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PARENTAL AND CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES  
AND ADJUSTMENT IN MATERNAL VERSUS  
JOINT CUSTODY FAMILIES

DISSERTATION

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By

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Differences between joint custody and mother custody families were assessed. The sample consisted of 42 post divorce families which had a child between the age of 4 and 15 years and resided in the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex. This cross sectional, multimethod, quasi-experimental study examined two groups of divorced families. The experimental group consisting of 21 joint custody families, was compared to the control group, consisting of 21 mother custody families. Families were matched between the two groups based on the child's gender, age and time lapse since parental separation. Within each family, interviews were conducted with one parent and with the parent's permission, a target child. Besides the interview, parents completed a questionnaire and the Child Behavior Checklist. Only 19 parents gave permission for their child to be interviewed. Parents completed a questionnaire and the Child Behavior Checklist.

A multiple regression analysis of these data found children in joint custody families had fewer behavioral

adjustment problems with externalizing behavior than children in mother custody families. Regardless of custody arrangement parents with low self esteem were more likely to have children with behavioral adjustment problems when predicting the child's overall behavioral adjustment and internalized behavior. Former spouses who as parents reported a great deal of conflict had children with more behavioral adjustment problems when predicting internalized behavior in children. Finally, parents with higher incomes had children with fewer behavioral adjustment problems when predicting internalizing behavior in children.

A probit analysis revealed that parents in joint custody had different characteristics than parents who choose mother custody. In particular, parents who chose joint custody were less likely to cite alcohol or other drugs as a factor in the decision to divorce. Parents choosing joint custody lived closer to one another and had a more trusting attitude toward their ex-spouse's parenting skills. T-test analysis found that joint custody parents had a higher frequency of coparenting interaction than mother custody.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Statement of the Problem

When parents divorce, who takes responsibility for their children? Major responsibility has traditionally been given to the sole parent awarded custody of the children. Historically the father usually gained sole custody, but since the late 1800s it has been almost exclusively gained by mothers. An alternative approach is joint custody, where parents share responsibilities for children after divorce. This alternative has received lots of attention recently but is extremely controversial. In joint arrangements, physical custody is usually shared more equally than with sole custody, but actual practice varies considerably (Reppucci, 1984).

At one end of the ideological continuum on responsibilities for children, advocates argue for sole custody without any visitation rights by the noncustodial parent (Goldstein, Freud & Solnit, 1973). Those at the other end of the ideological continuum argue that the presumption of joint custody after parents divorce would serve the best interest of children (Roman & Haddad, 1978). Some of those holding views between the ideological extremes argue that joint custody is not for everyone and is only a



viable alternative under certain conditions (Gardner, 1982). In spite of the controversy surrounding the practice, joint custody has become increasingly available (Freed & Foster, 1984). Thirty two states have approved legislation addressing joint custody as an alternative for divorcing families (Coller, 1988). Social science research on joint custody is sparse while rhetoric is abundant.

#### Purpose

This research project assessed the advantages and disadvantages of two types of post divorce arrangements by comparing joint custody families to mother custody families. Several categories of variables were used in making this comparison including the parent child relationship, the interparental relationship, mechanics of alternations, similarities/dissimilarities of home environment, characteristics of children, and social demographic variables (Clingempeel & Reppucci, 1982).

#### Research Questions

Given the research purpose, the following questions were posed:

1. What variables predict parents who choose joint over sole custody?
2. Does child custody choice predict child adjustment?
3. Do parents who choose joint custody have a different interparental relationship than those who choose mother custody?

4. What are the differences between children's behavioral adjustment in mother versus joint custody families.

5. What are the advantages and disadvantages for families of joint custody versus those with mother custody?

### Theoretical Orientation

A theoretical framework suitable for studying divorcing families integrates general systems theory and family stress theory. Divorce can be viewed as a process of family change and redefinition. Divorce is a family transition crisis resulting in structural change within the family system (Ahrons, 1980a). People going through divorce make the transition from nuclearity to what Ahrons (1979) calls binuclearity.

### Family Stress Theory

Applying family stress theory to the divorce process provides an explanation which relates the major stressors of divorce to family functioning. The degree of severity assigned to a stressor by individual family members, provides a definition of the situation which helps determine coping ability to the crisis (Burr, 1973; Hill, 1949). The family members' definition of the situation interacts with both the family's coping resources and the stressor, to produce the crisis. In the case of divorce, all these determinants are within the family itself. This contrasts with most other family stresses which contribute to family hardship since most are found outside the family. Divorce

as described by Ahrons (1980b) is an internal crisis of relationships which results in a deliberate dissolution of the primary family subsystem.

Redefinition of roles and boundaries are tasks which can be traumatic for divorcing families given the lack of clearly established models (Ahrons, 1980b). A family's vulnerability to stress is influenced by clarity of norms and expectations. Divorcing families have largely negative models to deal with (Ahrons, 1980b). Institutions define acceptable behavior and objective reality (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Cherlin, 1978). The institution of the family provides guidelines for acceptable behavior in everyday life. These normative structures and guidelines contribute to stability within families. Families base their behavior in part on social norms. In the case of divorcing families, there is a lack of positive models and normative structures to pattern behavior by. Family behavior is primarily habitualized (Berger & Luckman, 1966). With habitualized behavior, choices are narrowed, hence, family unity is more likely due to fewer decisions to be made that may cause disagreement (Cherlin, 1978). In the case of divorcing families, choices are large in number leading to the possibility of greater conflict.

#### General Systems Theory

General systems theory, elaborated first by Von Bertalanffy (1968) extends the logic of biological systems

to social systems. A system can be defined as "a set of objects together with relationships between the objects and between their attributes" (Hall & Fagen, 1968, p.81).

The term boundary is important to the definition of a system. A boundary separates the internal part of the system from the environment. Families maintain boundaries by filtering out elements seen as undesirable to the system. Boundary is an important concept in understanding the divorce process. Divorcing parents will begin separating their parental roles and spousal roles, and will have the task of redefining roles and establishing new boundaries.

According to Minuchin (1974) boundaries are the rules defining who participates and how. Clarity of boundaries is essential for healthy family functioning. Boundaries fall on a continuum from disengaged, which are too rigid, to enmeshed. Disengaged communication restricts relating to those outside and across boundaries. Members of disengaged systems lack a sense of belonging and loyalty. In an enmeshed system, family members lack autonomy and are over-involved with one another. Clear boundaries which are neither disengaged nor enmeshed will provide the most healthy functioning families. Permeable, but clearly defined boundaries, are necessary within families that are able to successfully make the transition to separation, divorce, and remarriage (Ahrons, 1987).

Divorce in the family results in establishing separate households giving children two subsystems in which to interact. These two subsystems form what Ahrons (1980a) calls the binuclear family. Clear boundaries between parents concerning their coparental relationship and clarity in rules reduce the probability of conflict between spouses.

Thus stress theory helps account for the interpersonal changes and systems theory accounts for the shifting structure of divorcing families.

#### Definition of Terms

The following are the main terms used in the study: Custody is a legal term which refers to the combination of rights and privileges that a parent or guardian has for the care of a minor child (Gaddis & Bintliff, 1979).

Sole custody provides a parent or guardian with complete decision making power with regard to a minor child. Although state laws differ somewhat on the rights and privileges of parent with sole custody, the Texas statute defines the following:

- 1) the right to have physical possession of the child and establish its legal domicile; 2) duty of care, control, protection, moral and religious training, and reasonable discipline of the child; 3) the duty to provide the child with clothing, food, shelter, and education; 4) right to services and earnings of the child; 5) power to consent to marriage, to enlistment

in armed forces of the United States, and to medical, psychiatric, and surgical treatment; 6) power to represent the child in legal action and to make other decisions of substantial legal significance concerning the child including, guardian or attorney ad litem has been appointed for the child, a power as an agent of the child to act in relation to the child's estate if the child's action is required by a state, the United States, or a foreign government; 7) the power to receive and give receipt for periodic payments for the support of the child and to hold or disburse these funds for the benefit of the child, and 8) if the parent-child relationship has been terminated with respect to the parents, or only living parent, or if there is no living parent, the power to consent to the adoption of the child and to make any other decision concerning the child that a parent could make (Texas Family Code, 1988, p.58).

In Texas, the parent with custody is titled the managing conservator.

Joint custody, as a term has been confusing for many people. Joint custody is the legal arrangement where separated or divorced parents share rights and privileges for caretaking their children. Two decisions that are important in establishing a joint custody arrangement are decision making rights, and visitation. Parents have the

option of sharing all decisions regarding their children or dividing the areas of decision making and appointing them to a specific parent. A joint custody arrangement offers a variety of options for parents to choose from when forming their legal document of agreement. For example, parents may agree that all decisions will be made jointly, or one parent may be responsible for decisions involving the religious upbringing of children while the other will be responsible for decisions involving medical or psychiatric treatment. Actual living arrangements in a joint custody vary widely from visitation occurring every other weekend to sharing physical possession of the children equally.

In Texas, those who have joint custody are called joint managing conservators. The Texas statute defines joint managing conservatorship as "sharing of the rights, privileges, duties, and powers of a parent by two parties, ordinarily the parents, even if the exclusive power to make certain decisions may be awarded to one party. Joint managing conservatorship does not require the award of equal or nearly equal periods of physical possession of and access to the child to each of the joint conservators; ordinarily the best interest of the child will require the court to designate a primary physical residence for the child" (Texas Family Code, 1988, p.59).

The next chapter reviews literature and research relevant to the custody issue.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Children and Divorce

##### Incidence

In the 1960s and 1970s the divorce rate rapidly increased. This increase was part of a long term upward trend in divorce (Glick & Lin, 1986). An estimated forty-five percent of the children who were born in 1977 will reside in a one parent family some time before they reach 18 years of age (Glick, 1979). If trends since 1960 continue; this proportion will reach fifty percent by 1990 (Glick, 1979). It is estimated that forty-five percent of all children born in 1983 will experience their parents' divorce, thirty-five percent will experience a remarried family, and twenty percent will experience a second divorce (Wallerstein, 1985). Out of this group, 11.4 million children will live with their mother only; 1.2 million live with fathers only, 6.4 million live with one biological parent and a stepparent (Wallerstein, 1985). Close to one tenth of all children living with a divorced parent live with their father. This proportion has not changed since 1960, but the number of children living with a divorced father has tripled since 1960.



As the statistics indicate, joint custody is rarely practiced (Furstenberg & Nord, 1985). Even among those granted, joint legal custody, where both parents share in major decisions and responsibilities related to the child, the practice often resembles sole custody in amount of time the nonresidential parent spends with their children. This legal arrangement is more prevalent than the more encompassing joint physical custody where parents share both residency and daily care of the child. For example, Phear, Beck, Hauser, Clark & Whitney (1983) studied 500 court records in Massachusetts and out of 109 families with joint legal custody, only eleven shared physical custody of the children. Another study where joint custody was defined as neither parent taking more than sixty percent of the child care responsibilities, sampled forty-seven states and the district of Columbia. Out of 738 divorced families surveyed, only 56 families had this type of joint custody (Defrain, Fricke & Elman, 1987).

#### Two Classic Studies of the Impact of Divorce

The two most influential research projects on the impact of divorce on children began in the early 1970's (Levitin, 1979). One project, by Hetherington, Cox and Cox is quasi experimental. The other project, by Wallerstein and Kelly used methods of clinical research to study a non-clinical sample of children. Strengths in contrast to most previous research included the following: use of a normal,

previous research included the following: use of a normal, rather than clinical samples; use of longitudinal designs so that changes in the effects of divorce, over time could be measured; information was gathered near the time of parental separation, and are not subject to distortions associated with retrospective data; use of direct observation of children and families; viewing the family as a system and attempts to understand family functioning before, during, and after the separation; and finally, employment of process variables and use of multiple measures and procedures to understand change in families.

Hetherington, Cox & Cox (1976; 1978; 1979) carried out a comprehensive, multimeasure, longitudinal two year study of divorcing families. Their final sample contained 48 white, middle class families with preschool children, and a matched sample of 48 intact families with a preschool child of the same age and gender as the target child in the divorced family. In the former families, the mother had custody in all cases. The two groups of families were matched on age, sex, birth order, and nursery school of the child, and attempts were made to match parents on age, education and length of marriage. Data were gathered at two months, one year, and two years following the divorce.

The purpose of the study was to examine responses to divorce, see what new patterns of family organization emerged, examine characteristics of family members, and

study how the variation in family structure and functioning affected the children. Data were obtained through interviews with parents, diary records, home observations of parent-child interactions, observation of child teacher and child-peer interactions, checklists by parents and teachers, personality tests, and self report ratings by parents.

This study found that the first year after divorce family members exhibited severe stress and disorganization. Divorce had an effect on parental functioning. Both mothers and fathers were found to feel incompetent, lonely, alienated, and depressed. Mothers reported feeling trapped because of the children, and fathers tended to feel shut out of the children's lives. On almost every measure of parental behavior, divorced parents were coping at a lower level than that of non-divorced parents in the first year following the divorce. Divorced parents had less face to face interaction with their children. They made fewer maturity demands on their children, were less consistent in discipline, were less apt to reason with the children, communicated less, and were less affectionate than the still married parents.

The children of divorced parents showed much more negative behavior than children in non-divorced families; showed less affection, and less compliance, made more dependency demands, and exhibited more nagging and whining behaviors. Divorced mothers had a notable lack of control

and became more restrictive and gave orders but did not follow through with discipline. Divorced fathers initially were permissive and indulgent. The mother-son relationship was particularly troubled. A decline in mother's parenting skills was associated with increased aggressive behavior among sons.

At the two year follow up, the mother-son relationship was still troubled. In general, the most debilitating effects of divorce on both children and their parents had abated with time. Hetherington, Cox & Cox concluded that there was no such thing as a "victimless" divorce, because in their sample, some degree of distress was experienced by one member of every family studied. Agreement concerning parenting and low conflict between the former spouses as parents were important factors associated with less severe disorganization for parent and child.

The generalizability of this study is limited because of the narrow selection of families and their homogeneous demographic characteristics. Yet the age range of the children, homogeneity of the sample, carefully well matched comparison groups, and comprehensive analysis does permit useful conclusions to be drawn about the impact of divorce on children, parents, and the parent-child relationship. Thus the homogeneity of the sample is both a strength and a weakness. Homogeneity of the sample gives information on a narrowly defined group, but also does not yield information

on racial or socioeconomic differences among families.

Wallerstein & Kelly (1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1980) conducted their study in Marin County, California. The purpose of the project were to document how the experience of divorce affected the psychological and social development of the children, parent child relationship, and to develop procedures to diminish the distress associated with divorce. Their project combined research on the impact of divorce with research on the effectiveness of an intervention program. The sample consisted of 60 families with 131 children. The children ranged from age three to eighteen. Families were referred to the project by attorneys, school psychologists, teachers, and other sources. Mothers had custody of the children in all but one family. None of the children had a prior history of psychological difficulty or treatment. Clinical interviews were carried out at the time of parental separation, one year later, four years later, and ten years later. Information was gathered about the quality of the marriage and family life, events and feelings that preceded the decision to divorce, personal history of each spouse, the impact of the divorce on each parent and child, relationship of each parent to the child, and parents' perceptions of how their children understood and were coping with the divorce. Interviews, observations, school records, and information from teachers were obtained. Information about play behaviors and fantasies were used to

understand how each of the children experienced their parents' divorce.

Six weeks of counseling was offered to the participating families. The intervention was brief, child focused, preventive, and specifically addressed to the problems of families undergoing divorce. Wallerstein & Kelly (1980) also found that parenting capacities deteriorated. The first year was a most stressful and critical time and the relationship of the noncustodial father both to the former spouse and to the child was a critical factor in the child's adjustment. The most distressed children were found to be those who became the focus of their parents' conflicts, or those whose parents received little emotional support from family and friends. One major contribution of this study was the delineation of the different outcomes for children at different developmental levels (covered in detail below).

While the attention to the reactions of children at different developmental levels was certainly a positive feature; there were many design problems. The sample bias is difficult to estimate and the lack of a control or comparison group is troublesome. When age and sex controls are used in the analysis, the sub-sample sizes often become quite small. The clinical interviews are not easily replicated, and data collection and interpretation have relied heavily of subjective judgment and clinical skills.

Yet Wallerstein & Kelly's clinical skills, astute perceptions, insights, and sensitivity provide an invaluable set of interpretations that invite further rigorous exploration. The majority of the scholars writing and doing research on the effects of divorce on children draw heavily on the work of both Wallerstein & Kelly, and Hetherington, Cox & Cox. Their findings and research questions have clearly influenced subsequent researchers.

#### Impact Varies by Developmental Stages and Age of Children

When considering the importance of the child's age at the time the marital disruption occurred, the literature contains some incongruent findings. One study addressing the importance of the child's age at the time of marital disruption reported no relationship between the timing of disruption and the child's later overall adjustments (Kalter & Rembar, 1981). However, most studies findings indicate that the severity and persistence of problems depends on the child's age at the time of disruption.

Younger children seem to have more severe reactions to the divorce of their parents (Hetherington, 1979; Hetherington, Cox & Cox, 1981; Longfellow, 1979; Santrock, 1975; Desimone-Luis, O'Mahoney & Hunt, 1979). Children who are under five at the time of divorce seem to be more vulnerable to developmental disruption and depression (Longfellow, 1979; McDermott, 1968). Younger children also tend to show more anxiety than older children (Tuckman &

Regan, 1966) and to somatize more than older children (Luepnitz, 1979).

Wallerstein & Kelly (1974, 1975, 1976) found that developmental factors are critical in the responses of children and adolescents at the time of marital disruption. Wallerstein (1985) considers the child's age one of the most important factors in determining the initial response. According to her, the child's dominant needs, capacity to perceive and understand family events, the central psychological preoccupation and conflict, available repertoire of coping skills, and the dominant patterning of relationships and expectations all reflect the child's age and developmental stage.

The literature suggests that significant commonalities in perceptions, responses, underlying fantasies, and behaviors are divided by the following age breakdown: preschool ages three to five, early school age or early latency ages eight to eleven, and adolescent ages twelve to eighteen (Kelly & Wallerstein, 1976; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1975, 1976, 1980). The responses by these age groups may be general responses to acute stress and may not be divorce specific.

Preschool children are likely to show regression following departure of one parent from the household. This regression usually occurs in the most recent developmental achievement of the child (Wallerstein, 1985; Wallerstein &



Kelly, 1975, 1980). Preschool children tended to be frightened, confused, and ashamed of themselves. Intensified fears were found to be frequent and are evoked by separation from the custodial parent. Sleep disturbance was frequent. Children are often preoccupied with the fear of abandonment by both parents. Yearning for the departed parent is intense. Young children become irritable and demanding, and tended to behave aggressively with parent, siblings, and peers. Preschool children needed a great deal of physical contact and comfort. All preschool children in the sample had difficulty expressing feelings and only five and six year olds understood what divorce meant in terms of changes that would take place (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1975).

Children of ages five to eight years old tended to show open grieving (Wallerstein, 1985; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Early latency children expressed sadness, fear, and insecurity. They were preoccupied with feelings of concern, and longing for the departed parent. They had difficulty expressing anger to their parents, and had a strong desire for parental reconciliation. Many feared that they would be replaced by the missing parent. Many of the children had difficulty believing that the divorce would endure. About half of the sample suffered decline in school achievement (Kelly & Wallerstein, 1976, 1980).

The eight to twelve year olds often responded with intense anger at one or both parents for causing the divorce

(Wallerstein & Kelly, 1976, 1980). These children tend to suffer the grief over the loss of the intact family with anxiety, loneliness, and the humiliating sense of their own powerlessness (Wallerstein, 1985). This age group often sees one parent as the "good" parent and the other as "bad," and they are especially vulnerable if a parent engages in battles with the other parent. Children in later latency have a potential for assuming a helpful and empathic role in the care of the needy parent. School performance and peer relationships suffered in 50 percent of the sample (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1976, 1980).

The adolescents most openly expressed their anger, sadness, and shame. They engaged in examination of the familial relationship and their own values. Adolescents frequently will become depressed, accompanied by suicidal preoccupation. Anger and acting out can be intense. Since the adolescent is preoccupied with morality, they may judge the parents' conduct during the marriage and the divorce, and they may identify with one parent and battle against the other. Many adolescents become concerned that as they enter early adulthood they may experience marital failure also (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1974). Adolescents have impressively shown their capacity to grow in maturity and independence as they respond to the family crisis (Weiss, 1979). This age group was better able to disengage themselves from their parents' conflicts and regain their emotional equilibrium.

### Gender Differences

Boys typically show more prolonged problems than girls in response to divorce. Boys show an increased incidence of aggression, dependency, disobedience, and developmental regression, and these effects persists over a longer period of time (Hess & Camara, 1979; Hetherington, 1979; Hetherington, Cox & Cox, 1979; McDermott, 1968). Boys show more problems in mother-son interaction than they do father-son interaction (Hetherington, 1979; Hetherington, Cox & Cox, 1981).

Santrock & Warshak (1979) found that boys show more maturity, and are less demanding in the custody of their fathers. Given that most mothers have custody, boys more often feel the loss of their fathers more acutely than girls.

Tuckman & Regan (1966) found an increase in aggression among both sexes in children from divorced families. Some evidence suggest that some of the increased aggressive behavior shown by boys may represent the boy's attempt to establish a masculine presence in the family (Tooley, 1976).

In the preschool and latency ages, boys are reported to be more vulnerable than girls to the stress of the divorce. Hetherinton, Cox & Cox (1979) report major differences in cognitive, social and developmental measures for boys and girls preschool age. Divorce did not appear to disrupt sex role typing for girls, but two years after divorce, boys

scored lower on male preference and higher on female preference on the sex role preference tests (Hetherington, Cox & Cox, 1979). The boys were spending more time playing with girls and with younger children. Play patterns were more fragmented and less cognitively and socially mature for children from divorced families in the first year of divorce. For boys, these play patterns continued into the second year (Hetherington, Cox & Cox, 1979). In addition, children displayed more dysphoric types of affect in their play the first year following divorce. These differences again disappeared for girls but hostile, more anxious, less happy affect still remained for boys two years after the divorce (Hetherington, Cox & Cox, 1979). Sex differences also emerged in the Wallerstein & Kelly (1976, 1977, 1980, 1985) study. Although boys and girls did not differ in their over all psychological adjustment at the time of marital breakup, eighteen months later, the boys' psychological adjustment had deteriorated markedly, whereas girls had improved (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980).

At the present time, it is unknown how much of the differential effect between the sexes is mediated by the mother having custody. Santrock & Warshak (1979) compared a small group of latency aged children in the custody of the same sex parent with a matched group in the custody of the opposite sex parent, and a matched group of children from intact families. The results suggested that the sex of the

custodial parent has a direct bearing on the child's social adjustment. Children in the custody of the same sex parent showed more maturity, greater social ability, more independence, and less demanding behavior than did children in the custody of the opposite sex parent (Santrock & Warshak, 1979).

The ten year follow up of the Wallerstein & Kelly (1984, 1985) study suggests that girls from divorced families may have a more stormy adolescence and a more conflict ridden transition into adulthood than their male counterparts. Many young women in the sample were involved in short lived sexual relationships, and described themselves as fearful of commitment, anticipating infidelity and betrayal. Wallerstein (1985) suggests that maybe boys have a more difficult time immediately following the divorce, but girls find adolescence a particularly hazardous time.

#### Behavioral Changes Noted in Children

Several researchers have examined the incidence of divorce in child psychiatric populations (Kalter, 1977; McDermott, 1970; Morrison, 1974; Tuckman & Regan, 1966). These studies have found the following: 1) the proportion of child patients among children of divorce is equal to that of child patients from intact families (Kalter, 1977; McDermott, 1970; Morrison, 1974; Tuckman & Regan, 1966); 2) there is a higher rate of delinquency and antisocial

behavior among children of divorce than among children from intact families (McDermott, 1970; Tuckman & Regan, 1966); 3) depression is more commonly seen among children of divorce (Morrison, 1974); 4) children with enuresis occur more frequently among children of divorce than from intact families (Morrison, 1974); and 5) children of divorce are over represented in outpatient psychiatric agencies (Kalter, 1977; Tessman, 1977; Tooley, 1976).

Children from single parent families have been identified as using more aggressive behavior than children from intact families (Horne, 1981; Tooley, 1976). A longitudinal study on the personalities of children from intact families where a number of families subsequently experienced divorce was conducted by Block, Block & Gjerde (1986). The behavior of boys from the subsequently divorcing families was characterized by under control of impulse, aggression, and excessive energy prior to parental divorce. The behavior of girls from subsequent divorcing families was found to be less affected by parental divorce.

Hetherington, Cox & Cox (1977) found that poor parenting skills were related to aggression in children and to low self esteem, loneliness, depression, and feelings of helplessness for single mothers. In an investigation which compared intact and single parent families, self concept of children was studied (Raschke & Raschke, 1979). No significant differences in self concept was found with

children from intact or single parent families. It was discovered; however, that family conflict, and/or parental unhappiness could be detrimental to self concept in children (Raschke & Raschke, 1979).

Investigations of how divorce effects children's performance at school have inconsistent results. One study compared children of divorce and children from intact families and found no significant difference in self esteem, social interaction, home attitude, school motivation, and school achievement (Hoffman & Zippco, 1986). These researchers were not able to determine the time when the divorce occurred in the lives of the subjects. Since the greatest effects of divorce on children occur within the first year following divorce, and after two years, many of the effects have disappeared (Hetherington, Cox & Cox, 1979; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980), it could be that the effects of divorce had dissipated in most the subjects used.

Children of divorce have been found to show lower achievement and function less competently at school (Guidubaldi & Perry, 1984; Guidubaldi & Perry, 1985; Kinard & Reinherz, 1986; Zakarija, 1982). Some researchers have reported more detrimental effects on children's cognitive functioning when marital disruption occurred during the child's preschool years (Santrock, 1972; Shinn, 1978; Werner & Smith, 1982), while others found no consistent effects depending on the child's age at disruption (Svanum, Bringle

& McLaughlin, 1982). Children experiencing parental divorce during their early school years were more likely to show a decline in school performance at age nine and ten (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1976) than at seven and eight.

Luepnitz (1978) found that living in a single parent family has more negative effects on cognitive performance for first born children than for later born ones. In a study controlling for gender, birth order, maternal employment, and maternal education differences showed that children in recently disrupted single mother families had greater problems in some areas of school achievement and performance than children of early disrupted, single-mother families or children in intact families (Kinard & Reinherz, 1986).

#### Changes in the Relationships Between Parents and Children

The quality of the relationships between the child and each parent has been found to be an important variable in the adjustment of children after divorce. Hess & Camara (1979) found that children who had good relationships with both parents following divorce had fewer problems. The level of post divorce parental harmony was also found to be an important factor. The duration of time spent with the father was positively related to the quality of the father-child relationship, and to the child's adjustment. Koch (1982) found that while increased visitation is associated with a good noncustodial parent child relationship, that association is mediated by the quality of the post divorce



parenting relationship.

Wallerstein (1985) points out that parents experience a diminished capacity to parent their children during the divorce process. The parent may also develop a dependent attachment to the child during post separation years. The custodial parent may place the child in the role of confidante, advisor, mentor, sibling, parent, caretaker, ally within the marital conflict, or mediator.

The visiting relationship with the noncustodial parent may fail, or may take on new life within the constraints of a visit (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Tension is often very intense, but these tensions tend to diminish over time. In a nationally representative household sample of children, it was found that nearly half of all children have not seen their nonresident fathers in the past year (Furstenberg & Nord, 1985). Only a minority had ever slept over at the father's house; among those who had, overnight visits were a special treat rather than a regular routine.

Wallerstein & Kelly (1980) explored factors that fostered visitation in fathers who did not have custody. They found that the following factors were related to a pattern of continuing regular visitation after divorce: fathers whose children expressed pleasure in the visits; fathers whose children were not angry at them over the divorce; fathers whose children were in the custody of distressed mothers; fathers who were lonely, but

psychologically intact and not depressed; fathers who were economically secure and better educated; and fathers in families where there was no longer intense animosity between the parents.

#### Custody Arrangements Impact Upon Children's Adjustment

Santrock & Warshak (1979) found that children seemed to be better adjusted on measures of social development when in the custody of the same sexed parent. In studying the same sex custodial arrangements, differences were found in four areas. Father custody boys were less demanding, more mature, more sociable, and more independent than father custody girls. Mother custody girls were less demanding, more mature, more sociable, and more independent than mother custody boys. The literature confirms the ability of custodial fathers to function competently in the role of primary caretaker (Luepnitz, 1982; Santrock & Warshak, 1979). At the present time, it is still infrequent for a father to receive custody. Because of this, research in this area is sparse.

Joint custody could help eliminate some of the stress experienced by families (Ilfeld, Ilfeld & Alexander, 1982; Luepnitz, 1982). Luepnitz (1982) concluded that joint custody had more advantages than sole custody. Children can benefit from joint custody when the arrangement is accompanied by cooperation between parents, by a strong commitment to the parenting role, and by genuine love and

respect for the children (Steinman, 1981). If increased contact between the parents in a joint custody situation results in increased conflict, the children may be better off in sole custody. More discussion on the various aspects of custody are presented later.

### Possible Long Term Effects

Kulka & Weingarten (1979) describe some of the long term effects of divorce by looking at the psychological adjustment and responses toward marital and parenting roles of adults whose parents divorced when they were children. They found fewer differences between adults from intact and divorced families of origin than might be expected. Being a child of divorce was related to some measures of adult psychological adjustment and to some responses to marital and parenting roles, but these relationships are not statistically very strong. This study demonstrates the methodological difficulties involved in untangling various factors that contribute to the long term effects of divorce.

The five year follow up in the Wallerstein & Kelly (1980) study did not indicate a theme that had emerged in the lives of the children who continued to progress positively after the divorce. Nor was there a theme that appears in the lives of those whose actions and attitudes deteriorated. Wallerstein & Kelly (1980) found a set of complex configurations in which the relevant components appear to include the following: 1) the extent to which the

parent has been able to resolve and put aside conflict and anger; 2) the way the custodial parent's handling of the child and the resumption or improvement of parenting within the home; 3) the extent to which the child does not feel rejected by the noncustodial parent and the extent to which this relationship has continued regularly; 4) the extent to which the divorce has helped the parent child relationship; 5) the range of personality assets and deficits that the child brought to the divorce; 6) the availability to the child of a supportive human network; 7) the absence in the child of continued anger and depression; and 8) the sex and age of the child.

Reports from the ten year follow up of the California children of divorce suggests that outcomes assessed a decade after the divorce may be at considerable variance with earlier findings (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1984; Wallerstein, 1985, Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). The latest responses may represent delayed reaction to marital breakdown or be associated with the impact of a new developmental stage and tasks that have been burdened by the child's past or current experiences within the divorce or remarried family.

Youngsters who were entering adulthood and whose parents divorced when ages nine to eighteen at the time of divorce carry with them the sense that their childhood was under the shadow of the parental divorce and that they have, as a result, suffered longstanding deprivation. They look back

with nostalgia to the intact family, while at the same time, realize that their parents are incompatible. A significant number of these youngsters have remained increasingly apprehensive about repeating their parents' marital failure during their own lives. The women entering adulthood were especially frightened of betrayal in love and marriage. This led them to be fearful of commitment to a relationship despite their yearning for a faithful marriage (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1981; Wallerstein, 1985).

The younger children appeared to be considerably less worried about their future, less burdened by memories of unhappiness in failed marriage, and less preoccupied with the sense that they need to avoid divorce for themselves. The children who were preschool at the time of the divorce claimed little or no conscious memory of the intense conflict that prevailed in their families although records indicated ten years earlier, the presence of extreme conflict. This group of youngsters were more likely to accept the possibility of divorce in their own future as an unpleasant but possibly inevitable aspect of their future. They were more hopeful and optimistic about the future than the other children (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1984; Wallerstein, 1985). It may be that older children, by virtue of their greater capacity to remember the unhappiness of the marital rupture, are more likely to suffer more intensely and over a longer period of time with the unhappy memories and sense of

foreboding over their own future (Wallerstein, 1985). The disruption of the child rearing functions of the family appears in a significant number of families as one of the lasting sequelae of marital breakdown in middle class, white populations (Wallerstein, 1985). Children are often overburdened for many years by responsibility for their own upbringing, by responsibility for a troubled parent, or for parents in continual conflict.

Many of the children interviewed in the ten year follow up discussed their future saying that they would delay having children until sure their marriage was workable. This would protect their children from what they experienced. These children want what their parents did not get, commitment, faithfulness, and a good marriage (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989).

The sense of loss persisted among many of the children. Many could remember their parents fighting and the details of the day of separation vividly. Many reported feeling deprived of economic and psychological support. Next, the issue of custody determination will be explored in detail.

#### Custody Arrangements

As marriage, family, childhood and parenthood definitions change, presumptions in favor of one parent getting custody of children after divorce also have changed (Simring, 1984). Ancient Roman law gave the father control over his children and this right continued in English law

(Derdeyn, 1976).

### History of Determination

Throughout the medieval period, the conception of children was quite different from the one held today (Aires, 1962). Children were often servants at home or elsewhere. They usually began working when they were four or five years of age up until child labor became an issue during the nineteenth century (DeMause, 1974). Historically English courts had jurisdiction over children under the doctrine of *parens patriae*, which gave protection to those without a protector. The Talfourd Act passed in 1839 in England gave the court power to determine custody of children under age seven (Derdeyn, 1976). Over time, mother's rights to custody gradually increased. In 1925 the guardianship of infants act was passed in England, which gave equal rights to both parents for custody of their children. At about the same time, the United States gave equal rights to both parents for custody. Even though American judges did not fully adopt the doctrine that gave fathers custody, judicial decisions reflected English common law (Derdeyn, 1976; Weiss, 1979). Decisions often took into account fathers' ability to provide financially for the children.

During the nineteenth century, many changes occurred in the American family. The family was no longer the economic center, but primarily the social center of life. Industrialization and urbanization removed the husband from

the home and with this, brought about an increased division of labor within the family. With the growth of cities, the father's role in the child's life was reduced because the fathers were less likely to spend their day in the home or their neighborhood (Seward, 1978; Somerville, 1982).

Mothers' lives became more domestic and they were alone with their children more than fathers. This brought about changes in parental roles and responsibilities.

Improvements in the legal status of women also served to erode the father's role as sole custodian when divorce occurred (Oster, 1965; Pearson, Munson & Thoennes, 1982; Walker, 1967). Nineteenth century law slowly began to reflect these changes in families and placed greater importance upon childhood (Roman & Haddad, 1978).

From the time of the civil war through the 1960s, preference for the mother in custody disputes was dominant. The right of the mother for custody was based on the "tender years" presumption. This doctrine contended that mothers' care for young children was very important and was preferred over that of fathers. At first, judges often gave the mother custody for a short time, and then the child would be awarded to the father. With the passage of time, the age range to be applied in this doctrine increased (Weiss, 1979). The father's advantage in custody disputes gradually disappeared and was not questioned until the 1970s.



The best interest of the child principle required judges to consider the rights of the child, not the parent in determining custody. It also required that parental behavior be treated as irrelevant unless this behavior affected caring for the child's welfare (Weiss, 1979). Throughout most of its existence, this principle has favored the mother's claim for custody (Derdeyn, 1976).

In the mid 1970s, the applications of the best interest of the child principle favored neither parent. According to Derdeyn (1976), recent changes relating to custody of children are as follows:

The weakening of the tender years presumption, the increasing concern about discrimination by sex, and moderate decrease in emphasis on parental fault in awarding custody all herald a trend toward equalization of the struggle for custody between former spouses. An important effect of this equalization is that it requires judges to exercise every increasing freedom and discretion in each interparental custody decision. The child's interest may have more importance in the courts at present because of the trend toward equalization of the rights of parents. With fewer parent oriented formulas available as guidelines, courts appear to be incline to learn more about the needs of the child (p. 1374).

Hence, joint custody advocates favor a presumption of shared custody to allow children to maintain greater contact with both parents. The practice of joint custody avoids judicial decisions which result in a parent being a "winner" or "loser." Finally, the presumption of joint custody may provide an incentive to reach agreements on custody outside the courtroom (Derdeyn & Scott, 1984).

#### Two Opposing Related Custody Viewpoints

Two widely known works have been influential on social policy in the area of child placement. In Beyond the Best Interest of the Child, Goldstein, Freud & Solnit (1973) take an absolute and conservative point of view arguing only for sole custody of children when parents divorce with no legal visitation rights given to the noncustodial parent. At the other end of the continuum, is Roman & Haddad's (1978) work, The Disposable Parent which advocates legal presumption of joint custody.

The case for sole custody. Goldstein, Freud & Solnit (1973) propose guidelines on child placement based on psychoanalytic theory. This work has been described as a "succinct, polemical presentation of guidelines for judicial decision making in placement of children" (Spring, 1975, p.685). The authors focus on what they call the least detrimental alternative in child placement. Psychological parenthood is considered more important than biological parenthood. Placement decisions must protect the child's

need for continuity in relationships. Continuity is considered essential for normal child development. The child's sense of time is more important than the adult's sense of time. The authors propose that judicial decisions concerning child placement be made reflecting the child's sense of time.

In discussing child custody, Goldstein, Solnit & Freud (1973) state children have difficulty in relating positively from, and maintaining the contact with two psychological parents who are not in positive contact with each other. Loyalty conflicts are common and normal under such conditions and may have devastating consequences by destroying the child's positive relationships to both parents. A "visiting" or "visited" parent has little chance to serve as a true object for love, trust, and identification, since this role is based on his being available on an uninterrupted day to day basis. Once it is determined who will be the custodial parent, it is that parent, not the court who must decide under what conditions he or she wishes to raise the child. Thus, the noncustodial parent should have no legally enforceable right to visit the child, and the custodial parent should have the right to decide whether it is desirable for the child to have such visits. What we have said is designed to protect the security of an ongoing

relationship -- that between the child and the custodial parent. At the same time the state neither makes nor breaks the psychological relationship between the child and the noncustodial parent, which the adults involved may have jeopardized. It leaves to them only what they can ultimately resolve (p.38).

The above arguments have often been cited to challenge joint custody. Although joint custody is never mentioned throughout this work, it assumes that divorced parents can not be in a working relationship with one another.

One critic of this work see it's use as an academic example of over reacting and replacing inflexibility with rigidity (Foster & Freed, 1978). Foster (1974) contends that the authors "supply new rigidity to problems that call for flexibility" (p.46). Their interpretation of the need for continuity in relationships has slowed down the acceptance of alternative forms of custody (Folberg & Graham, 1979).

Two basic problems with Goldstein, Freud & Solnit's analysis are outlined by Stack (1976). Their guidelines are sure to intensify conflict between parents leading them to fight with one another for custody (Stack (1976).

The case for joint custody. In contrast to the viewpoint taken by Goldstein, Freud & Solnit (1973), Roman & Haddad (1978) in The Disposable Parent insist that it is crucial for a child to have continuing contact with both

parents. They advocate that all custody decisions should begin with the presumption of joint custody. Only when joint custody is completely unworkable should a more traditional arrangement be adopted. The authors point to prior research on the implications of father absence on children. Roman & Haddad (1978) argue that benefits of joint custody outweigh problems associated with continued conflict between parents and disruption to the child. They argue that the conflict between parents actually decreases when parents choose joint custody. Parents can separate their own conflicts from their parent role.

Low conflict contributes to father participation and hence, helps heal the children. Roman & Haddad (1978) refute the critics of joint custody on the issues of children shifting back and forth between two homes and two parents being disruptive.

Roman and Haddad (1978) suggest that court involvement should be at a minimum, and parents involvement at a maximum when determining the welfare of children. This is thought to be a more satisfying and amicable resolution which will lead to satisfying family relationships.

Joint custody minimizes parental conflict because it satisfies both parents. A combination of increased involvement with child care is balanced with time off from children.

After reviewing selected literature on children of

divorce, Roman & Haddad (1978) suggest that father's involvement with the children was helpful. The position is rigidly presented as the authors omit or reinterpret data which does not support their position (Felner & Farber, 1980). All data supporting positions at the other end of the spectrum from Roman & Haddad (1978) were omitted from their discussion.

The studies mentioned by Roman & Haddad which were supportive of joint custody were exploratory and anecdotal in nature. For example, they rely heavily on interviews of parents who chose joint custody and report results as if they have reliability and validity. Also they failed to utilize quantitative data.

To summarize, both opposing theoretical positions have been criticized for being extremely rigid and flawed.

#### Studies on the Parents and Children in Joint Custody

Although joint custody has received much attention in the popular literature, few empirical studies been completed. The available research rarely assesses the impact of custody decisions on both parents and children. The studies of joint custody families have used qualitative, quantitative and multimethod techniques.

#### Parents in Joint Custody

Parents Ahron's (1979) study of 41 divorced parents found three patterns among divorced couples with joint custody. First, ex-spouses who were still friends and had

frequent contact, second were those couples who were neutral and rarely spent time together as a unit but shared parenting equally, and third, were ex-spouses who were bitter enemies whose joint custody agreements resembled traditional sole custody (Ahrons, 1979). Overall, parents were satisfied with their joint custody agreement and reported choosing the agreement mutually (Ahrons, 1980). Conflicts among the coparenting dyad occurred over differences in values. Otherwise, conflict was reported to be minimal (Ahrons, 1980). See Figure 1 for a summary of the studies on joint custody.

Joint custody fathers were found to be significantly more involved with parenting than noncustodial fathers (Bowman & Ahrons, 1985). More interparental support and less conflict was a predictor of more shared parental responsibility and decision making, but was not a predictor for the amount of time fathers spent with his children (Bowman & Ahrons, 1985).

One large study compared three patterns of custody for nearly 1,000 families who either participated in dual residence, mother or father only custody situations (Maccoby, Depner & Mnookin, 1990). Dual residence parents maintained a higher level of cooperative communication and talked to each other more frequently than parents with sole custody.

Figure 1

Summary of Joint Custody Research Findings

<u>Author</u>	<u>Sample Description</u> <u>N</u> <u>Family Structure</u>	<u>Method</u>	<u>Conclusion</u>
Abarbanel (1979)	4 Joint custody families in 50/50 to 67/33 Arrangement	Exploratory case study approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-factors of parent commitment, mutual support, flexibility and agreement on rules important</li> <li>-preadolescents did well when discrepancy between homes is minimal, and shifting homes occurs with parental cooperation and predictability</li> <li>-children have two psychological parents and did not suffer feelings of loss</li> <li>-compromising factors: age, age range of children, geographic proximity and frequent shifts between homes</li> </ul>
Ahrons (1979)	41 Court ordered joint custody parents	Exploratory Multimeasure approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-lower the level of conflict between parents higher the nonresidential parent and child involvement</li> <li>-Three parental patterns: friends, neither friend nor foe, and bitter enemies</li> </ul>
Ahrons (1980)	41 Court ordered joint custody parents	Exploratory Multimeasure approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-overall, satisfaction with joint custody</li> <li>-minimal conflict discussing parenting</li> <li>-conflict occurred over value differences</li> <li>-parents continued to parent while terminating the marital relationship</li> </ul> <p>(Continued on next page)</p>



Atwell, Moore, 8 Nielsen & Levite (1984)	Joint custody families in child custody clinic	Exploratory Case study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-children benefit from solid, continuing positive relationship with both parents</li> <li>-demands children's coping abilities</li> <li>-children caught in the middle of conflict tended to take responsibility for neutralizing conflict</li> </ul>
Berger, 884 Madakasira & Roebuck (1988)	documents of divorced families	Analysis of court records	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-low frequency of joint custody awards</li> <li>-no advantage to joint custody when considering relitigation</li> </ul>
Bowman & 82 Ahrons (1985)	divorced fathers in mother and joint custody	Multimeasure approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-joint custody fathers were more involved with parenting more than noncustodial fathers</li> <li>-amount of parent support was predictor of sharing responsibility, decision making, but not predictor for amount of time spent between Fathers and children</li> </ul>
Defrain, 783 Fricke, Elman (1987)	73% sole custody, 21% joint custody, 6% split custody parents	Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-feelings of overload on parent was lower in joint custody</li> <li>-no difference across groups in child adjustment</li> <li>-joint custody parents felt more positively about one another</li> <li>-parents in joint custody had belief that children benefit from relationship with both parents</li> </ul>

(continued on next page)

Dimidjian (1983)	43	22 joint custody fathers, 21 noncustodial fathers	interview of parent, questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-joint custody fathers were more involved with their children</li> <li>-joint custody fathers were more satisfied and felt more responsible for meeting needs</li> <li>-joint custody fathers were less anxious, frustrated, and lonely compared to noncustodial fathers.</li> </ul>
Greif (1979)	40	divorced fathers, 80% mother custody, 20% joint custody	interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-fathers in joint custody perceived no loss of influence in area of fatherhood and were more satisfied</li> </ul>
Ilfeld, Ilfeld & Alexander (1982)	414	court documents of joint and sole custody families	analysis of court records	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-joint custody fathers could more easily separate from children</li> <li>-parents in joint custody separated parental role from marital problems</li> <li>-half as many relitigations occurred in joint custody cases as there were in sole custody</li> </ul>
Irving, Benjamin & Procme (1984)	201	divorced parents	multimeasure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-joint custody is not just for the wealthy</li> <li>-low relitigation rate among those sharing parenting</li> <li>-good predictor of outcome was commitment, communication skills, flexibility, ability to separate marital conflicts from children</li> <li>-predictors of failure are intense conflict, weak parent commitment, anger, hope for reconciliation, guilt, custody as arena for punishment</li> </ul>

(continued on next page)

Johnston, Kline & Tshann (1989)	100	parents in dispute on average of four and a half years after separation in joint and sole custody	Longitudinal, multimeasure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-no significant difference in child adjustment</li> <li>-increased access was associated with more emotional and behavior problems in children</li> </ul>
Kline, Tshann, Johnston & Wallerstein (1989)	93	joint and sole custody	Longitudinal, multimeasure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-custody is independent of child adjustment</li> <li>-children in joint custody had more access to both parents and were less likely to lose a parent</li> <li>-factors associated with child adjustment were number of children, child age, gender parent anxiety and depression at baseline, and parent conflict one year followup</li> </ul>
Luepnitz (1982, 1986)	43	divorced families in maternal, paternal and joint custody	multimeasure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-child adjustment independent of custody type</li> <li>-all custody types have advantages and disadvantages</li> <li>-no relitigation in joint custody cases</li> <li>-joint custody children retained two parents</li> </ul>
Maccoby, Depner & Mnookin (1990)	1000	maternal, paternal, joint custody families	multimeasure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-dual residence parents maintained a higher level of cooperative communication and talked to each other more frequently</li> <li>-same amount of conflictual communication in all groups</li> </ul>
McKinnon & Wallerstein (1986)	25	families with variation on 50/50 joint custody arrangement	multimeasure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-when parents motivated by interest in child, and shield child from conflict, children do well</li> <li>-more difficulty in 3-5 age range than children 1-3</li> <li>-joint custody didn't protect children from experiencing grief and anxiety</li> </ul>

(continued on next page)

Phear, Beck, Hauser, Clark & Whitney (1983)	500	court documents of joint, mother and father custody	analysis of court records	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-no significant differences in groups demographically</li> <li>-no significant differences in relitigation</li> <li>-joint custody group more likely to file under a no fault provision</li> </ul>
Pojman (1981)	80	boys in joint custody, sole custody, happy and unhappily married families	multimeasure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-joint custody boys were better adjusted boys in unhappily married families</li> <li>-joint custody boys scored higher on behavior adjustment than sole custody, but not statistically significant</li> </ul>
Richards & Goldenberg (1986)	10	divorced fathers with joint custody of preschoolers	exploratory, interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-fathers satisfied with closer relationship</li> <li>-more available than fathers in traditional families</li> <li>-no report of feelings of loss and abandonment</li> <li>-some fathers experienced role overload</li> <li>-some adverse effects of job advancement</li> </ul>
Rothberg (1983)	30	joint custody parents	interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-joint custody can be complex, but workable</li> <li>-93% satisfied with schedule</li> <li>-50% had logistical problems</li> <li>-23% had problems with ex spouse</li> <li>-80% recommend arrangement</li> <li>-83% in same neighborhood</li> </ul>
Shiller (1986a)	40	divorced families with boys in joint and maternal custody	multimeasure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-no differences in emotional adjustment</li> <li>-joint custody moms perceived sons as having loyalty issues, but child administered tests didn't indicate this</li> <li>-joint custody children appear confused in acknowledging negative emotions to both parents</li> </ul>

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-no evidence of sharing custody when mutually agreed on by the parent exerting adverse effects on child development

-boys and parents in joint custody exhibited strengths compared to mother custody  
 -maternal dads felt more guilt  
 -dads with joint custody had higher self esteem  
 -teachers rated joint custody boys higher  
 -joint custody moms reported fewer emotional and behavioral problems

-after remarriage, father contact did not diminish  
 -quality of relationship between parents

varied from highly supportive to conflictual  
 -amount of conflict was not associated with father involvement

-parents with joint custody found arrangement satisfactory despite some difficulty  
 -children's experiences were more mixed  
 -one third children overburdened by demands of two homes  
 -values and behavior of parents crucial

-parents represent a wide spectrum of success and ability to sustain joint custody was related to psychological, relational and legal characteristics  
 (continued on next page)

Shiller (1986b) 40 divorced families with boys in joint and maternal custody multimeasure

Simring (1984) 44 divorced and remarried fathers multimeasure

Steinman (1981) 32 24 families in joint custody including 32 children multimeasure

Steinman, Zemelman & Knoblauch (1985) 51 joint custody families multimeasure

Wolchik, Braver & Sandler (1985)	133	divorced families 33% joint custody	multimeasure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-joint custody children reported higher number of self defined positive experiences</li> <li>-joint custody boys reported lower self defined negative experiences than mother custody boys</li> <li>-psychological symptoms did not differ on gender of child or custody</li> <li>-joint custody children had higher self esteem</li> </ul>
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Surprisingly, these parents experienced the same amount of conflictual communication as their sole custody counterparts. Sharing custody did not exacerbate or diminish conflict between parents (Maccoby, Depner, Mnookin, 1990). A better predictor of conflict was family size. Parents avoided conflict if they had only one child, and found it difficult to avoid conflict if they had three or more children.

Highly conflictual families who were involved in custody or visitation disputes on an average of four and a half years after separation were studied by Johnston, Kline & Tschann (1989). Parental access, conflict and child adjustment were examined in 100 lower middle class families. When they compared joint physical custody with sole custody, no significant differences in child adjustment was found. Parents with more frequent access to their children was associated with more behavioral problems in the children.

Documents of 414 consecutive custody cases were studied in a Las Angeles court by Ilfeld, Ilfeld & Alexander (1982). They compared relitigation rates of sole versus joint custody. One half as many relitigations occurred in joint custody cases versus those in exclusive custody. Relitigation was assumed to represent moderate to severe parental conflict suggesting that joint custody parents had less conflict and thus, their children experienced less distress than among those with exclusive custody (Ilfeld,

Ilfeld & Alexander, 1982). These results are at odds with another study of 500 records completed in Massachusetts (Phear, Beck, Hauser, Clark & Whitney, 1983). No significant differences in relitigation was found between exclusive and joint custody families. In another study of relitigation in rural settings where 884 records were examined also found no difference in relitigation found between exclusive and joint custody.

Joint custody fathers, when compared to fathers with visitation rights, experienced more satisfaction with their parenting arrangement (Dimidjian, 1983; Greif, 1979). Joint custody fathers had relationships with their children that more openly expressed a wide range of emotions compared to Dads whose ex-wives had custody (Greif, 1979). Fathers with joint custody felt they were being responsible for meeting emotional needs of the family (Dimidjian, 1983). These fathers reported feeling less anxious, less frustrated and less lonely than visitation fathers. Overall, joint custody fathers reported feeling happier (Dimidjian, 1983). Visiting or maternal custody fathers felt more guilt than joint custody fathers (Shiller, 1986).

An exploratory study of ten fathers with joint custody of young children found that the fathers liked a close relationship with their children (Richards & Goldenberg, 1986). Some of these fathers reported role overload with some adverse effects on job advancement. The average amount



of time that these fathers spent with their children was twenty-four hours of waking time a week. This compared favorably to an estimated average for the United States of fourteen hours per week for fathers in intact nuclear families. Hence, these fathers on average were much more available to their young children than fathers in traditional families.

The findings from a study of single parenting by Defrain, Fricke & Ellman (1987) which compared joint custody with sole custody provides an overview of research in this area. They found the following: 1) parents were less overburdened in joint custody families, 2) parents with sole custody reported higher stress levels, 3) higher percentages of joint custody parents felt positively toward their ex-spouse, 4) joint custody parents thought more strongly about their children having a close relationship with both parents, and 5) joint custody parents reported more positive changes in their lives.

#### Children in Joint Custody

Mixed experiences were reported from 32 children in 24 joint custody families in a study by Steinman (1981). Seventeen girls, and fifteen boys ranging in age from four to fifteen were studied in detail. Each family member was interviewed separately on two occasions using semistructured clinical interviews. A combination of discussion and play with toys and dolls were used to assess the child's

attitudes, feelings and adjustment to their two homes. Children appeared to have two psychological parents with attachment and strong loyalty to both parents. The children were able to differentiate the two homes and did not confuse their parents. Differences in values and child rearing styles were not issues for most of the families. Where parents were in conflict, children were more troubled. One third of the children had characteristics of hyper loyalty. That is, they were hyper alert to their parents feelings and wanted to be fair. Most of the children successfully maintained complex schedules. Twenty-five percent of the children experienced confusion and anxiety about switching homes. Half of these children were ages four and five, and the other half were boys age seven through nine. The marital separation was still an issue for the children even though seventy percent of them lived in joint custody over half of their lives.

When considering the preschool child's experiences of joint custody, McKinnon & Wallerstein (1986) found in their study of twenty five families, that three to five year olds had more difficulty than one to three year olds. They found that joint custody did not protect children from experiencing grief and anxiety about the divorce. When both parents are motivated by the interest of their child, and protective of the child from interparental conflict, the young children did well.

A study comparing maternal and joint custody children found that more idiographic and nomothetic experiences were found in joint custody children (Wolchick, Braver & Sandler, 1985). Idiographic scores were reflective of an individual's subjective rating of an event as being either good or bad. Nomothetical scores were those where at least 80% of the children reported the event as either positive or negative. Boys in maternal custody reported more negative experiences than boys in joint custody families.

Twenty maternal and twenty joint custody latency age boys were compared by Shiller (1986). The maternal custody boys experienced a yearning for their father. Boys in joint custody expressed more negative feelings toward their mother. This may suggest that these children were comfortable in acknowledging negative feelings to both parents.

Affects of joint custody was examined in an exploratory study on eight cases by Atwell, Moore, Nielsen & Levite (1984). Four patterns of joint custody were explored including 1) long term; 2) short blocks of time such as alternating weeks, months or splitting the week; 3) bird's nesting where parents have one home and move in and out of it to parent the children; or 4) free access where children go back and forth between homes at will. They describe the children's reactions as being complex and demanding children to have coping abilities. Some of the children were feeling

responsible for their parents disagreements and tried to neutralize the conflict. Many of the children took on adult worries that may inhibit healthy development.

Studies on joint custody have indicated mixed results when examining behavioral adjustment in children. Some findings indicate that custody does not in itself predict behavioral adjustment (Kline, Tschann, Johnston & Wallerstein, 1989; Luepnitz, 1986; Wolchick, Braver & Sandler, 1985) while Pojman (1981) and Shiller (1986) found that joint custody boys were better adjusted than sole custody. A longitudinal study conducted with 93 children, 58 in sole custody and 35 in joint physical custody found that factors associated with child adjustment included number of children in the family, the child's age, gender, parental depression and anxiety at baseline, and parent conflict during one year follow up (Kline, Tshann, Johnston, Wallerstein, 1989).

Luepnitz (1982, 1986) studied 43 families with 91 children who lived in either joint custody, maternal or paternal custody. The children's adjustment and self esteem as measured by the Piers Harris Self Concept test and parents ratings of their children was independent of custody arrangements. When parents were still in conflict, children did have lower scores on the Piers Harris Self Concept test. In another study of 133 children where 33 percent were in joint custody Luepnitz's (1982) findings were confirmed that

behavior symptomatology did not differ significantly across joint and maternal custody arrangements (Wolchik, Braver & Sandler, 1985). However, the same study found that children in joint custody had higher self esteem than children in mother custody. In contrast, Luepnitz (1982) found that self esteem and custody were independent.

In a quasi experimental study with 80 boys between ages five and thirteen Pojman (1981) compared four groups in the following arrangements: joint and sole custody, unhappily and happily married intact families. The Marital Adjustment Inventory was given to mothers in intact families to differentiate the unhappily and happily married groups. Boys in joint custody performed better than boys in sole custody and the unhappily married group on the security scale of the Louisville Behavior Checklist, and on the inferred self concept scale. On the California Test of Personality, boys in joint custody scored higher on adjustment than boys in sole custody but the difference did not quite reach statistical significance ( $p=.05$ ). Behavioral adjustment in 40 boys age six through eleven in joint physical custody and mother custody were studied using the Achenbach behavior checklist. Joint custody mothers reported fewer behavioral symptoms among their children when compared to the children of mothers with sole custody (Shiller, 1986).

### A Summary of Research Findings

Advantages. As noted earlier, most studies found that parents with joint custody are less likely to feel overburdened with parenting because they have a break in their parenting role (Defrain, Fricke, Elmen, 1987; Luepnitz, 1982, 1986; Mckinnon & Wallerstein, 1986). Parents with sole custody have reported higher stress levels than those with joint custody.

Fathers with joint custody were found to be more satisfied with their parenting role (Dimidjian, 1983; Greif, 1979; Simring, 1984). Joint custody fathers were more involved with their children (Dimidjian, 1983) and enjoyed having closer relationships with their children (Richards & Goldenberg, 1986). Fathers with joint custody were also more likely to continue involvement with their children (Greif, 1979). Fathers with joint custody reported feeling less anxious, less frustrated, less lonely and were generally happier with their lives (Dimidjian, 1983). Parents with joint custody were found to report more positive changes in their lives (Defrain, Fricke & Elmen, 1987).

Mothers with joint custody were more likely than single moms to receive financial support than mothers with sole custody (Irving, Benjamin & Trocme, 1984; Luepnitz, 1982).

Comparing joint custody parents to parents with sole custody, there were fewer court battles reported in joint

custody families (Ilfeld, Ilfeld & Alexander, 1982; Irving, Benjamin & Trocme; 1984; Luepnitz, 1982).

In terms of child rearing, Luepnitz (1982) found advantages of joint custody included reliance on the other parent for child care, and having both parents involved in disciplining the children. Abarbanal (1979) found that factors associated with success in joint custody were commitment to the arrangement of joint custody, parents expressing mutual support to one another, and flexibility in sharing responsibility. Overall, children have reported more positive experiences in joint custody than those in sole custody (Wolchik, Braver & Sandler, 1985). In particular, boys in joint custody had fewer problems than boys in sole custody (Shiller, 1980a).

Disadvantages. A major disadvantage of those with joint custody is with the hassle of shuffling children between two homes (Luepnitz, 1982; Rothberg, 1983). The age and age ranges of the children can produce logistical problems (Abarbanel, 1979). Frequent moving between homes can be confusing for children as well as parents (Abarbanel, 1979).

Fathers with joint custody were found to experience role overload and adverse effects on job advancement (Richards & Goldenberg, 1986). When mothers had been married to men who did not participate in child rearing, a high price was paid by mothers for more freedom and a break in parenting. These mothers worried about whether the

children were being cared for properly by the fathers. A lack of trust in the other parents child rearing skills can be a contributing factor to problems with the joint custody arrangement.

Parental profile for success versus failure. A wide spectrum of success and failure was found by Steinman (1985) in her study of 75 children in 51 joint custody families. Qualities shown by parents who achieved success in joint custody include as follows: 1) respect and appreciation for the bond between the child and the other parent, 2) parents who are able to achieve some objectivity when dealing with issues about their children, 3) empathizing with children and the other parent, 4) shift of emotional expectations of the ex-spouse to that of coparent, 5) ability to establish new role boundaries, and 6) generally having a high self concept, flexibility and openness with the ex-spouse.

Steinman (1985) found the following characteristics associated with negative outcomes of joint custody: 1) intense hostility and conflict that can't be directed away from the child, 2) overwhelming anger and a need to punish the ex-spouse, 3) history of physical abuse, 4) history of substance abuse, 5) a belief that the other parent is bad, and 6) inability for the parent to separate their feelings and needs from those of the child.

In a study of 201 parents, predictors of success of joint custody included 1) adequate communication skills,



flexibility, ability to separate past marital conflict from issues about children, commitment to joint custody, and good faith with regard to the joint custody arrangement (Irving, Benjamin & Trocme, 1984). Predictors of failure that were found in this same study were intense conflict and anger, a weak level of commitment to the arrangement, hope for reconciliation, guilt, and custody as an arena to punish the ex-spouse.

#### Limitations of Research

Though the amount of research on children of divorce and child custody has increased, the quality of much of it leaves something to be desired (Bleckman, 1982; Lowery & Settle, 1985). Most studies have conceptual and methodological problems which make the validity and generalizability of the findings problematic. For example, so many different approaches have been taken; and so little replication that it is difficult to draw conclusion from the existing body of literature. Sampling problems predominate in the literature. It is typical for small samples to be used, clinical samples, and samples from highly educated Anglo people. Clinical samples have likely exaggerated the methodological problems that occur. Many studies do not include control groups which would facilitate interpretation of the data. It becomes impossible to sort out whether findings are due to divorce, the child custody agreement or some other characteristic.

One major problem with the studies on joint custody is the variety of definitions used, and the variety of arrangements studied. Some studies have examined families with small variations on a 50/50 split in responsibility between two households (Abarbanel, 1979; Luepnitz, 1986; Mckinnon & Wallerstein, 1986; Shiller, 1986, 1986a; Steinman, 1985); while others used a definition that dealt with joint legal custody. Families can have the latter without sharing responsibility for the children equally. A primary household could be found in some of the joint custody studies (Pojman, 1982; Wolchick, Braver & Sandler, 1985). This problem of definition could account for some of the variance in the findings on joint custody. Another problem in these studies are the variety of arrangements studied. Some families had the children every other week, while other had the children for six months at a time. This variance in joint custody arrangements makes it difficult to interpret the data.

Thus far, most studies on joint custody have been exploratory or descriptive in nature. Research in this area is in it's infancy. Although joint custody has recently become more popular in the literature those who have the actual arrangement for a long term are few. The variety of arrangements people have further complicates the job of the researcher. This study attempted to provide data which does not have some of these limitations.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Description of Research Design

This cross-sectional research project was a multimethod, quasi-experimental study. Two groups of divorced families were used. The experimental group consisted of joint custody families. The control group was a sample of families with mother custody, who were matched with the experimental group on the gender, and age of one child; and the time lapse from parental separation. Data were gathered via a semistructured interview in the family home with one child and one parent per family. Each parent completed a self administered questionnaire and the child behavior checklist (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983). An attempt was made to interview the same number of women, men, boys, and girls. The sample size was 21 families in for each group.

#### Operational Definitions for Custody Types

Many definitions of joint custody have been used and a variety of arrangements occur. For the purpose of this study, a uniform but limited definition was used. Joint custody was operationalized as a custody situation where responsibility for children are shared by both parents by at least 60/40 percent split. Both parents must make decisions

regarding the child's welfare. Studies on joint custody have used a wide variety of definitions of joint custody. Since there may be a difference in families sharing custody fairly equally and those who have joint custody in name only, the choice was made for the purpose of this study to limit the operational definition of joint custody.

Mother custody was operationalized by a custody situation where the child had been specifically awarded to the mother. The major decisions and responsibility for the child were handled by the mother. For the purpose of this research, fathers in this group needed to be involved with visitation of their children.

### Subjects

The procedure for obtaining the sample of families involved advertising, contacting groups in the community that provide resources to divorced families, and taking referrals from family law attorneys and mediators. The joint custody sample was chosen first because there are so few families who actually share children fairly equally after divorce. After obtaining a minimum goal of twenty joint custody families, they were matched for gender and age of the child, and time lapse from parental separation to a mother custody family. An attempt was made to have a variety of ages of children between four and sixteen, and an equal number of boys and girls. Families were chosen from the Dallas and Ft. Worth metroplex area.

### Procedure

Recruiting announcements describing the research were given to community groups that serve divorcing families, mediators, and attorneys who practice family law. See Appendix A for a copy of the recruiting announcement. These announcements were mailed to attorneys, mediators, judges, potential subjects. See Appendix B for a copy of the cover letter mailed to professionals. Volunteers were asked to mail the bottom of the recruiting announcement back to the investigator in an enclosed, addressed, stamped envelope. Participants were contacted and if they were agreeable to participate, a questionnaire and child behavior checklist was mailed to them and an interview was set up at their convenience in the family home. Participants were told about confidentiality of individual responses, and completed an informed consent form. See Appendix C for a copy of the informed consent form. An individual, semistructured interview was conducted with the parent and the target child. After each joint custody family was interviewed, a mother custody family with a target child of the same gender and age was also interviewed. One parent in each family was given the questionnaire, and CBCL to complete on the target child. They were also interviewed at a mutually agreed time.

### Ethical Considerations

Special care was taken to assure subjects of confidentiality. All individual responses were coded for the purpose of maintaining confidentiality. If parents were anticipating litigation, the target child was not interviewed. All questions were answered voluntarily. When a parent or child seemed uncomfortable with a question, they were asked whether or not they wanted that question to be skipped. When it was evident that the child was having emotional difficulties during the interview, the possibility of seeking professional guidance was explored with the parent. When a parent requested a referral, more than one referral was given.

### Statement of Hypotheses

The following three groups of hypotheses were tested: children's behavioral adjustment problems, parents' custody type, and parents' behavior and interaction with one another post separation.

For children's behavioral adjustment problems as the dependent variable the following eight hypotheses were tested:

1. Children in joint custody families have fewer behavioral adjustment problems than children from mother custody families.
2. Parents who have high conflictual interaction will have children with more behavioral adjustment problems.

3. Parents with high levels of distress will be more likely to have children with more behavioral adjustment problems.

4. Parents with low self esteem will be more likely to have children with behavioral adjustment problems.

5. Boys will be more likely than girls to have more behavioral adjustment problems.

6. Parents with higher income will have children with fewer behavioral adjustment problems.

7. Parents with higher education levels will have children with fewer behavioral adjustment problems.

8. Children in joint custody families will have higher self esteem than those children in mother custody families.

For parents' custody type as a dependent variable it is predicted that those parents who choose joint custody have different characteristics than those who choose mother custody. The following three hypotheses were tested:

9. Parents who choose joint custody are less likely to have alcohol and use of other drugs as a factor in the decision to divorce than those with mother custody.

10. Parents who choose joint custody are more likely to have higher incomes than those with mother custody.

11. Parents who choose joint custody are more likely to have higher education levels than those in mother custody.

For parents' behavior and relationship post separation as a dependent variable it is expected that important

differences will occur in their post divorce relationship. The following seven hypotheses were tested.

12. Parents who choose joint custody have lower levels of conflictual interaction than parents with mother custody.

13. Parents who choose joint custody have a closer proximity of distance between homes than those choosing mother custody.

14. Parents who choose joint custody feel less anger toward their ex-spouse than those with mother custody.

15. Parents choosing joint custody have a more trusting attitude toward their ex-spouse's parenting skills than those with mother custody.

16. Joint custody parents will have a higher frequency of coparenting interaction than mother custody parents.

17. Joint custody parents will show a higher frequency of emotional support toward their exspouse than mother custody parents.

18. Joint custody parents will be more involved with their children's lives than mother custody parents.

#### Instrumentation

Sample parents completed a self report questionnaire dealing with their attitudes on the following: coparental interaction, conflict, support, satisfaction, involvement with children, psychological closeness, attachment, anger, positive feelings, attitudes toward former spouse as a parent. These areas were assessed scales constructed by



Ahrons (1987). Cronbach's alpha for the scales constructed by Ahron's range from .65 to .94. In addition to Ahron's scales, self esteem and level of distress scales were included in the questionnaire. The self esteem scale was adapted from Eve (1985) and Pearlin & Radabough (1975). The distress scale is made up of psychophysiological symptoms of anxiety which were developed by Derogatio, Lipman, Covi & Rickles. Social demographic information and specific information about their custody arrangement were placed at the end of the questionnaire. See appendix D for a copy of the questionnaire.

A semistructured interview was conducted with both the target child and the parent. The interview schedule is primarily taken from Clingempeel & Repucci (1982), Dimidjian (1983), Luepnitz (1982). Components of the adult interview schedule included questions on the following: custody and visitation, parent-child relationships, coparenting relationships, family functions, the social system, child self esteem, and alcohol and other drug usage. The children's interview schedule contained questions about the divorce and self esteem. See appendix E and F for a copy of the interview schedule.

#### Child Behavior Checklist

The Child behavior checklist (CBCL), also completed by the parents, is a standardized instrument designed to record behavior problems and competencies in children age four to

sixteen. This instrument is designed to be self administered by a parent or an adult who knows the child well. The CBCL has been revised and pilot tested with families referred for mental health services. There are 118 behavior problems which are scored on a scale from zero to two. To measure social competence, parents' are asked to report on the child's participation in activities, chores, school and friendship.

To assess reliability of individual items, Achenbach and Edelbrock (1983) computed intraclass correlations between scores obtained from mothers filling out the CBCL at one week intervals, parents filling out the CBCL on children which were clinically referred to mental health services, and three different interviewers obtaining CBCL's from parents of demographically matched children. The results of the correlations were in the 0.90s (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983). The correlation for three month stability in the mothers' ratings of individual items was .838 for behavior problems and .974 for the social competencies. When considering scale scores and total behavior problems and competence scores, the median Pearson correlations for one week test-retest reliability of ratings by mothers was .89. The median Pearson correlation between both parents' ratings was .66.

The content validity of the CBCL was significantly ( $p=.01$ ) associated with clinical status as established

independently of the CBCL. Correlations between the total CBCL behavior problems score and total scores on other parent ratings instruments are analogous. Achenbach & Edelbrock (1983) use referral for mental health services as a criterion to show evidence of criterion related validity. A significant difference was found between demographically matched referred and nonreferred children on all profile scores for all sex and age groups ( $p = .001$ ).

The CBCL can be divided into internalizing behaviors and externalizing behaviors. A T score can be obtained for the total score and for each grouping of internalizing and externalizing behaviors. Internalizing behaviors are characterized by fearful, inhibited and overcontrolled behavior. Externalizing behaviors are characterized as aggressive, antisocial, and undercontrolled behaviors. Second order factor analysis was performed to form the groupings of internalizing and externalizing behavior (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983).

#### Data Analysis

The primary statistical techniques used were probit analysis, multiple regression, and t-test. A probit model analyzed indicators of parents who chose joint custody. A multiple regression model examined predictors of children's adjustment. T-tests examined the differences between the custody groups on involvement with children, amount of coparenting interaction, and level of support between

parents.

Probit analysis is chosen because the dependent variable, joint custody is dichotomous. Dichotomous dependent variables violate the assumption in regression analysis of homoscedasticity. Probit analysis is an alternative to regression analysis when the dependent variable is a small number of categories or a dichotomy (Aldrich & Nelson, 1984). Probit analysis assumes that there is a latent continuous variable underlying the dichotomy. When the probit analysis is used, the probabilities are not linear. The interpretation of the impact of change in the independent variables on the dependent variable is less straightforward than when using regression analysis (Aldrich & Nelson, 1984). To interpret the maximum likelihood estimates, an assumed scenario can be considered by setting values for the variables in question. Under the assumptions of the scenario, the probability of parents choosing joint custody can be calculated. Chapter IV will explain the probit model variables and the multiple regression variables.

Multiple regression was used to examine the relationship between the independent variables or predictor variables and the dependent variables measured by the child behavior checklist. The beta values indicate the strength of the independent variable as a predictor of the dependent variable. Betas indicate the number of units change that

occurs in the dependent variable given a one unit change in the independent variable. Positive betas indicate that the dependent variable and predictor variable increases together. Negative betas are an indicator that the value of the dependent variable decreases as the value of the predictor variable increases.

T-tests were used to examine and compare means of the joint custody group and mother custody group when considering coparenting interaction, level of support between parents, and involvement with children.

Since the sampling technique was not random, the assumption of random sampling that t-test, multiple regression, and probit require was violated in an attempt to use more sophisticated statistical techniques. Statistical techniques can tolerate some degree of assumption violation (Bollen & Barb, 1981; Labovitz, 1972; Labovitz, 1970). Labovitz (1972) criticized the treatment of assumptions as inviolate. This leads to ritualism and the employment of inferior techniques in data analysis and can result in wasting information.

Statistical package for the social science was used to conduct the multiple regression model and t-tests. Microcrunch was the statistical package utilized for the probit model.

### Significance of the Research

The quasi-experimental study of joint custody families was conducted using a control group of mother custody families. A multimethod design used a questionnaire, interview, and inventories. A semistructured interview was conducted with one parent and a target child in each sample family. This multimethod approach provides added depth and meaning to the findings. The strengths of this method lie in the matching of samples, inclusion of a control group, obtaining data in multiple ways, and use of extensive statistical analysis (Santrock & Madison, 1985).

### Limitations of the Study

A larger, more carefully matched sample would have been helpful to control for other demographic variables. This study matched for age and gender of the target child, and the time lapse from parental separation only. Weaknesses of the approach include difficulty in generalizing to the population from the sample, and a limited amount of time spent with the subjects (Santrock & Madison, 1985). This sample has more homogeneity than samples in most other studies because of concern of controlling for demographic variables and limiting the definition of joint and mother custody families.

Only one parent per family was involved in the study. Having heard only one parents viewpoint can be considered a weakness and bias. Due to the sensitivity of the material,

another bias might have occurred if both parents were asked to be interviewed. The divorced population as a whole do not trust strangers easily. One might have had difficulty obtaining a sample at all if both parents had to be involved. In the event a researcher could eventually obtain a sample involving both parents, the sample would probably be biased in the direction of being healthier than the average divorced people in the population. This research probably contains a certain amount of bias in the direction of a healthier than average sample because mother custody fathers must be involved in a visitation schedule with their children to qualify for involvement in the study.

## CHAPTER IV

### QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

#### Data Collection

The research data were collected in the Dallas/Ft. Worth metroplex area. Forty-two families participated in the research. Half of the sample were joint custody families, and the other half were mother custody families. The joint custody sample was collected initially because it was the most difficult group to find. Then, a mother custody family was found to match each joint custody family according to gender and age of child, and time lapse from separation. Data were collected from March to August of 1990. Parents in both groups were quite hesitant to allow their child to participate in an interview with a stranger over such a sensitive topic as divorce. In cases where litigation or relitigation were likely, the researcher elected not to involve a child interview. Confidentiality was important and this researcher did not want to take a chance that the data would be subpoenaed. Only 19 children were interviewed because of parent fear, paranoia, protection of the child and litigation.

Analysis of variance indicated no significance between groups on the matching variables of child gender, child age, and time lapse from time of separation. Table 1 provides



the results of analysis of variance indicating no significant group differences on the matching variables.

Table 1  
Analysis of Variance

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Significance F
Main Effects	.239	7	.034	.113	.997
Time lapse	.184	3	.061	.061	.894
Gender child	.001	1	.001	.003	.957
Child age	.070	3	.023	.077	.972
Explained	.239	7	.034	.113	.997
Residual	10.261	34	.302		
Total	10.500	41	.256		

Since the joint custody group was the most difficult to find, many letters were written to attorneys, judges, and mediators to try to locate families. Eight families were located through referrals by attorneys. Four additional families were located from the subjects who were referred by attorneys. In addition to communicating with attorneys, organizations in the community who deal with divorce were contacted. Table 2 provides a summary of the sources of referrals of joint custody families.

In the joint custody group, five families were in temporary joint custody agreements and were not yet divorced. In all five cases parents had been in their

visitation arrangement from six months to a year. Three of the five cases in temporary joint custody arrangements were court ordered where the mother was opposed to the arrangement.

Table 2  
Sources of Joint Custody Families

Number of Families	Sources
8	Attorneys
5	Colleagues
5	Subjects
3	Acquaintances

After these data from joint custody families were collected, the researcher matched the families for age of child, gender of child, and time lapse of parental separation to a mother custody family. Self help groups for people who experience divorce provided nine of the referrals. Table 3 provides a summary of the referral sources for mother custody families. An attempt was made to collect a sample that was not a clinical sample. Since the researcher is a mental health professional, colleagues were asked if they had acquaintances who matched the criteria. Colleagues were told not to refer clients who matched the criteria. Only one family was still in process of obtaining the final divorce decree.

Table 3  
Sources of Mother Custody Families

Number of Families	Sources
9	self help groups
7	colleagues
3	acquaintances
2	subjects

#### Composition of the Groups

The joint custody group had a variety of visitation schedules. Sixteen families had a fairly equal split in time with each parent. The remainder of the parents were sharing children from a 60/40 to a 65/35 split in time. A summary of the various visitation patterns in the joint custody group can be found in table 4.

Mother custody families also had some variation in visitation schedule. In eleven families, fathers spent time with their children every other weekend. A summary of the variation in visitation patterns in the mother custody group can be found in table 5.

In the joint custody group, eleven women and ten men participated. Target children included eleven girls and ten boys. Since target children were matched according to gender and age of child, mother custody target children also included eleven girls and ten boys. Parents in mother

Table 4  
Joint Custody Visitation Schedule

Number of Families	Visitation Pattern
5	3 day/4 day
5	1 week/1 week
2	2 day/2 day/alternate weekends
2	6 month/6 month
2	Mother during school year Father during summer
1	2 week/2 week
1	every other month
1	every other Thurs. to Mon.
1	flexible visitation shared by parents different days of the week

custody who participated in the study were thirteen women and eight men. It was very difficult to obtain men volunteers whose children lived primarily with their mother in a mother custody arrangement.

Table 5  
Mother Custody Visitation Schedule

Number of Families	Visitation Pattern
11	every other weekend
5	summer visitation
2	flexible visitation
1	two times a year for a week at a time
1	4 days every other weekend
1	1 day a week for several hours

All parents and children were from Anglo, middle to upper middle class families. Religious backgrounds of the subjects were primarily Protestant (78.6%). Others reported backgrounds of Catholicism and Episcopalian (11.9%), Judaism (4.8%), and no religion (16.7%).

The overall family income mean of 8.33 indicates that the mean income in amounts of dollars fell between 35,000 to 49,000 dollars a year. Table 6 includes summary statistics describing the subjects. The parents education level mean

Table 6  
Description of Subjects Summary

Variable	Total		Joint Custody		Mother Custody	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
Family income	8.33 (\$35-49k)	2.51	9.28 (\$35-49k)	2.16	7.38 (\$35-49k)	2.57
Dad's income	5.16 (\$50-74K)	1.65				
Mom's income	3.25 (\$20-34k)	.94				
Parent Education	7.83	2.35	8.19	2.31	7.47	2.40
Mother's Education	3.47 (Some college)	1.08	3.52	1.03	3.42	1.16
Father's Education	4.35 (bachelors)	1.65	4.66	1.65	4.04	1.62
Parents Age *	39.33	4.15	39.33	3.59	39.33	4.74
Mother's Age *	38.87	4.62				
Father's Age *	39.94	3.47				
Number of Children	2.00	0.826	1.80	0.67	2.19	0.92
Remarriage **						
Women	0.76	0.43	0.90	0.30	0.61	0.49
Men	0.59	0.49	0.61	0.49	0.57	0.50
Length of * Marriage	11.73	4.65	12.33	3.87	11.14	5.36
Time lapse * Separation	4.66	3.18	3.28	2.57	6.04	3.18
Time lapse * Divorce	3.83	3.12	2.47	2.20	5.19	3.35
Child Age *	10.40	2.93	10.33	2.93	10.47	2.99
Girls	10.54	2.68				
Boys	10.25	3.24				

\* mean is reported in years

\*\* mean reported, yes coded 0, no coded 1

of 7.83 indicates that at least one parent in each family participating in the study had at least a bachelors degree. Most participants had some college. The family income and education level were higher in joint custody families. Appendix G explains the codings for all variables.

The mean age of parents participating was 39 and ranged from age 31 to 53. The mean age of participating target children was 10 and they ranged in age from 4 to 15 years. Families had a mean of two children, ranging from low of one to a high of four children.

The overall length of marriage was almost 12 years ( $\bar{X}$  = 11.73) and ranged in length from 3 to 25 years. The mean time lapse of separation was 4.6 years and ranged from 6 months up to 12 years in length. Time lapse from the actual divorce ranged from 6 months to 11 years in length, and had a mean of 3.83 years. When considering remarriage, 10% of the women and 40% of the men had remarried or were living with a significant other.

### The Findings

#### Child Behavior Checklist

Three scores from the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) of interest are the total T score, internalizing behavior T score and the externalizing behavior T score. Table 7 through 9 compares the means of the child behavior checklist T scores to the normative group tested by Achenbach & Edelbrock (1983). Normative data were obtained by testing

Table 7  
Comparison of CBCL T Scores

	mean	standard deviation
Total	53.57	8.10
Joint Custody	52.04	8.22
Mother Custody	55.09	7.88
Normative Group *	50.5	9.6

\* Source: Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1987

Table 8  
Comparison of Internalizing CBCL T Scores

	mean	standard deviation
Total	52.66	8.02
Joint Custody	52.33	8.82
Mother Custody	53.00	7.28
Normative Group *	51.20	9.1

\* Source: Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1987



children chosen randomly in the Washington D.C., Maryland, and northern Virginia area. The used census tract data were used to obtain a sample. Data on 1300 children between the ages of four and sixteen were used to provide norms.

Table 9  
Comparison of Externalizing CBCL T Scores

	mean	standard deviation
Total	52.19	7.14
Joint Custody	49.52	6.73
Mother Custody	54.85	6.65
Normative Group *	51.00	9.4

\* Source: Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1987

The sample children living in joint custody had consistently lower T scores on the Child Behavior Checklist total, internalizing, and externalizing scores than children in mother custody. When comparing the means to the normative group, the joint custody sample was higher on the total T score and the internalizing T score. When considering externalizing behavior, the joint custody sample was a little less than the normative sample. The T score range on the Child Behavior Checklist is from 10 to 100. Although the joint custody sample did score a little less than the normative sample, the difference is minimal when considering the range of possible T scores. Lower scores on

the Child Behavior Checklist indicates better adjustment.

When considering the child's gender, girls scored lower on all three scores. The largest difference in gender was in externalizing behavior. Table 10 summarizes means and standard deviations for the child behavior checklist when considering gender. Boys generally reported more behavioral difficulties. Again, the difference is minimal when considering the range of possible T scores.

Table 10  
Gender Differences on CBCL T Scores

	CBCL T Score		Internalizing T		Externalizing T	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
girls	52.45	8.22	52.09	7.99	50.36	6.72
boys	54.80	8.00	53.30	8.20	54.20	7.20

#### The Multiple Regression Model

Hypotheses one to seven were tested using the multiple regression model. Three dependent variables were used in the multiple regression model. First, the child behavior checklist total T score was used, secondly, the internalizing behavior T score, and lastly, the externalizing behavior T score. The total T score is a combination of internalizing and externalizing behavior T scores. High internalizing behavior scores characterize children who are fearful, inhibited and overcontrolled. The high externalizing behavior scores characterize children

when they behave with aggression, antisocial, and undercontrolled behavior.

The independent variables can be clustered under the following categories: custody, children, social, demographic, interparental, and parent mental health. Custody was treated as a dummy variable with a coding of 0 to represent joint custody and a 1 to represent mother custody.

The only variable under the category of children was gender of the child. A 0 was coded to represent girls, and a 1 represented boys.

Social demographic variables examined in the model are parents education and income. Normally these two variables are too highly correlated to use in analysis as two separate measures in multiple regression analysis, but no evidence of multicollinearity was present in this data set. See appendix H for correlation matrices of the independent variables used in the analysis. The variables, parent education and income included a combination of the respondents', and their ex-spouses' education and income.

The only variable used in the interparental category was conflict. The conflict scale (Ahrons & Wallish, 1987) utilized a four item scale measuring the frequency of arguments, hostility, differences of opinions, anger and tension level in conversation with their ex-spouse. Cronbach's alpha as reported by Ahrons & Wallisch (1987) was

.84 for women and .88 for men.

Parent mental health variables were measured by a ten item scale of self esteem and a fourteen item scale on distress.

The means and standard deviations of the variables used in the multiple regression model are shown in table 11. Overall, the sample parents had little distress and reported high self esteem. Level of conflict reveals little difference between the groups. When considering parent income and education, the joint custody group reported higher levels of education and income.

When examining the multiple regression analysis, the basic model using the total child behavior checklist T score as a dependent variable predicts nine percent of variance of emotional problems in children (Table 12). The multiple R score of .49762 indicates the relationship when using the set of independent variables to predict child adjustment.

Parent self esteem was the only beta coefficient which was statistically significant (using probability of  $< .05$ ). The Beta values indicate the relationship between each independent variable in relation the dependent variable, child behavioral adjustment. The Beta value of .3425 indicates that for every unit change in self esteem, there will generally be a .3425 increase in the child's behavioral adjustment. This result supports hypothesis number four

Table 11  
Descriptive Statistics on Variables Used in Multiple  
Regression Model

Variable	Total		Joint Custody		Mother Custody	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
Degree	7.83	2.35	8.19	2.31	7.47	2.40
Child Gender	.476	.50	.476	.51	.476	.51
Custody	.50	.50	.50	.50		
Stress	1.14	.35	1.14	.35	1.14	.35
Conflict	2.66	.87	2.61	.86	2.71	.90
Self Esteem	1.21	.41	1.23	.43	1.19	.40
Income	8.33	2.51	9.28	2.10	7.38	2.57
CBCL T Score	53.57	8.10	52.04	8.22	55.09	7.88
Internalizing Behavior T Score	52.66	8.02	52.33	8.86	53.00	7.28
Externalizing Behavior T Score	52.19	7.14	49.52	6.65	54.85	6.65

Table 12  
Multiple Regression for Predicting Child Behavior

Variable	B	SE B	beta	T	significance T
Parent Education	-.66509	.60612	-.19340	-1.097	.2802
Gender Child	3.33178	2.53663	.20776	1.313	.1978
Custody	4.84290	2.60628	.30233	1.858	.0718
Parent Stress	-2.99877	3.88468	-.13102	-.772	.4455
Parent Conflict	1.81731	1.43957	.19598	1.262	.2154
Parent Self Esteem	6.68662	3.36258	.34256	1.989	.0549
Parent Income	1.11563	.60000	.34612	1.859	.0716
(Constant)	35.93789	9.25346		3.884	.0005

Multiple R = .49762

R Square = .24762

Adjusted R Square = .09272

Standard Error= 7.72147

that parents with lower self esteem will be more likely to have children with behavioral adjustment problems. Two variables, income and custody were very close to achieving statistical significance (.07). The small sample required substantial difference to achieve statistical significance. Hypothesis one stating that children in joint custody families have fewer behavioral adjustment problems than children from mother custody families was close to achieving statistical significance. But the analysis of this data does not support the idea that custody and child adjustment are interdependent. The test for hypothesis number six stating that parents with higher income will have children with fewer problems was also close to statistical significance. Again, the analysis of these data suggests that income may affect child behavior. With more cases, income may indeed be found to be significant.

It is interesting to note that the variable parental conflict was not close to being statistically significant. The analysis indicates no support for hypothesis number two.

When examining the internalizing behavior T scores as dependent variable, the model explains 26 percent of the variance (Table 13). Multiple R of .62018 indicates a moderately strong relationship between all the independent variables and the dependent variable, internalizing behavior. When considering predicting internalizing behavior, the beta coefficients that were statistically

Table 13

Multiple Regression for Predicting Internalizing  
Child Behavior

Variable	B	SE B	Beta	T	Significance T
Parent Education	-.60093	.54234	-.17662	-1.108	.2756
Gender Child	2.86453	2.26972	.18054	1.262	.2155
Custody	3.61872	2.33204	.22833	1.552	.1300
Parent Stress	8.39228	3.00876	.43456	2.789	.6302
Parent Conflict	2.72530	1.28809	.29705	2.116	.0418
Parent Self Esteem	8.39228	3.00876	.43456	2.789	.0086
Parent Income	1.70163	.53687	.53360	3.170	.0032
(Constant)	24.49207	8.27978		2.958	.0056

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Multiple R = .62018

R Square = .38462

Adjusted R Square = .25792

Standard Error = 6.90899

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significant include parent income, parent self esteem, and parental conflict. When predicting internalizing behavioral problems, there is support for hypothesis number two, stating parents with high conflictual interaction will have children with more behavioral adjustment problems; hypothesis number four, stating parents with low self esteem will be more likely to have children with behavioral adjustment problems; and hypothesis number six, that parents with higher incomes will have children with fewer behavioral adjustment problems. The Beta value of .53360 indicates that every unit increase in parent income will yield a .53360 increase in internalized behavior in children. For every unit increase in parent self esteem, there will be a .43456 increase in internalized behavior in children. For every unit increase in parent conflict, there is a .29705 increase in internalized behavior in children.

When examining externalizing behavior, twelve percent of the variance was explained by the predictor variables (Table 14). The multiple R indicated a moderate relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable of externalizing behavior. Custody was the only statistically significant variable in this model. Joint custody children experienced fewer externalizing behaviors than mother custody children. The child's gender was very close to reaching statistical significance. Boys tended to have more problems with externalizing behavior

TABLE 14  
Multiple Regression for Predicting Externalizing Behavior

Variable	B	SE B	Beta	T	Significance T
Parent Education	-.65579	.52631	-.21650	-1.246	.2213
Gender Child	4.21654	2.20263	.29849	1.914	.0640
Custody	5.43506	2.26311	.38519	2.402	.0219
Parent Stress	-.13401	3.37319	-.006647	-.040	.9685
Parent Conflict	.32333	1.25002	.03958	.259	.7975
Parent Self Esteem	1.84633	2.91984	.10738	.632	.5314
Parent Income	.26933	.52100	.09486	.517	.6085
Constant	47.40661	8.03507		5.900	.0000

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Multiple R = .51851

R Square = .26885

Adjusted R Square = .11832

Standard Error = 6.70480

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than girls. For every unit change in custody, there is a .38519 increase in externalized behavior in children. When predicting externalizing behavioral problems, these findings support hypothesis one stating that children in joint custody families have fewer behavioral adjustment problems than children from mother custody families. These findings give some support to hypothesis number five that boys will be more likely than girls to have behavioral problems. However, the beta coefficient was not quite statistically significant ( $p=.06$ ).

Hypothesis number three stating that high levels of distress will be more likely to have children with more behavioral problems, and hypothesis number seven stating that parents with higher education levels would have children with fewer behavioral adjustment problems were not supported by any of the analyses for the three dependent variables used in the multiple regression model.

#### The Probit Model

Hypotheses numbers eight through fourteen were tested using the probit model. The variables examined in the probit analysis can be clustered into the following: social demographic, interparental relationship, and mechanics of alternations between parental homes. The first group of variables, social demographic, examined income level and education level. The second group of variables, interpersonal relationship between parents variables

included level of conflict, feelings of anger, and attitude about the ex-spouse as a parent, and use of alcohol or other drugs as a factor in marital dissolution. The last category of variables examined was mechanics of alternating between parental homes. With this category, the proximity of distance between parental homes was examined. See appendix G for coding of variables. The dependent variable, custody type was a dichotomous variable.

Examination of a correlation matrix of all variables indicates no evidence of multicollinearity. See Appendix H for the correlation matrix of all variables used in the probit model.

The means and standard deviations of the variables used in the probit analysis are in Table 15. When examining the variable attitude toward other parent, which measures how divorced parents feel about their ex-spouse as a parent, joint custody parents had more trust in their ex-spouse's parenting skills. Parents with joint custody had more education and incomes than those with mother custody. When considering alcohol or other drug use as a factor in getting divorced, parents in mother custody reported much more alcohol and other drug use as a factor in getting divorced. There was little difference in the amount of conflict and anger between ex-spouses in the two groups. When considering distance, mother custody families lived further away from the other parent, and had more variability in the

distance between parental homes.

Table 15

Descriptive Statistics for Variables Used in Probit Model

Variable	Total		Joint Custody		Mother Custody	
	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD
Attitude Toward Spouse as Parent	3.28	.88	3.61	.58	2.95	1.02
Parent Education	7.83	2.35	8.19	2.31	7.47	2.40
Parent Income	8.33	2.51	9.28	2.10	7.38	2.57
Alcohol/Drug Usage	.71	.45	.90	.30	.52	.51
Conflict	2.66	.87	2.61	.86	2.71	.90
Distance	2.09	1.78	1.42	1.24	2.76	2.04
Anger	1.52	.82	1.47	.81	1.57	.87

Three variables in the analysis achieved statistical significance (Table 16). Parents use of alcohol and other drugs in the marriage as a factor in getting a divorce appears to have exerted substantial pressure as the statistical significant results indicate ( $p=.025$ ). This result supports hypothesis number nine that parents who choose joint custody are less likely to have had previous alcohol and use of other drugs as a factor in the decision to divorce.

Other variables exerting significant results were

proximity of distance between parental homes, and parental attitude about their ex-spouse as a parent. Hypothesis thirteen, parents who choose joint custody have a closer proximity of distance between homes, is supported by the probit model analysis. Parents with joint custody lived much closer together. Hypothesis number fifteen, parents choosing joint custody have a more trusting attitude toward their ex-spouse's parenting skills was also supported. Joint custody parents were much more likely to trust in their ex-spouse's parenting skills.

Table 16  
Probit Model for Predicting Custody

Variable	Beta	Standard Error	t
Constant	3.0735	1.8629	1.64
Alcohol/Drug use	1.3738	.6578	-2.08 **
Parent Income	- .1459	.1158	-1.26
Parent Education	.1581	.1262	1.25
Parent Conflict	- .2006	.3139	- .63
Distance between parental home	.3188	.1587	2.00 *
Parent Anger	-.1482	.3129	- .47
Attitude about Ex- spouse as parent	-.5756	.3298	-1.75 *
Pseudo R square= .607			
* significance p = .05			
** significance p = .025			

The total variance explained by all predictors is 60 percent. The R square value in probit analysis is only an estimated, pseudo R square value (Aldrich & Nelson, 1984). This result and the hypothesis accepted support the general prediction that parents who choose joint custody have substantially different characteristics than parents who choose mother custody.

Surprisingly, parents in joint custody did not have lower levels of conflictual interaction and feelings of anger toward their ex-spouse when compared to the mother custody group. These findings do not support hypotheses number twelve and fourteen respectively.

Joint custody parents did not have enough of a difference in income and education level when compared to mother custody parents to be statistically significant. Thus, no support is given for hypothesis number ten and eleven.

When probit analysis is used, the interpretation of the impact of a change in the independent variables on the dependent variables is less straightforward (Aldrich & Nelson, 1984). To interpret the beta coefficients, an assumed scenario can be considered by setting values for the variables in question. Under the assumptions of the scenario, the probability of the parents choosing joint custody can be calculated. The scenario assumed is that joint custody families will live under fifteen miles from

one another. Also, the parents' combined annual income is between 50 and 74 thousand dollars. The attitude about the other parent is that this person is usually an effective parent. Finally, it is assumed that alcohol and other drugs were not an issue which contributed to the divorce. Considering this scenario, there would be fourteen percent probability of parents choosing joint custody.

### T-Test Results

Hypothesis number eight, and sixteen through eighteen will be tested using T-tests. The means and standard deviations of the variables used in the T-tests are found in table 17. The variables examined in relationship to child custody were involvement of parents in their children's activities, coparenting interaction, and level of emotional support given to the ex-spouse as a parent.

Table 17  
Descriptive Statistics on Variables  
Used in the T-Test

Variable	Total		Joint Custody		Mother Custody	
	X	SD	X	SD	X	SD
Involvement with Children	3.76	.93	3.85	.85	3.66	1.01
Coparenting Interaction	2.52	1.06	3.00	1.00	2.04	.92
Support	2.64	.90	2.85	.91	2.42	.87
Child Self Esteem	2.45	.77	2.47	.75	2.42	.81



When considering involvement with children's activities, joint custody parents were only slightly more involved than mother custody parents. The difference did not achieve statistical significance (Table 18). No support was found for hypothesis number eighteen stating that joint custody parents will be more involved with their children's lives than mother custody parents.

Table 18

## T-Test Parental Involvement with Children by Custody

F Value	Significance F	T Value	df	Significance T
1.42	.441	.66	40	.515

In examining the difference between the two groups on coparental interactions, joint custody parents interacted with one another more than mother custody parents. In examining the F value, one can assume similar variances and thus, use the pooled variance estimate for the T value. Table 19 indicates t-test results. Hypothesis number sixteen stating that joint custody families will have more coparenting interaction is supported.

Table 19

## T-Test Coparenting Interaction by Custody

F Value	Significance F	T Value	df	Significance T
1.18	.715	3.21	40	.003

The level of support given between parents yielded no significant results. Table 20 indicates the T test results. No support was found for hypothesis number seventeen stating that joint custody parents will show a higher frequency of emotional support toward their ex-spouses.

Table 20

## T-Test Parental Support by Custody

F Value	Significance F	T Value	df	Significance T
1.09	.842	1.56	40	.127

When examining parent report of child self esteem, no significant differences were found. See table 21 for results. There is no support for hypothesis number eight stating that children in joint custody families will have a higher self esteem.

Table 21

## T-Test Child Self Esteem by Custody

F Value	Significance F	T Value	df	Significance T
1.17	.730	.20	40	.844

Interpretation of these findings will be presented in Chapter VI. Next, a summary of the qualitative information gathered will be presented.

## CHAPTER V

### QUALITATIVE RESULTS

#### Introduction

In contrast to the paper and pencil questionnaire and checklist, data were collected via interviews with one parent, and in some cases, the target child. The interviews provided more in depth views of the family. Through the interviews, there was the opportunity to understand and explore the reasons for many of the attitudes taken by parents. Each interview was taped and transcribed. Patterns and consistency in responses was noted. These results compliment, and provide more in depth understanding to the overall findings.

#### The Custody Decision

Factors influencing parents in making their decision regarding custody were primarily positive in the joint custody sample. These parents believed that both parents loved and wanted to be with their children, and felt that the other parent was effective as a parent. A large proportion of the reported factors influencing decision making regarding custody in the mother custody sample was negative. One parent leaving or their irresponsibility were examples of factors involved in making a decision about custody. Table 22 summarizes the reported factors

influencing custody decisions ranked by frequency.

Table 22

Factors Influencing Custody Decision Making

Joint Custody	Percentage	Mother Custody	Percentage
Both parents love and want their children	45	Father left family	19
Other parent is effective	25	Parent irresponsible	14
Avoid Court	20	Don't want children losing contact with Father	14
Therapist or mediator	5	Age of child	10
Ordered by judge	5	Pressured	10
		Other	33

When considering conflict over custody, 62 percent of the parents in mother custody arrangements compared to 29 percent of the parents in joint custody arrangements reported no conflict. Money matters, or not wanting either joint custody or to relinquish the children were frequent conflicts among parents with joint custody. Irresponsible behavior was a complaint by many parents in mother custody arrangements. Some conflict ranging from neither parent wanting the children to both wanting custody also was reported. See table 23 for a summary of conflicts over custody.

Someone tried to talk parents out of joint custody in 48 percent of the families. Parents, friends, attorneys, and therapists were the persons who wanted to talk parents out of joint custody.

Table 23  
Conflict Over Custody

Joint Custody	Percentage	Mother Custody	Percentage
No conflict	29	No conflict	62
Didn't want joint custody	20	Irresponsibility	24
Money	14	Neither parent wanted children	5
Visitation	10	Other	9
Refusal to relinquish children	10		
Other	17		

Overall, a little over one half of both groups reported consulting with their attorneys to make important decisions regarding custody and visitation. The joint custody group also reported consulting with therapists and mediators. Some parents knew of other families in joint custody and consulted with them.

#### Advantages Versus Disadvantages

Parents in joint custody reported several advantages for both the parent and the child for living in a joint

custody arrangement. Some parents reported the advantage of having time off from children to pursue a social life or to rest and relax. Parents liked having both parents involved because of a belief that children need to receive love from both parents. Disadvantages reported by the parents had to do with different values and styles between the two parents. Poor communication and psychological games between ex-spouses was disturbing to some parents. Logistical problems were disruptive in some families. Table 24 summarizes the advantages and disadvantages of joint custody.

Advantages of mother custody arrangements emphasized were stability. Some mothers reported that their situation was excellent due to the other parent being irresponsible. Some parents reported just enjoying the time parenting. Many mothers reported having too much responsibility and feeling stressed because of it. Fathers reported having too little time with children. Distance was a factor which prevented some parents from being more involved with their children. Table 25 summarizes the advantages and disadvantages reported for mother custody.

When considering satisfaction in a joint custody arrangement, 81 percent of the sample reported never regretting their decision. Among the 19 percent who reported having regretted their decision from time to time, several parents did not like their visitation pattern.

Table 24

## Advantages and Disadvantages of Joint Custody

Advantages	Frequency	Disadvantages	Frequency
Children Receive Love from both parents	9	None	7
Parent has time off from children	6	Different rules in different homes	4
Children have contact with father	4	Two of everything	2
Children don't have grief issues	3	Games with ex-spouse	2
Father invested in parenting	3	Disruption	2
Best of both worlds	2	Poor communication	2
Consistency	1	Ex-spouse won't participate in child's activities	2
Win-win	1	No consistency	2
Flexible	1	Children are stressed	2
Children don't have to choose	1	Logistics	1
		Children in the middle	1
		Separation anxiety	1
		Ex-in law conflict	1

Table 25

## Advantages and Disadvantages of Mother Custody

Advantages	frequency	Disadvantages	Frequency
Stability	6	Too much responsibility	6
Enjoy parenting	3	No disadvantages	4
Flexible	3	Not enough time for children	4
No advantages	3	Too much distance	3
More interaction with children	1	Finances	2
Child not involved enough with noncustodial parent	1	Nobody to consult with	2
Better environment	1	Too flexible	2
Not consulting with ex-spouse	1	Worry about children	1
Good visitation schedule	1	Too rigid	1
		Children have abandonment issues	1



### Visitation

The parents in mother custody arrangements reported that the actual visitation schedule differed from the legal visitation schedule 57 percent of the time. Half of the parents reported that their was less visitation than the legal document stated and the other half stated their children received more visitation than the legal document stated.

Parents were dissatisfied with the visitation schedule 52 percent of the time. Women wanted their ex-spouse to have the children more time in 29 percent of the cases. Men wanted more visitation in 24 percent of the cases. Parents reported that children enjoyed the visitation in 71 percent of the cases.

### Parent Child relationship

Parents reported having contact with their children less often than when they were married. Most parents reported feeling closer or same closeness as before the divorce. Table 26 contains summary statistics comparing parent contact and closeness by custody type. When parents were asked if they felt closer to their children with less time or the same time spent with them, they stated that they had an appreciation of the time spent with their children and used the time wisely to be attentive with their children.

Table 26

## Comparison of Parent Contact and Closeness by Custody

Variable	Total			Joint Custody			Mother Custody		
	More	Less	Same	More	Less	Same	More	Less	Same
	(Percent)			(Percents)			(Percents)		
Parent contact with children	19	24	57	14	10	76	24	38	38
Closeness with children	40	48	12	38	52	10	43	43	14

When considering gender differences in amount of parent contact and closeness with children, fathers reported less contact with children 72 percent of the time. Almost half of the men reported feeling closer to their children. Almost half of the women reported less contact with their children after the divorce. More than half of the women reported feeling less close to their children post separation. See table 27 for results.

Table 27

## Comparison of Parent Contact and Closeness by Parent Gender

Variable	Mothers			Fathers		
	more	same	less	more	same	less
	(Percents)			(Percents)		
Parent contact with children	25	29	46	11	17	72
Closeness with children	29	13	58	45	22	33

### Coparenting relationships

In joint custody families parents usually made decisions by speaking to one another by telephone (76 percent of the cases). Others reported that the divorce decree was so detailed that there was no need to make joint decisions. In one case, whoever had the children made all decisions. Mothers made all decisions without consulting fathers in 67 percent of the cases in mother custody families. Some mother custody families discussed decision making regarding children on the phone, while others did not ever discuss anything.

Roughly half of the sample felt negative feelings including sadness, anger, and pity for their ex-spouse when they saw them. Joint custody parents reported these feelings 52 percent of the time while mother custody parents reported these feelings 57 percent of the time. Only about one fourth of the sample reported feeling good when seeing their ex-spouse. Most of the parents would at least speak to one another when they saw each other regardless of these feelings. Joint custody parents said they spoke to one another in 95 percent of the cases and mother custody parents said they spoke to one another in 81 percent of the cases.

### Family Functions

Many parents reported feeling so guilty about the divorce that they became lenient when it came to setting

appropriate limits with their children. Only a third of the sample reported that disciplining children was the same as before the divorce. Parents said discipline was harder 40 percent of the time, and easier 27 percent of the time.

Table 28 compares discipline issues for children.

Table 28

Comparison of Discipline Problems of Children by Custody

Variable	Total (Percents)	Joint Custody (Percents)	Mother Custody (Percents)
Discipline			
easier	27	29	24
same	33	33	33
harder	40	38	43
Children play parents off on each other	57	52	62
Change in children's behavior after alternating homes	76	57	95
Children confused by differences in rules	38	24	52

Children often play parents off on each other (57 percent of the cases). Mother custody children were more likely to play parents off on each other than joint custody children. Typically, if children did not get what they wanted from one parent, they would go ask the other parent. Another typical scenario was telling one parent about all the wonderful or bad things that the other parent was doing

for them. The parents who were not experiencing this from their children often had good communication with their ex-spouse. These parents also were aware of the children trying to play one parent off on the other, and avoided this kind of interaction with their children.

Parents reported changes in children's behavior after alternating homes in 76 percent of the cases. Almost all children in mother custody had behavioral changes noted after alternating homes. These behaviors were described as being hyper, extremely active behavior, or down, isolative behavior by children.

Parents perceived that their children seemed to be more confused about differences in parental rules in mother custody families. Only about one fourth of the children in joint custody, compared to one half of the children in mother custody were confused by differences in parental rules.

Overall, 45 percent of the parents report having similarity in homes after the divorce when considering size, cost and location of the homes. Only 29 percent of mother custody homes were similar, compared to 62 percent of joint custody families being similar. When considering lifestyle similarities, 45 percent of the total sample of parents reported having similar lifestyles. Joint custody parents reported similar lifestyles 57 percent of the time while mother custody families reported similarity in lifestyle 34

percent of the time. Mother custody families were much more likely to have very dissimilar lifestyles.

When examining parent role stress, parents reported their many roles in life being a strain 48 percent of the time. Mother custody families reported both more role stress and role overload. An overload of tasks was reported by 60 percent of the overall sample. Table 29 summarizes the comparison of parent stress by custody type. When examining for gender differences, mothers were much more likely to experience role strain or an overload of tasks. Table 30 summarizes the comparison of role stress by gender.

Table 29

## Comparison of Parent Role Stress by Custody

Variable	Total (Percents)	Joint Custody (Percents)	Mother Custody (Percents)
Role Strain	48	33	62
Tasks Overload	60	48	71

Table 30

## Comparison of Parent Role Stress by Gender

Variable	Total (Percents)	Mothers (Percents)	Fathers (Percents)
Role Strain	48	67	22
Tasks Overload	60	75	39

Money was an emotional issue for many parents interviewed. About half of the overall sample reported having less money since separation. Most parents reported that money was often adequate to meet their needs. Most parents worried over money sometimes, often or always. The overall sample had child support ordered by the court (81 percent of the cases). When considering custody, all mother custody parents were supposed to receive child support, and 62 percent of the joint custody parents receive child support. In all cases, men were ordered to pay child support with this particular sample. When considering child support reliability, joint custody parents were much more likely to receive payments on time. Table 31 summarizes a comparison of money issues by custody

In comparing money issues by gender, fathers were more likely to have more money post separation than mothers. Mothers were more likely to report having less available money than fathers. Mothers were also much more likely to worry about money sometimes, often or always. Table 32 compares money issues by gender of the parent.

#### Formal Institutions

Parents went to court over a custody dispute, or property issue in the divorce in 24 percent of the cases. Mother custody parents were more likely to believe that the court had a role in custody decision making. Relitigation

Table 31  
Comparison of Money Issues by Custody

Variable	Total (Percents)	Joint Custody (Percents)	Mother Custody (Percents)
Amount of money since separation			
more	36	24	48
less	16	19	14
same	48	57	38
Money adequate			
always	19	29	10
often	43	29	57
sometimes	25	18	28
rarely	10	14	5
never	5	10	
Worry over money			
always	17	24	10
often	24	14	34
sometimes	35	34	37
rarely	17	14	19
never	7	14	
Child support	81	62	100
Child support reliability			
yes	64	57	71
no	17	5	29



Table 32  
Comparison of Money Issues by Gender

Variable	Mothers (Percents)	Fathers (Percents)
Amount of money since separation		
more	29	44.5
same	13	22
less	58	33.5
Money adequate		
always	21	17
often	38	50
sometimes	25	22
rarely	8	11
never	8	11
Worry over Money		
always	17	17
often	42	
sometimes	37	33
rarely		39
never	4	11

was reported in only 14 percent of the mother custody sample. Joint custody had not relitigated in any of the cases. Joint custody families were more likely to believe that the legal system encouraged parents to make their own decision regarding custody. Table 33 compares the relationship of parents to formal institutions.

Nearly all parents in joint custody reported that they and their ex-spouse attended school activities compared to only a little over half of the mother custody parents reported that they and their ex-spouse attended school activities. The school was aware of divorce and custody arrangement in 86 percent of the cases. Problems with school personnel occurred in 31 percent of the cases. Most problems centered around the school being careful about allowing noncustodial parents to have the child in cases of emergencies. Some parents reported that school personnel took sides with their ex-spouse. Most families found school personnel to be supportive. Mother custody families were more likely to believe that the school personnel was supportive. Problems with school policy were reported by 24 percent of the sample. In one joint custody case, the school stated that the child could not attend school there unless both divorced parents lived in that school district. Most families reported that communication on programs, problems and grades was complicated because some parents never received notice of these issues. Parents also

Table 33

## Comparison of Relationship of Parents to Formal Institutions

Variable	Total (Percents)	Joint Custody (Percents)	Mother Custody (Percents)
<b>Legal</b>			
- Has gone to court	24	24	24
- Court role in decision making regarding custody	19	14	24
- Relitigation	7		14
- Believed legal system encouraged parents determining own custody arrangements	21	34	10
<b>Schools</b>			
- ex-spouse attends school activities	76	95	57
- school aware of custody arrangement	86	86	86
- had problems with school personnel	31	24	38
- found school personnel supportive	79	57	100
- problems in school policy	24	34	14
<b>Work</b>			
- changed jobs due to custody	7		14
- flexible working hours	74	57	90
- has possibility of relocation	19	34	5
- travels on the job	24	29	19
<b>Church</b>			
- obtained emotional support from church	55	52	57
- discussed divorce with a minister	33	29	38

reported that the forms used in schools were often inadequate to include information on both parents.

Parents reported having flexible working hours in 74 percent of the cases. Joint custody parents were more likely to report the possibility of relocation due to a job transfer. Joint custody parents were also more likely to travel as part of their job.

Only half of the parents reported obtaining emotional support from the church. Many reported that they were very dissatisfied with the church support for divorced people. Roughly one third of the sample discussed the divorce with a minister. Some parents reported this as a waste of time.

Over half of the parents reported going to a mental health professional for either marital, divorce, family or individual therapy. Table 34 compares use of mental health

Table 34

Comparison of Mental Health System Use by Custody

Variable	Total (Percents)	Joint Custody (Percents)	Mother Custody (Percents)
Therapy before divorce	62	67	57
Therapy during divorce	64	62	67
Therapy after divorce	55	52	57

Table 35

## Comparison of Mental Health System Use by Gender

Variable	Mothers (Percents)	Fathers (Percents)
Therapy before divorce	67	55
Therapy during divorce	83	39
Therapy after divorce	71	33

system by custody. Mothers were much more likely to seek help from mental health professionals than fathers. Table 35 compares use of mental health system by parent gender.

Informal Support Systems

Many parents reported that divorce recovery groups at church, and other groups in the community were helpful as they were going through the divorce process. Some parents found twelve step meetings of Alcohol Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, or Codependence Anonymous helpful.

Joint custody parents were more likely to keep old friends as well as make new friends after separation. Mother custody parents reported more changes in their network of friends. Extended family members were reported to be helpful in almost all cases. Kin were reported to contribute to conflict and problems in about 36 percent of the cases. In joint custody families, 57 percent reported maintaining contact with ex in laws compared to 71 percent maintaining contact in mother custody families.

### Children's Experiences

Parents were quite reluctant to involve their children in an interview process over such a sensitive topic as custody. The following results given are based on 19 children's responses, 10 living in joint custody, and nine living in mother custody.

Children in joint custody families were much less likely to have an idea as to why their parents divorced. Mother custody children had very clear ideas about why their parents divorced. They reported reasons like "my Dad wanted a different kind of life," "my Dad was on drugs," and "my Mom and Dad couldn't stand each other." Children in joint custody families were more likely to have been told about the divorce by both parents.

Children in mother custody families were more likely to report that they felt confusion about the divorce. Most children reported feeling sad and uncomfortable about their parent's divorce. Three of the children did report being happy about the divorce.

When asked if children had enough time with their parents, joint custody children were more likely to say they spend enough time with both parents. Mother custody children typically wanted more time with their father. Children reported missing the parent who they were not with. When asked what they do to cope with this, many stated that they call the other parent, or write the other parent.

Children in joint custody reported liking having two rooms, more possessions, more pets, and getting away from the other parent as advantages to having two homes. Children found it problematic when they forgot their possessions at their other home. They found the logistics of traveling back and forth between parental homes, and parents having different rules confusing at times. They reported awkwardness trying to explain to their friends which house they would be living at.

Children reported a variety of responses when asked how the divorce affected them. Joint custody children responded with the following: "having to wait so long to ask the other parent something," "everything is so much harder now," "It made me appreciate a lot about life," and "I can adjust to change much easier now." Mother custody children responded with the following: "I don't have enough time with my parents now," "I don't really have both my parents," "I don't trust people or want to be close to them now," and "I really miss my Dad."

### Conclusions

These findings complement the quantitative findings. When considering child behavior, most parents reported a change in their children's behavior when alternating homes. This behavior was normally reported to be hyperactive behavior, or children behaving withdrawn and quiet. Both joint custody and mother custody experienced this behavior

change. Little over half the children played one parent off on the other. Again, both mother and joint custody parents observed this behavior in their children. In addition, many parents felt guilty about the divorce and did not set consistent appropriate limits with their children. These factors could explain why children's Child Behavior Checklist T scores were higher than the normative sample. Although there was less behavior problems reported in joint custody, it was not a dramatic difference. This is consistent with the general quantitative finding that child behavior is independent from custody.

Joint custody parents were likely to believe in the importance of both parents involvement with their children's lives. This complements the probit analysis finding that joint custody parents had a better attitude toward their ex-spouses as parents.

Joint custody parents typically reported more positive reasons for wanting their custody and visitation patterns than mother custody parents. Mother custody parents reported much more drug and alcohol use in the marriage prior to divorce which contributed to emotional pain, chaos in the family and irresponsible behavior on the part of the parent using alcohol or other drugs. This type of chaos is not generally reported in the joint custody families. This probably contributed to the higher trust level in the ex-spouse as a parent.



Next, a final interpretation of the findings is presented.

## CHAPTER VI

### DISCUSSION

#### Major Findings

The overall sample was skewed in a healthy direction. A low degree of conflict was reported between ex-spouses on the questionnaire. Little anger was reported between ex-spouses and parent distress levels were low. Parents reported higher than average self esteem on the questionnaire.

When considering parental conflict, findings were in congruence with Mccoby, Depner & Mnookin (1990). Like this research, joint custody parents talked more frequently than sole custody parents but the same amount of conflictual communication occurred in each group. At the same time, these findings varied with Kline, Tshann, Johnston & Wallerstein (1989) who found that parent conflict was a variable achieving statistical significance

No relitigation was reported in the joint custody sample and the mother custody sample only reported relitigation in 14 percent of the cases. These findings support the findings of both Ilfeld, Ilfeld & Alexander's (1982), and Irving, Benjamin & Trocme (1984) who found that relitigation was lower in joint custody families, and unlike those studies which found no differences in relitigation

among sole and joint custody. (Berger, Madakasira & Roebuck, 1988; Phear, Beck, Hauser, Clark & Whitney, 1983).

Joint custody is clearly not just for the wealthy. These findings are in agreement with Irving, Benjamin & Trocme (1984) considering parent income. The present study had a variety of parent incomes but on average they were in the upper levels. Overall, these findings agreed with Ahrons (1980) and Steinman (1981) that joint custody parents are satisfied with their custody arrangement despite the difficulties.

Parent overload was less in the joint custody sample, and is in congruence with findings by Defrain, Fricke & Ellman (1987). Also like Defrain, Fricke & Ellman (1987), parents with joint custody in this study were more likely to believe that children benefit from relationships with both parents.

Alcohol and other drug use, which has not yet been examined in joint custody research, was significant in the present research. This factor should be utilized in future research on child custody. It is likely that parents who don't drink or take drugs are more likely to be trusted by the other parent when considering parenting skills.

Overall, the results of the multiple regression analysis were in support that child custody is independent of child behavioral adjustment (Defrain, Fricke & Elman, 1987; Kline, Tshann, Johnston & Wallerstein, 1989; Luepnitz,

1982, 1986; Pojman, 1981; Shiller, 1986; Wolchik, Braver & Sandler, 1985). However, when considering externalizing behavioral problems, children in joint custody were experiencing fewer problems than those in mother custody ( $p=.02$ ).

Gender differences approached significance when considering children's externalizing behavioral problems ( $p=.06$ ). Kline, Tshann, Johnston & Wallerstein (1989) found that gender differences was significant, but Wolchik, Braver & Sandler (1985) found no gender differences.

Children from the joint custody sample were not protected from experiencing grief, anxiety, and feelings of loss. These findings agreed with McKinnon & Wallerstein (1986) and were at variance with Abarbanel (1979). The interviewed children who described two very different lifestyles and rules for each household were very unhappy if they were living in a joint custody family. This issue was disturbing to mother custody children, but not nearly as traumatic as it was for children in joint custody families

#### Implications for Future Research

Further research is needed to examine emotional support and conflict resulting from increased access to children by the noncustodial parent. Also, does this increase the behavioral adjustment problems in children? Future research should examine more cases and a greater variety of cases. For example, little is known about court ordered joint

custody as opposed to parental requested, but court granted joint custody. In the present research, three out of five families having a temporary joint custody arrangement ordered by the judge felt badly about the arrangement. Level of chaos reported in their lives was high due to conflict between parents. More research should be done on what characteristics of children are associated with success in a joint custody arrangement. For example, how might a child with a learning disability or emotional disorder cope with joint custody?

Factors leading to behavioral adjustment in children after divorce need more examination. Thus, most studies so far agree that custody and behavioral adjustment in children are independent, but it is unclear what factors are important. Very few studies actually interviewed children and their parents when obtaining data. More studies where both children and parents are involved would enhance the present knowledge about joint custody. It is also very important that control groups are used. This study only matched the subgroups on age, gender of child, and time lapse from parental separation. Other important variables to match on would be income and education of parents, and birth order of the child.

Consistent with other findings, child support payments were more reliable in the joint custody group. Research on larger numbers of divorced families is needed when

considering child support payment reliability. This issue has implications for social policy. When a father feels a part of his children's lives, he is more likely to pay child support reliably.

#### Significance of the Study

Unlike almost all other studies, this research used a control group which was matched to the experimental group by child's age and gender, and time lapse of parental separation. Also, its use of a multimethod approach utilizing both quantitative and qualitative analysis adds to its significance. The homogeneous sample lead to useful information on middle to upper middle class divorced families. Unlike most other studies both parents and a target child were interviewed in this study. The findings on alcohol and other drug use as a factor in divorce was an important contribution to the present literature that warrants further investigation.

#### Limitations of the Study

Limitations to the present study include not utilizing enough children, and use of too small of a sample. Additionally, a limited amount of contact occurred with each family. A probable bias was due to only talking with one parent in each family. However, another type of bias would likely occur if both parents agreed to take part in the study. Eventually, research with more heterogeneous samples would be helpful. Racial and socioeconomic differences, as

well as differences in custody arrangements also would be helpful.

### Recommendations

It is clear that joint custody where parents share children equally is not for everyone. Joint custody is a viable alternative for those parents who mutually agree to it. When parents choose it because they do not have the money to go to court, or because the judge orders it, conflicts appeared to be more frequent.

Mediation is an excellent alternative for parents disputing custody of their children. When parents are in conflict, mediation or counseling should be tried before litigation. For those who are ordered to share custody equally by the court, frequent mediation should be recommended, or even made mandatory for parents experiencing conflict.

Use of specificity in the divorce decree for parents if they are in conflict and are unable to come to an agreement is very important in helping to minimize conflict between ex-spouses. Some subjects in this study said that the specificity of the divorce decree prevented unnecessary communication which could have led to conflict. Others interviewed claimed that the decree was so nebulous that they were in constant disagreement with their ex-spouse.

### Summary of Findings

These findings indicate that problems with children's behavior and self esteem after divorce occur independent of custody type. Joint custody children generally experienced less behavior difficulties than mother custody children but this difference was not statistically significant except when considering externalizing behavior. Regardless of custody type, most children experienced hyperactive or withdrawn behavior when alternating homes.

Unexpectedly, parents in joint custody reported less alcohol and other drug use as a factor leading to divorce than the mother custody sample. This probably contributed to parents having a more positive attitude about their ex-spouse as a parent that can be trusted. Not surprisingly, joint parents lived closer together. This seemed to greatly lessen the stress that parents and children experience when dealing with the logistical problems in joint custody. Joint custody parents did have more access to the children than mother custody. Surprisingly, level of parent conflict and anger was not different when comparing the two groups. Parents in joint custody did report having more contact with one another after divorce.

In conclusion, joint custody is a viable alternative which can include a variety of arrangements when considering visitation for divorcing parents.



## CHAPTER VII

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

When parents divorce who takes responsibility for their children? Major responsibility is given to the sole parent awarded custody of the children. At one end of the ideological continuum on responsibilities for children, advocates argue for sole custody without any visitation rights by the noncustodial parent (Goldstein, Freud & Solnit, 1973). Those at the other end of the ideological continuum argue that the presumption of joint custody after parents divorce would serve the best interest of children (Roman & Haddad, 1978). While rhetoric on this issue is abundant, social science research is sparse. This research project assessed the advantages, disadvantages, and characteristics of two different types of custody arrangements. A detailed comparison was made between joint custody and mother custody.

This cross sectional research project was a multimethod, quasi-experimental study which examined two groups of divorced families. The experimental group consisted of joint custody families. The control group was a sample of families with mother custody, who were matched with the experimental group on age and gender of a target child, and the time lapse since parental separation. The

sample consisted of a total of 42 families with 21 families in each group. All 42 parents were interviewed. Unfortunately due to parental fear, paranoia, or protection most parents refused permission to have a child interviewed. Only 19 children were interviewed.

Sample parents completed a self report questionnaire dealing with their attitudes on the following: coparental interaction, conflict, support, satisfaction, involvement with children, psychological closeness, attachment, anger, positive feelings, attitudes toward former spouse as a parent, self esteem, and level of distress. Parents also completed the child behavior checklist (Achenbach & Edelbrock (1983).

In addition, parents were interviewed using a semistructured interview schedule examining the following: custody and visitation, parent-child interaction, coparenting interaction, family functions, the social system, self esteem and alcohol and other drug use. Children were interviewed concerning their experience during the divorce process and their self esteem.

From a multiple regression analysis, support was found for children in joint custody families having fewer behavioral adjustment problems than children from mother custody families, when considering their externalizing behavior. Also, parents with low self esteem were more

likely to have children with behavioral adjustment problems, when predicting child behavior adjustment and internalizing behavior in children. Parents who had a lot of conflictual interaction had children with more behavioral adjustment problems when predicting internalizing behavior in children. Finally, parents with higher income had children with fewer behavioral adjustment problems when predicting internalizing behavior in children.

A probit analysis found that parents who choose joint custody have different characteristics than parents who choose mother custody. In particular parents who chose joint custody were less likely to cite alcohol and use of other drugs as a factor in the decision to divorce. Parents choosing joint custody lived in closer proximity of one another, and had a more trusting attitude toward their ex-spouse's parenting skills. T-tests analysis found that joint custody parents had a higher frequency of shared parenting interaction than mother custody parents.

Advantages of joint custody were that children received love from both parents, parents have time off from parenting responsibilities, children have more frequent contact with their father, children do not feel a sense of loss, and fathers were more invested in their parenting role. Disadvantages of joint custody included conflicting rules in both homes, having two of everything, psychological games between ex-spouses, disruption, and ex-spouses not

participating in taking the child to scheduled activities during their scheduled time with the child.

Advantages of mother custody included stability for the child, and the child having a parent who enjoys parenting and flexibility. Disadvantages included too much responsibility for the custodial parent, and the noncustodial parent not having enough time with children.

Unlike other studies of joint custody, this study has included a control group of mother custody families. It also used a multimethod design using a questionnaire, child behavior checklist, and interviewed both parents and children. It involved extensive statistical analysis as well as qualitative analysis.

Limitations of the study include the use of a small sample, and the homogeneity of the sample. A more carefully matched sample using controls for other demographic variables would have been helpful. Because few children participated in the interview process, more research is needed involving more children. Only one parent among the ex-spouses was used in the analysis leading to possible bias. However, if both parents were included, another type of bias would have likely occurred.

In conclusion, the findings indicate that the differences in child behavior and self esteem after divorce occur independent of custody type. Joint custody children were generally experiencing less behavior difficulties, but

this was not statistically significant except when considering externalizing behavior. Most children did experience hyperactive or withdrawn behavior when alternating homes. Joint custody is certainly a viable alternative for many divorcing couples. Parents do have a variety of alternatives when considering a joint custody arrangement.

APPENDIX A  
RECRUITMENT ANNOUNCEMENT

## A STUDY ON CHILD CUSTODY

Volunteers are needed to participate in a study comparing joint custody families to mother custody families. Little is known about the experience of families living in joint custody, since most research focuses on mothers with custody of their children. Knowledge is needed to better understand if joint custody is a viable alternative for divorcing families. Comparing mother custody with joint custody families is necessary for a better understanding. This research is part of a PhD dissertation project for the Department of Sociology and Social Work at the University of North Texas.

It requires a face to face interview with volunteer parents and their children. This takes approximately two hours and can be scheduled at the family home when convenient. Also, parents will fill out a questionnaire and a checklist which can be completed during the interview procedure.

The information you share will be used anonymously and no identifying personal information will be kept or used with this information.

The criteria for participation in this study is as follows: 1. Have at least one child between four and sixteen; and 2. Have maternal or joint custody.

The following criteria must be met for joint custody families: 1. Children are shared by the parents with a 50/50 split to a 60/40 split; and  
2. Children do not go more than fourteen days without seeing both parents.

If you would like more information about this research project, please call Kim Rockwell-Evans at 214-641-5340 (work) or 214-349-7675 (home); or Dr. Rudy Ray Seward, Associate Professor of Sociology at 817-565-2296.

Your participation would be greatly appreciated and should help others in the future deal with some of the problems you have faced.

If you are willing to participate in the study, please mail the information below using the attached envelope.

-----  
Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Numbers \_\_\_\_\_ (work) \_\_\_\_\_ (home)

Good time to contact you \_\_\_\_\_

Custody: (circle one)      Joint custody      Maternal custody

Number of children \_\_\_\_\_ Children's age and gender \_\_\_\_\_

Thanks again

APPENDIX B  
LETTER TO PROFESSIONALS



Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

As you know, joint custody of children is becoming more common after parents divorce but little is known about its impact. As a doctoral student at the University of North Texas, I am conducting a study which will compare joint custody families with sole custody families as part of my dissertation. I need the help of many volunteer divorced families to participate in my research. Your assistance would be invaluable.

I want to collect data from at least 40 joint custody families where parents are sharing responsibilities for children fairly equally. The criteria for participation is 1) having joint managing conservatorship of a child between the ages of four and sixteen, 2) children's daily needs are shared by parents on a 50/50 to a 60/40 split, and 3) children do not go more than fourteen days without seeing one parent or the other. Parents who share school aged children with an arrangement where one parent has the child on weekends and the other parent has the child during the week will qualify for the study.

Since joint custody is still the exception, I would greatly appreciate your help in locating qualified people who share custody of their children. For any clients or ex-clients who qualify, please send them one of the enclosed recruiting announcements. Clients may then volunteer to participate if they wish. Also, would you send any friends, neighbors or colleagues who qualify a recruiting announcement or call me with their name and phone number. Participation is completely voluntary and all information gathered is held in strict confidence.

If you would like more information about this research project, or have suggestions on gaining access to these families, please call me at 641-5340 (work); or Dr. Rudy Ray Seward, Associate Professor of Sociology at 817-565-2296.

Thank you so much for your help.

Sincerely,

Kim Rockwell-Evans

Enclosures

APPENDIX C  
CONSENT FORM

## CONSENT FORM

I \_\_\_\_\_ have agreed to participate as a subject in the research project being conducted by Kim Rockwell-Evans on child custody. This research is part of a PhD dissertation project in the Department of Sociology and Social Work at University of North Texas. The study will compare joint and maternal custody families, and will describe parents and children in both groups. I also give my child, \_\_\_\_\_ permission to participate in this research project.

I am aware that the interview will be tape recorded and that direct quotes may be used in reporting the findings for any publication or presentation of the research. I do understand, however, that all identifying information, such as name, address, employment, etc. will be disguised or withheld.

I am aware that I may withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

---

Signature

---

Date

APPENDIX D  
QUESTIONNAIRE

## CHILD CUSTODY QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is designed to measure your attitudes about various aspects of your family and yourself. Please read each statement carefully and decide which response most closely matches your attitude. Please answer the questions by writing the number of the appropriate category on the line.

The categories of responses are as follows:

- 1 = never
- 2 = rarely
- 3 = sometimes
- 4 = usually
- 5 = always

NEVER	RARELY	SOMETIMES	USUALLY	ALWAYS
-----1-----	-----2-----	-----3-----	-----4-----	-----5-----

## COPARENTAL INTERACTION

At the present time, which of the following do you share with your former spouse?

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Making major decisions regarding your children's lives.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Making day-to-day decisions regarding your children's lives.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Discussing personal problems your children may be experiencing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Discussing school and/or medical problems.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Planning special events in your children's lives.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Talking about your children's accomplishments and progress.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Talking about problems you are having in raising the children.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Discussing how the children are adjusting to the divorce.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Discussing problems you are having with the coparenting relationship.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Discussing finances in regard to your children.

## CONFLICT

- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. When you and your former spouse discuss parenting issues, how often does an argument result?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. How often is the underlying atmosphere one of hostility or anger?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. How often is the conversation stressful or tense?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. Do you and your former spouse have basic differences of opinion about issues related to childrearing?

## SUPPORT

- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. If your former spouse has needed to make a change in visiting arrangements, do you go out of your way to

accommodate?

- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. Does your former spouse go out of the way to accommodate any changes you need to make?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. Do you feel that your former spouse understands and is supportive of your special needs as a custodial (or noncustodial) parent?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. When you need help regarding the children, do you seek it from your former spouse?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. Would you say that your former spouse is a resource to you in raising the children?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. Would you say that you are a resource to your former spouse in raising the children?

#### ATTACHMENT

- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. I find myself wondering what my former spouse is doing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. I find myself spending a lot of time thinking about my former spouse.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. I feel I will never get over the divorce.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. Sometimes I can't believe we got divorced.

#### PSYCHOLOGICAL CLOSENESS

- \_\_\_\_\_ 25. I feel neutral about my former spouse.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 26. I feel detached from my former spouse.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 27. I feel indifferent toward my former spouse.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 28. I feel emotional extremes of hating and then loving my former spouse.

#### ANGER

- \_\_\_\_\_ 29. I feel angry for the hurt I have gone through.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 30. I blame my former spouse for the divorce.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 31. I don't feel my former spouse deserves to be happy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 32. I want revenge for wrongs done to me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 33. I hope my former spouse has problems in new relationships.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 34. I think my former spouse should be punished.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 35. I want to get back at my former spouse for what's been done to me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 36. I hate my former spouse.

#### POSITIVE FEELINGS

- \_\_\_\_\_ 37. I love my former spouse.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 38. I care about my former spouse's welfare.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 39. I have warm feelings for my former spouse.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 40. I feel compassion for my former spouse.

#### ATTITUDE TOWARD FORMER SPOUSE AS A PARENT

- \_\_\_\_\_ 41. My former spouse is a caring parent.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 42. My former spouse is a good parent to the children.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 43. My former spouse is an incompetent parent.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 44. My former spouse is an irresponsible parent.

#### SATISFACTION

For the next set of questions, the category of responses is as follows:

- 1 = very dissatisfied  
 2 = somewhat dissatisfied  
 3 = mixed, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied  
 4 = somewhat satisfied  
 5 = very satisfied

Very	some		some	very
dissatisfied	dissatisfied	mixed	satisfied	satisfied
-----1-----	-----2-----	-----3-----	-----4-----	-----5-----

- \_\_\_\_\_ 45. How satisfied are you with the custody arrangement?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 46. How satisfied are you with the amount of time you spend with the children.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 47. How satisfied are you with the present parenting relationship between you and your former spouse?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 48. In general, how satisfied are you now with your life as a whole?

#### INVOLVEMENT WITH CHILDREN

For the next set of questions, the category of responses is as follows:

- 1 = not at all  
 2 = a little  
 3 = somewhat  
 4 = much  
 5 = very much

not at all	a little	some	much	very much
-----1-----	-----2-----	-----3-----	-----4-----	-----5-----

How involved are you with the children in the following areas?

- \_\_\_\_\_ 49. Disciplining the children  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 50. Dress and grooming  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 51. Religious or moral training, if any  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 52. Running errands for/with the children  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 53. Celebrating holidays with the children  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 54. Celebrating significant events (e.g., birthdays) with the children.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 55. Taking the children for recreational activities (e.g., sports)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 56. Attending school or church related functions.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 57. Discussing problems with the children that they might be

- \_\_\_\_\_ having
- \_\_\_\_\_ 58. Taking the children for vacations
- \_\_\_\_\_ 59. Social activities with friends or extended family,  
grandparents
- \_\_\_\_\_ 60. Helping children with schoolwork
- \_\_\_\_\_ 61. Discussing children's social activities (e.g. friendships,  
dating, parties, overnights)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 62. Planning for the children's future (e.g. education, career,  
marriage)

### SELF ESTEEM

For the next set of questions, the category of responses are as follows:

- 1 = strongly agree  
2 = somewhat agree  
3 = not sure  
4 = somewhat disagree  
5 = strongly disagree

strongly agree	somewhat agree	not sure	somewhat disagree	strongly disagree
-----1-----	-----2-----	-----3-----	-----4-----	-----5-----

- \_\_\_\_\_ 63. I feel that I am a person of worth at least an equal with  
others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 64. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 65. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 66. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 67. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 68. I take a positive attitude toward myself.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 69. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 70. I certainly feel useless at times.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 71. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 72. At times I think I am no good at all.

### DISTRESS

For the next set of questions, the category of responses are:

- 1 = not often  
2 = sometime  
3 = frequently

not often	sometimes	frequently
-----1-----	-----2-----	-----3-----

- \_\_\_\_\_ 73. How often in general do you lack enthusiasm for doing  
anything?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 74. How often do you have a poor appetite?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 75. How often do you feel lonely?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 76. How often do you feel bored or have little interest in doing  
things.



- \_\_\_\_\_ 77. How often do you have trouble getting to sleep or staying asleep?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 78. How often do you cry easily or feel like crying?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 79. How often do you feel downhearted or blue?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 80. How often do you feel low in energy or slowed down?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 81. How often do you feel hopeless about the future?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 82. How often do you worry about things?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 83. How often do you feel weak all over?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 84. How often are you troubled by headaches?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 85. How often do you have difficulty keeping your balance when walking?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 86. How often are you troubled by your heart pounding or shortness of breath?

#### SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

87. What is your approximate annual income? \_\_\_\_\_  
 88. What is the highest degree you have received? \_\_\_\_\_  
 89. How many children do you have? \_\_\_\_\_  
 90. What are the ages and gender of your children? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 91. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_  
 92. What is your custody status? \_\_\_\_\_  
 93. What is your ethnic background? \_\_\_\_\_  
 94. What is your current profession? \_\_\_\_\_  
 95. When were you divorced? \_\_\_\_\_  
 96. When were you separated? \_\_\_\_\_  
 97. Is there a significant other in your life? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_  
 98. What is your religion? \_\_\_\_\_  
 99. What is the approximate distance in miles from your ex-spouse's home? \_\_\_\_\_  
 100. What was the length of your marriage? \_\_\_\_\_  
 101. What is your ex-spouse's approximate annual income? \_\_\_\_\_  
 102. What is your ex-spouse's occupation? \_\_\_\_\_  
 103. What is your ex-spouse's education level? \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your participation.

Would you like a copy of the results? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX E  
ADULT INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

## ADULT INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

## THE DIVORCED FAMILY

## Custody and visitation

1. Describe your custody arrangement that you have in detail?
2. What factors influenced you in making a decision about your custody arrangement?
3. Describe any conflict you and you ex had over custody?
4. Did you consult anyone on the question of custody?
5. Did you consult your children about custody?
6. What are the advantages of your custody arrangement?
7. What are the disadvantages?  
Joint custody:
  8. Why did you decide on joint custody?
  9. Where did you first hear of joint custody?
10. Did anyone try to talk you in or out of joint custody?
11. Have you every regretted the decision to have joint custody?  
Sole custody:
  12. What is your legal visitation schedule?
  13. What is the actual visitation schedule?
  14. Did you consult anyone on questions of visitation?
  15. How satisfied are you with your present visitation schedule?
  16. Would you rather your ex see the children more or less?
  17. Do the children enjoy the visits?

## Parent-Child Relationship

18. Do you have more, less, or the same contact with your children as you had during the marriage?
19. Do you feel closer, less close or same closeness with your children? Why is this the case?

## Coparenting Relationship

20. How do you and your ex make decisions about children?
21. How do you feel when you see your ex?
22. Do you speak to your ex when he/she comes to pick up the children?

## Family Functions

23. What kind of problems do you have with disciplining the children?
24. Is it easier or harder to discipline since the divorce?
25. Do the children try to play you and your ex off on each other?
26. Do you notice a change in the children's behavior after they return from their other parent?
27. What are the rules in each house?
28. Do the children get confused by the differences you have in rules?
29. If in joint custody: Has joint custody increased or decreased problems caused by the different parenting styles you and your ex have?

30. Do you do more, less or the same amount of chores as before the divorce?
31. Do you do things that are not traditional for your gender?
32. Do the children do more housework now?
33. Did you have to learn any new skills to use around the house?
34. If so, who taught you?
35. How do the children react to switching homes?
36. What are the characteristics of the two homes?
37. How similar are the home environments when considering the following: child rearing, discipline, daily routine, mealtime, bedtime, peers, degree of similarity in the physical environment?
38. Explain the mechanics of alternating homes?
39. Are your many roles a strain?
40. Do you feel overloaded with tasks?
41. If remarried: What roles have emerged for the stepparent?
42. If remarried: What is the quality of the remarriage?
43. Do you have more or less money than when you were married?
44. Is your money adequate to meet your needs?
  - 1- always
  - 2- often
  - 3- sometimes
  - 4- rarely
  - 5- never
45. Is money a worry?
  - 1- never
  - 2- rarely
  - 3- sometimes
  - 4- often
  - 5- always
46. Does your ex pay support?
47. Are payments reliable?
48. What money issues do you have?

### THE SOCIAL SYSTEM

#### Formal institutions

##### The legal system:

49. Did you ever go to court because of a conflict with your ex?
50. What extent did the legal system influence decisions on custody?
51. What was the role of your attorney?
52. Was there an attorney ad litem?
53. Have you been involved in any relitigation with you ex?
54. What degree did the legal system encourage you to determine your own custody arrangement?

##### Schools:

55. Does your ex go to school activities?
56. Is the school aware of your custody arrangement?
57. Have there been any problems related to the divorce when interacting with the school personnel?
58. Have school personnel been supportive?

59. Have you noticed any problems in the school policies that effects your family because of your custody arrangement or divorce?

Work:

60. Did you go to work for the first time after the divorce?  
61. Did you change your job because of your custody arrangement?  
62. What are your employment conditions?  
63. How rigid or flexible are your working hours?  
64. Does your workplace sponsor day care?  
65. Does your job have the potential of requiring relocation?  
66. Does your job require you to travel?

Church:

67. Do you receive emotional support from the church?  
68. Have you talked with the minister about your divorce and custody arrangement?

Mental Health System:

69. Did you seek therapy before, during, or after the divorce?  
70. If so, what type of therapy did you receive?  
71. Have you been involved in any support groups?

Informal support

72. Describe your support system you had before the divorce and after the divorce?  
73. How do you feel about accepting help from others?

Kin:

74. Are there extended family members that are helpful?  
75. Do kin view your custody situation as favorable?  
76. Do kin fuel problems with disagreements?  
77. Do you maintain contact with ex in-laws?

Friends:

78. Do you maintain contact with the same friends as before the divorce, and/or have you made new friends?  
80. Do you date?  
81. If so, how often?  
82. Do your children know about it?  
83. Do they meet your dates?  
84. How do they feel about your dating?

Child Self Image

The next four questions will be answered using the following:

- 1- never  
2- rarely  
3- sometimes  
4- often  
5- always

- 85. Does he/she lack self confidence?
- 86. Does he/she show sensitivity to teasing or criticism?
- 87. Does he/she feel good about self?
- 88. Does he/she need more reassurance than most children?

#### Drug/Alcohol Use

- 89. Was Drug or alcohol use in the marriage a factor in the decision to divorce?    Yes    or    no
- 90. If yes, get details on who and how much substance abuse took place in the marriage.

APPENDIX F  
CHILDREN'S INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

## CHILDREN'S INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

## Building Rapport

1. How old are you?
2. What grade are you in? or What daycare do you go to?
3. What do you like to do for fun?
4. Do you like school?
5. What is your favorite subject?
6. What kinds of activities do you do?

## The divorce

7. Why did your parents divorce?
8. Who told you about it?
9. Were you confused about the divorce?
10. Did you think they would get back together?
11. How did you feel about the divorce?
12. Did your parents ask you where you wanted to live?
13. When do you see your other parent? Is it enough time?
14. What do you do with your other parent?
15. Do you have chores at both houses?
16. Do you miss the other parent?
17. What do you do when you start to miss them?
18. What chores does each of your parents do?
19. Do mom and dad have different rules about bedtime, chores, and friends.  
If Joint custody, answer 20-29
20. What is it like living in two houses?
21. What are the problems?
22. Do you forget things at one house?
23. If so, then what happens?
24. Do you like both houses the same?
25. Is it confusing going back and forth between houses?
26. Is there anything nice about two houses?
27. Do you like it this way?
28. What do you like about having two homes?
29. What do you dislike about having two homes?
30. When your parents were married did they fight? How often?
31. Do your parents fight now?
32. Is it less, more or the same as when they were married?
33. Do they fight in front of you?
34. Does one parent say bad things about the other?
35. Is one parent stricter?
36. Do you spend as much time with your parents as you want?
37. Who helped you through the divorce?
38. Does one of your parents lean on you for support?
39. Did your grades go down?
40. How did the divorce affect you?



## Self Esteem

For the next statements, tell me if you agree or disagree.

41. I am happy with myself.
42. I have lots of friends.
43. I am not happy with myself.
44. I am good at schoolwork.
45. I like the way I look.
46. I worry about my schoolwork.
47. I like the way I'm leading my life.
48. I wish I looked different.
49. I don't have many friends.
50. I usually act the way I know I'm supposed to.

APPENDIX G  
CODINGS OF VARIABLES

## CODINGS OF VARIABLES

### Analysis of Variance

The dependent variable, custody was measured by number 92 on the child custody questionnaire. The coding assigned to joint custody was 0, and mother custody, 1.

The independent variable, time lapse from separation was measured by using item 96 on the child custody questionnaire, and was recoded 0 if parents were separated less than six months, 1 if parents were separated from six months to one year, 2 if parents were separated from one to two years, and 3 for parents who were separated at least two years.

The independent variable, child age was operationalized by asking the parent how old the target child was at the time of the interview. The ages were recoded into 1 for children aged four to eight, 2 for children aged nine to 10, and 3 for children aged 11 to 13, and 4 for children aged 14 to 15.

The gender of the child was operationalized by asking what gender the target child was, and was coded 0 for girls and 1 for boys.

### Multiple Regression Model

The dependent variables, overall child behavior, internalizing behavior, and externalizing behavior were operationalized by having one parent complete the child behavior checklist on the target child. The total, internalizing, and externalizing T scores were used.

The independent variable, parent education was operationalized by number 88 and 103 on the child custody questionnaire. The codings were 1 for some school, 2 for high school, 3 for some college, 4 for

bachelors degree, 5 for masters degree, 6 for J.D. or L.L.B., 7 for M.D., or D.D.S. and an 8 for a Ph.D. Then the two variables were added together to form the variable, parent education.

Gender of child was coded 0 for girls and 1 for boys.

Custody was coded 0 for joint custody and 1 for mother custody.

Parent stress was operationalized by creating a scale using items 73 to 86 on the child custody questionnaire and was coded 1 for not often, 2 for sometimes, and 3 for frequently.

Parent conflict was operationalized by creating a scale using items 11 through 14 on the child custody questionnaire and were coded 1 for never, 2 for rarely, 3 for sometimes, 4 for usually, and 5 for always.

Parent self esteem was operationalized by creating a scale using items 63 through 72 on the child custody questionnaire and were coded 1 for strongly agree, 2 for somewhat agree, 3 for not sure, 4 for somewhat disagree and 5 for strongly disagree. Items 65, 67, 70, 71, and 72 were recoded so 5 equals 1, and 4 equals 2. The variable was recoded 1 for high self esteem and 2 for low self esteem.

Parent income was operationalized by using items 87 and 101 of the child custody questionnaire. These items were coded 1 for no income, 2 for income less than \$19,000, 3 for income between \$20,000 and \$34,000, 4 for income between \$35,000 and \$49,000, 5 for income between \$50,000 and \$74,000, 6 for income between \$75,000 and \$99,000, 7 for income between \$100,000 and \$149,000, and 8 for income above \$150,000. Then the two income variables were added together to form the parent income variable.

### Probit Model

The dependent variable, custody was coded 0 for girls, and 1 for boys.

Parental use of drugs or alcohol as a factor in parents getting a divorce was operationalized by item number 89 on the adult interview questionnaire and was coded 0 for yes, and 1 for no.

Parent income was coded 1 for no income, 2 for income less than \$19,000, 3 for income between \$20,000 and \$34,000, 4 for income between \$35,000 and \$49,000, 5 for income between \$50,000 and \$74,000, 6 for income between \$75,000 and \$99,000, 7 for income between \$100,000 and \$149,000, and 8 for income above \$150,000. Then the two income variables were added together to form the parent income variable.

Parent education was coded 1 for some school, 2 for high school, 3 for some college, 4 for bachelors degree, 5 for masters degree, 6 for J.D. or L.L.B., 7 for M.D., or D.D.S. and an 8 for a Ph.D. Then the two variables were added together to form the variable, parent education.

Parent conflict was coded 1 for never, 2 for rarely, 3 for sometimes, 4 for usually, and 5 for always.

Proximity of distance between parental homes was operationalized by item number 99 of the child custody questionnaire and was recoded 1 for parents living under 15 miles from one another, 2 for 20 to 35 miles, 3 for 36 to 199 miles, 4 for 200 to 499 miles, 5 for 499 to 999 miles, and 6 for 1000 to 3000 miles between parental homes.

Parental anger was operationalized by creating a scale using items 29 through 36 on the child custody questionnaire and was coded using 1 for never, 2 for rarely, 3 for sometimes, 4 for usually, and 5 for

always.

Attitude toward ex-spouse as a parent was operationalized by creating a scale using items 41 to 44 on the child custody questionnaire. Items 43 and 44 were recoded 5 equals 1, and 4 equals 2. The codings used were 1 for never, 2 for rarely, 3 for sometimes, 4 for usually, and 5 for always.

#### T-Test

The dependent variable for all T-tests conducted was custody. The codings used were 0 for joint custody and 1 for mother custody.

Coparenting interaction was operationalized by creating a scale using items number one through 10 on the child custody questionnaire. The codings were 1 for never, 2 for rarely, 3 for sometimes, 4 for usually, and 5 for always.

Parental support was operationalized by creating a scale using items 15 through 20 on the child custody questionnaire. The codings were 1 for never, 2 for rarely, 3 for sometimes, 4 for usually, and 5 for always.

Involvement with children was operationalized by creating a scale using items 49 through 62. The codings were 1 for not at all, 2 for a little, 3 for somewhat, 4 for much, and 5 for very much.

Child self esteem was operationalized by creating a scale using items 85 to 88 in the adult interview schedule. Item number 87 was recoded 5 equals 1, and 4 equals 2. The items were coded 1 for never, 2 for rarely, 3 for sometimes, 4 for often, and 5 for always.

APPENDIX H  
CORRELATION MATRICES

## CORRELATION MATRICES

## Multiple Regression Model

Dependent Variable = Behavioral Adjustment (CBCLT)

	CBCLT	INCOME	STRESS	CONFLICT	GENDER CHILD	CUSTODY	SELF ESTEEM	DEGREE
CBCLT	1.000	.0610	-.0121	.2306	.1463	.1903	.1873	-.1430
INCOME	.0610	1.000	-.0274	-.1146	-.0703	-.3833	-.1168	.4950
STRESS	-.0121	-.0274	1.000	.0788	-.2530	.000	.4501	-.0584
CONFLICT	.2306	-.1146	.0788	1.000	.0920	.0551	.000	-.2525
GENDER CHILD	.1463	-.0703	-.2530	.0920	1.000	.000	-.2656	-.0136
CUSTODY	.1903	-.3833	.000	.0551	.000	1.000	-.0580	-.1533
SELF ESTEEM	.1873	-.1168	.4501	.000	-.2656	-.0580	1.000	-.0872
EDUCATION	-.1430	.4950	-.0584	-.2525	-.0136	-.1533	-.0872	1.000

Dependent Variable = Internalized Behavior (INTT)

	INTT	INCOME	STRESS	CONFLICT	GENDER CHILD	CUSTODY	SELF ESTEEM	DEGREE
INTT	1.000	.2632	.0945	.3038	.0762	.0421	.2929	-.0585
INCOME	.2632	1.000	-.0274	-.1146	-.0703	-.3833	-.1168	.4950
STRESS	-.0945	-.0274	1.000	.0788	-.2530	.000	.4501	-.0584
CONFLICT	.3038	-.1146	.0788	1.000	.0920	.0551	.000	-.2525
GENDER CHILD	.0762	-.0703	-.2530	.0920	1.000	.000	-.2656	-.0136
CUSTODY	.0421	-.3833	.000	.0551	.000	1.000	-.0580	-.1533
SELF ESTEEM	.2929	-.1168	.4501	.000	-.2656	-.0580	1.000	-.0872
EDUCATION	-.0585	.4950	-.0584	-.2525	-.0136	-.1533	-.0872	1.000



## Dependent Variable = Externalized Behavior

	EXTT	INCOME	STRESS	CONFLICT	GENDER CHILD	CUSTODY	SELF ESTEEM	DEGREE
EXTT	1.000	-.1978	-.0207	.1315	.2716	.3780	.0106	-.2516
INCOME	-.1978	1.000	-.0274	-.1146	-.0703	-.3833	-.1168	.4950
STRESS	-.0207	-.0274	1.000	.0788	-.2530	.000	.4501	-.0584
CONFLICT	.1315	-.1146	.0788	1.000	.0920	.0551	.000	-.2525
GENDER CHILD	.2716	-.0703	-.2530	.0920	1.000	.000	-.2656	-.0136
CUSTODY	.3780	-.3833	.000	.0551	.000	1.000	-.0580	-.1533
SELF ESTEEM	.0106	-.1168	.4501	.000	-.2656	-.0580	1.000	-.0872
EDUCATION	-.2516	.4950	-.0584	-.2525	-.0136	-.1533	-.0872	1.000

## Probit Model Correlation Matrix

	Custody	Drug/Alcohol	Income	Education	Conflict	Distance	Anger	Attitude To Ex-spouse as Parent
Custody	1.000	-.422	-.383	-.153	.055	.374	.058	-.379
Drug/alcohol	-.422	1.000	.339	.407	.000	-.173	-.174	.385
Income	-.383	.339	1.000	.495	-.115	-.356	.124	.272
Education	-.153	.407	.495	1.000	-.252	-.128	-.091	.290
Conflict	.055	.000	-.115	-.252	1.000	.098	.112	-.313
Distance	.374	-.173	-.356	-.128	.098	1.000	.080	-.123
Anger	.058	-.174	.124	-.091	.112	.080	1.000	-.141
Attitude to Ex-spouse as parent	-.379	.385	.272	.290	-.313	-.123	-.141	1.000

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