

THE RELATION OF SEPARATED HOME BACKGROUND
TO STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE
SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

by

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ABSTRACT

The effect of separated home background on students' perception of the school environment as measured by the School Environment Assessment Scales (SEAS) is explored. Three hypotheses are advanced. The first proposes that students from separated homes will have a different perception of the school environment when compared with students of intact homes. The second suggests that there will be a difference in perception depending on the age of the student when parental separation took place. The third hypothesis indicates that there will be a difference in perception between male and female students of separated homes.

In the first part of the study, 120 students from separated homes are compared with 120 students from intact homes. Results from this comparison demonstrate that there is a statistically significant difference at the .01 probability level between these two groups of students on Authoritarian Press, one of the eight SEAS scales. Contrary to expectations, students from separated homes perceived the school environment as less authoritarian. On the seven remaining SEAS scales, there is no statistically significant difference between these two groups. However, there is some indication that students from separated homes perceived a few more aspects of the school environment in a more favorable way. This more positive per-

ception, even though conjectural in nature, cannot be neglected; implications of this trend are explored.

In the second part of the study, intra-group comparisons on 117 students from separated homes on two variables, age at onset of parental separation and sex, are examined. There is no statistically significant difference on any of the SEAS scales between students whose parents separated when they were age 0 - 6, and students who were over age 6. On the variable sex, the female group scored significantly higher on two scales. On the Heterosexual Social Expression Scale, the level of significance reached the .01 level. On the Creative Self-Expression Scale, the level of significance reached the .05 level. Females perceived themselves as being more encouraged to interact with members of the opposite sex, and as being more encouraged to express themselves creatively. On the other six SEAS scales, there is no statistically significant difference between male and female groups.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The number of children from homes where parents have separated is increasing. Benjamin Schlesinger, in the 'Family Coordinator', 1973, estimated that about nine percent of Canadian children come from one-parent homes.¹ In 'Social Trends in Greater Vancouver', which is a detailed demographic study of this area, Michele Lioy found that single parent families accounted for ten percent of the families living in the Greater Vancouver Region and District in 1971.² Their distribution in the region was concentrated in Vancouver City and New Westminster. In New Westminster, where this research took place, single parent families, as a percentage of total number of families, was approximately fourteen percent. A map outlining the various percentages of single parent families in the GVRD area is included as Appendix A. In her conclusion, Michele Lioy wrote that single mothers, who accounted for more than eighty percent of single parent family heads, are becoming more readily accepted by society. The trend today appears to be away from thinking of the two parent family as being the only viable setting in which to rear children, especially when serious, traumatic conflicts emerge between mother and father. Under these circumstances, it is thought that a

healthier environment for the psychological growth of the child is provided when arrangements are made for the child to live with one parent.³.

A large portion of children in our school system come from separated homes. Much of the literature, discussed later, dealing with children of separated homes hypothesizes that children's perception is affected by parental conflict and separation when little or no helping intervention is offered them. This report is an investigation of the relation between these children's perception of the psychological climate of their school and their separated home background. The psychological climate of the school is an environmental factor affecting the interactions of students in this social structure. According to Murray, a person's behavior is influenced by his unique personality characteristics, called needs, and by his perception of the properties in the environment, which he termed beta press. If students from separated homes, as a group, perceive the school environment differently from that of other students, a divergence of behavior may be expected. It is important, then, to discover how students of separated homes perceive the psychological climate of the school. An assessment of their perceptions in this environment could help define how the school might be instrumental in facilitating positive behavioral patterns.

Statement of the Problem

Basically, there are two parts to this study. In part one, the problem, stated in question form, is: Do students from separated homes perceive the psychological climate of their school environment, as measured by the School Environment Assessment Scales, differently from students of intact homes? In part two, the study explores possible age and sex differences which may exist among students of separated homes in their perception of the school environment. The problem, in this intra-group analysis, stated in question form, is: Is there a difference among students of separated homes in their perception of the psychological climate of the school environment, as measured by the School Environment Assessment Scales, depending on the student's age at onset of parental separation, and/or on the sex of the student? In a broad sense, the study seeks to answer the question: What is the relation between students' perception of the psychological climate of the school environment, as measured by the SEAS, and the type of home background?

Definition of Terms

A definition of terms will help clarify the ideas presented in this paper.

1. Psychological Climate:

This term refers to the psychological characteristics, as defined by the School Environment Assessment Scales, of the educational system, and more specifically, to the student's perception of these characteristics. As noted previously, Murray coined this perception, beta press.

2. Students from Separated Homes:

Students of grades eight and nine whose parents (legally married or having lived common-law) do not live together due to separation, divorce or desertion.

3. Students from Intact Homes:

Students of grades eight and nine who live with both parents (legally married or living common-law).

4. Student's Age at Onset of Parental Separation:

This phrase refers to the age of the child when parental separation (physical separation) took place.

Instrumentation

The School Environment Assessment Scales, referred to as SEAS in this study, was developed by R. Tolsma and G. Hopper in 1972.⁴ Basically, the SEAS measures the psychological climate of a school as perceived by students. Using Murray's terminology, it measures beta press. Various

dimensions of perception within the high school environment are explored.

This 81-item instrument allows students to respond to their perception of behaviors dealing with school experience. The test is divided into two parts: the first involves making responses on a five-point Likert-type scale from "almost never" to "almost always", and the second, from "almost none" to "almost all". The SEAS is comprised of eight separate scales, which are defined below.

1. Scholarly Affect: This dimension of the environment is characterized by a positive regard between student and teacher. Students perceive the teachers as possessing such attributes as fairness, interest, and respect. These characteristics of the faculty help create a climate in which there is an affect for learning. High scores on this factor seem to indicate that many faculty members behaviorally express to the students the philosophy, "We're interested in you and seek to help you develop your academic potentials."

2. Parental Climate: This type of environment is perceived by students as being parental in the sense that an attitude of shoulds and should-nots prevails. Faculty members tend to moralize with students. They are right and wise and therefore should be obeyed. Faculty members behaviorally express to students the philosophy, "We know what is right for you so you should do as we direct you to do".

3. Heterosexual Social Expression: Males and females mix freely in this type of environment. They are encouraged to interact with members of the opposite sex. There is heterosexual social interaction and an absence of cliques based primarily on gender.

4. School Spirit: The school climate fosters an enthusiasm, a vigour for school events. There is a feeling of "esprit de corps". School spirit is a behavioral expression by the student body of a patriotic like loyalty toward the school.

5. Activity: Students perceive the school environment as providing opportunities to engage in a variety of pursuits. The press is one of activity, dynamics, movement, providing numerous outlets for student energies.

6. Authoritarian Press: This press has a Spartan like quality. Activities are performed under threat of punishment for non-compliance. Discipline and the threat of discipline is an omnipresent dynamic. The faculty expresses behaviorally the philosophy, "You will do as I tell you....or else".

7. Creative Self-Expression: This environment encourages students to express themselves creatively. They are encouraged to utilize their intellectual, manual, and artistic potentials. This environmental press may help students actualize in many dimensions.

8. Social Order: An environmental press encouraging socially acceptable behavior as opposed to anti-social or delinquent behavior. Schools in which students have indicated a less than moderate press for social order have a number of students who are acting against the prevailing perceived environment. Students behaviorally express their disenchantment by transgressing against the school establishment. A low social order press indicates there is a press for delinquent and anti-establishment sentiment by students. Student feelings of hostility are behaviorally expressed in the aggressive forms of destruction and disruption.

Reliability coefficient estimates, arrived at from average inter-item correlations, were tested by its authors at the time that the SEAS was developed. Their findings, as well as reliability coefficient estimates for the specific group examined in this study, are reported in Appendix B. The specific items under each SEAS scale, and the factor loading of each item, are presented as Appendix C. Items for the SEAS are scored by giving each item of the test a value from

one to five when the factor loading indicated in Appendix C is positive, and a value from five to one when the factor loading indicated in Appendix C is negative. The sum of the item scores for each scale is then calculated. To find the average scale scores for respondents, the sum of the item scores is divided by the number of items in each scale. To find the group means for each scale, average scale scores across individuals are added and then divided by the number of respondents.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

General Review

What is the rationale for believing that the perception of students from separated homes will differ from students of intact homes? A review of the literature in this field indicates that children of separated homes are seriously affected by a change in structure involving the family unit. The possible negative influences on the child's perception of himself, his family and the world at large, at the time of parental break-up and later in life, are emphasized. Helpful intervention from parents, friends and professionals is strongly suggested.

Irving R. Stuart and Lawrence Edwin Abt, editors of 'Children of Separation and Divorce' suggest that both the challenges the children face and the difficulties they must resolve become magnified for children of separated homes. Comparing interviews with young children and adolescents, Stuart and Abt conclude: "Although the problems faced by the younger children appear to them to be different, an examination of the perceptions of the older group shows that as the children grow older, many of their earlier perceptions of their parents are retained, and many of the problems persist and remain unresolved

in adolescence."⁵ Dr. Hanna E. Kapit refers to feelings of insecurity, rejection, guilt, resentment, bitterness, aloneness and fear which might be evoked in children of separated parents. While Dr. Kapit stresses that each family break-up situation differs, resolution of feelings within the child must be dealt with by the parents or by professionals or by both parties. In Adlerian fashion, Dr. Kapit concludes that the child's first world, that of his family, is usually the sample he carries along into adulthood and uses to judge the whole world. His perception of the world, at later stages in life, is influenced by the perception of his earlier experience; therefore, it is important to understand and help the child who has been subjected to a disturbed family relationship.⁶

In a taped interview with CBC, Dr. Richard A. Gardner, emphasizing that each child reacts differently to his parents' separation, mentions feelings of depression and anger as being salient in the child. Again, the manner in which these feelings are handled, it is thought, helps or hinders the child's psychological growth.⁷ John Bowlby, in a comprehensive volume entitled 'Separation', 1972, refers to anger and anxiety as being aroused in a child or adult after a period of separation from a loved object. He also contends that threats of separation or other forms of rejection elicit these feelings. Bowlby furthers his ideas: "Because of the tendency for anger and hostility

directed towards a loved person to be repressed and/or redirected elsewhere (displaced), and for anger to be attributed to others instead of to the self (projected), and for other reasons too, the pattern and balance of responses directed towards an attachment figure can become greatly distorted and tangled. Furthermore, because models of attachment figures and expectations about their behavior are built up during the years of childhood and tend, thenceforth, to remain unchanged, the behavior of a person today may be explicable in terms, not of his present situation, but of his experiences many years earlier".⁸ The effect of the early experience on a child's future perception and behavior is accentuated. Implicit here is the need for intelligent and empathic intervention in aiding the person undergoing the stress of separation, as a way of facilitating his psychological adjustment to the change as well as ensuring his psychological growth in the future.

While the above named authors do not hold the exact, same views on the reactions of children from separated homes, nevertheless there are some similarities among them that deserve consideration. There is agreement that there are deep affective reactions when parental separation takes place. It would appear that negative feelings such as anger, depression, anxiety, rejection, guilt, fear, aloneness, play major roles

in the individual's psychological make-up. These feelings are described as 'negative' in that they are considered to lessen the child's ability to cope with life situations. Unless these feelings are properly resolved at the time of separation, or at a later date, the individual carries these emotions with him, often unwittingly, throughout his life. It is thought that as the individual perceived, and thus reacted to his family situation, he will perceive and react to the world at large in a similar way. The feelings mentioned, it is conjectured, affect the child's perception of the family, and on a larger scale, of the community. Thus, two themes surface from the readings dealing with children of separated homes: the children have strong affective reactions to separation, and their perception of the environment is changed if little or no effort is made to help them confront and resolve their feelings and perceptions. The focus of this study centers around the perception of children from separated homes in one of the major community environments in which they are placed, namely, the school environment. Their responses to the SEAS, according to theoretical concepts, should differ from responses given by students of intact homes.

Two pertinent variables, age at onset of separation and sex of student, are considered in this study. Henry Biller,

a leading authority on paternal deprivation, strongly suggests that these variables be taken into account when studying children from separated homes, since they appear to affect the child in a potent manner.⁹ The younger the age of the child at onset of separation, the greater will be his reaction to parental breakup. A difference in responses to the SEAS can be anticipated between children who underwent early separation and those who underwent later separation. Males are thought to be more seriously affected by parental break-up because their loss is usually that of an identification figure, the father. A difference in responses to the SEAS can be anticipated between male and female students of separated homes.

Specific Review

Many studies have been conducted which relate perception of school environment and certain variables. The variable in question in this study, the effect of separated home background on the students' perception of school environment was examined in 1966 by A. C. Caudill, using the High School Characteristics Index (HSCI). No statistically significant differences were found. Caudill, in an unpublished doctoral dissertation, studied many variables using the HSCI.

without finding statistically significant differences involving the variables socio-economic status, aptitude, religion.

He did find statistically significant differences with the variables sex, and activity level in one of four groups.

His findings with four of six variables were not statistically significant. These findings contradict other studies, especially on the variables aptitude and socio-economic status.

There appear to be no other studies relating perception of school environment with separated home background. The general inconsistencies of many reports relating perception of school environment and certain variables must be challenged so as to produce a more realistic picture of what is happening.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

Hypotheses

The hypotheses for this study, stated in null form are as follows:

Hypothesis One:

There are no statistically significant differences between students of separated homes and students of intact homes in their perception of the school environment as measured by the SEAS.

Hypothesis Two:

There are no statistically significant differences in perception of the school environment, as measured by the SEAS, among students of separated homes, based on age at onset of separation.

Hypothesis Three:

There are no statistically significant differences in perception of the school environment, as measured by the SEAS, among students of separated homes, based on sex of the students.

Each of the null hypotheses is rejected when the difference referred to is of such magnitude as to exceed the chance findings at the .05 probability level ($p \leq .05$).

Design

This study is descriptive in nature. The independent variable, the separation of parents, was established before the SEAS was administered. In the first part of the study, the paradigm is:

(X)	Y	Experimental group
(-X)	Y	Control group

(Design 18.4, F. Kerlinger)

where,

(X) is broken home background

(-X) is intact home background

Y is scores on the SEAS scales.

In the second part of the study, intra-group comparisons among students of separated homes is made according to age at onset of separation and sex.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) design is used to statistically test hypothesis one with 'type of home' being the independent variable:

Type of Home

Intact

Separated

--	--

Since the number of students from intact homes will be greater than that of separated homes, equal numbers are established by randomly selecting an equal number of students from intact homes.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) design is used to statistically test hypothesis two with 'age at onset of parental separation' being the independent variable:

Age at Onset of Parental Separation

0 - 6

6+

--	--

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) design is used to statistically test hypothesis three with 'sex' being the independent variable:

Sex

Male

Female

--	--

While no interactional effects between age at onset of parental separation and sex are hypothesized, these effects are tested. No statistically significant interactional effect is detected.

Methodology

The SEAS was administered to students in grades eight and nine of a large high school at the end of May, 1976. These grades formed a large body of students so that cell sizes for the design requirements would be met. It was thought that students in both grade levels would have had time to formulate impressions of the school by the end of that month; most students would have spent nine months or more in this school.

The SEAS was given to 595 students in grades eight and nine; 36 teachers participated in administering the SEAS to their classes. It is estimated that most students in these grades at the high school were tested; four homeroom classes (two from each grade) were not tested because these classes were taking physical education during testing time; providing desks and chairs for these students was not feasible. It is thought that this omission did not seriously alter test results as there is no reason to believe that this latter group of students would differ from the tested students.

Each homeroom teacher received written instructions (Appendix D) regarding the administration of the test. Each student was provided with a questionnaire (Appendix E), a SEAS test and an I.B.M. answer sheet. The questionnaire defined the status of each student: type of home, sex, age at onset of parental separation when appropriate. Since anonymity was maintained for all students, the questionnaire and I.B.M. answer sheet were numerically paired in order to identify which questionnaire would be considered with each I.B.M. answer sheet. All tests were given to students by their teachers in their homeroom classes during the first period of the day. It can be assumed that the administration of the test was given under normal class conditions. No time limit was imposed on students.

Of the 595 paired answer sheets and questionnaires received, 544 or 91.42 percent were appropriately answered. The number of unuseable test results was 51: 19 answer sheets were incomplete, 15 questionnaires did not clearly indicate the type of home that the student came from, 9 answer sheets were incorrectly marked, 6 questionnaires indicated a refusal to respond, and 2 questionnaires indicated the death of a parent.

The number of students coming from separated homes was 120 of 544 or 22.05 percent. It would appear that one out

of every five students in these grade levels at this school was from a separated home. Of this latter group, 100 students or 83.3 percent indicated that they lived with their mothers, 11 students or 9.16 percent indicated that they lived with their fathers, and 9 students or 7.5 percent indicated that they lived in other situations. These incidence figures differ from those of the 1971 census for this area, and are probably an indication of the expected results of the incidence figures, yet to be published, based on the census taken in June, 1976.

All of the 120 subjects from separated homes were included in the first part of the study, comparing students of intact and separated homes. Of the remaining 424 students from intact homes, 120 students were randomly selected by using a table of random numbers. That status of each group (intact home, separated home) was marked on each I.B.M. sheet for identification purposes. For the second part of the study exploring intra-group comparisons, the status of all students from separated homes was delineated as to the age at onset of parental separation and sex. Three answer sheets of the 120 students from separated homes were omitted because the two variables examined were not included on the questionnaire. Therefore, the total number of students in the latter part of the study was 117.

The I.B.M. answer sheets were optically scanned at the Simon Fraser University Computer Centre, and transferred onto two computer cards per student. These cards were scored at the University of British Columbia Computer Centre. The scores were converted to the eight scale scores of the SEAS for each subject. Means and standard deviations on each scale of the SEAS were computed for each specified group. The BMD:10V Analysis of Variance program was used to test hypotheses.

CHAPTER IV
STATISTICAL RESULTS

The sample consisted of grade eight and nine students. An equal number of students from intact and separated homes was accomplished through a random sampling procedure. The number of students in each group was 120, making the total number of respondents for the first part of the study 240. The number of students from separated homes was twenty-two percent of the students tested.

The number of respondents for the intra-group comparisons between students from separated homes on the two variables, age at onset of separation and sex, was 117. The number and percent of respondents by age at onset of separation and sex are presented in Table I.

Table I

Number and Percent of Respondents by Age at Onset of Parental Separation and by Sex.

<u>Respondent Characteristics</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Age 0 - 6	36	31
Age 6+	81	69
Male	45	38
Female	72	62

There are over twice as many subjects in the study whose parents separated after the subject was age 6 and over, than those whose parents separated before the subject was age 6. There is a larger number of females in the study.

Hypothesis 1

Results of hypothesis one are considered first.

Hypothesis one, stated in null form is as follows: there are no statistically significant differences between students of separated homes and students of intact homes in their perception of the school environment as measured by the SEAS.

The means, standard deviations and average scale scores for students from intact homes and for students from separated homes on each of the eight SEAS scales are reported in Table II.

The number of observations for each scale was 240, 120 for the intact group and 120 for the separated group. Group means for students from separated homes are higher on all scales except for that of Authoritarian Press. Standard deviations indicate that students from separated homes had more heterogeneous responses on all scales as compared with students of intact homes. This consistent heterogeneity could indicate that responses for the separated group were more diverse or more extreme.

TABLE II

Means, Standard Deviations, and Average Scale Scores for
Intact and Separated Groups on the SEAS Scales

<u>SEAS Scales</u>	<u>Intact Group</u>	<u>Separated Group</u>	
(1)			
Scholarly Affect	42.72	42.99	\bar{X}
	6.53	7.29	SD
	3.29	3.31	ASS
(2)			
Parental Climate	25.97	26.11	\bar{X}
	5.07	5.16	SD
	2.60	2.61	ASS
(3)			
Heterosexual Social Expression	21.26	21.75	\bar{X}
	3.62	4.05	SD
	3.54	3.63	ASS
(4)			
School Spirit	25.62	27.03	\bar{X}
	5.91	6.03	SD
	2.85	3.00	ASS
(5)			
Activity	24.50	25.36	\bar{X}
	4.50	5.20	SD
	2.45	2.54	ASS
(6)			
Authoritarian Press	37.04	35.15	\bar{X}
	4.40	5.01	SD
	3.70	3.52	ASS
(7)			
Creative Self- Expression	29.86	31.04	\bar{X}
	5.41	6.11	SD
	2.98	3.10	ASS
(8)			
Social Order	24.16	25.30	\bar{X}
	4.65	5.38	SD
	2.69	2.81	ASS

The results of analysis of differences between the intact and separated home groups on each of the SEAS scales are reported in Table III.

On each of seven SEAS scales, there is no statistically significant difference ($p \leq .05$) between the mean scale scores of the intact and separated groups. Therefore, hypothesis number one cannot be rejected for each of these seven scales. There is a statistically significant difference on one scale. On the sixth scale, Authoritarian Press, the difference between the mean scale scores of the two groups is statistically significant at the .01 level of probability ($p \leq .01$). Students from separated homes have a lower group mean. Even though the level of statistical significance was placed at the .05 level for this study, it is of interest to note that two scales, School Spirit and Social Order fall within the .10 level of statistical significance. Other possible directional trends can be seen in the mean differences on the scales Activity and Creative Self-Expression which are close to the .10 probability level. These four scales are indicated because a pattern of school perception for students from separated homes, even though not statistically significant, can be seen to emerge and will be discussed in Chapter 5.

The Average Scale Scores on each of the SEAS scales for students from intact and separated homes are reported in

TABLE III

Differences in Perception of the School Climate by Students from Intact and Separated Homes

<u>SEAS Scales</u>	<u>Sum of Squares</u>	<u>D.F.</u>	<u>Mean Square</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Prob</u>
(1)					
Scholarly Affect	4.53750	1	4.53750	.09470	.75855
(2)					
Parental Climate	1.20417	1	1.20417	.04601	.83035
(3)					
Heterosexual Social Expression	.14500	1	.14500	.99000	.32200
(4)					
School Spirit	119.00414	1	119.00414	3.33526	.06966
(5)					
Activity	45.06664	1	45.06664	1.90112	.16925
(6)					
Authoritarian Press	212.81658	1	212.81658	9.55887	.00223**
(7)					
Creative Self-Expression	82.83748	1	82.83748	2.48408	.11633
(8)					
Social Order	77.06663	1	77.06663	3.04083	.08249

** Significant at the .01 level of probability ($p \leq .01$)

Figure 1. This profile indicates more clearly how students from both groups perceived their school environment. Except on the Authoritarian Press Scale, the students from separated homes had a higher score.

Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis presented is: there are no statistically significant differences in perception of the school environment, among students of separated homes, based on age at onset of separation. The results of analysis of differences between students whose parents separated when they were age 0 - 6, and students whose parents separated when they were over age 6 on each of the SEAS scales, are reported in Table IV. The number of observations for each group is shown in Table I. There is no statistically significant difference ($p \leq .05$) between these two groups on any of the scales. Therefore, hypothesis number two cannot be rejected for the eight scales. No directional trends are observed.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis three is as follows: there are no statistically significant differences in perception of the school environment, as measured by the SEAS, among students of separated homes, based on sex of the student. The results of

FIGURE 1

SEAS Profiles for Intact and Separated Groups

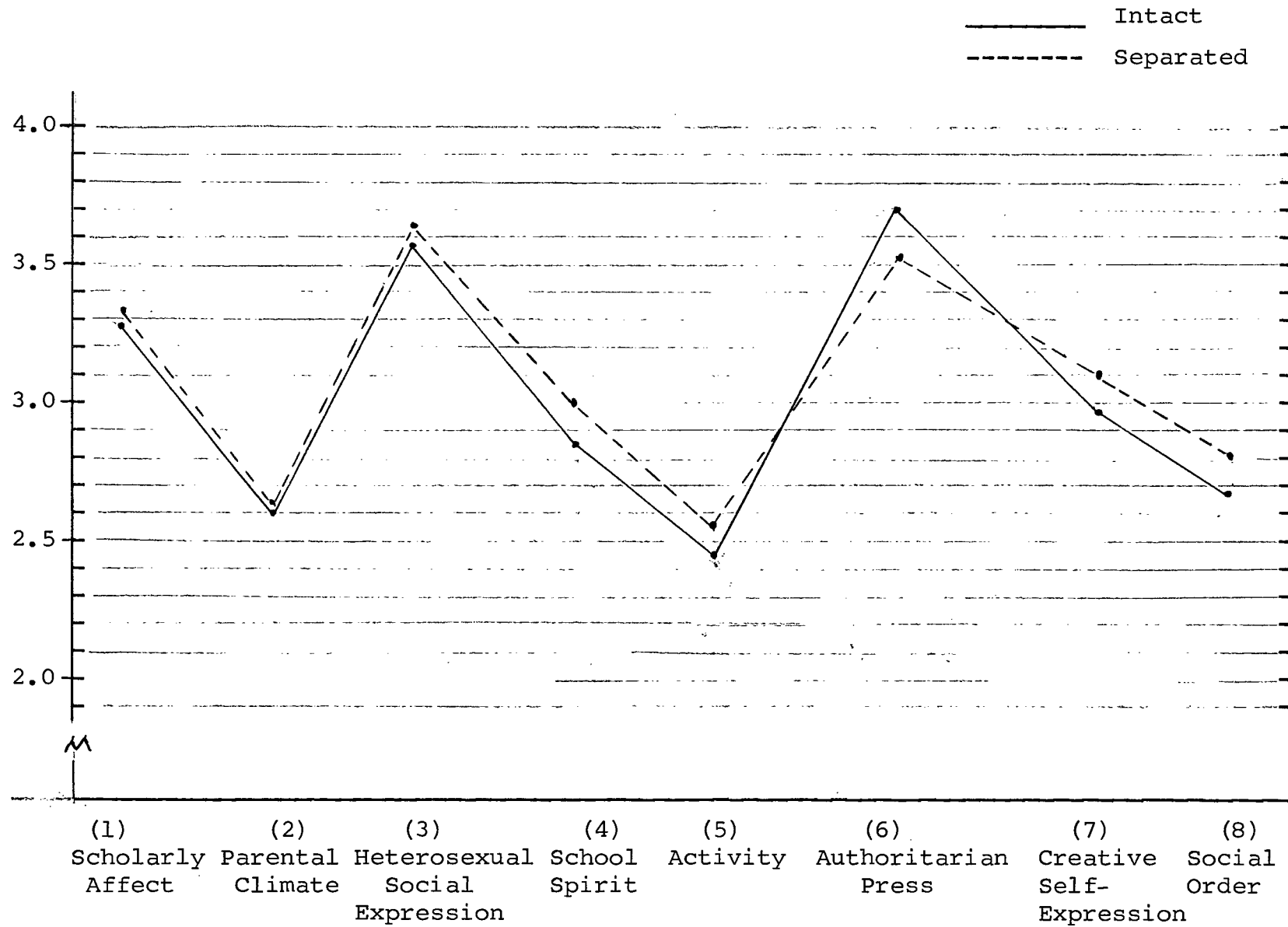


TABLE IV

Differences in Perception of the School Climate by Students from Two Age Groups

<u>SEAS Scales</u>	<u>Sum of Squares</u>	<u>D.F.</u>	<u>Mean Square</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Prob</u>
(1)					
Scholarly Affect	33.33569	1	33.33569	.62850	.42957
(2)					
Parental Climate	42.40765	1	42.40765	1.59637	.20902
(3)					
Heterosexual Social Expression	.45338	1	.45338	.02897	.86515
(4)					
School Spirit	1.17131	1	1.17131	.03129	.85991
(5)					
Activity	10.14963	1	10.14963	.37367	.54224
(6)					
Authoritarian Press	.00907	1	.00907	.00035	.98500
(7)					
Creative Self-Expression	.04336	1	.04336	.00117	.97279
(8)					
Social Order	1.64074	1	1.64074	.05720	.81141

analysis of differences between male and female students from separated homes are reported in Table V. There is a statistically significant difference beyond the .01 level of significance on the Heterosexual Social Expression Scale. There is a difference beyond the .05 level of significance on the Creative Self-Expression Scale. On both of these scales, females had higher group mean scores. The means and standard deviations of these respective groups are reported in Table VI. There is no statistically significant difference ($p \leq .05$) between these two groups on the other six scales. Therefore, hypothesis three cannot be rejected for these six scales.

TABLE V

Differences in Perception of the School Climate by Male and Female Students

<u>SEAS Scales</u>	<u>Sum of Squares</u>	<u>D.F.</u>	<u>Mean Square</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Prob</u>
(1)					
Scholarly Affect	49.82569	1	49.82569	.93939	.33450
(2)					
Parental Climate	5.79706	1	5.79706	.21822	.64130
(3)					
Heterosexual Social Expression	137.73	1	137.73000	8.80139	.00367**
(4)					
School Spirit	51.61105	1	51.61105	1.37866	.24280
(5)					
Activity	79.23370	19	79.23370	2.91710	.09039
(6)					
Authoritarian Press	.01309	1	.01309	.00051	.98198
(7)					
Creative Self-Expression	224.29349	1	224.29349	6.04571	.01546*
(8)					
Social Order	38.08964	1	38.08964	1.32793	.25161

* Significant at the .05 level of probability ($p \leq .05$)** Significant at the .01 level of probability ($p \leq .01$)

TABLE VI

Means and Standard Deviations for Male and Female Groups
on the SEAS Scales

<u>SEAS Scales</u>	<u>Male Group</u>	<u>Female Group</u>	
(1)			
Scholarly Affect	42.35	43.44	\bar{X}
	8.38	6.46	SD
(2)			
Parental Climate	26.37	25.77	\bar{X}
	4.99	5.23	SD
(3)			
Heterosexual Social Expression	20.20	22.69	\bar{X}
	4.07	3.82	SD
(4)			
School Spirit	26.36	27.41	\bar{X}
	6.15	6.04	SD
(5)			
Activity	24.53	25.81	\bar{X}
	5.91	4.74	SD
(6)			
Authoritarian Press	34.99	35.27	\bar{X}
	5.65	4.58	SD
(7)			
Creative Self-Expression	29.53	31.90	\bar{X}
	6.51	5.82	SD
(8)			
Social Order	25.99	24.84	\bar{X}
	5.81	4.97	SD

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Interpretation of Results

The outcome of the comparison between the mean scores of students from intact homes and students from separated homes is as follows: on seven of the SEAS scales, there is no statistically significant difference ($p \leq .05$) between these two groups of students; however, there is a statistically significant difference on one scale, Authoritarian Press, beyond the .01 level of significance. It would appear that students from separated homes perceive the school environment as being less authoritarian than students from intact homes. For students of separated homes, the school environment is perceived as having less of a Spartan-like quality than for students of intact homes. Discipline and the threat of punishment for non-compliance are not as marked a dynamic for students of separated homes. It could be that students from separated homes enjoy the authoritarian press more than students of intact homes. This press may provide them with a type of structure which these students may need. If this line of thought is sound, the behavior and attitude of school personnel dealing with students from separated homes may be clearer. Being more authoritative with these students, giving them

more structure might be helpful. Another hypothesis regarding this finding may be that students from separated homes adapt more easily to the Authoritarian Press, and therefore perceive the school as being less authoritarian than the intact home group. More research, surrounding this difference in perception, is indicated.

As noted in the statistical findings, School Spirit and Social Order are significant at the .10 level, and Activity and Creative Self-Expression are close to the .10 level of significance. These four scales are mentioned because they indicate a pattern of response for students of separated homes. While not statistically significant, these may be of practical significance. On all of these scales, these students perceive the school environment in a more favorable way (higher mean scores). To dismiss this pattern as totally insignificant could be misleading; there appears to be a different response set on the part of students from separated homes on these scales. This observation coupled with the significantly lower mean score on Authoritarian Press could indicate that students from separated homes perceive more aspects of the school environment in a more positive way than students from intact homes. From this perspective, it can be said that students from separated homes perceive the school as having a greater "esprit de corps" (School Spirit). They see the school as

more encouraging in socially acceptable behavior (Social Order). They perceive the school climate as providing more opportunities to engage in a variety of pursuits (Activity). They perceive the school as being more encouraging in creative expression (Creative Self-Expression).

Even though the comments made on these four scales still remain conjectural in nature, a "trend" in perception of school environment for students of separated homes can be advanced. These students would appear to perceive the school environment as providing a more positive atmosphere. This proposition is substantiated by their lower score on Authoritarian Press. It may be that students from separated homes are not as critical of what the school offers its pupils, as are students of intact homes. It may be also that students of separated homes are having more of their needs met at school than are students of intact homes.

The profile of perception of the school environment for intact and separated groups on each SEAS scale is illustrated in Figure 1. Scores for both groups peak and fall under the same scales. Heterosexual Social Expression and Authoritarian Press are high; Scholarly Affect, School Spirit, Creative Self-Expression and Social Order are moderately high; Parental Climate and Activity are moderately low. Students from both groups follow a same general way of viewing the school environ-

ment. All scores for students from separated homes can be seen to be higher except on one scale, Authoritarian Press, where their score is significantly lower.

It would appear that the school in which this study was performed is seen by students of separated homes as providing a more "congenial" environment. Yet, no special programs for this group of students have been initiated by the school. There is some reason, then, to speculate that these students perceive the school differently, even though they are in the same environment. The more positive perception on the part of these students was not anticipated as much of the literature on children of separated homes stress their eventual difficulties in perceiving circumstances outside the home in a more positive way than children from intact homes. This finding, although not statistically significant, except on Authoritarian Press, is interesting and warrants closer examination in future studies.

The outcome of the comparisons between groups of students from separated homes depending on age at onset of parental separation shows that there is no statistically significant difference on any of the SEAS scales. No pattern of response can be seen when looking at the group means. Perhaps the age groupings (0 - 6 and 6 over) were too large to distinguish a difference in this study, if, in fact there

is one. The problem with this type of comparison arises from the fact that the number of subjects whose parents separated when they were very young is small; in this study, there were seven subjects whose parents separated before age three.

The one-way analysis of variance showing results for hypothesis three, demonstrates a statistically significant difference on two scales. Females had higher mean scores on Heterosexual Social Expression and Creative Self-Expression. Females perceived themselves as being more encouraged to interact with members of the opposite sex, and as being more encouraged to express themselves creatively. On these two scales, findings concur with the proposition that females would perceive the environment in a more positive manner. There is no statistically significant difference between male and female groups on the other six SEAS scales. Interactional effects between age at onset of parental separation and sex were tested with no statistically significant results ($p \leq .05$) being reached.

Limitations

This study was directed to male and female students of separated homes in grades eight and nine of low-middle and middle income groups. Findings can be generalized to this group of students; it is probably quite representative of similarly described groups throughout our educational system.

One variable, economic status, was not taken into consideration, when studying the two groups of students from intact and separated homes. There is some indication that students from separated homes might not have the financial resources that students from intact homes might have. This factor might have affected responses to the SEAS. In the particular school being studied, the economic factor, while a consideration, does not appear to possess the disparity of incomes described in other studies (eg: comparing ghetto children with high-income children) which stress the importance of the economic variable.

Other variables (contact with separated parents, contact with parent-surrogates, severity and duration of parental conflict, degree of conflict between parents at break-up time, quality of parental care at present, sex of remaining parent, number of siblings in present family, basic constitutional make-up of child and his experience until the conflict occurred) were not delineated when examining the group of students from separated homes.

Conclusions

Results of this study seem to indicate that students from separated homes perceive the school environment, as measured by the SEAS, in a more favorable way as compared

with students from intact homes. On Authoritarian Press, there was a statistically significant difference at the .01 level of probability, with students from separated homes perceiving the school environment as less authoritarian. On four other scales, School Spirit, Activity, Creative Self-Expression and Social Order, students from separated homes perceived the school environment in a more positive way. Even though results on these four scales are not statistically significant, a directional trend can be seen to emerge. This trend was not anticipated. Further research is needed to explore implications of this finding. No statistically significant differences were observed between students whose parents separated when they were age 0 - 6 or when they were over age 6. It would appear that the variable, age at onset of separation, has no effect on the perception of students as measured by the SEAS. A finer age grouping may have brought about different results. On the variable, sex, statistically significant differences in perception of the school environment as measured by the SEAS were found on two scales, Heterosexual Social Expression and Creative Self-Expression. Females perceived, as expected, the school as more encouraging on these two scales. There were no statistically significant differences on six scales. Definitive statements on these results cannot be drawn.

FOOTNOTES

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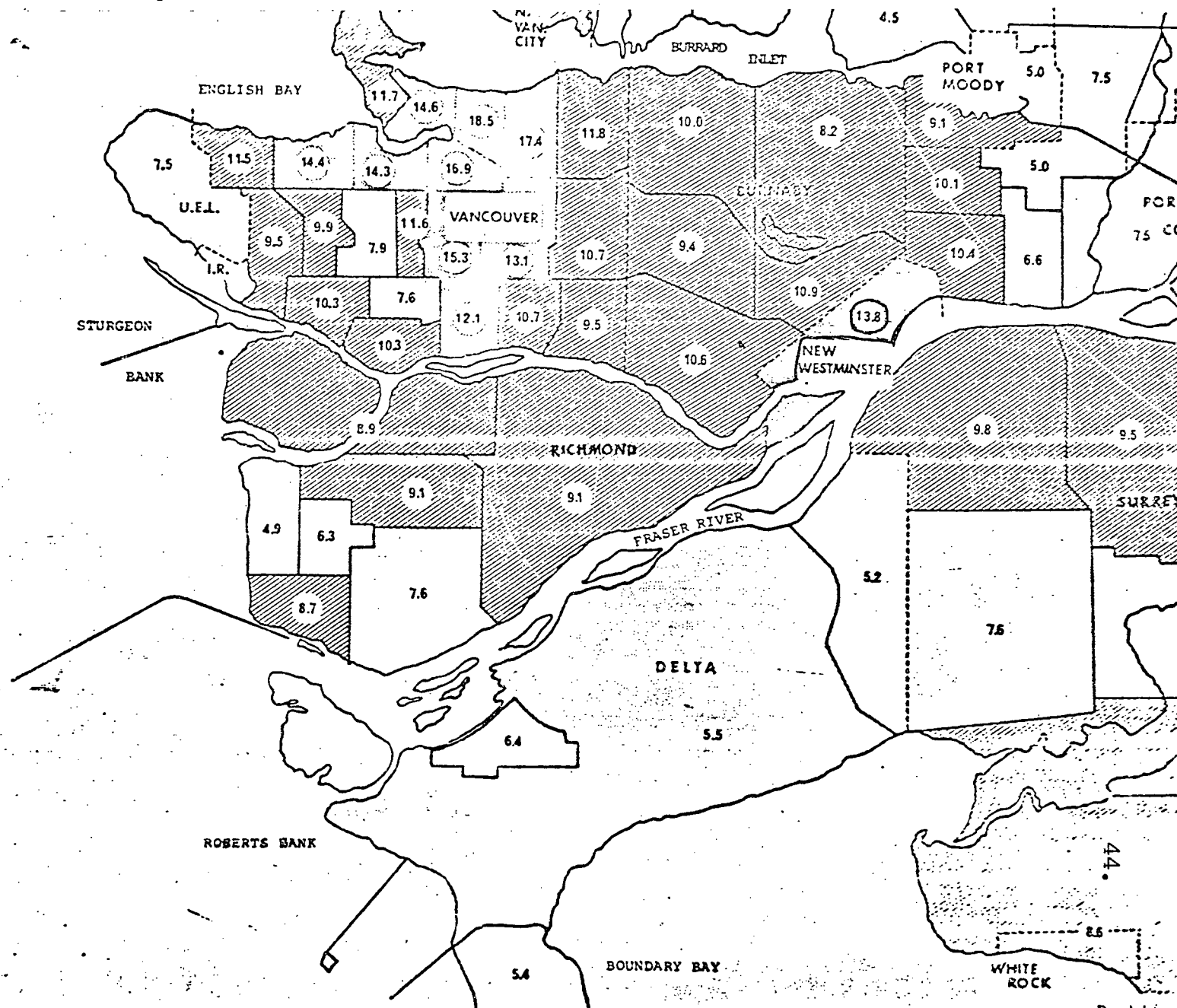
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APPENDIX A

Single Parent Families as Percentage of Total Number of Families for the Greater Vancouver Region and District, 1971



APPENDIX B

Reliability Coefficient Estimates of the SEAS Scales for the 1972 Norming Group and the 1976 Study Group.

<u>SEAS Scales</u>	<u>Estimates for 1972 Group*</u>	<u>Estimates for 1976 Group**</u>
(1)		
Scholarly Affect	.76	.71
(2)		
Parental Climate	.69	.52
(3)		
Heterosexual Social Activity	.59	.61
(4)		
School Spirit	.82	.73
(5)		
Activity	.59	.53
(6)		
Authoritarian Press	.54	.40
(7)		
Creative Self-Expression	.70	.66
(8)		
Social Order	.68	.61

* Reliability coefficient estimates based on the 1972 group were estimated by average inter-item correlations.

$$r_{kk} = \frac{n\bar{r}}{1+(n-1)\bar{r}}$$

** Hoyt's reliability coefficients were used for the 1976 group.

All of the above reliability coefficient estimates are statistically significant at the .001 level of probability (McCall, Robert B.: Fundamental Statistics for Psychology, Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., New York, 1970, p.369).

APPENDIX C

Specific Items Under Each SEAS Scale and Factor Loading of Each Item

1. SCHOLARLY AFFECT

Definition - This dimension of the environment is characterized by a positive regard between student and teacher. Students perceive the teachers as possessing such attributes as fairness, interest, and respect. These characteristics of the faculty help create a climate in which there is an affect for learning. High scores on this factor seem to indicate that many faculty members behaviorally express to the students the philosophy, "We're interested in you and seek to help you develop your academic potentials."

Factor Loading	Sample \bar{X}	SEAS Item No.	Item
.56		59	_____ of the teachers assign grades fairly.
.50		54	_____ of the science classes are well taught.
.47		63	_____ of the teachers here appear to be interested and enthusiastic about what they are teaching.
.46		66	_____ of the teachers will volunteer to stay after school if necessary, to help an individual student with his or her studies.
.45		76	_____ of the classes seem to have been planned in advance.
.45		60	_____ of the teachers seem to respect student opinions on serious matters.

1. Scholarly Affect (continued)

Factor Loading	Sample \bar{X}	SEAS Item No.	Item
.37		53	_____ of the students would agree that this school has an adequate service program for those planning careers in science.
-.31		34	Daily tests are _____ given in classes
.30		33	There are _____ enough books and magazines on science available for borrowing from the library.
.29		27	A student, who wants to, can _____ raise his or her midterm grade by the end of the term.
.21		78	_____ of the students look up to their teachers and admire them.
.21		13	The school nurse is _____ readily available to those who need her.
-.15		19	It is _____ difficult to see why one has to take such courses as history.

2. PARENTAL CLIMATE

Definition - This type of environment is perceived by students as being parental in the sense that an attitude of shoulds and should-nots prevail. Faculty members tend to moralize with students. They are right and wise and therefore should be obeyed. Faculty members behaviorally express to students the philosophy, "We know what is right for you so you should do as we direct you to do."

Factor Loading	Sample \bar{X}	SEAS Item No.	Item
.63		30	The teachers _____ express opinions about how a student should dress to come to school.
.62		36	Something is said to students who come to school but are not neatly dressed.
.59		25	Students and teachers _____ disagree on how students should dress for various after-school events.
.54		41	A student will _____ get reprimanded if observed chewing on pencils, rubber bands, gum, etc.
.41		20	Students are _____ encouraged to make things for science fair or science display.
.39		73	_____ of the faculty members expect students to be neatly groomed and conforming in the clothes they wear to school.

2. Parental Climate (continued)

Factor Loading	Sample \bar{X}	SEAS Item No.	Item
.32		35	The students here are _____ told to grow up and act their age.
.27		22	Faculty members _____ encourage students to report those who violate school rules.
.21		16	Students are _____ told to keep things neat and orderly around here.
.21		31	A new student here would _____ find it difficult to meet and make new friends.

3. HETERO-SEXUAL SOCIAL EXPRESSION

Definition - Males and females mix freely in this type of environment. They are encouraged to interact with members of the opposite sex. There is heterosexual social interaction and an absence of cliques based primarily on gender.

Factor Loading	Sample \bar{X}	SEAS Item No.	Item
.60		69	_____ of the boys and girls mix together during class breaks, during noon hours, etc.
.53		79	_____ of the boys and girls mix together and sit at the same table when eating in the cafeteria.
.46		70	_____ of the students have a lot of dating experience.
.32		11	There are _____ opportunities to work on projects with members of the opposite sex.
.25		45	You can _____ expect to find students gathered together at certain places after school.
.19		57	If at a social gathering, a cigarette or alcoholic drink is offered, _____ of the students will accept it.

3. Hetero-Sexual Social Expression (continued)

Factor Loading	Sample \bar{X}	SEAS Item No.	Item
.17		67	_____ of the students here have a written or unwritten study schedule which they follow.
.17		77	_____ of the teachers have taught in this school for a long time.
.14		68	There are enough school dances and parties to satisfy _____ of the students

4. SCHOOL SPIRIT

Definition - The school climate fosters an enthusiasm, a vigor for school events. There is a feeling of "esprit de corps." School spirit is a behavioral expression by the student body of a patriotic like loyalty toward the school.

Factor Loading	Sample \bar{X}	SEAS Item No.	Item
.72		75	School Spirit is expressed by _____ of the students here.
.70		43	Students _____ get excited about athletic contests involving this school.
.70		64	_____ of the students actively support the school's athletic teams.
.64		56	The major school events are enthusiastically supported by _____ of the student body.
.62		42	There is _____ a feeling of excitement around here before a school event.
.31		6	Students are _____ encouraged to uphold the proud traditions of the school.
.23		52	_____ of the students have school pennants and school pictures displayed in their lockers, cars, or rooms at home.

4. School Spirit (continued)

Factor Loading	Sample \bar{X}	SEAS Item No.	Item
.15		65	_____ of the teachers give the same exams they have given before to previous classes.
.12		8	Student elections are _____ hotly contested and provoke student interest.

5. ACTIVITY

Definition - Students perceive the school environment as providing few opportunities to engage in a variety of pursuits. The press is one of activity, dynamics, movement, providing numerous outlets for student energies.

Factor Loading	Sample \bar{X}	SEAS Item No.	Item
.38		32	Students around here can _____ be seen playing checkers, chess, working crossword puzzles, and engaged in other like activities in their spare time.
.36		46	Those students who are interested in ballet and modern dance _____ get adequate opportunities to practice and perform in school.
.33		49	Popular books and movies dealing with psychological problems are _____ read and discussed by teachers and students alike.
.32		61	_____ of the students and faculty donate to charity drives conducted at school.
.27		55	_____ of the faculty members attend the majority of the school's dramatic or musical
.27		9	Projects to help the needy are _____ supported by students and teachers here.

5. Activity (continued)

Factor Loading	Sample \bar{X}	SEAS Item No.	Item
.26		2	Poems and short stories written by students are _____ being published in the school newspaper in addition to the regular news items.
.22		14	Students with complaints _____ take them up with the principal.
.14		38	Students _____ get a chance to hear music of their choice in the lunchroom or during free periods.
.15		74	_____ of the teachers here would rather attend a school play, concert, etc., than an athletic event.

6. AUTHORITARIAN PRESS

Definition - This press has a Spartan like quality. Activities are performed under threat of punishment for non-compliance. Discipline and the threat of discipline is an omni-present dynamic. The faculty expresses behaviorally the philosophy, "You will do as I tell you, ... or else."

Factor Loading	Sample \bar{X}	SEAS Item No.	Item
-.43		48	There are _____ comfortable places available where a student can go to just sit and relax.
.39		23	Students _____ have to pair up on science projects due to a lack of equipment in the science lab.
.36		71	In _____ of the classes students have assigned seats.
.36		26	"Get permission or be ready to suffer the consequences" is the attitude one hears _____ expressed around here.
.35		24	Students _____ have to take their school work home in order to have it completed on time.
-.22		10	There are _____ copies of famous paintings hanging on the walls around school.

6. Authoritarian Press (continued)

Factor Loading	Sample \bar{X}	SEAS Item No.	Item
.19		7	When a student is contacted to come to the principal's office he _____ has to wait once he has arrived.
-.18		51	_____ of the classrooms, offices, and other rooms are clearly labeled as to what they are used for.
.13		50	_____ of the teachers will give an "F" grade.
-.16		80	_____ of the lunches served in the cafeteria are tasty and eye-appealing.

7. CREATIVE SELF-EXPRESSION

Definition - This environment encourages students to express themselves creatively. They are encouraged to utilize their intellectual, manual, and artistic potentials. This environmental press may help students actualize in many dimensions.

Factor Loading	Sample \bar{X}	SEAS Item No.	Item
.41		3	Students are _____ encouraged to use the science lab during their free time.
.39		21	New ideas are _____ tried out first before they are adapted as policy.
.34		47	Students are _____ encouraged to enter into classroom discussions.
.33		4	Student opinions and ideas about school matters are _____ taken into serious consideration by the faculty.
.29		1	The themes of "be an individual" and "make up your own mind" seem to be _____ stressed in this school.
.27		5	The people who are involved in the counselling and guidance program here _____ seem to be warm, concerned, and genuine in working with students.

7. Creative Self-Expression (continued)

Factor Loading	Sample \bar{X}	SEAS Item No.	Item
.27		40	Students are _____ told why they are being punished.
.25		44	Students who enjoy working with their hands _____ get the opportunity to repair and make things.
.24		17	Serious subjects are _____ openly discussed in panels or other ways at school assemblies or in the classroom.
.14		15	Classes in history, literature, and art are _____ considered among the best offered here.

8. SOCIAL ORDER

Definition - An environmental press encouraging socially acceptable behavior as opposed to anti-social or delinquent behavior. Schools in which students have indicated a less than moderate press for social order have a number of students who are acting against the prevailing perceived environment. Students behaviorally express their disenchantment by transgressing against the school establishment. A low social order press indicates there is a press for delinquent and anti-establishment sentiment by students. Student feelings of hostility are behaviorally expressed in the aggressive forms of destruction and disruption.

Factor Loading	Sample \bar{X}	SEAS Item No.	Item
-.55		28	School property is _____ damaged by students.
-.53		62	_____ of the school books have been torn, marked, or written in.
-.52		72	_____ of the desks are defaced by knife or pencil marks.
.46		12	Classrooms and halls are _____ kept clean and neat.
.42		37	Effort is _____ made to keep the school grounds and buildings neat and tidy.
-.40		39	Shouting and yelling is _____ heard in the halls and in the cafeteria.

8. Social Order (continued)

Factor Loading	Sample \bar{X}	SEAS Item No.	Item
.38		58	_____ of the students make an effort to help keep the washrooms neat.
.36		18	Effort is _____ made to keep the halls looking bright, cheerful, and interesting.
-.33		29	Classes are _____ interrupted by announcements, knocks at the door, etc.

APPENDIX D

Notice to Teachers Regarding Administration of the Test

1. Would you have the students in your home room answer both:
 - i) the questionnaire and
 - ii) the 81-item test (School Environment Assessment Scales).
2. The questionnaire is to be completed by students first, on the question sheet itself; there are 5 questions. Any irregularities may be noted by students if they so wish, at the bottom of the questionnaire; eg. a student may want to include that he/she lives with an aunt.
3. The test is completed on IBM sheets. There are 81 items in the test; students darken one choice of five choices (A,B,C,D or E) for each of the 81 items. Pencils should be used. The front page instructions of the test should be read aloud to the class by the teacher, and any questions can be answered at this time. Students could be reminded: i) that they are not to write their names anywhere; ii) that numbers on the IBM answer sheet run in order across the page, and not down the column.
4. Each student's questionnaire and IBM sheet must be together to assess test results. To reach this goal, each questionnaire and each IBM sheet have been numbered in pairs at the top left hand corners of the pages. Could you ascertain that each student has a paired questionnaire and IBM sheet before they complete them; eg. one student might have questionnaire #41 and IBM sheet #41. Questionnaires and IBM sheets have been ordered this way for convenience in distribution of both copies.
5. The test should take about 20 - 30 minutes. Students who finish earlier can be expected to wait for all students to finish this untimed test before handing copies to the teacher.
6. Thank you for your co-operation.

APPENDIX E

Questionnaire Given to Students

Questionnaire (Your answers are considered confidential and will not be paired with your name).

1. Grade:
2. Age:
3. Sex:
4. Check one or more, where appropriate:

I live with my mother: _____

father: _____

step-mother: _____

step-father: _____

brother(s): _____

sister(s): _____

other: _____

5. For students whose parents have separated.

I was _____ years old when my parents separated.