The prediction of fathers' child support compliance from the quality of the former spouse relationship and psychological presence

Catherine Margaret Ryan

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Catherine Margaret Ryan entitled "The prediction of fathers' child support compliance from the quality of the former spouse relationship and psychological presence." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Human Ecology.

Cheryl Buehler, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)
To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Catherine Margaret Ryan entitled "The Prediction of Fathers' Child Support Compliance from the Quality of the Former Spouse Relationship and Psychological Presence." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Human Ecology.

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We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

[Signatures]

Accepted for the Council:

[Vice Provost]

and Dean of The Graduate School
THE PREDICTION OF FATHERS’ CHILD SUPPORT COMPLIANCE FROM THE QUALITY OF THE FORMER SPOUSE RELATIONSHIP AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PRESENCE

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Catherine Margaret Ryan
May 1991
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the prediction of fathers' child support compliance from the quality of the former spouse relationship and psychological presence on fathers' child support compliance. The sample consisted of 109 divorced fathers. Child support compliance was measured by data from fathers' self-reports and court data. The concept quality of the former spouse relationship included four dimensions: conflict, cooperation, direct competition, and indirect competition. Two dimensions of psychological presence were measured: child and former wife. As hypothesized, cooperative former spouse relations predicted the likelihood of child support compliance. Also as hypothesized, coparental conflict did not predict the likelihood of child support compliance. Contrary to hypothesis, neither direct nor indirect coparental competition predicted the likelihood of child support compliance, and the likelihood of fathers complying with child support orders was not predicted by either psychological presence of child or former wife.
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I. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Mothers are awarded physical custody of 87% of the children following divorce (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990a). In 74% of the divorces involving children, fathers are ordered or voluntarily agree to pay child support (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990b). Nevertheless, divorced fathers' noncompliance with child support orders is well documented. For example, among mothers expecting to receive child support in 1987, 51% received the full amount, 25% received a partial payment, and 24% received no payment (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990b).

The consequences of child support noncompliance are equally well documented. First, divorced mothers must assume a disproportionate share of the economic responsibility for childrearing (Buehler, 1989a). Second, the lack of fathers' financial support contributes to the downward economic mobility experienced by divorced female-headed families (Duncan & Hoffman, 1985; McLanahan & Booth, 1989). Third, mothers who cannot provide financially for their children often seek public assistance (Lima & Harris, 1988), resulting in taxpayers instead of the noncompliant parent becoming financially responsible for the children.

Wright and Price (1986) concluded that the financial irresponsibility of many divorced fathers is rooted in the quality of the former spouse relationship (QFSR). Rather than the QFSR, Chambers (1979) proposed that the dissolution of fathers' psychological ties to their children enables fathers to dismiss their financial obligations. Accordingly, the objective of this study was to examine the prediction
of fathers' child support compliance from the QFSR and psychological presence.

Child Support Compliance

Given the magnitude of the consequences of nonpayment of child support, identifying factors that influence fathers' noncompliance with child support orders is essential. With much of the available child support research conducted by lawyers and economists, there is a wealth of data on demographic and economic factors related to noncompliance (Beller & Graham, 1985, 1986; Cassetty, 1978; Chambers, 1979; O'Neill, 1985; Pearson & Thoennes, 1988; Peterson & Nord, 1990; Robins & Dickinson, 1984, 1985; Seltzer, Schaeffer, & Charng, 1989; Sorenson & MacDonald, 1983). Findings have indicated that duration of divorce, remarriage of either former spouse, and the presence of mutual children from the father's remarriage are related negatively to child support compliance; conversely, father's age, education, occupational status, income, duration of marriage, number of children, and age of children are related positively to child support compliance. Information on dyadic and social-psychological factors related to noncompliance is limited (Wright & Price, 1986).

Critics charge that child support data are incomplete and have questionable validity. The use of court records has been criticized for underestimating the incidence of noncompliance (Weitzman, 1985); self-report data have been criticized for biased responses (Cherlin, Griffith, & McCarthy, 1983; Schaeffer, Seltzer, & Klawitter, 1989). Methodologists (e.g., Sudman, 1976) have suggested that data from
multiple sources may enhance validity. Researchers need not choose between self-reports and court records as data sources. Rather, the triangulation of data from self-reports and court records may provide a more valid measure of child support compliance than data from a single source.

Quality of the Former Spouse Relationship and Child Support Compliance

From a family systems theoretical perspective, divorce is not the permanent termination of relationships but a series of transitions, requiring an extensive amount of family reorganization and redefinition (Ahrons, 1979, 1980a, 1980b; Goldsmith, 1980). As a result, a new divorced family system develops over time. Although divorce alters the structure of the family, members of the original family system continue to be interrelated and interdependent. This continuing interdependence means that changes in one member impact other family members. For example, changes in mothers' employment postseparation (e.g., hours worked, disruptive job changes) are related indirectly to children's well-being through mothers' parenting (Buehler, 1989b).

Family researchers are interested particularly in the QFSR because the former spouse relationship is considered "the foundation for the emotional climate and functioning of the family" (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987, p. 121). The QFSR is critical to children's postdivorce adjustment (Buehler & Trotter, 1990; Heath & MacKinnon, 1988; Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1976; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980) and predicts

Researchers began studying the link between the QFSR and child support compliance in the mid-1980s (Kurdek, 1986; Pearson & Thoennes, 1988; Peterson, 1987; Spanier & Thompson, 1984; Wallerstein & Huntington, 1983; Wright & Price, 1986). Studies have differed on dimensionality and specific dimensions of the QFSR studied. Researchers have treated coparental conflict as a salient dimension of the QFSR and have included it as a predictor of child support compliance in a few studies.

According to conflict theory (Sprey, 1979), conflict between former spouses is common, neutral, and inevitable. Rather than the level of conflict per se, the strategies former spouses use to address conflict may be more effective predictors of child support compliance and should be included for a more complete explanation of the relationship between the QFSR and child support compliance.

Thus, from a conflict theoretical perspective, QFSR can be conceptualized as a multidimensional construct including conflict, competition, and cooperation (Deutsch, 1969, 1973; Horowitz, 1967; Sprey, 1979; Trotter, 1989). Conflict in relationships represents the level of disagreement between partners; competition and cooperation describe specific sets of responses that individuals use to manage their disagreements. This conceptual distinction is required because conflict and competition often have been confounded in the research on parental conflict and children's well-being, leading to inconsistent findings. Trotter's (1989) findings supported the conceptual
distinctions among coparental conflict, competition, and cooperation. Thus, in the present study, conflict, competition, and cooperation were conceptualized as three distinct dimensions of the QFSR.

**Coparental conflict** was defined as disagreement between former spouses over child-related matters (Trotter, 1989). Two researchers have examined empirically the link between child support compliance and coparental conflict. Kurdek (1986) found that mothers who reported low levels of preseparation conflict received payments with greater regularity than those who reported high levels. Peterson (1987) reported that coparental conflict at separation was related negatively to recipiency and amount of support received. In addition, he found that conflict at an average of 3 to 5 years postdivorce was related negatively to recipiency and positively to the amount of child support received. Peterson suggested that divorced fathers tolerate a certain level of disagreement with their former wives and still continue to pay child support. However, when the level of conflict exceeds a personally defined threshold, payment is discontinued. Lastly, Peterson found that custodial mothers received support payments when conflict levels increased or remained unchanged over time and received larger portions of support awarded when levels of conflict remained high. Peterson's findings may reflect mothers' successful attempts to use the legal system to maintain fathers' financial obligations.

In this study, coparental competition was defined as a set of oppositional and hostile behaviors that further one parent's goals at the expense of the other parent (Buehler & Trotter, 1990). Competitive behaviors may be direct or indirect. **Direct coparental competition** is
represented by overt behaviors (e.g., yelling, screaming, attacking) that express the negative interdependence between former spouses (Ihinger-Tallman, Buehler, & Pasley, 1990). **Indirect coparental competition** is represented by passive-aggressive attempts to triangulate children in coparental conflict (e.g., using them as spies or allies or by denigrating the other parent in front of the children) (Buehler & Trotter, 1990). **Coparental cooperation** was defined as a set of behaviors that allow for continued interaction in spite of differences and even fundamental disagreements (Horowitz, 1967).

Pearson and Thoennes (1988) have investigated the association between child support compliance and coparental competition and cooperation; based on a sample of 338 custodial mothers, they reported that competition and cooperation were predictive of the amount of child support paid. Fathers who denigrated their former wives in front of their children paid a smaller portion of child support awarded. The researchers also found that the more cooperative the former spouse relationship, the more child support fathers paid.

In summary, previous studies lacked a conceptual framework to guide the selection of the QFSR dimensions. As a result, the relationship between coparental conflict and child support compliance has been examined in past research, but the relationships between child support compliance and coparental competition and cooperation have been overlooked. In the present study, conflict theory guided the selection of the QFSR dimensions. Besides coparental conflict, coparental competition and cooperation also were included as dimensions of the QFSR. Specifically, it was hypothesized that coparental conflict would
be unrelated to the likelihood of fathers' complying with child support orders. Second, it was hypothesized that competitive behaviors—direct or indirect—would be related to the likelihood of fathers' complying with child support orders. Third, it was hypothesized that cooperative former spouse relations would be related to the likelihood of fathers' complying with child support orders.

Psychological Presence and Child Support Compliance

Social-psychological factors also may explain fathers' compliance with child support orders. Chambers (1979), a law professor investigating child support compliance in Michigan in the late 1970s, was the first to suggest the connection between child support compliance and social-psychological factors. He proposed that fathers fail to comply with child support orders because of the dissolution of the psychological ties that bind fathers to their children.

Social-psychological factors related to child support compliance remain relatively unexplored. The few researchers who have investigated social-psychological factors have relied on custodial mothers to report on fathers' behaviors and have used these behavioral indicators as proxy measures of fathers' social-psychological motives. For example, Kurdek (1986) measured "paternal investment" by having custodial mothers estimate their former husbands' involvement with child-related activities and issues. Peterson (1987) used information provided by mothers on father-child contact to measure fathers' "commitment" to their children.
Rather than relying on mothers' estimations of fathers' "paternal investment" or "commitment," it seems important to examine social-psychological factors directly. In discussions of family boundary ambiguity, Boss (1977, 1987, 1988) introduced the concept of psychological presence. Psychological presence has been defined as preoccupation with someone who has physically left the family system (Boss, 1977; Greenberg, 1988). Psychological presence, as an indicator of family boundary ambiguity, has been investigated in a number of family situations, including servicemen missing in action in Vietnam, widows, adolescents leaving home, and family members with Alzheimer's disease. Although psychological presence has been cited as an important variable in the study of postdivorce families (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987; Boss, Greenberg, & Pearce-McCall, 1986), research has been limited.

In previous studies, Boss and her colleagues had remaining family members report on the psychological presence of the physically absent family member. They found that high psychological presence of the physically absent family member was related significantly to individual and family dysfunction (e.g., psychosomatic complaints, rigidity, lowered self-esteem). Because divorce results in the reorganization and not the loss of family membership, members of the postdivorce family are not completely physically absent and can remain psychologically present to one another. In fact, rather than inhibit functioning, the maintenance of psychological ties may facilitate the functioning of the postdivorce family (Boss, 1987, 1988).
In the present study, *psychological child presence* (PCP) was defined as the father’s interest in the child’s best interest motivated by a sustained commitment to the role of parent. *Psychological former wife presence* (PFWP) was defined as the former husband’s continued cognitive preoccupation with his former wife and use of her as a reference in decision making.

The psychological presence of children and former wife to the divorced father may influence his willingness to maintain his child support obligation. Psychological presence may motivate divorced fathers to continue "acting like a father," which includes the financial support of children. In this study, it was hypothesized that psychological presence—former wife and child—would be related to the likelihood of fathers’ complying with child support orders.

In summary, few studies have been focused directly on the social-psychological factors related to fathers’ maintaining their child support obligations. The present study advances the literature in this field by having divorced fathers respond to questions on psychological presence and by testing the association between psychological presence and child support compliance.
II. METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample consisted of 109 fathers who had been divorced for an average of 38 months ($SD = 5.43$). A sampling frame of 394 divorced fathers was identified using the 1986 court records from Knox County, Tennessee. Of these, 296 met the following criteria: (a) the divorce had occurred (the case had not been dismissed or closed by an order of reconciliation), (b) the mother had physical custody of at least one child, and (c) the father was designated the payer of child support in the final decree.

An inspection of court records in mid-1989 revealed that 17 of the fathers had gained physical custody of their children in postdivorce litigation and because of this change were no longer obligated to pay child support. In attempting to locate the remaining 279 divorced fathers, the researcher found that 7 fathers had died, 6 had remarried their former wives, 1 was in prison, and 1 was institutionalized for mental illness. These 32 fathers were eliminated from the sample.

Of the remaining 264 divorced fathers, 65 (25%) were untraceable. For another 17 fathers, precontact letters were not returned by the

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The court records yielded a sample of fathers who had established a child support payment record from 1986 to 1989 without major changes in child support enforcement procedures becoming effective. Fathers were beginning the legal divorce process about the time the Child Support Enforcement Amendments of 1984 became effective, and child support provisions of the Family Support Act of 1988 did not become effective until October, 1990, after the completion of data collection.
postal service and fathers did not contact the researcher. For 10 fathers, intermediaries (i.e., former wives, parents, and professionals in touch with family members) agreed to forward a precontact letter to the divorced father without revealing the address to the researcher, but none of the fathers responded. Another 9 fathers failed to return telephone calls or broke scheduled appointments and were unavailable for rescheduling, 54 fathers (20%) were contacted by telephone and refused to be interviewed, and 109 fathers (41%) agreed to be interviewed. Thus, the response rate was 62%, the same response rate as that in a study in which divorced fathers were paid to participate (Haskins, 1988).

Sample Characteristics

Information on sample characteristics was obtained from divorced fathers' self-reports and court records. The sample consisted of 106 white and 3 black divorced fathers. The age of the divorced fathers ranged from 24 to 54 years ($M = 36$, $SD = 5.81$). The educational level of these divorced fathers ranged from grade school (1%) to completion of a graduate degree (11%), with over one-third (38%) having completed high school. The modal occupational status was skilled laborer. The fathers' median annual net income was $21,010, ranging from $10,000 or less to $100,000 or more ($SD = $10,000-20,000). See Appendix A for more detailed information.

The 17 fathers who failed to contact the researcher and the 10 fathers the researcher attempted to reach through intermediaries were not included in calculating the above response rate because whether they received the precontact letter was indeterminable. If these 27 were included in the number of fathers contacted, the response rate was reduced to 55%.
The dissolved marriage of focus was the first for 82% of the sample. The duration of marriage ranged from 1 to 26 years ($M = 9, SD = 5.28$). About 92% of the divorced fathers had one or two children, with the remainder having three children. Forty-four percent of the sample had remarried, and the mean length of remarriage was 20 months ($SD = 11.39$). Of those remarried, 23% had mutual children from the remarriage.

Sample Representativeness

Two different procedures were used to evaluate the representativeness of this sample. First, survey respondents and nonrespondents were compared using data taken from court records. There were no group differences on age, income, duration of marriage, number of children, or age of oldest child. Group differences existed for education and occupational status. Respondents were better educated, $t(61) = 3.18, p = .002$, and held more prestigious occupations, $t(36) = 2.12, p = .04$, than nonrespondents.

Second, 10% of the former wives of respondents and nonrespondents were selected randomly and interviewed to examine possible biases in the sample. These former wives of respondents and nonrespondents were compared on their perceptions of the QFSR variables and the number of complete child support payments paid during the preceding 12 months. There were no group differences in coparental conflict, cooperation, and direct competition. Group differences existed for indirect competition and the number of full child support payments. The former wives of nonrespondents described their relationships with their former husbands as more covertly competitive than did the former wives of
respondents, $t(16) = 2.67, p = .02$. The former wives of nonrespondents also reported that their former husbands made more complete child support payments in the preceding 12 months than did the former wives of respondents, $t(15) = 2.17, p = .05$.

Thus, respondents and nonrespondents were comparable on age, income, duration of marriage, number of children, and age of oldest child despite a slight bias in education and occupational status. It is doubtful that these differences compromised severely the representativeness of the sample.

Data Collection Procedures

Within the last few years, the telephone survey has become the most widely used survey method in the United States (Schuman & Kalton, 1985). Advantages underlying the growing popularity of the telephone survey include cost efficiency, personnel requirements, and speed of data collection (Frey, 1983; Lavrakas, 1987). Critics argue that respondents are less willing to answer sensitive questions and give more socially desirable responses when interviewed by telephone (Fowler, 1988).

For the present study, telephone interviews were used because this method has compared favorably with face-to-face interviews and mail surveys (Frey, 1983; Lavrakas, 1987). A telephone survey is less costly, less likely to produce socially desirable responses, and more likely to produce answers to sensitive questions than face-to-face

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This finding challenges the charge that noncompliant fathers are less willing to be interviewed than compliant fathers and that their nonresponse will bias the results.
interviews. In addition, a higher response rate was anticipated to a telephone survey than to a mail survey (Fowler, 1988).

The interview schedule was pilot tested with 8 divorced fathers who had financial responsibility for their children. The pilot study helped to identify ambiguous questions and phrases and to determine the length of the interview. A copy of the final version of the survey is in Appendix B.

Each divorced father was sent a precontact letter requesting his participation in a telephone survey on relationships in divorced families (Dillman, 1978; Frey, 1983) (see Appendix B). For those with unlisted telephone numbers, a postcard was enclosed for the respondent to indicate his willingness either to contact the researcher or to list a telephone number for the researcher to contact him. Eight fathers returned postcards and 2 fathers contacted the researcher by telephone.

Telephone interviews were conducted over 16 weeks from late October, 1989, to mid-February, 1990. Interviews were conducted throughout the day and week, with the heaviest concentration on weekday evenings. As anticipated from the pilot study, interviews lasted approximately 20 minutes. Nonrespondents were contacted six times at intervals of 7 to 10 days. If another individual answered or a telephone answering machine was activated, a message was left. This message included the researcher's name, affiliation, telephone number, the purpose of the call, and a request to return the call.

Court records provided additional information. This information included demographic characteristics, grounds for divorce, visitation
schedule, and child support award, as well as the incidence of legal activity associated with the nonpayment of child support.

Measures

Child Support Compliance

Data from fathers' self-reports and court records were triangulated to provide a more valid measure of child support compliance. First, each father estimated the number of complete child support payments he paid during the preceding 12 months. The number of complete payments paid was divided by the number of scheduled payments and multiplied by 100% to obtain the percentage of complete payments. Those fathers paying 100% of the scheduled payments in full were coded as "compliant" and those paying less than 100% of the scheduled payments in full were coded as "noncompliant." Second, court records were examined for contempt petitions for nonpayment of child support and wage assignment orders issued since the final decree. The absence of either petitions or wage assignment orders was coded "compliant" and the presence "noncompliant." Third, a new variable, COMPLY, was constructed by triangulating data from fathers' self-reports and court records.

The following decision rules were used to triangulate data from self-reports and court records:

1. Self-identified noncompliant fathers were coded as noncompliant because it is doubtful a father would willingly risk embarrassment and social disapproval by falsely claiming noncompliance. There were 13 fathers who reported either failing to make payments or
paying less than the awarded amount at least once during the last 12 months.

2. The presence of either contempt petitions for nonpayment of child support or wage assignment orders in court records was taken as evidence of past nonpayment of child support and fathers were coded as noncompliant. As a consequence, three fathers who were having child support payments withheld from their paychecks and eight fathers with petitions for nonpayment of child support filed against them were recoded as noncompliant. The 11 noncompliant fathers identified by court records were not among the 13 self-identified noncompliant fathers.

3. Without contradictory evidence from court records, self-identified compliant fathers remained coded as compliant. There were 85 fathers in this category. Using these decision rules, 24 divorced fathers (22%) were coded as noncompliant and 85 (78%) compliant.

**Quality of the Former Spouse Relationship**

The measure of coparental conflict was adapted from Ahrons (1981, 1983). For the present study, Ahrons' stem asking about the frequency of discussions was changed to ask about the frequency of disagreements over various areas of childrearing. Coparental conflict was measured by averaging five items with scale responses ranging from *never* (1) to *always* (5). Divorced fathers assessed the frequency of disagreements regarding daily decisions, major decisions, planning events, children's school or medical problems, and children's personal problems. Evidence of satisfactory internal consistency reliability was provided previously by Cronbach's alphas of .93 (Ahrons, 1983; Goldsmith, 1980),
Cronbach's alpha for the present study was .81. Ahrons (1983) showed support for the content and construct validity of this measure.

Direct coparental competition was measured by having divorced fathers respond to items adapted from Ahrons (1981, 1983) and Jacobson (1978). Each father indicated the frequency of five behaviors: (a) "stressful or tense conversations," (b) "name-calling," (c) "verbal attacks," (d) "hostile and tense atmosphere," and (e) "yelling and screaming." Responses were scaled from never (1) to always (5) and were averaged. Evidence of the internal consistency reliability of the scale comes from Ahrens (1981), Goldsmith (1980), and Moskoff (1980), with Cronbach's alphas of .88, .85, and .83, respectively. Cronbach's alpha for the present study was .86. Evidence of the scale's construct validity was provided when Camara and Resnick (1988) demonstrated a significant relationship between fathers' use of "verbal attack" as a conflict resolution method and their school-age children's self-esteem, $\beta(77) = -.33$, $p < .001$, prosocial behavior, $\beta(77) = .39$, $p < .001$, and problem behavior, $\beta(77) = .31$, $p < .001$.

Indirect coparental competition was measured by having divorced fathers respond to items adapted from Kurdek (1987). Indirect coparental competition was measured by summing six items with responses

'Trotter's (1989) study and the present study were parts of a larger research project on marital dissolution and adjustment. There was some overlap in the two samples because almost one-quarter of the present sample had responded to an earlier survey from which Trotter's subjects had been drawn.
ranging from never (1) to always (5). Each father assessed the frequency with which he and his former wife denigrated the former spouse in front of the children, used the children as spies, and formed alliances with the children against the other parent. The internal validity of the index was determined by correlating the individual items with the total score (Babbie, 1986). Zero-order correlation coefficients among items ranged from .36 to .77 (p < .001). Evidence of construct validity was provided by Trotter's (1989) findings that coparental competition predicted children's aggression, β(68) = .40, p < .05, dependency, β(68) = .26, p < .05, and anxiety/depression, β(68) = .50, p < .05, at 6 months postseparation.

Coparental cooperation was measured by having divorced fathers respond to items adapted from Ahrons (1981, 1983). Coparental competition was measured by averaging five items with scale responses from never (1) to always (5). Each divorced father indicated the frequency with which (a) "I try to help out if my former wife needs to change plans for taking care of the children," (b) "I provide my former wife emotional support for dealing with the children," (c) "I am a resource to my former wife in raising the children," (d) "My former wife tries to help out if I need to change plans for taking care of the children," and (e) "My former wife provides emotional support in

An index of indirect coparental competition was constructed because it was assumed that the individual behaviors do not necessarily covary but rather could be relatively independent of each other. That is, parents who denigrate their former spouse in front of the children do not necessarily form alliances with the children against their former spouses. Thus, competitive behaviors accumulate. The more competitive behaviors in which former spouses engage, the more competitive the relationship.
dealing with the children." Evidence of adequate internal consistency reliability was provided previously by Cronbach's alphas of .75 (Ahrons, 1983; Moskoff, 1980), .84 (Fishel & Scanzoni, 1989), and .83 (Trotter, 1989). Cronbach's alpha for this study was .82. Evidence of the scale's construct validity was provided by Fishel and Scanzoni (1989) who found that cooperation was related positively to effective negotiation at the time of separation, $r(S1) = .53$, $p < .05$, and to mothers' planning no further litigation, $r(S1) = .42$, $p < .05$.

The former spouse dimensions were factor analyzed to examine the dimensionality of the QFSR construct (see Table 1). The 17 items from the measures of coparental conflict, direct competition, and cooperation were analyzed specifying a three-factor solution, maximum likelihood extraction, and varimax rotation. Factor structure was interpreted using two criteria: (a) a minimum loading of .30 on the primary factor and (b) a minimum difference of .20 between the primary and secondary factor loadings.

Of the 17 items, 15 met both criteria. One item (finances) was eliminated from the coparental conflict scale because it did not meet the second criterion, and another item (physical attack) was eliminated from the coparental competition scale because it did not meet either criterion. The factor structure of competition was consistent with the one identified by Camara and Resnick (1988), in which verbal and physical conflict resolution strategies factored separately for a sample of married and divorced couples.
Table 1

Factor Loadings and Cronbach's Alphas for Quality of Former Spouse Relationship Scales for Divorced Fathers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Factor loadings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of the former spouse relationship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Conflict (alpha = .81)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Personal problems the children might be having</td>
<td>.75 - .02 .00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Major decisions regarding the children's lives</td>
<td>.75 .26 .04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Planning events in the children's lives</td>
<td>.67 .20 .03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Daily decisions regarding the children's lives</td>
<td>.66 .15 .13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Children's school or medical problems</td>
<td>.53 .05 -.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Finances related to the children</td>
<td>.48 .33 .00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Direct competition (alpha = .86)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Hostile and angry atmosphere</td>
<td>.24 .84 -.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Yelling and screaming</td>
<td>.07 .81 .04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Name-calling</td>
<td>.06 .69 .10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Stressful and tense conversation</td>
<td>.36 .68 -.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Verbal attack</td>
<td>.42 .66 .02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Physical attack</td>
<td>.17 .18 -.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Cooperation (alpha = .82)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Former wife provides emotional support in dealing with children</td>
<td>.01 -.15 .73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Former husband provides emotional support in dealing with children</td>
<td>.14 .03 .71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Former husband tries to help out if former wife needs to change plans for taking care of the children</td>
<td>-.05 -.13 .69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Former wife tries to help out if former husband needs to change plans for taking care of the children</td>
<td>-.24 -.13 .68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Former husband is resource to his former wife in raising the children</td>
<td>.05 .27 .67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 109. Response categories were 1 (never), 2 (seldom), 3 (sometimes), 4 (often), and 5 (always).  
*Items deleted from scale because they did not meet criteria.
Psychological Presence

Divorced fathers reported on psychological child presence (PCP) by responding to items adapted from Boss et al. (1986) and items developed for this study. Responses were scaled from never (1) to always (5) and were averaged. PCP was measured by having each father indicate the frequency of eight behaviors: (a) talking about the children to other people, (b) importance of being included in decisions involving the children, (c) looking forward to hearing from the children, (d) looking forward to seeing the children, (e) thinking about the children, (f) considering himself the children’s father, (g) thinking about what is best for the children, and (h) importance of being included in special events involving the children. Cronbach’s alpha was .81.

Divorced fathers reported on psychological former wife presence (PFWP) by responding to items adapted from Boss et al. (1986) and items developed for this study. Responses were scaled from never (1) to always (5) and were averaged. PFWP was measured by having each father indicate the frequency of eight behaviors: (a) becoming upset if he imagines his former wife with another man, (b) considering himself a spouse to his former wife, (c) wondering what his former wife’s opinion would be on events that happen during the day, (d) hoping that he and she will be reunited, (e) asking her for advice about areas she used to handle, (f) finding himself wondering about where she is and what she is doing, (g) feeling that in some sense he will always be attached to your former wife, and (h) getting her advice about important personal decisions. Cronbach’s alpha was .85.
Boss and her colleagues reported internal consistency reliability coefficients ranging from .58 to .75 for such diverse samples as widows, parents launching adolescents, and adult daughters of divorced parents. The reliability coefficients for the two scales used in this study were slightly higher than those reported for other adaptations of the scale. Boss and her colleagues (Blackburn, Greenberg, & Boss, 1987; Boss, 1980; Boss, Pearce-McCall, Greenberg, 1987) provided some evidence of content and construct validity of the original Family Boundary Ambiguity Scale and its various adaptations.

To examine the dimensionality of the psychological presence construct, items from the PCP and PFWP measures were analyzed specifying a two-factor solution, maximum likelihood extraction, and varimax rotation (see Table 2). Results were assessed using two criteria: (a) a minimum loading of .30 on the primary factor and (b) a minimum difference of .20 between the primary and secondary factor loadings.

Of the 10 PCP items, eight met the criteria. One item (children influence his future plans) was eliminated because it failed to meet either criterion. One item (thinking about where the children are and what they are doing) was eliminated because it failed to meet the second criterion. All eight of the PFWP items met the criteria.

Social Desirability

A measure of social desirability was included as one check for response bias. There was concern that fathers might underestimate their noncompliance and direct and indirect competitive behavior, and overestimate coparental cooperation to appear in a favorable light.
Table 2

Factor Loadings and Cronbach’s Alphas for Psychological Presence Scales for Divorced Fathers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Factor loadings</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Psychological presence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Child (alpha = .81)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Look forward to hearing from children</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Look forward to seeing children</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Think about children</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Importance of being included in special events involving children</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Think about what is best for children</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Talk about children with other people</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Importance of being included in decisions involving children</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Consider yourself children’s father</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Think about where children are and what they are doing</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Former wife (alpha = .85)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Reunite</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Upset when imagine former wife with another man</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Get her advice about important personal decisions</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Ask her advice about areas she used to handle</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Wondering about where she is and what she is doing</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Consider yourself a spouse to your former wife</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Wonder what former wife’s opinion would be on events that happen during the day</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Attached to former wife</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Relationship with children influences future plans</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 109. Response categories were 1 (never), 2 (seldom), 3 (sometimes), 4 (often), and 5 (always). Item deleted from scale because it did not meet criteria.*
The tendency of respondents to bias their self-reports positively was assessed with an adaptation of the Crowne and Marlowe Social Desirability Scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964). An expert panel of four graduate students and one faculty member selected items associated with problem solving and negotiation in personal relationships from the Crowne-Marlowe Scale. Lists ranged from 6 to 20 items. The six items common to the five lists composed the social desirability scale ("I'm always willing to admit it when I make a mistake," "I sometimes try to get even, rather than forgive and forget," "I sometimes feel resentful when I don't get my way," "No matter who I'm talking to, I'm always a good listener," "There have been occasions when I took advantage of someone," and "At times I have really insisted on having things my own way").

Factor analysis was done to examine the structure of the social desirability construct. The six items were analyzed specifying a one-factor solution, maximum likelihood extraction, and varimax rotation. Results were assessed using a single criterion of a minimum loading of .30 on the factor. Of the six items, three met the criterion. Three items (insist on having things your own way, try to get even rather than forgive and forget, admit when you have made a mistake) were eliminated because they failed to meet the criterion. Social desirability was measured by averaging the four items with scale responses from never (1) to always (5). Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .52.
Control Variables

Father's age, income, occupational status, education, duration of marriage, number of children from dissolved marriage, age of oldest child, custody arrangement (sole or joint), remarriage status of father, remarriage status of mother, presence of mutual children from father's remarriage, geographical distance between father and children, and type of child support order (voluntary or court-initiated) have been cited in the literature as demographic predictors of child support recipiency (Beller & Graham, 1985, 1986; Cassetty, 1978; Chambers, 1979; O'Neil, 1985; Pearson & Thoennes, 1988; Peterson, 1987; Peterson & Nord, 1990; Robins & Dickinson, 1984, 1985; Seltzer et al., 1989). Because of the possibility that these variables might be related to child support compliance, they were used as control variables in the present study. Father's age (adjusted three years), age of oldest child, custody arrangement, and type of child support order were obtained from the 1986 court records. Fathers provided information on income, education, occupational status, duration of marriage, number of children from the dissolved marriage, duration of divorce, remarriage status of father, remarriage status of mother, presence of mutual children from fathers' remarriage, and geographical distance between father and children.

Data Analysis

Pearson zero-order correlations were used to determine intercorrelations among the independent variables. A series of chi-square analyses and t tests were done to determine the need to control
for social desirability and the possible control variables that might be related to child support compliance. Because these comparisons did not reflect any differences between compliant and noncompliant fathers, these variables were not included as covariates.

Logistic regression with maximum likelihood estimation was used because the dependent variable was dichotomous (Hanushek & Jackson, 1977; Homser & Lemeshow, 1989). Logistic regression is preferred to ordinary least squares when the dependent variable is dichotomous because it does not violate the assumption of homoscedasticity and normality of distribution of residuals (Aldrich & Nelson, 1984). In the logit model, the dependent variable is the logarithm of its likelihood, log (P/1-P). Logit coefficients represent increases or decreases (depending on the sign) in the log odds of the probability of child support compliance, given a unit increase in the independent variable (Argesti & Finlay, 1986).

The total sample of 109 divorced fathers was included in each analysis. Although several fathers did not respond to individual indirect coparental competition items, their data were not dropped because cases were kept if fathers responded to four of the six items. A criterion of $p = .05$ was used for all reported tests of significance.
III. RESULTS

Intercorrelations, means, and standard deviations for the independent variables are presented in Table 3. The correlation coefficients ranged from .01 (direct coparental competition and PFWP) to .56 (coparental cooperation and PFWP). None of the correlations were large enough among the independent variables to present a problem with multicollinearity.

At an average of 38 months postdivorce, the fathers in this sample described their relationships with their former wives in relatively favorable terms (see Table 3). As a group, fathers characterized these relationships as having fairly low levels of coparental conflict and as relatively noncompetitive--both directly and indirectly. Fathers also described their relationships with their former wives as moderately cooperative. Finally, they reported fairly high levels of PCP and low levels of PFWP.

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of the QFSR and psychological presence on fathers' child support compliance. Specifically, it was hypothesized that (a) coparental conflict was unrelated to the likelihood of fathers' fulfilling their child support obligations, (b) competitive (direct and indirect) former spouse relations would be related to the likelihood of fathers' complying with child support orders, (c) cooperative former spouse relations would be related to the likelihood of fathers' complying with child support orders, and (d) psychological presence (child and former wife) would be
Table 3
Means, Standard Deviations, and Zero-Order Correlations Among Quality of the Former Spouse Relationship and Psychological Presence Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Coparental conflict</td>
<td>.39**</td>
<td>.42**</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Direct coparental competition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.45**</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Indirect coparental competition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.18</td>
<td>-.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Coparental cooperation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.50**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Psychological child presence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Psychological former wife presence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Mean                                   | 2.17 | 1.83 | 11.96 | 3.17 | 4.48 | 1.86 |
| Standard deviation                      | 0.75 | 0.77 | 3.38  | 0.99 | 0.49 | 0.74 |

*p < .05. **p < .01.
related to the likelihood of fathers' complying with child support orders.

The results of the logistic regression analysis predicting the likelihood of fathers' child support compliance are presented in Table 4. As hypothesized, coparental conflict did not predict the likelihood of fathers' child support compliance. Also as hypothesized, cooperative relationships with former wives predicted the probability that fathers complied with child support orders. Contrary to the hypothesis, neither direct nor indirect coparental competition were related to the probability of fathers' compliance with child support orders. The likelihood of fathers' complying with child support orders was not predicted by either PCP or PFWP.
Table 4
Logistic Regression Analysis for Child Support Compliance with Quality of the Former Spouse Relationship and Psychological Presence Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coparental conflict</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct coparental competition</td>
<td>-0.27</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect coparental competition</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coparental cooperation</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>6.95</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological child presence</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological former wife presence</td>
<td>-0.74</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>-3.25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Likelihood ratio 98.09
df 102
$\hat{p}$ .59
IV. DISCUSSION

Before discussing the major findings, it is important to recognize that the results are limited in four ways. First, the sample was predominantly white, and thus the results pertain only to white divorced fathers. Although court records were used to identify the sampling frame, only 3% of the divorced fathers were black.

Second, a cross-sectional research design was used. Because the variables were measured concurrently, the directionality of the relationships among the variables cannot be confirmed. Although it is reasonably expected that such motivational factors as psychological presence precede behaviors such as child support compliance, the direction of the relationship between the QFSR variables and child support compliance is less clear. Seltzer (1990) has proposed that child support compliance may influence coparental conflict, which in turn influences children’s well-being. In the absence of longitudinal data, however, this researcher had relied upon previous research to guide the decisions about relationship direction.

Third, previous researchers have relied on either self-reports or court records for child support data. Both sources have been criticized. In the present study, data from fathers’ self-reports and court records were triangulated to provide a more valid measure of child support compliance than would have been achieved with a single data source. The sole use of either self-reports or court records would have identified fewer noncompliant fathers than the employed methodology (13 and 11, respectively). Yet, a comparison of reports
from 12 former couples indicated that triangulating fathers' self-reports and court records might have been insufficient to identify all possible noncompliant fathers in this sample. The comparisons showed that 4 of 12 former wives contradicted their former husbands' claims of child support compliance. The court records, lacking contempt petitions and wage assignment orders, also had failed to identify these fathers as noncompliant. The effectiveness of court records as a means of identifying noncompliant fathers is limited. The absence of contempt petitions for nonpayment of child support or wage assignment orders may reflect former wives' lack of resources (time, energy, money) or unwillingness to use the legal system to force their former husbands to maintain their financial obligations and not child support compliance. Thus, also including former wives as respondents may have increased the accuracy of identifying noncompliant fathers.

Four, data were collected on one specific child support obligation. Although fathers reported on the number of their previous marriages (18% had been married previously at least once), fathers were not questioned on the presence of children from these marriages, consequent child support obligations, or their history of child support compliance. This additional information would have been helpful in testing the relationship between compliance to prior obligations and compliance to more recent obligations.

Coparental conflict was expected to be unrelated to fathers' compliance with child support orders. The hypothesis was supported. This finding is consistent with conflict theory but contrary to available empirical findings. According to conflict theorists
(Deutsch, 1969), conflict is a neutral phenomenon that is neither inherently constructive nor destructive. Theoretically, behaviors that former spouses use to manage their conflict increase or decrease the likelihood of fathers' compliance with child support orders.

One explanation for the inconsistency with past findings is differences in the measurement of coparental conflict. In the present study, divorced fathers indicated the frequency of coparental disagreement on five child-related issues. Kurdek (1986) had custodial mothers indicate the level of agreement (strongly agree...strongly disagree) that 12 issues contributed to their marital breakup. Kurdek's measure focused on marital disagreements in general (e.g., sexual incompatibility, infidelity, financial problems) rather than parenting issues. Peterson (1987) used single items to measure preseparation conflict, current conflict, and changes in conflict over time. Single-item measures are less reliable than multiple-item scales like the measure of coparental conflict used in the present study.

In this study, coparental cooperation was expected to be related to the likelihood of fathers' complying with child support orders. This hypothesis was supported. This finding is consistent with Pearson and Thoennes' (1988) finding that cooperative former spouse relations (as perceived by custodial mothers) predicted the amount of child support received.

The key to cooperative former spouse relations is the ability of the divorcing parents to establish clear and well-defined boundaries between the spousal and parental relationships. Divorcing couples with children are confronted with the complex task of terminating their
spousal relationship while redefining their parental relationship (Ahrons, 1979, 1980a, 1980b). If former spouses are able to contain within the boundaries of the spousal relationship the contaminating effects of the negative feelings, hostilities, and conflicts associated with the marriage and its dissolution, they can redefine the parental relationship based on "a mutual appreciation for the right and responsibility of each parent to maintain attachment bonds and involvement with the children" (Trotter, 1989, p. 9).

Such an attitude fosters cooperative former spouse relationships. Cooperation enables former spouses to manage conflict so that they have a "non-zero-sum" structure (Sprey, 1979). That is, gains for one parent do not necessarily mean losses for the other. Thus, an "us-versus-the-problem" orientation develops that facilitates a sense of common purpose in the joint venture of childrearing. Cooperative former spouses share a perspective that recognizes the priority of their children's well-being over their own individual interests. When former spouses consider themselves partners in childrearing and can place their children's interests ahead of their own, divorced fathers may be less likely to default on their financial responsibilities.

In this study, competition--direct and indirect--was expected to be related to the likelihood of fathers' complying with child support orders. The hypotheses were not supported. Neither direct nor indirect competition was related to child support compliance. These findings are inconsistent with conflict theory and previous empirical findings. Pearson and Thoennes' (1988) measure of indirect competition was a single question mothers answered on fathers' denigration of their
former wives in front of the children. In the present study, the measure of indirect competition included the use of children as spies and allies, as well as denigration of the former spouse. Divorced fathers estimated individually for themselves and their former wives the frequency of the three indirect competitive behaviors.

The aggregation of competitive behaviors was based on the assumption that the former spouse relationship becomes increasingly competitive as former spouses individually and collectively engage in multiple competitive behaviors. That is, former spouses who denigrate the other might be expected to have less competitive relationships than those who denigrate and use the children as spies. Because the findings failed to support the "pile-up" assumption, additional analyses were done to examine the relationship between individual competitive behaviors and child support compliance. The results indicated that mothers’ use of children as allies (as perceived by fathers), \( \chi^2 = 8.54(3, 24), p = .004 \), decreases the likelihood of child support compliance. Denigration and use of the children as spies were not related to child support compliance.

Unlike cooperative former spouses, competitive former spouses seem to be unable to contain the "emotional baggage" associated with their marriage and its end within the boundaries of the spousal relationship, thus allowing the parental relationship to become contaminated. Competitive parents are caught in a state of negative interdependence such that gains for one are losses for the other (Sprey, 1979). Because disagreements are contests with a winner and a loser, the use of any tactic is seen as fair. The divisiveness of competitive
behavior preempts the sharing of the common goal of childrearing. This missing sense of common purpose encourages the placing of parental self-interests before children's well-being. Without the best interests of children as first priority, divorced fathers may be more likely to default on their financial responsibilities.

Psychological presence -- former wife and child -- was expected to be related to the likelihood of fathers' complying with child support orders. Surprisingly, these hypotheses were not supported. Neither PCP nor PFWP was related to child support compliance. These findings are inconsistent with past research. Wright and Price (1986) noted that former spouse attachment predicted regularity of child support payments. In other research, behavioral indicators (e.g., visitation) of fathers' commitment to children have been related to child support compliance. Wallerstein and Huntington (1983) reported that the frequency, pattern, and duration of visits were related strongly with payment child support. Children who were supported fully had frequent visits with their fathers and regularly spent weekends with their fathers. Similarly, Peterson (1987) found that a regular and stable pattern of visitation predicted recipiency and amount of child support received. Also, the likelihood of fathers' paying child support was related to the intimacy (face-to-face, sleep-over) of contacts.

One explanation for the inconsistency with past findings might be the relationship between attitudes and behavior. In the present study, it was assumed that child support compliance and visitation are two behavioral expressions of fathers' commitment to their children and therefore would be related. Thus, the relationship between the
underlying attitude of psychological presence and child support compliance was examined. Although as a group fathers reported a relatively high level of PCP, PCP did not predict fathers' child support compliance. It appears that fathers' psychological ties to their children are not being reflected in fathers' compliance behavior. Some fathers may have very strong psychological ties to their children, but a painful reaction to the divorce may discourage payment of child support (Nuta, 1986).

This study was the first investigation of the association between coparental conflict and conflict resolution strategies (cooperation and competition) and fathers' child support compliance. Researchers have investigated either the association between child support compliance and coparental conflict or the associations between child support compliance and coparental cooperation and competition, but none have examined these predictors concurrently. This study also represented the first time the association between psychological presence and fathers' child support compliance has been examined. An original methodology in this study was the triangulation of data from fathers' self-reports and court records to measure child support compliance. Data triangulation provided a more valid measure of compliance because twice as many noncompliant fathers were identified than if either source had been used individually.

In future research, the indirect and moderating effects of the QFSR on psychological presence (and other social-psychological factors) need to be examined. Although there was no direct relationship between coparental competition and child support compliance, path analysis
might uncover indirect effects of competition on child support compliance through its effect on such social-psychological factors as psychological presence.

In addition, the longitudinal relationship between these factors and child support compliance needs to be investigated. Chambers (1979) proposed the association between the dissolution of father-child psychological ties and irregular and incomplete child support payments after noting that the decline occurred over time. Although researchers have begun to examine the QFSR over time (Maccoby, Depner, & Mnookin, 1990; Nelson, 1990), the relationship between the QFSR and child support compliance has not been investigated.

As mentioned earlier, the directionality of the relationship between the QFSR and child support compliance is not clear. Does compliance influence the QFSR or vice versa? When former spouse relations are harmonious and former spouses are able to cooperate on child-related issues, fathers may be more likely to make child support payments. The trust and mutual support of partners in childrearing may encourage fathers to maintain the parental role of provider. Alternatively, the QFSR also may be a function of child support compliance. The payment of child support reduces conflict because former couples have one less issue for disagreement. Clearly, longitudinal data are needed to answer this question.

The focus of the study was limited to the association between the QFSR and psychological presence and fathers' child support compliance. Fathers' psychological ties to their former wives and children were measured directly rather than using behavioral proxies. Because
visitation may be influenced by the same social-psychological factors as child support compliance, future researchers may find it helpful to examine the relationship between psychological presence and visitation. In fact, future researchers should examine how both custodial mothers' and children's reports of psychological father presence are related to fathers' parenting role postdivorce.

This study focused on the child support compliance of ever-married fathers. Further research is needed on never-married fathers and obligated mothers. Cooperative former spouse relations may or may not be relevant for these obligors.

A theoretical implication is that psychological presence is a multidimensional concept. The results of the factor analysis provide evidence of the construct validity of the PCP and the PFWP scales. The two factor scores are not completely orthogonal ($r = -0.40$), but the correlation is low enough to allow independent relationships with other measures. For example, coparental conflict was related significantly to PCP, $r(109) = .29, p = .002$, but unrelated to PFWP, $r(109) = -.07, r = .47$.

Another theoretical issue involves the conceptual relatedness of psychological presence and attachment. Given the common component of cognitive preoccupation (Cohen, 1974; Greenberg, 1988), one might argue that psychological presence and attachment are the same concept. Although Boss and her colleagues have claimed that psychological presence and attachment are distinct concepts (Greenberg, 1988), the distinction has not been established empirically. If researchers are to accept psychological presence as a predictor of functioning of the
postdivorce family, the conceptual independence of psychological presence and attachment needs to be established.

The adversarial nature of American jurisprudence extends to marital dissolution. Divorcing spouses are expected to be adversaries. Lawyers, trained to get the best judgment or settlement for their clients, use tactics that may erode the possibility of reconciliation and encourage couples to become greater adversaries than they already are (Spanier & Thompson, 1984).

Recent findings indicate that for many couples the quality of former spouse relations endures for several years (Maccoby et al., 1990; Nelson, 1990). That is, the level of coparental cooperation at separation may predict the level of coparental cooperation at 3 years postdivorce. The findings of this study indicate a relationship between child support compliance and coparental cooperation at 3 years postdivorce. Thus, it appears that child support noncompliance may be an unintended consequence of lawyers’ use of adversarial tactics. A connection between such tactics and child support noncompliance would indicate the need for the following:

1. lawyers should cease the use of adversarial tactics;
2. lawyers should develop skills that help to build cooperation between divorcing spouses;
3. lawyers should overcome their reluctance to refer divorcing couples to intervention programs for help if they themselves do not have the necessary skills; and
4. the training of divorce lawyers needs to be modified to replace the best interests of the family as the lawyer’s objective rather than the best interest of the individual client.
Similarly, judges can use this information to identify potentially noncompliant fathers. Once fathers are identified, judges can (a) recommend intervention to ameliorate the relationship between the spouses, (b) issue an immediate order of wage assignment, or (c) recommend an award of a large property settlement and small child support payments.

Congressional response to the severe problem of child support noncompliance and its subsequent devastating economic consequences has been to enact legislation strengthening public enforcement of private child support. The enforcement techniques (i.e., income withholding, interception of state income tax refunds, liens against property, posting of securities or bonds, and reporting to consumer credit agencies) states are mandated to use by the Child Support Enforcement Amendments of 1984 have been successful. The Office of Child Support Enforcement (1990) reports having collected $27.7 million on the behalf of AFDC and non-AFDC families since the inception of the program.

Notwithstanding the program's success, questions are raised regarding the program's effect on the quality of relations between former spouses. Does the relationship face further deterioration because of governmental interference? Is the relationship between former spouses improved with the automatic withholding of support payments from paychecks that eliminates the face-to-face transfer of funds? Further research is needed to answer these questions.
REFERENCES
REFERENCES


Table A-1

Detailed Demographic Characteristics of Divorced Fathers in Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade school or less</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some high school</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduates</td>
<td>37.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-college training</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College graduate</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some graduate work</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate degree</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Occupation:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled laborer</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled laborer</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager/owner</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Annual income:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than $10,000</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10,000 - 20,000</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$21,000 - 30,000</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$31,000 - 40,000</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$41,000 - 50,000</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$51,000 - 60,000</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$61,000 - 70,000</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$71,000 - 80,000</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$81,000 - 90,000</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$91,000 - 100,000</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over $100,000</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refused to answer</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

DATA COLLECTION
October 20, 1989

Dear

You may have read predictions that 50% of all marriages will end in divorce. As you know, divorce triggers many changes in families. One of the biggest is the change parents experience in their relations with their children. Unfortunately, we know little about the nature of these changes between parents and children after divorce. Without good information on this topic, some parents and children may have a hard time adjusting to divorce.

I am asking you to participate in a telephone interview about family relationships after divorce. I found your name along with those of 300 others in the records of the Fourth Circuit Court in Knox County. I will be telephoning for an interview early this fall.

The interview should last between 20 and 25 minutes. Any information you share will remain confidential. I will not share any information you provide with anyone, including the court or your former spouse. Your identity as a participant will be protected by the use of identification numbers instead of names on all interview forms. The data gathered will be reported in summary form with no reference to you personally.

In an effort to conduct proper, ethical, and high quality research the University of Tennessee has established "informed consent" procedures. According to these procedures, you can decline to answer any question or questions and you are free to withdraw from the interview if you wish without penalty. Although there may be no unique benefits or risks from your participation in this study, the group results may interest you.

Even though you are busy, please seriously consider taking time to answer my questions. Your participation is extremely important as I try to learn more about family relationships following divorce. If you have questions, please contact me at the Department of Child and Family Studies, The University of Tennessee, 115 Jessie Harris Building, Knoxville 37996-1900 (phone: (615) 974-5316).

I appreciate your willingness to participate.

Sincerely,

Catherine M. Ryan
Project Director
CIRCLE THE APPROPRIATE FREQUENCY FOR EACH STATEMENT

1. With whom do the children from your previous marriage live?
   1. self
   2. mother
   3. an equal or almost equal time spent with each parent
   4. one child lives with mother, one child lives with father
   5. other
   6. on their own

2. Do you have contact with your former wife?
   NO YES
   1  2

3. Do you have contact with the children?
   NO YES
   1  2

I’d like for you to answer each of the following questions with one of five responses. If you want to get a pencil and a piece of paper to jot down the responses I'll wait. The possible responses are always, often, sometimes, seldom, and never.

always often sometimes seldom never

4. How frequently do you talk about the children with other people?
   1  2  3  4  5

5. How frequently do you try to get even, rather than forgive and forget.
   1  2  3  4  5

6. How frequently do you wonder what your former wife’s opinion would be on events that happen during the day?
   1  2  3  4  5


7. How frequently does she provide you with emotional support in dealing with the children?  
8. How frequently do you think she asks the children for information about your personal life?  
9. How frequently are you willing to admit when you have made a mistake?  
10. How frequently do you ask the children for information about your former wife's personal life?  
11. How frequently is it important to you to be included in special events involving the children (i.e. graduation, award ceremonies, performances)?  
12. How frequently do you think your former wife says bad things about your character to the children?  
13. How frequently do you and she disagree about planning events in the children's lives?  
14. How frequently do you think about what is best for the children?  
15. How frequently are you a resource to your former wife in raising the children?  
16. How frequently do you hope that you and she will be reunited?  
17. How frequently do you and she call each other names?  
18. How frequently do you feel resentful when you don't get your way?
19. How frequently do you consider yourself the children’s father?  
20. How frequently do memories of your former wife make you feel guilty about dating?  

THEN, ASK QUESTION #22.

IF REMARRIED, LEAVE QUESTION #20 BLANK. THEN ASK:

21. How frequently do you feel guilty about remarrying?  

THEN, PROCEED TO QUESTION #23.

22. How frequently do you feel guilty about thinking of remarriage?  
23. How frequently do you and your former wife disagree about major decisions regarding the children’s lives?  
24. How frequently do you think about the children?  
25. How frequently do you and your former wife disagree about daily decisions regarding the children’s lives?  
26. How frequently is the atmosphere between you and she hostile and angry?  
27. How frequently do you still consider yourself a spouse to your former wife?  
28. How frequently is the conversation between you and she stressful and tense?  
29. How frequently do you and she verbally attack each other?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>always</th>
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<th>sometimes</th>
<th>seldom</th>
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<td>Question</td>
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<tr>
<td>30. How frequently do you and she physically attack each other?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. How frequently do you find yourself thinking about where the children are and what they are doing?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. How frequently do you and your former wife disagree about personal problems the children might be having?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>33. How frequently do you look forward to seeing the children?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>34. How frequently do you and your former wife yell and scream at each other?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>35. How often do you find yourself asking her for advice about the areas she used to handle?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>36. How frequently have there been occasions when you took advantage of someone?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>37. How frequently does your former wife try to help out if you need to change plans for taking care of the children?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. How frequently is it important to you to be included in decisions involving the children?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>39. How frequently do you encourage the children to side with you?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>40. How frequently do you think your former wife encourages the children to side with her?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. How frequently do you feel upset when you imagine your former wife with another man?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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</table>
42. How frequently do you find yourself wondering about where she is and what she is doing?  
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</table>

43. How frequently do you and she disagree about finances related to the children?  
<table>
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<tr>
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<th>sometimes</th>
<th>seldom</th>
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</table>

44. How frequently do you provide her with emotional support for dealing with the children?  
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<th>seldom</th>
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</table>

45. How frequently do you try to help out if she needs to change plans for taking care of the children?  
<table>
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46. How frequently do you look forward to hearing from the children?  
<table>
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<tr>
<th>always</th>
<th>often</th>
<th>sometimes</th>
<th>seldom</th>
<th>never</th>
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</table>

47. How frequently do you really insist on having things your own way?  
<table>
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<tr>
<th>always</th>
<th>often</th>
<th>sometimes</th>
<th>seldom</th>
<th>never</th>
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</table>

48. How frequently do you and your former wife disagree about the children’s school or medical problems?  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>always</th>
<th>often</th>
<th>sometimes</th>
<th>seldom</th>
<th>never</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

49. How frequently are you a good listener, no matter who is talking?  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>always</th>
<th>often</th>
<th>sometimes</th>
<th>seldom</th>
<th>never</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>5</td>
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</table>

50. How frequently do you feel that in some sense you will always be attached to your former wife?  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>always</th>
<th>often</th>
<th>sometimes</th>
<th>seldom</th>
<th>never</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

51. How frequently do you say bad things about her character?  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>always</th>
<th>often</th>
<th>sometimes</th>
<th>seldom</th>
<th>never</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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</table>

52. How frequently do you get her advice about important personal decisions (e.g. health, career).  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>always</th>
<th>often</th>
<th>sometimes</th>
<th>seldom</th>
<th>never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

53. How frequently does your relationship with the children influence your plans for the future?  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>always</th>
<th>often</th>
<th>sometimes</th>
<th>seldom</th>
<th>never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
OK, WE'RE DONE WITH THE MAIN PART OF THE INTERVIEW. LET'S GO ON WITH SOME FINANCIAL QUESTIONS.

54. OK, FIRST  Do you pay child support?

    NO       YES
    1        2  IF "NO" PROCEED TO QUESTION #69 ON PAGE 8.

55. Please think back to your legal agreement; how frequently were you to pay child support according to the agreement?

    1. weekly
    2. every two weeks
    3. monthly
    4. share expenses

56. Have you and your former wife changed the frequency of payments since then?

    NO       YES
    1        2  IF "NO" PROCEED TO QUESTION #58.

57. Was that change made in court or did you and she decide that on your own?

    1. informal agreement between former spouses
    2. court action

58. Have you and your former wife increased the amount of the child support payment?

    NO       YES
    1        2

59. Have you and your former wife decreased the amount of the child support payment?

    NO       YES
    1        2

60. Was that change made in court or did you and your former wife decide on your own?

    1. informal agreement between former spouses
    2. court action
61. Right now, how often are your child support payments scheduled: weekly, every 2 weeks, monthly?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Every 2 Weeks</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

62. During the last year, have you made the scheduled payments?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

63. During the last year, estimate the number of child support payments you have made in full. In other words, of the scheduled payments, estimate the number of payments you have made in full.

Response: ________ IF ALL SCHEDULED PAYMENTS PAID IN FULL, PROCEED TO QUESTION # 69.

64. During the last year, were there times when you paid only part of the child support payment?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IF "NO" PROCEED TO QUESTION #67.

65. I'd like you to estimate the number of times you have made only part of a child support payment.

Response: _______

66. When paying part of a child support payment, which of the following fractions best estimates the size of the payment: one-fourth, one-third, one-half, three-fourth?

| 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 4 |

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
67. Have you failed to make any child support payments in a typical year since your divorce?

   NO   YES
   1    2    IF "NO" PROCEED TO QUESTION #69.

68. Estimate the number of times you have failed to make a child support payment.

   Response: _______

OK, THAT'S ALL I NEED TO ASK ABOUT FINANCIAL SUPPORT. NOW I HAVE A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CHILDREN.

ASK IF CHILD-RELATED EXPENSES ARE SHARED:

69. When the children are living with their mother do you and the children visit?

   NO   YES
   1    2    IF "NO" PROCEED TO QUESTION #72.

70. How often do you visit the children?

   1. daily
   2. 2-3 times a week
   3. weekly
   4. every 2 weeks
   5. monthly
   6. every few months
   7. only during summer months
   8. never

71. On the average, how long are the visitation periods?

   1. few minutes
   2. 1-2 hours
   3. half day
   4. whole day
   5. weekend
   6. week
   7. more than a week
   8. there are none

72. How often do you talk to them on the telephone?

   1. daily
   2. 2-3 times a week
   3. weekly
   4. monthly
   5. every few months
   6. never

73. How often do you send cards, letters, notes, or postcards?

   1. weekly
   2. every 2 weeks
   3. monthly
   4. every few months
   5. yearly
   6. never
THIS LAST SECTION WILL INCLUDE BACKGROUND QUESTIONS.

74. Were you married before your marriage to your former wife?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO</th>
<th>YES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IF "NO" PROCEED TO QUESTION #76.

75. How many times?
Response: ___________

76. Was your former wife married before her marriage to you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO</th>
<th>YES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IF "NO" PROCEED TO QUESTION #78.

77. How many times?
Response: ___________

78. How long were married to her?
Response: ______________

79. Have you remarried?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO</th>
<th>YES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IF "NO" PROCEED TO QUESTION #81.

80. How long have you been remarried?
Response: __________

81. Has your former wife remarried?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO</th>
<th>YES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IF "NO" PROCEED TO QUESTION #83.

82. How long has she been remarried?
Response: __________

83. How many children do you and your former wife have?
Response: __________
84. How many children do you and your current wife have?
Response: ___________

85. Have you moved since the initial separation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO</th>
<th>YES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IF "NO" PROCEED TO QUESTION #87.

86. How many times?

Response: ___________

87. In what city or town do your former wife and children live?

Response: ___________

88. How many miles is this from you?

Response: ___________ (IF RESPONSE IS MORE THAN 50 MILES, ASK QUESTION #89.)

89. Do you and your former wife share transporting the children for their visits with you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO</th>
<th>YES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

90. What is your highest educational level?

1. grade school or less
2. some high school
3. high school graduate
4. non-college training
5. some college
6. college graduate
7. some graduate work
8. graduate degree

91. What is your occupation? Response: ___________

1. professional
2. managerial/owner
3. clerical/sales
4. skilled laborer/farmer
5. unskilled laborer
92. Considering all your sources of income, what is your annual income after taxes for the present year?

1. less than $10,000
2. $10,000 to $20,000
3. $21,000 to $30,000
4. $31,000 to $40,000
5. $41,000 to $50,000
6. $51,000 to $60,000
7. $61,000 to $70,000
8. $71,000 to $80,000
9. $81,000 to $90,000
10. $91,000 to $100,000

93. Would you like a summary of the final results?

NO YES
1 2

Thank you for taking the time to answer my questions. I really appreciate it. If you have any questions feel free to call me at 974-5316 during the day.

92. Respondent’s level of hostility and suspicion:

LOW MEDIUM HIGH
1 2 3
APPENDIX C

EXPLORATORY LONGITUDINAL EXTENSION STUDY
I. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

In the main text of this dissertation, the prediction of fathers' child support compliance from the QFSR and psychological presence was examined using cross-sectional data. Cross-sectional analyses are useful in identifying covariation and testing certain theoretical propositions, but they cannot provide information describing processes over time. Longitudinal studies can provide information describing processes over time (Babbie, 1986). Because this present study was part of a larger research project on marital dissolution and adjustment, it was possible to explore the longitudinal relationship between the QFSR and fathers' child support compliance and to assess the QFSR over time. For a portion of the sample, data were available on three dimensions of the QFSR (conflict, cooperation, and indirect competition) at 5 months postseparation. A postseparation measure of psychological presence was not available because it was not a focus of the original study.

As noted in the main text, researchers have studied the relationship between the QFSR and child support compliance since the mid-1980s (Kurdek, 1986; Pearson & Thoennes, 1988; Peterson, 1987; Spanier & Thompson, 1984; Wallerstein & Huntington, 1983; Wright & Price, 1986). However, few researchers have investigated the longitudinal relationship between the QFSR and child support compliance. Accordingly, the first purpose of these exploratory analyses was to examine the longitudinal relationship between the QFSR and fathers' child support compliance.
Researchers have provided valuable descriptive "snapshots" of the QFSR variously in the divorce process (Ahrons, 1981, 1983; Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987; Goldsmith, 1980; Kurdek & Blisk, 1983; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980), but few have assessed the QFSR over time. Little is known about underlying processes that function to maintain or alter former spouse relations over time. Thus, the second purpose of these exploratory analyses was to examine the QFSR over time. Because no one has investigated whether the QFSR varies by compliance status, the third purpose was to examine the QFSR over time in relation to compliance.

Quality of the Former Spouse Relationship Over Time and Child Support Compliance

(Refer to pages 3-7 of main text for theoretical rationale and conceptual definitions.)

Few researchers have investigated the longitudinal relationship between the QFSR and fathers' child support compliance. Two researchers have examined retrospectively the longitudinal relationship between coparental conflict and fathers' child support compliance. Kurdek (1986) found that mothers who reported low levels of preseparation conflict received payments with greater regularity than those who reported high levels. Peterson (1987) reported that coparental conflict at separation was related negatively to recipiency and amount of support received. Only Pearson and Thoennes (1988) have investigated the association between child support compliance and coparental cooperation and competition over time. They reported that coparental competition predicted the amount of paid child support.
Fathers who denigrated their former wives in front of the children paid a smaller portion of child support. These researchers also found that the more cooperative the former spouse relationship, the more child support fathers paid.

In sum, longitudinal research on this topic is limited and previous studies lacked a conceptual framework to delineate different dimensions of the QFSR. However, based on this scant empirical evidence and conflict theory, it was hypothesized that coparental conflict at Time 1 (about 5 months postseparation) would be unrelated to the likelihood of fathers' complying with child support orders at Time 2 (3 years postdivorce). Second, it was hypothesized that indirect coparental competition at Time 1 would be related to the likelihood of fathers' complying with child support orders at Time 2. Third, it was hypothesized that coparental cooperation at Time 1 would be related to the likelihood of fathers' complying with child support orders at Time 2.

Quality of the Former Spouse Relationship Over Time

Each measure has been assigned to a category using the three dimensions of the QFSR defined earlier in this paper. Findings are discussed under the topic deemed appropriate regardless of the terminology used by the original author.

Maccoby, Depner, and Mnookin (1990) found that postseparation coparental conflict predicted the coparenting relations reported two years postdivorce. Parents reporting low conflict at 6 months postseparation were either "cooperative" or "disengaged" 18 months later; parents reporting high conflict were "conflicted."
Nelson (1990) studied the relationship between direct competition at separation and direct competition 2 to 3 years later and found that direct competition at separation predicted direct competition 2 to 3 years later. However, indirect competition has not been investigated. Although it is likely the two dimensions of competition are related and thus may develop similarly over time, the stability of indirect competition needs to be examined.

Despite the common sense assumption that cooperation is necessary for an effective and smoothly functioning coparental relationship, its longitudinal stability has not been investigated. This absence reflects both the unidimensional conceptualization of the QFSR and the concurrent emphasis on negative interaction that are typical in divorce research (Trotter, 1989).

In sum, the longitudinal stability of the QFSR needs to be investigated. Available studies reflect an emphasis on coparental conflict and negative interaction. In the present study, the longitudinal stability of coparental conflict, indirect competition, and cooperation were examined. This study was guided by two research question "How stable is the QFSR over time?" and "Does the stability of the QFSR vary for compliant and noncompliant fathers?"
II. METHODOLOGY

Sample

The Time 1 data were collected as part of an evaluation study of a prevention-oriented educational program developed for divorcing parents. Child and Family Services of Knox County has conducted the Orientation for Divorcing Parents (ODP) program under the aegis of a local judge since 1984. In 1986 (Time 1), the ODP program was evaluated using a quasi-experimental design; participants were self-selected because ODP attendance was voluntary. The evaluation plan involved the self-administration of a mail survey by program participants and nonparticipants. In total, 878 surveys—633 to nonparticipants and 245 to participants—were mailed. See Buehler (1989) for details on sample and data collection. The survey was completed by 148 participants, including 55 fathers. Limited funding reduced nonparticipant response to 99, including 34 fathers. Combining responses from participants and nonparticipants, 89 separated/divorced fathers responded to the mail survey.6

Of the 89 separated/divorced fathers who responded to the survey at Time 1, 54 met the following criteria at Time 2 (an average of 39 months postdivorce): (a) the divorce had occurred (the case had not been dismissed or closed by an order of reconciliation), (b) the mother

6Trotter (1989) compared ODP participants and nonparticipants on the QFSR variables and selected demographic variables. There were no differences in coparental conflict, cooperation, and parents’ educational level. Group differences existed for income, length of separation, and indirect coparental competition. ODP participants had a higher mean income, were separated more recently, and were more competitive than nonparticipants.
had physical custody of at least one child, and (c) the father was the designated payer of child support in the final decree. At Time 2, 27 of the 54 eligible fathers were willing to participate in a telephone survey on family relationships in divorced families. Three of the 27 fathers were eliminated from the present study because of incomplete data at Time 1.

Of the 27 fathers who were not interviewed, an inspection of court records showed that 1 had died and 3 had gained physical custody of their children in postdivorce litigation and therefore were no longer obligated to pay child support. Of the remaining 23 fathers, 7 were untraceable and 16 refused to participate. The response rate was 63%.

Sample Characteristics

The sample consisted of 22 white and 2 black fathers whose median length of separation was 5 months ($SD = 11.23$) at Time 1. The age of the fathers at Time 1 ranged from 26 to 51 years, $M = 33$, $SD = 5.55$. Thirteen percent of the fathers had some high school education or less, 8% had received non-college training, 58% had attended some college or were college graduates, and 22% had attended graduate school or had graduate degrees. The fathers tended either to be skilled laborers (38%) or professionals (33%), with 17% managers/owners and 13% salesmen. Ninety-six percent of the fathers were employed, with 40 as the modal number of hours worked per week. The fathers' median net monthly income was $1,100 ($SD = 1,835$), ranging from $88$ to $9,166$ at Time 1. Sixty-seven percent of the fathers described their economic situation as "doing okay" to "up and coming."
The dissolved marriage of focus was the first for 83% of the sample. The duration of marriage ranged from 3 to 26 years \((M = 10, \text{SD} = 5.50)\). Ninety-two percent of the sample had one or two children.

Sample representativeness

Three different procedures were used to evaluate the representativeness of this follow-up sample. First, respondents to both the mail and telephone survey and other fathers from the sampling frame were compared on demographic data (e.g., age, income, education level) taken from court records. There were no group differences.

Second, respondents to both the mail and telephone surveys and respondents only to the mail survey were compared on their perceptions of the QFSR variables and demographic data from the mail survey and court records. There were no group differences.

Third, respondents to both the mail and telephone surveys and other respondents to the mail survey were compared on demographic data taken from the telephone survey. Again, there were no group differences.

Time 2 Data Collection Procedures

(Refer to pages 13-15 in main text.)

Time 1 Measures

Quality of the Former Spouse Relationship

(Because Time 1 and Time 2 QFSR measures have similar psychometric properties, refer to pages 16-19 of main text for descriptions of the Time 2 of coparental conflict, indirect competition, and cooperation.)
Time 2 Measures

(Refer to pages 15-16 of the main text for description of the child support compliance.)

Quality of the Former Spouse Relationship

The indirect coparental competition measure and abbreviated versions of the coparental conflict and cooperation measures were readministered at Time 2. The two measures were shortened to accommodate the telephone interview format. The retention of specific items was based on high factor loadings in a previous factor analysis (Trotter, 1989) and the results of a pilot study conducted at Time 2. Cronbach's alphas for coparental conflict and cooperation were .86 and .84, respectively.

Social Desirability

(Refer to pages 22-24 of main text for description of social desirability.)

Control Variables

(Refer to page 25 of main text for description of control variables.)

Data Analysis

Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) repeated measures analysis (O'Brien & Kaiser, 1985) was used to examine the QFSR over time and to compare the QFSR over time for compliant and noncompliant fathers. In this analysis, Time 1 scores are subtracted from Time 2 scores to give the amount of change over time. The amount of change
over time is the dependent variable (e.g., coparental conflict) and compliance status (compliant/noncompliant) is the independent variable. A significant $F$ for the independent variable means that the amount of change differed for the two groups. A unique feature of this statistical technique is the capacity to test whether the amount of change in the dependent variable is significant for the entire sample regardless of compliance status. A significant $F$ for the constant means that the entire sample changed over time.

(Refer to pages 25-26 of main text for description of other analyses.)
III. RESULTS

Intercorrelations, means, and standard deviations for the independent variables at Time 1 are presented in Table C-1. The values ranged from .03 (coparental conflict and cooperation) to -.46 (coparental cooperation and indirect competition). None of the correlations were large enough among the independent variables to present a problem with multicollinearity.

At 5 months postseparation, the separated/divorced fathers in this sample described their relationships with their wives in relatively favorable terms (see Table C-1). As a group, the fathers characterized these relationships with their wives as moderately conflicted, $M = 2.40$, $SD = 1.02$, as relatively noncompetitive, $M = 10.71$, $SD = 3.91$, and as relatively cooperative, $M = 3.81$, $SD = .83$.

The first purpose of this study was to investigate the longitudinal effects of the QFSR on fathers' child support compliance. The results of the logistic regression analysis predicting the likelihood of fathers' child support compliance are presented in Table C-2. As hypothesized, coparental conflict at Time 1 was not related to the likelihood of fathers' child support compliance at Time 2. Contrary to hypotheses, neither coparental cooperation nor indirect competition at Time 1 was related to the likelihood of fathers' compliance with child support orders at Time 2, although coparental cooperation was only marginally nonsignificant.

The second purpose of the study was to assess the QFSR over time. The repeated measures analyses are presented in Table C-3. Separated/divorced fathers' perceptions of coparental conflict, $F(1, 22) = .75$, 


Table C-1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Zero-Order Correlations Among Quality of the Former Spouse Relationship Variables at Time 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Coparental conflict</td>
<td></td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Indirect coparental competition</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-.46*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Coparental cooperation</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>10.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard deviation</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 24.

*p = .03.
Table C-2
Logistic Regression Analysis for Child Support Compliance with Quality of the Former Spouse Relationship Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Standard error</th>
<th>( \chi^2 )</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coparental conflict</td>
<td>-1.24</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect coparental competition</td>
<td>-0.40</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coparental cooperation</td>
<td>-3.94</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>25.03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood ratio</td>
<td>13.87</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>df</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table C-3
Mean Change in Quality of the Former Spouse Relationship Variables from Time 1 to Time 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Means of change scores</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compliant Fathers</td>
<td>Noncompliant Fathers</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coparental conflict</td>
<td>0.04 (1.31)</td>
<td>-0.59 (1.16)</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect coparental</td>
<td>1.16 (4.35)</td>
<td>2.40 (5.73)</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>competition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coparental cooperation</td>
<td>-.03 (.85)</td>
<td>-1.69 (1.09)</td>
<td>13.28*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** Standard deviations are in parentheses.

*Test of constant indicating overall group change.

*p = .002.  **p = .001.
$p = .40$, and indirect competition, $F(1, 22) = 2.34, p = .14$, did not change from Time 1 to Time 2. Separated/divorced fathers' perceived that coparental cooperation decreased over time, $F(1, 21) = 14.35, p = .001$.

The third purpose of the study was to compare the QFSR over time for compliant and noncompliant fathers. The mean change in compliant and noncompliant fathers' perceptions of coparental conflict from Time 1 to Time 2, $F(1, 22) = .96, p = .34$, and indirect competition, $F(1, 22) = .28, p = .60$, did not differ (see Table C-3). Compliant and noncompliant fathers' perceptions of coparental cooperation from Time 1 to Time 2 differed, with noncompliant fathers experiencing a greater decline, $F(1, 21) = 13.28, p = .002$. See Table C-4 for the means of the QFSR variables at Time 1 and Time 2.
Table C-4
Means of Quality of the Former Spouse Relationship Variables at Time 1 and Time 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>E</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compliant Fathers</td>
<td>Noncompliant Fathers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coparental conflict</td>
<td>2.23 (0.93)</td>
<td>3.06 (1.20)</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect coparental competition</td>
<td>10.63 (4.03)</td>
<td>11.00 (3.81)</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coparental cooperation</td>
<td>3.52 (0.97)</td>
<td>4.33 (0.75)</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coparental conflict</td>
<td>2.26 (0.68)</td>
<td>2.47 (1.04)</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect coparental competition</td>
<td>11.79 (2.94)</td>
<td>13.40 (4.28)</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coparental cooperation</td>
<td>3.42 (0.80)</td>
<td>2.64 (0.92)</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** Standard deviations are in parentheses.
IV. DISCUSSION

Before discussion of the major findings, it is important to recognize that these supplementary results are limited because of the small sample size. However, this study is still worth consideration because the sample is relatively unbiased. Three different procedures were used to evaluate representativeness. The 24 respondents on both the mail and telephone surveys were compared with (a) the other fathers on the sampling frame, (b) the respondents to the mail survey who were nonrespondents to the telephone survey, and (c) the other telephone survey respondents on selected variables (e.g., age, annual income, and education level). The results of these sets of comparisons did not reflect any differences between the respondents and any of the three comparison groups.

(Refer to pages 31-32 of main text for additional limitations.)

Empirical findings reflect the complexity of the QFSR construct. It is evident that some dimensions of the QFSR are more important than others for redefining and restructuring various postdivorce family relations. For example, coparental competition is a most important predictor of children's social competence (Buehler & Trotter, 1990), whereas coparental cooperation influences fathers' child support compliance.

The findings from these additional analyses are consistent with the relationship between coparental cooperation and child support compliance and provide insight into the nature of coparental cooperation over time. The results of the logistic regression analysis suggested a relationship between coparental cooperation and child
support compliance. The relationship was nonsignificant, but a trend in the data indicated that cooperative former spouse relations at Time 1 increase the likelihood of fathers' complying with child support orders at Time 2. The similarity of compliant and noncompliant fathers' perception of coparental cooperation at Time 1 may have contributed to the nonsignificant findings. At Time 1, noncompliant fathers perceived their relations with their wives as more cooperative than did compliant fathers ($M = 4.33$ and 3.52, respectively), although the difference was nonsignificant. Replicating the study with a larger sample might result in significant findings.

Given that coparental cooperation declined from Time 1 to Time 2 for the entire sample, the nature of coparental cooperation may be seen as very different for compliant and noncompliant fathers. At Time 1, compliant fathers characterized relations with their wives as moderately cooperative and at Time 2 maintained that perception of moderate coparental cooperation. The negative mean change in perceived coparental cooperation from Time 1 to Time 2 of .03 represents a negligible decline. For practical purposes, compliant fathers' perception of coparental cooperation seems to remain unchanged over time. Unlike compliant fathers, however, noncompliant fathers perceived a dramatic decrease in coparental cooperation over time. Former spouse relations characterized as "often" cooperative at Time 1 diminish to "seldom" cooperative at Time 2. Thus, the findings of the repeated measures analysis suggest a relationship between the amount of change in coparental cooperation over time and child support compliance at Time 2. A minimal negative change in coparental cooperation is associated with fathers' complying with child support orders and a
considerable decrease in coparental cooperation is related to fathers' noncompliance with child support orders.

Present findings describe the nature of coparental cooperation for compliant and noncompliant fathers but do not address the issue of causality. Does coparental cooperation influence child support compliance or vice versa? Additional research is needed to facilitate better understanding of the direction of influence between coparental cooperation and child support compliance.

Future researchers also will need to study how and why divorced couples maintain cooperative relations over time. Such knowledge would be helpful to professionals who have contact with divorcing families. Divorce therapists and family counselors can plan intervention programs for divorcing couples that include information on building and maintaining cooperative former spouse relations. Lawyers can avoid the use of adversarial tactics and instead encourage their clients to cooperate with their spouses.

The study focused on the child support compliance of ever-married fathers. Further research is needed on never-married fathers and obligated mothers. The findings of these additional analyses may or may not be relevant to these obligors.
REFERENCES


Catherine Margaret Ryan was born in Cleveland, Ohio, on May 18, 1950. She graduated from Lourdes Academy in June, 1968. She received her Bachelor of Science degree from Loyola University of Chicago in June 1972, with a major in psychology. In September of that year, she began graduate work in the Department of Child Development at Iowa State University and received her Master of Science degree in November 1974.

From 1974 to 1976, she directed the University of Dubuque Day Care Center in Dubuque, Iowa. The following 10 years she was the Coordinator of the Child Care and Development Program at Rock Valley College, a community college in Rockford, Illinois. In the fall of 1986, she entered the graduate program at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She received her Doctor of Philosophy degree, with a major in Human Ecology in May 1991.

She is a member of the National Council of Family Relations, American Home Economics Association, American Sociological Association, and Kappa Omicron Nu.