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RESEARCH UPDATE REVIEW

Children's Adjustment in Conflicted Marriage and Divorce: A  
Decade Review of Research

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## ABSTRACT

### Objectives

To review important research of the past decade in divorce, marital conflict, and children's adjustment and to describe newer divorce interventions.

### Method

Key empirical studies from 1990 to 1999 were surveyed regarding the impact of marital conflict, parental violence, and divorce on the psychological adjustment of children, adolescents, and young adults.

### Results

Recent studies investigating the impact of divorce on children have found that many of

the psychological symptoms seen in children of divorce can be accounted for in the years before divorce. The past decade also has seen a large increase in studies assessing complex variables within the marriage which profoundly affect child and adolescent adjustment, including marital conflict and violence and related parenting behaviors. This newer literature provides provocative and helpful information for forensic and clinical psychiatrists in their work with both married and divorcing families.

## Conclusions

While children of divorced parents, as a group, have more adjustment problems than do children of never-divorced parents, the view that divorce per se is the major cause of these symptoms must be reconsidered in light of newer research documenting the negative effects of troubled marriages on children.



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## Key Words

divorce; marital conflict; child adjustment; parent-child relationships; visiting; divorce interventions

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*This series of 10-year updates in child and adolescent psychiatry began in July 1996. Topics are selected in consultation with the AACAP Committee on Recertification, both for the importance of new research and its clinical or developmental significance. The authors have been asked to place an asterisk before the 5 or 6 most seminal references.*

*M.K.D.*

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