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MARITAL DISRUPTION AND CHILDREN'S NEED  
FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL HELP

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## INTRODUCTION

The dramatic rise in the rate of divorce in the U.S. since the late 1950's is well known and has been amply documented (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1979). While the increase appears to have slowed or even stopped in recent years, the rate remains at record levels (National Center for Health Statistics, 1982, 1983). The number of children under 18 involved in divorces has shown a corresponding rise, from about 360 thousand per year in 1956 to over one million per year in each year since 1972 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1979, Table 2). Data from the National Survey of Children indicate that, based on current patterns of disruption, over 40% of U.S. children can expect to experience the disruption of their parents' marriage before they reach age 18 (Furstenberg, Nord, Peterson, & Zill, 1983).

Not surprisingly, the involvement of such large numbers of children in divorce has generated interest in the possible consequences for children of experiencing the disruption of their parents' marriages. Much early interest focused on the effects, especially on boys, of father absence. The literature on this subject was critically reviewed by Herzog & Sudia (1971) who concluded that factors present in the home both before and after separation were at least as important as separation per se, and that the complex set of interacting variables is such that father absence is probably not a fruitful variable in itself. Among the interacting variables Herzog & Sudia identified were the type of father absence (temporary versus permanent; separation due to death, marital disruption, or employment related absences), the age of the child at time of separation, social and economic factors, and family climate (especially degree of stress in the home).

More recent research has reinforced the conclusion that marital

disruption is not a unitary phenomenon which produces uniform effects on children. Rather, one must take into consideration a number of factors that characterize the process of and participants in the disruption. For example Rutter (1971) shows that it is not separation per se but the attendant marital discord which accounts for higher rates of delinquency among boys from disrupted families. Similar results were found in a sample of preschool children (Hetherington, Cox & Cox, 1981) and in studies comparing children from disrupted homes with those from intact but unhappy families (Landis, 1962; Nye, 1957). Children who are younger at the time of the disruption have sometimes been found to suffer worse effects (Kalter & Rembar, 1981; Kurdek, Blisk, & Siesky, 1981; Santrock & Wohlford, 1970). On the other hand, the passage of time since the disruption appears to lessen or eliminate the negative consequences provided the conflict is reduced (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Hetherington, Cox & Cox, 1979).

Other effects may stem less from the absence of one parent than from the changed circumstances at home following the disruption. In the great majority of cases the mother retains custody of the child, but is faced with increased responsibilities, changed roles, and decreased financial resources (Brandwein, et al., 1974). Weitzman (quoted in Newsweek, 1983) found that in the first year after divorce the income of women with children declined 73 percent while that of their former husbands increased 42 percent. In such circumstances women are apt to enter the labor force for the first time, or increase their level of participation, thus reducing the time available for child care and household tasks. In the face of these changes, the relationship between the custodial parent and the child often deteriorates (Hetherington, 1979). Indeed, Hess & Camara (1979) found the nature of the parent-child relationships to be more important than conflict itself in explaining the

effects of disruption on children. Interestingly, there is some evidence that in cases of divorce, those children whose mothers work who are better off, perhaps because of the increased level of income, or because it is the more resourceful or competent mothers who manage to succeed in the labor force (Zill, 1978).

In most cases, a divorce is followed by a remarriage, typically after an interval of about five years (Bane, 1976; Bumpass & Rindfuss, 1979). The remarriage usually returns a greater degree of financial security to the family, and provides for an additional adult to share the burdens of child-care and household tasks. Yet the remarriage itself is sometimes as disruptive to the child as was the divorce, at least initially (Despert, 1953).

In the present analysis we focus on four variables which may mediate the effects of divorce on children; namely the age of the child at the time of disruption, the amount of time which has passed since the disruption, the amount and length of conflict attending the disruption, and the remarriage of the custodial parent. Rather than examine a broad range of effects in this paper, we have chosen to focus on the child's need for or receipt of some form of psychological help, therapy, or counseling. By so doing, we are looking at outcomes on the negative end of the spectrum which are severe enough that the parent or some other person feels that professional help is needed to correct the problem.

#### THE SAMPLE

The analysis is based on data from the National Survey of Children, conducted in 1976 and 1981. The first wave of the survey was conducted using a national probability sample of children aged 7-11 at the time of the survey.

Data were collected through structured interviews with 2301 children, and their parents, and through questionnaires mailed to their teachers. Black children were oversampled to yield enough cases (approximately 500) to make race comparisons possible. In households with two eligible children, both were interviewed. In cases of more than two eligible children, two were selected at random.

The questionnaires covered a broad range of topics relating to the physical, social and psychological characteristics of children, and their home, neighborhood, and school environments. (See Zill, 1984, for a fuller description of the sample and methods of data collection.) The second wave, conducted five years later, was a reinterview with a subsample of 1423 of the children from the first survey. The second wave covered most of the same topics but concentrated more heavily on the process of marital disruption and its effects on children. Included in the second wave were all those children who were in a disrupted or high conflict family at the time of the first survey, plus a subsample of the rest. Weights have been developed for each wave to make possible population estimates for all U.S. children in the appropriate age range.

Data from both waves of the survey have been merged into one file making possible the construction of variables which take into account data from both times, as well as the prediction of events or circumstances at the time of the second wave from characteristics present at the time of the first one.

#### FINDINGS

We looked first at the child's need for psychological help or counseling as a function of the parents' marital situation in 1976 and 1981. Three measures are presented in Table 1. The first is the proportion of children who had ever gotten psychological help as of the time of the first survey (in

1976) or who were perceived as needing such help in the 12 months prior to the survey date. The overall proportion needing help by this measure was 12.0% in 1976. The second measure is the proportion of children who received help in the interval between the first survey and the second survey (in 1981) or who were perceived as needing such help in the 12 months prior to the second survey date. The base for this "new case" rate excludes those children who needed help in 1976 as indicated by the first measure. The overall new case rate for the 1976-1981 interval was 11.9%, which is essentially identical to the earlier rate. Also shown in the table is the total proportion of children who ever received help or were perceived as needing help in the 12 month periods preceding either survey. This total proportion of children needing or getting help was 22.5% of the sample.

Marital Change or Stability and the Child's Need for Psychological Help The detailed groups of children shown in Table 1 were defined by combinations of the parents' marital situation at both survey dates. Not all combinations are shown in the table; families where neither biological parent was present in the household and families where the parent was never married or where the marriage was disrupted by death have been left out of the detailed categories, but are included in the line for all children.

Where the child lived with both biological parents at either survey date, a marital conflict measure was constructed to categorize the marriage in terms of low, moderate or high conflict. This measure is based on a combination of questions about the number of topics about which the parents argue, and the respondent's rating of the happiness of the marriage. Conflict, as measured at the first survey, was a strong predictor of marital situation at the time of the second survey. For example, one quarter of the marriages with high conflict in 1976 had been disrupted by 1981, and two of five were still in a

high conflict situation. In contrast, less than 4 percent of the low conflict marriages had become disrupted and less than 8 percent were characterized by high conflict in 1981.

For each column, we carried out statistical tests of the differences between the proportion needing help for those with low conflict at both surveys (the first group) and each of the other groups. The levels of significance are indicated in the table. In some cases, sizeable differences were not significant because of the small sample sizes for the comparison category. Thus these differences must be interpreted with caution.

Biological parents married throughout period. The three psychological help measures showed considerable variation by the parents' marital situation at the time of the first survey and the change in situation between the two surveys. Focusing first on those children living with both biological parents throughout the period, the data show that the rates of needing or getting psychological help are generally below the average. At the same time there is an obvious relationship between the level of conflict, and changes therein, and the probability of the child needing help. In particular, the group in which there was high conflict at both survey dates showed high rates of needing help. These rates were not only above those for other intact-marriage groups, but also well above the rates for the population of children as a whole. In addition it appears that the new case rate may be higher than the initial rate for those children who remained in high conflict marriages.

Two groups were defined in terms of the change in the reported level of conflict between the two surveys. Families changing from low to moderate or high conflict or from moderate to high conflict were classified as increasing, while those changing from high to moderate or low conflict or from moderate to low conflict were classified as decreasing. A comparison of new case rates

with initial rates for these two groups appears to show a weak tendency for the need for psychological help to increase or decrease in parallel with the changing level of conflict.

Parents separated or divorced between the surveys. The next set of groups refers to children who experienced a divorce for the first time in the interval between the two surveys, that is, during middle childhood or early adolescence. While it might be expected that these children would show uniformly higher-than-average new case rates in response to the trauma of divorce, the results show that the outcome depends strongly on the situation at the time of the first survey. In particular, those children whose parents were in a low or moderate conflict marriage at the time of the first survey showed rates that were actually below average on all three measures of psychological help. Furthermore, the new case rate is no higher than the initial rate. In contrast, children who experienced the disruption of a high-conflict marriage during this interval showed rates of needing help that were somewhat above average, especially on the total measure. Once again, however, the new case rate is essentially identical to the initial rate. Those children whose parents were already separated at the initial survey and became divorced during the interval also showed higher than average rates of needing help, especially on the new case and total case rates. There also appears to be an increase in the rate of needing help from that found in the initial survey.

Custodial parent in same post-separation situation at both times. The disruption of a marriage may be followed by a relatively long period of stability for the child, either in a single-parent home or in a home with a parent and a stepparent. The next three groups comprise children who experienced a separation or divorce prior to the initial survey and who have



been in a stable situation for the years intervening between the surveys. Children in the first group were living with a divorced parent (usually the mother) throughout the period. This group shows an initially high rate of needing psychological help followed by an apparent decline in the rate of new cases. However, the total proportion for the group is well above average, with nearly a third of the children needing or getting psychological help at some point in their lives. The second group in this set had already experienced both a divorce of their biological parents and the remarriage of the custodial parent by the time of the first survey. They remained in the remarriage situation throughout the period between the surveys. Not surprisingly the initial rate of needing help was high -- twice the average proportion for the time of the initial survey. In contrast, the new case rate is substantially lower, actually at or slightly below the new case rate for all children. Nevertheless, the total case rate is as high as that for the divorced group.

The final group in this set, children living with a parent who was separated throughout the period, presents an apparent anomaly. These children show an implausibly low rate of needing or getting help at the time of the initial survey -- less than 3%. The new case rate for the interval between the surveys is more than 26%, among the highest of all the groups shown in the table. A more detailed examination of the characteristics of this group revealed several factors which could account for this anomalous pattern of results. Only half of the single mothers in this group completed high school, and only 14 percent went beyond high school. Additionally, black children are heavily over-represented, comprising 58% of the group. Previous analyses of the initial survey suggest that both low education and minority background are associated with higher rates of child behavior problems, especially in school,

yet lower rates of both perceiving the need for or actually getting psychological help. Consistent with this pattern of results is the finding that children whose parents were separated in 1976 showed a high rate of school disciplinary problems as reported by teachers in contrast to a low rate of perceived need for help on the part of parents in that survey. These school problems may become sufficiently serious to eventually compel the parent to obtain psychological help for the child even though she may not fully perceive the need for such help.

Further marital transitions between the surveys. The last set consists of two groups of children who experienced a further transition during the interval between the two surveys. One group consists of those children with a divorced custodial parent who remarried during the interval; the other consists of those who experienced the breakup of their custodial parent's remarriage. Both of these groups show the highest rates of needing or getting psychological help -- approximately 40% -- of any of the groups in the table. The new case rates are also among the highest. This is especially the case for those children experiencing a remarriage, suggesting that this transition does represent an additional stress factor for the early adolescent child. As noted above, however, the prognosis may become more favorable as the child remains in a stable remarriage. On the other hand, if the remarriage also fails, then the new case rate is considerably higher than for those in stable remarriages, and commensurate with those in the high-conflict marriage group.

Background characteristics of marital groups. Some of the differences between these groups in rates of needing or getting help may be related to differing characteristics of the groups. The data in Table 2 characterize the groups in terms of the proportions of children who are black, and the proportions who have parents with less than a high school education. In

addition, the average age of the child at the time of parental separation, and the average years since the separation are given for those groups containing children who have experienced the disruption of their parents' marriage.

Table 2 shows a high concentration of blacks and those with low education in the continuously separated group, a finding previously noted. More generally, low parent education is associated with high conflict in intact marriages and with marital disruption. However, those parents who remarry and remain that way following a divorce tend to be better educated than those who do not remarry or who experience a subsequent disruption.

Black children also have a greater risk of being exposed to a high conflict marriage or a marital disruption. At the same time, black children are underrepresented among groups where the custodial parent has remarried after divorce.

However, these variations in background characteristics do not explain the findings reported in Table 1. When race, parent education, and family income are introduced as control variables, and adjusted percentages are calculated for Table 1, the magnitudes are barely affected and the overall pattern of results remains unchanged. The only statistic to change appreciably is the proportion needing/having gotten help by time 1 among those whose custodial parent was separated at both times. The adjusted percentage is 6.8%, in contrast to 2.6%, reflecting the low education of this group and the preponderance of blacks.

#### Effects of Age of Child At Time of Disruption

Certain aspects of the differences found in Tables 1 and 2 suggest that the age of the child at the time of marital disruption may make a difference in the likelihood of needing or getting help. Recall that at Time 1 the children in the study were in the 7-11 year age range. Given that this is the

case many of those who experienced a marital disruption before the first survey were of preschool or early elementary school age at the time of the disruption. The average age at disruption for these groups as shown in Table 2 ranges from 3.1 to 4.7. In contrast all of those who experienced disruption between the two surveys were at least of middle elementary school age and many were in early adolescence. The average age at disruption for these categories is between 11.1 and 11.3. Note from Table 1 that, for a given level of conflict, those children whose parents were married at the time of the first survey and who separated or divorced in the interval showed rates of needing help which were comparable to those whose parents remained married. In contrast, those children whose parents' marriage had already been disrupted at the time of the first survey showed considerably higher rates of needing help.

To examine the effect of age more directly, we looked at the rates of actually receiving help by the age of the child at the time of the disruption. These data, presented in Table 3, showed a sharp difference between those children whose parents had separated or divorced by the time the child was six or younger and those who were seven or older at the time of the disruption. The proportion needing or having gotten help was 30.5% for the early disruption group versus 11.4% for the later disruption group. Indeed the rate for the later disruption group is not significantly different than the rate for children who had never experienced a disruption, 10.4%

#### Marital Stability and the Continuation of Need

The total proportion of children who need psychological help at any given time is a combination of those who have recently come to need help and those who continue to need help for emotional and behavior problems of longstanding duration. Thus far we have focused primarily on the new case rate and its relation to marital transitions. In Table 4 data are presented on the

proportion of those children needing help at the time of the first survey who continued to need help five years later, at the time of the second survey. Ideally one would like to examine continuation rates for each of the marital groups previously discussed. Unfortunately, because these rates are based on the relatively small numbers who needed help at Time 1, stable estimates require the collapsing of the detailed marital categories into broader groups. Two groups are shown in Table 4. The first consists of all those children who were living with both biological parents, and whose parents were in a low or moderate conflict marriage at both surveys, or where the level of conflict decreased from high to low or moderate. As noted above, the children in this broad group tended to have low rates of needing or getting help at the time of the first survey. The second group consists of children from the remaining marital categories shown in Table 1. These are children who had either already experienced a marital disruption by the time of the first survey or who were living with both biological parents in a high conflict marriage at Time 2.

In defining the continuation of need we wish to focus on those children who needed help at both times. Therefore, the data in Table 4 are defined in terms of needing or getting help in the year preceding each survey. The overall proportions needing or getting help during the year preceding each survey was 9.7% and 10.6% for Time 1 and Time 2 respectively. The proportion of children needing help at both times was 3.0% of all children. And the overall continuation rate, that is the proportion of those children who needed help at Time 1 who also needed help at Time 2, was 30.8%. Children in the stably married group, however, the first of the two groups defined above, had a continuation rate of only 22.3%, considerably better than the average. In contrast, those in disrupted or high conflict families showed a continuation

rate of 39.2%. Thus conflict and disruption are not only associated with a higher new case rate, but also with a greater persistence of the need for psychological help.

#### DISCUSSION

The data just presented clearly demonstrate an association between the marital history of parents and the mental health of their children. Four aspects of the marital history appear to be especially significant for the child's risk of needing psychological help. These are: 1) the degree of conflict between the parents; 2) the stability of the marital situation of the custodial parent after a disruption; 3) whether the custodial parent subsequently remarries; and 4) the age of the child at the time of marital separation. All of these aspects are consistent with a stress-and-coping model of children's reactions to marital transitions.

Degree of conflict. Conflict is a key element in the negative effects of marital disruption on children. Children experiencing persistent high conflict in an intact marriage were as likely, if not more likely, to need or have gotten psychological help as children who experienced the disruption of their parents' marriage. Increases ( or decreases) in the level of marital conflict were associated with parallel changes in the rates of development of new cases of needing psychological help. However these rates were considerably lower than those shown by the persistent high conflict group suggesting that transitory conflict is something with which most children can cope. Moreover, persistent but moderate levels of conflict were not associated with an elevated risk of needing help. The level of conflict even appears to be important in mediating the effects of subsequent marital disruption. Children whose parents were separated or divorced between the

surveys but who reported only low or moderate conflict at the time of the first survey showed no greater need for psychological help than those whose parents remained married. However, this finding may be at least partly accounted for by an age effect, discussed below. In general, the lowest rates of child mental problems are found among children who live with both biological parents in a relatively harmonious marriage.

Readjustment over time. Previous research suggests that most children can cope with the short-term stress of marital disruption, and that those who develop emotional or behavior problems gradually adjust to their new situation. Nevertheless the post-divorce situation brings with it new sources of stress which may prolong existing problems or generate new ones.

The data examined here show that the majority of children who had experienced marital disruption had not gotten psychological help and did not seem to need it at either of the two survey dates. This was true even in those groups of children showing the highest risk of psychological disturbance. Moreover, of those children who did need help at the time of the first survey, a majority no longer needed it by the time of the second survey.

Nevertheless, the persistence of need was notably higher among children who had experienced a marital disruption than among children in intact families. The children whose parents were separated or divorced by the time of the first survey were, on the average, ten years away from the date of separation. Despite the passage of this much time, these children still showed an elevated risk of developing new emotional and behavioral problems. This was true even among those children of divorce whose family situation had not changed in the last five years. While it remained elevated, the risk did diminish with time for children in stable divorced or remarried households.

Thus far we have said little about whether there was continued conflict

between the separated spouses in the years following the divorce or separation. The reports of the custodial parent indicate that in the vast majority of cases conflict had stopped completely or had decreased. Much of the cessation of conflict was due to a total lack of contact with the non-custodial parent. Thus, while post-marriage conflict may play a role in the genesis of child behavior problems around the time of the divorce, it is unlikely that such conflict is a major factor in accounting for the continued elevated risk of psychological problems among children of divorce. The explanation for this sustained elevation of risk may be found in a number of other factors, to be explored in subsequent analyses. Among these factors are economic stress, the strains of rearing children as a single parent, the psychological well-being of the custodial parent, and the distortion of relationships between the child and each of his parents.

Effects of remarriage. It is often thought that the strains of a single parent existence may be alleviated by remarriage. At the same time remarriage may in itself introduce new strains for the children involved, such as conflicts in loyalty, jealousies over loss of parental attention, and rivalries with step-siblings. Both of these notions received support from the data. The group of children whose parents had remarried by the time of the first survey and remained remarried throughout the interval, showed a marked reduction in the rate of needing psychological help. The same group of children had shown one of the highest rates of needing help at the time of the first survey. Likewise those children whose parents remarried in the interval between the surveys showed an especially high new case rate, apparently reflecting the difficulties that many children face in adjusting to their parent's remarriage. Should the recent remarriages remain stable it may be presumed that there will be a reduction in risk over time similar to that



shown by the group of children whose parents remarried at an earlier time. Of course remarriage brings with it the distinct possibility of further disruption. The data on the very small group of children who had experienced a subsequent disruption suggest that the risk of new psychological problems remains high in such circumstances, rather than declining as in the stably remarried group.

The age of the child. How a child experiences and reacts to a divorce or separation may be expected to vary considerably by the age of the child. As noted earlier, some previous research suggests that younger children are less able to cognitively understand what is going on and are more likely than older children to blame themselves for the disruption. While older children may experience as much pain and anger over the divorce, they are better able to recognize the real causes of the conflict and to assign responsibility for it.

Thus children of preschool age may well be more vulnerable to the effects of marital disruption than are older children. The data from the survey support this belief. Children whose parents separated or divorced while the child was age six or under were over twice as likely to need or have gotten psychological help as children experiencing a marital disruption at an older age. As noted above in the presentation of results, those groups of children who experienced parental separation between the two surveys, when all were beyond the age of greatest vulnerability, showed lower rates of needing help than did those groups of children who experienced separation by the time of the first survey.

Some investigators have suggested that the adolescent years may also be a time of heightened vulnerability to the effects of marital disruption, because of the emergence of sexual maturity, the increasing influence of peers, and other problems often associated with the adolescent years. Thus far the

survey data do not support this notion. Those who experienced disruption as adolescents did not show higher rates of needing help than those who experienced disruption in middle childhood. It is possible, of course, that emotional and behavioral problems will emerge later, when these teenagers became older adolescents or young adults.

In conclusion there is clearly a relationship between family conflict and disruption and children's need for and use of mental health services. However the relationship is not a simple one, in that the degree of risk depends on a number of factors and is subject to change over time. Furthermore, the dependent variable -- having needed or received psychological help -- has certain limitations as a measure of mental health. In particular, those with less education (such as the long-term separated group) may be less able to assess the mental health needs of their children, and consequently may underreport the level of need. Even so, a number of findings have emerged.

In the present analysis we have focused on the degree of conflict in the marital relationship, the process of readjustment over time, subsequent changes in the marital situation, and the age of the child at the time of the original disruption. The lowest risks were found among children living with both biological parents whose marriages were characterized by low or moderate conflict. The highest risks were found among children who experienced a disruption before age seven and also among those who experienced multiple marital transitions by early adolescence. Nearly as high in terms of overall risk were those living with both biological parents in a situation of persistent high conflict. This suggests that it is almost as hard for a child to adapt to persistent marital conflict as to multiple marital transitions.

As these and other factors affecting the relationship between divorce and child mental health are more fully understood, we should be better able to

suggest preventive strategies and to direct treatment resources toward those children most likely to benefit from mental health services.

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Table 1

Proportion of Children Needing or Having Gotten Psychological Help in Middle Childhood or Early Adolescence. By Change in Marital Situation of Parents, U.S. Children Aged 7-11 in 1976 and 12-16 in 1981

Change in Marital Situation of Parents from Time 1 to Time 2	Proportion Needing/Having Gotten Help		Ns Unweighted
	By Time 1	By Time 2 (total cases)	
	Time 1 & Time 2 (new cases only)		Cols. 1,3 Col. 2
Biological Parents Married Throughout Period			
Low conflict both times	7.1%	14.6%	238
Conflict decreased from Time 1	5.1	13.8	128
Moderate conflict both times	6.2	15.3	144
Conflict increased from Time 1	10.7*	16.7	213
High conflict both times	22.2**	35.6***	51
Biological Parents Separated or Divorced During Interval			
Low or moderate conflict at Time 1	5.9	11.7	41
High conflict at Time 1	15.5	28.4**	38
Separated at Time 1; Divorced at Time 2	20.8**	33.0**	39
Custodial Parent in Same Situation at Both Times			
Divorced	15.3*	32.5***	55
Remarried	10.9	32.4***	68
Separated	26.4**	28.3**	35
Further Transition of Custodial Parent During Interval			
Remarried during interval	26.9**	41.2***	25
Remarriage disrupted	21.4**	40.4***	37
All Children	11.9%	22.5%	1377

1Needing help refers only to the 12 months prior to the two survey dates. Having gotten help refers to any time prior to the survey date. Time 1 = survey date in 1976 when children were 7-11 years old. Time 2 = survey date in 1981 when children were 12-16 years old. Base for middle column excludes cases needing or having gotten help by Time 1. Total N is greater than the sum of the columns as not all marital situations are included in the table.

2Asterisks indicate proportions that are significantly different from the proportion for the first group (low conflict both times) at the following levels; using a one-tailed t-test:

\* p<.1  
\*\* p<.05  
\*\*\* p<.01

Table 2

Race, Parent Education, Age At Disruption and Time Since Disruption by Change in Marital Situation of Parents, U.S. Children Aged 7-11 in 1976 and 12-16 in 1981

Change in Marital Situation of Parents from Time 1 to Time 2	Percent Black Children in Group	Percent Whose Parents Have Less Than H.S. Education	Mean Age of Child at Time of Parental Separation	Mean Number of Years Since Parental Separation
<b>Biological Parents Married Throughout Period</b>				
Low conflict both times	8%	14%	-	-
Conflict decreased from Time 1	9	14	-	-
Moderate conflict both times	4	13	-	-
Conflict increased from Time 1	7	7	-	-
High conflict both times	17	24	-	-
<b>Biological Parents Separated or Divorced During Interval</b>				
Low or moderate conflict at Time 1	23	19	11.1	3.2
High conflict at Time 1	12	20	11.3	2.4
Separated at Time 1; Divorced at Time 2	41	31	4.7	9.0
<b>Custodial Parent in Same Situation at Both Times</b>				
Divorced	17	30	4.1	9.8
Remarried	3	9	3.1	11.0
Separated	58	50	4.5	9.9
<b>Further Transition of Custodial Parent During Interval</b>				
Remarried during interval	7	0	4.7	8.9
Remarriage disrupted	6	44	4.1	10.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>8.2</b>

Time 1 = survey date in 1976 when children were 7-11 years old. Time 2 = survey date in 1981 when children were 12-16 years old.

Table 3

Proportion of Children Ever Receiving Psychological Help or Counseling,  
By Child's Experience of Disruption of Biological Parent's Marriage,  
By Age at Disruption, U.S. Children Aged 12-16 in 1981

Disruption of Biological Parent's Marriage	Percent Receiving Help			N (weighted)
	Total	Before Disruption	After Disruption	
Never Disrupted	10.4%	-	-	847
Disrupted by Death	7.7	0.0	5.8	54
Disrupted by Divorce or Separation				
Child 0-6 at time	30.5*	0.3	25.2	179
Child 7-16 at time	11.4	2.9	8.3	102
Child Born out of Wedlock	13.2	-	-	87

\*Significantly greater than proportion for "never disrupted" group,  $p < .01$ , one-tailed t-test.