JOURNAL OF APPLIED DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY 17, 239–270 (1996)

# Advantages of Father Custody and Contact for the Psychological Well-Being of School-Age Children

K. ALISON CLARKE-STEWART
CRAIG HAYWARD
*University of California-Irvine*

Previous researchers have suggested that after divorce, children do better in the custody of the same-gender parent. This hypothesis was explored in a study of 187 school-age children (72 in father custody and 115 in mother custody). Two other hypotheses were also tested: children do better (1) if they have more contact with the nonresident parent, and (2) if the circumstances in the resident parent's household are more favorable. The major finding of the study was that across a variety of assessments of psychological well-being (self-esteem, anxiety, depression, problem behaviors), children (especially boys) did significantly better in the custody of their fathers. Moreover, children in father custody had the odvantage of maintaining a more positive relationship with the nonresident parent, the mother. These differences in children's well-being were not eliminated by statistically controlling for the custodial parent's psychological state and adequate income or the child's contact with the nonresident parent—other variables that also predicted children's well-being. No same-gender advantage was found for girls in mother custody. For these children, well-being was predicted by close "parentlike" contact with the nonresident father—participating in a variety of activities and spending holidays together.

There is ample research evidence that when parents divorce, this can have detrimental effects on their children's psychological well-being. National surveys (Allison & Furstenberg, 1989; Bianchi & Seltzer, 1986; Downey, 1994; Guidubaldi, Perry, & Nastasi, 1987a, 1987b) and meta-analyses (Amato & Keith, 1991; Love-Clark, 1984) document detrimental effects of divorce on children's school achievement, self-esteem, and psychological adjustment. These effects are statistically significant and quite consistent (differences were observed in 70% of the 92 studies included in Amato and Keith's analysis). The effects are not large in absolute terms—on average, children from divorced families scored only about one seventh of a standard deviation below children from intact families. But what these averages hide is the fact that although some children in divorced families are doing just as those in intact families, others are doing considerably worse. In an effort to discover which children are doing poorly and

Correspondence and requests for reprints should be sent to Alison Clarke-Stewart, Psychology and Social Behavior, School of Social Ecology, University of California, Irvine, Irvine, CA 92697–5150.

why, researchers have focused on the circumstances that moderate and mediate the effects of divorce.

Their findings, and this article, can be organized around three complementary hypotheses:

1. Children do better if, after the divorce, they continue to have contact with the nonresident parent. This hypothesis is based on the assumption that children benefit from close relationships with both of their parents. If the child continues to have a relationship with the nonresident parent, he or she will not suffer the pain of losing an attachment object that a divorce can cause (Bowlby, 1969), and will have the benefit of two parental points of view to balance any excesses in the child-rearing of a single custodial parent.
2. Children do better if the custodial parent offers the child a favorable environment in which to adjust and develop. Specifically, this hypothesis predicts that the effects of divorce will be mitigated if the custodial parent maintains an adequate standard of living and is able to provide adequate care. This hypothesis receives support from the extensive literature on the effects of family environments on children's behavior and development (e.g., Clarke-Stewart, 1988; Clarke-Stewart, Gruber, & Fitzgerald, 1994; Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1994; Radke-Yarrow & Zahn-Waxler, 1986; Sameroff, Seifer, Baldwin, & Baldwin, 1993; Sameroff, Seifer, & Zax, 1982).
3. Children do better if they are in the custody of the same-gender parent. This hypothesis is based on the idea that children need a same-gender identity model if they are to develop appropriate gender-role attitudes and behavior (Biller, 1981; Lynn, 1974; Santrock & Warshak, 1979; Warshak & Santrock, 1983b).

In the following sections, the research literature bearing on each of these hypotheses is reviewed. The study to be presented offers a test of the three hypotheses.

## HYPOTHESIS 1: CONTACT WITH THE NONCUSTODIAL PARENT

As time goes by after the divorce, children typically have less and less contact with the nonresident parent (Bianchi & Seltzer, 1986; Braver, Wolchik, Sandler, Fogas, & Zvetina, 1987; Bray, Berger, Touch, & Boethel, 1993). National studies suggest that within a couple of years after the divorce, 30% to 40% of children no longer see their nonresident parent, and only about 20% to 30% see the parent as often as once a week (Bianchi & Seltzer, 1986; Furstenberg, 1982; Furstenberg, Nord, Peterson, & Zill, 1983; King, 1994; National Center for Health Statistics, 1986).

What difference does contact with the nonresident parent make for children's well-being? In their meta-analysis, Amato and Keith (1991) found that the results on this issue are mixed. Supporting the hypothesis that contact with the noncustodial parent is important, a substantial number of studies suggest that children who have more contact with the nonresident parent do better (Bisnaire, Firestone, & Rynard, 1990; Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1982; Kurdek, 1988; Lowenstein & Koopman, 1978; Mott, 1991). Yet, in just as many studies, no such association has been found (Buchanan & Maccoby, 1993; Hodges, Buchsbaum, & Tierney, 1983; Kalter, Kloner, Schreier, & Okla, 1989; King, 1994; Kurdek & Berg, 1983; Rosen, 1979). Moreover, in a few studies, researchers have found that more frequent contact with the noncustodial parent is actually associated with increased problems for children (Hodges, Wechsler, & Ballantine, 1979; Johnston, Kline, & Tschann, 1989).

Perhaps the reason for the inconsistency in these results is that all kinds of contact are not equal. Contact differs both in its content and its quality. Some kinds of contact involve special events like going to Disneyland; others, more mundane activities like grocery shopping. Most children have only social contact with their nonresident parents; they are not involved in routine daily activities (Furstenberg & Nord, 1985). Perhaps it is better for the child (and the parent) to share a broader range of activities. Supporting this suggestion, Buchanan and Maccoby (1993) reported that although the adjustment of the adolescents in their study was not related to the number of visits with the nonresident parent, it was related to the number of activities they participated in together. Similarly, Kurdek and Berg (1983) found that although the frequency of nonresident fathers' visits was not related to children's adjustment, a measure of the amount of time the father spent in direct, exclusive contact with the child was.

Contact also differs in quality. Some contact is harmonious; other contact is fraught with acrimony. Contact with the noncustodial parent in the two studies reporting a negative effect of more frequent contact may have been more acrimonious. In the Hodges, Wechsler, and Ballantine (1979) study, the outcome affected by frequent contact was children's aggressive behavior—influenced, perhaps, by seeing their parents fight. In the study by Johnston, Kline, and Tschann (1989), the sample consisted of parents who had been referred for counseling or mediation, and parental conflict covaried with the frequency of contact between the child and the noncustodial parent. Confirming the importance of the quality of the parent–child contact, Hetherington, Cox, and Cox (1978) found that the beneficial effects of father contact occurred only if the divorced parents got along fairly well.

Clearly, it is essential in investigating the hypothesis that contact with the noncustodial parent is important for children's well-being to investigate the kind of contact as well as its frequency. This study offered an opportunity to do just that.

## HYPOTHESIS 2: CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE CUSTODIAL PARENT

The hypothesis that the environment provided by the custodial parent affects the child's adjustment is supported by a consistent finding in the literature on divorce effects that the emotional well-being of the custodial parent is related to the emotional well-being of the child. If the custodial parent is depressed and anxious, so is the child (Forehand, Fauber, Long, Brody, & Slotkin, 1987; Fulton, 1979; Kalter et al., 1989; Kline, Tschann, Johnston, & Wallerstein, 1989; Kurdek & Berg, 1983; Malley & Barenbaum, 1984; Shaw & Emery, 1987).

This depression and anxiety of parents and children may be the result of a number of circumstances in the custodial parent's life. One is the financial situation of the family. A common consequence of divorce, especially for women, is a reduced household income (Arendell, 1986; Day & Bahr, 1986; Weitzman, 1985), and this drop in income, often to a less than adequate level, has been found to be strongly related to the stress and depression experienced by women after divorce (Arendell, 1986; Belle, 1982; Braver, Gonzalez, Sandler, & Wolchik, 1985; Clarke-Stewart & Bailey, 1989; Coletta, 1983; Gerstel, Riessman, & Rosenfield, 1985; Spanier & Thompson, 1984) and to their children's psychological well-being (Desimone-Luis, O'Mahoney, & Hunt, 1979; Fulton, 1979; Hodges, Tierney, & Buchsbaum, 1984). When income level is controlled statistically, the detrimental effects of divorce on children's behavior appear substantially less (Guidubaldi et al., 1987a, 1987b).

A second factor affecting the custodial parent's psychological adjustment is social support. Researchers have documented a link between social support and adults' adjustment to divorce (Brown, 1982; Gerstel, Riessman, & Rosenfield, 1985; Ginsberg 1985; Hanson, 1986; Richardson, 1981; Tetzloff & Barrera, 1987; Woody, Colley, Schlegelmilch, & Maginn, 1984)—although it is worth noting that the significance of this association is reduced when researchers control statistically for other variables such as prior psychological state (Dooley, Catalano, & Brownell, 1986) or income and employment status (Clarke-Stewart & Bailey, 1989). Researchers have also documented a link between the social support parents receive and their children's psychological adjustment (DeMaris & Greif, 1992; Guidubaldi, Perry, & Nastasi, 1987b; Kurdek, 1988; Kurdek & Berg, 1983).

A third factor related to the custodial parent's psychological adjustment is remarriage. Living with a stepparent, compared with living with a single parent, however, previous research suggests, has either no effect on children's well-being (Kalter et al., 1989; Johnston, Kline, & Tschann, 1989; Zill, 1988; Zimiles & Lee, 1991; and see Amato & Keith, 1991) or a negative one—children in stepfamilies were less likely to have close relations with both parents (Bianchi & Seltzer, 1986; Santrock, Warshak, & Elliott, 1982).

In this study, to investigate the hypothesis that the circumstances in the custo-

dial household affect the child's adjustment to divorce, these three factors—income, social support, and remarriage—as well as the custodial parent's emotional state, were related to children's psychological well-being.

## HYPOTHESIS 3: GENDER OF THE CUSTODIAL PARENT

The third hypothesis, that children do better if they are in the custody of the parent of the same gender, is often assumed in discussions of research on divorce. Most studies of divorce are of children in mother custody, and many of these studies suggest that boys fare worse than girls. Zaslow (1988, 1989), evaluating 27 studies of school-age children in mother custody, for example, found 16 in which boys did worse, 5 in which girls did worse, and 6 in which there was no difference. Although not all studies revealed worse effects for boys, and although the effect size even for those studies that did is small, there is some preponderance of evidence suggesting that boys in mother custody are at greater risk than are girls for problems with aggression and impulse control, academic performance, self-esteem, and mental health. This evidence has been taken to support the same-gender hypothesis.

Research in which interactions between the gender the child and the gender of the custodial parent have been analyzed to see if boys do better when they are with their fathers and, more generally, whether children do better in the custody of the same-gender parent, however, are rare. These studies reveal that adolescents with the same-gender custodial parent are less likely to be delinquents (Gregory, 1965), less prone to antisocial behavior and depression (Peterson & Zill, 1986), and less likely to drop out of school (unless the custodial parent has remarried) (Zimiles & Lee, 1991). Thus, there is some—slim—evidence for a same-gender advantage in adolescence.

For younger children, there are three studies that support the same-gender hypothesis. In one study, girls with mothers did better than girls with fathers—but no difference was observed for boys (Maccoby, 1991). In a second study, boys with fathers and girls with mothers had fewer behavior problems, were less aggressive, had higher self-esteem, and were accepted more by same-gender playmates—but the sample in this study included only 10 children in father custody (Camara & Resnick, 1988). The third study, which has been most frequently used to support the same-gender hypothesis, is one by Warshak and Santrock (1983a, 1983b; Santrock & Warshak, 1979; Santrock, Warshak, & Elliott, 1982). In this study, 6- to 11-year-old children, 20 in father custody and 20 in mother custody, were compared on a number of measures of psychological well-being (self-esteem, warmth, anxiety, anger, maturity, sociability, conformity, independence). It is this study from which the implication has been drawn most strongly that there is an advantage of having a custodial parent of the same gender (e.g., Warshak, 1992). The study showed that, in father custody, boys did

better than girls on these measures of psychological well-being, whereas, in mother custody, girls did better than boys.[1]

It was the goal of this study to test the same-gender hypothesis by evaluating children's psychological well-being and relating it to the gender of the custodial parent in a sample that included a substantial number of school-age children in father custody. It was also a goal to test the other two hypotheses that have been offered, investigating whether children's psychological well-being is related to (a) the extent and nature of the child's contact with the noncustodial parent and (b) the psychological and economic circumstances of the custodial parent. Children's gender role attitudes and relationships with both parents were also assessed to aid our understanding of the processes by which these three sources of variation might influence children's adjustment to their parents' divorce.

## METHOD

### Participants

The sample consisted of 187 children from 160 divorced families,[2] living in southern California. The families were recruited by students in a large undergraduate class at the University of California at Irvine. About half were acquaintances of the students; the other half came from lists obtained through court records, schools, and after-school programs. Families were limited to those having at least one school-age child in a sole-custody arrangement. Students were instructed to recruit one child in father custody and one child in mother custody, using identical methods. It was hoped that in this way a balanced random sampling of custodial fathers and mothers would be obtained. The sample recruited consisted of 72 children (39 boys and 33 girls) in father custody and 115 children (56 boys and 59 girls) in mother custody. Thus, the sample consisted of roughly equal numbers of boys and girls and roughly equal numbers of children in same-gender and opposite-gender custodial arrangements. The children ranged in age from 5 to 13 years (approximately equal numbers in each grade from 1 to 7); their mean age was 9 years. The parents had been separated for an average of 4 years. The majority of families were European American; 13% were of Hispanic origin; 6%, Asian; 1%, African American.

### Procedures and Variables

Each family in the study was visited once, when the child was at home with the custodial parent, for approximately 1½ hrs. During the visit, the custodial parent

---

[1]Although, in their published articles, these researchers did not report differences between boys in father custody and boys in mother custody or between girls in father custody and girls in mother custody—the real test of the same-gender hypothesis—personal communication from Warshak (August, 1994) confirms that these comparisons, too, favored children in same-gender custodial arrangements.

[2]When analyses were conducted using only one child from each family ($n = 160$), the results were comparable to those presented for the entire sample of 187 children.

was interviewed first (without the child present) and then the child was interviewed and assessed (without the parent present). These interviews and assessments focused on three categories of dependent (child) variable — psychological well-being, gender role attitude, and relationships with parents — and three categories of independent (family) variables — contact with the noncustodial parent, circumstances of the custodial parent, and gender of the custodial parent.

### Child's Psychological Well-being

A variety of instruments were used to assess the child's psychological well-being: standardized psychological tests of self-esteem, depression, anxiety, and mood, and parents' reports of the child's problem behaviors and adjustment.

***Adjustment to Divorce.*** Parents' rating (on a 4-point scale) of the child's current psychological state: Half of the children had adjusted well to the divorce; 10% were still doing very poorly.

***Self-esteem.*** The child's score on a standardized test by Rosenberg (1965), with some items reworded to be appropriate for younger children, for example, "I can do things as well as other kids" (Cronbach's alpha = .82).

***Positive Mood.*** A measure devised by Cantril (1965) and adapted for younger children in this study, in which the child selected his or her current mood from 5 happy-to-sad faces and from 5 circles representing "all good things" to "all bad things" and placed his or her current life experience on a 5-rung ladder where the top rung represented "the best that life could be" and the bottom rung, "the worst that life could be" (Cronbach's alpha = .75).

***Depression.*** Responses to a standardized test by Tisher and Lange (1978), which included items such as, "I feel like crying every day" (Cronbach's alpha = .89).

***Problem Behaviors.*** The number of different types of problem behavior (from Achenbach, Howell, Quay, & Conners, 1991) exhibited by the child in the preceding week according to the custodial parent, M = 3, range = 0 to 14. Problem behaviors were divided into *difficult behaviors* (e.g., complaining, ignoring the parent, acting defiant); *aggressive behaviors* (e.g., kicking or hitting someone); *depressed behaviors* (e.g., crying for no reason, acting withdrawn and depressed, isolating themselves in their room, saying they wanted to live somewhere else).

***Anxiety.*** The child's score on a standardized test by Reynolds and Richmond (1978), with items such as, "I worry about things a lot" (Cronbach's alpha = .84).

Correlational analyses revealed that these six measures of the child's psychological well-being were significantly intercorrelated, rs from .17, $p < .05$, to .77, $p < .001$. This finding of a cohesive cluster of variables reflecting psychological well-being helped validate these measures and made it possible to create a composite measure of well-being (Cronbach's alpha = .73) by summing standard scores for the child's positive mood, adjustment, self-esteem, behavior problems, anxiety, and depression (the last three measures reverse coded). It is worth noting that children's self-reports (positive mood, self-esteem, depression, anxiety) and parents' report of the children's adjustment and behavior problems were significantly related; for example, r between positive mood and adjustment = .29, $p < .001$, and r between positive mood and behavior problems = −.38, $p < .001$, and that both are included in this composite measure. Only one of the well-being variables was related to the child's age; older children expressed less-positive moods, $r = -.26$, $p < .001$. Only one was related to child's gender; parents reported more depressed behavior in girls, $F(1,186) = 7.1$, $p < .01$, Ms = .37(.58) versus .19(40). Thus, these measures of well-being appear to be appropriate for use with boys and girls across the age range studied.

**Child's Gender Role**

Because one of the hypotheses to be tested involved children's gender-role identity, a measure of children's gender-role attitude was included in the study.

***Femininity.*** The femininity (or socioemotional orientation) scale from the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (Hall & Halberstadt, 1980) was used to reflect a feminine gender-role attitude (Cronbach's alpha = .56). It included items like, "I almost always notice how other people are feeling."

***Masculinity.*** The masculinity (or instrumentality) scale from this questionnaire included items such as, "I would rather do things for myself than ask grownups or other kids for help." The unexpectedly low level of internal consistency on this measure (Cronbach's alpha = .22) may reflect the general societal trend away from rigid gender stereotypes.

To assess the validity of the gender-role measures, their relations with each other and other child variables are examined. As expected, masculinity and femininity scores were unrelated to each other, and girls were more feminine than boys, $F(1,186) = 13.8$, $p < .001$. Also predictably, femininity scores were positively related to having a more positive relationship with mother, $r = .22$, $p < .01$, and masculinity scores were related to having a more positive relationship with father, $r = .15$, $p < .05$. These associations support the validity of these measures, as do the significant relations observed between the measures and children's overall psychological well-being, r for masculinity = .23, $p < .01$, r for femininity = 51, $p < .001$. The one inconsistency in these analyses was that boys did not score significantly higher than girls on the masculinity scale. This

scale, thus, has some problems in both internal consistency and validity; it is included in this article only because it is the only measure we had collected of this theoretically important variable.

### Child's Relationship With Parents

Because there are no standardized tests available to measure the nature of school-age children's relationships with their parents, we relied on a variety of methods to assess this aspect of children's well-being. These methods included parent's ratings and projective tests that were devised or modified for this age group.

***Relationships With Parents (Parent Report).*** A 4-point rating was completed by the custodial parent indicating the closeness of the child's relationship with each parent; 65% of the children had "very close" relations with the resident parent, whereas only 36% had "very close" relations with the nonresident parent.

***Relationships With Parents (Pictorial Measure).*** In the "Draw-a-Family Test," children were asked to draw a picture of their family "as if they were all together." Drawings were coded to indicate the extent of the child's positive relationship with each parent using coding schemes suggested by Isaacs and Levin (1984), Isaacs, Leon, and Kline (1987), and Spigelman, Spigelman, and Englesson (1992). A more positive relation was indicated by the parent being drawn next to the child, facing, touching, smiling at the child, involved in an activity with the child, and relative to the other parent, larger, more detailed, and closer.

***Relationships With Parents (Verbal Measure).*** Children were asked to point to a picture of a "Mother," a "Father," or "A Nobody" in the "Parent Relationship Test" (Bene & Anthony, 1957), to indicate which person each of 26 sentences resembled. The sentences included the following: "Is nicest to be around;" "Sometimes is cranky;" "I'd like to kick;" "Does not like what I do;" "Helps me best when I am sad." The proportion of positive statements attributed to each parent was the measure of a positive relationship; the proportion of negative statements was used as the measure of a negative relationship.

A composite variable reflecting the child's positive relationship with each parent was formed by summing standard scores for the parent-report, pictorial, and verbal measures of a positive relationship, mean $r = .32$. Supporting the validity of this composite variable was its significant relation to the child's psychological well-being; for relationship with custodial parent, $r = .26$, $p < .01$, for relationship with noncustodial parent, $r = .19$, $p < .01$

### Child's Contact With Noncustodial Parent

The child's contact with the noncustodial parent was assessed in terms of the following variables derived from the interview with the custodial parent. Several

of the measures (frequency, time since separation) are those typically used in divorce research to indicate the extent and amount of parental contact. The others represented our attempt to probe more deeply into the nature of that contact (involvement in routine daily activities, shared special occasions).

***Frequency of Visits.*** A 6-point scale of how often the child sees the noncustodial parent, from never to more than once a week was used. According to the custodial parent, visits with the noncustodial parent occurred more than once a week for 20% of the sample; once a week for 51%; every 2 weeks for 6%; once a month or less for 23%.

***Length of Visits. A*** 6-point scale indicating the length of the typical visit was used. Visits ranged from a few hours (20% of the children) to longer than a week (4% of the children); the modal visit lasted a few days (34%).

***Distance. A*** 5-point scale indicating the geographic distance between child and the noncustodial parent was used. Most children (48%) lived a short driving distance from the nonresident parent; only 6% were within walking distance; 22% were more than 1 to 2 h drive away.

***Number and Kind of Activities.*** The number of activities was computed from a checklist of 11 different types of activity that child and noncustodial parent could participate in together, M = 4, range = 0 to 10. The most common type of activity, participated in by 80% of the children, was "social": going to entertainment events or restaurants. Only 5% of the sample engaged in a full range of routine daily activities: watching TV, reading, doing homework, visiting, shopping.

***Holidays. A*** 4-point rating of how often the child spent holidays with the noncustodial parent, from never to always, was used. The majority of children (55%) often or always spent holidays with the noncustodial parent.

***Time Since Separation.*** The length of time that had passed since the divorce: 74% of the couples had been divorced for **3** or more years; 23% had been divorced for 1 to 2 years; 3% had been divorced for less than 1 year.

***Change(s) in Custody Arrangement.*** Since the time of the divorce, 25 children (13 boys and 12 girls) had changed from mother custody to father custody; 8 children (4 boys and 4 girls) had changed from father custody to mother custody.

### Custodial Parent's Circumstances

To evaluate the custodial parent's circumstances we collected measures of the custodial parent's household (including new spouse or other adult, number of

children), financial resources (income, adequacy of income, child support), practical and emotional support, and psychological adjustment and satisfaction. In addition, we included a question about how the custody decision had been arrived at, on the assumption that this might contribute to the custodial parents' emotional state and satisfaction.

***Stepparent or Other Adult in Residence.*** Of the custodial households represented in the study, 18% included a stepparent, 10% included an unrelated adult, and 4% included an adult relative.

***Number of Children in Household.*** The number of children in the custodial household ranged from 1 to 6 (mode = 2).

***Income.*** The household income of the custodial parents ranged from under $20,000 to over $60,000; median = $40,000.

***Adequacy of Income.*** On a 4-point scale, most custodial parents found their income adequate (58%), 16% found it not quite adequate, 17% found it quite inadequate, and 9% were struggling to make ends meet.

***Child Support Paid by Noncustodial Parent.*** According to the custodial parent, child support was paid regularly by the noncustodial parent in 46% of the families; 40% of the custodial parents did not receive child support. Of the custodial mothers, 80% received child support regularly from their ex-husbands; only 24% of the custodial fathers received regular child support payments from their ex-wives.

***Availability of Emotional and Practical Support.*** On 3-point scales, 72% of the custodial parents thought that they had friends or family that they could call on at any time for emotional support; 52% thought they had practical support whenever they needed it.

***Custodial Parent's Adjustment.*** On a 3-point rating scale, 75% of the custodial parents claimed that they had adjusted to the divorce and everything was going fine for them, 22% were still not happy, and 4% were still significantly upset.

***Custodial Parent's Satisfaction with Custody.*** On a 5-point scale, 53% of the custodial parents were completely satisfied with the current custody arrangement; the others were quite satisfied (25%), ambivalent (20%), or dissatisfied (2%).

***Custody Decision.*** For 30% of the sample, the decision about custody was made by mutual consent of both parents. For 11% it was decided by the custodial

parent. In 21% of the cases the decision was made by the court; 13% "just assumed" the custodial arrangement would be as it was, and in 23% of the cases there was a problem with the noncustodial parent (he or she abandoned the spouse and child, was unfit, unavailable, or financially unable). The remaining 2% of the families allowed the child to decide with whom to live.

### Gender of Custodial Parent

The gender of the parent who had sole physical custody of the study child was a major variable in the study: 39% of the custodial parents in the study were fathers; 61% were mothers.

### Analyses

Analyses conducted to test the three hypotheses involved correlational and regression analyses, analyses of variance and covariance, and analyses of interactions between gender of child and gender of custodial parent.

## RESULTS

### Testing Hypothesis 1: Contact with Noncustodial Parent

The measures of contact with the noncustodial parent were, not surprisingly, intercorrelated. Children who had more frequent visits with the nonresident parent lived closer to the parent, spent holidays together, and shared more different kinds of activities, rs = .32 to .70, ps $< .001$. Less time had passed since the parents separated, $r = -.29$, $p < .001$, and the children were likely to have a custodial arrangement that had been arrived at by the parents jointly, $F(1,186) = 6.7$, $p < .05$; Ms = 3.0(1.0) versus 2.5(1.0). Children who had changed custody arrangements at some time since the divorce had more intense contact with the noncustodial parent—with whom they had once lived—longer visits, $F(1,186) = 9.4$, $p < .05$, Ms = 3.6(1.8) vs. 2.6(1.5) and more shared activities, $F(1,186) = 4.9$, $p < .05$, Ms = 5.5(3.3) vs. 4.2(2.4). Of interest, the noncustodial parent was more likely to pay child support regularly, $r = .38$, $p < .001$, when he or she saw more of the child.

To test the hypothesis that children's adjustment is related to having more contact with the noncustodial parent, all these measures of contact were correlated with measures of children's psychological well-being (see Table 1). To keep the effect of contact independent of the other two possible sources of influence (gender and circumstances of the custodial parent), the custodial parent's gender, income, and adjustment were partialled out of these associations. The results of these analyses showed some support for the parent-contact hypothesis. Children's psychological well-being was related to two aspects of contact: spending holidays with the nonresident parent and participating in a wider range of activities together. However, it was not related to the frequency of visits, length of visits, geographic proximity, time since separation, or change in custody. The

first hypothesis, therefore, requires refinement. It was not the frequency of visitation, but the type of contact, that was related to children's well-being.

Analyses to see if associations between the child's well-being and contact with the noncustodial parent were different depending upon the gender of the custodial parent revealed that spending holidays with the nonresident parent was related to the child's well-being only for children in mother custody, $F(1,184) = 3.5$, $p < .05$; $r = .33$, $p < .01$.

Contact with the noncustodial parent was also related to the quality of children's relationships with their parents (see Table 1). Not surprisingly, children's relationship with the nonresident parent was strongly and consistently related to contact with that parent: The relationship with the nonresident parent was more positive if the parent and child had more frequent and longer visits, lived closer to each other, participated in a wider variety of activities, spent holidays together, and if the child had previously been in the custody of that parent, Ms = 8.3(5.O) vs. 5.6 (4.4). Under these circumstances, children were more likely to continue to consider the noncustodial parent part of the "family." These associations are not unexpected—indeed they are somewhat circular. More surprising, children also had better (less negative) relations with the custodial parent when they had more contact (holidays) with the noncustodial parent. For girls, in addition, the relationship with the custodial parent was better if they lived closer to the nonresident parent, $F(1,184) = 2.6$, $p < .10$, $r = -.20$, $p < .05$, and shared more activities, $F(1,184) = 3.9$, $p < .05$, $r = -.28$, $p < .01$.

What is more, to some extent, the child's relationship with the noncustodial parent mediated the effect of contact on well-being: partialling out the child's positive relationship reduced the level of association between well-being and contact, partial rs with activities = .13, $p < .10$; with holidays = .25, $p < .001$.

**Testing Hypothesis 2: Custodial Parent's Circumstances**

Custodial parents were happier with their lives (and more satisfied with their custodial arrangement) if they had been separated for a longer time, $r = .29$, $p < .001$ ($r = .20$, $p < .01$), lived farther away from the ex-spouse, $r = .26$, $p < .001$, had a more adequate household income, $r = .38$, $p < .001$ ($r = .30$, $p < .001$), received practical support from friends and family, $r = .16$, $p < .05$, got to spend holidays with their children, $r = .22$, $p < .O1$ ($r = .22$, $p < .01$), made the custody decision jointly with their ex-spouse, $F(1,186) = 3.5$, $p < .05$, Ms = 2.8(.44) versus 2.6(.58), and $F(1,186) = 2.7$, $p < .10$, Ms = 4.4(.71) versus 4.2(.98), and were living with another adult, $F(1,186) = 9.7$, $p < .01$, Ms = 2.9(.34) versus 2.6(.61), and $F(1,186) = 9.6$, $p < .01$, Ms = 4.6(.84) versus 4.1(.91), or a new spouse, $F(1,186) = 6.3$, $p < .01$, Ms = 2.9(.29) versus 2.7(.56), and $F(1,186) = 3.3$, $p < .10$, Ms = 4.5(.96) versus 4.2(.89). These latter circumstances had economic as well as psychological benefits for the custodial parent: When custody was decided by both parents, the household income was more adequate, $F(1,186) = 7.8$, $p < .01$, Ms = 3.5(.91)

**TABLE 1**
**Associations Between Child Variables and Contact With Noncustodial Parent**

| Child Variables | Contact With Noncustodial Parent | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Frequency of Visits[a] | Length of Visits[a] | Distance[a] | Activities[a] | Holidays[a] | Time Since Separation[a] | Custody Change[b] |
| Psychological Well-Being | | | | | | | |
| Overall well-being | | | . | .21** | .35*** | . | |
| Adjustment | . | . | . | .17* | . | .13+ | |
| Self-esteem | . | .14* | . | . | .15* | . | |
| Positive mood | | | . | .22** | .21** | . | |
| Depression | | | . | −.17* | −.20** | . | |
| Problems in last week | | | . | −.16* | −.34*** | . | |
| Aggressive | | | . | −.13+ | −.16* | . | |
| Depressed | | | . | . | −.16* | −.17* | |
| Difficult | . | . | . | −.14* | −.33*** | . | |
| Anxiety | .18* | . | | | | | |
| Relations With Parents | | | | | | | |
| Positive with custodial | . | −.15* | . | . | | | |
| Negative with custodial | . | . | . | . | −.18** | . | |
| Positive with noncustodial | .46*** | .36*** | −.28*** | .52*** | .46*** | −.13+ | 8.6** |
| Negative with noncustodial | . | −.20** | . | −.17* | | | . |
| Both parents pictured | .20** | .18* | . | .19* | | | |

[a]Partial Pearson correlations with custodial parent's gender, income, and psychological adjustment partialled out. [b]ANCOVA Fs with custodial parent's gender, income, and psychological adjustment covaried out.
.$p < .10$. +$p < .10$. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$ (two-tailed tests).

versus 3.1(1.0). When the household included another adult, the household income was higher, $F(1,186) = 6.3$, $p < .01$, Ms = 3.5(1.1) versus 3.0(.14), and the parent received more practical support, $F(1,186) = 6.1$, $p < .01$, Ms = 1.6(.66) versus 1.3(.66).

The results of analyses to test Hypothesis 2 showing how these circumstances of the custodial parent were related to children's adjustment after the effects of contact with the noncustodial parent and the gender of the custodial parent had been removed statistically are presented in Table 2. Supporting the hypothesis was one clear predictor of the child's psychological well-being—the custodial parent's mental state. Children were doing better emotionally (in terms of their own reports as well as their parents') if their custodial parent was. When the custodial parent had emotionally adjusted to the divorce, the child, too, had adjusted better, demonstrated a more positive mood, and exhibited fewer problem behaviors, particularly depressed behavior. If the parents had decided custody by mutual agreement, children were less likely to exhibit aggressive behavior, Ms = 1.2(1.1) versus .56 (.84); if the custodial parent had not remarried, children had higher self-esteem, Ms = 1.97(3.1) versus .50(.32), and reported that they were less depressed, Ms = 2.8(1.5) versus 3.5(1.5). Note that this negative association with remarriage was found despite the fact that remarried parents were themselves happier and reported that their children were too, Ms = .15(.43) versus .32(.54) for parent's report of child's depressed behavior.

Before the contributions of the custodial parent's gender and the noncustodial parent's contact were statistically removed, adequate income in the custodial household was significantly associated with children's overall well-being, $r = .16$, $p < .05$, depression, $r = -.19$, $p < .05$, behavior problems, $r = -.16$, $p < .05$, depressed behavior, $r = -.16$, $p < .05$, and anxiety, $r = -.21$, $p < .01$. However, these associations were eliminated by controlling for the two covariates, and no significant relations with well-being were observed with income level, payment of child support, and emotional or practical support, before or after gender of custodial parent and contact with noncustodial parent were statistically controlled.

Analyses to see if associations with children's psychological well-being were different depending upon the gender of the custodial parent revealed that well-being was related to regular payment of child support for children in mother custody, $F(1,184) = 6.5$, $p < .01$; $r = .29$, $p < .01$, and that well-being was related to the custodial parent's psychological adjustment only for children in father custody, $F(1,184) = 4.2$, $p < .05$; $r = .30$, $p < .01$.

Further supporting the hypothesis that children do better when circumstances in the custodial household are better were significant associations between conditions in the custodial family and children's relationships with their parents (also presented in Table 2). Children's relationship with the custodial parent was more positive if the custodial parent was more positive (emotionally well-adjusted, satisfied with the custody arrangement), had participated in the custody decision,

TABLE 2
Associations Between Child Variables and Circumstances of Custodial Parent

| Child Variables | Circumstances of Custodial Parent: Income[a] | Adequate Income[a] | Child Support[a] | Parent's Mental Health[a] | Satisfaction With Custody[a] | Emotional Support[a] | Practical Support[a] | Custody Decision[b] | Remarried[b] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Psychological Well-Being | | | | | | | | | |
| Overall well-being | | . | . | .22** | . | . | . | 2.8+ | . |
| Adjustment | | . | . | .25*** | .15* | . | . | . | . |
| Self-esteem | | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | 5.7* |
| Positive mood | | . | . | .18** | . | . | . | . | . |
| Depression | | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | 4.5* |
| Problems in last week | | . | . | −.22** | . | . | . | . | . |
| Aggressive | | . | . | . | . | . | . | 6.5** | . |
| Depressed | | . | . | −.16* | . | . | . | . | 4.2* |
| Difficult Anxiety | | | | | | | | | |
| Relations With Parents | | | | | | | | | |
| Positive with custodial | | | | .19** | .13+ | | | 4.6* | |
| Negative with custodial | .14* | | | | | | | | |
| Positive with noncustodial | . | | | .16* | | | −.23** | 4.4* | |
| Negative with noncustodial | . | | | −.15* | −.18* | | | 7.8** | |
| Both parents pictured | .25*** | .17* | | | | | .22** | | |

[a]Partial Pearson correlations with custodial parent's gender and child's contact with the noncustodial parent (holidays) partialled out.
[b]ANCOVA Fs with custodial parent's gender and child's contact with the noncustodial parent (holidays) covaried out.
$.p < .10$. $+p < .10$. $*p < .05$. $**p < .01$. $***p < .001$ (two-tailed tests).

and was living with another adult, $F(1,186) = 3.9$, $p < .05$, Ms = 3.9(.27) versus 3.8(.55). Their relationship with the noncustodial parent, too, was better if the custodial parent was happy, had participated in the custody decision, Ms = 3.3(.73) versus 2.8(.97)—especially for children in mother custody, $F(1,184) = 8.4$, $p < .01$—and was living with another adult, $F(1,186) = 4.2$, $p < .05$, Ms = 10.1(5.2) versus 8.6(5.0). Interactions with gender of child showed that boys had more positive relations with the noncustodial parent if that parent paid child support regularly, $F(1,184) = 3.0$, $p < .10$; $r = .21$, $p < .05$.

Partialling out the contribution of the child's positive relationship with the custodial parent did not reduce the association between the custodial parent's adjustment and the child's well-being, so apparently the effect of the custodial parent's mental state on the child's well-being was direct rather than mediated by the parent–child relationship.

**Testing Hypothesis 3: Same-Gender Custodial Parent**

Analyses of variance revealed significant differences in the circumstances of custodial parents related to gender. Mothers with custody had more children living with them, $F(1,186) = 10.7$, $p < .001$, Ms = 1.3(1.0) versus .79(.99), and were more likely to receive child support from the ex-spouse, $F(1,186) = 73.6$, $p < .001$, Ms = 2.4(.85) versus 1.3(.66). Custodial fathers had higher, $F(1,186) = 31.8$, $p < .001$, Ms = 3.9(.96) versus 2.7(1.3), and more adequate, $F(1,186) = 26.4$, $p < .001$, Ms = 3.7(.75) versus 2.9(1.0), incomes than custodial mothers and tended to receive more emotional support from their family and friends, $F(1,186) = 2.9$, $p < .10$, Ms = 1.4(.58) versus 1.2(.52). It was significantly more likely that, when there had been a change in the custody arrangement, the change had been from mother custody to father custody, 76% vs. 24%, $\chi^2 = 24.1$, $p < .001$. When the specific reasons for the choice of custodial arrangement were examined, it was discovered that mothers were more likely to have custody because it was "just assumed" (23 mothers versus 1 father) and fathers were more likely to have custody because the other parent was poor or unavailable—11% of fathers versus 1% of mothers, $\chi^2 = 10.1$, $p < .001$. Fathers were also more likely than mothers to have custody when the decision was made by mutual consent—34% of fathers versus 26% of mothers; $\chi^2 = 3.8$, $p < .05$. There was no difference related to the gender of the custodial parent in how much contact the child had with the noncustodial parent (on any measure) or how happy the custodial parent was (psychological adjustment or satisfaction with the custodial arrangement).

To test Hypothesis 3, that children do better in the custody of the same-sex parent, analyses of covariance were conducted, covarying out the effects of contact with the noncustodial parent (holidays) and circumstances of the custodial parent (income and psychological adjustment). Table 3 presents the results of these analyses showing main effects for gender of parent and interaction effects for Gender of child × Gender of parent. A MANOVA for gender of parent was

**TABLE 3**
**Anovas for Effects of Gender of Custodial Parent on Child Variables**

| Child Variables | Mean (*SD*) Boys: With Father (*n* = 39) | Boys: With Mother (*n* = 56) | Girls: With Father (*n* = 33) | Girls: With Mother (*n* = 59) | F Gender Parent[a] | F Interaction Gender Child × Gender Parent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Psychological Well-Being | | | | | | |
| Overall well-being | 1.1 (3.3) | −.81 (4.2) | .78 (3.5) | −.43 (3.6) | 12.2*** | |
| Adjustment | 3.3 (.79) | 3.5 (.57) | 3.2 (.70) | 3.5 (.65) | | |
| Self-esteem | 2.9 (3.0) | 1.5 (3.3) | 2.0 (2.7) | .97 (3.4) | 10.3** | |
| Positive mood | 4.1 (.64) | 3.9 (.76) | 3.9 (.73) | 3.9 (.72) | 2.7+ | |
| Depression | 2.5 (1.4) | 3.3 (1.7) | 2.4 (1.2) | 3.1 (1.6) | 12.2*** | |
| Problems in last week | 2.7 (2.8) | 3.9 (3.2) | 3.2 (2.5) | 3.5 (3.2) | 4.8* | |
| Aggressive | .69 (1.0) | 1.1 (1.1) | .81 (.93) | .88 (1.2) | | |
| Depressed | .18 (.39) | .20 (.44) | .27 (.52) | .46 (.65) | | |
| Difficult | 1.4 (1.5) | 2.1 (1.7) | 1.6 (1.4) | 1.8 (1.7) | 3.7* | |
| Anxiety | 17. (3.9) | 20. (5.1) | 19. (5.0) | 21. (4.8) | 12.0*** | |
| Gender Role | | | | | | |
| Masculinity | 6.2 (2.0) | 6.2 (1.7) | 6.4 (1.6) | 5.6 (2.0) | | |
| Femininity | 5.8 (2.0) | 5.9 (2.2) | 6.6 (1.7) | 7.3 (1.9) | | |
| Relations With Parents | | | | | | |
| Positive with custodial | 14. (3.8) | 14. (3.8) | 13. (3.8) | 15. (3.7) | | |
| Negative with custodial | 3.1 (2.8) | 2.8 (2.5) | 4.0 (2.6) | 2.6 (2.3) | | |
| Positive with noncustodial | 9.6 (4.5) | 9.4 (4.8) | 10. (4.7) | 7.9 (4.3) | | |
| Negative with noncustodial | 2.5 (2.4) | 3.1 (2.9) | 2.8 (3.0) | 3.2 (2.4) | 4.3* | |
| Both parents pictured | 8.4 (2.8) | 6.9 (3.5) | 8.5 (2.0) | 6.8 (3.7) | 6.3* | |

ANCOVA for gender of parent with nonresident parent's contact (holidays) and custodial parent's circumstances (income, psychological adjustment) covaried out.

.$p >= .10$. +$p < .10$. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$ (two-tailed tests). Higher means in each significant contrast are italicized.

significant, $F(1,175) = 2.9$, $p < .01$, and strong and consistent effects were found across the measures of children's psychological well-being. Children in father custody were doing significantly better than children in mother custody in terms of overall psychological well-being, self-esteem, depression, anxiety, and behavior problems, specifically "difficult" behaviors. No gender-of-child by gender-of-parent interactions were significant for any measure of psychological well-being. Thus, the same-gender hypothesis was not supported. Inspection of t tests conducted separately for boys and girls (see Table 4) suggests that the advantage of father custody was especially marked for boys, but there was no indication that girls did better in a same-gender custodial arrangement. There also were no significant interactions with child's age for these variables, so it is not possible that the same-gender hypothesis was supported only for older (or younger) children.

Main effects of the gender of the custodial parent and interaction effects of Gender of child × Gender of parent on children's gender roles were not significant for the sample as a whole. However, when analyses were conducted separately for boys and girls (Table 4), there was a faint suggestion that girls in father custody were more masculine, whereas girls in mother custody were more feminine. Using a one-tailed test, these associations reached significance ($p < .05$). This gives scant support to the same-gender hypothesis for gender roles and should be viewed with particular caution because of the psychometric problems with the measure of masculinity.

Analyses of children's relationships with parents showed no significant interaction effects and only two main effects for gender of parent. Children in father custody were less negative toward the noncustodial mother than children in mother custody were to the noncustodial father, and were more likely to picture both parents in their drawing of their family. The parallel associations, showing that children in father custody were more positive toward the noncustodial mother and more negative to the custodial father, were also significant in analyses of variance (particularly for girls, see *t* tests in Table 4), but they did not reach statistical significance in analysis of covariance. Interactions with gender of custodial parent revealed that children had more positive relations with their custodial mother if visits with father were shorter, $F(1,184) = 12.3$, $p < .001$; $r = -.32$, $p < .01$; they had more positive relations with their custodial father if visits with mother were longer, $F(1,184) = 7.11$, $p < .01$, $r = -.32$, $p < .01$.

Not only did children in father custody apparently remain close to their mothers, if their relationship with their noncustodial mother was negative, they were more likely to have psychological problems. When interactions with gender of custodial parent were calculated for associations between children's well-being and their relationships with their parents, children in father custody were doing more poorly in overall well-being if their relationship with their nonresident mother was more negative, $F(1,184) = 3.7$, $p < .05$, $r = -.39$, $p < .01$, whereas for children in other custody this association was not significant.

**TABLE 4**
**t Tests for Gender of Custodial Parent Effects**

| Child Variables | Boys With Father (39) Vs. Mother (56) (# = Father Better or Higher) | Girls With Father (33) Vs. Mother (59) (# = Father Better or Higher) | Same-Gender (97) Vs. Unmatched-Gender (90) (# = Same-Gender Better or Higher) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Psychological Well-Being | | | |
| Overall well-being | 2.5** # | 1.6+ # | |
| Adjustment | 2.0+ | 1.7+ | |
| Self-esteem | 2.0* # | . | |
| Positive mood | . | . | |
| Depression | 2.0* # | 2.3* # | |
| Problems in last week | 2.4* # | . | |
| Aggressive | 1.7+ # | . | |
| Depressed | | . | |
| Difficult | 2.0* # | . | |
| Anxiety | 2.9** # | 2.1* # | |
| Gender Role | | | |
| Masculinity | | 1.9+ # | 1.7+ |
| Femininity | | 1.8+ | 1.9+ # |
| Relations With Parents | | | |
| Positive with custodial | | 1.7+ | |
| Negative with custodial | | 2.9** | |
| Positive with noncustodial | | 2.0* # | |
| Negative with noncustodial | | | |
| Both parents pictured | 2.5* # | 2.1* # | |

.$p >$ = .10. +$p <$ .10. *$p <$ .05. **$p <$ .01. ***$p <$ .001 (two-tailed tests).

Whether in father or mother custody, children tended to have closer and more positive relationships with their mothers than their fathers. In the Parent Relationship Test, the average number of positive statements (out of 15) attributed to mothers was 9, mode = 14; the average number of positive statements attributed to fathers was 7, mode = 0, $t = 3.3$, $p < .001$. The median number of positive statements received by custodial mothers was 12, by custodial fathers, 11; the median number of positive statements received by noncustodial mothers was 6, by noncustodial fathers, 5.

## Comparing Hypotheses

According to the results of all these analyses, some support was found for each of the three hypotheses predicting children's adjustment after divorce, but for none of the hypotheses was the support simple. With respect to Hypothesis 1, children's well-being was related to the quality of contact with the noncustodial parent but not the quantity of contact. With respect to Hypothesis 2, children's well-being was related to the mental health of the custodial parent but not, after other factors had been controlled, to the "objective conditions" of the custodial household. Hypothesis 3 was not supported with respect to the advantage of a same-gender custodial parent, but the gender of the custodial parent was related to the child's well-being and relationships.

Analyses combining the effects of close contact with the noncustodial parent, mental health of the custodial parent, and gender of the custodial parent were conducted to see which of the three effects was strongest. Regression analysis indicated that all three factors were significantly predictive and that removing any one of them reduced the level of prediction below the obtained multiple R of .41. Partial correlations with well-being for each factor while controlling for the other two indicated that spending holidays was most strongly predictive of well-being (partial r for holidays = .34, $p < .001$)—but the other two were almost as highly predictive; partial r for custodial parent's adjustment = .23, $p < .001$, for custodial parent's gender (mothers coded 0, fathers coded 1) = −.19, $p < .01$.

Further analyses were carried out to compare the effects of living with the father versus having substantial contact with the father while living with the mother. The psychological well-being of children in father custody was compared with the psychological well-being of children in mother custody who lived close to the father (not more than 2 h drive distant) and often or always spent holidays with him. The difference in well-being between these two groups was not statistically significant. Mean level of well-being for children in father custody ($n = 72$) was .83. Mean level of well-being for children with father contact ($n = 54$) was .79; $F(1,186) < 1$. There was no significant interaction with gender of child, but it may be worth noting that boys in father custody scored higher, M = .84, $n = 39$, than boys with father contact, M = .52; $n = 21$, whereas girls with father contact scored higher, M = .97, $n = 33$, than girls in father custody, M = .75, $n = 33$. The small number of children in mother custody who always

spent their holidays with father ($n$ = 13, of which 12 were girls) scored particularly high on psychological well-being ($M$ = 2.1), but unfortunately this group was too small to analyze separately. In support of this gender difference suggesting that contact with the nonresident father is especially important for girls, regression analyses predicting well-being performed separately for boys and girls indicated that, for girls, only close contact with the nonresident parent was predictive of well-being; whereas for boys all three factors were predictive.

## DISCUSSION

If there is one major finding in this study, it is the demonstration of the importance of fathers for the psychological health of children after divorce. The significance of fathers' contribution to children's well-being has been suggested by researchers previously (Amato & Keith, 1991), but it has never been so clearly and unequivocally demonstrated for children of this age. Across a variety of assessments, it was apparent that fathers played an important role in these children's lives after divorce. They were important for boys and for girls, for 6-year-olds and for 12-year-olds. They were important for contact, for cash, and for custody. In this section, we discuss the importance of fathers in the context of the three hypotheses that were tested in the study.

### Contact with Nonresident Parent

In our sample of primarily middle-class families, most children saw their nonresident parent at least once a week. In national studies (e.g., Furstenberg & Nord, 1985), the likelihood of this is much lower. As in those studies, however, the children in our study were most likely to participate with the nonresident parent in social activities, like eating out and going to amusement parks, rather than routinely sharing more mundane activities like shopping, reading, visiting, doing homework, and watching TV together. Our results suggest that participating in a wider range of activities, including these mundane matters, and spending holidays together was what was associated with children's well-being, not just how often the child and parent saw each other. In fact, for girls in this study, this kind of contact with the nonresident parent was the ***only*** significant predictor of psychological well-being from among all the family variables. This kind of close parentlike contact with the noncustodial parent had the additional advantage of being associated with better relations with both parents, which to some extent was responsible for children's better well-being. Apparently it is important for children that their nonresidential parent continue to act like a "full-service" parent rather than simply taking trips to Disneyland or McDonalds—no matter how frequent these trips are.

The results of previous research on the effects of parental contact on children's well-being have been mixed. Equal numbers of studies have documented positive effects and no effects on children's well-being (Amato & Keith, 1991). Our

results are consistent with those of researchers who have distinguished between the amount and kind of contact and found children's adjustment related only to the kind of contact (Buchanan & Maccoby, 1993; Kurdek & Berg, 1983).

In previous research which has included primarily children in mother custody, contact with the nonresident parent generally refers to contact with fathers. In this study, this is the case as well: Spending holidays with the nonresident parent was significantly related to well-being only for children in mother custody. Here, then, we see that continued close contact with the nonresident parent is of particular importance when the nonresident parent is the father. Children suffer particularly when their father becomes the proverbial "Disneyland Dad."

### Circumstances of Custodial Parent

In the custodial household, two factors were associated with children's well-being: having enough money to be comfortable, and having a parent who had adjusted to life after divorce. In previous research, better adjustment for children has been associated with family income in the postdivorce family (Desimone-Luis, O'Mahoney, & Hunt, 1979; Fulton, 1979; Hodges, Tierney, & Buchsbaum, 1984) and regular payment of child support by the noncustodial parent (King, 1994). In this study, too, the child's psychological well-being was related to the adequacy of the income to cover family expenses. However, when the gender of the custodial parent was covaried out, this association of income with well-being disappeared. The income variable that remained significant in predicting children's well-being was the regular payment of child support by noncustodial fathers. Here is further evidence of the importance of fathers—as a source of financial support for custodial mothers and their children.

Further evidence of the significance of fathers appeared in the link between the custodial parent's mental state and the child's. Children were better off psychologically and had better relationships with both parents when the custodial parent had adjusted better to the divorce. The psychological adjustment of the custodial parent has also been associated with children's psychological well-being in previous research on divorce (Forehand et al., 1987; Fulton, 1979; Kalter et al., 1989; Kline et al., 1989; Kurdek & Berg, 1983; Malley & Barenbaum, 1984; Shaw & Emery, 1987). In our study, however, the association was significant only for children in father custody, suggesting that the custodial father's mental state had a greater influence on the child's well-being than did the custodial mother's.

### Gender of Custodial Parent

Finally, the importance of fathers was clearest in the examination of the third hypothesis, that children do better in the custody of a parent of the same sex. Past researchers have claimed support for the same-gender hypothesis on the basis that, in mother custody, boys fare worse than girls. The boys in this study, however, were not doing worse than girls—whether they were in mother custody

or not. In fact, on one measure of psychological well-being—depressed behavior—boys were doing better than girls. There was no support in our data for the suggestion that boys suffer more than girls after divorce because they are not with the same-gender parent.

Researchers have also claimed support for the hypothesis that children are better off in the custody of the same-gender parent on the basis of a small number of studies comparing children in mother and father custody. These studies, however, were of adolescents (Buchanan & Maccoby, 1993; Gregory, 1965; Peterson & Zill, 1986; Zimiles & Lee, 1991) or included only small samples of children in father custody (Camara & Resnick, 1988; Warshak & Santrock, 1983a, 1983b). In our study, the differences that Warshak and Santrock found, favoring boys over girls in father custody and girls over boys in mother custody, although in the right direction, were not significant.[3] The only significant difference that might favor same-gender custody was in the child's gender role. Girls in father custody reported more masculine attitudes and girls in mother custody more feminine ones. But this difference was small and did not appear for boys. Moreover, there was no indication that, at the level observed in this study, having more masculine attitudes was detrimental for girls. Masculinity was positively correlated with girls' well-being, $r = .26, p < .05$. Thus, there was no support in our data for the suggestion that children require a same-gender custodial parent for gender-role development.

What the study demonstrated, rather than an advantage of same-gender custody, was an advantage of father custody. Children in father custody were doing better than children in mother custody in terms of overall psychological well-being, self-esteem, depression, anxiety, and exhibition of "difficult" problem behaviors. This advantage was most clear and consistent for boys, it is true, but the effect for girls was only slightly less. Previously, researchers have failed to uncover such differences (Bisnaire, Firestone, & Rynard, 1990; Desimone-Luis, O'Mahoney, & Hunt, 1979; Johnston, Kline, & Tschann, 1989; Lowenstein & Koopman, 1978; Luepnitz, 1982, 1986; Rosen, 1979; Schnayer & Orr, 1988–89; Welsh-Osga, 1981). But these studies have included few participants in father custody, average $n = 14$. In a larger study, the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (Downey, 1994), although children in father custody were not different from children in mother custody in terms of their school grades and behavior, they did score higher on standardized achievement tests. Our finding that measures of psychological well-being favored children in father custody, even when family income, contact with the noncustodial parent, and the custodial parent's psychological adjustment were controlled, is consistent with the results of Amato and Keith's (1991) meta-analysis of studies of adolescents.

What was the basis of this apparent advantage of father custody? What do we

[3] In father custody, $M = 1.1$ for boys versus $M = .78$ for girls; $F < 1$. In mother custody, $M = -.43$ for girls versus $M = -.81$ for boys; $F < 1$.

know about these custodial dads? In measurable ways, the custodial fathers in the study had advantages over the custodial mothers. Compared with the mothers, they had higher incomes and fewer children to take care of; they were less likely to require or receive child support and more likely to have available emotional support from friends and family. These advantages for children were added to whatever inherent benefits paternal care might have—such as the ability of fathers to provide discipline for difficult children. Previous research offers some suggestion that fathers may be more controlling and effective disciplinarians than mothers, that mothers are more likely to get embroiled in petty bickering with difficult children (Aldous, 1975; Armentrout & Burger, 1972; Lytton, 1979; 1980; Malone & Guy, 1982; Osofsky & O'Connell, 1972; Patterson, 1980).

Yet another advantage of father custody in this study was that children living with their fathers were more likely to continue to think of their mothers as part of the family and less likely to think of them in negative terms that children in mother custody did with the fathers. Mothers somehow seemed to stay more involved with their children when they were no longer living with them than fathers did. Whether this was because of the mothers' closer connection to the children early on, because of the mothers' continued involvement was permitted or encouraged by the father or insisted upon by the mother, or because children simply feel more positive about their mothers in general (as they did in this study), is not clear. Consistent with other research by Buchanan and Maccoby (1993) and Bianchi and Seltzer (1986), there was no difference between nonresident mothers and fathers in the amount or kind of contact they had with their children (frequency of visits, length of visits, shared activities, holidays). Nor did nonresident mothers live closer to their children; in fact, in our sample, they lived farther away. There is some indication that this finding of a continued emotional closeness with mother is a common one, however. Peterson and Zill (1986) also found that children in father custody had a better chance of having good relationships with both their parents than did children in mother custody. They noted that children's relationships with their mothers are more robust in the face of absence: Only one-third of the 12- to 16-year-olds in their study maintained as a positive relationship with an absent (nonresident) father, compared with 57% of the children who maintained relations with their absent mother.

Having a positive relationship with the nonresident mother is apparently important for the child's well-being, as well. The children in father custody who had a more negative relationship with their noncustodial mother had poorer psychological well-being than the children whose relationship was better, whereas the psychological well-being of children who had a more negative relationship with the nonresident father was not measurably different from that of children with a closer relationship.

Thus, we see that there are a number of ways in which living with the father has advantages for a child's well-being. Before concluding that all children should be placed in father custody after a divorce, however, there are several

important cautions that should be noted. First, there is the tired but true cliche that correlations do not prove causation. The associations we have noted contain circularities. Fathers may be more inclined to be involved with children who are already doing well or they may be more likely to be awarded custody of children who are psychologically healthy. Second, we must be careful about generalizing beyond this sample of predominantly middle-class volunteers, identified by word of mouth. It is possible that there were unassessed recruitment biases in the study that operated differently for fathers and mothers. Third, although children in father custody as a group were doing better than children in mother custody, they were not doing better than the children in mother custody who had high levels of contact with dad (living close and spending holidays together). In terms of psychological well-being, close contact with dad (for children in mother custody) fully compensated for the advantages of living with dad (for children in father custody).

Fourth, the fathers with custody in this study were self-selected custodial parents. They were not randomly assigned by the courts or their wives to take on the burdens and joys of child-rearing. In a number of studies, custodial fathers who seek custody, rather than just assenting to it, have been found to be more emotionally invested in their children and to be more effective parents (DeMaris & Greif, 1992; Greene, 1978; Mendes, 1976; Risman, 1986). The fathers in this study may have been a special group of men who were exceptionally involved with their children. When making the decision about who would be the custodial parent, couples in the study did not "just assume" that the father would get custody (as happened for one-fifth of the mothers). These custodial fathers were more likely to have custody because the mother was unfit or unavailable, or because the two parents had come to a mutual decision that the father should have custody. Fathers were also more likely to have taken over custody after it had not worked out with the mother. In other research custodial fathers have been found to feel more satisfied and less stressed than custodial mothers about their parenting, about the time they have to spend alone, and about how trapped or bored they are (Clarke-Stewart & Bailey, 1989). They reportedly feel that divorced parenthood has elevated their status, whereas sole custody mothers feel that it has lowered theirs (Luepnitz, 1982). There is a good possibility that the custodial fathers in this study were an unusual group to begin with, who were then given societal and social support for their custody. Yet one more feature of life with a custodial father that was observed by Santrock and Warshak (1979; Santrock, Warghak, & Elliott, 1982) is that children in father custody have more contact with other female caregivers (day-care providers, housekeepers, aunts, grandmothers), and this contact is related to children's well-being. Fathers may not be providing all the benefits to children by themselves; they have help from sisters, friends—and their ex-wives.

Fifth, and finally, it is important not to overestimate the size or significance of the associations obtained between children's well-being and their custody or contact with the father. Although statistically significant, the correlations were

small in absolute terms. Children's psychological well-being is a function of many factors, of which we identified only a small number in this study. Most notably, we did not evaluate the quality of care provided by each parent. Undoubtedly, this would be a strong, perhaps the strongest, contributor to children's well-being. It is essential to keep this in mind when considering the practical implications of these results. The significance of this study for practitioners is not that it provides a blunt instrument for obtaining more custody for fathers. The positive associations obtained in the study demonstrate the benefits for children of father custody and of continued contact with both parents, but the small size of these associations suggests that custody and contact are not the whole story. A large part of children's adjustment remains to be explained, and that explanation undoubtedly involves the quality of parents' care.

This study has not answered all our questions about fathers' roles after divorce. What it has, however, convincingly demonstrated — with a relatively large group of fathers, over a relatively wide range measures of children's well-being, in the context of a relatively comprehensive assessment of family variables — is that, without question, fathers can continue to make significant and unique contributions to their children's well-being after divorce. As custodial parents, fathers can offer children an environment that promotes their psychology well-being and continued close relations with their noncustodial mother. As noncustodial parents, they can promote children's well-being by staying involved in close "parentlike" interactions and paying child support regularly. Recently, a "fathering movement" has arisen, based on the notion that the father's presence in the family is the solution to our social ills (e.g., the National Fatherhood Initiative, Blankenhorn, 1995). A few years ago, a "father's rights movement" appeared, promoting the efforts of fathers to gain custody of their children (e.g., United Fathers of America). The findings of this study offer support — and restraint — to both these movements, by confirming that children are more likely to thrive if their fathers stay involved in their lives, but suggesting that their involvement does not necessarily have to be limited to staying married or getting custody. Practitioners wishing to apply the findings of this study can use them to encourage fathers to stay involved with their children after a divorce, either by taking on custody or by providing "full-service" parental contact when they are with the child. But it is also essential that practitioners investigate whether the father can and will offer the child good quality care. This study does not provide a mandate for men; it opens doors for discussions of paternal custody, and it underscores the need for practitioners to evaluate the best interests of the child in each case individually.

## REFERENCES

Achenbach, T.M., Howell, C.T., Quay, H.C., & Conners, C.K. (1991). National survey of problems and competencies among four- to sixteen-year-olds: Parents' reports for normative and clinical samples. ***Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development, 56*** (Serial ***No.*** 225).

Aldous, J. (1975). The search for alternatives: Parental behaviors and children's original problem solutions. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 37,* 711–722.

Allison, P.D., & Furstenberg, F.F. Jr. (1989). How marital dissolution affects children: Variations by age and sex. *Developmental Psychology,* 25, 540–549.

Amato, P.R., & Keith, B. (1991). Parental divorce and the well-being of children: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin, 110,* 26–46.

Arendell, T. (1986). *Mothers and divorce: Legal, economic, and social dilemmas.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Armentrout, J.A., & Burger, G.K. (1972). Children's reports of parental child-rearing behavior at five grade levels. *Developmental Psychology,* 7, 44–48.

Belle, D. (Ed.). (1982). *Lives in stress: Women and depression.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Bene, E., & Anthony, J. (1957). *Manual for the Family Relations Test.* London: National Foundation for Educational Research.

Bianchi, S.M., & Scltzcr, J.A. (1986, Dcc.). Life without father. *American Demographics, 8,* 43–48.

Biller, H.B. (1981). Father absence, divorce, and personality development. In M.E. Lamb (Ed.), *The role of the father in child development* (2nd ed., pp. 489–552). New York: Wiley.

Bisnaire, L.M.C., Firestone, P., & Rynard, D. (1990). Factors associated with academic achievement in children following parental separation. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 60,* 66–76.

Blankenhorn, D. (1995). *Fatherless America.* New York: Basic Books.

Bowlby, J. (1969). Disruption of affectional bonds and its effects on behavior. *Canada's Mental Health Supplement, 12,* No. 59.

Braver, S.L., Gonzalez, N., Sandler, J.N., & Wolchik, S.A. (1985, Feb.). *Economic hardship and post-divorce adjustment of custodial mothers.* Paper presented at Conference on Family Competence, Arizona State University, Tempe AZ.

Braver, S.L., Wolchik, S.A., Sandler, I.N., Fogas, B., & Zvetina, D. (1987, Aug.). *Parental reports of noncustodialparent visitation: Some recent findings.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, New York.

Bray, J.H., Berger, S.H., Touch, G., Boethel, C.L. (1993, March). *Nonresidential parent–child relationships following divorce and remarriage: A longitudinal perspective.* Paper presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, New Orleans, LA.

Brown, B.F. (1982). *Divorce adjustment and social support: A study of their relationship through a divorce adjustment group approach designed to facilitate the building of social support.* Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Fielding Institute.

Buchanan, C.M., & Maccoby, E.E. (1993, March). *Relationships between adolescents and their nonresidential parents: A comparison of nonresidential mothers and fathers.* Paper presented the biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, New Orleans.

Camara, K.A., & Resnick, G. (1988). Interparental conflict and cooperation: Factors moderating children's post-divorce adjustment. In M. Hetherington & J.D. Arasteh (Eds.), *Impact of divorce, single parenting, and stepparenting on children* (pp. 169–196). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Cantril, H. (1965). *The pattern of human concerns.* New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Clarke-Stewart, K.A. (1988). Parents' effects on children's development: A decade of progress? *Journal of Applied Development Psychology, 9,* 41–84.

Clarke-Stewart, K.A., & Bailey, B. (1989). Adjusting to divorce: Why do men have it easier? *Journal of Divorce, 13,* 75–94.

Clarke-Stewart, K.A., Gruber, C.P., & Fitzgerald, L.M. (1994). *Children at home and in day care.* Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Coletta, N.D. (1983). Stressful lives: The situation of divorced mothers and their children. *Journal of Divorce, 6,* 19–32.

Day, R.D., & Bahr, S.J. (1986). Income changes following divorce and remarriage. ***Journal of Divorce, 9,*** 75–88.

DeMaris, A., & Greif, G.L. (1992). The relationship between family structure and parent–child relationship problems in single father households. ***Journal of Divorce & Remarriage,*** 18, 55–78.

Desimone-Luis, J., O'Mahoney, K., & Hunt, D. (1979). Children of separation and divorce: Factors influencing adjustment. ***Journal of Divorce, 3,*** 37–42.

Dooley, D., Catalano, R., & Brownell, A. (1986). The relation of economic conditions, social support, and life events to depression. ***Journal of Community Psychology, 14,*** 103–119.

Downey, D.B. (1994). The school performance of children from single-mother and single-father families: Economic or interpersonal deprivation? ***Journal of Family Issues,*** 15, 129–147.

Duncan, G.J., Brooks-Gunn, J., & Klebanov, P.K. (1994). Economic deprivation and early childhood development. ***Child Development,*** 65, 296–318.

Forehand, R., Fauber, R., Long, N., Brody, G.H., & Slotkin, J. (1987). Maternal depressive mood following divorce: An examination of predictors and adolescent adjustment from a stress model perspective. In J.P. Vincent (Ed.), ***Advances in family intervention, assessment and theory*** (Vol. 4, pp. 71–98). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Fulton, J.A. (1979). Parental reports of children's post-divorce adjustment. ***Journal of Social Issues,*** 35, 126–139.

Furstenberg, F.F., Jr. (1982, Nov.). ***Child care after divorce and remarriage.*** Paper presented at the MacArthur Foundation's Conference on Child Care: Growth Fostering Environments, Chicago.

Furstenberg, F.F., Jr., & Nord, C.W. (1985). Parenting apart: Patterns of childrearing after marital disruption. ***Journal of Marriage and the Family,*** 47, 893–904.

Furstenberg, F.F., Jr., Nord, C.W., Peterson, J.L., & Zill, N. (1983). The life course of children of divorce: Marital disruption and parental contact. ***American Sociological Review,*** 48, 656–668.

Gerstel, N., Riessman, C.K., & Rosenfield, S. (1985). Explaining the symptomatology of separated and divorced women and men: The role of material conditions and social networks. ***Social Forces,*** 64, 84–101.

Ginsberg, D. (1985). Social support and post-divorce adjustment in highly educated women. ***Dissertation Abstracts International,*** 45 (11-B), p. 3617. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1984.

Greene, R.S. (1978). Atypical parenting: Custodial single fathers. ***Dissertation Abstracts International, 39***(2-A), p. 1136. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Maryland.

Gregory, I. (1965). Anterospective data following childhood loss of a parent. I: Delinquency and high school dropout. ***Archives of General Psychiatry, 13,*** 99–109.

Guidubaldi, J., Perry, J.D., & Nastasi, B.K. (1987a). Assessment and intervention for children of divorce: Implication of the NASP-KSU Nationwide Study. In J.P. Vincent (Ed.), ***Advances in family intervention, assessment and theory*** (Vol. 4, pp. 33–70). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Guidubaldi, J., Perry, J.D., & Nastasi, B.K. (1987b). Growing up in a divorced family: Initial and long-term perspective on children's adjustment. In S. Oskamp (Ed.), ***Annual Review of Applied Social Psychology*** (Vol. 7, pp. 202–237). Beverly Hills: Sage.

Hall, J.A., & Halberstadt, A.G. (1980). Masculinity and femininity in children: Development of the child's Personal Attributes Questionnaire. ***Developmental Psychology, 16,*** 270–280.

Hanson, S.M.H. (1986). Healthy single parent families. ***Family Relations,*** 35, 125–132.

Hetherington, E.M., Cox, M., & Cox, R. (1978). The aftermath of divorce. In J.H. Stevens, Jr., & M. Mathews (Eds.), ***Motherlchild, fatherlchild relationships*** (pp. 149–176). Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Hetherington, E.M., Cox, M., & Cox, R. (1982). Effects of divorce on parents and children. In M.E. Lamb (Ed.), ***Nontraditional families: Parenting and child development*** (pp. 233–288). Hillsdale. NJ: Erlbaum.

Hodges, W.F., Buchsbaum, H.K., & Tierney, C.W. (1983). Parent–child relationships and adjustment in preschool children in divorced and intact families. ***Journal of Divorce, 7,*** 43–58.

Hodges, W.F., Tierney, C.W., & Buchsbaum, H.K. (1984). The cumulative effect of stress on preschool children of divorce and intact families. ***Journal of Marriage and the Family, 46,*** 611–617.

Hodges, W.F., Wechsler, R.C., & Ballantine, C. (1979). Divorce and the preschool child: Cumulative stress. ***Journal of Divorce, 3,*** 55–67.

Isaacs, M.B., Leon, G.H., & Kline, M. (1987). When is a parent out of the picture? Different custody, different perceptions. ***Family Process, 26,*** 101–110.

Isaacs, M.B., & Levin, I.R. (1984). Who's in my family? A longitudinal study of drawings of children of divorce. ***Journal of Divorce, 7,*** 1–22.

Johnston, J.R., Kline, M., & Tschann, J.M. (1989). Ongoing postdivorce conflict: Effects on children of joint custody and frequent access. ***American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 59,*** 576–592.

Kalter, N., Kloner, A., Schreier, S., & Okla, K. (1989). Predictors of children's postdivorce adjustment. ***American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 59,*** 605–618.

King, ***V.*** (1994). Nonresident father involvement and child well-being: Can dads make a difference? ***Journal of Family Issues. 15,*** 78–96.

Kline, M., Tschann, J.M., Johnston, J.R., & Wallerstein, J.S. (1989). Children's adjustment in joint and sole physical custody families. ***Developmental Psychology, 25,*** 430–438.

Kurdck, L.A. (1988). A 1-year follow-up study of children's divorce adjustment, custodial mothers' divorce adjustment, and postdivorce parenting. ***Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 9,*** 315–328.

Kurdek, L.A., & Berg, B. (1983). Correlates of children's adjustment to their parents' divorces. In L.A. Kurdek (Ed.), ***Children and divorce*** (pp. 47–60). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Love-Clark, P.A. (1984). A meta-analysis of the effects of divorce on children's adjustment. ***Dissertation Abstracts International, 45*** (09-A), p. 2807. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Texas A & M University.

Lowenstein, J.S., & Koopman, E.J. (1978). A comparison of the self-esteem between boys living with single-parent mothers and single-parent fathers. ***Journal of Divorce, 2,*** 195–208.

Luepnitz, D.A. (1982). ***Child custody: A study of families after divorce.*** Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.

Leupnitz, D.A. (1986). A comparison of maternal, paternal, and joint custody: Understanding the varieties of post-divorce family life. ***Journal of Divorce, 9,*** 1–12.

Lynn, D.B. (1974). ***The father: His role in child development.*** Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Lytton, H. (1979). Discipline encounters between young boys and their mothers and fathers? Is there a contingency system? ***Developmental Psychology, 15,*** 256–268.

Lytton, H. (1980). ***Parent–child interaction: The socialization process observed in twin and singleton families.*** New York: Plenum.

Maccoby, E.E. (1991, Spring). After the divorce: The Stanford Child Custody Project. ***Newsletter*** of the American Psychological Association, Division 7, Developmental Psychology.

Malley, J.E., & Barenbaum, N.B. (1984, Aug.). ***Maternal employment patterns and mothers' and children's post-separation adjustment.*** Paper presented at the meeting of the American Psychological Association, Toronto, Canada.

Malone, J.J., & Guy, R.F. (1982). A comparison of mothers' and fathers' speech to their 3-year-old sons. ***Journal of Psycholinguistic Research, 11,*** 599–608.

Mendes, H.A. (1976). Single fatherhood. ***Social Work, 21,*** 308–312.

Mott, F.L. (1991, April). ***The impact of father's absence from the home on subsequent maternally reported behavior problems of young children.*** Paper presented at the biennial meeting of the Society of Research in Child Development, Seattle, WA.

National Center for Health Statistics (1986, June). ***American Demographics,*** 8, 11.

Osofsky, J., & O'Connell, E.J. (1972). Parent–child interaction: Daughters' effects upon mothers' and fathers' behaviors. ***Developmental Psychology,*** 7, 157–168.

Patterson, G.R. (1980). Mothers: The unacknowledged victims. ***Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development. 45*** (Serial No. 186).

Peterson, J.L., & Zill, N. (1986). Marital disruption, parent–child relationships, and behavior problems in children. ***Journal of Marriage and the Family, 48,*** 295–307.

Radke-Yarrow, M., & Zahn-Waxler, C. (1986). The role of familial factors in the development of prosocial behavior: Research findings and questions. In D. Olweus, J. Block, & M. Radke-Yarrow (Eds.), ***Development of antisocial and prosocial behavior.*** Orlando, FL: Academic.

Reynolds, C.R., & Richmond, B.O. (1978). What I think and feel: A revised measure of children's manifest anxiety. ***Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 6,*** 271–280.

Richardson, J.B. (1981). Support systems and sense of well-being: A study of separated and divorced parents with physical custody of their children. ***Dissertation Abstracts International, 42*** (04-A), p. 1798.

Risman, B.J. (1986). Can men "mother"? Life as a single father. ***Family Relations, 35,*** 95–102.

Rosen, R. (1979). Some crucial issues concerning children of divorce. ***Journal of Divorce, 3,*** 19–25.

Rosenberg, M. (1965). ***Society and the adolescent self-image*** Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Sameroff, A.J., Seifer, R., Baldwin, A., & Baldwin, C. (1993). Stability of intelligence from preschool to adolescence: The influence of social and family risk factors. ***Child Development.*** 64, 80–97.

Sameroff, A.J., Seifer, R., & Zax, M. (1982). Early development of children at risk for emotional disorder. ***Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development, 47,*** (Serial No. 199).

Santrock, J.W., & Warshak, R.A. (1979). Father custody and social development in boys and girls. ***Journal of Social Issues, 35,*** 112–125.

Santrock, J.W., Warshak, R.A., & Elliott, G.L. (1982). Social development and parent–child interaction in father-custody and stepmother families. In M.E. Lamb (Ed.), ***Nontraditional families: Parenting and child development.*** Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Schnayer, R., & Orr, R.R. (1988–89). A comparison of children living in single-mother and single-father families. ***Journal of Divorce. 12,*** 171–184.

Shaws, D.S., & Emery, R.E. (1987). Parental conflict and other correlates of the adjustment of school-age children whose parents have separated. ***Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 15,*** 269–281.

Spanier, G., & Thompson, L. (1984). ***Parting: The aftermath of separation and divorce.*** Beverly Hills: Sage.

Spigelman, G., Spigelman, A., & Englesson, I.L. (1992). Analysis of family drawings: A comparison between children from divorce and non-divorce families. ***Journal of Divorce & Remarriage, 18,*** 31–54.

Tetzloff, C.E., & Barrera, M. (1987). Divorcing mothers and social support: Testing the specificity of buffering effects. ***American Journal of Community Psychology, 15,*** 419–434.

Tisher, M., & Lange, M. (1978). ***Children's Depression Scale*** (research ed.). Palo Alto: Consulting Psychologists Press.

Warshak, R.A. (1992). ***The custody revolution: The father factor and the motherhood mystique.*** New York: Poseidon.

Warshak, R.A., & Santrock, J.W. (1983a). Children of divorce: Impact of custody disposition on social development. In E.J. Callahan & K.A. McCluskey (Eds.), ***Life-span developmental psychology: Nonnormative life events*** (pp. 241–263). New York: Academic.

Warshak, R.A., & Santrock, J.W. (1983b). The impact of divorce in father-custody and mother-custody homes; The child's perspective. In L.A. Kurdek (Ed.), ***Children and divorce*** (pp. 29–46). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Weitzman, L. (1985). ***The divorce revolution.*** New York: Free Press.

Welsh-Osga, B.K. (1981). ***The effects of custody arrangements on children of divorce.*** Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of South Dakota.

Woody, J.D., Colley, P., Schlegelmilch, J., & Maginn, P. (1984). Parental stress and adjustment following divorce. ***Crisis Intervention,*** 13, 133–147.

Zaslow, M.J. (1988). Sex differences in children's response to parental divorce: 1. Research methodology and postdivorce family forms. ***American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 58,*** 355–378.

Zaslow, M.J. (1989). Sex differences in children's response to parental divorce: 2. Samples, variables, ages, and sources. ***American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 59,*** 118–141.

Zill, N. (1988). Behavior, achievement, and health problems among children in stepfamilies: Findings from a national survey of child health. In M. Hetherington & I.D. Arasteh (Eds.), ***Impact of divorce, single parenting, and stepparenting on children*** (pp. 325–368). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Zimiles, H., & Lee, V.E. (1991). Adolescent family structure and educational progress. ***Developmental Psychology, 27,*** 314–320.