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THE IMPACT OF A TELEPHONE WARM LINE
ON LATCHKEY CHILDREN

DISSERTATION

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A prevention-oriented telephone line intended as an intervention program for latchkey children was studied to determine its impact on the self-esteem, anxiety level, and in-school and at-home behavior of these children. The sample consisted of 75 suburban, fourth- and sixth-grade latchkey children in the North Texas area. Instruments used in the study included the Coopersmith Inventory, School Form; the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory for Children, Form C-1; the Behavior Rating Form; and the At-Home Behavior.

A *t*-test comparison of the pre-test scores of the 24 fourth graders and the 51 sixth graders showed that the fourth graders exhibited a significantly higher level of after-school anxiety. No significant differences were found in the other dependent variables. After attrition, 62 students (21 fourth graders and 41 sixth graders) were available for post-testing. An ANCOVA analysis of the data found no significant differences on the four dependent variables among latchkey children who never called the warm line, who called one or two times, and who called three or more times. Multiple ANCOVA analysis of the mean scores of the fourth graders and sixth graders who called the warm line any number of times revealed no significant differences between the two groups on the four dependent variables.

It was concluded that, for this sample of children, the warm line had no impact on the specified variables. Factors suggested as contributing to this conclusion included the small number of children who voluntarily called the line, the general perception of this suburb as being relatively safe, and the possibility that permission to participate was granted mainly by parents comfortable with the latchkey arrangement. It was discovered that although these fourth graders had a higher anxiety level after school, they were less likely to call the warm line than were the sixth graders. Recommendations were made for intervention programs and for future research.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The term "latchkey child" is used frequently to describe a growing number of American children. These youngsters have been described by various authors (Elkind, 1981; Galambos & Garbarino, 1982; Long & Long, 1982, 1983a, 1983b; Simons & Bohlen, 1982; Stroman & Duff, 1982), all of whom refer to children who are regularly without adult supervision for a part of the day.

As Stroman and Duff (1982) pointed out, the problem of unsupervised children has probably existed as long as the family has been recognized as a social unit. However, they became more highly visible in this country during World War II when fathers were away from home in the military and mothers began joining the labor force in large numbers. The term "latchkey" was applied to these children as they often wore a housekey on a chain or string around their necks in order to permit them to gain independent entry into their homes.

Because of this high visibility, professionals began to focus on the phenomenon. In March 1943, the central theme of the Annual American Association of School Administrators was the plight of "door key" children (Stroman & Duff, 1982). Zucker (1944) called the latchkey children of the war years the "problem adolescents-to-be in the 1950's and . . . maladjusted parents-to-be in the 1960's" (p. 43). Many of the concerns described by Zucker are still expressed today.

The trend of women working outside the home did not reverse after the war. Between 1940 and 1976, the number of employed mothers increased more than five-fold (Long & Long, 1982). Simons and Bohem (1982) documented the steady climb of labor force participation of ever-married women with children ages 6 to 17 from 2,276,000 (27.3%) in 1947 to 10,925,000 (64.3%) in 1980. By 1985, 69.9% of women with children ages 6 to 13 were participating in the labor force (United States Bureau of Labor, 1985).

A survey of the after-school care of school-age children was conducted in December 1984 by the United States Bureau of the Census (1987a). Of children 5 to 13 years old enrolled in school, about 2.1 million (7.2%) were described as being in self- or nonadult-care after school. When the mother worked full-time, the percentage rose to 13.5. The proportion of children without adult supervision varied markedly by age. Only 3.2% of children 5 to 8 years old had no adult supervision after school while 8.5% of the 9 to 11 year olds and 12.5% of the 12 to 13 year olds fell into this category. When the mother worked full-time, the percentages rose to 6.0, 15.8, and 21.7, respectively.

An additional study (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1987b, May) reported data from only working mothers. Of children ages 5 to 14 whose mothers worked, over one million (20.0%) cared for themselves. When the mothers were employed full-time, the percentage rose to 21.3.

Current researchers (Hedin, Su, Hannes, Saito, Goldman, & Knick, 1986; Steinberg, 1986; Vandell & Corasaniti, 1985) have found even higher percentages of "latchkey" children. Depending on age, sex, type of maternal employment, and definition of nonadult supervision, findings ranged from

23% to 80%. The discrepancies among these figures may be due to "some level of deliberate misreporting on child supervision because of a perceived illegality of leaving children unattended (child neglect), fear for children's safety, and a perception of social undesirability associated with forms of child care labelled 'latchkey'" (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1987a, p. 5).

Changes in the American family are contributing factors to the large numbers of latchkey children. Packard (1983) mentioned the "surge of married women—including millions of mothers—into jobs outside the home" (p. xx) and the "great increase in the splitting up of parents" (p. xx) resulting in single-parent households as contributing factors. Other trends include fewer adult caretakers in the child's environment and smaller families (Galambos & Garbarino, 1983). It is predicted that by the end of the 1980's two out of every three mothers will be employed (Long & Long, 1982) and that the population of children ages 5 to 13 will rise to 35 million by the year 2000 (Stroman & Duff, 1982). These trends and forecasts suggest that the ranks of latchkey children will continue to be large in the coming years unless steps are taken to allow working parents more alternatives to their child-care problems.

Numerous circumstances can lead to the self-care arrangement even when it is felt that adult supervision would be more beneficial. Problems arise for working parents as school schedules usually fail to overlap with their work schedules. After-school programs are difficult to find and/or offer no transportation. Day-care centers may not accept older children because of a lack of suitable recreational facilities (Long & Long, 1983a, 1983b; Stroman & Duff, 1982).

There may be no desirable alternatives to the latchkey situation. The lack of extended family members in the home or of involved neighbors rules out free care for many. Formal services that are available may be too expensive, inconvenient or of poor quality (Garbarino, 1982; Long & Long, 1982, 1983a; Stroman & Duff, 1982; Weiss, 1979).

Situational changes can precipitate the decision to leave a child unsupervised (Long & Long, 1983a; Weiss, 1979). A family may be unaware of services available after a move to a new community. If a baby-sitter moves or is no longer available, new arrangements may be difficult to find.

Maturity level of the child also influences the parental decision to leave a child in self-care. At about age 10, children often begin to assert that they are responsible enough to care for themselves (Long & Long, 1983a). According to Hedin et al. (1986), parental desire for child care decreases dramatically after children finish the third grade, suggesting a belief that many children of that age are able to care for themselves.

There can be problems when children are left in self-care, and parents are warned against rushing a child into responsibilities prematurely (Elkind, 1981; Garbarino, 1980; Long & Long, 1982). Garbarino (1980) listed four possible negative outcomes of the latchkey experience: (a) feelings of rejection, (b) delinquent behavior, (c) accidents, and (d) sexual victimization. Children left by themselves commonly fear that someone bad may break into the house (Hedin et al., 1986; Zill, 1983). During the preadolescent and adolescent years, lack of adult supervision along with heightened peer pressure may encourage experimentation with drugs, alcohol, and sex (Long & Long, 1983a; Steinberg, 1986; Stroman & Duff, 1983).

Major concerns of the parents of latchkey children are the safety of the neighborhood (Garbarino, 1980; Long & Long, 1983a; Medrich, Roizen, Rubin, & Buckley, 1982) and the possibility of injury to the child (Hedin et al., 1986). Long and Long (1983a) and Hedin et al. (1986) listed other parental concerns such as the child's emotional needs not being met, the effect of the latchkey arrangement on school performance, and the child watching too much television.

There are also potentially positive benefits to the latchkey experience. Some researchers see it as an opportunity for the child to develop independence and responsibility (Elkind, 1981; Garbarino, 1980; Long & Long, 1982). In their handbook, the Longs (1983a) listed benefits for both the children and their parents. Packard (1983) pointed out that many latchkey children don't mind that their mothers work and may even be proud of their careers. They just don't like coming home to an empty house. Hedin et al. (1986) found in their study that most children in self- or sibling-care find being home alone quite pleasurable.

In an effort to alleviate the potential negative consequences of the latchkey experience, programs specifically developed to offer aid to families who, for various reasons, must use self-care as the main form of child care are being instituted. While such programs are not yet universal, efforts are being made by some businesses, communities, schools, and youth organizations to fill this need (Long & Long, 1983a).

A telephone "warm" line for latchkey children is one such program. The first free telephone line to provide prevention-oriented support for these children was PhoneFriend, introduced in 1982 in State College, Pennsylvania

(Guerney & Moore, 1983). Since that time numerous warm lines have been established throughout the country.

The concept of a "warm" line is different from that of a "hot" line in that it is not crisis oriented. Crisis situations are referred to other support organizations or personnel within the community who are equipped to handle them. The warm line provides support and information for children at home without adult supervision. Children call for a host of reasons--for information, for help with homework, for help in getting along with siblings, for medical problems, to discuss sensitive issues, and to report crimes. The largest number of calls seem to be associated with feeling lonely, scared, or bored. The warm line volunteer can listen empathically, help in problem solving, or refer the child to another service (Guerney & Moore, 1983).

In Dallas, the warm line concept was initiated by the Dallas Association for the Education of Young Children (DAEYC). A task force of agencies and persons involved with school-age children developed KIDTALK, a telephone warm line which was implemented by the Lone Star Council of Camp Fire on September 2, 1986 (Appendix A). The line is accessible to all telephones in the 214 area code, which includes all of Dallas County and beyond.

Research studies conducted to date on latchkey children have centered on the effects of being a latchkey child. No published research was found that had investigated the impact of programs developed to provide aid to latchkey children. Nor was any research located that compared individual characteristics of latchkey children before and after a telephone warm line was implemented. L. F. Guerney, one of the originators of the warm line

concept (personal communication, Aug. 28, 1985), stated that she was not aware of any research that had evaluated the impact of a warm line on the characteristics of latchkey children.

It is believed that the impact of the latchkey experience can be influenced by programs specifically developed for these children. Research is needed to determine whether individual characteristics such as self-esteem, anxiety level, and behavior can indeed be moderated by programs for children in self-care. If the latchkey experience does have negative consequences, as indicated by some authors (Elkind, 1981; Garbarino, 1980; Long & Long, 1983a; Stroman & Duff, 1983), can intervention approaches directly aimed at providing information and/or support for latchkey children make the experience more positive? If they can, are specific approaches more effective with younger latchkey children than with older ones or vice versa? If intervention is deemed necessary to help latchkey children have a more positive experience, what elements are needed to make the programs most effective? The present research addressed these questions to provide useful information for professionals designing programs aimed at curtailing the potential negative impact of the latchkey experience.

Literature Review

Interest in latchkey children has been on the increase as more and more mothers of school-age children return to work. In 1972, Woods reported that until that time "supervision, or lack of it, has not been investigated in depth as it relates to maternal employment" (p. 14). While the popular press has published numerous articles on the subject (e.g., Berman, 1986; Farrell,

1984; Gallogly, 1983; Harper, 1983; Kaercher, 1985; Wellborn, 1981), professional studies are still lacking. Only a few published empirical studies related to latchkey children could be located for the years between 1972 and 1986. Apparently none were published before 1972.

Woods (1972) sampled 108 fifth-grade children of employed mothers attending school in the Black ghetto of North Philadelphia. The children were classified into four supervised and four unsupervised groups determined by whether or not the child was supervised by a mature individual (18 years old or older) during critical periods of the school day and during summer vacation. Data were gathered by using psychological tests, teacher ratings, school records, community records, and maternal interviews.

Results indicated that there may be significant differences in personality and intellectual functioning between supervised and unsupervised children of employed mothers. For girls, in particular, more significant differences were found than would be accounted for by chance. Unsupervised girls exhibited higher deficits in school achievement and in intelligence quotients than did their supervised counterparts. They also exhibited more difficulty in school relations. The unsupervised girls perceived their mothers as less controlling and intrusive than did the supervised girls. Significantly more girls than boys reported a lack of supervision. Teachers at the school were unable to distinguish between the supervised and unsupervised children on adjective check lists. The unsupervised children were not more delinquent, did not need emergency treatment more often, did not have more school absences or tardiness, did not have more psychological referrals, nor exhibit more nonconforming

behavior than did the supervised children. Children reporting adult supervision appeared to be more self-reliant and to have a greater sense of personal freedom.

A positive mother-child relationship, high maternal quality, and a positive attitude by the mother toward her job had positive influences on the sample children's personal and social adjustment whether they were supervised or not. Children whose mothers worked full-time achieved the best social adjustment and intelligence scores of the group. Woods' study (1972) is limited in that it sampled only Black, lower-class children.

Gold and Andres (1978) compared 10-year-old children of employed and unemployed mothers. The 223 children comprising the sample were from two-parent families and were separated into eight groups according to employment status of the mother, socioeconomic class (working or middle), and sex. No attempt seems to have been made to control for ethnic group. While not all the results were relevant to children in self-care, the researchers found that unsupervised sons of employed mothers (a group of 16--11 from middle class, 5 from working class) were consistently lower than supervised sons of employed mothers (a group of 34) on all adjustment and academic achievement test scores. However, none of the differences reached significance.

Galambos and Garbarino (1982) studied fifth- and seventh-grade rural children in order to ascertain how a lack of supervision affects a child's social adjustment, academic achievement, orientation to the classroom, and fear of going outdoors alone. Seventy-seven children (39 fifth graders and 38 seventh graders) were divided into three groups--unsupervised and adult-supervised children of employed mothers and children supervised by

unemployed mothers. No significant differences were found among the groups on measures of academic achievement, school adjustment, or fear of going outdoors alone. The researchers concluded that, in a rural area relatively safe from crime, the latchkey children were not any more or less socially and academically adjusted and fearful than children who were regularly supervised.

Long and Long (1982) conducted semi-structured interviews with 85 Black children, grades 1 through 6, at a parochial school in Washington, D.C. Fifth-three were considered latchkey children. Of these, 38 children stayed by themselves, and 15 were supervised by an older sibling. The average age of a supervising sibling was 12 years 10 months. Thirty-two children were supervised by adults. The latchkey children consisted of 26 females and 27 males. The adult-supervised children consisted of 18 females and 14 males. The alone latchkey children were without adult supervision an average of 2 1/4 hours each weekday. Children at home with siblings were without adult supervision for 1/2 to 5 1/2 hours per day. The average time spent without adult supervision for these children was 3 hours a day.

The Longs (1982) drew several conclusions concerning Black, urban, elementary school children similar to those in the study. Probably one out of every three could be considered a latchkey child and was likely to be residing with a single parent. The usual sign of a latchkey child was the carrying of a housekey. Children left totally alone (without siblings) were given better safety instructions, taught better in survival skills, and given more established consistent routines than were children left at home with siblings or with an adult. Self-care children were also generally better

equipped to be personally effective in case of an emergency than were adult-care children. The latchkey experience could seriously curtail the socializing play of children. Ones who stayed home alone without continuous companionship ran a one in three chance of developing substantial fear responses (e.g., recurring nightmares, fear of noises, fear of the dark, fear for personal safety). Fear responses could be reduced by a close, concerned, interactive parent-child relationship and by providing the child with a pet.

Children ages 7 through 11 were asked by Zill (1983) if they worried when they had to stay home without any grownups to watch them. "Yes" was the answer of 32% of the boys and 41% of the girls. The most common fears of the "yes" group were (a) that someone bad might get into the house (boys, 62%; girls, 75%), (b) their parents arguing (boys, 48%; girls, 56%), and (c) thunder and lightning (girls, 46%).

In two of their studies (Long & Long, 1983a, 1983b), the Longs reported interviewing 75 former latchkey children who were then adults. The average time spent as a latchkey child was 9 years. Nearly one-half reported at least one serious incident occurring while they were alone. Twenty percent were categorized as "casualties" of the latchkey experience (i.e., long-term negative impacts were still affecting them as adults). Specifically, they complained that the high levels of fear resulted in current hiding, sleeplessness, and nightmares; the intense feelings of isolation resulted in current depression and strong feelings of rejection; and the acceptance of too much responsibility resulted in current feelings of bitterness, resentment, and anger.

Vandell and Corasaniti's (1985) research examined the possible effects of the latchkey situation on a fairly large sample of children from a

relatively affluent, suburban area. They were also interested in determining if there were differences in children who were in different types of after school arrangements. Their sample consisted of 349 third graders from seven elementary schools in a suburban community in the North Texas area. Demographic data showed the group to be mainly from white, well-educated, intact families. Sixty-nine percent of the mothers were employed outside the home. After school, 54% of these children returned home to mother, 11% attended an after-school program at a day-care or community center, 7% had a sitter at their own or the sitter's home, 5% stayed with a relative who was not the mother, 16% returned home to a sibling, and 7% returned home alone. As reflected in the last two figures, 23% of these third graders qualified as latchkey children.

The researchers used four sets of outcome measures related to: (a) how the children viewed themselves--The Perceived Competence Scale for Children (Harter, 1982), (b) how they were viewed by their peers--sociometric nominations, (c) how they were viewed by their teachers--factor analysis of a 32 item questionnaire that used a five-point scale, and (d) how they were viewed by their parent--factor analysis of a 33 item questionnaire similar to the one used by the teachers. The sample children were divided into four groups based on type of after-school care: at home with mother, in self-care (alone or with siblings), at a day-care or community center, and with a babysitter.

The most salient results to come from the study, according to Vandell and Corasaniti (1985), were that: (a) There was a high incidence of children in alternative after-school care with the most common type (used by 23% of the families) meeting the criteria of latchkey care; (b) there were no

differences found according to social class, marital status, or race in families' decisions about the type of alternative after-school care they were using beyond going home to mother; and (c) latchkey children of both intact and single-parent families and children going home to mother appeared to be functioning similarly, while, for intact families, those children attending day-care centers or staying with sitters appeared to be doing more poorly.

Vandell and Corasaniti (1985) offered several possible explanations for these results. It was possible that self-selection was being done by the parents by choosing latchkey arrangements only for those children that they thought had sufficient maturity and responsibility to stay without an adult present. There may also have been negative factors associated with the center and sitter experiences which affected the results of this study, such as activities that were inappropriate for third graders and fostered less than adequate development; or the placing of the children in a structured, school-like setting for too long a period during the day without a balance of active and quiet times as found in day care for younger children. The authors suggested a third possibility that needs to be tested. "It may be that self-care or latchkey care can be a positive experience for some children relative to center care" (Vandell & Corasaniti, 1985, p. 11). Further study would be needed in order to determine for which children and under what circumstances latchkey care might be beneficial.

Rodman, Pratto, and Nelson (1985) reported on a study they conducted in the Piedmont area of North Carolina. Twenty-six pairs of fourth graders and 22 pairs of seventh graders were matched on age, sex, race, family composition (one parent vs. two parents), and social status (father's

occupation as major indicator). One member of each pair was identified as being in self-care after school while the other member was identified as being in adult care. A standardized interview schedule was used with each child to obtain demographic data and the nature of the child-care arrangement. The Self-Esteem Inventory (Coopersmith, 1967) and the Personal Reaction Survey (Nowicki & Strickland, 1973) were also completed by each child. The homeroom teacher for each child completed a Behavior Rating Form (Coopersmith, 1967).

The researchers found no significant differences between the self-care and the adult-care children on the measures of children's social and psychological functioning. They stated that this suggested that "the growing public and professional concern about the negative effects of self-care arrangements . . . is premature and may not be warranted" (Rodman et al., 1985, p. 417).

Steinberg (1986) criticized Rodman et al. (1985) for limiting their study to children who usually went home after school, thereby excluding a large number of children in self-care who didn't go directly home. His study extended the one done by Rodman et al. with two very important departures. First, measures were included that permitted differentiation among latchkey children -- whether the parents were home or not, where latchkey children spent their time after school, and how the children were (or were not) supervised by the parents *in absentia*. Second, the study focused not on elements of personality, but on susceptibility to peer pressure, especially as it applied to involvement in deviant or dangerous activities.

The subjects consisted of a heterogenous sample of 865 urban school district students in grades 5, 6, 8, and 9. The students were equally divided

between boys and girls. The sample was predominantly white ranging in age from 10 through 16. Two-thirds of the students lived with both natural parents. Eighty-four percent of the mothers worked either full- or part-time. Forty-four percent of the boys and 38% of the girls were classified as being unsupervised by adults. All the students answered a battery of questionnaires administered in classroom-size groups.

When analyses that replicated those of Rodman and his colleagues (1985) were done to compare susceptibility to peer pressure of adolescents at home alone to those at home with an adult or an older sibling, no significant differences were found for boys or girls. However, when analyses were done which took into consideration a variety of self-care settings, the picture changed.

For both boys and girls, the more removed the adolescent's after-school situation was from an adult environment, the more susceptible he or she was to peer pressure, with adolescents who hung out after school more susceptible than those who went to a friend's house, who were, in turn, more susceptible than those who returned to their own homes. Adolescents in self-care who went home after school were far more likely to report that their parents knew their whereabouts each afternoon than ones who went to an unsupervised friend's house or spent their time hanging out. Steinberg (1986) reported that, "It is the self-care adolescents who are psychologically as well as physically distant from their parents who hold up the least well in the face of peer pressure to engage in antisocial behavior" (p. 437).

Parental permissiveness was found to be significantly correlated with adolescents' susceptibility to peer pressure, but was only a small part of the relationship between susceptibility to peer pressure and after-school

experiences. It appeared, however, that authoritative parenting (high responsiveness coupled with high demandingness) buffered the impact of peer pressure. Steinberg (1986) noted that "the less distal supervision an adolescent receives during after-school hours, the more important it is for him or her to have been raised authoritatively" (p. 437).

Steinberg (1986) concluded that his study demonstrated that there are important differences within the self-care population and that "variations within the latchkey population . . . are more important than are variations between adult care and self-care, broadly defined" (p. 438).

Hedin, Su, Hannes, Saito, Goldman, and Knick (1986) conducted a study that looked at the scope of the latchkey phenomenon in the Greater Minneapolis area. They were also interested in learning how children in grades K through 8 spent their time after school and in getting a perspective of these issues from both parents and students. Questionnaires were answered by parents of students in grades K through 8 (1,212) and by students in grades 4 through 8 (1,281). Group discussions were held with approximately 40 parents and approximately 800 students. The vast majority of the participants were white. In the suburbs, 94% fell into the middle and upper-middle income categories. In Minneapolis proper, 44% fell into the low and lower-middle income categories, while 47% placed themselves in the middle income category.

The researchers found that in their sample about 50% of the children in grades K through 3, about 65% of the children in grades 4 through 6, and about 80% of the children in grades 7 and 8 were usually (3 to 5 days a week) or sometimes (1 to 2 days a week) at home without adult supervision. Families least likely to use self- or sibling-care were two-parent families

where only the father worked or single-parent families where the parent was unemployed. Families most likely to use self- or sibling-care were ones in which all adults in the family worked full-time.

When asked what the right age would be for self-care, both parents and children agreed on 9 1/2 years old for less than 2 hours. Parents preferred 11 1/2 years old for more than 2 hours, while the children thought 10 1/2 or 11 would be appropriate.

Most of the children in grades 4 through 8 (80%) liked being home alone. The only exceptions to this pattern were among the lowest income, minority, urban, elementary children from single-parent families, 50% of whom said they did "not at all" like being home alone (Hedin et al., 1986, p. 2). The children did express concerns about being home alone after school. In response to the closed-ended survey questions, students in grades 4 through 6 were highly concerned about getting hurt, being kidnapped, getting involved with the wrong kind of friends, getting into fights, and being abused. Junior high students (grades 7 and 8) ranked being bored, wasting time, and not finishing chores and homework as their greatest concerns. In the group settings, the number one concern expressed was "a fear of someone breaking into their home and robbing and/or hurting them" (p. 3).

Hedin and her colleagues (1986) gave three possible explanations for the apparent discrepancies between the generally positive feelings about being home alone and the expressed worries and concerns. The children might have felt ambivalent about freedom vs. adult protection. For low income, urban youth (especially girls), fears of being victimized were very real and close to the surface and might have overshadowed the benefits of being on one's own. For the other populations, fears related to the

productive use of time and less serious issues which were outweighed by the pleasures of being home alone.

Parents were more homogeneous in their worries and prioritized them differently than the children. Concern about injuries to their children was the highest choice (80%). Also chosen (in descending order) were watching too much television, getting involved with the wrong kind of friends, being kidnapped, and being sexually abused.

The survey showed a dramatic decrease in the perceived need for paid child care after a child finished the third grade. For grades K through 3, 38% of the parents expressed a need for care after school; while for grades 4 through 6, only 15% of the parents expressed a need. Participation in after-school programs was examined with different perceptions on amount of, definition of, and barriers to participation expressed by the children than by the parents.

The authors concluded that the majority of children in grades K through 8 could be considered latchkey children. The environmental context in which they lived was perhaps the most important factor in how they adjusted in self- or sibling-care. The vast majority of the children enjoyed being home alone, but many of the parents would have liked to reduce their reliance on self-care. A final conclusion is worth quoting in full:

Since large numbers of children are home alone and this trend will probably accelerate, schools, churches, youth-serving agencies should respond to both children's and parents' interest in courses or workshops which help young people cope with being home alone. The programs should be targeted at 4-6th graders and ideally would involve both parents and their children. While there are purists who argue that offering such educational programs will only increase the number of children on their own, self-sibling care is a fact of life in the 80's and will not go away. (Hedin et al., 1986, p. 7)

Summary

As more and more mothers join the work force, the large numbers of latchkey children (viz., children who are without adult supervision for a part of the day) is a concern for our modern society. Various circumstances, such as a lack of family or neighborhood support, unavailability of after-school programs or day care, or perceived maturity of the child, can lead parents to depend on self- or sibling-care as the main form of care for their children.

Only within the last 15 years have empirical studies concerning latchkey children begun to appear. The majority of these have been conducted since 1982. Most of the studies were done in urban areas. Participating children ranged from the first through the ninth grade with the fourth through seventh grades being the ones on which the most focus was placed. Percentages of children who were classified as being in a latchkey situation ranged from 23% of third graders (Vandell & Corasaniti, 1985) to 80% of seventh and eighth graders (Hedin et al., 1986).

When these children were compared to adult-supervised children, the results indicated no significant differences in academic achievement, school adjustment, or fear of going out doors (Galambos & Garbarino, 1982); in social, emotional, and intellectual development as compared to children who went home to their mothers after school (Vandell & Corasaniti, 1985); or in social and psychological functioning (Rodman et al., 1985).

Steinberg (1986) also found no significant differences in susceptibility to peer pressure when comparing self-care adolescents to adult-supervised adolescents (broadly defined). However, he did find significant differences when a variety of self-care settings, parental involvement, and parenting

style were taken into consideration. This led him to conclude that the variations within the latchkey population are more important than simply defining whether a child is in self- or adult-care.

Unsupervised girls have been found to have deficits in school achievement and intelligence quotients compared to their supervised counterparts (Woods, 1972). Gold and Andres (1978) found that 10-year-old, unsupervised sons of employed mothers were consistently lower on adjustment and academic achievement measures than supervised ones, although not significantly.

Negative effects noted in the reviewed literature included the curtailing of socializing play, the chance of developing fear responses, and long-term negative effects as adults (Long & Long, 1982, 1983a). Hedin et al. (1986) noted that low income, minority, urban, elementary children from single-parent homes had realistic fears about their personal safety causing 50% to not like being alone at all.

The number one worry of latchkey children seemed to be the fear that someone would get into the house robbing and/or hurting them (Hedin et al., 1986; Zill, 1983). Children mentioned fears of noise, of the dark, and for their personal safety to the Longs (1982). Parental concerns included the possibility of injury to the child (Hedin et al., 1986), the safety of the neighborhood (Garbarino, 1980; Medrich et al., 1982), the emotional needs of the child not being met, and the effect of the situation on school performance (Long & Long, 1983a).

Positive effects of the latchkey experience were noted by various researchers. Vandell and Corasaniti (1985) reported that the latchkey situation may be a positive experience relative to the experience of children

in center care. Rodman et al. (1985) concluded from their research that the public and professional concern about the negative effects of the latchkey experience may be premature and unwarranted. Hedin et al. (1986) noted that 80% of fourth- through eighth-grade children in self- or sibling-care enjoyed being home without adult supervision.

Positive influences on children, whether supervised or not, seemed to be a good mother-child relationship, high maternal quality, a positive attitude of the mother toward her job, and full-time employment of the mother (Woods, 1972). Steinberg (1986) stressed that authoritative parenting (high responsiveness coupled with high demandingness) seemed to buffer the impact of peer influence to engage in antisocial activities. The Longs (1982) suggested that a good parent-child relationship and providing the child with a pet can help reduce fear responses.

The literature on latchkey children is mixed in its conclusions. This is a new field of study. Much more definitive research is needed to look at this experience and its effects. No research was found that examined the effect of intervention approaches on the ability of children to cope with the latchkey experience.

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CHAPTER II

PROCEDURES

This chapter presents the purposes, hypotheses, and definitions of the study. Also described are the instruments, limitations, subjects, and procedures for the collection and analysis of data.

Purposes of the Study

The purposes of this study were: (a) to determine if a telephone warm line (specifically KIDTALK) had an effect on the self-esteem, anxiety level, and behavior of latchkey children; (b) to determine the effect of age on the self-esteem, anxiety level, and behavior of latchkey children; (c) to determine if age was a factor in the effect of a telephone warm line for latchkey children on self-esteem, anxiety level, and behavior; (d) to provide information to help in the designing of support programs for latchkey children; and (e) to provide information which may be useful with regard to future research concerning the effects of support programs for latchkey children.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses served as the basis of this study:

1. There will be a significant difference in self-esteem among latchkey children who never called KIDTALK, who called KIDTALK a low

number of times¹, and who called KIDTALK a high number of times².

2. There will be a significant difference in after-school anxiety level among latchkey children who never called KIDTALK, who called KIDTALK a low number of times, and who called KIDTALK a high number of times.

3. There will be a significant difference in school behavior among latchkey children who never called KIDTALK, who called KIDTALK a low number of times, and who called KIDTALK a high number of times.

4. There will be a significant difference in at-home behavior among latchkey children who never called KIDTALK, who called KIDTALK a low number of times, and who called KIDTALK a high number of times.

5. There will be a significant difference in self-esteem between fourth- and sixth-grade latchkey children.

6. There will be a significant difference in after-school anxiety level between fourth- and sixth-grade latchkey children.

7. There will be a significant difference in school behavior between fourth- and sixth-grade latchkey children.

8. There will be a significant difference in at-home behavior between fourth- and sixth-grade latchkey children.

9. There will be a significant difference in self-esteem between fourth- and sixth-grade latchkey children who called KIDTALK.

10. There will be a significant difference in after-school anxiety level between fourth- and sixth-grade latchkey children who called KIDTALK.

11. There will be a significant difference in school behavior between fourth- and sixth-grade latchkey children who called KIDTALK.

¹low being one or two times called

²high being three or more times called

12. There will be a significant difference in at-home behavior between fourth- and sixth-grade latchkey children who called KIDTALK.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were defined for this study.

Latchkey Children

Latchkey children is defined as children who are left alone without adult supervision for a significant part of the day on a regular basis. Long and Long (1983b) give the most comprehensive definition:

"Latchkey" is a term that generally defines children who are left to take care of themselves, left to use group recreational programs, play in the street, stay home alone, join a gang or in general supervise themselves, or for whom the care arrangements are so loosely made as to be virtually ineffective. (p. 3)

The children selected for this study were in the fourth or sixth grade and were without adult supervision for one or more hours after school on a regular basis. Throughout the study the terms "self-care" and "children responsible for themselves" were used interchangeably with "latchkey" as all basically refer to the same situation.

Self-Esteem

According to Coopersmith (1967), self-esteem is:

the evaluation which the individual customarily maintains with regard to himself; it expresses an attitude of approval or disapproval, and indicates the extent to which the individual believes himself to be capable, significant, successful, and worthy. In short, self-esteem is a personal judgement of worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes the individual holds towards himself. (pp. 4-5)

For the purposes of this study, self-esteem was defined in terms of scores achieved on the Coopersmith Inventory, School Form (Coopersmith, 1981a).

State Anxiety

As defined by Spielberger, Edwards, Lushene, Montuori, and Platzek (1973), state anxiety is "subjective, consciously perceived feelings of apprehension, tension, and worry that vary in intensity and fluctuate over time" (p. 3). Gaudry and Spielberger (1971) have suggested that while there is no qualitative way to define a psychological construct such as anxiety, it can be inferred from verbal reports, physiological indications, and general behavior. Scores on the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory for Children, Form C-1 (Spielberger, Edwards, Montuori, & Lushene, 1970) were used to define state anxiety level in this study.

Behavior

Behavior is defined as the outward actions of a person in response to stimuli. Mischel (1968) pointed out that "'personality' and 'behavior' often are used interchangeably by psychologists, producing great confusion. Personality is an abstraction or hypothetical construction from or about behavior, whereas behavior itself consists of observable events" (p. 4). In this study, school and at-home behaviors presumed to be related to self-esteem were considered separately. Behavior was measured by scores achieved on Coopersmith's (1967) Behavior Rating Form (Appendix E) and on the At-Home Behavior (Appendix F).

KIDTALK

KIDTALK is a "warm" line, a prevention-oriented telephone line established to provide assistance to latchkey children (Guernsey & Moore, 1983). KIDTALK, which went into effect in the Dallas 214 area code on September 2, 1987, was the "treatment" in this study. (See Appendix A for a more detailed description of KIDTALK.)

Standardized Instruments

Coopersmith Inventory, School Form (SEI)

The Coopersmith Inventory, School Form (Coopersmith, 1981a) is used to measure the self-esteem of children ages 8 through 15 (see Appendix D). It consists of 58 items, 50 of which deal with self-esteem and 8 of which constitute a lie scale. All the items are short statements (e.g., "Things don't usually bother me") which are answered "like me" or "unlike me." The inventory yields subscores for general self, social, self-peers, home-parents, school-academic, and a total self score. General self subscores range from 0 to 26. Scores for the other subtests range from 0 to 8. The total self score ranges from 0 to 100. A higher score indicates higher self-esteem. Only the total self scores were used in this study. The subtitle of this inventory has been changed from Form A to School Form (Coopersmith, 1981b).

The items were tested for comprehensivity with a group of 30 children. Means for both males and females tended to be negatively skewed in the direction of high self-esteem (Coopersmith, 1981b).

Technical data for the SEI were established on a sample of 1,748 children attending public school in central Connecticut. A test-retest (stability) reliability coefficient of .88 was established with 30 fifth graders from the original sample after a five-week interval. Test-retest reliability with 56 children from the original population was .70 after a three-year interval (Coopersmith, 1967). A study by Fullerton in 1972 (cited in Coopersmith, 1981b) reported a reliability coefficient of .64 for 104 fifth- and sixth-grade children tested twelve months apart. Internal consistency coefficients ranged from .87 to .92 (Coopersmith, 1981b).

Construct, concurrent, predictive, and multitrait-multimethod validity for the SEI have been established as adequate according to studies cited by Coopersmith (1981b). The SEI correlates highly with personal and social adjustment scores on the California Test of Personality and with the Eysenck Personality Inventory. The inventory does not seem to correlate highly with cognitive functioning (Coopersmith, 1981b). Gilberts (1983) stated that "the SEI's construct validity appears sound" (p. 36).

State-Trait Anxiety Inventory for Children, Form C-1 (STAIC)

The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory for Children, Form C-1 was developed by Spielberger, Edwards, Montuori, and Lushene (1970) as a downward extension of the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (Spielberger, Edwards, Montuori, Lushene, & Platzek, 1973). The instrument, entitled "How-I-Feel Questionnaire," yields two scores--state anxiety and trait anxiety. In this study, only STAIC state anxiety (Form C-1) scores were used. The inventory consists of 20 statements that ask the children to indicate how they feel at a particular moment in time by checking the one response of three alternatives that describes them best (e.g., I feel . . . very calm, calm, not calm). Scores range from a minimum of 20 to a maximum of 60 with a higher score indicating higher anxiety. The questionnaire is designed to be used with children in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades.

The STAIC Preliminary Manual (Spielberger, et al., 1973) states, "For the A-State scale . . . the instructions may be modified to permit the evaluation of level of A-State intensity for any situation or time interval that is of special interest to the clinician or experimenter" (p. 4). In this study, the directions were modified to ask the children how they usually feel when they are at home after school and no adults are there. (See Appendix D.)

Test-retest reliability (stability) coefficients for the A-Trait are moderate--.65 for males and .71 for females. Test-retest coefficients for the A-State are considerably lower--.31 for males and .47 for females (Spielberger, et al., 1973). The researchers anticipated the lower A-State coefficients, "since a valid measure of A-State should reflect the influence of unique situational factors existing at the time of testing" (p. 8). Internal consistency reliability coefficients for A-State are .82 for males and .87 for females; for A-Trait, the coefficients are .78 for males and .81 for females. Endler (1978) stated that the "internal consistency of the STAIC is fairly good, but the test-retest reliability is poor" (p. 1098).

A pilot study involving 21 fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade male and female students was conducted using the situation-specific directions mentioned above. A test-retest reliability (stability) coefficient of .83 was obtained for A-State with a two week interval between testings.

Evidence of construct validity of the A-State scale was shown by a study using a sample of 900 fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade students. The students responded to the scale as they felt at that moment (NORM condition) and then as to how they believed they would feel just before a final examination in an important subject (TEST condition). The mean scores were considerably higher in the TEST condition (41.76 for males, 43.79 for females) than in the NORM condition (31.10 for males, 31.03 for females). Each individual item was able to significantly discriminate between the NORM and TEST conditions for both males and females (Spielberger, et al., 1973).

Endler (1978) stated that the STAIC has "good theoretical basis, adequate norms, adequate reliability, and moderate validity" (p. 1098). He also stated that "despite the limitations . . . this scale is probably the best

scale available for assessing anxiety in children. I would recommend it over the CMAS and GASC, primarily on the basis of the care and precision with which it has been developed" (p. 1098).

Behavior Rating Form (BRF)

The Behavior Rating Form was developed by Coopersmith (1967) for teachers to rate individual children on behaviors presumed to be related to self-esteem. The form consists of 13 items, rated on a five-point, Likert-type scale, referring to behavior such as reaction to failure, self-confidence in a new situation, sociability with peers, and the need for encouragement and reassurance. Scores range from 15 to 65 with higher scores indicating a perception of more positive self-esteem behaviors.

Behaviors selected for the BRF were chosen after a series of observations of child behavior in and out of school, interviews with child experts, and evaluations and discussions with a research committee. They were "assumed to be an external manifestation of the person's prevailing self-appraisal" (Coopersmith, 1967, p. 11) on theoretical and empirical grounds.

A cross-rater reliability coefficient of .73 was obtained for the ratings done by one teacher and the principal on 21 students. The test-retest reliability for this teacher, after an eight-week interval, was .96. Coopersmith (1967) stated that each student in a sample of 1,748 was rated by two teachers in order to establish cross-rater reliability. No coefficient was given. Reliability on the BRF seems to be adequate although the teachers tended to assign higher ratings to the girls than to the boys (Coopersmith, 1967).

Instruments Designed for Study

General Report Form

The General Report Form (Appendix C) was designed by the author and used as a screening device. It consisted of basic demographic information to be used for coding purposes and three questions that were deemed necessary in order to separate possible candidates for the final sample. It was felt that the small number of questions would encourage a larger return rate.

The first question, "Is this child at home without anyone there over 14 years old, for one hour or more at least three days a week?" separated out those children who fit this study's working definition of a latchkey child . It was decided to use three days a week in order to obtain children who were responsible for themselves on a regular basis (but perhaps not every day) and not those just left occasionally.

Question two, "What are the ages of any other children who are at home with this child during those times?" served as a double check on the definition in case some parents were confused by question one. The ages were then also available for later use.

Question three, "Do you have a telephone in your home?" was necessary since the study concerned the use of a telephone. Children identified as being in the latchkey situation but who did not have a telephone in their home could not be included in the sample group.

Student Report Form

The Student Report Form (Appendix C) was designed by the author to act as a double check on the information gained from the General Report Form and to elicit further demographic information from the identified latchkey

children. It asked specific questions related to the latchkey experience concerning the length of time as a latchkey child, the presence of pets in the home, and whether the parents could be reached by telephone.

At-Home Behavior

At-Home Behavior (Appendix F) was designed by the author to measure parental perception of self-esteem behaviors. Nine questions concerning behavior presumed to be related to self-esteem were answered by checking the response that best described the behavior of the child. The questions dealt with independence, cooperation, adaptability, and self-esteem. Items were selected and modified from the Behavior Rating Form (Coopersmith, 1967) and the children's questionnaire of the Children's Time Study (Medrich, Roizen, Rubin, & Buckley, 1982). Several original items were also included after discussions with counselors, mothers, and professors teaching child-related courses.

Five experts in child behavior comprised a panel which evaluated 10 items for content validity. They were asked to score each item "yes" or "no" as to whether it tapped self-esteem related behaviors that could be influenced by the latchkey experience. Every item received a "yes" from each panel member.

Test-retest reliability for the At-Home Behavior was established by submitting the ten-question form to 20 mothers with a two-week interval between testings. One item was discarded after this pilot study because many of the mothers found it difficult to answer. A reliability coefficient for stability of .88 was obtained based on the nine remaining items.

Optional Data Sheet

The Optional Data Sheet (Appendix F), designed by the author, was used to collect demographic information from the parent(s) of the sample

children. As requested by the school district, these questions were strictly optional and asked only of parents who had agreed to participate in the study. The form also made possible determination of who had completed it and the At-Home Behavior without specifically asking. With this information, it was possible to request that the same person complete the At-Home Behavior for the second round of testing.

KIDTALK Use (Form A)

KIDTALK Use (Form A) was developed by the author (for use at the pre-testing) in order to ascertain if any of the sample children had heard of and had used the telephone warm line prior to the study. (See Appendix D.) The three questions on the form asked if the children had heard of KIDTALK, had called KIDTALK, and, if so, how many times they had called.

KIDTALK Use (Form B)

KIDTALK Use (Form B) was designed by the author (for use at the post-testing) to recheck the latchkey status of each child, determine if KIDTALK was called and how many times, and ask specific questions of those who did use the line (e.g., "Why did you call KIDTALK?"). Questions for use by the KIDTALK organization were also asked in order to gain feedback and to obtain suggestions for improved service. (See Appendix D.)

The forms were submitted to 21 children in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades in order to ensure readability and were subsequently modified per their suggestions.

Basic Assumptions

Two basic assumptions were made in this study: (a) that the sample children were capable of assessing their own feelings accurately, and (b)

that each sample child was able to remember the number of times he or she called KIDTALK.

Limitations

Several limitations were inherent in the design of this study:

1. The teachers were aware which of the children in their classes were involved in the study and may have given them special attention or perceived them in a different light. A change in the teacher's response to the child could have effected that child's self-esteem, anxiety level, and behavior.

2. Parents who felt guilty about and/or feared legal repercussions from leaving their children in self-care might not have allowed their children to participate in the study, a sort of self-selection, thereby possibly skewing the sample toward latchkey children whose parents were comfortable with the arrangement.

3. The results were not generalizable to all latchkey children as the sample contained only fourth- and sixth-grade, suburban, latchkey children from a southwestern city.

4. The sample children were only classified as being unsupervised by an adult after school. No attempt was made to account for the effects of a variety of after-school situations which are unsupervised by adults (e.g., going to a friend's home or hanging out at a shopping mall).

5. The number of children who would actually call KIDTALK could not be controlled without biasing the results. Because the calls had to be voluntary, the possibility of a small number of callers (making comparisons difficult) was realized from the beginning.

Selection of Subjects

To obtain a sample for this study, several school districts in the North Texas area were approached. After extensive review by its External Research Committee, permission to conduct the study was granted by the school district of a large, fairly affluent, metropolitan suburb.

Once accepted, the proposal was sent to the four Attendance Area Superintendents. A meeting was held with the four Superintendents, the chair of the External Research Committee, and the Project Director to answer concerns of the Superintendents and to clarify what was required to effectively carry out the research. Each Superintendent chose one school in his/her geographical area for participation in the study. Factors effecting the choice of a school were willingness to cooperate; little current participation in research, pilot studies, and so forth; and likelihood of a fairly large number of latchkey children.

Initiation of the research was dependent upon the start-up of KIDTALK. Once funding was obtained, KIDTALK was scheduled to begin September 2, 1986. It was requested by the Attendance Area Superintendents that the principals of the participating schools not be contacted until after teacher in-service at the beginning of the school year was completed and that researchers not be in the buildings during the first week of student attendance.

The principals were contacted by telephone during the first week of September in order to introduce the Project Director, explain and clarify the study, set up a mutually convenient schedule, address needs or requests idiosyncratic to each school, identify a contact person in each building, and establish a good working rapport.

After speaking with each principal, a projected time line (Appendix B) was drawn up and sent to the chair of the External Research Committee. Copies were sent to the Attendance Area Superintendents and to each participating school. The time line proved to be realistic and attainable and served as a guide throughout the rest of the study.

On Monday, September 8, the General Report Forms, with a cover letter and a return envelope attached, were sent home with all the fourth- and sixth-grade students in each school. (See Appendix C.)

As in the cover letter, the term "latchkey" was never used in any communication with the parents during this study. Instead the phrase "children responsible for themselves" was substituted. It was felt that the term "latchkey" might not be understood or have negative connotations which could cause some parents to be reluctant to report their child as being home without adult supervision. "Children responsible for themselves" seemed to be less emotionally laden and less judgemental.

A total of 451 questionnaires were sent home with 219 fourth graders and 232 sixth graders in the weekly packet of school papers. Parents were asked to return the completed questionnaire in the attached envelope as they returned the weekly packet to the school. By returning the questionnaire in a sealed envelope with the Project Director's name on it, each family's privacy was protected.

Upon receiving the envelopes, the teachers placed them (unopened) in a collection box in the office or gave them to the designated contact person. The envelopes were then collected by the Project Director and tallied. A 65.5% overall return rate, before follow-ups, was achieved using this method. The fourth grade before-follow-up return rate was 61.3%; the sixth grade, 68.9%. Parents who did not return their questionnaires were

contacted by telephone and asked to return the form. Two contacts were made, if necessary. Some answers were taken over the telephone if the forms had been misplaced.

Table 1 shows the breakdown of the final results of this first screening device. The final tally showed an overall return of 391 forms (86.7%). The fourth grade returned 183 (83.6%); the sixth grade, 208 (89.7%). School A had 121 returned out of 144 sent (84%); School B, 132 out of 147 (89.8%); School C, 92 out of 111 (82.9%); School D, 46 out of 49 (93.9%). From the returned General Report Forms, it was possible to identify 111 children (24.6% of the original group) who qualified as "latchkey children" and had a

Table 1

Return Rate of Initial Screening Device (General Report Form)

	Fourth Grade	Sixth Grade	Total
SCHOOL A			
Sent	73	71	144
Returned	56	65	121
Percentage	76.7	91.5	84.0
SCHOOL B			
Sent	71	76	147
Returned	63	69	132
Percentage	88.7	90.8	89.9
SCHOOL C			
Sent	50	61	111
Returned	41	51	92
Percentage	82.0	83.6	82.9
SCHOOL D			
Sent	25	24	49
Returned	23	23	46
Percentage	92.0	95.8	93.9
TOTAL GROUP			
Sent	219	232	451
Returned	183	208	391
Percentage	83.6	89.7	86.7

telephone in their home. Two children, who otherwise qualified, could not be included in the sample because they did not have a telephone in their home.

A letter explaining the purposes of the study in more detail with a permission form for participation was sent home from school in a sealed envelope to the parents of each identified child. (See Appendix C.) An envelope with the Project Director's name on it was provided so the permission form could be returned in the same manner as the General Report Form.

All the parents were contacted in order to gain permission for their child to participate or not. Ones who had not returned the permission slip were contacted by telephone. Parents who did not want their child to participate were allowed to indicate this over the telephone without having to return the slip. Parents who granted permission were asked to return the slips to the school for collection. New letters were provided for those who needed them. Since the form required a signature, home visits were made, if necessary, to those granting permission in order to obtain the slip. In this manner, a 100% return rate was achieved for this letter.

The 111 students identified as "latchkey children" represented 28.4% of the original group of 391 who returned the screening form. Forty out of 183 (21.9%) were identified in the fourth grade; 71 out of 208 (34.1%) were identified in the sixth grade. Seventy-five of the 111 identified children (67.6%) received permission to participate in the study. Of these, 24 were fourth graders (60.0% of 40 identified) and 51 were sixth graders (71.8% of 71 identified). (For individual school and total group data, see Table 2 in Appendix G.)

Collection of Data

The 75 students who comprised the final sample were assigned five-digit code numbers based on their school, grade, teacher, and sequence in which their permission forms came in at each school. (For example, the code number for a student at School A [1] in the fourth grade [4] with a specific teacher [2] who was the fifteenth child [15] to bring in her permission form would be 14215.) The code numbers were placed on each permission form, and a master list was created identifying each child by his or her number. These numbers were used on all further forms instead of names. Basic information was also included on the master list, such as parent name(s), address, and home phone number.

Pre-test forms for the students consisted of the Coopersmith Inventory, School Form (SEI), the modified State-Trait Anxiety Inventory for Children (STAIC), the Student Report Form, and KIDTALK Use (Form A). (See Appendix C). Order of the presentation of the forms was determined by a random drawing done for each school individually. KIDTALK Use (Form A) was not included in the randomization. This form needed to be presented last in order to avoid mention of KIDTALK before the other information was gathered.

All testing was conducted in each school by the Project Director. Preceding the testing, the examiner talked with the children for a short while in order to set a relaxed mood. They were told that these tests were not the kind that had right or wrong answers and would not effect their school grades in any way. The tests and forms would help the examiner in a study of children responsible for themselves after school. The use of the code number was explained as a way to protect their privacy. They were

asked not to put their name on any of the papers. It was explained that no one besides the examiner would see the papers--not even their teachers or parents. The children were made aware that their teachers and parents would be filling out forms concerning them but that these forms were nothing to worry about. Any questions that the children had about the study were answered throughout this period.

The examiner read the instructions and each item on the forms. Some of the instructions or words that were further clarified should be noted. The term "jittery" (STAIC, #5, Appendix C) was unfamiliar to some of the children. It was defined as "jumpy, easily startled." Spielberger, et al. (1973) also found some unfamiliarity with this term as they were developing the STAIC.

On the SEI, the responses were labeled "like me" and "unlike me." Many of the children found these terms confusing. It was suggested that they think of "like me" as "true" and "unlike me" as "false." Some even wrote "T" and "F" above the printed responses as an aid to themselves.

As each school was visited in order to test the children, a Behavior Rating Form for each child was left in a manila envelope in the teachers' mailboxes. Each child's name appeared at the top of the form and was to be cut off after completion. The code number was on the main part of the form. A cover memo explained how to complete the form and that the forms should be returned in the envelope to the contact person. (See Appendix E.) The teacher forms were collected from the schools the next week.

The At-Home Behavior was mailed to the parents the day after the children had been tested in each school. Also included was the Optional Data Sheet which asked for demographic data. Questions on that sheet were to be

answered at the discretion of the parent. By obtaining answers to the questions concerning the sex and relationship to the child of the person completing the forms, it was possible to request that that same person complete the forms in the second round of testing. A cover letter explained the procedure for completing and returning the forms. A self-addressed, stamped envelope was enclosed for the convenience of the parents. (See Appendix F).

After one week, those who had not yet returned their form were contacted by telephone to see if the forms had been mailed. Those whose forms had not been received in several more days were once more contacted. At this time, if the parent stated he or she hadn't received the form yet or that it had been misplaced, answers were taken over the telephone. Parents whose forms had apparently been lost in the mail while being returned were asked to complete another set of forms by giving their answers over the telephone. Several contacts were made, as necessary, until all the forms but one were collected--a return rate of 98.7%. The parent who had been impossible to contact finally did return the forms, but in February. The At-Home Behavior was no longer valid, but the Optional Data Sheet was still of use at that time. All the parents (100%) did cooperate with the study, albeit a little late for one.

Forms from children who were absent on their assigned testing days were obtained by returning to their respective schools within the next week at a time convenient for the teachers. In one case, a child was visited in the home in order to obtain the child's and the parent's forms.

Between the September and February testings, Lone Star Council of Camp Fire delivered KIDTALK materials to all the schools in the 214 area

code. The four target schools received their materials in early November. The materials consisted of a poster aimed at children, a sticker with the KIDTALK logo and telephone number, and a brochure intended for parents. Extensive advertising was done on television and radio; features appeared in area newspapers and on local television stations; and posters were placed on prominent display in all four target schools. The target schools were offered speakers from KIDTALK and programs on the plight of the working parent. Only one of the schools was able to take advantage of this offer prior to the February post-testing.

At the beginning of February, notices were sent to the school administrative personnel involved and to each school's contact person to remind them of the start-up of the second round of testing (Appendix B).

Post-testing was done during the week of February 16, in the manner described previously. For this round, the forms for the children consisted of the SEI, the modified STAIC, and KIDTALK Use (Form B). (See Appendix D.) It was thought that the KIDTALK form might bias the responses on the other forms; therefore, that form was given last at all the schools. The order of presentation of the SEI and the STAIC was decided by flipping a coin for each school.

Thirteen children were not able to be included in the post-testing because they were no longer in a self-care situation or had moved. This depleted the original sample to an N of 62. The total attrition rate was 17.3%. (See Table 3 in Appendix G for detailed information on the attrition rate in the individual schools and in the total group.)

The Projector Director, who conducted all the post-testing, told the children that while the tests were the same as the ones used in September,

they should not try to remember how they answered then but answer each item as they felt now. They were again assured of the confidentiality of their answers. The clarifications of defining "jittery" on the STAIC and thinking of the responses as "True" and "False" on the CSEI were repeated.

At this testing, the Project Director went over the directions for each form and then allowed the children to work at their own speed. Individual questions were answered as they arose.

A return visit to the schools was made to gather information from students who were absent on the day of post-testing in their school. Scheduling of the make-up testing was done at the convenience of the teachers.

On the same day as the testing, a Behavior Rating Form for each child, along with an explanatory memo (Appendix E), was left with the teachers to be returned in the manila envelope as before. At School A, one of the sixth-grade teachers was no longer available. Forms for the five identified students in that class could not be completed. A total of 57 forms were collected from the schools the next week.

Parents were mailed the At-Home Behavior and a cover letter (Appendix F) indicating who should complete the form on the day after their respective children were tested. A self-addressed, stamped envelope was again included for return convenience. Only 61 letters were sent out on this round as one parent had returned the first At-Home Behavior too late to be included.

Follow-ups over the telephone began the next week and followed the same procedure as in the Fall. Answers were taken over the telephone, if necessary, being sure that the person answering was the same one who had

completed the form previously. A 100% return rate was achieved with persistent follow-up.

Procedure for Data Analysis

The hypotheses of this study were placed into three groups for analysis procedures. Hypotheses 1 through 4 were analyzed using a one-way analysis of covariance; hypotheses 5 through 8 were analyzed using a *t*-test for independent samples; and hypotheses 9 through 12 were analyzed using a multiple analysis of covariance. Level of significance at which a hypothesis was rejected was set at .05.

For analysis of hypotheses 1 through 4, data collected from the sample children, teachers, and mothers were divided into three groups. The groups were determined by information gained from the KIDTALK Use (Form B) as to the number of times each child called KIDTALK -- none, low (one or two times), or high (three or more times). A pre-test/post-test design was used in order to obtain a more powerful analysis than could be possible by simply using post-test scores. Since the groups could not be matched or assigned randomly, initial differences had to be taken into account. Therefore, analysis of covariance was used because it "tests the significance of the differences between means of final experimental data by taking into account the correlation between the dependent variable and one or more covariates, and by adjusting initial mean differences in the experimental groups" (Kerlinger, 1973, p. 370). By using this method, any initial differences among the groups that might have been present in the pre-test means were controlled statistically.

For hypotheses 5 through 8, a *t*-test for independent samples was used as all the fourth and all the sixth graders in the sample were being compared on only the means of the pre-test scores. This test answers the question of whether the means of the two groups differ significantly beyond differences that would be expected by chance. The *t*-test assumes a normal distribution of the scores (Ferguson, 1976; Kerlinger, 1973).

A multiple analysis of covariance was used for hypotheses 9 through 12. This procedure tested for the significance of the difference between the dependent variable and the covariates while adjusting statistically for the initial differences between the groups (Kerlinger, 1973). The two covariates were the number of times KIDTALK was called and the pre-test scores.

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CHAPTER III

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents a demographic overview of the sample, the results of the data analysis, a discussion of the findings, and recommendations based on the findings.

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample Group

Demographic information was obtained from the Student Report Form (Appendix D) and the Optional Data Sheet (Appendix F). Information given is based on the original sample of 75 "latchkey" students identified in September 1986.

The group ranged in age from 9 to 13 and was evenly split between males and females. Sixth graders outnumbered fourth graders almost two to one. The predominant ethnic group was white containing 80% of the sample. Blacks comprised 14.7% of the group with Hispanics and Asians accounting for 5.3%.

The majority of the children lived in homes with married parents (61.3%). Twenty-eight percent lived with a divorced parent. The number of adults living in the home varied from one to four with 56.2% of the children living with two adults and 31.5% living with one adult. Over one-half of the families (54.2%) earned an income of over \$30,000. Only 5.6% earned less than \$15,000.

Most of the children had siblings under the age of 14 (54.7%). This was particularly true of the fourth graders where 75% of them had siblings under the age of 14. That percentage dropped to 45.1% among the sixth graders.

Fifty-two percent of the children had spent three years or more in self-care after school. This increased from 25% of the fourth graders to 64.7% of the sixth graders. Among the fourth graders, 37.5% had just started the self-care situation; 45.8% of them had been in self-care for at least two years.

Almost all of the children (94.7%) reported being able to reach a parent at work at least sometimes. Only one child reported not being able to reach a parent, while three did not know if they could as they had never tried.

Additional demographic information for the original sample of 75 students is available in Table 4 (Appendix G). The table breaks down the information for fourth grade, sixth grade, and total group.

Sixty-two children, 15 of whom had called KIDTALK, were still included in the study at the February 1987 testing. Of the fourth graders, only 16.7% (4 out of 24) called KIDTALK. In the sixth grade, 21.6% (11 out of 51) called. Most of the children who called KIDTALK were female (73.3%). The non-callers were generally male (59.6%). None of the Asian or Hispanic students, three in all, were callers. Whites accounted for 86.6% of the callers with Blacks comprising the other 13.3%. Tables 5 and 6 (Appendix G) show the demographic characteristics of the group of children who called KIDTALK and of the group of children who were non-callers.

Analysis of Data

The hypotheses must be considered with caution. The small number of fourth graders and children who actually called KIDTALK signal the possibility of Type II errors. A Type II error occurs when, because of the small sample size, a large difference which may exist between the dependent variable means of the two groups is difficult to prove. A hypothesis that is true may be rejected (Ferguson, 1976).

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 was as follows: There will be a significant difference in self-esteem among latchkey children who never called KIDTALK, who called KIDTALK a low number of times, and who called KIDTALK a high number of times.

The Coopersmith Inventory, School Form (SEI) was used as a measure of total self-esteem. The mean scores and standard deviations obtained on the SEI are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Means and Standard Deviations on the Coopersmith Inventory, School Form

Group	N	Means			Standard Deviations	
		Pre-Test	Post-Test	Adjusted	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Never	47	66.30	67.62	67.94	18.89	17.89
Low	7	65.71	66.29	67.01	16.75	21.77
High	8	70.50	66.00	63.44	9.24	11.16

The results of the analysis of the mean scores on the SEI are presented in Table 8. The obtained F-value was not significant at the .05 level

indicating that on the SEI no significant difference in self-esteem was found among the groups of latchkey children. Therefore, hypothesis 1 was rejected.

Table 8

Analysis of Covariance Data for Comparison of Mean Scores on the Coopersmith Inventory, School Form

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig. of F
Within cells	9594.47	58	165.42		
Group	138.53	2	69.27	.419	.660

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 was as follows: There will be a significant difference in after-school anxiety level among latchkey children who never called KIDTALK, who called KIDTALK a low number of times, and who called KIDTALK a high number of times.

Table 9

State Anxiety Means and Standard Deviations on the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory for Children, Form C-1

Group	N	Means			Standard Deviations	
		Pre-Test	Post-Test	Adjusted	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Never	47	29.55	27.72	27.47	7.45	7.19
Low	7	28.71	27.29	27.48	5.65	6.02
High	8	26.63	28.00	29.30	8.09	5.71

The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory for Children, Form C-1 (STAIC) was used as a measure of after-school anxiety. On this test, higher scores are indicative of a higher level of anxiety. The mean scores and standard deviations obtained from the C-1 form of the STAIC are presented in Table 9.

Table 10

Analysis of Covariance Data for Comparison of Mean Scores on the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory for Children, Form C-1

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig. of F
Within cells	1927.52	58	33.23		
Group	22.84	2	11.42	.344	.711

The results of the analysis of the state anxiety mean scores on the C-1 form of the STAIC are presented in Table 10. The obtained F-value was not significant at the .05 level indicating that on the C-1 form of the STAIC there was no significant difference in the level of after-school anxiety among the groups of latchkey children. Therefore, hypothesis 2 was rejected.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 was as follows: There will be a significant difference in school behavior among latchkey children who never called KIDTALK, who called KIDTALK a low number of times, and who called KIDTALK a high number of times.

Table 11

Means and Standard Deviations on the Behavior Rating Form

Group	N	Means			Standard Deviations	
		Pre-Test	Post-Test	Adjusted	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Never	42	45.81	45.67	46.14	9.90	8.74
Low	7	49.00	48.00	46.84	8.04	5.80
High	8	49.63	48.75	47.28	6.61	5.15

The Behavior Rating Form (BRF) was used as a measure of teacher observed behaviors presumed to be related to self-esteem. The mean scores and standard deviations obtained on the BRF are presented in Table 11. Five children are missing from the never group as one teacher was not available to complete the post-testing.

Table 12

Analysis of Covariance Data for Comparison of Mean Scores on the Behavior Rating Form

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig. of F
Within cells	2312.17	53	43.63		
Group	10.10	2	5.05	.116	.891

The results of the analysis of the mean scores on the BRF are presented in Table 12. The obtained F-value was not significant at the .05 level indicating that on the BRF no significant difference in teacher-observed school behavior was found among the groups of latchkey children. Therefore, hypothesis 3 was rejected.

Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 was as follows: There will be a significant difference in at-home behavior among latchkey children who never called KIDTALK, who called KIDTALK a low number of times, and who called KIDTALK a high number of times.

Table 13

Means and Standard Deviations on the At-Home Behavior

Group	N	Means			Standard Deviations	
		Pre-Test	Post-Test	Adjusted	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Never	47	33.45	33.36	33.24	3.66	4.28
Low	7	31.00	31.29	33.35	3.11	3.82
High	7	34.71	34.14	32.89	1.70	4.34

The At-Home Behavior was used as a measure of parent-observed behaviors presumed to be related to self-esteem. The mean scores and standard deviations obtained on the At-Home Behavior are presented in Table 13. One child is missing from the high group as the parent did not return the form in time to be included.

The results of the analysis of the mean scores on the At-Home Behavior are presented in Table 14. The obtained F-value was not significant at the .05 level indicating that on the At-Home Behavior no significant difference in parent-observed at-home behavior was found among the groups of latchkey children. Therefore, hypothesis 4 was rejected.

Table 14

Analysis of Covariance Data for Comparison of Mean Scores on the At-Home Behavior

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig. of F
Within cells	490.61	57	8.61		
Group	.84	2	.42	.049	.952

Table 15

Means, Standard Deviations, and *t*-Test Data for Comparison of Fourth- and Sixth-Grade Latchkey Children

Test/Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	<i>t</i> Value	DF	Two-Tail Probability
SEI						
Fourth	24	62.25	19.76	-1.95	73	0.055
Sixth	51	70.75	16.45			
STAIC						
Fourth	24	31.50	10.30	2.03	73	0.046
Sixth	51	27.69	5.97			
BRF						
Fourth	24	44.88	11.13	-1.80	73	0.077
Sixth	51	49.16	8.85			
AT-HOME						
Fourth	24	33.46	4.35	-0.32	72	0.751
Sixth	50	33.76	3.53			

Hypothesis 5

Hypothesis 5 was as follows: There will be a significant difference in self-esteem between fourth- and sixth-grade latchkey children.

The mean scores, standard deviations, and *t*-test data obtained on the SEI are presented in Table 15. The *t*-value, while approaching significance at .055, was not significant at the .05 level indicating that on the SEI no significant difference in self-esteem was found between fourth- and sixth-grade latchkey children. Therefore, hypothesis 5 was rejected.

Hypothesis 6

Hypothesis 6 was as follows: There will be a significant difference in after-school anxiety level between fourth- and sixth-grade latchkey children.

The mean scores, standard deviations, and *t*-test data obtained on the STAIC are presented in Table 15. On this test, higher scores are indicative of a higher level of anxiety. The fourth-grade group score was significantly higher than the sixth-grade group score indicating that on the STAIC fourth-grade latchkey children were found to experience significantly more after-school anxiety than sixth-grade latchkey children. Therefore, hypothesis 6 was accepted.

Hypothesis 7

Hypothesis 7 was as follows: There will be a significant difference in school behavior between fourth- and sixth-grade latchkey children.

The mean scores, standard deviations, and *t*-test data obtained on the BRF are presented in Table 15 indicating that on the BRF no significant difference was found in teacher-observed school behavior between fourth- and sixth-grade latchkey children. Therefore, hypothesis 7 was rejected.

Hypothesis 8

Hypothesis 8 was as follows: There will be a significant difference in at-home behavior between fourth- and sixth-grade latchkey children.

The mean scores, standard deviations, and *t*-test data are presented in Table 15. One sixth-grade student was not included on this measure as the parent did not return the form in time. The *t*-value was not significant at the .05 value indicating that on the At-Home Behavior no significant difference was found between the parent-observed at-home behavior of fourth- and sixth-grade latchkey children. Therefore, hypothesis 8 was rejected.

Hypothesis 9

Hypothesis 9 was as follows: There will be a significant difference in self-esteem between fourth- and sixth-grade latchkey children who called KIDTALK.

The mean scores and standard deviations obtained on the SEI are presented in Table 16. The results of the analysis of the mean scores on the SEI are presented in Table 17. The obtained *F*-value was not significant at the .05 level indicating that on the SEI no significant difference in self-esteem was found between fourth- and sixth-grade latchkey children who called KIDTALK. Therefore, hypothesis 9 was rejected.

Table 16

Means and Standard Deviations for Fourth- and Sixth-Grade Callers

Variable/ Group	N	Means			Standard Deviations	
		Pre- Test	Post- Test	Adjusted	Pre- Test	Post- Test
Times Called						
Fourth Grade	4	----	5.25	----	----	3.95
Sixth Grade	11	----	4.45	----	----	4.74
SEI						
Fourth Grade	4	67.00	61.50	62.73	12.38	5.97
Sixth Grade	11	68.73	67.82	67.37	13.78	18.69
STAIC						
Fourth Grade	4	29.50	29.75	29.34	9.15	6.02
Sixth Grade	11	26.91	26.91	27.06	6.28	5.61
BRF						
Fourth Grade	4	50.00	49.75	49.72	6.98	3.86
Sixth Grade	11	49.09	47.91	47.92	7.40	5.79
AT-HOME						
Fourth Grade	4	34.00	31.75	30.76	2.45	2.22
Sixth Grade	10	32.40	33.10	33.49	3.31	4.82

Table 17

Analysis of Covariance Data for Comparison of Caller Scores on the Coopersmith Inventory, School Form

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig. of F
Within cells	2684.94	11	244.09		
Grade	62.48	1	62.48	.26	.623

Hypothesis 10

Hypothesis 10 was as follows: There will be a significant difference in after-school anxiety level between fourth- and sixth-grade latchkey children who called KIDTALK.

On the C-1 form of the STAIC, higher scores are indicative of a higher level of anxiety. The mean scores and standard deviations are presented in Table 16.

Table 18

Analysis of Covariance Data for Comparison of Caller Scores on the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory for Children, Form C-1

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig. of F
Within cells	382.37	11	34.76		
Grade	14.60	1	14.60	.42	.530

The results of the analysis of the mean scores on the STAIC are presented in Table 18. The obtained F-value was not significant at the .05 level indicating that on the STAIC no significant difference in after-school anxiety was found between fourth- and sixth-grade latchkey children who called KIDTALK. Therefore, hypothesis 10 was rejected.

Hypothesis 11

Hypothesis 11 was as follows: There will be a significant difference in school behavior between fourth- and sixth-grade latchkey children who called KIDTALK.

Table 19

Analysis of Covariance Data for Comparison of Caller Scores on the Behavior Rating Form

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig. of F
Within cells	231.86	11	21.08		
Grade	9.44	1	9.44	.45	.517

The mean scores and standard deviations are presented in Table 16. The results of the analysis of the mean scores on the BRF are presented in Table 19. The obtained F-value was not significant at the .05 level indicating that on the BRF no significant difference in teacher-observed school behavior was found between fourth- and sixth-grade latchkey children who had called KIDTALK. Therefore, hypothesis 11 was rejected.

Hypothesis 12

Hypothesis 12 was as follows: There will be a significant difference in at-home behavior between fourth- and sixth-grade latchkey children who called KIDTALK.

The mean scores and standard deviations obtained on the At-Home Behavior are presented in Table 16. One sixth grader is missing as the parent did not return the form in time to be included. The results of the analysis of the mean scores on the At-Home Behavior are presented in Table 20. The obtained F-value was not significant at the .05 level indicating that on the At-Home Behavior no significant difference in parent-observed at-home behavior was found between fourth- and sixth-grade latchkey children who called KIDTALK. Therefore, hypothesis 12 was rejected.

Table 20

Analysis of Covariance Data for Comparison of Caller Scores on the At-Home Behavior

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig. of F
Within cells	136.99	10	13.70		
Grade	20.03	1	20.03	1.46	.254

Summary of Results

In summary, only hypothesis 6 regarding after-school anxiety of fourth- and sixth-grade latchkey children was supported. There was a significant difference in the level of after-school anxiety between the fourth- and sixth-grade students as measured by the C-1 form of the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory for Children with fourth graders exhibiting higher anxiety. The other eleven hypotheses were rejected.

Hypotheses 9 through 12 may have had the occurrence of Type II errors. A large difference on any of the measures would have been difficult to prove because of the small sample size (N=15). On examination of individual scores, it was shown that the self-esteem scores of three of the four fourth graders decreased. The self-esteem scores of the sixth graders were split almost in half with five increasing and six decreasing.

Discussion

With the increasing number of single-parent homes and two-paycheck families, more and more parents are having to find alternative care for their young children. For various reasons, as the children become school age, self-care is frequently selected for the after-school hours until an adult is able to return home after work. As the phenomenon of the "latchkey" child has become more prevalent, concerns have been expressed about the advisability of the arrangement (Elkind, 1981; Garbarino, 1980; Stroman & Duff, 1982; Zill, 1983).

The few research studies that have been done to date on latchkey children have been concerned with the reaction of children to the self-care situation (Galambos & Garbarino, 1982; Gold & Andres, 1978; Hedin et al., 1986; Long & Long, 1982) or with comparing self-care children to adult-care children (Rodman et al., 1985; Steinberg, 1986; Vandell & Coraniti, 1985; Woods, 1972). The present study was an attempt to measure the impact of an intervention program designed for latchkey children and to explore differences between younger and older latchkey children.

The majority of the children identified in this study as being in self-care were from two-parent homes where the income was over \$30,000. Many of the children had siblings at home with them, particularly the fourth graders. Almost all were able to reach a parent at work.

Based on the results of this study, it was concluded that the telephone warm line had no impact on the self-esteem, after-school anxiety level, school behavior, or at-home behavior of the sample latchkey children. Several factors may have contributed to these results.

First, the children could not be asked to call KIDTALK without biasing the data. All calls needed to be voluntary. As a result, the actual number of sample children who called KIDTALK was quite small (N=15). It might have been that these children felt no need to call. The suburban community in which they lived was generally perceived as being relatively safe. It has been observed that the perceived safety of the neighborhood may be an important factor in how well children and their parents adjust to the latchkey arrangement (Medrich, Roizen, Rubin, & Buckley, 1982).

Related to the above point is the possibility that permission to participate in the study may have been granted mainly by parents who were comfortable with self-care for their children. Parents who were not comfortable with the arrangement and/or feared possible legal repercussions may have opted not to involve their families. Such self-selection would tend to skew the sample toward children whose families had adjusted well to the situation.

A significant difference was found between fourth- and sixth-grade latchkey children in after-school anxiety with the fourth graders reporting higher anxiety. Even though these fourth graders appeared to be more anxious after school, they were less apt to call the telephone line. Only four of the children who called KIDTALK were fourth graders.

While more sixth graders used the line than fourth graders, they made numerous comments such as "I need help with problems for when you're older," "I'm too old," or "they're nerds." While the fourth graders made similar remarks (viz., "I am too BIG," "forget it,"), many of their comments were more positive and implied a need for the line (viz., "it's somebody to

talk to for a little while," "to calm me down when I am nervous," "because I am sort of scared at home alone").

In November 1986, fee-charging "976" telephone lines began service in the 214 area code. It was discovered that parents were concerned about the possibility that KIDTALK charged a fee. This was not true, but at least one child in the study was told not to call the line. There may have been others. If so, this would have reduced the number of potential callers.

Although it had been assumed that four schools would provide a large enough population from which to draw a sample, this did not prove to be the case. Parents had the right to refuse to disclose whether their children were in self-care and to withhold permission to participate in the study. Parents of fourth graders seemed to be particularly sensitive to negative reactions and/or possible legal repercussions to leaving a child under the age of 12 at home without adult supervision. It may also have been that the parents of the sixth graders felt more comfortable with the ability of their children to cope with the situation. The final sample of fourth graders was relatively small and less than half of the number of sixth graders.

Because of the low numbers, the findings of this study must be considered with caution. While none of the hypotheses attempting to measure the effectiveness of a telephone warm line for latchkey children proved significant, the conclusion that the line was not having an impact might not be valid. As mentioned earlier, Type II errors were possible which would result in the rejection of a hypothesis that was true.

A number of specific recommendations can be made based on the findings of this research:

1. Intervention programs aimed at younger children need to take into account that they may be less likely to initiate contact than are older

children. Subscription telephone lines that have the ability to contact the child may be more appropriate for some of these children. Programs readily available through the school might also be more attractive to them.

2. Programs that teach the children how to contact a warm line and what to expect once they call could ease the apprehension about calling.

3. More sophisticated advertising may need to be used as many of the older children thought they were "too big" for the warm line. Perhaps non-crisis lines devoted to older children would be more appealing to them.

4. Positive peer pressure (especially with older children) could be utilized to help increase the number of participants by interesting influential students in the intervention program.

5. An adequate sample size might be more effectively insured by requesting a certain number of children rather than a set number of schools.

6. A higher number of younger latchkey children for the final sample might be obtained by increasing the original population of younger children. Twice as many younger children might be necessary.

The problem of after-school child care is not solely the concern of working parents. It is a societal concern. Employers, in particular, need increased awareness of the problems facing their employees who have young children. It is difficult for a parent to be productive when he or she (usually she) is worried about an unsupervised child. Employee Assistance Programs, flexible hours, job sharing, on-site child care, subsidized child care, referral services, parent education classes, and stress management seminars are some of the programs designed with the working parent in mind. Employers are reluctant to spend money on such programs unless they can be educated as to how their businesses would benefit from increased loyalty and productivity. Research provides the type of bottom line

information employers understand and increases their awareness that helping to meet the needs of their employees with young children can also be a smart business move.

Being able to show the demand for and/or effectiveness of intervention programs is imperative in order to gain funding and public support. Much more research is needed to help substantiate the need for the involvement of governments, businesses, schools, churches, communities, and youth-serving organizations in the creation of activities and programs to alleviate the after-school child-care situation.

Future researchers are encouraged to explore related issues that were not addressed by this study. How does an intervention program effect the guilt and/or anxiety felt by working mothers? How do latchkey children who have access to an on-going intervention program, such as a telephone warm line, compare to latchkey children who do not have access to it? How does the competence of the staff and/or volunteers operating an intervention program effect the use of that program by latchkey children? Answers to questions such as these would add a great deal to our knowledge of how to deal with the "latchkey" phenomenon.

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APPENDIX A
KIDTALK INFORMATION

Lone Star Council of Camp Fire

KIDTALK FACT SHEET

1. **KIDTALK** is an after-school telephone "warm-line" for children. It is a collaboration of over 40 Dallas agencies and organizations coordinated by the Lone Star Council of Camp Fire, Inc., and housed at the Camp Fire office. **KIDTALK** began September 2, 1986 and operates Monday through Friday from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. during the school year and 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. in summer months.
2. In today's world, children are sometimes home alone. The purpose of **KIDTALK** is to provide all children in the metroplex (214 area code) with the opportunity to obtain telephone support and information from an adult. The **KIDTALK** volunteer provides a caring ear and is a supportive and instructive friend.
3. Volunteers answering the phones have been trained to:
 - a. PROVIDE INFORMATION to callers so they can help themselves (e.g., what to do about spills, minor accidents, wet clothing, frozen pipes, forgotten books at school, and over 100 other problems),
 - b. MAKE REFERRALS where the situation suggests (e.g., police will be contacted to check on a child's report of a prowler), and
 - c. LISTEN to children who express feelings of loneliness, boredom or fear as well as sharing the children's accomplishments and joys.
4. The **KIDTALK** office is equipped with a problem and referral index developed by the committee. Volunteers have had training in communication skills (being supportive and comforting) in a program developed by community agencies such as the Mental Health Association, Lynn Weiss Center and Eastfield Community College.
5. **KIDTALK** is a supplement to family support. It is not meant to replace usual emergency numbers (such as fire or police) or your established family emergency procedures. **KIDTALK** volunteers will encourage your child to follow family rules.

Volunteers are instructed to inquire of children with problems, "What would your parents want you to do in this situation?" If necessary, volunteers will attempt to contact parents.

KIDTALK FACT SHEET
Page 2

6. Confidentiality is respected. For data collection purposes the child is asked first name, school he/she attends, and age (this also helps the volunteer respond at appropriate level for that child). The caller's phone number is requested only if the volunteer believes it might be necessary to call back the child.
7. KIDTALK has been recognized as a valuable community service by Dr. Linus Wright, Superintendent of Dallas Independent School District as well as more than 40 community agencies and other area school districts. A number of community foundations and individuals have funded or provided service to KIDTALK.
8. The response to KIDTALK has been incredible. KIDTALK is believed to be the most heavily used "warm-line" of it's type in the country, averaging over one hundred calls a day during a three hour period.
9. While we are equipped to deal with problem situations, our main role is to listen and give support to children. Most callers can and do solve their own "problems". Most children seem able to deal with their concerns when they have a supportive listener.
10. KIDTALK is for all children, whether they are regularly at home alone, or only occasionally. Parents are encouraged to place the KIDTALK sticker on or near the phone even if they are at home most of the time.
11. Parents wishing to know more about KIDTALK may call the KIDTALK line (631-0000) during calling hours (3:00 to 6:00 p.m.) or the Camp Fire office (638-2240) from 9:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Children are also welcome to call KIDTALK just to see or "hear what happens" and acquaint themselves with the service just in case they might want help or a "friend" at a later time.

For more information about KIDTALK write to:

KIDTALK
Lone Star Council of Camp Fire, Inc.
5353 Maple Avenue, Suite 201
Dallas, Texas 75235

or call

(214) 638-2240
(214) 638-0000
(214) 638-2248 (TDD for hearing impaired)



LONE STAR COUNCIL OF CAMP FIRE

KIDTALK - STATISTICAL SUMMARY 1986

In 1986, from September 2nd - December 19th, we answered 7,832 calls. We attempt to obtain as much information from the child as we can, while keeping the primary emphasis on meeting the conversational needs of the child.

In situations which are not crises or emergencies, we try to get from each child their first name, note the reason for the call, their grade in school, name of school and/or school district, and sex. We were more effective at collecting some information than other. For instance, in 93% of the calls, type of call was noted; 67% had grade reported; 48% reported school district; and in 71%, sex was noted. However, it should be noted that the latter 3 numbers do not seem so low when one considers that approximately 33% of our calls are hang-ups and wrong numbers, for which we are unable to retrieve data.

Reasons for calls, besides hang-ups and wrong numbers, are: children who either "Just want to talk", are "lonely", or "bored" (32%); want to know "What's KIDTALK" (14%); want to share good news (3.3%); is school related, such as help with homework (2.4%); are scared (3%); are having interpersonal problems or questions such as getting along with teachers, friends, family, boyfriend or girlfriend (4%); or some other reason (8.3%).

As anticipated, most of our calls are not of a crisis nature. In fact, we estimate that fewer than one-half of one percent are what might be considered crisis in nature, such as the child reporting abuse or neglect, running away, reporting being raped, thinking they are pregnant, or thinking someone is breaking in.

While we are receiving calls from children, preschool through high school, most of the children are in the 3rd, 4th and 5th grade (18.1%, 19.9%, and 19% respectively); 19.4% are in the 1st or 2nd grade, 16.6% in the 6th and 7th grades, 4.8% in kingergarten or under, and 2% in the 8th grade or higher.

Approximately 46% of our calls are coming from children in the Independent School District; this is close to their percentage of elementary school aged children in the metroplex. The other primary independent school districts from which we are receiving calls are (10%), (9%), (8.5%), (6.5%), (4%), (3%), (2.5%), (2%) and (1.7%).

We were receiving slightly more calls from girls than boys (58% and 42% respectively).

APPENDIX B
PROJECTED TIME LINE AND PERTINENT COMMUNICATIONS

KIDTALK STUDY

conducted by Mary Lou Padilla

PROJECTED TIME LINE

- 9/4 Contact principals of (school names) in order to solidify plans and meet any individual needs.
- First Round of Testing (September 1986)
- 9/8 Deliver General Report Form and cover letter to contact person at each school.
- 9/9 General Report Form goes home in weekly packets of 4th and 6th graders at (Schools A, B, and D).
- 9/11 Returned forms collected from (Schools A, B, and D).
General Report Form goes home in weekly packets of 4th and 6th graders at (School C).
- 9/12 Returned forms collected from (School C).
- 9/12 - 9/14 If necessary, parents who did not return forms contacted to urge them to return form Monday, 9/15, or to give the information over the telephone.
- 9/15 Explanatory letter with permission slip delivered to contact person at each school.
- 9/16 Letter with permission slip sent in weekly packet of students identified as responsible for themselves after school at (Schools A, B, and D).
- 9/17 Returned permission slips collected from (Schools A, B, and D).
- 9/17 - 9/21 Parents who did not return skips contacted and asked to please do so.
Codes assigned to participating children.
- 9/18 Letter with permission slip sent in weekly packet of students identified as responsible for themselves after school at (School C).
- 9/19 Testing of identified students with parental permission at (School D).

- Behavior Rating Form for each identified child left with teachers at (School D).
- Returned permission slips collected from (School C).
- 9/22 - 9/26 Testing of identified students with parental permission at (Schools A, B, and C). Specific time to be set at the convenience of the individual school.
- Behavior Rating Form for each identified child left with teachers.
- 9/26 At-Home Behavior forms mailed to participating parents (to be returned by mail to Mary Lou Padilla).
- 9/29 Behavior Rating Forms collected from contact person at each school,
- 10/6 Follow-up on unreturned At-Home Behavior forms begins. Personal pick-up done if necessary.

Second Round of Testing (February 1987)

- 2/16 - 2/20 Testing of participating students at each school. Specific time to be set at the convenience of the individual school.
- Behavior Rating Form for each participating student left with teachers.
- 2/20 At-Home Behavior forms mailed to participating parents (to be returned by mail to Mary Lou Padilla).
- 2/23 Behavior Rating Forms collected from contact person at each school.
- 3/2 Follow-up on unreturned At-Home Behavior forms begins. Personal pick-up done if necessary.

MEMO

To: (Chair, External Research Committee)
From: Mary Lou Padilla
Re: KIDTALK study

Feb. 6. 1987

cc: (Attendance Area Superintendents)

It is time to start the second round of testing of latchkey children at (school names). As per the time line sent to you on Sept. 8, 1986, testing will begin the week of Feb. 16. For your information, the specific times for each school are listed below:

(School A)	Tuesday, Feb. 17 2:30 p.m.	Cafeteria
(School C)	Wednesday, Feb. 18 2:40 p.m.	Cafeteria
(School B)	Thursday, Feb. 19 2:00 p.m.	Library
(School D)	Friday, Feb. 20 2:15 p.m.	Cafeteria

These times were set up in cooperation with each school and have their approval. If you have any questions concerning the completion of this study, please check the time line or call me at _____.



Counselor Education

Feb. 5, 1987

D J
 Elementary School
 Road
 , Texas

Dear D ,

This is to reconfirm the time we agreed upon over the phone for the second round of testing in your school. I plan to be in your building 15 minutes before the 2:15 testing time on Friday, Feb. 20.

Attached is a sheet listing the children to be tested. Please mark the names of any children no longer enrolled and save the sheet for me. I will wait for the children at the testing site. They need to bring pencils (not pens) with them. The testing should last no longer than one-half hour.

I will also be bringing forms for the teachers to complete on that same day. I'll return to pick those up on Monday, Feb. 23, as indicated on the time line I left with you last September. I'm asking them to return the forms to you.

Parent forms will be mailed directly to the parents. Those are to be returned by mail to my home.

After the testing and collection of the teacher forms, I will no longer need to be in your building. I will send a written report summarizing the results of this study to _____ as soon as it is available.

Please share this information with _____ and the fourth and sixth grade teachers. If there are any questions, contact me at _____

Thanks so much for your help in this endeavor. It's been a pleasure to work with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Lou Padilla".

Mary Lou Padilla, M.Ed.
 Project Director

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Garry L. Landreth".

Garry L. Landreth, Ed.D.
 Counselor Education

Enc.



APPENDIX C
FORMS USED IN SELECTING SAMPLE



Counselor Education

September 9, 1986

Dear Parents,

We are collecting information about children who are responsible for themselves after school on a regular basis. Would you please take a few minutes to complete the attached questionnaire? The questionnaire is being sent to the parents of fourth and sixth grade students throughout the state. Please complete a form for each child that you have in those grades. The information you provide will increase our understanding of the needs of school-age children and help us to begin to meet those needs.

This study has been reviewed by the _____ External Research Committee, chaired by _____, and was approved to be conducted in _____ schools. Your principal, _____, has given permission for information to be collected at _____ Elementary.

Your answers will be kept strictly confidential. No information will be reported about any individual child or family. We are only interested in total group information. To protect your privacy, an envelope has been provided in which to return the questionnaire.

Please complete the questionnaire and return it with the weekly envelope tomorrow. Thank you for your cooperation. It is very much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Mary Lou Padilla
Mary Lou Padilla, M.Ed.
Project Director

Garry L. Landreth
Garry L. Landreth, Ed.D.
Counselor Education

Attachments (2)

GENERAL REPORT FORM

Child's name _____ Date _____
Age _____ Sex _____ Grade _____ School _____ Teacher _____

1. Is this child at home without anyone there over 14 years old, for one hour or more at least three days a week?

_____ yes (continue on with questionnaire)

_____ no (no more answers needed--return questionnaire to school)

2. What are the ages of any other children who are at home with this child during those times? _____

3. Do you have a telephone in your home?

_____ yes

_____ no

To protect your privacy, place this form in the attached envelope and return it to school.



Counselor Education

September 16, 1986

Dear Parents,

In today's world, it's a fact of life that children must sometimes be left on their own without adult supervision because of a lack of money or because good child care just isn't available. Many older elementary children feel that they are mature enough to care for themselves and prefer not to be "baby-sat."

With this in mind, we are conducting a study of fourth and sixth grade students who are responsible for themselves after school on a regular basis. In order to get the best possible idea of the needs of these children and how to meet those needs, we are asking for assistance from you and your child (or children). Participation in this study is voluntary and will not interfere with your child's school work nor effect his or her grades.

Participating children will be tested twice, now and again in February. They will be asked how they feel during the hours after school when no adults are at home (for example: "I feel . . . () very good, () good, () not good"). Other items such as "I can usually take care of myself" or "I'm popular with kids my own age" are marked as either "like me" or "unlike me." The testing will be done as a group activity and will take about one-half hour each time.

The main teacher of each child will be asked to complete a form on that child's school behavior. You will be asked to complete a similar form on your child's behavior at home. These forms take just a few minutes to complete and will be used both now and in February. Typical questions deal with the children's independence, cooperation and responsibility. Your form will be mailed to you with the stamped, self-addressed envelope in which it is to be returned. Your child's teacher will never see your form.

Once a child has permission to participate in the study, a code number will be used to identify all further information concerning that child. No names will be used on the forms. Individual responses will be known only to the study team which does not include anyone from the school district. No information will be reported concerning any individual child or family. We are only interested in total group information.

At the bottom of the second page of this letter is a permission form which must be signed by a parent or guardian in order for a child to participate in this study. Please indicate on the form whether or not you give your child permission to participate. The form is to be returned in either case. The more children that participate, the better our results will be.



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
P.O. BOX 13857 DENTON, TEXAS 76203-3857
AC 817-565-2910

We will be testing in your school within the next few days and must have the permission forms as soon as possible. No child will be included in this study without the permission of a parent or guardian. Please detach and complete the form at the bottom of this page and return it to school in the enclosed envelope.

If you have any questions concerning this study and your child's participation in it, feel free to call Mary Lou Padilla at 931-6211.

Once again, our sincere thanks for your cooperation. Keep this letter for your own information.

Sincerely,

Mary Lou Padilla

Mary Lou Padilla, M.Ed.
Project Director

Garry L. Landreth

Garry L. Landreth, Ed.D.
Counselor Education

On the form below:

1. Read the form carefully.
2. Write your child's first and last name on the blank.
3. Check the correct blank to give or not give your permission.
4. Sign, date, detach and return the form in the attached envelope to school.

PERMISSION FORM

I have read the letter explaining how my child, his or her teacher, and I will be involved in the study on children responsible for themselves after school and realize what will be expected of us. I understand that participation in this study will not interfere with my child's school work nor effect his or her grades in any way. I voluntarily sign this form with the understanding that no identifying information about my child or family will be released.

Child's first and last name

_____ has my permission to participate in this study.

_____ does not have my permission to participate in this study.

Date

Parent or Guardian signature

APPENDIX D
FORMS USED WITH SAMPLE CHILDREN

STUDENT REPORT FORM

Code No. _____ Date _____

1. After school, how often do you stay at home by yourself (or with other kids 13 years old or younger) for at least one hour?

_____ everyday
_____ 3 to 4 days a week
_____ 2 to 1 days a week
_____ 0 days a week

2. What are the ages of any other kids who are at home with you during those times? _____

3. How long have you been staying by yourself (or with other kids 13 years old or younger) on a fairly regular schedule after school?

_____ just started this year
_____ 1 year
_____ 2 years
_____ 3 years or more

4. Do you own any pets? _____ yes _____ no

If you answered "yes," what kind? _____

5. Are you able to reach your mother or father by telephone when they're at work or away from home after school?

_____ yes
_____ sometimes (not always)
_____ no
_____ don't know (never tried)

HOW-I-FEEL QUESTIONNAIRE

(Developed by C. D. Spielberger, C. D. Edwards, J. Montuori and R. Lushene)
STAIC FORM C-1

Code No. _____ Date _____

DIRECTIONS: A number of statements that boys and girls use to describe themselves are given below. Read each statement carefully and decide how you usually feel when you are at home after school and no adults are there. There are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time on any one statement. Remember, find the word which best describes how you usually feel when you are at home alone after school and no adults are there.

- | | | | |
|--------------------|--|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1. I feel | <input type="checkbox"/> very calm | <input type="checkbox"/> calm | <input type="checkbox"/> not calm |
| 2. I feel | <input type="checkbox"/> very upset | <input type="checkbox"/> upset | <input type="checkbox"/> not upset |
| 3. I feel | <input type="checkbox"/> very pleasant | <input type="checkbox"/> pleasant | <input type="checkbox"/> not pleasant |
| 4. I feel | <input type="checkbox"/> very nervous | <input type="checkbox"/> nervous | <input type="checkbox"/> not nervous |
| 5. I feel | <input type="checkbox"/> very jittery | <input type="checkbox"/> jittery | <input type="checkbox"/> not jittery |
| 6. I feel | <input type="checkbox"/> very rested | <input type="checkbox"/> rested | <input type="checkbox"/> not rested |
| 7. I feel | <input type="checkbox"/> very scared | <input type="checkbox"/> scared | <input type="checkbox"/> not scared |
| 8. I feel | <input type="checkbox"/> very relaxed | <input type="checkbox"/> relaxed | <input type="checkbox"/> not relaxed |
| 9. I feel | <input type="checkbox"/> very worried | <input type="checkbox"/> worried | <input type="checkbox"/> not worried |
| 10. I feel | <input type="checkbox"/> very satisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> satisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> not satisfied |
| 11. I feel | <input type="checkbox"/> very frightened | <input type="checkbox"/> frightened | <input type="checkbox"/> not frightened |
| 12. I feel | <input type="checkbox"/> very happy | <input type="checkbox"/> happy | <input type="checkbox"/> not happy |
| 13. I feel | <input type="checkbox"/> very sure | <input type="checkbox"/> sure | <input type="checkbox"/> not sure |
| 14. I feel | <input type="checkbox"/> very good | <input type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> not good |
| 15. I feel | <input type="checkbox"/> very troubled | <input type="checkbox"/> troubled | <input type="checkbox"/> not troubled |
| 16. I feel | <input type="checkbox"/> very bothered | <input type="checkbox"/> bothered | <input type="checkbox"/> not bothered |
| 17. I feel | <input type="checkbox"/> very nice | <input type="checkbox"/> nice | <input type="checkbox"/> not nice |
| 18. I feel | <input type="checkbox"/> very terrified | <input type="checkbox"/> terrified | <input type="checkbox"/> not terrified |
| 19. I feel | <input type="checkbox"/> very mixed-up | <input type="checkbox"/> mixed-up | <input type="checkbox"/> not mixed-up |
| 20. I feel | <input type="checkbox"/> very cheerful | <input type="checkbox"/> cheerful | <input type="checkbox"/> not cheerful |

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KIDTALK USE (FORM A)

Code No. _____ Date _____

1. Have you heard of KIDTALK, a phone line that children can call when there are no adults at home?

_____ yes

_____ no

2. Have you ever called KIDTALK?

_____ yes

_____ no

3. If you have called KIDTALK, how many times? _____

KIDTALK USE (FORM B)

Code No. _____ Date _____

1. After school, how often do you stay at home by yourself (or with other kids 13 years old or younger) for at least one hour?

everyday
 3 to 4 days a week
 2 to 1 days a week
 0 days a week

2. Have you heard of KIDTALK, a phone line that children can call when there are no adults at home?

yes
 no

3. Have you ever talked with KIDTALK?

yes (Go on)
 no (Skip to #4)

- 3a. How many times have you called KIDTALK? _____

- 3b. Why did you call KIDTALK? (Check all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> to find out about KIDTALK	<input type="checkbox"/> homework problems
<input type="checkbox"/> lonely	<input type="checkbox"/> trouble with other kids
<input type="checkbox"/> bored	<input type="checkbox"/> problem with a pet
<input type="checkbox"/> scared	<input type="checkbox"/> hurt (cut, scrape, burn, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/> personal problem	<input type="checkbox"/> called back KIDTALK volunteer
<input type="checkbox"/> just to talk or share some good news	
<input type="checkbox"/> other (please explain) _____	

- 3c. Did calling KIDTALK help you?

a lot
 some
 not very much
 not at all

4. Have you ever called KIDTALK and gotten a busy signal?

yes
 no

5. Have you ever thought about calling KIDTALK but then didn't?

yes (Go on)
 no (Skip to #6)

5a. Why didn't you call? _____

6. Does knowing there is someplace you can call if you need help after school make it easier for you to stay by yourself or only with other children?

yes
 no

7. Do you think you'll use KIDTALK in the future?

yes
 no

7a. Why or why not? _____

8. Do you have any ideas or suggestions to help KIDTALK do a better job?

Thanks for your help!

APPENDIX E
TEACHER FORM AND MEMOS

MEMO

To: Fourth and Sixth Grade Teachers
(Schools A, B, C, and D)

Sept. 22, 1986

From: Mary Lou Padilla

Re: Study on "latchkey" children

Would you please complete the attached forms on the children indicated. Be sure to cut the name off the top of the form when it is completed. You need to know who the child is that you are rating, but to protect confidentiality the information you provide will be only identified by a code number. You will be asked to complete these same forms on these same children again when we do the second round of testing in February.

When you have completed the forms and taken off the children's names, return them to _____ in the manila envelope. I'll pick them up from him/her on Monday, Sept. 29.

I am getting some much needed information concerning "latchkey" children. I feel certain that study will add a lot to our knowledge of these children and their needs. Your efforts in getting back the envelopes and filling out these forms are very much appreciated. I have tried not to intrude on your time any more than absolutely necessary. Thanks so very much for your help.

MEMO

To: Fourth and Sixth Grade Teachers
(Schools A, B, C, and D)

Feb. 16, 1987

From: Mary Lou Padilla

Re: Study on "latchkey" children

It is time to do the second round of testing on the children in your rooms who qualified for our study. If you remember, you were asked to complete these same forms back in September. The same procedure will be used this time. Do not try to remember how you rated each child previously. We are interested in how each one is behaving now. Be sure to cut the name off the top of each form when it is completed. You need to know who the child is that you are rating; but to protect confidentiality, the information you provide will be only identified by a code number. If any of these children are no longer in your class, please mark the form "No longer enrolled" and return it to me unrated.

You will be happy to know that no forms will be returned to you by the children this time around. Your only involvement will be to complete and return the forms in this envelope.

When you have completed the forms and taken off the children's names, return them to _____ in the manila envelope. I'll pick them up from him/her on Monday, Feb. 23.

I truly appreciate your assistance in this endeavor and hope that the testing of the children and the completing of your forms has not interfered too much with your schedule. As a token of my appreciation, I have left something for you in the school office.

ENJOY AND THANKS!

_____ Cut off after completing form.
 (Child to be rated)

BEHAVIOR RATING FORM (BRF)

Code No. _____ Date _____

DIRECTIONS

There are two parts to the thirteen items of the Self-Esteem Behavior Rating Form, (BRF). The first ten items provide an appraisal of behaviors that have been associated with poise, assurance, and self-thrust. These ten items include reactions to new situations, reactions to criticism and failure, self-depreciation, and hesitation to express opinions publicly.

The second part, consisting of three items, provides an index of behaviors that are frequently defensive in nature. These include bragging, domination or bullying, and attention seeking.

To rate the behavior of a child, place a check next to the word that describes the behavior (✓).

PART I: SELF-ESTEEM BEHAVIOR

1. Does this child adapt easily to new situations, feel comfortable in new settings, enter easily into new activities?
 always usually sometimes seldom never
2. Does this child hesitate to express his opinions, as evidenced by extreme caution, failure to contribute, or subdued manner in speaking situations?
 always usually sometimes seldom never
3. Does this child become upset by failures or other strong stresses as evidenced by such behaviors as pouting, whining, withdrawing?
 always usually sometimes seldom never
4. How often is this child chosen for activities by his classmates? Is his companionship sought after and valued?
 always usually sometimes seldom never
5. Does this child become alarmed or frightened easily? Does he become very restless or jittery when procedures are changed, exams are scheduled or strange individuals are in the room?
 always usually sometimes seldom never
6. Does this child seek much support and reassurance from his peers or the teacher, as evidenced by seeking their nearness or frequent inquiries as to whether he is doing well?
 always usually sometimes seldom never

7. When this child is scolded or criticized, does he become either very aggressive or very sullen and withdrawn?
 always usually sometimes seldom never
8. Does this child depreciate his school work, grades, activities, and work products? Does he indicate he is not doing as well as expected?
 always usually sometimes seldom never
9. Does this child show confidence and assurance in his actions toward his teachers and classmates?
 always usually sometimes seldom never
10. To what extent does this child show a sense of self-esteem, self-respect, and appreciation of his own worthiness?
 very strong strong medium mild weak

PART II: DEFENSIVE BEHAVIOR

11. Does this child publicly brag or boast about his exploits?
 always usually sometimes seldom never
12. Does this child attempt to dominate or bully other children?
 always usually sometimes seldom never
13. Does this child continually seek attention, as evidenced by such behaviors as speaking out of turn and making unnecessary noises?
 always usually sometimes seldom never

APPENDIX F
PARENT FORMS AND LETTERS



Counselor Education

September 22, 1986

Dear Parents,

Thank you for participating in our study about children who are responsible for themselves after school. Enclosed is the At-Home Behavior questionnaire to be completed as your contribution to the the study. You will be asked to complete this same questionnaire again in February. Please take a few minutes right now to check the response for each question that best describes how your child behaves at home. Remember: you are answering only about the child participating in this study. The form should take you only a few minutes to complete. Be sure to cut your child's name off the top of the form before you return it. That way the information you provide will only be identified by a code number. This is to protect your privacy.

Also included in this letter is a sheet of optional questions. While the answers would be of great help to us in our study, you do not need to answer any of the questions you think are too personal. Please notice that no name is required on this sheet in order to ensure your privacy.

When you finish both forms, return them in the enclosed, self-addressed, stamped envelope. No one will see either of these forms except the members of the study team who are not connected with the Independent School District. Your responses will be kept confidential.

Once more we thank you for your help in this project. We couldn't do it without you!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Lou Padilla".

Mary Lou Padilla, M.Ed.
Project Director

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Garry K. Landreth".

Garry K. Landreth, Ed.D.
Counselor Education

Enclosures (3)



----- This is the child on whom you are to complete this form.
Cut off this strip before returning the form so that his/her name is no longer on it.

AT-HOME BEHAVIOR

Code No. _____ Date _____

The following questions are about your child's behavior at home. Check (✓) the response that best describes the behavior of the child named above. Please be as honest as possible.

1. Does your child do things for him/herself around the house (gets own snack or does projects on own for example)?
 always usually sometimes not very often never
2. Does your child follow the rules of the household?
 always usually sometimes not very often never
3. Does your child adjust well to changes in routine?
 always usually sometimes not very often never
4. Does your child accept responsibility (completes chores or comes home on time for example)?
 always usually sometimes not very often never
5. Does your child get upset if things don't turn out as he/she wanted (whines, pouts or withdraws for example)?
 always usually sometimes not very often never
6. Does your child complain about being left at home when you aren't there?
 always usually sometimes not very often never
7. Is your child able to figure out solutions to problems on his/her own (other than school work)?
 always usually sometimes not very often never
8. Does your child argue with you?
 always usually sometimes not very often never
9. Based on the behaviors you see, how much would you say your child likes him/herself?
 completely a lot somewhat not much not at all

OPTIONAL DATA SHEET

Code No. _____ Date _____

The following questions are optional. While the answers would be of help in our study, you do not need to answer any that you think are too personal. Please return this sheet with the At-Home Behavior questionnaire.

1. To what cultural group does your family belong?

<input type="checkbox"/>	White	<input type="checkbox"/>	Asian
<input type="checkbox"/>	Black	<input type="checkbox"/>	Native American
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hispanic	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other

2. What is your sex?

male
 female

3. What is your marital status?

<input type="checkbox"/>	married	<input type="checkbox"/>	widowed
<input type="checkbox"/>	separated	<input type="checkbox"/>	never married
<input type="checkbox"/>	divorced		

4. What is your relationship to this child?

<input type="checkbox"/>	parent	<input type="checkbox"/>	guardian
<input type="checkbox"/>	step-parent	<input type="checkbox"/>	foster parent
<input type="checkbox"/>	grandparent		

5. In what range does your total family income fall?

less than \$15,000
 \$15,000 to \$29,999
 over \$30,000

6. How many adults (over the age of 18), including yourself, live in your home? _____

APPENDIX G
TABLES

Table 2

"Latchkey Children" Identified by Screening Device (General Report Form)

	Fourth Grade	Sixth Grade	Total
SCHOOL A			
Identified	14/56 ^a	23/6	37/121
%	25.0	35.4	30.6
Permission ^b	6	15	21
%	42.9	65.2	56.8
SCHOOL B			
Identified	8/63	19/69	27/132
%	12.7	27.5	20.5
Permission	5	14	19
%	62.5	73.7	70.4
SCHOOL C			
Identified	12/41	19/51	31/92
%	29.3	37.3	33.7
Permission	9	14	23
%	75.0	73.7	74.2
SCHOOL D			
Identified	6/23	10/23	16/46
%	26.1	43.5	34.8
Permission	4	8	12
%	66.7	80.0	75.0
TOTAL GROUP			
Identified	40/183	71/208	111/391
%	21.9	34.1	28.4
Permission ^c	24	51	75
%	60.0	71.8	67.6

^aRead as "14 out of 56"^bNumber of permissions granted from each group of identified students^cFinal sample

Table 3

Attrition Rate at February Testing

	Original Sample	New Sample	% Attrition
SCHOOL A			
Fourth Grade	6	5	16.7
Sixth Grade	15	11	26.7
Total	21	16	23.8
SCHOOL B			
Fourth Grade	5	5	00.0
Sixth Grade	14	13	7.1
Total	19	18	5.3
SCHOOL C			
Fourth Grade	9	8	11.1
Sixth Grade	14	10	28.6
Total	23	18	21.7
SCHOOL D			
Fourth Grade	4	3	25.0
Sixth Grade	8	7	12.5
Total	12	10	16.7
TOTAL GROUP			
Fourth Grade	24	21	12.5
Sixth Grade	51	41	19.6
Total	75	62	17.3

Table 4

Demographic Characteristics of Sample Group

	Fourth Grade (N=24)		Sixth Grade (N=51)		Total (N=75)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Sex						
Male	15	62.5	23	45.1	38	50.7
Female	9	37.5	28	54.9	37	49.3
Ethnic Group						
White	21	87.5	39	76.5	60	80.0
Black	1	4.2	10	19.6	11	14.7
Hispanic	1	4.2	0	0.0	1	1.3
Asian	1	4.2	2	3.9	3	4.0
Parent Marital Status						
Married	16	66.7	30	58.8	46	61.3
Separated	0	0.0	2	3.9	2	2.7
Divorced	7	29.2	14	27.5	21	28.0
Widowed	1	4.2	1	2.0	2	2.7
Never Married	0	0.0	4	7.8	4	5.3
Number of Adults in Home^a (Over age 18)						
One	9	39.1	14	28.0	23	31.5
Two	12	52.2	29	58.0	41	56.2
Three	2	8.7	6	12.0	8	11.0
Four	0	0.0	1	2.0	1	1.4
Income Range^a						
Less than \$15,000	0	0.0	4	8.3	4	5.6
\$15,000 to \$29,999	12	50.0	17	35.4	29	40.3
Over \$30,000	12	50.0	27	56.3	39	54.2

(table continues)

	Fourth Grade (N=24)		Sixth Grade (N=51)		Total (N=75)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Siblings under 14						
Yes	18	75.0	23	45.1	41	54.7
No	6	25.0	28	54.9	34	45.3
Time in Self-Care						
Just Started	9	37.5	3	5.9	12	16.0
One Year	4	16.7	8	15.7	12	16.0
Two Years	5	20.8	7	13.7	12	16.0
Three Years or More	6	25.0	33	64.7	39	52.0
Pets^b						
Dog	8	33.3	14	27.5	22	29.3
Cat	4	16.7	7	13.7	11	14.7
Dog and Cat	4	16.7	11	21.6	15	20.0
Other than Dog or Cat	2	8.3	5	9.8	7	9.3
None	6	25.0	14	27.5	20	26.7
Able to Reach Parent by Phone						
Yes	15	62.5	39	76.5	54	72.0
Sometimes	6	25.0	11	21.6	17	22.7
No	1	4.2	0	0.0	1	1.3
Don't Know (Never Tried)	2	8.3	1	2.0	3	4.0

^aSome parents chose not to answer this question.

^bSome children had multiple pets but were placed in categories according to dog and/or cat ownership.

Table 5

Demographic Characteristics of KIDTALK Callers

	Fourth Grade (N=4)		Sixth Grade (N=11)		Total (N=15)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Sex						
Male	1	25.0	3	27.3	4	26.7
Female	3	75.0	8	72.7	11	73.3
Ethnic Group						
White	4	100.0	9	81.8	13	86.7
Black	0	0.0	2	18.2	2	13.3
Parental Marital Status						
Married	2	50.0	6	54.5	8	53.3
Separated	0	0.0	1	9.1	1	6.7
Divorced	1	25.0	2	18.2	3	20.0
Widowed	1	25.0	0	0.0	1	6.7
Never Married	0	0.0	2	18.2	2	13.3
Number of Adults in Home (Over age 18)						
One	2	50.0	2	18.2	4	26.7
Two	2	50.0	9	81.8	11	73.3
Income Range						
Less than \$15,000	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
\$15,000 to \$29,999	1	25.0	4	36.4	5	33.3
Over \$30,000	3	75.0	7	63.6	10	66.7
Siblings under 14						
Yes	4	100.0	5	45.5	9	60.0
No	0	0.0	6	54.5	6	40.0

(table continues)

	Fourth Grade (N=4)		Sixth Grade (N=11)		Total (N=15)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Time in Self-Care						
Just Started	2	50.0	2	18.2	4	26.7
One Year	1	25.0	1	9.1	2	13.3
Two Years	1	25.0	2	18.2	3	20.0
Three Years or More	0	0.0	6	54.5	6	40.0
Pets^a						
Dog	2	50.0	2	18.2	4	26.7
Cat	1	25.0	1	9.1	2	13.3
Dog and Cat	0	0.0	4	36.4	4	26.7
Other than Dog or Cat	1	25.0	0	0.0	1	6.7
None	0	0.0	4	36.4	4	26.7
Able to Reach Parent by Phone						
Yes	3	75.0	7	63.6	10	66.7
Sometimes	1	25.0	3	27.3	4	26.7
No	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Don't Know (Never Tried)	0	0.0	1	9.1	1	6.7

^aSome children had multiple pets but were placed in categories according to dog and/or cat ownership.

Table 6
Demographic Characteristics of Non-Callers

	Fourth Grade (N=17)		Sixth Grade (N=30)		Total (N=47)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Sex						
Male	12	70.6	16	53.3	28	59.6
Female	5	29.4	14	46.7	19	40.4
Ethnic Group						
White	14	82.4	21	70.0	35	74.5
Black	1	5.9	8	26.7	9	19.1
Hispanic	1	5.9	0	0.0	1	2.1
Asian	1	5.9	1	3.3	2	4.3
Parent Marital Status						
Married	12	70.6	18	60.0	30	63.8
Separated	0	0.0	1	3.3	1	2.1
Divorced	5	29.4	8	26.7	13	27.7
Widowed	0	0.0	1	3.3	1	2.1
Never Married	0	0.0	2	6.7	2	4.3
Number of Adults in Home^a (Over Age 18)						
One	6	37.5	9	30.0	15	32.6
Two	8	50.0	14	46.7	22	47.8
Three	2	12.5	6	20.0	8	17.4
Four	0	0.0	1	3.3	1	2.2
Income Range^a						
Less than \$15,000	0	0.0	3	10.7	3	6.7
\$15,000 to \$29,999	10	58.9	12	42.9	22	48.9
Over \$30,000	7	41.1	13	46.4	20	44.4
Siblings under 14						
Yes	12	70.6	13	43.3	25	53.2
No	5	29.4	17	56.7	22	46.8

(table continues)

	Fourth Grade (N=17)		Sixth Grade (N=30)		Total (N=47)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Time in Self-Care						
Just Started	7	41.2	1	3.3	8	17.0
One Year	3	17.6	6	20.0	9	19.1
Two Years	2	11.8	5	16.7	7	14.9
Three Years or More	5	29.4	18	60.0	23	48.9
Pets^b						
Dog	4	23.5	9	30.0	13	27.7
Cat	3	17.6	5	16.7	8	17.0
Dog and Cat	3	17.6	5	16.7	8	17.0
Other than Dog or Cat	1	5.9	3	10.0	4	8.5
None	6	35.3	8	26.7	14	29.8
Able to Reach Parent by Phone						
Yes	10	58.8	26	86.7	36	76.6
Sometimes	4	23.5	4	13.3	8	17.0
No	1	5.9	0	0.0	1	2.1
Don't Know (Never Tried)	2	11.8	0	0.0	2	4.3

^aSome parents chose not to answer this question.

^bSome children had multiple pets but were placed in categories according to dog and/or cat ownership.

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