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PERSONALITY FUNCTIONING IN LATENCY AGED CHILDREN PRIOR TO PARENTAL DIVORCE

The University of Oklahoma PH.D. 1979

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THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

PERSONALITY FUNCTIONING IN LATENCY AGED CHILDREN PRIOR TO PARENTAL DIVORCE

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

ROY MELVIN ISENBERG

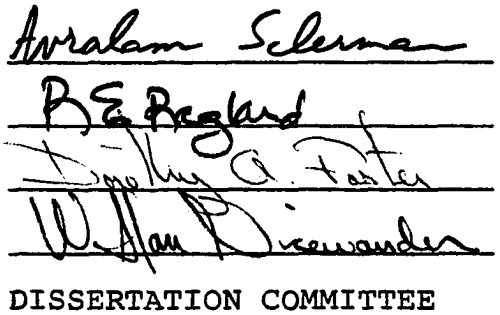
Norman, Oklahoma

1979

PERSONALITY FUNCTIONING IN LATENCY AGED

CHILDREN PRIOR TO PARENTAL DIVORCE

APPROVED BY:



DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

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Abstract

This study assessed the personality adjustment of children prior to the granting of a parental divorce. Nine early latency children (EL), ages 7 and 8, and nine later latency children (LL), ages 9 and 10, from divorcing homes (DG) were compared with twelve EL and twelve LL children who remained in intact homes (IHG). Each child was administered Rorschach's Test in order to assess his or her personality functioning. Fourteen of Beck's (1961) formal Rorschach categories were employed as dependent measures (R, W%, D%, Dd%, L, F+%, M, FC, CF+C, SumC, Y, A%, H% and P%). In addition, each child's complete protocol was reviewed and assigned an overall personality adjustment rating. No significant differences between the DG and IHG children were found on any of the 15 personality measures. LL children produced significantly more CF+C responses ($p<.005$) and higher SumC totals ($p<.009$) than EL children. No other significant age effects were apparent. Methodological problems were delineated and suggestions for alternate ways of inspecting the data were given. It was concluded that the personality functioning in latency children who are facing an impending parental divorce is no different than the personality functioning in latency children remaining in intact homes as measured on the formal Rorschach Test categories.

Personality Functioning in Latency Aged Children Prior to Parental Divorce

The purpose of this study was to assess the personality adjustment of latency aged children following the filing of a divorce petition by one of their parents. This is the earliest period in a long divorce adjustment process for children. Understanding how children react at this time could benefit attorneys, domestic relations courts, family and child counselors, and most importantly, the parents and children involved.

The early investigative work in the area of children and divorce included children from all kinds of broken homes. The children of divorce were grouped with children who had lost a parent due to death, desertion, military service and imprisonment (e.g., Banister & Ravden, 1944, 1945; Burchinal, 1964; Gay & Tonge, 1967; Greer, 1964, 1966; Nye, 1957; Perry & Pfuhl, 1963; Risen, 1939; and Wardle, 1961). But the adjustment of a child to the loss of a parent due to different circumstances has been demonstrated to have differential effects on the child (Earle & Earle, 1961; Felner, Stolberg & Cowen, 1975; Robinson & Williams, 1973; Russell, 1957; Santrock, 1972; and Santrock & Wohlford, 1970) and therefore divorce adjustment must be inspected separately.

Two findings from these early studies are most important in terms of their general outcomes. First, Landis' (Note 1) conclusion that children from broken homes adjust to life better than children remaining in unhappy unbroken homes has

not been disputed. In fact, support for his finding has grown and is applicable to families broken by divorce (Hetherington, Note 2; Kelly & Berg, 1978; Rosen, 1977; and Zill, Note 3). Second, children from divorced and broken homes are characterized throughout the literature as being aggressive and delinquent, as acting-out, being anti-social, having conduct disorders, and/or displaying psychopathic tendencies (e.g., Banister & Ravden, 1944; Bowlby, 1944; Felner et al., 1975; Glueck & Glueck, 1950, 1962; Greer, 1964; Gregory, 1966; and Wardle, 1961). These children tend to come to the attention of school officials, the legal authorities and social and psychological community agencies more frequently than children who remain in intact homes.

Recent writings have addressed the issue of children's adjustment to divorce in a more singular manner. However, the characteristics, reactions and descriptions that have been attributed to these children in these popular writings, clinical impressions, behavioral observations, and retrospective data collections have been extensive and often inconsistent. The inspection of recent scientific inquiries suggests that there are some identifiable and reliable trends concerning the adjustment of these children. The reactions might be captured by the following categories, which are not mutually exclusive and frequently contain related characteristics. The categories contain specific examples of the feelings and behaviors reported by various researchers (Biller, 1974; Gardner, 1977; Gonso, 1977; Hetherington, Note 2; Hetherington, Cox & Cox

Note 4, Note 5, 1979; Kelly & Berg, 1978; Kelly & Wallerstein, 1976; McDermott, 1968; Robinson & Williams, 1973; Sugar, 1970; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1975, 1976; and Zill, Note 3). Behavior problems (delinquency, anti-social behavior, negative behaviors, unmanageableness, quarrelsome, bossiness, scolding behaviors, tantrums, opposition, demandingness, rebelliousness and restlessness) and demonstrations of aggression (release of aggressive and destructive feelings, hostility, anger, blaming others, desire for retaliation and loss of self control) are the most frequently reported behaviors along with depressive affects (sadness, suffering, crying, sulking, grief, mourning, unhappiness, loss, loneliness, whininess and moodiness). Many children display withdrawal tendencies (self absorption and preoccupation, personality constriction, distancing and over compliant behavior) as well as seeming lost, detached or apathetic (wandering aimlessly, bored, empty, loss of belonging, less task involved and feelings of rejection, abandonment, isolation and loneliness). Some are feeling ineffectual, helpless and powerless to influence their environment. Many are anxious (fearful, frightened, worried, panicky, shocked and unable to master the anxiety) and display hyperactivity (impulsive, impatient, irritable, restless, poorly attentive, less self controlling and require immediate gratification). One of three things tends to happen in terms of maturity: regression, a pseudo-mature approach to living or a precocious thrust into adulthood. They engage in more fantasy activity than children from

intact homes but it is constricted (narrower, less imaginative play). The most common defenses employed by these children are regression, denial and reversal of angry and depressive feelings. Cognitively and perceptually there is confusion and disorganization in the younger children which is less evident in the older ones. The self concept of the children suffer (shaken sense of identity, low self esteem, dependency, insecurity, decreased assertiveness and feelings of humiliation). Certain aspects of their superego functioning seem to be heightened by the family dissolutionment (shame and guilt) while other aspects suffer (weakening of superego formation and less well integrated standards of morality). Finally, interpersonal relationships seem to deteriorate or become more troublesome (distancing; superficial relationships; deteriorated peer relations; poor relations with one or both parents; play more concerned with objects than human imagery; provoked rejections and hurts; increased demandingness; demands for affection, approval, attention and physical contact; show little affection and act less affectionate; and increased dependency).

Only two studies have investigated the adjustment of latency aged children to the pre-divorce separation period. Gonso's (1977) findings are limited in terms of personality adjustment. She noted that the children she tested displayed behavior problems and were more unmanageable than a control group of intact home children. Furthermore, her divorce group children appeared more withdrawn than the controls.

Wallerstein and Kelly (1976) and Kelly and Wallerstein (1976) conducted a pioneering study in this area. Their results were based on extensive clinical observation of divorcing children only. They did not distinguish between the reactions which occurred prior to the divorce being granted and those which occurred in the first few months following the divorce. That was, in part, due to their belief that the legal divorce was not important to the child and did not significantly impact or alter the adjusting process (Wallerstein, Note 6). They reported seeing anger, depression, grief, loss, emptiness and feelings of rejection in seven to ten year old children near the time of divorce. Age was a significant factor among the latency aged children, with younger children (seven and eight year olds) displaying different reactions to the parental divorce than the older children (nine and ten year olds).

In general, the early latency children were dominated and overwhelmed by feelings of sadness, grief, fear, deprivation, loss and anger. Their pain was intense and resulted in immobilization. Their sadness was pervasive. And their whole world was shaken, every sphere and aspect of their lives. The later latency children were better able to temper the impact of divorce because, with age, more psychologically sophisticated systems were available to them. Wallerstein and Kelly reported a conscious layering effect in these older latency children, muting and encapsulating the suffering, so that their developmental progress continued.

More specifically, the older group displayed more aggression and delinquent acts than the younger ones. The younger children had more difficulty expressing their anger for fear of reprisals and because they felt less self-reliant. The older children's anger was conscious and intense, more well organized and object-related. The early latency children were seen as sad and suffering while the later latency children were more lonely. The young ones spent hours in fantasies of being deprived while the older ones did not. Some older children became more compliant with adult authority demands and withdrew more frequently, while younger ones became inattentive, restless and preoccupied. The early latency group had feelings of abandonment while the older ones felt isolated. The later latency children felt helpless and powerless to alter their environment; and had more difficulties with their interpersonal relationships than did the younger ones. While the early latency children were overwhelmed by the family dissolution, resulting in internal disorganization and confusion, the later latency children perceived the realities of what was happening soberly and clearly. The older children were also able to muster more control over their apprehensive feelings. They were seen as anxious, fearful and worried while the younger children appeared panicky and frightened. Some of the later latency children displayed a precocious thrust into adulthood not seen in the seven and eight year olds. A shaken self concept and weakening of superego functioning and superego formation

seemed to be more characteristic of the older children, in which these psychological systems had more fully developed. The older children also experienced feelings of shame about their family situation. Those feelings were not present at all in the early latency children.

Rorschach's Test has been employed as a research instrument applied to children, over the course of many years and across various kinds of studies (e.g., Ames, 1966; Beck, 1931; Colm, 1948; D'Heurle, Mellinger & Haggard, 1959; Greenstadt, 1963; Haworth, 1964; Meltzer, 1935; Neuhaus, 1954; Piotrowski, 1945; Schubert, 1968; Swift, 1945; and Winston, 1958). Rorschach protocols may be viewed in a variety of ways. Although the preferred manner of inspecting Rorschach protocols for research purposes is to look at clusters of formal Rorschach scoring variables especially designed to tap certain personality characteristics (Weiner, 1960), no such scales have been validated on children. It is presumptuous to apply those specially derived adult scales (e.g., Lerner, 1975) to children when the norms for children's Rorschach responses differ from those of adults (Ames, Metraux, Rodell & Walker, 1974; Beck, Beck, Levitt & Molish, 1961; Ford, 1946; and Levitt & Truumaa, 1972). Researchers continue to compare groups of subjects on the basis of their outcomes on the formal Rorschach scoring variables (Basit, 1972; Beck, 1965; Boyer, Boyce, Brawer, Kawai & Klopfer, 1964; Exner, Wylie, Leura & Parrill, 1977; Murstein, 1972; Stavrianos, 1971; and Wagner & Daybney, 1976).

The formal Rorschach scoring variables could provide important quantitative information about the adjustment of children to divorce. Based on the work of Wallerstein and Kelly (1976; and Kelly & Wallerstein, 1976), it might be anticipated, for example, that ego strength or self concept (as measured by F% or Lambda) might be lower for a group of children whose parents are divorcing than it would be for a group of children from intact homes. Furthermore, Lambda might be the lowest for a group of later latency divorcing children when compared to a group of early latency divorcing children and intact home children of the same age. Color and shading determined responses (C, CF, FC, Y, YF, FY) might be expected to appear more frequently in the protocols of divorcing children when compared with those of children remaining in intact homes because they are described as more aggressive, impulsive, anxious and dysphoric. The nature of the affective responses might be different due to age. Younger children might be expected to produce responses in which their affect dominates their ego processes (CF, YF), while it may be anticipated that the older children might demonstrate ego domination of their affect (FC, FY). Likewise, a variety of other personality characteristics may be assessed through the Rorschach; perception, depression, maturity, fantasy, impulsivity and interpersonal relations (Ames et al., 1974; Beck et al., 1961; Halpern, 1953; Levitt & Truumaa, 1972; etc.).

Using Rorschach's Test, specific personality characteristics of early and later latency children, undergoing parental divorce, could be compared to those of children remaining in intact homes; and differences in the manner in which younger and older latency aged children adjusted to divorce could be assessed.

Method

Subjects. Forty-two boys and girls between the ages of seven and ten participated in the study. Eighteen children came from a family in which at least one parent had filed a petition in district court for divorce but the divorce decree had not been granted. The other group of twenty-four children came from "intact" families.

The divorce group (DG) comprised two 7 year old males, two 7 year old females, three 8 year old males, two 8 year old females, four 9 year old males, four 9 year old females and one 10 year old female. Only children whose natural parents were divorcing for the first time were included. In two instances, two children from the same family were included, so the 18 DG children represent 16 families. Only children whose parents had never been apart for more than four months during the child's lifetime and had been separated less than four months prior to the filing were tested. Any child with a history of a particularly unusual childhood (medically, emotionally, educationally or socially) was dropped from the sample.

The intact home group (IHG) of children included three 7 year old males, three 7 year old females, three 8 year old males, three 8 year old females, three 9 year old males, four 9 year old females, three 10 year old males and two 10 year old females. These children were living with both biological parents and had never been separated from either or both parents for more than four months during their lifetimes. None had histories of unusual childhood problems. These 24 IHG children came from 21 families.

The early latency aged group of children (7 and 8 year olds) contained 9 DG children and 12 IHG children and the later latency aged children (9 and 10 year olds) were represented by 9 DG children and 12 IHG children. Forty-one of the children were Caucasian and one DG female was a Native American. Additional demographic data on the 37 families can be found in Table 1. No significant differences were found between the two groups of early latency families or the two groups of later latency families for any family characteristic when multivariate t-tests were performed.

Insert Table 1 about here

Instruments. Each child was administered in order, the Children's Manifest Anxiety Scale, an abbreviated form of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children - Revised Edition (WISC-R), and Rorschach's Test. This report is concerned almost solely with the Rorschach Test.

One of the reasons for administering the WISC-R was to assure that none of the participants had an intellectual quotient below 80, since low intellectual ability increases and/or decreases the propensity for certain kinds of responding on the Rorschach instrument (Halpern, 1953). The short form WISC-R technique employed in this study included the administration of the Arithmetic, Vocabulary, Comprehension, Picture Arrangement and Block Design subtests. A deviation quotient was calculated with these five subtests in accordance with the procedure outlined by Sattler (1974). The deviation quotient approximates the full scale intelligence quotient normally derived from the administration of 10 subtests. The validity coefficient between this particular short form subtest combination and the complete test is high, r=.958 (Sattler, 1974). No child produced a deviation quotient lower than 80. The deviation quotients ranged from a low of 86 to a high of 130.

The Rorschach Test was administered by the principle researcher only, in the manner recommended by Halpern (1953). The responses to the 10 inkblots were tape-recorded and then transcribed in order to achieve a maximum of accuracy. The scoring of the protocols was conducted in accordance with the system established by Beck (Beck et al., 1961). One DG child and one IHG child were dropped from the study because they gave less than six responses to the inkblots. The number of responses for those included ranged from a low of 10 to a high of 52.

Procedure. The DG children were obtained through the cooperation of the local district court. As divorce petitions were filed with the court, those cases involving minor children between the ages of seven and ten were noted. In the state of Oklahoma, the address and telephone number of the plaintiff and defendant in a divorce action are not required on the divorce petition. Therefore, the attorney(s) involved in each case were contacted in order to obtain a means by which to contact their client(s). The parent(s) were given a detailed explanation of the study and asked for permission to test and interview their child(children).

The IHG children were solicited through the local public school system. Families with children between seven and ten years of age were randomly selected from elementary school enrollment forms. The parents were contacted, provided an explanation and asked for permission to test their child(children).

The testing took approximately two hours. The sessions were usually conducted in the child's home, but occasionally they were held at the child's school, a local community service agency or in the researcher's home. A parent was permitted to stay with the child during the testing if both so desired. In most instances, parents were present for at least a portion of the session. Every parent was offered an interpretation of the data collected from their child.

After the Rorschach's were transcribed and scored by the examiner, they were sent to a Rorschach expert for an

independent scoring check. This clinical psychologist was trained by Beck and had administered hundreds of Rorschachs. The checking of the scoring of each protocol was done blindly. When disagreements about scoring occurred, a third Rorschacher was consulted for a decisive opinion.

Finally, the corrected Rorschach protocols were submitted to another Rorschach expert for a general assessment of the child's personality functioning (described below). This developmental psychologist had administered several thousand Rorschach Tests. Her general rating of each protocol did take into account the age and sex of the child. However, she was not aware of the marital status of the child's family.

Design. This study looked at the Rorschach outcomes in terms of the marital status of the family (divorcing vs. intact) and the age of the children (early latency vs. later latency).

Each child, through his or her Rorschach protocol, was given an overall personality adjustment rating. The overall rating included an inspection of the following areas of personality functioning: perception, intelligence, thought processes, emotional states, defenses, fantasy activity, interpersonal relationships and personal dynamics. Evaluation was made with regard for the age-appropriate developmental expectencies for each child. Each child's protocol was rated on a four point scale. A score of +2 signified a very adjusted child; a score of +1 signified an adjusted

child; a score of -1 suggested a maladjusted child; and a score of -2 pointed to a very maladjusted child. This general assessment, based on the child's total Rorschach productivity, permitted a general comparison between children in divorcing families and those remaining in intact homes. It also allowed an appraisal of the relationship between each formal Rorschach variable and the overall adjustment of the children in either marital status group.

Along with the overall rating, 14 formal Rorschach scoring categories were used as dependent measures: R, W%, D%, Dd%, Lambda(L), F+%, M, FC, CF+C, SumC, Y, A%, H% and P%. These 14 variables were selected because they included the basic Rorschach scales outlined by Ogdon (1977). This list also included those variables selected by a group of Rorschach experts as offering the most discriminable information in terms of diagnostic outcome (Potkay, 1971).

Results

A multivariate analysis of variance technique (MANOVA) was employed to analyze the Rorschach data. The 14 Rorschach variables could not be analyzed in one group because of the small cell sizes. Therefore two sets of Rorschach measures were created with the overall adjustment rating assigned to each set; Set I = overall rating, R, W%, F+%, M, SumC, A% and P%; and Set II = overall rating, D%, Dd%, CF+C, FC, Y, L, and H%. This variable arrangement resulted in two MANOVAs, each one a 2 x 2 factorial with eight dependent variables. It

allowed the testing of marital status, age and their interactive effects across the Rorschach variables.

Insert Table 2 about here

Table 2 displays the means and standard deviations for the 15 variables. Neither of the MANOVA tests performed on the two sets of variables resulted in a significant outcome for marital status (Set I = $p<.26$, Set II = $p<.88$), age (Set I = $p<.20$, Set II = $p<.16$) or their interaction (Set I = $p<.73$, Set II = $p<.25$). ANOVAs conducted on the 15 variables showed no significant marital status or interaction effects. Later latency children did produce significantly more CF+C responses than did the early latency children, $F(1,38)=9.12$, $p<.005$. And relatedly, later latency children had significantly higher SumC outcomes than did the early latency groups, $F(1,38)=7.47$, $p<.009$. Individual comparisons indicated that the later latency DG children displayed significantly greater amounts of the livelier affects than did the early latency DG children; $t(16)=2.75$, $p<.02$ for CF+C and $t(16)=2.21$, $p<.05$ for SumC. These differences did not occur to the same extent between the early and later latency IHG children even though a similar tendency was very strong; $t(22)=1.72$, $p<.10$ for CF+C and $t(22)=1.80$, $p<.10$ for SumC. Age was not a significant factor on the other 13 Rorschach variables.

Discussion

The children in this study who were living in homes where a divorce was impending appeared to be no different, characteristically, than children remaining in intact homes based on the outcomes of the 15 Rorschach variables. A quick inspection of 21 additional formal Rorschach variables on the same protocols were made. Again, no significant differences attributable to the marital status of the family were found. These results differ considerably from both Wallerstein and Kelly (1976) and Kelly and Wallerstein (1976), who did not compare divorce children to a group of normal children; and Hetherington, Cox and Cox (Note 4, Note 5, 1979) who did use a control group. There have been some studies which indicated that there were no differences between divorcing children and intact home children. For example, Raschke and Raschke (1979) reported no significant differences between a group of intact home children and children of divorcing parents on the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale. They contend that marital separation of parents does not in itself presuppose negative consequences for children, but that factors other than the family structure are correlated with the adjustment of children.

Gonso (1977), Hetherington, Cox and Cox (Note 4) and Kelly and Wallerstein (1976) have certainly seen some negative trends in children of divorce. In conducting this research, it was quite evident that most of the DG children

were having difficulty and were affected by the actions of their parents. We noticed that during the actual testing session, the DG children appeared much like the IHG children. Only when the children began discussing their family situations did we really feel the distress that they were enduring. We expected to see intense anxiety in these children near the time of parental separation. We actually saw more depression than anxiousness, leading us to believe that the initial anxiety is short-lived and the onset of sadness occurs quickly. The impact of the family dissolutionment seemed to be reserved, detached, isolated, secluded or encapsulated by these children so that it only appeared when they were directly confronted by it. Perhaps it was the difference of structured and unstructured situations. Given tasks to perform, they were better able to control their thoughts and affects. In an unstructured situation all the vicissitudes of an unstable home life became apparent. These anxious, sad, lonely and angry feelings did not appear on the Rorschach protocols as they did in these children's conversations and behaviors. This leads us to believe that parental separation prior to a divorce does not have nearly as dramatic or pervasive an impact on latency children as has been reported.

There was some bias in both the DG and IHG group sampling. Attorneys screened families in the process of referring them to us so we did not attain a random sampling of divorce families. Many attorneys were totally

uncooperative so none of their clients participated. The divorcing parents who agreed to allow their children to participate were often, it seemed, engaged in divorces which were not vigorously contested or conflict ridden. These parents may have represented a special few who were interested and willing to take on this added obligation at a time that is normally very stressful for parents.

The intact home children often seemed to come from homes in which a parent was concerned about them. Few of these parents declined the feedback session and several seemed aware that they were being offered a free psycho-diagnostic evaluation. Finally, when we compared the performance of both the DG and IHG children to the norms which have been established for children's Rorschachs (e.g., Ames et al., 1974; Beck et al., 1961; Ford, 1946; Ledwith, 1959; Levitt & Truumaa, 1972; and Setze, Setze, Baldwin, Doyle & Kobler, 1957), we found them both equally deviant from the expectencies. For example, the average number of shading responses (Y) given by the four groups in the study ranged from 2.0 to 3.5. The norms for 7 to 10 year old children range from 0.6 to 0.8 shading responses per protocol, so all four groups exceeded the anticipated shading productivity. Likewise, the number of responses involving the use of the whole blot (W%), rare details (Dd%), human movement (M) and human percepts (H%) was at variance with the norms.

We thought that gender may have confounded the results since boys have been reported to be more pervasively affected

by parental divorce than girls (Hetherington, Cox & Cox, Note 4). The nine DG girls in the sample could have diminished more dramatic adjustment deviances present in the nine boys. A computation of *t*-tests on the 15 Rorschach variables, collapsing across age, did not support that hypothesis. There were no significant differences between DG children due to gender.

While several intervening variables were controlled in the study, others were not. For example, the extent of family disharmony prior to and during the separation period was not considered. Nor was the availability or extent of support systems for the child outside the nuclear family noted. The numerous potential confounding variables which could have affected the outcomes here have been discussed at length by other researchers (e.g., Gregory, 1966).

The results on the color determined responses (CF+C and SumC) support the developmental notion that nine and ten year old children generally have not developed ego control over their affects. More importantly, the results lend credence to Wallerstein and Kelly's (1976) observation that later latency children of divorcing parents express their vibrant feelings more readily than do the early latency children. Early and later latency children remaining in intact homes display a similar pattern, but to a lesser extent.

These Rorschach protocols may be inspected in numerous other ways. For example, they may be scrutinized for clustering effects and content analysis. One nine year old DG

boy perceived "a germ splitting" on Card V; a card often referred to as the self concept card. On Card I another child of divorcing parents saw two people trying to pull apart, but stuck together. The two portions of the blot referred to by this child have been identified by Halpern (1953) as representations of parental figures for some children viewing it. Those kinds of responses were not seen in IHG children's protocols. Percepts of this nature offer important insights into the child's view of the world and himself/herself at the time of divorce which are not tapped by the formal categories. Further inspection of these protocols may produce some different and more insightful findings.

There is a lot being written about the detrimental effects of divorce on children. It seems to us that the verdict is still out on the extent and type of personality adjustment children make at the time of divorce. We need quantitatively measured, controlled, longitudinal studies with larger and more representative samples to determine whether divorce itself is the source of problems for children and the precipitator of later adjustment difficulties or what factors contribute to the difficulties. Some factors worth exploring might be the circumstances surrounding the actual separation, whether the husband or wife sought the divorce, parental living arrangements, visitation by the temporary non-custodial parent, wife's work experience, number of

siblings and their birth order, instructions given the children by the parents concerning the divorce, and so on.

If we place considerable weight on the methodological problems in this study, which are almost inherent in this type of research, we cannot have confidence in the results. We believe that the outcomes are useful. The problems do not invalidate the results, just restrict their generalizability. We conclude that the results achieved here lend support to those who contend that divorce is not necessarily detrimental to children, and that it is certain contingencies in the divorcing process that are responsible for consequent problems.

For the practitioner in the field, these findings have important implications. At this time in the divorce process children do not yet demonstrate any particular change in their personality functioning. If changes occur, they come later or gradually over time. There are immediate changes in behavior and affects which do not appear characteristically. These children can and should be dealt with like any other child who is experiencing transitory or situational stress. Most of the DG children welcomed, with various degrees of anxiety, the opportunity to talk with and hear from someone outside their immediate family about divorce. But they were unlikely to ask for this, and more inclined to isolate their feelings.

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Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of Demographic Data by Marital Status and Age

Characteristic		Divorce Group		Intact Home	
		Age 7 and 8	Age 9 and 10	Age 7 and 8	Age 9 and 10
Number of children in each group		9	9	12	12
Average age of these children (years & months)	Mean	7-11	9-08	8-00	9-11
	S.D.	7.8	6.2	7.4	7.3
Annual family income	Mean	$19,600	$22,700	$21,900	$22,000
	S.D.	7,000	9,300	10,300	6,500
Age of husband	Mean	30.8	34.9	31.7	34.6
	S.D.	2.7	5.1	3.4	4.7
Age of wife	Mean	28.1	33.2	30.5	32.3
	S.D.	3.3	4.1	3.0	3.1
Number of years of education - husband	Mean	13.2	14.5	14.7	14.1
	S.D.	3.8	4.8	2.3	2.1
Number of years of education - wife	Mean	12.4	13.4	13.2	12.8
	S.D.	3.6	3.7	1.7	1.3
Number of years married	Mean	10.9	12.4	11.1	13.2
	S.D.	2.5	2.4	3.0	2.9
Length of time parents were separated prior to testing (in months)	Mean	1.4	0.9		
	S.D.	1.1	0.6		

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations of Rorschach Variables by Marital Status and Age

			Divorce Group		Intact Home Group	
	Variable		Early Latency	Later Latency	Early Latency	Later Latency
Set I	Overall Rating	Mean	-0.44	-0.67	-0.67	-0.25
		S.D.	1.13	1.00	0.78	1.36
	R	Mean	20.00	19.78	25.33	23.08
		S.D.	6.22	6.67	11.04	11.46
	W%	Mean	22.78	29.56	26.00	32.00
		S.D.	11.43	14.25	26.41	7.65
	F+%	Mean	64.44	67.44	69.00	65.83
		S.D.	14.06	10.28	16.52	15.95
	M	Mean	1.67	2.89	3.33	3.50
		S.D.	1.80	2.26	2.23	2.24
	SumC[a]	Mean	1.00	3.28[b]	1.33	3.29
		S.D.	1.12	2.91	1.09	3.62
	A%	Mean	56.67	53.00	53.58	49.92
		S.D.	11.69	12.57	12.46	8.93
	P%	Mean	23.89	22.33	20.33	22.08
		S.D.	8.34	8.23	11.02	12.21
Set II	D%	Mean	57.89	51.67	50.92	49.42
		S.D.	14.30	21.01	19.35	12.77
	Dd%	Mean	19.22	18.78	23.17	18.58
		S.D.	13.64	11.66	15.31	7.40
	CF+C[c]	Mean	0.44	2.67[d]	0.92	2.33
		S.D.	0.73	2.34	0.90	2.67
	FC	Mean	1.11	0.67	0.75	1.50
		S.D.	1.27	1.00	0.87	1.73
	Y	Mean	2.11	2.00	2.08	3.50
		S.D.	1.17	1.41	1.31	4.42
	L	Mean	6.27	2.51	2.99	2.20
		S.D.	7.06	2.35	2.76	2.90
	H%	Mean	18.33	25.22	21.42	19.25
		S.D.	9.41	14.29	9.26	7.62

[a]Early latency vs. later latency, $F(1,38)=7.47$, $p<.009$.

[b]Early latency DG vs. later latency DG, $t(16)=2.21$, $p<.05$.

[c]Early latency vs. later latency, $F(1,38)=9.12$, $p<.005$.

[d]Early latency DG vs. later latency DG, $t(16)=2.75$, $p<.02$.

APPENDIX A

PROSPECTUS

Personality Functioning in Latency Aged Children at the Time of Parental Divorce

In 1976, more than one million children in the United States below the age of 18 were affected by the divorce of their parents (U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1976). According to recent statistics, the rate of divorce continues to accelerate at an ever increasing pace. Over two million people in the United States divorced and four million married in 1976 (U.S. Public Health Service, 1976). In the same year approximately 5.0 divorces occurred per one thousand population, while there were only 0.5 divorces per one thousand population around the turn of the century (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1976). Approximately two-thirds of those marriages that end in divorce have minor children at issue; and it is estimated that about one out of six children under the age of 18 lives in a single parent home (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1974). Local public school administrators indicate that the problem of broken families is even more serious than the statistics indicate. Many report having a student population in which at least 50% of their students are living in broken homes. It is becoming unusual, they report, to find children living in an intact home with both natural parents (Personal Communication from Moore and Norman, Oklahoma, Public School Administrators, 1978).

With this burgeoning rate of family disunion, it seems important to ask what is known about the impact of divorce on children. How are children affected by the process of family dissolutionment? What do we know about the reactions and adjustments made by children in various spheres of their lives as the process of divorce takes place? Do we have concurrent or longitudinal data on children's adjustment to the process of divorce as obtained through direct observation? If not, why not and where do we start? Perhaps the most logical place to begin an investigation of this problem would be at the earliest possible moment in the process; the point at which a parent says publicly, by filing a legal petition with a court, that they seek to dissolve their marriage. This, then, is the point at which this research investigation will focus its attention.

General Literature Review

The publication of popular literature on the topic of children and divorce has and continues to grow in abundance paralleling the increment in the rate of divorce (Addco, 1975; Athearn, 1976; Becker, 1971; Bel Geddes, 1974; Blaine, 1963, Braun, 1975; Canton, 1971; Doherty, 1974; Duty, 1968; Egleson, 1961; Epstein, 1975; Ferri, 1976; Fuller, 1975; Hirsch, 1973; Hope & Young, 1976; Hosier, 1975; Klein, 1973; Lovett, 1975; McFadden, 1974; Mindey, 1969; Moffett, 1976; Olshaker, 1971; Peppler, 1974; Smoke, 1976; Stewart, 1974; Walker, 1976; Watts, 1976; Williams, 1976; and Wooley, 1975).

Professional people in the fields of psychology, sociology, social work, psychiatry and family relations have also been producing their share of books and articles related to this subject (Anthony, 1974; Bohannan, 1970; Caplan & Douglas, 1969; Cull & Hardy, 1974; Dell & Applebaum, 1977; Despert, 1962; Fisher, 1974; Gardner, 1971, 1976, 1977; Gettleman & Markowitz, 1975; Grollman, 1972, 1975; Hallet, 1974; Kessler, 1975; Kushner, 1965; Loeb, 1966; Morrison, 1974; Salk, 1978; Schlesinger, 1966; Steinzor, 1969; Stuart, 1972; Sugar, 1970; Tessman, 1978; Turnell, 1968; Weiss, 1975; Westman, 1972; and Westman, Cline, Swift & Kramer, 1970). Much of that professional and lay writing has been descriptive in nature based on personal and clinical observation. Few scientific studies have specifically addressed the issue of the impact of divorce on children (i.e., Madow & Hardy, 1947; Goode, 1956; Landis, 1960, 1962; Cline & Westman, 1971; McDermott, 1968, 1970; Kelly & Wallerstein, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977). The articles and books which have been written, continually refer to the same meager sample of research. On the other hand there have been numerous studies which have dealt with the impact of a broken home on children (i.e., Banister & Ravden, 1944, 1945; Batchelor & Napier, 1953; Burchinal, 1964; Gay & Tonge, 1967; Greer, 1964, 1966; Gregory, 1958, 1965a, 1965b, 1966; Herzog & Sudia, 1968; Kelly, North & Zingle, 1965; Koch, 1973; Munro, 1965, 1966; Nye, 1957; Perry & Pfuhl, 1963; Risen, 1939; Russell, 1957; Sethi, 1964; Silverman, 1935; Tuckman & Regan, 1967; and Wardle, 1961). In many

cases, the children of divorce were lumped together with children who had lost a parent due to desertion, death and extended separation (i.e., military service, imprisonment). And they often contributed a negligible amount of data since they tended to represent only a small fraction of the total number of subjects included. It was assumed that the reactions of children to these various causes of family dissolutionment would be similar. However, Felner, Stolberg and Cowen (1975) recently found that primary school children reacted differently to the death of a parent versus the loss of a parent through divorce.

The majority of the research work done with children of divorce has been retrospective in nature (i.e., Goode, 1956; Gregory, 1965a, 1965b; Landis, 1960; and McDermott, 1968, 1970). The act of divorce cannot be independently controlled and gaining the participation of divorcing families is a lengthy and difficult task. Studies were primarily engaged in looking at the long term effects of divorce and broken homes on children, and tended to ignore the short term impact. A few trends appear in the studies which have been done and they are described below.

No one has yet disputed Landis' (1955) finding that children from broken homes adjust to life better than children remaining in unhappy unbroken homes. The strongest trend in the literature is one which describes children of divorce and broken homes as being characteristically aggressive and delinquent, as acting-out, being anti-social, having

conduct disorders, and/or displaying psychopathic tendencies (Banister & Ravden, 1944; Bowlby, 1944; Felner et al., 1975; Glueck & Glueck, 1950, 1962; Greer, 1964, Gregory, 1958; Wardle, 1961; etc.). These children tend to come to the attention of school officials, the legal authorities, and social and psychological community agencies more frequently than children who remain in intact homes. Conversely, children of divorce tend to be freer of neurotic tendencies such as psychosomatic illness (Nye, 1957). Two studies (Gay & Tonge, 1967; Madow & Hardy, 1947) did not support the finding for sociopathic tendencies. Another study (Perry & Pfuhl, 1963) failed to corroborate the notion that either delinquent or psychoneurotic tendencies are more frequently found among children from single parent homes. Children of divorce display higher chronic anxiety and feel less secure and less confident than comparable normals (Koch, 1961; Landis, 1963). There is some evidence that these children are less able to self-disclose their thoughts and feelings to others (Glasser & Navarre, 1965; Ohlson, 1974) and in certain children self-esteem is lowered drastically and irrevocably (Rosenberg, 1965). Children from happy homes appear to have more difficulty adjusting to their parents' divorce than children from unhappy homes (Landis, 1960). The divorce is evidently unexpected and comes as a surprise to these children. In terms of school adjustment, the child of divorce seems to have slightly more absences than his "normal" counterparts, seems to withdraw from school activities, and tends to be

more of a problem due to the acting-out behavior. No clear trend is seen in the school achievement of these children (Burchinal, 1964; Kelly et al., 1965; Nye, 1957; Perry & Pfuhl, 1963; Risen, 1939; and Russell, 1957). It appears that children under the age of 5 are most adversely affected by family disunion (Glueck & Glueck, 1962; and Greer, 1964) and those between the ages of 5 and 8 make the best adjustment in terms of feeling secure and rating themselves as happy (Landis, 1960). In looking at sexual differences, boys tend to be referred to guidance clinics more readily and they display more drastic changes in their behavior (toward aggressiveness and destructiveness). Girls tend to identify with certain pathological features of their mother's (Banister & Ravden, 1944; and McDermott, 1968). None of these findings are clear cut and unequivocal. In fact, there is contradictory evidence of each conclusion reached. Some studies conclude that there is minimal support for the notion that children are detrimentally affected in any way by divorce (e.g., Burchinal, 1964). Despert (1962) concluded that the divorce itself was not automatically destructive to children. And Silverman (1935) stated that there were no significant relationships between the cause of broken homes and the behavior pattern observed in the child. The concept of a broken home contains a number of possible factors, so it is not surprising, Earle and Earle (1961) stated, that it has been found to be related to about every variety of

psychiatric illness, personality disorder, emotional reaction and overt behavior.

John McDermott (1968, 1970) has indirectly investigated the adjustment of preschool children to the divorce of their parents near the time of divorce. Besides his work, only one other research project has looked into the adjustment made by children to the divorce process at the time when the divorce took place (Kelly & Wallerstein, 1976; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1974; 1975; 1976). Wallerstein and Kelly (in the aforementioned project) have also been the only researchers to undertake a longitudinal study of children going through the divorce process from the pre-divorce parental separation to one year following the divorce decree.

Kelly and Wallerstein on Latency Children

Dr. Joan Kelly and Judith Wallerstein followed 131 children in 60 families on a long term basis. These children ranged in age from 2½ years through adolescence, but no children between the ages of 11 and 12 were included in their sample. The families participating in the study resided primarily in Marin County, California, and were young, well educated, non-urban, almost all caucasian and in the upper levels of socioeconomic status. Among the conclusions drawn in their study was the supposition that the adjustment of children to the divorce process was a function of age. It was partly for that reason that Wallerstein and Kelly reported their research results in four articles grouped by age;

preschool (2½-6 year olds, 1975), early latency (7-8 year olds, 1976), later latency (9-10 year olds, 1976) and adolescents (13-18 year olds, 1974). They were careful to point out in their discussion and conclusions, that the experience of each child to the divorce process was unique. However, they were able to ascertain and identify some common issues among the various groups of children. Of primary importance here, are the patterns of adjustment seen in the early and later latency children.

Early latency children. The initial reactions of the early latency children (seven and eight year olds) were dominated by feelings of sadness, grief, fear, deprivation, loss and anger. These children displayed a pervasive sadness. They were aware of their suffering and had great difficulty in obtaining relief. Sometimes this distress was related to the amount of turmoil which continued between the parents. The age appropriate defenses, including denial by fantasy and reversal did not hold under the stress. Therefore intense pain and immobilization occurred. More than half of these children expressed their sorrow directly. For some the depressive reaction was more overwhelming and they displayed their sadness by seeing the world as full of symbols and events associated with death, damage, loss and emptiness. Some other children used silence or avoidance. And others used strong verbal denials of sadness and then fell back on more complex defensive maneuvers.

Most of the children were frightened about their current unstable family situations, as well as their futures. Crying and sobbing occurred frequently, especially among boys. For many, the breakup of the family was perceived as a threat to the whole arena of their experience and they felt that their world had been severely shaken. They worried that there was no safe place to take refuge. They felt very insecure and felt like they were falling apart. Three of these 26 children demonstrated an extremely variant reaction; acute reactive disorganization and panic.

Many of these children spent hour upon hour in fantasies of being deprived. This was conveyed either directly as feelings of loss or by an insatiable hunger or by reversing these feelings in play and fantasy activity. These early latency children demonstrated an increment in possessiveness, with teachers and parents reporting increased difficulties in sharing with their siblings and classmates. They wanted to be loved, but could not as yet, love themselves.

Feelings of responsibility for the divorce were not a predominant response in this group although a few children openly thought and worried about this. By contrast, these children had widespread, open and enduring wishes for parental reconciliation. For some children, this wish became such a pre-occupation that it interfered with their ability to function in most life situations. For others, the wish was accompanied by the realization that the divorce would occur

despite their wishes. None of these children was pleased or relieved with the divorce.

These children missed their fathers acutely. For boys, this was severely painful. They felt abandoned and rejected. There was little comfort in their visiting their father occasionally. They consistently longed for more frequent visits. The boys expressed the desire for their mother to remarry and the need for a father to provide discipline and external control.

This aged child felt the brunt of their parents' bitterness and continuing rage toward each other as it was acted-out during parental visits. Both parents would misuse their children. The children were unable to defend themselves and suffered intensively as a result. Later latency children and adolescents were better able to cope with being misused.

In contrast with the difficulty in expressing anger at their fathers for being left, there were some children in the study, mostly boys, who expressed considerable anger at their mothers for either causing the divorce or driving the father away. The children who were most seriously hurt or became most anxious by the father's departure tended to get most enraged at their mother. The anger was also a defense for some boys, against regressive oedipal fantasies. More common than anger was a fear of antagonizing the mother. For some children this fear became a central preoccupation. Mother was seen as dangerous and powerful. To some extent the fear

was reality based and they feared for their own security. Later latency children and adolescents felt less inhibited in expressing themselves, probably due to their feeling more psychologically independent.

Unlike older latency children, these children did not have healthy solutions for avoiding the pain of divided loyalties to both parents. One-fourth of these children felt a specific pressure to align with one parent but found it difficult to do so. They maintained their loyalty to both parents, frequently in secret, and at quite some psychic cost.

After one year, 50% of these 26 children had either improved in their overall level of psychological functioning or had maintained their previous developmental strides. Fifteen percent (15%) had consolidated the difficulties and another 23% were judged by the researchers to be in significantly worsened or deteriorated psychological condition. The other three children were not seen at follow-up. Kelly and Wallerstein concluded that the outcomes after one year were related to the nature of the post divorce family structure. Furthermore, they felt that the intensity or spread of these children's initial responses were not correlated with the eventual outcome; nor was the setting of the initial separation period related to outcome.

Later latency children. While the younger children were seen as initially disorganized and immobilized by the parental separation, the later latency child (nine and ten year

olds) perceived the realities of their family dissolutionment and their parents turbulence with soberness and clarity. Some of these children came to the researchers with a prepared agenda. Others found the opportunity to interact with a concerned neutral adult as important in and of itself. Others participating in the study found the interviews so threatening and painful that they were barely able to keep their anxiety controlled. And finally others employed denial and distancing tactics in order to cope.

Wallerstein and Kelly report a layering effect in these children's responses. These children had profound underlying feelings of loss and rejection. There was also a pervasive helplessness and loneliness. These feelings were managed or masked bv various available devices: bv seeking coherence, by denial, by courage, by bravado, by seeking support from others, by keeping in motion, or by conscious avoidance. They functioned simultaneously on two discrepant levels. They were involved on one hand with efforts to master their impulses and also succumbed to the anguish of their psychic pain. Wallerstein and Kelly noted that the conscious layering was particular to the 9 and 10 year old children. It is useful, they reported, in muting and encapsulating the suffering, permitting the child to move on developmentally. A very few children succumbed more totally and regressively. They suffered the pain of the family separation as well as the grief over the loss of the family structure and the fears of an uncertain future. The latency

aged children were better able to temper the impact of the divorce because they were more sophisticated, mature in grasping time and reality, and history increased their comprehension of the meaning and consequences of divorce.

Efforts to master their inner turmoil were made along with efforts to conceal the turmoil from outsiders in order to disguise the acute feelings of shame they felt. This shame reaction did not occur in younger children. The later latency children were ashamed of their parents, their parent's behavior and the implied rejection of themselves in the father's departure (marking them as unlovable in their own eyes). They attempted to overcome their sense of powerlessness, humiliation at rejection, and passively suffered family disruption, by engaging in organized activity and play.

The most clearly distinguishing characteristic of this group, from the younger groups, was their conscious intense anger. The younger children were aggressive and irritable. These children's anger was well organized and clearly object directed. The source of the anger was multi-determined, but its major role seemed to be an obscuring of the other more painful affects previously described. Half of the children were angry with their mother, half were angry with their father, and some were angry with both. The parent that the child felt had initiated the divorce was often the object of intense anger. The anger was expressed in a variety of ways; temper tantrums, scolding, demandingness and dictatorial attitudes. Other children showed the opposite reaction.

They became increasingly compliant and decreased their assertiveness.

Unlike the younger children, these youngsters did not worry about actual starvation. However, they had other pervasive fears. Some, although not entirely realistic, were still tied to reality and others approached phobic proportions. About 25% of these participants in the study were worried about being forgotten or abandoned by both parents. Some expressed concern about having to rely on one parent rather than two. They perceived this as less secure and were therefore aware that they were more vulnerable in the world. Some worried, and for good reason, about emotionally ill parents. And others seemed concerned about whether or not their specific needs were likely to be overlooked or forgotten.

Only a few of the children seemed concerned about having caused the divorce. Some of these children had a shaken sense of self identity. Children of this age are normally still defining themselves in terms of their family; family name, family structure, family background, history, religious beliefs, socioeconomic level, and so forth. When these usual indicators changed or disappeared, their self-image and identity were profoundly shaken. Another aspect of altering the external family structure was the breakdown in the children's socialization process and superego formation. Some children's conscience controls were weakened by the removal of the external controls, as the family dissolved, and anger

toward the parents came more fully into the child's awareness. One manifestation of this, as reported by Kelly and Wallerstein, was an increment in petty stealing and lying by some of these later latency children near the time of family dissolutionment. These researchers further observed that these children feared the return of a presocialized "wild state" or primitive angers with which they might not be able to cope.

The later latency children were well aware of their loneliness. They recognized their sense of being left outside and their powerlessness and peripheral roles in major family decisions. The younger groups did not have these feelings probably because of less maturation and the lack of understanding about mutuality in relationships. Because of this, the later latency children felt more hurt, humiliated and pushed aside. Furthermore, they were very much in touch with their parent's withdrawal of interest in them at that time. Part of the isolation came as a result of their recognition that the divorce was a battle between their parents, and they were primarily involved in the process when a parent asked them to take sides. These children were paralyzed by their divided loyalties and the psychic and real costs of making choices. They did not choose, and felt alone and desolate.

For the first time, these children displayed somatized symptons as a reaction to the family disruption. There were a variety of kinds and severities, such as headaches and

stomach aches. The children did relate these to the parental conflict and parental visits.

Changes occurred in these children's school performance. As in the early latency group, half of the later latency children suffered a noticeable decline in school performance. There was also a deterioration in their peer relationships; a finding not seen in the younger latency group. The researchers found no relationship between prior school performance or degree of turmoil in the home and the decrease in learning. Many children displayed behaviors at school which were widely discrepant with their home behavior. Some acted pressured and frightened at home and then became bossy, controlling, or devious at school. Many demonstrated a decreased ability to concentrate in class while becoming increasingly aggressive on the playground. And some found the pressure of academics and socializing unbearable at that time. Others used the school to express what they could not verbalize or act on at home. All but 4 of these 15 children had resumed their prior educational and social achievements by the time one year had passed.

Changes occurred in the parent-child relationships and new constellations emerged out of the marital strife and family separation. Wallerstein and Kelly felt that these realignments and qualitative alterations were a major component in the adjustment or total response of these children to divorce. Eight of their 31 children formed an exclusive relationship with one parent, actively rejecting the other

parent. In several children, there appeared a heightened empathy toward one or both distressed parents, and siblings. Some children, especially girls, worried about their fathers. Sometimes the children took on more adult responsibilities like caring for younger children and seeing after important household functions. Many parents had no adult relationships to lean on and they relied on these children for emotional support, advice and practical help.

The turbulent feelings seen in the later latency children, as an initial response to the divorce, subsided almost entirely in 15 of the 29 children by the time of follow-up. They did take backward glances of bitterness and nostalgia. Anger and hostility lingered longer and more tenaciously than did any other affect, even in these children with better outcomes. Ten of the children maintained an unremitted anger directed toward the non-custodial parent. Most had come to accept the divorce with sad finality.

> By contrast, the other half (14 of the 29 seen at follow-up) gave evidence of consolidation into troubled and conflicted depressive behavior patterns, with, in half of these, more open distress and disturbance than at the initial visit. A significant component in this now chronic maladjustment was a continuing depression and low self-esteem, combined with frequent school and peer difficulties. (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1976).

The phobic reaction in one child worsened and spread. Delinquent behavior, truancy and petty thievery, remained unchanged. Those children who had become isolated and withdrawn were even more so after one year. There was a precocious thrust into adolescent preoccupation with sexuality and assertiveness, with all its detrimental potential. Finally among all of the 29 children, relatively few were able to maintain good relationships with both parents.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to assess the personality adjustment of latency aged children (7 to 10 years of age) at the time of parental divorce. This data should contribute support to the findings of Wallerstein and Kelly (1976), add empirical data to their clinical observations and increase the generalizability of their conclusions to a broader population of families and children. In addition, it may shed some new light on and produce additional contributions toward an understanding of the difficulties that children encounter in the divorcing process. The following questions will be addressed: 1) are early and later latency children, undergoing the divorce of their parents, different as a group in terms of their personality adjustment, from children remaining in intact homes, and 2) are there differences in the manner in which early latency and later latency children approach and cope with parental divorce at the time of divorce?

Method

Subjects. Forty-eight boys and girls between the ages of seven and ten will participate in this study. Twenty-four children will come from a family in which one parent has recently filed a petition for divorce. The other group of 24 children will be living in "intact" homes, and will serve as controls for the "divorcing" group.

The children in the "divorcing" group (DG) will be obtained on a voluntary basis through the Cleveland County, Oklahoma, District Court. As divorce cases are filed with the court, those cases involving minor children between the ages of 7 and 10 will be noted and the families contacted about participation in the study. Only children whose natural parents are divorcing for the first time will be considered for inclusion in the study. More than one child from a single family may be included. Any DG child whose parents have been separated in excess of four months just prior to the filing for divorce and/or having an intelligence quotient below 80 will be eliminated from the experimental group sample. Also any child who has a history of a particularly unusual or disturbed childhood will not be included. These problems may frequently be chronic in nature and attributable to medical (e.g., lengthy hospitalization and repeated operations for heart condition); emotional (e.g., long term psychotherapy for somaticized disorders); educational (e.g., learning problems which required years of special training

or classes); and social factors (e.g., behavioral problems, truancy, etc.). Each case dropped on this basis will be noted and reported. By law, in the state of Oklahoma, a minimum of 30 days must elapse between the filing of a divorce petition and the hearing on the final divorce decree. All DG children will be seen and tested as close to the filing date as practically possible and never after the decree is granted.

Participation of the "intact home" or "non-divorcing" group (NDG) children will be solicited through the Norman, Oklahoma, public school system. The families will be asked to volunteer for the study. These NDG children will be living with their natural parents (never having experienced a parental divorce) and will not have been separated from either or both of their parents for more than four months during their lifetime. They will be matched by age group, gender and range of intellectual ability to the DG children. Those having any highly unusual childhood problems or experiences will be dropped from the sample in a similar fashion to the DG subjects.

Procedure. In Oklahoma, the addresses and phone numbers of the plaintiff and defendent in a divorce action are not required on a petition for divorce. Therefore, the attorney(s) involved in each case will be contacted in an attempt to: 1) obtain his/her cooperation in the study and 2) obtain a means by which the client(s) can be contacted. The (temporary) custodial parent will then be contacted and a detailed explanation of the project will be made. There is no

deception in the study. This parent will be asked for their permission to test and interview their child (children). Whenever this parent requests the researcher to contact the non-custodial parent for his or her consent, it will be done. During this initial contact with the parent(s) some screening will be done in terms of length of parental separation and serious childhood problems. So before a DG child is seen, he or she will have gone through several qualifying steps; the willing cooperation of the family attorney(s), the voluntary cooperation of a parent(s) and having met some of the criteria established for the experimental group. Soliciting the participation of the NDG children will not require a contact with an attorney. The addresses and phone numbers of these families will be obtained through the schools. Prior to these NDG children being seen, a screening process similar to that for the DG will take place.

The testing of each child will take approximately two hours. The parent will be allowed to remain with the child during the testing. A consent form (see Appendix A) will be signed by a parent on each child participating in the study. Each child will be administered, in order; an anxiety measure, an intelligence instrument; a personality measure and finally a brief and structured interview. The parent(s) will complete a rating scale on their child and a questionnaire which seeks primarily demographic information. This study is concerned solely with the intelligence measure and personality instrument. The additional data collected will

be used subsequently to answer other research questions. Also being collected, but not relevant to this particular research inquiry, are behavioral rating scales from each child's teacher.

A follow-up session will be offered to each parent in order to provide them with an interpretation of the assessment data collected on their child. In certain cases, where a child has indicated that he or she is having some difficulty in coping, referrals will be made to an appropriate community resource.

Instruments. Two instruments will be employed in this study. First, an abbreviated form of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children - Revised Edition will provide a sample of the child's level of intellectual functioning (Sattler, 1974). The outcome of each child on this objectively scored instrument will determine whether or not their data will be included in the study. A frequency count will be kept and reported on those children eliminated from the study due to low intellectual ability. The short form WISC-R technique employed here will entail the use of five of the WISC-R subtests; Arithmetic, Vocabulary, Comprehension, Picture Arrangement and Block Design. A Deviation Quotient will be calculated in accordance with the procedure outlined by Sattler (1974). This D. Q. approximates the full scale I. Q. normally derived from the administration of all the subtests. The validity coefficient between this particular

short form subtest combination and the complete test is high (r=.958).

The other instrument and primary dependent measure will be Rorschach's Test; a projective personality assessment technique. It has been employed as a research instrument, applied to children, over the course of many years and across various kinds of studies (Altable, 1947; Ames, 1966; Baumberger, 1961; Beck, 1931; Colm, 1948; Des Lauriers & Halpern, 1947; D'Heurle, Mellinger & Haggard, 1959; Greenstadt, 1963; Goldfarb, 1942; Haworth, 1964; Hertz, 1939; Hertz, 1941; Kerr, 1936; Lingren, 1968; Meier, 1965; Meltzer, 1935; Neuhaus, 1954; Northway & Wigdor, 1947; Piotrowski, 1937, 1945; Rosenberg, 1963; Rothstein, 1963; Sarason & Sarason, 1947; Schubert, 1968; Sender & Klopfer, 1936; Stavrianos, 1942; Swift, 1945; Tulchin & Levy, 1945; Werner, 1945; and Winston, 1958). There has been some debate concerning the "proper" use of the Rorschach technique as a research tool and the manner by which it is best used to produce the most accurate, sensitive and useful measure of personality functioning (Weiner, 1960). Weiner disfavors the statistical testing of formal Rorschach scoring variables as separate and independent entities (e.g., R, W%, and M). He believes that the instrument was designed to look at variable interactions. He favors a conceptual approach, using a pre-specified group of scales to measure a particular personality factor. Several such clusters of Rorschach indices have been developed (e.g., Lerner, 1975), however the derived scales are usually

validated on adult protocols. Validation, for example, of a hostility scale on children has not been conducted. Since the norms for children's Rorschach responses are not similar to those of adults (Ames, Metraux, Rodell & Walker, 1974; Beck, Beck, Levitt & Molish, 1961; Bohm, 1958; Davidson & Klopfer, 1938; Ford, 1946; Ledwith, 1959; and Levitt & Truumaa, 1972), it is presumptuous to apply those specially derived adult scales to children without some evaluation of their applicability. Rorschach protocols may be viewed in a variety of other ways. For example, they may be approached for content analysis, for certain aspects of response sequencing, in terms of the quality of the responses, in relation to expected associations to certain cards and through the interactions of formally scored categories or variables. Each approach carries its own liabilities such as poor reliability or narrowness of interpretive value. For the purpose of this study, the formal Rorschach scoring variables will be used in looking at and comparing DG and NDG children. In spite of the criticism, researchers have and continue to evaluate subjects on this basis (Basit, 1972; Beck, 1965; Boyer, Boyce, Brawer, Kawai & Klopfer, 1964; Exner, Wylie, Leura & Parrill, 1977; Murstein, 1972; Stavrianos, 1971; and Wagner & Daybney, 1976).

The test will be administered by the researcher only in the manner recommended by Halpern (1953). The responses to the inkblots will be tape recorded and then transcribed in order to achieve a maximum of accuracy. The scoring of the

protocol will be conducted in accordance with the system established by Samuel Beck (Beck et al., 1961). An independent Rorschach expert in the Beck system will check the scoring of each protocol. Any child unable to produce at least eight responses or unable to give even one response on half of the 10 blots, will be dropped from the sample. A quantitative and descriptive report on those children will be made.

Design. The research design is a 2 X 2 factorial. Divorce is the major independent variable. Children whose parents are in the divorcing process will be compared with those children who have remained in "intact" homes. The other major factor is age. According to Kelly and Wallerstein (1976), seven and eight year old children (early latency) react and attempt to cope with the divorcing process in a manner somewhat different from that of nine and ten year olds (later latency children).

	Divorce (DG)	Non-Divorce (NDG)	
Early Latency (7-8)	12 subjects (Cell A)	12 subjects (Cell B)	n = 24
Later Latency (9-10)	12 subjects (Cell C)	12 subjects (Cell D)	n = 24
	n = 24	n = 24	Total N = 48

Figure 1. Experimental design.

Each cell in the design (see Figure 1) will include 12 children. Therefore, 24 early latency children and 24 later latency children will participate, with half of each of those falling into either the DG or NDG category. If more DG children are available for participation, they will be included in the sample. The control group (NDG) will remain as described.

An attempt will be made to maintain, within each cell, equal numbers of subjects by age and gender. For example, in cell A of the design, 3 seven year old males, 3 seven year old females, 3 eight year old males and 3 eight year old females will be sought. Because the subjects in the study must come through the court and the school system, and will participate on a voluntary basis, total control of the age and gender factors will not be possible. Therefore some deviation from these ideal balances will occur.

A general assessment of personality adjustment for each child will be derived in the following manner. The scored Rorschach protocol on each child along with a scoring summary, will be submitted to another Rorschach expert. This Rorschacher will have administered, scored and interpreted hundreds of children's Rorschach Tests. No distinction will be made for this expert between the DG and NDG protocols. However, the rater will be provided with each child's age and gender. The expert will rate the child on a four point scale solely in terms of overall personality adjustment. A score of +2 will indicate a very well adjusted child; a

score of +1 will signify a well adjusted child; a score of -1 will suggest a slightly maladjusted child; and a score of -2 will point to a more maladjusted child. This data, based on the child's total Rorschach productivity, will permit a comparison to be made between the DG's and NDG's general personality functioning.

Eighteen formal Rorschach scoring categories will be used as dependent measures. As formerly discussed, this procedure of simultaneously comparing group differences on a large number of scores has received acceptance in the field of Rorschach study. The following categories will be used: R, W%, D%, Dd%, Z, initial reaction time (IRT), card manipulation (CardM), L/F%, F+%, M, FC , CF+C, SumC, Y, A%, H%, P% and affect ratio (Af r). These 18 variables are selected because they include the basic 16 Rorschach scales outlined by Ogdon (1977). This list also includes those variables selected by Rorschach experts as offering the most discriminable information in terms of diagnostic outcome (Potkay, 1971, pp. 59). Furthermore, several variables (Z, IRT, CardM, and Af r) are included because they appeared in addition to some of the basic 16 scales, in a pilot study, to demonstrate differential effects in individual and age group performance.

Data Analysis. A two-factor analysis of variance will be performed on the overall adjustment measure. One main effect will be the two levels of family condition and the other main effect will be the two age levels. Individual

comparisons will not be necessary with only two levels of each factor. Should an interaction effect be achieved, multiple *t* tests will be performed on cell means (A vs. B, A vs. C, A vs. D, B vs. C, B vs. D and C vs. D). A significant main effect for family condition is expected. No significant outcome is expected for age or interaction between family condition and age.

The 18 Rorschach variables will be tested with a multivariate analysis of variance technique. These 18 dependent variables must be tested in groups of less than 12 since 12 represents the number of subjects per cell. The measures will therefore be divided into two equal groups of nine as follows: Set I = R, W%, F+%, M, CF+C, FC, Y, A% and P%; and Set II = Z, IRT, D%, Dd%, L/F%, SumC, Af r, H% and CardM. Set I consists of Potkay's (1971) most often chosen and utilitarian variables plus Y and A%. The shading variable is added to this group because it demonstrates anxiety and dysphoria; states that the divorce children may be expected to display. The A% is included so as to achieve some information as to how content and maturity interact with the other variables in this group. Set II is constructed so as to contain a balance of the various personality aspects which the Rorschach Test taps. To each of these two sets, a tenth variable will be added; the overall personality adjustment measure. This will be done in order to assess how the Rorschach variables relate to the general appraisal of the children. This arrangement of variables yields two multivariate ANOVA's which are each

2 X 2 factorials with 10 dependent variables. This procedure permits the testing of interactive effects among the two age levels (early and later latency), the family condition (divorce and non-divorce) and the ten Rorschach variables in each set. If significant differences occur in the mutlivariate test, univariate analyses of variance will be conducted on each of the dependent variables. Once again, individual comparisons will not be necessary and significant interaction effects will be inspected.

The multivariate and univariate analyses of variance are parametic tests designed to test mean differences. Although they take into account the variability within and between groups, they are most sensitive to the differences between means. It seems important to note that deviant performances on most Rorschach variables may occur in a positive and/or negative direction. For example, the normally expected outcome for seven and eight year old children on F% is somewhere in the range of 50% to 60%. Deviations from the norm, then, will be any F% below 50% and in excess of 60%. The NDG children in this study may be expected to produce a sample group mean within the normal range and a standard deviation that varies modestly around that score. However, the DG children may be expected to demonstrate deviantly low scores (due to ego collapse, regression, decompensation, etc.), deviantly high scores (over-worked ego, compensation, etc.) and a few will score within the normal limits (ego strength holding) depending upon the adaptation

made to the family dissolutionment. The mean for the DG may approximate the NDG mean. Then, comparisons of group mean differences may be small while the variability within different groups is great. The result is an insignificant test. In other words, the NDG may produce data closely approximating a normal distribution while the DG children produce a flat or bimodal distribution. In the event that this occurs, a test on mean differences will not demonstrate, as accurately as a test for distribution differences, what is actually occurring. A nonparametric statistical technique would be more appropriate (McCall, 1970). The researcher is aware of that possible outcome and the potential necessity for employing an extra or alternative statistical technique.

There are some important interrelationships in this study which might affect its outcome. First, more than one child from a single family may be included in two "distinct" groups of the study. For example, Mr. and Ms. Smith are divorcing. They have a seven year old boy and a nine year old boy. Both participate in the study and are placed in the early latency DG and later latency DG, respectively. Those two DG groups are no longer independent of each other.

Second, the 18 dependent variables are interrelated. They are produced by the same subject on the same instrument and multiple scorings are derived from any one or the same Rorschach response. This situation enhances the probability of finding either repeated statistically significant

differences or repeated non-significant differences. No adjustment will be made for these difficulties. The experimenter is aware of them and they will be reported with the results.

The fact that a large number of statistical tests will be performed produces another problem. The probability of arriving at a few significant results by chance alone (Type I error) is increased. If the level of alpha is set at .05 for each of the ANOVA tests on 18 variables, the probability of at least one Type I error is $1 - .95^{18} = .6$. This probability will be protected by first performing multivariate tests; if the multivariate tests are non-significant, the individual univariate tests will not be performed.

Following the data analysis, a discussion of the results will be undertaken. Trends will be delineated and the findings will be related back to the initial research questions. Conclusions will be drawn and recommendations for further study will be elucidated.

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Appendix A

Consent for Research Participation

I (print name) _____ do hereby consent to participate in a research program regarding the impact of divorce on children. I, furthermore, grant the Divorce Program of the University of Oklahoma and the Cleveland County District Court permission to test my son/daughter, _____, (date of birth) _____.

I understand that my child will be administered an abbreviated intelligence measure, a self rating scale, a personality instrument and an interview. I am aware that I will be asked to complete a parental questionnaire and a behavioral rating scale on my child.

I understand that all information provided by me and my child is confidential and that the results of the testing will be kept in strict confidence. Neither I nor my child will be individually identified in any verbal or written report of the findings of this study.

I understand that within a few weeks of the initial testing, I will be offered the opportunity to have an interpretation of the data collected. I further understand that my participation and that of my child, in this study, is completely voluntary, and that I may withdraw from participation at any time.

_____ _____

(Signed) (Date)

_____ _____

(Street Address) (Relation to student)

_____

(City & State)

APPENDIX B

OVERALL ADJUSTMENT RATING SCALE

Overall Adjustment Rating of Divorce Program Children

The overall adjustment rating of 6 to 10 year old children on the Rorschach Test should include the inspection of the following areas of personality functioning: Perception, Intelligence, Thought Processes, Emotional States, Defenses, Fantasy Activity, Interpersonal Relationships and Personal Dynamics. Evaluation should be made with regard to the age appropriate developmental expectencies for each child.

+2 Rating = Very Adjusted Child

- demonstrates that he or she is functioning within the normal limits or expectencies for most of the categories listed above.
- can easily cope with most of the ordinary daily demands and stresses in his or her life.

+1 Rating = Adjusted Child

- demonstrates difficulties in just one or two of the above areas but compensates for it in other ways or areas.
- can cope with most ordinary daily demands and stresses, but experiences occasional difficulties when faced with certain stressful circumstances or events.

-1 Rating = Maladjusted Child

- demonstrates a marked deviance in one or two areas which is not compensated for well, or demonstrates some mild deviance across most areas listed above.
- cannot cope with certain ordinary daily demands and stresses, and is more pervasively affected when faced with stressful circumstances or events.

-2 Rating = Very Maladjusted Child

- demonstrates that he or she is functioning well outside of the normal limits or expectations for most of the categories listed above.
- cannot cope with most of the ordinary daily demands and stresses in his or her life.

APPENDIX C

LETTER MAILED TO ATTORNEYS

ALAN J. COUCH
JUDGE

LARRY SHALBERG
CSR

DISTRICT COURT OF OKLAHOMA
CLEVELAND COUNTY
COUNTY COURTHOUSE
NORMAN, OKLAHOMA 73069
TELEPHONE 405-321-6231

TO:

DATE:

SUBJECT:

For Cleveland County, a direct service and research program is being conducted in the area of divorce. The District Court and the University of Oklahoma are cooperating in an effort to obtain information regarding the effects of divorce on parents and minor children. Parents are frequently involved in continuing court matters surrounding divorce, and many children are detrimentally affected by the actions of their parents for long periods of time following the actual divorce.

This program will attempt to find out as much as possible about 1) parental communication in the interim between the date that a divorce petition is filed and the final decree, and 2) the trauma or impact on children themselves by the divorce proceedings. Only those cases assigned to Judges Couch and Trimble will be involved in the study. Judge Wilson's cases will be used for control purposes.

In cases where minor children are involved, Thomas J. Vaughn and Roy M. Isenberg will be contacting the attorney(s) in hopes of securing a telephone number for each party so that they may be invited to participate. These individuals have sixteen years of experience counseling with parents and children under stress. This experience includes community guidance centers, the juvenile court and the Child Study Center at the University of Oklahoma Medical School. Participation is voluntary, and reconciliation is not the goal. All statistics will be stored in a computer without individual identification so confidentiality is assured.

The assistance of each attorney in obtaining the cooperation of their client, as well as the phone number of the client's spouse, will contribute substantially to the validity of the study, and hopefully will lead to revelations that might help reduce the trauma of divorce on parents and children in the future.

For any further information concerning the program and its services please feel free to contact us at 325-1746, the University of Oklahoma Divorce Program, P. O. Box 2911, Norman, Oklahoma 73070.

APPENDIX D

LETTER TO DIVORCING PARENT FORWARDED BY ATTORNEY

ALAN J. COUCH
JUDGE

LARRY SHALBERG
CSR

DISTRICT COURT OF OKLAHOMA
CLEVELAND COUNTY
COUNTY COURTHOUSE
NORMAN, OKLAHOMA 73069
TELEPHONE 405-321-6251

Date:

Dear Mr./Ms. _____:

The Cleveland County District Court is cooperating with Thomas J. Vaughn and myself in conducting a service program and study at The University of Oklahoma regarding the adjustment of children to the process of divorce.

Your divorce has been selected as one of several that we would like to include in our free confidential program. The purpose is not to attempt any reconciliation of spouses but to learn as much as we can about the problems faced by six to ten year old children whose parents are in the divorce process. This information will be useful in establishing future programs for parents and children.

If you participate in this voluntary study, you will be asked to fill out a rating scale concerning your child's present behavior and to provide some demographic information about your family such as ages, employment, years married, and so on. I would need approximately two hours of time with _____, in order to administer a children's self rating scale, an abbreviated intelligence instrument, a personality measure and a briefly structured interview. You could be present during this session and you would be permitted to screen the interview questions. Detailed feedback about the outcome of these measures would be provided to you and might provide you with useful information in terms of helping your child through this time.

I believe that your cooperation in this program will help us to gain knowledge about the difficulties of the divorcing process for children, and may provide you with considerable knowledge and skills that could be useful to you in the future. To date, the parent(s) of every child we have seen, has indicated that their participation was well worth their time and effort.

Your attorney has agreed to forward this letter to you. If you are interested in having your child participate or would like further information about the program, please contact me at 325-1746, the University of Oklahoma Divorce Program, P. O. Box 2911, Norman, Oklahoma 73070. I would greatly appreciate your help.

Sincerely,

Roy M. Isenberg,
Divorce Program Co-Director

APPENDIX E

LETTER TO DIVORCING PARENT

WITHOUT ATTORNEY INTERCESSION

ALAN J. COUCH
JUDGE

LARRY SHALBERG
CSR

DISTRICT COURT OF OKLAHOMA
CLEVELAND COUNTY
COUNTY COURTHOUSE
NORMAN, OKLAHOMA 73069
TELEPHONE 405-321-6251

Date:

Dear Mr./Ms. _____:

The Cleveland County District Court is cooperating with Thomas Vaughn and myself in conducting a study at the University of Oklahoma regarding the adjustment of children to the process of divorce.

Your divorce has been selected as one of several that we would like to include in a confidential pilot program. The purpose is not to attempt any reconciliation of spouses but to learn as much as we can about the problems faced by families, and particularly children, whose parents are in the divorce process. This information will be useful in establishing future programs for parents and children.

If you participate in this study, you will be asked to fill out a questionnaire concerning your child's (children's) behavior at the present time and to provide some demographic information about your family such as ages, employment, years married, and so on. The researcher may request to have two hours of time with one or more of your children (only children between ages 6 and 10), in order to give the child two questionnaires about themselves and two other instruments. These can be given in the home or at the child's school or day care facility (with your permission). Feedback about the outcome of these evaluations would be provided to you upon request and might provide you with useful information in terms of helping your child through this time.

We believe that your cooperation in this program will help us to gain knowledge about the difficulties of the divorcing process for children, and may provide you with considerable knowledge and skills that could be useful to you in the future.

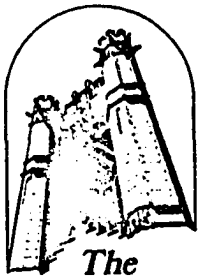
You will be contacted by telephone within the next few days with more specific information regarding the program. If we are unable to obtain a phone number, we would appreciate a response by you through the enclosed postcard. If you have any questions concerning this program please feel free to contact Martha McGowen, project coordinator, or myself at the University of Oklahoma Divorce Program, 325-1746.

Sincerely,

Roy M. Isenberg
Divorce Program Co-Director

APPENDIX F

LETTER TO INTACT HOME GROUP PARENTS



The
University of Oklahoma at Norman

College of Education

Dear

In cooperation with the Cleveland County District Court and the University of Oklahoma, I am conducting a research program on the impact of divorce on children. This study looks at the adjustment of seven to ten year old children whose parents are divorcing, near the time that the divorce petition is filed. To accurately assess how these children are doing, it is necessary to obtain an estimate of how "normal" children are functioning. We may then compare the two groups.

The Norman Public School System granted us permission to find some seven to ten year old children who were living in a "non-divorced" family. Your child's name, _____, was selected at random from among the children enrolled in the Norman schools.

We would like to invite your participation in this research project. Your participation would involve my spending 1½ hours with your child to conduct several tests. I would administer an abbreviated intelligence test, a personality measure and a self-rating scale. You would be permitted to be present during the testing. You would be asked to complete a questionnaire (seeking demographic information) and a behavioral rating scale on your child. When this information has been scored within a few weeks, you will be offered an opportunity to have the results interpreted to you.

All information provided by you and your child will be confidential. The data will be grouped with other children the same age so that neither you nor your child can be individually identified. The scores will be stored in a computer.

820 Van Vleet Oval, Norman, Oklahoma 73019

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. This study is of great importance to a variety of people in the legal and social service field, and most importantly, to the families and children who will, in the future, be involved in the stresses of family dissolutionment. Your help and cooperation can make a significant contribution to our learning about the difficulties that children face when their parents divorce. You will probably also learn something about your own child. In the next few days, another program member or myself, will call to talk with you further about this study. I hope that you will see this work as important and offer to help us. If you wish to call us about the project, our phone number is 325-1746.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Roy M. Isenberg,
Program Director

RMI:pj