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FACTORS RELATED TO THE SOCIAL COMPETENCE OF CHILDREN IN
SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro

PH.D. 1985

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OF CHILDREN IN SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES

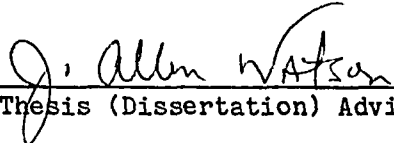
by

Phyllis Annette Heath

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APPROVAL PAGE

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Viewed in light of the great deal of research documenting the negative effects of divorce on children, the results of the present investigation offer an alternative explanation of children's outcomes following divorce. These findings provide strong support for the ecological model which stresses that child outcomes may be attributed to a variety of contextual influences. In particular, these results emphasize that divorce is only one event affecting the child's adjustment and that subsequent experiences within the single-parent family environment also contribute to the child's overall social competence.

Assessments were made regarding the relations between factors within the single-parent family environment and social competence of children in these families. Nine predictor variables--which included three measures of parental childrearing behaviors (acceptance versus rejection, firm versus lax control and psychological autonomy versus psychological control), as well as the variables of family income, mother's support systems, the child-father relationship, the coparental relationship, education of the mother and sex of the child--were examined in relation to measures of the social competence of children in these families.

Determinations were then made of how much variation in social competence was explained by the predictor variables through multiple regression and discriminant analyses. Assessments were also made regarding which of the predictor variables adequately discriminated between children who were considered to be more socially competent and those who were perceived as less socially competent.

Childrearing behaviors of single parents emerged as important contributors to their children's social competence. Other contributors to children's social competence in these families were education of the mother, and parental cooperation. Two findings of this investigation were that (a) mothers used lax control more often with their sons than with their daughters, and (b) that different variables contributed to the social competence of boys versus girls.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The single-parent family is presently the fastest growing family form in America. It has been predicted that half of the children born during the 1980's will spend part of their childhood living in a single-parent family (Norton & Glick, 1977; Weiss, 1979). The rapid growth of this family has resulted in concern from child and family researchers as well as the population at large regarding the welfare of children within these households. The overwhelming conclusion derived from a review of the literature on children from divorced parents is that children of single-parent families are more at risk for psychological distress than children from intact families (Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1978; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980).

Because children of divorced parents have been considered to be at risk for psychological distress, researchers have focused on variables associated with divorce which are believed to impact children's development. Until recently, the focus of investigators studying children in single-parent families have centered on the reaction of children to their parents' divorce and the negative effects of father absence (Biller, 1974, Lynn & Sawrey, 1959). Within the past decade, however, a number of other factors have been linked with the well-being of children in single-parent families. Hess and Camara (1979) reported that the availability of support systems to the single mother aids not

only her adjustment to divorce but also increases her ability to carry out her childcare responsibilities. Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) and Hetherington (1980) found that divorced parents, who cooperate with each other in matters affecting their children and who avoid involving the children in their disputes, help to eliminate many of the difficulties typically experienced by children following divorce. Coletta (1979) and Hetherington, Cox and Cox (1978) emphasized that raising the family income of single-parent families would alleviate many of the stresses felt by single parents and their children. In an investigation of the parental practices of single parents, Santrock and Warshak (1979) demonstrated that certain dimensions of childrearing are related to children's adjustment to divorce. The behaviors and attitudes which these researchers found to be correlated with the child's adjustment are (a) expression of warmth; (b) clear communication of rules and regulations; and (c) encouragement of verbal exchange.

Although a number of factors have been identified as important predictors of child outcomes, researchers have not demonstrated which combination of these variables is most important in contributing to children's well-being in divorced families. Also, researchers have not presented empirical evidence to explain the consistent findings of sex differences in children's outcomes in the single-parent family.

Purpose of the Study

This investigation had two purposes. The first purpose was to increase our understanding of how various factors within the single-parent family environment contribute to children's social competence. Since sex differences have been found in outcomes of children from single-parent families, a second purpose was to discriminate between the contributions of the identified factors to boys' and girls' social competence. To achieve these purposes, the following research questions were employed to guide the investigation: (a) What are the significant factors which contribute to varying levels of social competence in children in single-parent families? (b) What is the relative contribution of each of these factors to the child's social competence? and (c) Are different configurations of variables contributing to boys' and girls' social competence?

Approach to the Problem

In assessing the influence of various factors on child outcomes, the child's social competence level was chosen as the measure of child outcome rather than the child's adjustment to divorce. The variables which were examined in relation to the child's social competence were those which have been most often related to child outcomes in the divorce literature. To provide an explanation of sex differences in children's social competence levels, the influence of the identified variables were examined in relation to boys' and girls' levels of social competence.

Subjects for the present study included single divorced mothers and their school-aged children. The decision to study single mothers and their school-aged children was based on several reasons: (a) Approximately 90% of divorced single-parent households are headed by mothers (Ahrons, 1979); (b) A large number of older children reside in these households (Glick, 1980); and (c) researchers who have studied single parents and their children have virtually ignored children past preschool age. Although Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) studied single parents and their different-aged children, they examined only the negative effects of divorce on children. These researchers did not attempt to determine how variations in attitudes and behaviors of single parents contribute to their children's reactions to the divorce and to their levels of social competence.

Expected Findings

Of the several factors under investigation, childrearing behaviors were expected to be the most important predictors of children's social competence. Expected findings were that there would be positive correlations between acceptance and social competence and a negative correlation between psychological control and social competence. A curvilinear relation between firm control and social competence was expected with both high scores and low scores on control expected to be negatively related to social competence. Although childrearing behaviors have previously been demonstrated to be important predictors of children's social competence (Baumrind, 1971; Feshbach, 1975; White, 1973), the investigations of the relation between social competence and

childrearing practices have been limited to studies of children and parents in intact families. We know little from the research literature about the role of single-parent attitudes and behaviors in the development of their children's social competence. There is no evidence, however, to indicate that the childrearing styles of single parents are less important for contributing to their children's social competence. Furthermore, the childrearing factors which Santrock and Warshak (1979) related to children's adjustment to divorce are similar to those which have been identified as crucial for providing the supportive and nurturant relationships children need for the development of social competence (Baumrind, 1971; Feshback, 1975; White, 1973).

It has been suggested that parental childrearing behaviors are particularly significant in the single-parent household not only because they play a major role in the child's adjustment to divorce but because the attitudes and behaviors of the single parent have a more direct impact on the child than those of either parent in an intact family (Hetherington et al., 1978). Because the other parent is not present to act as a buffer, both positive and negative parental practices are likely to more directly affect the child. Although childrearing behaviors were expected to be the most important predictors of children's social competence, positive correlations were also expected to be found between measures of the child's social competence and other variables which have been documented as important predictors of child outcomes in single-parent families.

Definitions of Constructs

The predictor variables used in the analyses included three childrearing variables (acceptance versus rejection, psychological autonomy versus psychological control, and firm versus lax control) as well as family income, the quality of the child-father relationship, support systems available to the mother, the quality of the coparental relationship, education of the mother and the sex of the child. The criterion variables were measures of the child's social competence. The following predictor and criterion variables are defined according to the way they were measured by the research instruments.

Acceptance Versus Rejection

Acceptance was defined as an attitude by which parents (1) perpetuate a positive emotional relationship between themselves and their children, (2) allow their children to participate in the management of the house, and (3) freely express warmth and affection toward their children (Baldwin, Kalhorn & Breese, 1945). A better understanding of acceptance may be gained by contrasting this concept with its extreme opposite--rejection. Rejection is defined by Baldwin et al. as "the basic attitude which parents have in order to be consistently hostile, unaffectionate, disapproving and emotionally distant in their treatment of the child which is so pervasive that it is psychologically impossible for them to be genuinely solicitous or democratic or understanding" (p. 18).

Rejecting parents subordinate their children's interests to the interests of others. Parental handling consists of a general hostility and resentment toward the child which reveals itself in expressions of disapproval and a minimum of understanding. Such parents appear to dislike children and attempt to rear their children with a minimum of effort. They are dictatorial toward their children, allowing them little voice in family decisions. As noted by Baldwin et al., "There is a deeper significance to their attitude than the attempt to conserve energy; there is an active positive resentment reflected in their constant rejection. Their hostility pushes them to frustrate the child needlessly or to ignore him when a friendly interest would cost them nothing" (p. 18).

Firm Versus Lax Control

Firm versus lax control was defined as the manner in which rules and limits are expressed as well as the levels of demands and the vigilance with which these expectations are enforced. Control relates to the manner with which discipline is carried out, whether it is consistent, inconsistent or lax, enforced or nonenforced. Firm versus lax control also addresses the degree of autonomy the parent allows the child (Schludermann & Schludermann, 1979).

Psychological Autonomy Versus Psychological Control

Psychological control was defined as a technique which parents sometimes use to control their children. This type of control consists of hostility toward the child, withdrawal of relations, possessiveness, inconsistent discipline, intrusiveness, , controlling through the use of guilt and instilling persistent anxiety (Schludermann & Schludermann, 1979).

Parental Cooperation

This variable was defined in terms of the level of cooperation which exists between parents. Mothers in the study were asked to reply to a question regarding how cooperative she and the father are regarding financial support, visitation schedules, special concerns regarding the child, and sharing of positive feelings about the child.

Child-Father Relationship

Child-father relationship was defined as the child's satisfaction with the father in the areas of (a) time spent with the father; (b) father's handling of discipline; (c) child's ability to express areas of concern; and (d) affection and encouragement from the father.

Mother's Support Systems

This factor was defined in terms of how often mothers received assistance from certain groups, including family members, church groups, friends and/or neighbors, and agency or community groups. Types of assistance included financial support, emotional support and/or practical help.

Family Income

Family income was defined in terms of the total family income from all sources (including child support) before taxes in 1984.

Mother's Education

This variable was defined as the total years of school completed by the mother.

Social Competence

Social competence, as perceived by the mother, was defined according to the way it is measured by the Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist (1983). This instrument measures "the degree of involvement and level of attainment in areas that are socially and developmentally significant in the overall adjustment of the child" (Davis, 1972, p. 61). Those areas of particular concern are (a) the quality and amount of the child's participation in age-appropriate social activities; (b) the nature and quality of the child's interpersonal behaviors when in the presence of significant others; (c) the child's social and academic adjustment in school including the child's level of academic performance.

Child's Perception of Social Competence

Social competence, as perceived by the child, was defined according to the way it is measured by the Perceived Competence Scale for Children

(1979). This scale assesses important correlates and mediators of the child's "intrinsic motivation to be effective, to engage in independent mastery attempts in the anticipation of a competent outcome" (Harter, 1979, p. 1). Areas of competence included in this definition are cognitive competence, social competence, physical competence, and general self-esteem.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

No trend in American family life has received more attention or caused more concern than the rising rate of divorce and the concomitant increase of single-parent families. Concerns regarding divorce rates have centered on the plight of children growing up in single-parent homes. As the numbers of single-parent families have increased, so has public alarm (Anthony, 1974; Lynn, 1974). The study of this family form has been complicated by the fact that much of the research which is available shows a bias in favor of intact families. This literature reflects the view that single-parent families are "partial" or "broken" and thus not healthy environments for children (Anthony, 1974). In contrast to this negative approach to the study of the single-parent family, several researchers within the past few years have suggested that this family be considered a viable family form (Hetherington, 1980; Thompson & Gongla, 1984; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980).

The Single-Parent Family Experience

In the United States, there are presently more than 600,000 single parent families being created by divorce each year (Bumpass & Rindfuss, 1979). With increasing numbers of households in this country being headed by single parents, these families have become an integral part of our society and are not expected to disappear. Instead, there is every indication that single-parent households will continue to grow. In

1980, 8.7% of the population of the United States were members of single-parent families (United States Bureau of the Census, 1980). This figure does not include the percentage of the population who, as of 1980, had been members of single-parent families at some period in their lives.

If current trends continue, it is estimated that one-quarter of the parents who have still-immature children at home will be single parents in the 1980s. Furthermore, it is predicted that half of the children born during the 1980s will spend part of their childhood living with only one of their parents (Norton & Glick, 1977; Weiss, 1979). Based on these trends, it is conceivable that in the near future a majority of individuals in our society will experience living for some time in a single-parent family.

Distinguishing Features of the Single-Parent Family

The modern single-parent family does not have a historical precedent in our society. Although the single-parent family is not an unfamiliar phenomenon, the majority of single-parent families in the past resulted from the death of a spouse. In contrast, nine-tenths of all current single-parent families are preceded by divorce (Norton & Glick, 1977). Since the overwhelming majority of children are placed in the custody of their mothers (Ahrons, 1979; Greif, 1979), the typical single-parent household consists of a divorced mother and her children.

Even though children of divorced parents typically reside with the mother, these children usually continue to have frequent contact with the father. Because the father is alive and usually continues to be involved with the family, children in this household belong to more than one family subsystem. Subsystems include the custodial parent-child subsystem, the noncustodial parent-child subsystem, and the ex-spouse subsystem, all of which affect interactions within the single-parent household (Keshet, 1980). Because there are various subsystems within the single-parent family, the boundaries of the single-parent household formed as a result of divorce are more permeable than those which result from the death of a spouse and parent. These structural differences distinguish today's single-parent families from those in the past.

The complex structure of this family form combined with its lack of historical precedent presents unique adjustment challenges to its members. Recognizing this, researchers have focused much attention on the adjustment of parents and children to divorce. We know much less, however, about how parents contribute to their children's adjustment in the post-divorce environment.

The first important step in understanding the influence of single parents on their children's overall development is to recognize the single-parent family as having equal status to the intact family. Some researchers have questioned the extent to which the norms of the single-parent family are constrained by "natural" functions expected of the intact family (Thompson & Gongla, 1984; Weiss, 1979). The position taken by these writers is that it is unfair to hold up the intact family

as an example for the single-parent family to model. Nevertheless, much of the research in this area has focused on the comparisons between single-parent and intact households. Studies such as these are derived from assumptions that the majority of children growing up in single-parent families are exposed to similar experiences.

Some researchers have suggested that a more objective approach for studying single parents and their children would presuppose a considerable amount of variation in the norms of single-parent family life and would focus on the situational variables within the family group. Hess and Camara (1979), who have taken this position, argued that there is more variation within single-parent families than between family forms. Thompson and Gongla (1984), who share this view, pointed out that it is impossible to study the single-parent family since this description covers a wide variety of family types. Thompson and Gongla suggest that "understanding the diversity across single-parent families may be more theoretically, clinically and politically important than the search for the common denominators of single-parent family life" (p. 9).

Living Arrangements of Single Parents and Their Children: Historical Trends

Whether parents and children live together represents some indication of the strength of ties between them. Based on the rising divorce rates of the past few decades, many people assume that fewer children live with their parents than in the past. This assumption is not entirely accurate. Since 1940, when the U. S. Bureau of the Census began publishing information about family living arrangements,

the proportion of children who live with at least one parent has been steadily rising (from 90% in 1940 to 95% in 1970) (Bane, 1976).

An analysis of this trend by Bane (1976) provides two reasons for this increase. One explanation is the declining death rate and another is the dramatic increase in the proportion of widowed and divorced women who continued living with their children after their marriages ended. In 1940, the majority of divorced or widowed mothers (56%) sent their children to live with relatives or to orphanages when the marriage ended. By 1970, almost 80% of divorced, separated, or widowed mothers headed their own families. As noted by Bane, "Children may not live with both their parents, but they do live with at least one"

(p. 13). This trend indicates a heightened commitment to childcare responsibilities by single parents today in comparison to single parents in the not too distant past.

Bane speculated that the increased tendency of divorced and widowed mothers to assume familial responsibilities may be good for children. This possibility appears to have eluded child and family researchers, however, judging from the paucity of studies which document both the positive and negative effects of living in a single-parent family. This is surprising in view of the significant rise in divorce rates and the subsequent growth of single-parent families. The research which is available on single-parent families is largely descriptive but it suggests that most children adjust relatively quickly and well to their parents' marital dissolution (Hetherington, 1980; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Furthermore, the disruption may be a better alternative than

continuing to live in a tension-filled home (Hetherington et al., 1978; Staples, 1980) and less difficult than previously anticipated (Kulka & Weingarten, 1979). As of now, however, conclusions must remain tentative since there is little information grounded in methodologically sophisticated studies.

Research in Single Parent Families

In spite of the evidence which shows that the single-parent family is a way of life for a large number of families, the literature continues to reflect a cultural bias which favors the "ideal" nuclear family. This bias represents an impediment to the identification of factors within this family environment which contribute to children's socially competent behavior.

The notion that the nuclear family provides the ideal family environment for the developing child is reflected in prevailing attitudes that the prerequisite for a child's normal development is the presence of both parents (Bleckman, 1982; Elkind, 1981; Levitin, 1979). Criticism of this family has led to the proposals of simplistic solutions such as reforming family policy to make divorce more difficult. Suggestions such as these are based on the assumption that single-parent family systems are detrimental to the welfare of children (Fox, 1981).

Some critics of the single-parent family assume this family will "go away" when the single parent remarries. The belief that single parents will remarry is in part justified since, at the present time, the median age for remarriage following divorce is three years (Glick, 1980). This interval, however, represents an increase over past intervals between divorce, and remarriage rates are currently declining (National Center for Health Statistics, 1980).

An example of the lack of objectivity in the study of this family is reflected in the tendency of child and family researchers to refer to these families as the single-parent family. Despite differences found in the attitudes and lifestyles of single parents and their children, these families are still viewed as more similar to each other than to other family types. The assumption is made that most single-parent families share common lifestyles and common problems (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1971).

The current literature concerning divorce and single-parent families contains little information on the relationships between single parents and their children. That literature which does address the family experiences of single parents and their children is largely descriptive. Furthermore, the focus is most often on the children. A majority of such studies have called attention to the psychological stresses experienced by children of divorce, ignoring findings that most of these children do not require psychological treatment and do not experience long-term psychological stress (Hetherington, 1980; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980).

Not only are the lifestyles of persons in single-parent families considered to be similar but experiences of children within these families are generally viewed as negative. Consequently, factors within single-parent households which may be beneficial to children's development have not been as well studied as the detrimental factors. Guided by psychoanalytic theory, the single-parent literature has emphasized the negative effects of separation from the noncustodial parent while overlooking the positive effects of attachment to and continued care from the custodial parent. Theory has been guided by the assumption that problems encountered by children of divorce are attributable to their parents' marital dissolution without sufficient regard to the pre-existing family conditions and subsequent family experiences (Thompson & Gongla, 1983).

In emphasizing the negative effects of divorce, researchers have focused not only on the problems of adjusting to the parental divorce (Bernard, 1979) but have also given much attention to the detrimental effects of father absence (Biller, 1974; Lynn & Sawrey, 1959; Santrock & Warshak, 1979). Within the past decade, however, there have appeared a number of studies questioning whether father absence is directly responsible for any of the supposed deficiencies of single-parent homes. In a comprehensive review article, Herzog and Sudia (1973) pointed out that the accumulated evidence fails to support any blanket generalizations about the effects of father absence. These researchers argued that those who had attributed father absence to a variety of alleged pathologies among children had overlooked a number of important contextual variables such as variations in children's contact with their

fathers and differing levels of coping abilities among single-parent mothers.

Researchers, during the past several years, have increasingly noted other correlates which may affect the development of children within single-parent familie--such as childrearing behaviors of the custodial parent (Herzog & Sudia, 1973; Hess & Camara, 1979; Santrock & Warshak, 1979), family income (Coletta, 1979; Hetherington et al., 1978), mothers' support systems (Brandwein, Brown & Fox, 1974; Hetherington et al., 1978; Tessman, 1978), education of the mother (Chiriboga, Coho, Stein, & Roberts, 1979) and parental cooperation (Ahrons, 1979; Hetherington et al., 1978).

The conclusions from studies of Hetherington (1980) and Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) were that (a) almost all children experience an initial period of emotional distress following their parents' separation; (b) most resume normal development within one to two years following the separation; and (c) a minority of children express long-term psychological problems which can be attributed to their parents' separation.

Despite conclusions such as these, many writers today continue to express criticisms of single parents which are based on assumptions and speculations rather than on actual research findings. For example, without citing empirical evidence for his beliefs, Elkind (1981) suggested that the stresses of single parenthood are predictive of parental egocentrism. Elkind stated that single parents "may expend so much effort coping with the daily stresses of living that there is

little strength or enthusiasm left over for parenting" (p. 28). Elkind conjectured that single parents respond to stresses by putting their needs ahead of their children's.

The Single-Parent Family as a Viable Family System

Family and child researchers have failed to address factors within single-parent homes which contribute to children's well-being. Because of the negative beliefs which have guided research efforts in this area, the implications derived from studies of single-parent families are that single parents are unable or unwilling to provide the quality of childcare and supervision needed by their children. The opinion has been that divorced parents, by virtue of their single status, are incapable of providing the experiences necessary for the healthy development of their children.

A more realistic approach to the study of single-parent families would begin with the recognition that this family form is increasing and that it is a viable family arrangement (Thompson & Gongla, 1984; Weiss, 1979). The investigation of factors within the single-parent household which contribute to children's overall adjustment (not simply their adjustment to divorce) implies an acceptance of the legitimacy of this family structure. The failure to focus research attention to possible positive features within this family environment suggests a lack of cultural support for this institution despite the reality of its rapid growth.

The existence of the single-parent household indicates the inability of the parents, for whatever reasons, to continue to maintain the nuclear family structure. It does not necessarily imply that they are ineffective parents. Recognizing that there are variations in children's experiences within these families contributes to the belief that custodial parents can and do positively impact the adjustment of their children. Moreover, the documented deleterious effects upon children of divorce may precede in part from previous experiences within the married household wherein discord existed which prompted the parental separation (Hetherington et al., 1978; Santrock & Warshak, 1979).

Reasoning from this perspective, the negative effects of living in an environment of discord may be compensated for if experiences within the single-parent family are sufficiently positive. In this case, the quality of the single-parent family environment and the child-rearing attitudes of the single parent may be expected to significantly influence the child's development and subsequent adjustment.

Family Environment and Children's Social Adjustment

Whereas the various difficulties experienced by children in intact families have been most often attributed to the childrearing practices of their parents (Baumrind, 1971; Feshbach, 1975; White, 1973), the different levels of adjustment among children of single parents have been primarily related to their parents' marital dissolution and factors associated with father absence (The Consortium for the Study of School Needs of One-Parent Families, 1980; Goldstein, Freud & Solnit, 1979;

Hatch, 1981; Lynn, 1974). Researchers who have attempted to identify factors of family environment that contribute to children's social competence have virtually ignored the single-parent family, focusing on the intact, middle-class family (Baumrind, 1971; Feshbach, 1975; White, 1973).

The intact, middle-class family is a compact group with well-defined boundaries (Eastman, 1979). In contrast, the single-parent family is headed by one parent who assumes the majority, or in many cases, all of the responsibilities of childrearing. Furthermore, childrearing objectives may be more difficult to achieve due to more permeable boundaries which must exist if the children within these homes continue to have loyalties and relationships with the noncustodial parent. As noted by Cherlin (1981), the structural differences between married and single-parent households contribute to less clearly defined familial roles within single-parent families. Also, severe financial difficulties are more likely to be found in single-parent families. Hoffman (1977) found that divorce is associated with a marked drop in income for women, as much as 30%. The decrease in family income in single-parent families often necessitates a move to more modest housing in poorer neighborhoods or a relocation into a combined household. As observed by Tessman (1978), moves which are necessitated by family dissolution typically result in the loss of friends, and lack of continuity of important support systems.

Because of differences in family history, family structure and the stresses particular to the single-parent household, single parents face many challenges unknown to parents who remain married (Hetherington, 1980; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Nevertheless, there has been as yet little in-depth study of the single-parent child interactions within single-parent families. Understanding of factors associated with the healthy development of children within these families is an important need, particularly for the benefit of the increasing number of children who reside in these households.

Childrearing by Mothers: A Historical Analysis

Even within the intact family, childrearing responsibilities have been and continue to be the primary responsibility of the mother. Although there presently is a trend toward increased involvement of fathers, within the majority of American households, the socialization of children is considered to be more the mother's responsibility than the father's (Berk & Berk, 1979). Therefore, within single-parent homes, the majority of which are headed by mothers (Ahrons, 1979), the children continue to be cared for by the principle caregiver from the pre-existing intact family. Continuous interaction with the principle caregiver provides continuity in parent-child interactions which have been firmly established and which have continued since birth. Although the establishment of a single-parent household represents structural changes, familiar aspects of childrearing may be expected to continue to influence the child's development.

Childrearing Attitudes and Children's Competence

Those studies which have related childrearing attitudes to children's social adjustment have focused on intact, middle-class families (Baumrind, 1971; Feshbach, 1975; White, 1972). From these studies, several features of effective childrearing have been noted. Feshbach (1975), in examining parental childrearing factors and children's behaviors, found that for mothers the strongest childrearing factors relating to competence in children were child-centeredness, use of induction and positive reinforcement, as well as the degree of conflict and child rejection. These first three factors were found to be positively associated with empathy and related social behaviors. The last two factors were found to be negatively related to empathy and prosocial behavior. In Baumrind's (1967; 1971) studies of the childrearing factors which relate to children's social competence, she identified three types of childrearing behaviors (Authoritarian, authoritative and permissive) in her 1967 study and added a fourth (harmonious) in 1971. Both authoritative and harmonious childrearing behaviors were found to be associated with social responsibility in children. White (1972) identified a group of competent children and subsequently observed the interactions of these children's mothers with younger infant-toddlers. Based on these observations, White concluded that the most important aspect of childrearing is an orientation which communicates the parent's interest and accessibility to the child.

The studies by Feshbach (1975), Baumrind (1967; 1971) and White (1973), as well as the majority of studies linking childrearing practices to children's competence, have focused on children and parents from intact homes. Where the competencies of children of single-parent families have been observed, these competencies have not been linked to their own parents' childrearing behaviors. In contrast, competencies of children in single-parent families have been compared to competencies of children in intact homes (Crescimbeni, 1964; Nye, 1957).

Comparing the competencies of children in single-parent families to children in intact families is based on the assumption that those competencies which have been identified within intact homes cover the entire range of competencies one may expect to observe in children. However, as noted by Ogbu (1981), competence is a value-laden concept which may be expected to differ from culture to culture as well as for different cultural subgroups of American children. From this perspective, Ogbu argued that the white, middle-class competencies and childrearing practices should not be the standard upon which all others are measured. As stated by Ogbu, "...researchers have not yet reached the point of clearly delineating the unique competencies of minority groups and how such competencies are acquired" (p. 415).

There exists a need to shift research attention from the child's adjustment to divorce to identification of the antecedents of children's social competence within the single-parent environment. Because the single-parent family is a system which has its own authority structure, norms, processes of conflict management and boundary maintenance, it is

important to discern the patterns of reciprocal exchange which contribute to the social competence of children in this environment. Some writers have suggested that parent-child interactions within the single-parent family may promote the child's competent social behavior (Thompson & Gongla, 1984; Weiss, 1979). As noted by Weiss (1979), separation from the spouse and father tends to decrease the social distance and open the normal boundary between the custodial parent and the children. Weiss suggested that children are promoted within the single-parent family. "The parent wants to be able to rely on the children as fully participant in the functioning of the family" (p. 75), and "once children accept the increased responsibility, it becomes a natural for the single parent to consult the children regarding household decisions" (p. 76). To paraphrase Thompson and Gongla (1984), decomposition of the authority structure and family size encourages communication and disclosure between single parents and their children, forming a type of parent-child(ren) dyad form which is markedly different from the traditional parent-child bond. The greater involvement of children in single-parent homes in the family decision-making process may increase overall social competence. There has been as yet, however, little in-depth study of this single-parent child relationship.

Conclusions

Adequate research attention to parent-child interactions within the single-parent family has been hampered by a traditional bias in our society in favor of married parents rearing their children in intact homes. This attitude has contributed to an ambivalence toward the single-parent family contrasted with an awareness that this family form is increasingly becoming the norm for many. The growth of single-parent families in this country warrants a more serious study of the single-parent family environment. To compare single parents to married parents does not take into account the challenges single parents encounter which are unknown to married parents.

Since the family headed by the single parent is becoming an increasingly common pattern of family organization, the study of parent-child interactions within this family may well warrant the considerable efforts of family and child researchers. There is a need for better understanding of how some single parents are successful in meeting the childrearing challenges they encounter as well as how other single parents are hampered in these same efforts. With knowledge, support and understanding, single parents may be able to adopt child-rearing attitudes and behaviors which enable them to better contribute to their children's social competence and overall adjustment.

The correlates of children's adjustment to divorce have been well documented. We know much less about the factors within the single-parent family environment which contribute to children's overall social competence. These influences may be assessed by examining variables within the single-parent household which have been associated with children's adjustment to divorce.

Hypothesis 1. There is a positive relationship between mother's education and child's social competence.

Hypothesis 2. There is a positive relationship between parental cooperation and the social competence of the child.

Hypothesis 3. There is a positive relationship between support systems available to the mother and the child's social competence.

Hypothesis 4. There is a positive relationship between the childrearing dimension of acceptance versus rejection and the child's level of social competence.

Hypothesis 5. There is a curvilinear relationship between the childrearing dimension of firm versus lax control and levels of the child's social competence.

Hypothesis 6. There is a positive relationship between family income and levels of the child's social competence.

Hypothesis 7. There is a positive relationship between father-child relationship and the child's social competence.

Hypothesis 8. The child's sex will be significantly correlated with measures of the child's social competence.

Hypothesis 9. All the predictor variables in combination will account for a significant amount of the variance in the child's social competence.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

Concomitant with the single parent's goal of establishing a harmonious household is the objective of rearing well-adjusted, competent children. How well single parents achieve this goal may be related to their attitudes and behaviors regarding childrearing. It was anticipated that results of this study would move us closer to understanding the factors within the single-parent family environment which are likely to contribute to children's social competence. It was also predicted that these results would contribute to an understanding of the factors in single-parent families which differentially influence the outcomes of male and female children.

The research was an ex-post facto study which examined and measured the phenomena without intervention. Inferences about relations among variables were made from observations of concomitant variation of predictor and criterion variables. Nine predictor variables, which included three measures of parental childrearing behaviors (acceptance versus rejection, psychological autonomy versus psychological control, and firm versus lax control), as well as the variables of family income, quality of the child-father relationship, support systems available to the mother, quality of the coparental relationship, mother's level of education and sex of the child were examined in relation to measures of

social competence of children from single-parent homes.

It was hypothesized that the three childrearing variables in combination would account for significantly more of the variance in children's social competence than any of the other predictor variables. Step-wise multiple regression analyses were performed to assess these effects. It was also hypothesized that different configurations of these independent variables would predict social competence scores depending on the sex of the child. Separate stepwise multiple regression analyses (selecting for sex) were performed to assess these relations. It was further hypothesized that the factors identified as predictors of children's social competence (omitting gender) would adequately discriminate between high and low scores on the two measures of social competence. To measure these relations, separate step-wise discriminant analyses (selecting for sex) were performed. Tables 1 through 16 (in the Results Section) and Figure 1 (in Appendix C) demonstrate how the data were recorded and analyzed.

Sample

Eighty white mothers, who had been separated for at least one year, and who had custody of a child between the ages of eight and eleven, were asked to participate in the study along with their children. These subjects were recruited from court divorce records. Approximately equal numbers of male and female children were selected from the total possible subjects. All of the mothers and their children lived in or around Greensboro. The average length of separation was four years, with length of separation ranging from one year to eight years and four

months. Mothers and their identified children completed separate questionnaires at the same time and place. An interviewer was present to insure independent responses. After prospective subjects had been identified, mothers of the identified families were telephoned and those agreeing to participate were scheduled for an interview. Eighty-four percent of those mothers who were contacted agreed to participate in this study.

Procedure

During the interview, each mother was asked to sign an Informed Consent Form (See Appendix E) consenting to provide information regarding her child as well as consent for her child to complete a questionnaire providing information about the parent. The mother was then asked to furnish information about herself, her family, and her perceptions of the social functioning of her identified child.

Prior to questionnaire completion by the child, he or she was also asked to sign an Informed Consent Form (See Appendix E) consenting to provide information regarding the parent. The child was then requested to complete two questionnaires. One of these questionnaires measured the child's perceived competence. The other measured the child's perceptions of the custodial parent's childrearing behaviors. All questionnaires were completed in the subjects' homes. Each family interview and questionnaire completion took approximately forty-five minutes.

Instrumentation

The information pertaining to the child's social functioning was obtained from two sources. The child was asked to complete The Perceived Competence Scale for Children (Harter, 1982) (See Appendix C), and the child's mother was requested to respond to items on the Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist (Achenbach, 1978; 1979) (See Appendix B). The information regarding the child-rearing behavior of the parent was obtained by asking the child to respond to items on the Child's Report of Parental Behavior Inventory (See Appendix D). Mothers were also requested to complete a Family History Questionnaire which contained questions relating to the other predictor variables under investigation--(a) quality of the child's relationship with the father; (b) quality of the coparental relationship; (c) support systems available to the mother; (d) family income; and (e) mother's level of education (See Appendix A).

Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist

Mothers in this study were asked to complete the Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) for boys and girls, ages 4 to 16 years. The instrument was administered by the researcher. The CBCL is a 24-item scale which was originally formulated to screen children with behavior problems. The scale is divided into two parts. Part I is a social competence scale and Part II consists of items describing a variety of behavior problems. Part I was used in this analysis. Part I includes three social competence subscales-- (a) the activities scale (scores of zero to 12) reflects the degree and quality of involvement in jobs and

chores, sports and nonsports activities; (b) the social scale (scores of zero to 12) measures the degree of involvement in social relationships; and (c) the school scale (scores of zero to 6) measures academic performance and behaviors in school (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983).

Scoring. Each item of the CBCL is scored from 1 to 3 or from 1 to 4 with a score of 1 indicating low competence as perceived by the mother, and 3 or 4 reflecting high competence as perceived by the mother. Scores are summed and then averaged for each subscale resulting in three subscale means. These separate subscale means allow data to be transformed into a child competency profile. The profile provides a description of the child's competencies, demonstrates how competencies cluster, and shows how the child compares with average children of his or her age. The profile reveals in graph form the raw scores with percentile listings and transformed scores. Profiles are standardized separately for each sex at ages 4-5, 6-11, and 12-16. Percentiles and normalized T's (standard scores with mean=50, standard deviation=10) are based on normal children. In addition to scoring items for the purpose of obtaining subscale means, scores are also summed across subscales resulting in a total number of points which are then averaged to derive a summary mean score which is used as a measure of the child's overall social competence. For this investigation, the summary mean score was used.

Reliability. The items on the CBCL have demonstrated an adequate discrimination between clinic and nonclinic children. Reliability data were obtained from 1,000 children from randomly selected families, including 50 normal children of each sex and each age (6-16). Short-term (approximately one week) test-retest reliabilities on these subjects ranged from .72 to .97, varying according to the sex of the child and the particular subscale. Long-term (six to 27 months) test-retest reliabilities on clinic children ranged from .26 to .79 with most correlations above .50. Interrater reliabilities (mothers versus fathers) ranged from .54 to .87, varying with sex and age of child and subscale used (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1980).

Construct Validity. Normalized T scores for social competence scales were derived from nonclinical samples. Subsequent comparisons of clinical and nonclinical samples showed differences ($p < .001$) on all social competence scores. Clinical subjects scored lower on social competence ($p < .001$). One-week test-retest correlations averaged .67. Treatment of subjects in the clinical samples contributed to an increase in social competence, as measured by the CBCL, in eight out of nine comparisons (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1979). In a later study, Achenbach & Edelbrock (1980) constructed a typology of behavior problem patterns. Agreement was found between classifications based on mothers and assessments based on clinicians. A negative correlation was found between social competence scales and behavior problem scales; the lower the social competence the higher the behavior problem score.

The Perceived Competence Scale for Children

Each child was requested to complete The Perceived Competence Scale for Children (PCSC) (Harter, 1982) (See Appendix A). This inventory was administered by the investigator. The PCSC is a 28-item, self-report instrument which requires approximately ten minutes to complete. This scale assesses a child's sense of competence across three different domains instead of measuring perceived competence as a unitary concept. The three domains of competence represented by the items in the PCSC are cognitive, social, and physical, each of which constitutes a separate subscale. Each of these subscales represents a separate factor indicating that children make clear differentiations among these domains. The question format was devised to provide a broad range of responses and to reduce the tendency to give socially desirable responses. The child is first asked to decide which kind of child he or she is most like--the child described on the right or on the left. After making this decision, the child answers whether the description on that side is "sort of true" or "really true" for him or her.

Scoring. Each item on the PCSC is scored from 1 to 4, with a score of 1 indicating low perceived competence and a score of 4 reflecting high perceived competence. Scores are summed and then averaged for each subscale, resulting in four separate subscale means. The choice of the four domains of perceived competence was determined from individual interviews with children. Some of the items within the scale were generated from these interviews, others were adapted from existing scales.

Reliability. Norms on the PCSC are based on data obtained from a sample of 215 third through sixth graders. The scale originally contained 40 items (10 items per subscale) which was group administered to this sample. Factor analyses indicated that a four-factor solution was the most appropriate in terms of both statistical criteria (Cattell's scree test) and interpretability. All items which were included in the PCSC met the following criteria: (a) moderate to high loadings on the designated factor; (b) no cross loadings of the same magnitude; (c) mean value near the midpoint; (d) sufficient variability; and (e) contribution to the internal consistency of the subscale. Only 6 to 7 items of the original 10 for each subscale met these qualifications and were, therefore, included in the questionnaire (Harter, 1979).

In separate analyses by grade, Harter (1982) showed that the factor pattern of the PCSC is stable across grades 3-6. Internal consistency reliability data were obtained from a combined Connecticut-California sample of 341 students in the third through sixth grades. These values, assessed by the employment of coefficient α were .76, .78, .83, and .73 for the cognitive, social, physical and general subscales. Test-retest reliability correlations, collected from a sample of 208 Colorado third through sixth graders, retested after three months, and 810 New York students, retested after nine months, were .78, .80, .87, and .70 for the Colorado sample and .78, .75, .80, and .69 for the New York sample. An examination of the subscale means of these samples indicate that these values are highly stable across subscales, ranging from .55 to .79. On the physical subscale, however, males have consistently

received significantly higher ($p < .05$) scores than have females.

Validity. Construct validity for the PCSC was assessed by correlations between perceived cognitive competence and Harter's (1981) measure of intrinsic versus extrinsic orientation in the classroom. Perceived cognitive competence was found to be strongly related to preference for challenge ($r = .57$) and to independent mastery ($r = .54$) and moderately related to curiosity ($r = .33$). In subsequent studies, Harter (1982) demonstrated the discriminant validity of the PCSC. Discriminant validity of the cognitive domain of the scale was indicated in a study with learning disabled children. Results showed a significant difference ($p < .005$) in perceived competence ratings of these children when compared to children who were not learning disabled. Discriminant validity for the social and physical dimensions was demonstrated in a study which compared students selected for sports teams ($N = 23$) with their classmates ($N = 57$) who were not selected for sports teams. In this sixth grade sample, in which athletic achievement was a prominent school value, physical and social scores for the sports groups were 3.4 and 3.2 ($p < .001$) compared to the means of their classmates, 2.5 and 2.7 ($p < .01$).

The Children's Report of Parental Behavior Inventory

Each child was administered a revised version of the Children's Report of Parental Behavior Inventory (CRPBI) (Schludermann & Schludermann, 1970) which is a 108-item instrument that requests children to rate their parents as they perceive them. The child completes the questionnaire by indicating whether the parent is "like," "somewhat like," or "not like" each of the items listed. This scale

focuses on the measurement and description of three dimensions of childrearing behaviors: (a) acceptance versus rejection; (b) psychological autonomy versus psychological control; and (c) firm versus lax control.

The CRPBI was originally developed by Schaeffer (1965). The purpose of this instrument is to measure children's perceptions of their parents' child-rearing behaviors. Schaeffer's selection of parental-behavior concepts was guided by a conceptual model which was derived from factor analysis of psychologists' ratings of parental behaviors. This conceptual model led to the formulation of a hierarchical scheme for parental behavior which contributed to the development of a reliable scale for measuring these concepts. Each concept in Schaeffer's instrument consists of 10 homogeneous items that describe relevant, consistent, observable parental behaviors. The criteria for inclusion of an item for a particular concept was based on clarity of the behavioral description, relevance of the item to the concept, applicability of the item to both father and mother and high predicted item variance.

Schaeffer's (1965) original instrument consisted of 260 items, 26 10-item scales. Schludermann and Schludermann's (1970) revised version consists of 108 items (18 scales of 5 to 8 items per scale). This scale has been found to yield scores that approximate closely the accuracy of the original instrument (Burger & Armentrout, 1971). The high replicability of the factor structure of the CRPBI (Burger & Armentrout, 1971; Schludermann & Schludermann, 1971) suggest the fruitfulness of

describing the results of the CRPBI more economically in terms of the three factor analytically derived dimensions rather than in terms of the 18-scale scores. As noted by Burger and Armentrout (1971), a number of revisions of the CRPBI have consistently yielded three orthogonal factors: (1) acceptance versus rejection, (2) psychological autonomy versus psychological control, and (3) firm control versus lax control. These factors were consistently yielded over a wide range of populations: American college students, American children in grades four through eight, American children in grades five and six, Walloon high school students, Canadian college students, and Hutterite adolescents. These three factors have consistently emerged regardless of sex of the child, sex of the parent, version of the instrument or cultural group studied (Schludermann & Schludermann, 1971).

Scoring. In scoring the CRPBI, three separate subtotals are obtained, each of which represents the score on a particular childrearing factor. Those items characteristic of a given factor are summed and that total is divided by the number of items contained in that particular factor. Maximum scores for each item are: (NL)=10, (SL)=20, and (L)=40. The reversals of a scale score (for scales with negative loadings on a factor) are calculated by 40 minus the the scale score. Schludermann and Schludermann (1972) provided the following formula for calculating these subtotals:

reversals of scale

Acc.(Hi) vs. Rej.(Lo) = scale score 1,2,3,7,13 + scores of 4, 16

7

Ps.Co.(Hi) vs. Ps.Au.(Lo) = scale scores 8,9,10,11,15,17

6

reversals of

Fi.Co(Hi) vs La.Co(Lo) = scale scores 5,6 + scale scores 12,14,18

5

The score ranges of the subtotals are comparable to each other and to those of scale scores.

Reliability. That the items representing specific components of parental behavior in the CRPBI are homogeneous is indicated by the high internal consistency reliabilities reported by Schaeffer: acceptance, .84; rejection, .78; autonomy, .69; and control, .66. Schaeffer demonstrated the discriminative power of the scale by an analysis of differences between delinquent and nondelinquent boys where highly significant differences were found between the two groups' descriptions of parental behaviors. Delinquent boys reported parents higher than nondelinquent boys on most scales written to describe parental control, except for control through guilt for which the direction was reversed.

Results of the Wilcoxin test of significance of these differences showed that 20 of the 26 tests were significant beyond the $p < .01$ level using a two-tailed test. These analyses of differences between groups justify the analysis of specific components of parental behavior. Both the reliability data and the analyses of group differences suggest that this instrument provides a sensitive method for measuring children's perceptions of parental behavior.

Normative data is also available for revised versions of the CRPBI (Margolies & Weintraub, 1977; Schludermann & Schludermann, 1971). Norms for Margolies and Weintraub's (1977) revised form were collected for 128 children, grades four through six. These subjects were administered one form of the instrument on two separate occasions. For some, the retest interval was one week and for others, five weeks. Subjects were assigned to retest intervals by grades. Also, mother ratings were compared to father ratings. Test-retest reliabilities were higher (across all three factors) for mothers than for fathers. The one-week, test-retest coefficients ranged from a low of .13 for fifth graders for the third factor to .92 for fifth graders on factor one for the father's form. For the mother's form, the one-week test-retest coefficients ranged from .15 for fifth graders on factor II to .96 for fourth graders on factor I. Test-retest stabilities for five-week test-retest intervals ranged from .79 on factor I to .93 on factor III for the mother's form. For the father's form, coefficients ranged from .77 on factor III to .81 on factor II (Margolies & Weintraub, 1977).

An analysis of variance performed on the CRPBI by Schludermann and Schludermann (1970) revealed that neither age nor sex differences were significant in a sample of boys and girls, aged 13 to 17. In a comparison of high school and university students, however, these researchers found that high school students attributed much more firm control to both parents than did university students. The significant high school versus university differences for the two control dimensions suggest that family situation (living with or away from parents) may be a critical variable.

Construct Validity. A strength of the CRPBI is that it provides a way to study three factors of childrearing behaviors, recognizing the multivariate nature of family relationships and their influence on child behavior (Margolies & Weintraub, 1977; Schludermann & Schludermann, 1971). A number of studies utilizing the CRPBI have been undertaken to look at those childrearing influences that indicate the ability of the CRPBI to successfully discriminate between parental childrearing behaviors that differ on a number of factors and the relation to social and psychological functioning of family members. Schludermann and Schludermann (1971) studied Hutterite boys and girls (13-15 years old) and found that the child's perception of parental behavior could be described adequately and economically in terms of the three basic dimensions, acceptance versus rejection, psychological control versus psychological autonomy, and firm versus lax control.

Family History Questionnaire

The information pertaining to four of the predictor variables was assessed by items contained in the Family History Questionnaire (FHQ), which was completed by the mother. These variables, family income, mother's support systems, quality of the coparental relationship, quality of the child-father relationship, and education of the mother were scored in the following way:

Family Income. This variable was assessed by Question 6 on the FHQ, which asked for the approximate family income from all sources before taxes in 1984. Requesting information in this manner insured that the answer would be in the form of continuous, rather than categorical, data (a prerequisite for incorporating into a regression analysis). It also allowed for the inclusion of both earnings from child support and any other kind of family assistance. The actual amount stated by respondents was entered into the regression analyses. Condescriptive analyses were completed on this data for the purpose of providing a description of the sample studied. The results of these analyses are in Table 1 in the Results Section.

Education of the Mother. This variable was assessed by Question 7 on the FHQ, which asked for the total years of school completed by the mother. This question was designed to elicit a response which could be recorded as continuous rather than categorical. The exact number of years of mother's education was entered into the multiple regression analyses. Condescriptive information on this variable is provided in Table 1 of the Results Section.

Support Groups Available to the Mother. The information for this variable was assessed by Question 8 in the FHQ, which asked mothers to identify those groups that provided assistance to the family and explain how frequently those groups provided assistance. Four categories of groups that might conceivably provide assistance to the single parent were listed: (a) family members; (b) church groups; (c) friends and/or neighbors; and (d) agency or community supports. For each of the groups listed, the mother was requested to answer whether assistance was received from that particular group "never or almost never," "usually not," "sometimes but infrequently," "often," "usually," or "always or almost always." The frequency of assistance was scored from 1 to 5, with a score of 1 indicating no support and a score of 5 indicating frequent support. The frequency scores were summed across groups resulting in a total score. This amount was used as a measure of support systems available to the mother. The condescriptive information obtained for this variable is in Table 1 in the Results Section.

Coparental Relationship. Information regarding the quality of the coparental relationship was assessed by Question 9 of the FHQ. This question asked the mother to rate how frequently she and the child's father cooperated in discussions of the child. Four discussion topics were listed--(a) financial support; (b) child-father visitation; (c) special concerns of the parents regarding the child; and (d) sharing of positive feelings regarding the child. The answer choices for each topic fell into a likert-scale categorization ranging from 1 for "never or almost never" to 5 for "always or almost always." Scores were summed across categories to achieve a total score which was used as a measure

of the quality of the coparental relationship. Low numbers represented a low-quality coparental relationship and high values represented a high-quality coparental relationship. This condescriptive data is contained in Table 1 in the Results Section.

Quality of the Child-Father Relationship. Questions 10 and 11 of the FHQ assessed the information regarding whether or not had contact with the father and the child's satisfaction with the child-father relationship. Question 10 asked if the child had contact with the father. If the answer to this question was no, a zero score was entered indicating the lowest value possible. If the mother indicated that the child did have contact with the father, she was then requested to respond to items in Question 11. This question contained four subscales which were designed to assess the quality of the father-child relationship. These subscales included questions regarding the child's satisfaction with (a) the amount of time spent with the father; (b) the father's handling of discipline; (c) the father's responsiveness to the child's problems; and (d) the amount of affection and encouragement received from the father. Condescriptive information pertaining to this variable is recorded in Table 1 in the Results Section.

Sex of the Child. In order to incorporate the variable of sex into the regression equations, it was necessary to treat gender as a dummy variable. To accomplish this, linear scores were assigned to the male-female categories with the score of 0 representing males and the score of 1 representing females. With this adjustment, these scores were treated as the linear influence of gender in the regression analyses (Kerlinger, 1973).

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

General Description of the Sample

The mothers in this study ranged in age from 28 years to 46 years, with a mean age of 36 years. The children ranged in age from 8 years to eleven years and eleven months, with a mean age of ten years. The mean number of years of education for the mothers was fifteen years. Four percent of these mothers had not completed high school, 18% were high school graduates, 31% had received some type of post high school education, 23% were college graduates and 24% had attended or were presently attending graduate school.

In this sample of separated/divorced mothers, 91% were employed and 9% were not employed. Of those who were not employed, 78% were attending college or graduate school. Of the divorced mothers who listed an occupation, 20% were employed in semiskilled jobs, 29% worked in clerical jobs, 34% were administrators or minor professionals, 10% worked as business managers and 7% were in major professions. The family income (from all sources) reported by these mothers ranged from \$6,000 to \$45,000. The mean family income was \$18,874, with 64% of these families having incomes below \$20,000. Fifty-four percent of these mothers had custody of more than one child with an average of two children per family and a range of one to five children per family. Ninety-four percent of these children had contact with their fathers,

with 6% having no contact.

Data Analysis

To test the relations between family environment factors, the sex of the child, and the level of social competence of the children in this study, Pearson Product-Moment correlation coefficients were computed. Scattergrams were done to check for curvilinearity. To test for the combined effects of the predictor variables on the criterion variables, separate multiple regression analyses were performed for each of the criterion variables. Since sex of child was found to be significantly correlated with one of the criterion variables (the child's perception of social competence), separate multiple regression analyses were performed for male and female children. The $p < .05$ level of significance was used for the multiple regression analyses.

Multiple regression analyses are frequently used in ex-post facto research to determine the strength and direction of relations between variables. An advantage of multiple regression analysis is that categorization of variables is unnecessary. Since categorization of measurement variables is to some extent arbitrary, it may be seen as yielding a somewhat less sensitive analysis (Kerlinger & Pedhazur, 1973).

Multiple regression analysis is a technique of hypothesis testing that is particularly useful in behavioral research since, when proceeding from sound theoretical reasoning, this analysis reflects the multivariate nature of psychological reality. Through use of the

multiple regression technique, determinations can be made regarding the collective and separate contributions of two or more predictor variables on the variation of a criterion variable.

To demonstrate that the variables identified as predictors of social competence adequately discriminated between children scoring high or low on the social competence measures, separate discriminant analyses were performed for each criterion measurement, after selecting for sex of child. In order to use the discriminant procedure, the social competence scores of each of the two measurements were categorized. Those scores at or below the mean were assigned to the low social competence categories and those scores above the mean were assigned to the high competence categories.

Discriminant analysis is a regression equation which is used to determine group membership. The discriminant function gives the best prediction, in the least squares sense, of the correct group membership of each member of the group. When dealing with two groups, as in this case, the discriminant function is nothing more than a multiple regression equation with the dependent variable a nominal variable representing group membership (Kerlinger, 1973).

The validity of conclusions derived from regression analysis is dependent upon randomization of subject selection. As noted by Kerlinger and Pedhazur (1973), without randomization, it is difficult to be reasonably sure that the observed variation in a criterion variable is indeed due to the variation in the predictor variables. To determine if the responses of subjects in this sample were sufficiently random,

condescriptive data were calculated. Table 1 contains the means, ranges and standard deviations for each of the predictor variables and the criterion variables. In general, the responses were normally distributed on all variables, and therefore support the assumption of normality of sample.

Another basic assumption of multiple regression analysis is that the predictor variables are not highly correlated. Therefore, Pearson Product-Moment correlations were performed to examine the correlations among these variables. These correlations (See Table 2) indicated that six of the predictors were not highly correlated but that two, child-father relationship and parental cooperation were highly correlated ($r=.60$). Therefore, the decision was made to remove one of these variables from subsequent analyses. A comparison of these two predictors showed that the correlations between parental cooperation and both social competence measures were statistically significant. Correlations between the social competence measures and child-father relationship were not statistically significant. Therefore, child-father relationship was chosen for removal.

Pearson Product-Moment correlation coefficients were also computed to determine the relations between predictor and criterion variables (See Table 3). An examination of this correlation matrix resulted in the substitution of mother's education for family income as the measure of socioeconomic status to be entered into the regression analysis. This decision was based on the findings that (a) the correlation between these variables was statistically significant ($p=.03$); (b) education of

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the mother was statistically correlated with both of the social competence measures; and (c) family income was not statistically correlated ($p < .10$) with either of the social competence measures.

Since two measures of social competence (the criterion variable) were used in this study, The Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist (1979) and The Perceived Social Competence Scale (1983), Pearson Product-Moment correlation coefficients were computed on the relation between the scores on these two scales. The results indicate that these two measurements are not highly correlated ($r = .21$) and, therefore, measure different aspects of social competence.

Since the two criterion measures were not found to be highly correlated, separate multiple regression analyses were performed to determine the extent to which the predictor variables contributed to the variation in each of the measures of social competence. The results are reported in Tables 4-7.

Examination of Hypotheses

The major hypotheses examined in this study were that (a) nine variables would be significantly related to the social competence of the child; (b) these variables in combination would account for a significant amount of the variance in the child's social competence scores; and (c) there would be a different combination of variables predicting girls' versus boys' social competence levels. The nine predictor variables included eight factors of the single-parent family environment--family income, the coparental relationship, mother's

support systems, the child-father relationship, education of the mother, three childrearing dimensions (acceptance versus rejection, firm control versus lax control, and psychological autonomy versus psychological control) and sex of the child.

The relationships between these predictor variables and social competence were expected to be positive for family income, mother's support systems, coparental relationship, child-father relationship, education of the mother, and the childrearing dimension of acceptance versus rejection. A negative relationship was predicted for psychological autonomy versus psychological control and a curvilinear relationship was predicted for firm versus lax control. Directionality was not predicted for sex of child but this variable was expected to be a significant predictor of social competence.

Hypothesis 1. There is a positive relationship between mother's education and child's social competence.

The Pearson Product-Moment correlation coefficient for mother's education and the child's perception of social competence was $+0.35$ ($p < .05$) (See Table 3). The Pearson Product-Moment correlation coefficient for mother's education and the mother's perception of the child's social competence was $+0.19$ ($p < .05$). These correlations suggested that the higher the level of education of the mother the higher the level of social competence of the child, thus, was supported by Hypothesis 1. That is, for this sample, there was a positive linear relationship between mother's education and child's social competence scores on both social competence measures (See Table 3).

Hypothesis 2. There is a positive relationship between parental cooperation and the social competence of the child.

The Pearson Product-Moment correlation coefficient for parental cooperation and the child's perception of social competence was $+0.05$ which was not significant at the $p < .05$ level. The correlation coefficient for parental cooperation and the mother's perception of the child's social competence was $+0.25$ ($p < .05$). For this sample, there was a positive linear relationship between parental cooperation and the mother's perception of her child's social competence.

Hypothesis 3. There is a positive relationship between support systems available to the mother and the child's social competence.

The Pearson Product-Moment correlation coefficients for mother's support systems and measures of the child's social competence were -0.13 for the child's perception of social competence, which was not significant at the $p < .05$ level, and $+0.18$ for the mother's perception of the child's social competence, which was significant at the $p < .05$ level. Thus, Hypothesis 3 was supported for one social competence measure, the mother's perception, but was not supported for the other social competence measure, the child's perception. A positive relation was revealed between the mother's reliance on available support systems and her perception of her child's social competence.

Hypothesis 4. There is a positive relationship between the childrearing dimension of acceptance versus rejection and the child's level of social competence.

Pearson Product-Moment correlation coefficients for acceptance vs rejection and each of the measures of social competence were +.17 for the child's perception of social competence, which was significant at the $p < .05$ level, and +.27 for the mother's perception of the child's social competence which was also significant at the $p < .05$ level (See Table 3). Higher levels of parental acceptance were associated with higher levels of social competence, from both the mother's and the child's perceptions, thus supporting Hypothesis 4.

Hypothesis 5. There is a curvilinear relationship between the childrearing dimension of firm versus lax control and levels of the child's social competence.

An examination of the Pearson Product-Moment correlation coefficients between firm versus lax control and the two measures of social competence indicate correlations of $-.16$ for the child's perception of social competence and $+.12$ for the mother's perception of the child's social competence (See Table 3). These scores were not close enough to zero to suggest curvilinearity. Subsequent scattergram plots of these relationships also failed to reveal a curvilinear relationship.

A statistically significant chi-square analysis comparing firm control and sex of child demonstrated, however, that there was an interaction between these variables. This analysis showed that the majority of the children in this study (61%) reported behaviors of their mothers that reflected moderate levels of control, as opposed to lax or firm control. Of these children, 31% were boys and 30% were girls. Thus, no sex differences were reported in the practice of moderate control. Furthermore, no sex differences were found in these mothers' use of firm control. Twenty percent of these children reported behaviors which indicated that their mothers relied on firm control. This percentage of children was evenly divided among boys (10%) and girls (10%). Sex differences were discovered in these mothers' use of lax control. Nineteen percent of the children in this study reported behaviors of the mother that reflected the use of lax control. Of this 19%, 88% were boys and only 12% were girls.

Because sex differences were found in the mothers' use of firm versus lax control, crosstabulations were calculated comparing firm versus lax control to sex of child and higher levels of child competence. The purpose of these analyses was to assess the relation between different levels of firm control and boys' and girls' social competence. The results of these crosstabulations demonstrated that 77% of the boys who scored above the mean on the child's perception of social competence had mothers who exercised firm control. Twenty-three of the boys who scored above the mean on this measure of social competence reported behaviors of mothers that reflected the use of moderate control. None of the boys with scores above the mean on

child's perception of social competence reported behaviors of mothers which were associated with lax control.

A similar pattern emerged when comparing boys' scores on the measurement of mother's perception of social competence to their mother's control behaviors. Seventy-one percent of the boys scoring above the mean on this instrument reported behaviors of their mothers which suggested the use of firm control. In comparison, 24% of the boys scoring above the mean on this scale reported behaviors of their mothers which were associated with the use of moderate control. Only 6% of this group reported behaviors of their mothers which fell into the lax control category.

The relation of firm versus lax control to levels of social competence for girls was somewhat different. The greater percentage of scores above the mean on child's social competence for girls (52%) was associated with moderate levels of control by the mother. Thirty percent of these scores were related to firm control and only 17% were associated with the use of lax control. Scores for girls on the mother's perception of social competence revealed a similar pattern. Fifty-four percent of the girls scoring above the mean on this measure had mothers who exercised moderate control. Thirty-eight percent of these girls had mothers who relied on firm control and only 8% of these girls reported behaviors of their mothers that were representative of lax control.

The crosstabulation analyses comparing sex of child, child's social competence and the mother's use of firm versus lax control suggested that these divorced mothers were more likely to practice moderate control with both sons and daughters. A smaller percentage used firm control with their children but made no distinctions between daughters and sons. A small percentage also used lax control. Differences found in the use of lax control were related to sex of the child, with considerably more boys than girls reporting behaviors by mothers which reflected the choice of this form of control.

An examination of the social competence scores of boys and girls suggested that higher levels of boys' social competence were associated with the use of firm control by their mothers. Higher levels of social competence for girls were related to the exercise of moderate control by their mothers.

Hypothesis 6. There is a positive relationship between family income and levels of the child's social competence.

Correlations between family income and the two measures of the child's social competence were $+.03$ for the child's perception of social competence and $-.02$ for the mother's perception of social competence (See Table 3). These correlations were not significant at the $p < .05$ level. Hypothesis 6, therefore, was not supported.

Hypothesis 7. There is a positive relationship between father-child relationship and the child's social competence.

The Pearson Product-Moment correlation coefficient for child-father relationship and the child's perception of social competence was $+0.02$ which was not significant at the $p < .05$ level (See Table 3). The coefficient representing the correlation between child-father relationship and the mother's perception of social competence was -0.11 , which was also not significant at the $p < .05$ level. Hypothesis 7 was not supported by these results.

Hypothesis 8. The child's sex will be significantly correlated with measures of the child's social competence.

Examination of the correlations between sex of child and measures of the child's social competence (See Table 3) revealed a correlation of $.21$ for the child's sex and the child's perception of social competence, which was significant at the $p < .05$ level. The correlation between the child's sex and the mother's perception of the child's social competence was $.03$, which was not significant at the $p < .05$ level. These results indicated that Hypothesis 8 was supported for the measurement of the child's perception of social competence but was not supported for the measurement of the mother's perception of social competence. Thus, The child's perception of social competence was found to differ according to the sex of the child; whereas, the mother's perception of the child's social competence did not vary according to the sex of the child.

Hypothesis 9. All the predictor variables in combination will account for a significant amount of the variance in the child's social competence.

This hypothesis was tested by multiple regression analyses where seven predictor variables were entered into the analysis (omitting family income and child-father relationship). Table 3 contains the bivariate correlations between these predictor variables and each measure of the child's social competence. These associations are the Pearson Product-Moment correlation coefficients which were used in the multiple regression analyses.

Results of the Multiple Regression Analyses

An examination of these findings indicated that in multiple regression analyses which included both sexes, four of the seven variables emerged as significant predictors of children's social competence. These variables were education of the mother, support systems available to the mother, parental cooperation and parental acceptance versus rejection. Two of these variables (parental acceptance versus rejection and parental cooperation) were predictive of one aspect of the child's social competence, the mother's perception. The other two (education of the mother and support systems available to the mother) were predictive of another aspect of the child's social competence, the child's perception.

On the other hand, multiple regression analyses which were performed after selecting for sex, demonstrated that the six variables which remained after omitting sex of child were all significantly related to one or both measures of social competence. When sex of child was controlled, these variables also accounted for a larger amount of the variance in measures of social competence. Concomitantly, through these analyses, there emerged different configurations of variables for predicting social competence according to the sex of the child.

Not only was there a different configuration of variables predicting social competence levels of boys versus girls, but one variable (parental firm versus lax control) was negatively related to social competence as perceived by the girls and positively related to social competence as perceived by boys. A crosstabulation analysis of parental firm versus lax control and social competence scores of boys and girls showed that moderate control was predictive of higher levels of social competence for girls and that firm control predicted higher levels of social competence for boys.

Mother's Perception of Child's Social Competence

This analysis (See Table 4) revealed that 19% of the variation in the mother's perception of her child's social competence could be explained by the seven predictor variables. The F-statistic ($F=.02$) indicated that this proportion of the variance was statistically significant.

An examination of the relative contributions of these variables to the mother's perception of her child's social competence indicated that although 19% of the variance was explained by these seven variables, several of these variables contributed very little to the variability in scores on this measure of social competence. Therefore, a stepwise multiple regression analysis was performed to select out only those variables making a significant ($p < .10$) contribution to the variation in this criterion measure.

The results of the stepwise regression analysis (See Table 5) indicated that 12% of the variance in the mother's perception of the child's social competence was explained by two statistically significant predictor variables. These variables were parental acceptance versus rejection ($p = .02$) and parental cooperation ($p = .04$). The F -statistic ($F = .006$) indicated that the variance in the mother's perception of the child's social competence (which was explained by this model) was more significant than the variance ($F = .02$) explained by a combination of all the predictor variables.

The results of these analyses provided support for Hypothesis 9.

Child's Perception of Social Competence

The relation between the seven predictor variables and the child's perception of social competence was also tested by a multiple regression analysis where all predictor variables were entered. The results of this analysis (See Table 6) revealed that these variables in combination accounted for 21% of the variation in the child's perception of social

competence. The F -statistic ($F=.01$) revealed that this proportion of the variation was statistically significant.

Examination of the model for predicting the child's perceptions of social competence revealed a similarity to the model for predicting the mother's perception of her child's social competence. That is, that although 21% of the variation in this criterion measure could be explained by the seven variables in combination, several of these variables contributed very little to the variance in this measure of social competence. Therefore, a stepwise multiple regression analysis was performed to derive the best linear equation for predicting the child's level of social competence. In this analysis, only those variables which made a statistically significant ($p<.10$) contribution to the variation in the child's perception of social competence were selected.

The results of this analysis (See Table 7) indicated that 15% of the variance in the child's perception of social competence was explained by two predictor variables, mother's education and mother's support systems. Both of these variables were significant at the $p<.10$ level. The F -statistic ($F=.002$) indicated that this linear equation was somewhat more significant than the F -statistic ($F=.012$) obtained when including all seven variables in the equation. Hypothesis 9 was also supported by the results of these analyses.

Multiple Regression Analyses

Selecting for Sex of Child

Sex of child was not found to be a significant predictor of either measure of social competence in the multiple regression analyses which included both male and female children (See Tables 4 and 5). However, the sex of the child was found to be significantly correlated ($p=.03$) with the child's perception of social competence (See Table 3). Also, parental firm versus lax control, a significant predictor of the child's perception of social competence, was found to be significantly correlated ($p<.01$) with the child's sex.

It was, therefore, conjectured that an interaction between sex of child and firm versus lax control may be masking the effect which the child's sex might be having on measures of the child's social competence. Based on this reasoning, separate stepwise multiple regression analyses were performed for each criterion variable, after selecting for sex. For these analyses, the six predictor variables (omitting sex of child) were entered into the regression analyses, but only those which made significant ($p<.10$) contributions to the variation in levels of social competence were included in the regression equations.

Tables 8 and 9 contain the bivariate correlations between the seven predictor variables (including child-father relationship) and each of the criterion variables, after selecting for sex of child. These associations are the Pearson Product-Moment correlation coefficients which were used in these multiple regression analyses. Child-father

relationship was entered into these correlation matrices to determine if, after selecting for sex of child, this variable would emerge as significantly correlated with either of the measures of social competence.

Even after controlling for sex of child, child-father relationship was not found to be correlated with either measure of social competence. Also child-father relationship continued to be highly correlated with parental cooperation for males (+.60) as well as for females (+.67). Therefore, this variable was not included in subsequent analyses.

Male Child's Perception of Social Competence

The results of this stepwise multiple regression analysis (See Table 10) indicated that, after selecting for males, 53% of the variation in the child's perception of social competence could be explained by four of the six predictor variables. All four of these variables were significant at the $p < .10$ level. The regression equation was significant at the $p < .05$ level. Three of these predictors (education of the mother, acceptance versus rejection, and firm versus lax control) were positively related to boys' perceptions of social competence. The fourth predictor, psychological autonomy versus psychological control, was negatively related to boys' perceptions of social competence. For the males in this study, higher levels of parental acceptance, firm control and mother's education predicted higher levels of social competence as perceived by the child; higher levels of psychological control predicted lower levels of social competence as perceived by the child.

Female Child's Perception of Social Competence

Results of this stepwise multiple regression analysis (See Table 11) demonstrated that, after selecting for females, 20% of the variation in the child's perception of social competence could be explained by a combination of two of the six predictor variables, both of which were significant at the $p < .10$ level. These predictors were support systems available to the mother ($p = .03$), and parental firm versus lax control ($p = .03$). Both of the predictors in this equation (which was statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level) were negatively related to girls' perceptions of social competence. Both higher levels of firm control and greater use of support systems by mothers were correlated with lower levels of their daughters' perceptions of social competence.

Mother's Perception of the Male Child's Social Competence

The results of this stepwise multiple regression analysis (See Table 12) indicated that, for males, 13% of the variance in the mother's perception of the child's social competence was explained by one of the six predictors (psychological control). This was the only variable which was significant at the $p < .10$ level. According to this linear equation (which was statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level), the social competence of boys, as perceived by their mothers, was negatively related to psychological control.

Mother's Perception of
the Female Child's Social Competence

A stepwise regression analysis was also performed, after selecting for females, to determine the best linear equation for predicting the social competence of females as perceived by their mothers. These results (See Table 13) indicated that 28% of the variance in the mothers' perception of their daughters social competence could be explained by two of the six predictors, each of which was statistically significant at the $p < .10$ level. This linear equation was significant at the $p < .05$ level. The most important predictor in this analysis was found to be parental acceptance versus rejection ($p = .002$) and the second most important predictor was parental cooperation ($p = .005$). Both of these variables were positively related to mothers perceptions of their daughters' social competence. The F-statistic ($F = .001$) indicated that this proportion of the explained variance was statistically significant.

Discriminant Analyses

After the preceding regression analyses had demonstrated that seven of the original nine variables were significant predictors of the child's social competence, discriminant analyses were performed to determine if these variables adequately distinguished between children scoring high or low on the two measures of social competence. For the discriminant analyses, the scores on both measures of social competence were categorized. All scores above the respective means were assigned to the high-competence categories and all scores equal to or below the means were assigned to the low-competence categories.

Male Child's Perception of Social Competence

In the discriminant analysis (selecting for males) with high and low categories of the child's social competence as the criterion variable, four variables were found to adequately discriminate between these two groups. These discriminators, which were all significant at the $p < .05$ level, included parental acceptance versus rejection, parental cooperation, parental firm versus lax control and education of the mother. This function was significant at the $p < .05$ level and correctly classified 71% of the cases (See Table 14).

Female Child's Perception of Social Competence

In the discriminant analysis (selecting for females) with high and low categories of the child's perception of social competence as the criterion variable, three variables emerged as significant discriminators between these two groups. These discriminators, which were all significant at the $p < .05$ level, included parental cooperation, mother's support systems and psychological control. This function was significant at the $p < .05$ level and correctly classified 67% of the cases (See Table 15).

Mother's Perception of the Son's Social Competence

In the discriminant analysis (selecting for males) with high and low categories of the mother's perception of the child's social competence as the criterion variable, four variables emerged as significant ($p < .05$) discriminators. These included mother's support systems, parental firm versus lax control, parental psychological

control and parental cooperation. This function was significant at the $p < .05$ level and correctly classified 77% of the cases (See Table 16).

Mother's Perception of the Daughter's Social Competence

A discriminant analysis was performed (selecting for females) with high and low categories of mother's perceptions of the child's social competence. The results of this analysis, however, were not significant at the $p < .05$ level nor were any of the variables in the function identified as significant discriminators. This analysis indicated that none of the seven predictors adequately discriminated between high and low scores of mothers' perceptions of their daughter's social competence.

The overall results of the discriminant analyses demonstrated that the variables identified as significant predictors of children's social competence also clearly distinguished between groups of males scoring high and low on both measures of social competence and between groups of females scoring high and low on the child's perception of social competence. Although the results of the discriminant analyses demonstrate that six predictor variables adequately discriminated between boys' and girls' high and low scores on the social competence measures, these results should be interpreted with caution since the categorization of social competence scores was an arbitrary decision. Because the social competence scores of children in this study clustered around the mean, it was not possible to divide the sample through the use of a median split. Since the categories were split at the mean, similar scores around the mean fell into two separate categories.

Because of the arbitrary categorization, the relations of discriminator variables to criterion variables were not emphasized.

Gender Difference in Social Competence

A comparison of the scores of boys and girls on the two measures of social competence showed that the means of boys and girls were within one standard deviation of the means on each scale, where scores of boys and girls were combined. Of the girls, 51% scored above the mean on the child's perception of social competence and 53% scored above the mean on the mother's perception of social competence. Of the boys, only 37% scored above the mean on the measure of the child's perception of social competence and 49% scored above the mean on the scale measuring the mother's perception of social competence. The greatest sex differences in social competence scores were in boys' and girls' perceptions of their social competence. In this sample, a larger percentage of girls as compared to boys had higher perceptions of social competence. There were also greater discrepancies between boys' perceptions of social competence and their mothers' perceptions of their social competence. Boys tended to score themselves lower on social competence than did their mothers. In contrast, the perceptions of social competence of girls were relatively close to their mothers' perceptions of their social competence.

Summary of Results

Multiple regression analyses which included both sexes demonstrated that a significant amount of the variance in each social competence

measure could be explained by a combination of seven predictor variables (the three childrearing factors, education of the mother, mother's support systems, parental cooperation, and the sex of the child). Although these analyses were significant at the $p < .05$ level, several of the variables contributed very little to the variability in scores.

Subsequent stepwise regression analyses were then performed. These analyses demonstrated that (a) parental acceptance versus rejection and parental cooperation are significant predictors of the mother's perception of the child's social competence; and (b) mother's education and mother's support systems are significant predictors of the child's social competence.

Next, separate multiple regression analyses were performed, after selecting for sex. In these analyses, four of the six remaining variables emerged as significant predictors of measures of boys' social competence and three emerged as predictors of girls' social competence. Those variables contributing to boys' social competence were mother's education, and the childrearing factors of acceptance versus rejection, psychological autonomy versus psychological control, and firm versus lax control. Those variables contributing to girls' social competence were parental cooperation and the childrearing factors of acceptance versus rejection and firm versus lax control.

These analyses demonstrated that mother's education was a significant predictor of both measures of boys' social competence but was not an important predictor of either measure of girls' social competence. Psychological control was significantly correlated with both measures of social competence for boys but with neither measure of social competence for girls. Parental cooperation was significantly correlated with both measures of girls' social competence but with only one measure of boys' social competence (the child's perception). Acceptance versus rejection was a significant predictor of boys' perceptions of social competence and mothers' perceptions of their daughters' social competence. Firm versus lax control was a significant predictor of both measures of boys' social competence and for girls' perception of social competence. Mother's support systems was not a significant predictor of sons' social competence but was negatively related to daughters' perceptions of social competence. Child-father relationship did not emerge as a significant predictor of either measure of social competence for either sex.

Table 1
Means, Ranges and Standard Deviations for
Family Environment Measures, Mother's Education,
and Both Measures of Child's Social Competence

	N	Mean	Range	SD
<u>Predictor Variables</u>				
Parental Cooperation	80	12.26	4-20	4.86
Child-Father Relationship	80	9.71	0-17	4.12
Mother's Support Systems	80	10.99	6-22	3.19
Acceptance vs. Rejection	80	25.25	15-29	2.56
Firm vs. Lax Control	80	22.07	13-27	2.81
Psychological Control	80	16.95	12-26	3.19
Family Income	80	18,874	6,000-45,000	9,105
Mother's Education	80	14.51	7-17	2.23
<u>Criterion Variables</u>				
Social Competence (Child's Perception)	80	12.02	9-16	1.73
Social Competence (Mother's Perception)	80	20.44	11-27	3.03

Table 2
 Pearson Product-Moment Correlation
 Coefficients for Predictor Variables (N=80)

	Firm vs Lax Control	Psycho- logical Control	Sex of Child	Family Income	Mother's Support System	Parental Cooper- ation	Child- Father Rel-ship	Mother's Education
Acceptance vs Rejection	-0.069	-0.302	0.195	-0.002	0.298	0.089	0.062	0.172
Firm vs Lax Control		0.424	-0.256	-0.119	0.001	0.073	-0.066	-0.194
Psychological Control			-0.141	0.141	0.142	0.042	-0.015	-0.323
Sex of Child				0.183	0.028	0.140	0.147	0.125
Family Income					-0.068	0.173	0.324	0.476
Mother's Support System						0.044	-0.194	0.140
Parental Cooperation							0.598	0.153

Table 3
 Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients
 of Social Competence (N=80)

	<u>Predictor Measures</u>								
	sex of child	mother's education	child/ father rel-ship	parental cooper- ation	accept vs reject	psycho- logical control	firm vs lax control	moth. support system	family income
<u>Criterion Measures</u>									
Social Competence (Child's perception)	0.21*	0.35*	0.02	0.05	0.17*	-0.25*	-0.16*	-0.13	0.03
Social Competence (Mother's perception)	0.03	0.19*	-0.11	0.25*	0.27*	-0.20*	0.12	0.18*	-0.02

* p<.10

Table 4
 Multiple Regression Analysis of Predictors
 of Social Competence as Perceived by the Mother
 (All Predictor Variables entered)

		<u>Analysis of Variance</u>			
Multiple R	0.44				
R-Square	0.19				
Adjusted R-Square	0.12				
Standard Error	2.85				
		Regression	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square
		Residual	7	140.29	20.042
			72	583.46	8.104
		F = 2.47		Signif F = .025	

Variables	Variables in the Equation		St Err	T-value	Signif. of T
	b	B			
Mother's Education	0.14	0.10	0.16	0.918	.362
Mother's Support System	0.08	0.08	0.11	0.724	.472
Child's Sex	-0.30	-0.05	0.68	-0.433	.667
Parental Cooperation	0.12	0.19	0.06	1.770	.081
Acceptance vs Rejection	0.22	0.18	0.14	1.562	.123
Firm vs Lax Control	0.22	0.21	0.13	1.693	.095
Psychological Control	-0.17	-0.18	0.12	-1.458	.149

Table 5

Multiple Regression Analysis of Predictors
of Social Competence as Perceived by the Mother
(Only Statistically Significant Predictors Selected)

		<u>Analysis of Variance</u>			
			<u>DF</u>	<u>Sum of Squares</u>	<u>Mean Square</u>
Multiple R	0.35				
R-Square	0.12	Regression	2	89.78	44.89
Adjusted R-Square	0.10	Residual	77	633.97	8.23
Standard Error	2.87				
		F = 5.45	Signif F = .006		

Variables	Variables in the Equation				
	A	B	C	D	E
Parental Cooperation	0.13	0.22	0.06	2.07	.041
Acceptance vs Rejection	0.30	0.25	0.13	2.37	.020

- A- Unstandardized Regression coefficient
- B- Beta Standardized Regression coefficient
- C- Standard Error of col A
- D- T-value for Beta
- E- Significance of T (col D)

Table 6

Multiple Regression Analysis of Predictors
of Social Competence as Perceived by the Child
(All Predictor Variables Entered)

		<u>Analysis of Variance</u>		
Multiple R	0.46			
R-Square	0.21			
Adjusted R-Square	0.14	Regression	DF	Sum of Squares
Standard Error	1.61	Residual	72	186.46
				Mean Square
				7.27
				2.59
		F = 2.81	Signif F = .012	

Variables	Variables in the Equation				
	A	B	C	D	E
Mother's Education	0.24	0.30	0.09	2.68	.009
Mother's Support System	-0.13	-0.23	0.06	-2.10	.039
Child's Sex	0.48	0.14	0.39	1.24	.220
Parental Cooperation	-0.01	-0.02	0.04	-0.18	.855
Acceptance vs Rejection	0.09	0.13	0.08	1.09	.279
Firm vs Lax Control	0.00	0.00	0.07	0.00	.999
Psychological Control	-0.07	-0.12	0.07	-0.99	.328

- A- Unstandardized Regression coefficient
- B- Beta Standardized Regression coefficient
- C- Standard Error of col A
- D- T-value for Beta
- E- Significance of T (col D)

Table 7

Multiple Regression Analysis of Predictors
of Social Competence as Perceived by the Child
(Only Statistically Significant Variables Selected)

		<u>Analysis of Variance</u>			
Multiple R	0.39				
R-Square	0.15				
Adjusted R-Square	0.13				
Standard Error	1.62				
		Regression	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square
		Residual	2	36.20	18.10
			77	201.19	2.61
		F = 6.93		Signif F = .002	

Variables	Variables in the Equation		C	D	E
	A	B			
Mother's Education	0.29	0.37	0.08	3.50	.001
Mother's Support System	-0.10	-0.18	0.06	-1.73	.087

- A- Unstandardized Regression coefficient
- B- Beta Standardized Regression coefficient
- C- Standard Error of col A
- D- T-value for Beta
- E- Significance of T (col D)

Table 8

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients
for Each of the Predictor Variables and Each of
the Criterion Variables Selecting for Females (N=45)

<u>Criterion Measures</u>	<u>Predictor Measures</u>						
	mother's education	child/ father rel-ship	parental cooper- ation	accept vs reject	psycho- logical control	firm vs lax control	moth. support system
Social Competence (Child's perception)	0.18	-0.17	-0.29*	-0.15	-0.16	-0.33*	-0.33*
Social Competence (Mother's perception)	0.09	0.08	0.32*	0.37*	-0.08	0.15	0.06

* $p < .10$

Table 9

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients
for Each of the Predictor Variables and Each of
the Criterion Variables Selecting for Males (N=35)

<u>Criterion Measures</u>	<u>Predictor Measures</u>						
	mother's education	child/ father rel-ship	parental cooper- ation	accept vs reject	psycho- logical control	firm vs lax control	moth. support system
Social Competence (Child's perception)	0.49*	0.14	0.43*	0.49*	-0.31*	0.22	0.11
Social Competence (Mother's perception)	0.30*	-0.07	0.16	0.17	-0.36*	0.10	0.35*

* $p < .10$

Table 10

Multiple Regression Analysis of Predictors
of Social Competence as Perceived by the Child
(Controlling for Males)

		<u>Analysis of Variance</u>			
			<u>DF</u>	<u>Sum of Squares</u>	<u>Mean Square</u>
Multiple R	0.73	Regression	4	57.29	14.32
R-Square	0.53	Residual	30	50.33	1.68
Adjusted R-Square	0.47				
Standard Error	1.30				
		F = 8.54	Signif F = .0001		

Variables	Variables in the Equation				
	A	B	C	D	E
Psychological Control	-0.14	-0.25	0.08	-1.72	.097
Mother's Education	0.28	0.38	0.10	2.91	.007
Acceptance vs Rejection	0.27	0.39	0.10	2.90	.007
Firm vs Lax Control	0.28	0.38	0.10	2.84	.008

- A- Unstandardized Regression coefficient
- B- Beta Standardized Regression coefficient
- C- Standard Error of col A
- D- T-value for Beta
- E- Significance of T (col D)

Table 11

Multiple Regression Analysis of Predictors
of Social Competence as Perceived by the Child
(Controlling for Females)

		<u>Analysis of Variance</u>		
Multiple R	0.45			
R-Square	0.20			
Adjusted R-Square	0.17			
Standard Error	1.51			
		Regression	DF	Sum of Squares
		Residual	42	95.17
				Mean Square
				12.16
				2.27
		F = 5.37	Signif F = .01	

Variables	Variables in the Equation				
	A	B	C	D	E
Mother's Support Systems	-0.15	-0.31	0.07	-2.23	.031
Firm vs Lax Control	-0.17	-0.30	0.08	-2.18	.035

- A- Unstandardized Regression coefficient
- B- Beta Standardized Regression coefficient
- C- Standard Error of col A
- D- T-value for Beta
- E- Significance of T (col D)

Table 12

Multiple Regression Analysis of Predictors
of Social Competence as Perceived by the Mother
(Controlling for Males)

		<u>Analysis of Variance</u>			
Multiple R	0.36				
R-Square	0.13				
Adjusted R-Square	0.10				
Standard Error	2.93				
		Regression	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square
		Residual	1	42.51	42.51
			33	283.73	8.60
		F = 4.94		Signif F = .033	
Variables	Variables in the Equation				
	A	B	C	D	E
Psychological Control	-0.37	-0.36	0.16	-2.22	.033

- A- Unstandardized Regression coefficient
- B- Beta Standardized Regression coefficient
- C- Standard Error of col A
- D- T-value for Beta
- E- Significance of T (col D)

Table 13

Multiple Regression Analysis of Predictors
of Social Competence as Perceived by the Mother
(Controlling for Females)

		<u>Analysis of Variance</u>		
Multiple R	0.53			
R-Square	0.28			
Adjusted R-Square	0.25			
Standard Error	2.61			
		Regression	DF	Sum of Squares
		Residual	42	285.88
				Mean Square
				55.812
				6.814
		F = 8.20	Signif F = .001	

Variables	Variables in the Equation				
	A	B	C	D	E
Parental Cooperation	0.22	0.39	0.08	2.94	.005
Acceptance vs Rejection	0.51	0.43	0.16	3.26	.002

- A- Unstandardized Regression coefficient
- B- Beta Standardized Regression coefficient
- C- Standard Error of col A
- D- T-value for Beta
- E- Significance of T (col D)

Table 14
 Discriminant Analysis of High and Low
 Categories of Social Competence as Perceived
 by the Child (Selecting for Males)

Degrees of Freedom Significance					
Wilks' Lambda	0.68	4	1	33	
Equivalent F	3.47		4	30	.020

Variables in the Equation		
Variable	Wilks' Lambda	Significance
Mother's Education	.872	.035
Firm vs Lax control	.785	.021
Acceptance vs Rejection	.404	.012
Parental Cooperation	.684	.020

Classification Results				
Actual Group		No. of Cases	Predicted 1	Group Membership 2
Group 1	1	22	16	6
Low			72.7%	27.3%
Group 2	2	13	4	9
High			30.8%	69.2%

Percent of "Grouped" Cases Correctly Classified: 71.43%

Table 15
 Discriminant Analysis of High and Low
 Categories of Social Competence as Perceived
 by the Child (Selecting for Females)

Degrees of Freedom Significance					
Wilks' Lambda	0.79	3	1	43	
Equivalent F	3.59		3	41	.022

Variables in the Equation		
Variable	Wilks' Lambda	Significance
Parental Cooperation	.865	.013
Mother's Support System	.822	.016
Psychological Control	.792	.022

Classification Results			
Actual Group	No. of Cases	Predicted 1	Group Membership 2
Group 1	22	16	6
Low		72.7%	27.3%
Group 2	23	9	14
High		39.1%	60.9%

Percent of "Grouped" Cases Correctly Classified: 66.67%

Table 16

Discriminant Analysis of High and Low
Categories of Social Competence as Perceived
by the Mother (Selecting for Males)

Degrees of Freedom Significance					
Wilks' Lambda	0.61	4	1	33	
Equivalent F	4.77		4	30	.004

Variables in the Equation		
Variable	Wilks' Lambda	Significance
Mother's Support System	.743	.002
Firm vs Lax Control	.685	.002
Psychological Control	.637	.003
Parental Cooperation	.611	.004

Classification Results				
Actual Group		No. of Cases	Predicted 1	Group Membership 2
Group 1	1	18	14	4
Low			77.8%	22.2%
Group 2	2	17	4	13
High			23.5%	76.5%

Percent of "Grouped" Cases Correctly Classified: 77.14%

CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

This investigation was an assessment of the relations between nine factors within the single-parent family environment and the social competence of male and female children residing in this household. Standardized research measurements were utilized. Condescriptive data were also collected to provide a profile of these families. The predictor variables studied included parental cooperation, mother's support systems, mother's education, family income, child-father relationship, sex of child and three childrearing factors (acceptance versus rejection, firm versus lax control, and psychological autonomy versus psychological control).

Hypotheses 1 through 8 addressed the bivariate relations between each of the predictor variables and the two criterion variables. Hypothesis 9 examined the percentage of the total variability in the criterion measures that could be explained by a combination of the predictor variables. Based on statistical analyses, the findings suggest that these models increased understanding of the factors that relate to differential levels of social competence in children residing in divorced single-parent families.

In this study, children in single-parent families were not compared to children in intact families because differences between these two environments have been previously established. An important difference is the finding that children growing up in single-parent families are more at risk for psychological distress than children from intact

households (Hetherington, 1980; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980).

Concern for the well-being of children whose parents are divorced has led investigators to search for factors within the single-parent family that contribute to positive and negative child outcomes. These efforts have resulted in the identification of several variables that contribute to children's adjustment in single-parent families. Unfortunately, these influences have been identified in separate studies. No single study has incorporated all these variables. This situation has limited discussion of the relative contributions of these factors to children's social competence. Although there has been much speculation regarding the influences of different factors within the single-parent family environment, their role in contributing to child competence has not been empirically demonstrated.

Different variables have been identified as being of primary importance according to the perspective taken by various researchers. Coletta (1979), for example, stated that family income is the most important predictor of overall adjustment of children in single-parent families. Hess and Camara (1979) emphasized that the quality of family relationships following divorce influences child outcomes in this family. The variable identified by Hetherington (1980) as the most significant contributor to children's adjustment is support systems available to the mother. Several researchers (Hetherington et al., 1979; Wallerstein & Kelly; Santrock & Warshak, 1979) have suggested that childrearing practices may be the most significant predictors of child outcomes in this family.

This study incorporated the factors which have been consistently related to children's adjustment in single-parent homes in order to determine which of these variables are the best predictors of child outcomes. It was believed that the findings from this study would empirically establish the role of these variables in contributing to the well-being of children in these families.

Social Competence

Reasoning from the assumption that the well-being of children is reflected in higher levels of social competence, the question addressed in this study was "What configuration of variables best predicts levels of social competence of children in single-parent families?" Based on research wherein social competence has been consistently related to childrearing factors (Baumrind, 1971; Feshbach, 1975; White, 1973) and findings that childrearing factors contribute to children's adjustment to divorce (Santrock & Warshak, 1979), it was hypothesized that custodial childrearing patterns would account for more of the variation in children's social competence than any of the other identified predictors. Other variables chosen for inclusion were those that have been identified as important correlates of child outcomes in single-parent families. These included family income, mother's education, mother's support systems, parental cooperation, the child-father relationship, and the sex of the child.

Childrearing Factors

The results of this study demonstrated that childrearing factors are important predictors of children's social competence in the single-parent household. These results support those of Hess and Camara (1979) who found that relationships between parents and their children are more potent influences of children's behavior than is marital status.

As predicted, parental acceptance was found to be positively related to the child's social competence and psychological control was found to be negatively related. These results are consistent with those of those of Santrock and Warshak's (1979). These investigators noted that, with either father or mother custody, authoritative parenting is positively linked to the child's competent social behavior. Authoritative parenting is marked by low levels of coercion or (psychological control) and high levels of parental warmth or (acceptance versus rejection) (Baumrind, 1971).

Sex Differences in Childrearing Practices

Perhaps the most interesting finding of this investigation was the unexpected sex differences in mother's use of lax control and the relation of this variable to boys' and girls' social competence scores. As previously stated, mothers were more likely to use lax control with their sons than with their daughters, although moderate control was the most frequently used control technique for both sons and daughters. Whereas moderate control was predictive of high social competence scores

for girls, firm control was shown to be a more important predictor of high social competence levels for boys. Moreover, this was the only predictor in the present study that interacted with sex of the child. That is, the sex of the child was found to elicit different levels of lax control from the mother. Furthermore, boys were more affected by this interaction than were girls. The findings of this investigation supports observations of Hetherington et al. (1979) that poor parenting is most apparent in divorced mothers' interactions with their sons. These results also confirm the observations of Hetherington et al. (1978) that divorced mothers are not systematic in enforcing commands given to their sons.

The data from the present study help to clarify findings that divorced parents make fewer maturity demands of their children in relation to married parents. Additionally, these results provide an explanation for the consistent observations of sex differences in child outcomes in single-parent families (Peterson, Leigh, & Day, 1984; Hetherington et al., 1978). The conclusions from these studies were that boys cope less effectively than girls with divorce and separation (Patterson & Leigh, 1984) and that the adverse effects of divorce are more severe and enduring for boys (Hetherington et al., 1978).

The Child-Father Relationship

The detrimental effects of divorce on boys has been most often related to the father's absence from the household. This conclusion is partly based on findings that children living with the opposite sex parent are less well adjusted than children living with the same sex

parent (Biller, 1974; Lynn & Sawrey, 1959; Santrock and Warshak, 1979). Why children are better adjusted in homes wherein the custodial parent is of the same sex has not been determined. Without providing empirical evidence for his position, Biller (1974) theorized that father absence is detrimental to children of both sexes because the fatherless home is without a source of discipline.

The findings of this study both support and contradict the position taken by Biller. These results provided empirical evidence for the link between parental discipline and the child's level of social competence. The use of firm versus lax control by the custodial parent was found to be a significant predictor of the child's competent social behavior. On the other hand, child-father relationship was not found to be significantly related to either measure of the child's social competence. The conclusion, therefore, is that the mother's willingness to exercise control over sons as well as daughters is a more important determinant of social competence than is father absence. These results also support the position taken by Herzog and Sudia (1973) who argued that researchers who had related child outcomes to father absence had overlooked a variety of contextual variables. These writers suggested that the ability of the custodial parent to manage her children may be more important for contributing to child outcomes than the mere presence of both parents.

Childrearing and the Parental Role

Although explanations of sex differences in the single mother's use of firm control require further investigation, they appear to be related to the alteration of the parental role following divorce. Several investigators have suggested that the disengagement of the noncustodial parent following divorce may require the custodial parent to alter the child socialization role (Brandwein et al., 1974; Hetherington, Cox and Cox, 1978; and Longfellow, 1979).

Kurdek (1981) suggested that the reluctance of divorced mothers to assume the authority role in the family may be attributed to belief systems and ideologies regarding family life. Changes in family structure following divorce seem to necessitate certain functional changes in the parental role. The findings in this study point to a need for divorced mothers to assume more authority, particularly in their relationships with their sons. As argued by Kurdek, such changes in the mother's role have the potential for altering not only the outcome of the child but also the nature of the models to which the child is exposed.

In explaining why some single mothers have not assumed the role of authority in the household, Brandwein et al. (1974) suggested that the social conditions which women as a whole are subject to affect the divorced mother with respect to her assumption of authority. From the perspective of these writers, mothers in our culture have not been trained for the role of authority in the home. Because women have not been socialized into the familial authority role does not necessarily

imply that they lack the ability to assume this role. The results of this investigation clearly demonstrate that the majority of single mothers are assuming the role of authority in their relationships with their children. These data also lend support to findings by Kriesberg (1970) that husbandless mothers were more likely to assert more direct control over their children than married mothers.

Parental Cooperation and the Child-Father Relationship

In the previous discussion, the mother's childrearing behaviors were cited as a more important determinant of the child's social competence than was the child-father relationship. That father-child relationship was not directly related to the child's level of social competence provides support for the study by Hetherington et al. (1978) who observed that divorced mothers become increasingly salient relative to divorced fathers in the social, cognitive and personality development of their children. These investigators related the declining influence of the father following divorce to the father's gradual disengagement from the child over time.

These data do not suggest that the child-father relationship does not contribute to the child's level of social competence. Rather, the relationship appears to be an important but indirect one. This conclusion derives from an examination of the correlation between child-father relationship and parental cooperation. Although the child-father relationship did not emerge as a significant predictor of the child's social competence, it was found to be highly correlated with parental cooperation which was a significant predictor of the child's

social competence. Whether this means that parental cooperation promotes the child-father relationship or that the child-father relationship contributes to higher levels of parental cooperation cannot be determined from these data.

The importance of the coparental relationship to the child's social competence appears to be related to its role in contributing to the mother's effectiveness in dealing with her child. Hetherington et al. (1978) found that, in both divorced and intact families, effectiveness in dealing with children is related to support from the other parent in childrearing and agreement with the other parent in matters of discipline.

The identification of the coparental relationship as a primary determinant of the child's social competence is in agreement with Ahron's (1979) conclusion that marital dissolution is less threatening to the child if divorced parents continue a cooperative parental relationship. On the other hand, the results of this study contradict those of Hess and Camara (1979), who found the child-father relationship to be more important in contributing to child outcomes than was the parental relationship. Hess and Camara, however, were measuring the relationship between the parents in terms of the level of discord that exists between them rather than the level of cooperation. Also, their dependent variable, the child's adjustment to divorce, is a more narrowly-defined concept than is social competence.

The finding that parental cooperation is highly correlated with the child-father relationship and predictive of the child's social competence emphasizes the importance of cooperative family interactions following divorce. Pais and White (1979) suggested that, by conceptualizing divorce as a redefinition of family relations, it is possible to look at adjustment to divorce as the process of developing these new definitions. The results of this investigation emphasize the desirability of viewing the divorced family from this perspective.

Mother's Support Systems

The data from this study indicated that the divorced mother's use of support systems significantly predicted their daughter's perceptions of social competence but did not significantly predict their son's perceptions of social competence. The relation between mothers' use of support systems and daughters' level of social competence was a negative one. These results are contradictory to those of other researchers in this area who found mother's support systems to be positively related to her adjustment to divorce and to her childrearing behaviors (Brandwein et al., 1974; Hetherington, et al, 1978; Tessman, 1978). The focus of these researchers was the child's adjustment to divorce. In contrast, this study focused on the child's overall social competence. While it may be desirable for divorced mothers to rely on outside support systems during the difficult period following divorce, the results of the present investigation suggest that it is equally desirable for single mothers to become increasingly more self-reliant and less dependent on support systems once the period of adjustment has passed. Furthermore,

because the use of support systems is related to the presence of stress and difficulty, it could be argued that support systems become increasingly less important to the mother's adjustment and effectiveness for dealing with her child.

That support systems may become less important to the single mother's effectiveness following adjustment to divorce is supported by McLanahan, Wedemeyer and Adelberg (1981). These researchers studied the role of support systems in alleviating the psychological stress associated with divorce and suggested that the postdivorce adjustment process may involve several stages. They further argued that an important stage in this process is the establishment by the divorced person of a new identity. From this viewpoint, it may be assumed that in the case of the divorced mother, acceptance of her identity as a single parent may alleviate much of the psychological stress associated with divorce and thereby decrease her reliance on support systems.

Education of the Mother

The finding that education of the mother is a significant predictor of her child's social competence provides an alternative explanation for (a) the negative relation between the mother's use of support systems and her daughter's perception of social competence; and (b) the absence of a significant relation between mother's use of support systems and her son's perception of social competence. As observed by Chiriboga et al. (1979), divorced persons who are more educated are less likely to depend on relatives and formal support agents.

The complex relations among adjustment to divorce, stress, use of support systems and mother's education do not imply a simplistic solution such as withdrawal of support systems from the single-parent mother. As emphasized by Price-Bonham and Balswick (1980), divorce is a major life transition which results in stress and necessary adjustment. During this period of adjustment, the availability of support systems to the single mother can provide the support she needs in assisting her and her child to adjust to the divorce (Hetherington et al., 1978). The findings from this investigation, nevertheless, emphasize the desirability of the single parent becoming increasingly more self-reliant following divorce.

That education of the divorce mother contributes to her self-reliance and to her child's social competence is apparent. Unfortunately, as noted by Carter and Glick (1976), the highest proportion of persons who are divorced or separated have not completed high school. The under-educated mother appears to be under-prepared for the responsibilities of single parenthood. These single-parent mothers and their children may require the assistance of formal and informal support systems.

Family Income

The data from this study failed to support the findings of Coletta (1979) and the argument of Herzog and Sudia (1973), relating family income to both child outcomes and mother's childrearing practices. Herzog and Sudia (1973) suggested that many of the deleterious effects of divorce could be eliminated if economic stability were provided for

the single mother and her children. Coletta (1979), who compared the effects of father absence and low income, found that income was the key factor, that childrearing practices were more restrictive and more demanding at low income levels.

In contrast to the above findings, the results of this investigation supported those of Hetherington et al. (1978) who found no significant correlations between family income, single parents' interactions with their children or children's behaviors. It may be that, for this sample and the sample of Hetherington et al. (1978), the ranges of income were not great enough to detect the effect of economic stress.

Sex Differences

Differences in the amount of variance in girls' and boys' social competence explained by the predictor variables suggest two possibilities--either the instruments used are more sensitive in measuring the social competence of one of the sexes or other variables are contributing to the social competence of the child of the other sex. In the case of boys' and girls' scores on the child's perception of social competence, it appears that this instrument is more sensitive in measuring boys' social competence than it is for measuring girls' social competence. Although the range of scores for both sexes were comparable, 51% of the girls scored above the mean; whereas, only 37% of the boys scored above the mean. The clustering of girls' scores toward the upper level of social competence reduced the overall variability in these scores and decreased the likelihood of identifying factors

associated with girls' perceptions of social competence.

A similar pattern emerged in scores on the instrument measuring mothers' perceptions of their sons' and daughters' social competence. In this situation, however, the instrument appeared to be more sensitive in measuring the mothers' perceptions of daughters' versus sons' social competence. An examination of the ranges of scores on this instrument, after selecting for sex, demonstrated that mothers discriminated less in their evaluations of their sons' social competence (with a range of 15-27) than in their evaluations of their daughters' social competence (with a range of 11-27).

Summary

The multivariate nature of this study provided answers to questions that have not been addressed in the correlational studies which have previously dominated the research in this area. By comparing the relative contributions of the factors which have been identified as important contributors of children's outcomes in single-parent homes, more accurate statements could be made regarding how parents can contribute to their children's socially competent behavior as well as the role the community can play in providing assistance to these families.

These findings suggest that the traditional method of comparing intact and single-parent families has limited usefulness. More studies such as this are needed which focus on the single-parent family environment after divorce. This approach emphasizes that the

development of the child may only be adequately understood within the context of constant reciprocal interactions between a changing person and his or her changing environment. In attempting to understand the development of the child in the post-divorce environment, it is essential that researchers recognize that divorce is only one of the events impacting the child's overall adjustment.

The results of studies such as this have important implications for court decisions, public policy and legislation. As these data suggest, the quality of the single-parent family environment and the relationships which emerge following marital disruption are at least as important as the divorce itself. These findings also have implications for counseling families who experience divorce. A realization that parental cooperation is an important determination of both the child's satisfaction with the noncustodial parent relationship and the child's social competence may influence parents to work cooperatively for the benefit of the child.

Most importantly, these findings demonstrated that parents who divorce continue to have important roles to play in promoting the social competence of their children.

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APPENDIX A
FAMILY HISTORY QUESTIONNAIRE

FAMILY HISTORY QUESTIONNAIRE

ID NUMBER _____

1. Child's Sex _____ Male _____ Female
2. Child's Birthdate _____
3. Parent's Birthdate _____
4. Date of Marital Separation (Month & Year) _____
5. How many children are presently living in your household? _____
6. What was your approximate family income from all sources before taxes in 1984? _____
7. How many years of school altogether have you completed? Please circle the number of years.

Elementary 1	High School 9	College 13
2	10	14 14
3	11	15
4	12	16
5		17 or more
6		
7		
8		

8. One of the ways families differ is in the number of groups that are available to provide assistance to them. Help or assistance may consist of such things as financial help (money, restaurant meals, groceries, household items or other purchases), emotional help (time given to you in the form of listening, giving advice and/or expressing understanding and care), practical help (providing services to you such as babysitting, fixing things around the house, repairing the car or running errands).

Listed on the next page are several types of groups that sometimes provide these types of help to parents. Please check how often each of these groups provide help to you.

Please Circle One Choice for Each of the Following Areas.

a. Family Members (Excluding Child's Father)

Never	Usually Does Not	Sometimes But Not Frequently	Often	Always or Almost Always
-------	---------------------	------------------------------------	-------	----------------------------

b. Church Groups

Never	Usually Does Not	Sometimes But Not Frequently	Often	Always or Almost Always
-------	---------------------	------------------------------------	-------	----------------------------

c. Friends and/or Neighbors

Never	Usually Does Not	Sometimes But Not Frequently	Often	Always or Almost Always
-------	---------------------	------------------------------------	-------	----------------------------

d. Agency and Community Supports (Any of the following--Aid to Dependent Children, Parents Without Partners, Suddenly Single--plus any others which come to mind)

Never	Usually Does Not	Sometimes But Not Frequently	Often	Always or Almost Always
-------	---------------------	------------------------------------	-------	----------------------------

9. When parents are divorced, they often have occasion to discuss the child regarding such matters as financial support, visitation schedules, the child's illnesses or other concerns, and positive feelings regarding the child. How cooperative would you say you and the child's father are regarding these matters?

Please Circle One Choice From Each of the Following Areas

a. Financial Support

Never or Almost Never	Usually Not	Sometimes But Not Often	Usually	Always or Almost Always
--------------------------	----------------	----------------------------	---------	----------------------------

b. Visitation Schedules

Never or Almost Never	Usually Not	Sometimes But Not Often	Usually	Always or Almost Always
--------------------------	----------------	----------------------------	---------	----------------------------

c. Special Concerns Regarding the Child (Such as Problems in School, illnesses, Need for Dental Work, etc.)

Never or Almost Never	Usually Not	Sometimes But Not Often	Usually	Always or Almost Always
--------------------------	----------------	----------------------------	---------	----------------------------

d. Sharing of Positive Feelings About the Child (Child's Achievements, Photographs of Child, etc.)

Never or Almost Never	Usually Not	Sometimes But Not Often	Usually	Always or Almost Always
--------------------------	----------------	----------------------------	---------	----------------------------

10. Does your child have contact with his/her father?

Yes _____ (Continue to next question)

No _____ (Skip rest of questions)

11. The relationship children have with parents who live outside the home differs from one family to another. We are interested in determining the quality of your child's relationship with his/her father. Please rate your child's satisfaction with the father in the following areas:

Please Circle One Choice for Each of the Following

a. Time Spent With Father

Enthusiastic	No Complaints	A Few Complaints	Many Complaints
--------------	---------------	------------------	-----------------

b. Father's Handling of Discipline

Enthusiastic	No Complaints	A Few Complaints	Many Complaints
--------------	---------------	------------------	-----------------

c. Child's Ability to Express Areas of Concern With Father

Enthusiastic	No Complaints	A Few Complaints	Many Complaints
--------------	---------------	------------------	-----------------

d. Affection and Encouragement Received from Father

Enthusiastic	No Complaints	A Few Complaints	Many Complaints
--------------	---------------	------------------	-----------------

APPENDIX B

THE ACHENBACH CHILD BEHAVIOR CHECKLIST

PLEASE NOTE:

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These consist of pages:

APPENDIX B: 116-118

APPENDIX C: 120-123

APPENDIX D: 125-130

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APPENDIX C

THE PERCEIVED COMPETENCE SCALE FOR CHILDREN

APPENDIX D

CHILD'S REPORT OF PARENTAL BEHAVIOR INVENTORY

APPENDIX E
LETTERS OF CONSENT

I, Phyllis Heath, a doctoral student at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, am engaged in research and would like to have your participation. You will be asked some general questions about yourself, your family, and your child. Next, you will be asked to respond to a questionnaire developed for boys and girls to find out how the child is doing at home, at school and with friends. In order to have a more complete picture of your family, I will also request that your child complete a questionnaire that asks how he/she feels he/she is doing in these areas. The child will also be asked to complete a questionnaire designed to find out his or her viewpoint regarding family life.

Yours and your child's participation in this study is voluntary. You and your child may choose to refrain from answering any or all of the questions. Either of you may withdraw from the study at any time. The information you give me about your family environment is strictly confidential. The forms used to record your answers will not have your names on them. An identification number will be put on each of the forms.

When this study is completed, the findings will be available to you if you are interested in knowing them. I will be able to mail you a copy of the major findings. Please indicate if you would like to have a copy mailed to you by signing your name at the bottom of the page in the appropriate place.

It is important that I have your written consent to participate in this study. If you give your consent to participate, please sign your name.

I, _____, do choose to participate in this study.
 Parent's Signature

I, _____, would like to have a copy of the results.
 Parent's Signature

Address _____

Date _____

I, Phyllis Heath, a doctoral student at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, have some forms I would like you to fill out for me so that I can find out how you feel about certain things.

Being in this study is your choice. You may choose not to answer any or all questions. You may withdraw from this study at any time.

What you tell me about yourself and your family will not be shared with anyone else. I will not put your name on the forms you fill out but will put a number instead.

It is important that I have your written consent to be in the study. If you choose to be in this study, please sign your name.

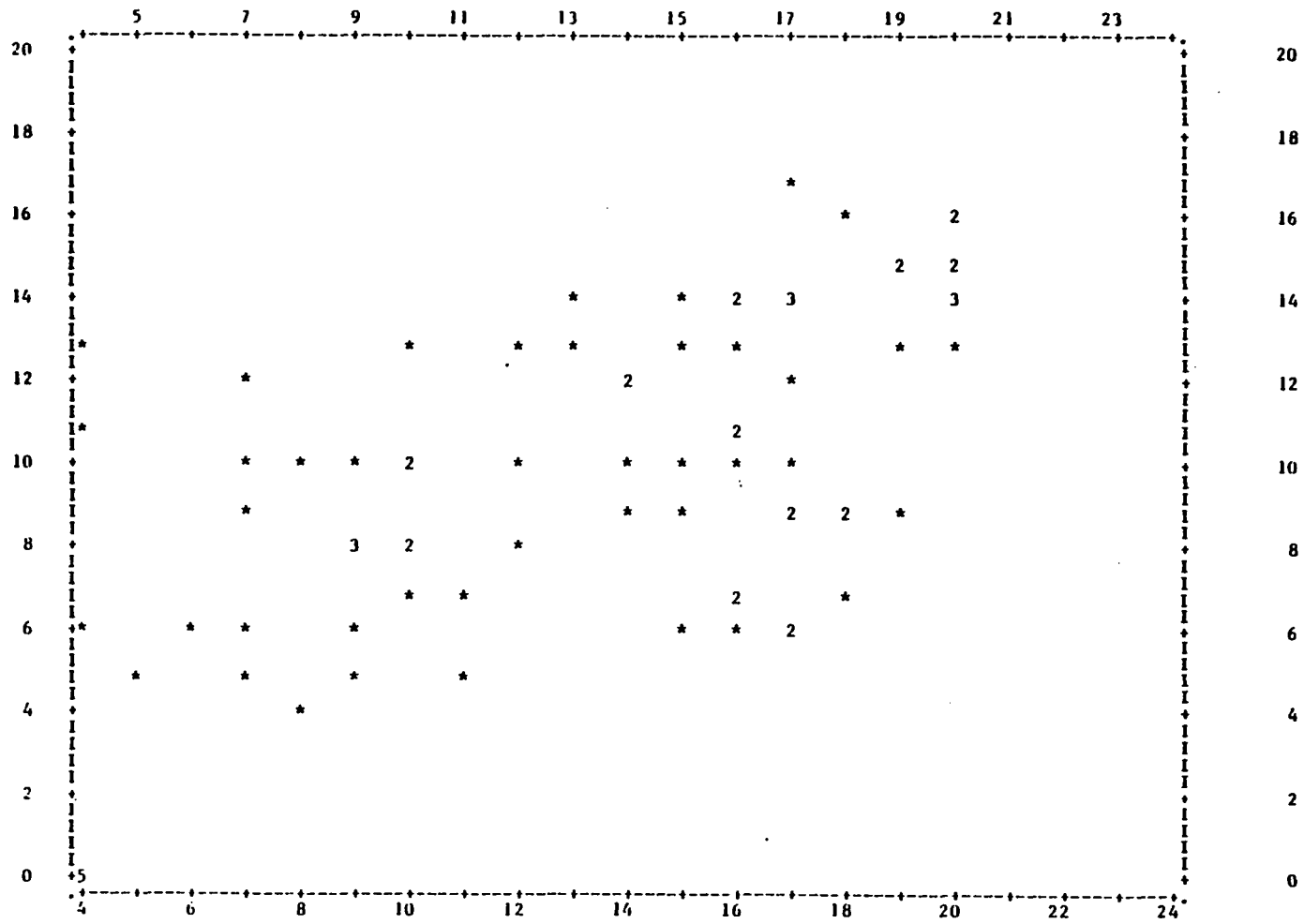
I, _____, do choose to be in this study.

Date

Appendix F

Figure 1

Figure 1
Scattergram of Scores on Child-Father Relationship and Parental Cooperation



STATISTICS..					
CORRELATION (R)-	.65088	R SQUARED -	.42364	SIGNIFICANCE -	.00000
STD ERR OF EST -	3.14947	INTERCEPT (A) -	2.83702	SLOPE (B) -	.52635
PLOTTED VALUES -	80	EXCLUDED VALUES -	0	HISSTIC VALUES -	0