 12 months. I will circle the number of the event that you have experienced. I will also ask you to rate the event as a *good* event or a *bad* event. Finally, I will ask you to tell me how good or how bad the event was. I will circle the number that tells how good or how bad the event was for you.

	0 = None (not good or bad at all)	1 = Little (a little bit good or bad)	2 = Medium (pretty good or bad)	3 = Big (really good or bad)
1. Have you moved to a new home?	Good	Bad	0	1 2 3
2. Do you have a new brother or sister?	Good	Bad	0	1 2 3
3. Have you changed to a new school?	Good	Bad	0	1 2 3
4. Has any family member been seriously ill or injured?	Good	Bad	0	1 2 3
5. Have your parents gotten divorced?	Good	Bad	0	1 2 3
6. Have your parents been arguing more?	Good	Bad	0	1 2 3
7. Has your mother or father lost his/her job?	Good	Bad	0	1 2 3
8. Has a family member died?	Good	Bad	0	1 2 3
9. Have your parents separated?	Good	Bad	0	1 2 3
10. Has a close friend died?	Good	Bad	0	1 2 3
11. Has either parent been away from home more?	Good	Bad	0	1 2 3
12. Has a brother or sister left home?	Good	Bad	0	1 2 3
13. Has a close friend been seriously ill or injured?	Good	Bad	0	1 2 3
14. Has one of your parents gotten into trouble with the law?	Good	Bad	0	1 2 3
15. Has one of your parents gotten a new job?	Good	Bad	0	1 2 3
16. Do you have a new stepmother or stepfather?	Good	Bad	0	1 2 3
17. Has one of your parents gone to jail?	Good	Bad	0	1 2 3
18. Has there been a change in how much money your parents have?	Good	Bad	0	1 2 3
19. Have you had trouble with a brother or sister?	Good	Bad	0	1 2 3
20. Have you gotten any awards for good grades?	Good	Bad	0	1 2 3
21. Have you joined a new club?	Good	Bad	0	1 2 3

22. Have you lost a close friend?	Good	Bad	0	1	2	3
23. Have you been arguing less with your parents?	Good	Bad	0	1	2	3
24. Have you been in special education classes (resource room, class for kids with learning or behavior problems)?	Good	Bad	0	1	2	3
25. Have you had a problem obeying rules?	Good	Bad	0	1	2	3
26. Have you gotten new glasses or braces?	Good	Bad	0	1	2	3
27. Have you had learning problems in school?	Good	Bad	0	1	2	3
28. Have you had a new boyfriend/girlfriend?	Good	Bad	0	1	2	3
29. Have you repeated a grade in school?	Good	Bad	0	1	2	3
30. Have you been arguing more with your parents?	Good	Bad	0	1	2	3
31. Do you have any difficulty saying words or do other people have a hard time understanding what you say?	Good	Bad	0	1	2	3
32. Have you gotten into trouble with the police?	Good	Bad	0	1	2	3
33. Have you been seriously ill or injured?	Good	Bad	0	1	2	3
34. Have you broken up with a boyfriend/girlfriend?	Good	Bad	0	1	2	3
35. Have you made up with a boyfriend/girlfriend?	Good	Bad	0	1	2	3
36. Have you had trouble with a teacher?	Good	Bad	0	1	2	3
37. Have you been put in a foster home?	Good	Bad	0	1	2	3
38. Do you have a hearing problem?	Good	Bad	0	1	2	3
39. Have you tried out for a sport but didn't make it?	Good	Bad	0	1	2	3
40. Have you been suspended from school?	Good	Bad	0	1	2	3
41. Have you made failing grades on your report card?	Good	Bad	0	1	2	3
42. Have you tried out for a sports team and made it?	Good	Bad	0	1	2	3
43. Have you had any trouble with classmates?	Good	Bad	0	1	2	3
44. Have you gotten any awards for playing sports?	Good	Bad	0	1	2	3
45. Have you been put in jail?	Good	Bad	0	1	2	3
46. Are there any other events that we haven't talked about? _____	Good	Bad	0	1	2	3
47. Are there any other events that we haven't talked about? _____	Good	Bad	0	1	2	3