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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

PATERNAL CUSTODY  
CHILDREN'S PERCEPTIONS  
OF  
PARENTAL FUNCTIONING

BY  
EILEEN A. BARIL

A THESIS  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH  
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION  
IN  
COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

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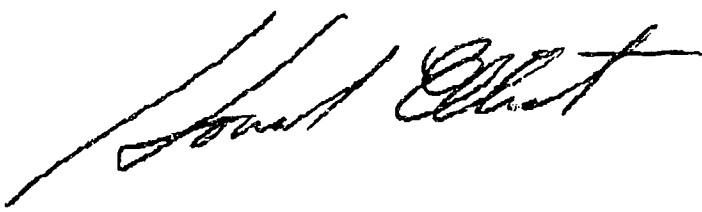
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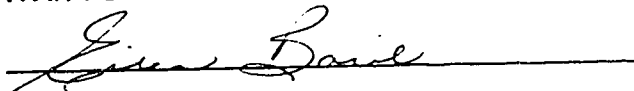
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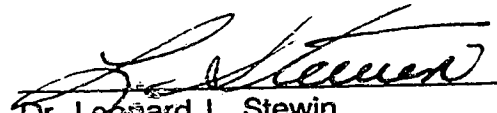
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Dr. Leonard L. Stewin

  
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Dr. Robert L. Ware

Date: Sept. 18, 1991

**DEDICATED TO:**

My friend and husband, Ray, and my children Renée, Allan and Michael. Their love, encouragement and interest has supported my quest to understand and help others.

My father who taught me the importance of learning and showed me how to care for others.

## ABSTRACT

Three out of four divorces involve children. Since the 1970's a significant portion of research has concentrated on divorce and separation. However, data has, for the most part, been gathered from adults. Studies that have concentrated on gathering data from children have generally involved the most conventional post divorce/separation family configuration which is one in which the mother has custody. Few studies have focused on paternal custody children's perceptions of their parents' effectiveness and strategies in meeting their needs after divorce or separation. This study was designed to gain the perceptions of paternal custody children in regards to the functioning of the custodial and noncustodial parent. An attempt was also made to discover factors which may influence these perceptions.

Eleven children, four girls and seven boys, from seven paternal custody homes, ranging in age from eight to fourteen were studied. A case study methodology was utilized. Families volunteered and agreed to participate after being made aware of the study. Data was collected from the children by using the Kinetic Family Drawing, Bricklin Perceptual Scales and interviews. The custodial father completed a questionnaire to provide demographic data.

Although the descriptions as to the parents' abilities to care varied amongst the eleven children, a multi case analysis revealed some commonalities. The most salient finding is that the children perceive that both parents are capable of and competent in caring for them. Most regard both parents as necessary and complementary. Fathers have learned to look after their children's various daily needs. Collective strengths of the custodial fathers seem to lie in fostering children's academic, cognitive and social development. Weaknesses seem to relate to controlling their tempers and providing

information about sex. Although children did not recognize definite changes in their mother's functioning, their descriptions generally reveal a social relationship. Most children perceive that their noncustodial mothers support them emotionally and help them develop socially but have a tendency to get angry. Five factors seem to affect, and explain to some extent, the perceptions of most of the children in regards to their parents' ability to care for them. These include an identification through personality, interests and/or gender, parenting strategies and environment, emotional functioning of the parent and child, age of the child, and experience in the pre and post divorce family.

Implications for professionals and society are considered. Among these are the recognition that paternal custody appears to be a viable family configuration after divorce or separation. Children perceive that both parents are important to them and contribute to their care in differing ways. Thus collaborative parenting should be promoted. The findings of this study suggest that children over the age of eight are able to assess and express their perceptions of their parents' effectiveness and involvement and therefore have much to offer in custody decisions.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

#### BACKGROUND

We live in a society of options. One of these options, within families, is to divorce or separate rather than to remain married. Divorce has become epidemic in our culture. Until recently, it was increasing by ten percent annually. The rate of increase has slowed as the 1990s approached (Santrock, 1989; Davids, 1985). Statistics Canada (1986) figures show that in 1978, 57,155 divorces were granted in Canada. The annual figure increased to 78,160 by 1986. Of this latter figure 59,672, or approximately three of four divorces, involved children (Glick, 1988). The number of children involved in divorce in a given year continues to be a small number but this proportion is cumulative throughout childhood. By the early 1980s, approximately two percent annually of all children were involved in divorce, which means that forty percent of young children today are likely to spend part of their childhood with a divorced parent (Glick, 1988; Wallerstein, 1985a). In spite of the continuously increasing number of children who grow up in homes that have been restructured by divorce, very few studies have concentrated on gaining children's perceptions of how the custodial and noncustodial parents are able to care for them and interact with them. The information that is available in regard to children's perceptions, for the most part, relates to a lone parent family arrangement in which the mother has custody of the children. Very little information regarding the child's view of parental functioning exists involving less common and nontraditional families that single fathers head or where both parents

share the custody jointly.

### FOCUS OF THE STUDY - PATERNAL CUSTODY HOMES

The increasing divorce rate has, without doubt, focused greater attention on the importance of a father's active and affectionate role in his children's growth and development. Greater blurring of sex roles, because of the women's liberation movement, has increased men's involvement in parenting (Chang & Dienard, 1982; Greif, 1985a, 1985b). In recent years the court system has been more generous to fathers applying for custody of their children and the Alberta Court of Appeal has said that there is no longer a presumption that a mother is the best parent (McBean, 1987). Despite this, divorced fathers have custody of only one percent of the child population under eighteen which is approximately ten percent of the total lone parent population (Glick, 1988; Statistics Canada, 1986). Statistics Canada (1986) figures show that if a father petitions for custody of his children he receives the award approximately one-third of the time and the mother is favoured in two thirds of the cases. If the mother petitions for custody of her children, the father's chances of gaining custody are minimal or approximately seven percent.

Perhaps the continuing preference for mothers to retain custody of children after divorce comes from a lack of understanding of single parents and a commitment to defined sex roles of parents. Researchers (Greif, 1985a, 1985b; Nieto, 1982; Chng & Gray, 1983) who studied single fathers suggested that society often perceives single fathers to be naturally ill equipped to perform the traditional female child rearing roles. Greif (1985a), who studied a very large sample (1,136) of single fathers, suggests that society holds a dichotomous view of single fathers, viewing them on one hand as

extraordinary individuals and, on the other hand, as incompetent and needing help. Chng and Gray (1983) submitted that children of custodial fathers are often pitied for their misfortune. "They have no mother. These children are expected to attend school in rags, looking malnourished from a steady diet of peanut butter sandwiches and soft drinks" (p. 37). Although research findings since the mid 1970s have suggested that custodial fathers are able to care for their children, and possess the required nurturing qualities, society seems to protect the stereotype. The stereotype extends to the paternal custody child's mother. Little is known about the role of the noncustodial mother and it is often presumed that her involvement is limited and that she does not care about her children. However, it is the "fathers, mothers and children who get hurt" (Greif, 1985a, p. 155) as these stereotypes are promoted without a full understanding of this post divorce/separation family structure. The description that will enable society to understand the paternal custody family structure can only come from those who are part of it.

Some of society's scepticism about father's caretaking abilities may relate to the fact that most literature has focused on the self reports of fathers who have generally reported positive experiences in their functioning as custodial parents. Hanson (1985) suggested that there are so few reports of child rearing difficulties that one wonders if men do not have problems as sole parents or if they prefer not to report them to give a positive impression. She contended that data collected directly from children themselves might yield different findings. Saunders and Melville (1987) reported that clinical literature in the area of custody assessments supports the notion that sex of the parent is not a relevant variable in deciding custody but rather variables such as the quality of the child's relationship with each parent and each parent's parenting ability



should underlie custody determination. For father custody to become a viable option more information is needed to describe the parenting abilities of this group. Growing information would not only aid in understanding the abilities of custodial fathers to meet needs of their children but also would help us understand noncustodial mothers' parenting abilities and involvement with their children.

### FOCUS OF THE STUDY - CHILDREN'S PERCEPTIONS

Faux, Walsh, & Dietrick (1988) reported that researchers have relied almost exclusively on adults as the primary informants for data concerning children's thoughts, feelings and experiences. This, as previously discussed, seems to be the situation in regard to understanding the paternal custody home. What researchers investigating homes in which the father is the primary caregiver have concentrated on, is seeing how the home functions and how the needs of the child are met through the eyes of the parent. For society to understand whether fathers in custodial homes are meeting the needs of their children, it seems necessary to gain a better understanding of how the child perceives the caretaking abilities of his or her parents while being in the custody of the father. In the book Second Chances, Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) wrote, "Although there are right ways and wrong ways to bring up children after divorce what counts most is that children perceive that their parents are committed and give them priority" (p. 111). Jacobs (1986) declared that the way in which a child responds to a parent has just as much to do with what ultimately happens to the parent-child relationship as the parent's responses to the child. The researcher of the present study also believes, because of her own experiences with children, that children can express their perceptions of parental functioning and that there is much to learn from children.

### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

To understand paternal custody homes more fully, the children's point of view must be solicited regarding how they are parented. This study focused on gaining and interpreting individual children's perceptions of how well their custodial fathers are able to care for them and interact with them. Similarly, the paternal custody child's perceptions were solicited and interpreted about his or her relationship with the noncustodial mother and the mother's role in meeting the child's needs. Eleven paternal custody children, ranging in age from eight to fourteen were studied. Each child was part of an indepth individual study to understand his or her perceptions of both the custodial and noncustodial parent and to find plausible factors that could contribute to his or her perceptions of the parents' functioning. After each child was studied individually, the children were studied as a group to discover commonalities in their experiences in the post divorce/separation home.

The literature regarding how paternal custody children view their parents' ability to care for them is sparse. However, the studies that do exist, also divorce, custody and, more specifically, father custody literature, provide an important framework in regards to interpreting children's perceptions of the paternal custody family structure and will be reviewed in the following chapter.

### RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

Information regarding how well a father is able to function as the primary caretaker and what role noncustodial mothers play in this family structure, as perceived

by children, would be helpful to parents who themselves are considering a paternal custody situation after divorce. It also would help children in paternal custody become more understood by the school and community. Custodial fathers and noncustodial mothers may come to more fully understand their unique strengths and weaknesses through the eyes of their children. A broader data base on parental competence, by gaining the child's perceptions, could be provided to legal and mental health professionals. This could aid in strengthening post divorce family forms and to reach custody decisions that are in the "best interests of the child" (Strom, Fleming and Daniels, 1984). Since "best interest" standards are to be child-centred considerations, it would be helpful to have the child interpret his own world. This may extend the options offered after divorce to best meet the needs of the child. The question that needs to be answered is how do children in paternal custody perceive their parents' abilities to meet their needs and what factors may influence their perceptions of their parents' functioning.

## CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Chapter One serves as an introduction to the study. The focus, purpose, and relevance of the study are discussed. A chapter overview serves to delineate the general process of the study.

Chapter Two reviews the theory and research related to the understanding of children who are in the custody of their fathers after divorce or separation. Very few studies exist that concentrate on gaining the paternal custody child's perceptions of his or her parents' functioning. The related literature which concentrates on the history of paternal custody, the father's ability to nurture his children, comparing custodial arrange-

ments, and functioning of the paternal custody home, from the father's point of view, are reviewed. The few existing studies relating to noncustodial mothers are also discussed. Although the studies reviewed generally concentrate on obtaining data from adults or indirectly from children by assessing their adjustment, they provide a valuable background for understanding paternal custody children's perceptions of their parents' functioning. Seven studies, which considered paternal custody children's perceptions are discussed. The reported results tend to be fairly general as to how paternal custody children perceive their parents in terms of their effectiveness in parenting skills and styles. None of the studies investigated, in any detail, the factors which may affect the child's perceptions.

Chapter Three deals with the methodology of the current research project. The case study method is discussed and analysis procedures at an individual and multi case level are outlined. Procedures for obtaining requisite participants, instruments used for collecting data, the pilot study and methodological issues considered, are reviewed.

In Chapter Four the findings in regards to each of the eleven participant children are presented, individually, and discussed. The results of four sources of data are synthesized and the analysis of each case commences with a description of the child and family. This is followed by a description of the child's perceptions of the functioning of his or her custodial and noncustodial parent. The researcher then presents her conclusions, focusing on factors which may explain the child's perceptions and relates this to the literature.

Chapter Five presents the findings of a multi case analysis. Commonalities in perceptions of paternal custody children are presented and discussed in regards to the

researcher's observations and the literature.

Chapter Six begins by relating the findings to the stated purpose. The contributions of the case study method are then discussed. As a result of the findings of this study, implications in regards to legal and mental health professionals, the educational system, parents and society are considered. The case study method is one which tends to point out the need for further research; it's use in this study is no exception. Several areas worthy of future research are discussed. Finally, the limitations of the study are looked at and the researcher concludes by considering how her future work will be influenced by the conduct of this study.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The following chapter reviews the literature which discusses the history of paternal custody and the father's ability to nurture his children. Studies which have concentrated on comparing custodial arrangements are reviewed as well as those that have specifically investigated the father custody home. Also reviewed is literature highlighting factors which may mediate the custodial father's functioning as a primary parent. The few existing studies relating to non custodial mothers are reviewed. Lastly, and most importantly, the literature which recognizes the importance of gaining children's perceptions and the studies, although sparse, regarding children's perceptions of parental functioning in the paternal custody home are presented.

#### HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Paternal custody is not a new option. Throughout much of history, it has been the only option. Under ancient Roman and English law, the power of the father over his children was absolute and without question. Children were considered to be chattels or property of the father (Orthner & Lewis, 1979; Sadoff & Billick, 1981). The state or society had no interest in this relationship. It was not until the sixteenth century "that children began to be looked on as being of particular interest, having important and specific developmental tasks to perform and being worthy of affection" (Derdeyn, 1976, p. 1369). Historically, paternal preference turned on the father's superior ability to provide for his children's basic needs (Orthner & Lewis, 1979; Weiss,

1979).

Gradually the idea began to evolve that custody involved not only rights but responsibilities for the care of the child. In 1817, Percy Shelley, an English poet, lost custody of his children because of his atheist beliefs (Derdeyn, 1976). The legal decision in this case "demonstrated that a father's claim of absolute right to custody was conditional upon his fitness as a parent" (Frey, 1986, p. 71). The passage of the Talfourd Act in 1839 (MacDonald, 1986) further modified and diluted the absolute paternal preference. This legislation, more commonly known as the "tender years doctrine", granted custody to the mother if the child was under seven years old. However, it is important to note that paternal superiority for custody remained entrenched as the "statute contemplated that custody would revert to the father before or at the age of seven" (MacDonald, 1986, p. 10). Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the courts could name the mother as the custodial parent until the child turned twenty-one and had the jurisdiction to award custody to either the mother or father. The father's claim, however, continued to be superior with the onus on the mother to show that continuance of the child in the father's custody would be harmful.

The early twentieth century marked a shift from paternal to maternal favour in issues of child custody with the "tender years" principle being more stringently applied, virtually assuring mothers of the custody of their children and suggesting they were the most important parent for the child (Weiss, 1979, p. 326). Social and economic reality accompanied this bias in favour of mothers and ultimately reshaped the dynamics of the family. The trend to urbanization and industrialization forced the division of labour within the family. The father worked away from the home to provide materially for his family and the mother was delegated to rearing the children (Orthner & Lewis, 1979;

Derdeyn, 1976). This specialization of parental functions helped create the concept of the nuclear family as the foundation of society (Elkin, 1987, p. 19). Paralleling this phenomenon were influences of philosophers such as Rousseau and Dickens who characterized maternal care to be important in meeting the child's needs. Psychoanalytic theory that implicated maternal care with proper psychological development further supported this view. (Thompson, 1986; Hanson, 1980) These changes to a preference for mothers as custodians, supposedly, began to address the child's needs as the paramount consideration in awarding custody.

Since 1925, the "best interests of the child" were considered as having utmost importance in decisions of custody. This suggested that neither mother or father would be regarded as having a custody claim superior to the other. In reality the "best interest" principle was rarely applied until the 1970s when fathers began to ask more often, after divorce, for equality in being considered the primary parent to suit the "best interests" of the child. Perhaps one reason the father was rarely considered for custody until the 1970s was that, although the issue of the "best interest of the child" was supposedly the cornerstone of custodial decisions, there seemed a lack of clarity in determining the "best interest of the child" (Orthner & Lewis, 1979; Derdeyn, 1976; Rohman, Sales & Lou, 1987). For most of this century, it seems societal views equated parenting with mothering, as the fact that mothers are awarded custody in ninety percent of cases implies. (MacDonald, 1986; Elkin, 1987; Foster, 1983) Some people have questioned fathers' motives in requesting custody as asserted in the writings of Louise Lamb (1987) and Phyllis Chesler (1986). These writers suggest that fathers often are not as interested in nurturing their children as in seeking custody for reasons of



health professionals continue to show a preference for maternal custody and look to awarding or recommending paternal custody only in unusual cases (Saunders & Melville, 1987; Felner et al., 1985; Sagi, 1987). Others have reported that there are no differences in choice of custodial parent among professionals in legal and mental health fields (Charnas, 1981; Woody, 1978).

As fathers have requested custody more often, it appears that the "best interests of the child" are becoming more clearly defined. There seems to be more emphasis that custody decisions should focus primarily on the child's physical, emotional and developmental needs to decide what parent, and how the parents, can meet these (Rohman, Sales & Lou, 1987; Thompson, 1986). Research is emphasizing the father's important part in the child's development and his ability to be nurturant. Consequently, more fathers are challenging the concept that only mothers can be nurturing and primary caregivers (Elkin, 1987).

#### FATHER AS NURTURER

The research of the 1970s regarding the father's role in his child's development contradicts the popularized sociological and psychological approaches to human behaviour as advanced by Freud, Parsons and Bowlby. The theories of these men promoted the father as the economic provider and disciplinarian rather than as an active nurturer (Keshet & Rosenthal, 1978; Wilson, 1988; Santrock, 1989). Much of the early research concerning the role of the father in his child's development focused on the father's influence in the intact family and father absence (Radin & Russell, 1983; Maidment, 1984). Early studies were based on interviews with mothers (Levine, 1976).

to the overriding conclusion that fathers play a greater role in the growth and development of their children than initially believed.

Lynn (1974) reviewed research that captured the view of the father through the child's eyes and concluded that children view their fathers and mothers differently. Whether the father is viewed as less affectionately nurturant than, or preferred over, the mother may vary with the sex and age of the child (p. 220). Lynn (1974) discussed studies that attempted to assess what qualities children perceive in "good" and "bad" fathers. Nurturant qualities were defined as good qualities. For example, a study reported in a French journal asked children, "What are the qualities you like in a father?" The qualities most frequently mentioned were that he be understanding, good natured and assertive (p. 225).

Lamb and Lamb (1976) also concluded from their review of the research, that fathers are important to children from infancy but that interactions differ from those of mothers and vary according to the sex and age of the child. They suggested "that both parents, and that the relationships they experience with their fathers and mothers differ in quality, involve different sorts of interactions, and consequently, that fathers, like mothers, have the potential for a significant differential impact on the psychological and social development of their infants from early infancy" (p. 381). Levine (1976), in his book, Who Will Raise the Children?, reviewed the literature questioning whether parents will be able to share caretaking of children or exchange previously ascribed roles as divorce becomes more prevalent and as more women are employed on a full time basis. His conclusions highlight the fact that nurturing is not gender-specific but, perhaps, more related to being involved in the role of caretaking.

nurturance is highly correlated with paternal involvement (Russell, 1983; Thompson, 1983; Russell & Radin, 1983; Lamb, Pleck & Levine, 1985; Greif, 1980; Risman, 1986, 1987; Risman & Park 1988). Russell (1983) concluded, after reviewing the literature, that "responsiveness to infants is not characteristic of females alone, and that when differences do occur between sexes they are more likely attributable to a complex interaction between biological factors and differences in experiences, social expectations and socialization" (p. 114). Russell stressed that although fathers can be as nurturant as mothers, if given the opportunity, it does not mean they will perform in the same way and that not all fathers will be nurturant or satisfied in such a role. Greif (1980) surveyed forty divorced fathers focusing on their perceptions of their relationships with their children and their ability to influence their children's growth and development. She concluded that, "Caring for one's children is a parental function that is learned and learned but from daily face-to-face contact. The amount of time a parent spends with a child directly affects the parent's competence in dealing with that child" (p. 298). Fathers in this study, as well as Dail's (1986) study of noncustodial fathers, emphasized the importance to themselves to be nurturant with their children.

Risman (1986, 1987, 1988) conducted studies using men and women from varying family configurations. She hypothesized that "microstructural" variables that relate to ongoing interaction and opportunity to respond to children's perceived needs and demands are more strongly related to parenting behaviour than to "individualist" ones that relate more to sex-role socialization or biological predispositions. The microstructural hypothesis that was confirmed, suggested that single fathers and married fathers who are actively involved in the care of their children can provide the nurturance that young children require despite the gendered socialization. Risman (1987) showed

that when situational contexts change and men are responsible for the care of their children, their parenting behaviour more closely parallels that of women. These findings seem to support Trost and Hultaker's (1986) suggestion that as fathers become more involved in expressive roles in the intact family, upon divorce may feel more confident in asking for custody. The results of these studies also may explain some findings of studies that compare different custodial arrangements.

### COMPARATIVE STUDIES OF CUSTODIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Most studies that compare custodial arrangements deal with the differences in adjustment and behaviour of children in mother custody, father custody and joint custody. These studies are limited because it is often difficult to obtain a large enough father custody sample. Most studies that have compared custodial arrangements have revealed no significant differences in adjustment based on custody type alone (Lowenstein & Koopman, 1978; Rosen, 1979; Santrock & Warshak, 1979; Ambert, 1982, 1984; Luepnitz, 1981, 1986; Schnayer & Orr, 1989; Kline et al., 1989; Fidler & Saunders, 1988). However, these studies suggest that other factors may influence adjustment. Some of these are lack of access to the noncustodial parent and interpersonal conflict (Lowenstein & Koopman, 1978; Rosen, 1979; Luepnitz, 1981, 1986; Kline et al., 1989), financial difficulties in the custodial home (Schnayer & Orr, 1989; Ambert, 1982, 1984), and psychological adjustment of the custodial parent (Schnayer & Orr, 1989). Santrock and Warshak (1979) found children to be better adjusted when they were in the custody of the same sex parent.

Shilling and Lynch (1985) compared the academic achievement of eighth grade children in mother custody and father custody homes. Although most mothers were

of a lower socioeconomic status than fathers and past research has often suggested that socioeconomic status is a powerful predictor of achievement, single parent children living with mothers achieved at significantly higher levels than single parent children living with fathers. Based on the results of this investigation, which used a very large sample, these researchers suggested that from an academic achievement standpoint, children may be better off in the care of mothers. They speculated that a better predictor of achievement is the student's perception of parental interest in school, which was greater in mother-headed single parent families. Single fathers in this sample could not cope as well as mothers with school related activities that are important in assisting children's adjustment (p. 10). Ambert (1982, 1984), found that children in father custody homes were better behaved toward the custodial parent than those in mother custody. Ambert's father custody sample was very small and the fathers were of a much higher socioeconomic status than mothers.

Two studies compared parental perceptions in mother and father custody homes. Defrain and Eirick (1981) compared single parent's ability to cope by looking at such areas as feelings of the parent, childrearing issues, perceptions of children's feelings and behaviours, and forming new relationships. No significant differences were found between the two groups on most of the measures. Fry and Thiessen (1981) compared single mothers and single fathers perceptions of their own and their children's needs. The results of the study showed that the two custodial groups perceive their children's needs and stresses in relation to their own quite differently. Fry and Thiessen suggested that single father's satisfaction with parenting may be less related to beliefs about "sacrifice" as a need for an exclusive relationship with children than are those of single mothers (p. 99). If mothers are more highly career-oriented, differences are not

as remarkable. These researchers suggested that the distinction in perception between single mothers and fathers, with mothers feeling more "appropriate closeness" with the children, may be a function of biological sex differences. However, the mother custody sample is approximately three years younger (7.7 yr. vs. 10.4 yr.) than the father custody sample and may reflect differing developmental concerns.

Most of the literature that compares custodial arrangements suggests that no one type of custodial arrangement is preferable to the other. There may be differences regarding how custodial parents function. A better understanding of custodial fathers may be helpful in further discerning these differences.

#### FATHER CUSTODY LITERATURE

Since the 1970s, articles and books have appeared that concentrate specifically on the single father, his living situation and ability to parent (Pichitino, 1983). Warshak (1986) reviewed and analyzed the literature relating to fathers with custody of their children. He identified three different strategies that researchers have used in studying father-custody families. The largest group of studies relied on reports, through interviews and questionnaires, of the single fathers. These studies focused on the characteristics and experiences of single fathers and information gleaned about children was through the father's eyes. Some of this research failed to distinguish between separated, divorced and widowed fathers (Warshak, 1986; Thompson, 1986; Hanson, 1985; Khoe, 1986; Felner & Terre, 1987; Berry, 1981). Other research focused on children's personality attributes such as self esteem; comparing mother-custody and father-custody children. Warshak (1986) identified a third type of research that included well matched comparison groups and assessed parent and child functioning using

several types of measures. Although the latter two strategies involved children, most of the information about these children was gained through observation and standardized measures. Few studies interviewed children to learn how they perceived parental roles.

In focusing on the available literature, it is possible to determine the profile of custodial fathers and how they define their roles, experiences and perceived strengths and difficulties. Fathers are generally portrayed as upper middle class, well educated and professionally successful (Greif, 1985a, 1985b; Hanson, 1985). The sample of most American and Canadian studies seems to enjoy a higher socioeconomic status than those of British (Hipgrave, 1982; O'Brien, 1982) and Australian (Wilson, 1988) studies. Some have suggested that financial status is a key factor in men's performance and satisfaction as single fathers (O'Brien, 1982; Price & McHenry, 1988; Schnayer & Orr, 1989). Fathers in the studies have indicated that they have continued their careers but that raising their children is important enough to them that they are often willing to make "sacrifices" in terms of advancement (Gersick, 1979; Smith and Smith, 1981; Johnson, 1985). Although fathers in some samples, indicated sex of the child did not affect their interest in caring for their children (Gersick, 1979; Bartz & Witcher, 1978), most studies suggested that custodial children are more likely to be male than female (Greif, 1985; Glick, 1988; Ambert, 1985; Chang & Dienard, 1982; Giles-Sims & Urwin, 1989). Children are more likely to be teenagers unless the father retained custody immediately after the divorce and most often fathers have physical rather than legal custody (Giles-Sims & Urwin, 1989). Greif (1985a) found that fathers generally did not want the marriage to end. The first year appeared to be the most difficult for custodial fathers (Chang & Dienard, 1982; Hetherington & Hagan, 1986; Frey, 1986).

It has been suggested that one reason for initial difficulties is the lack of "role definition". Frey (1986), in his phenomenological research with single divorced fathers found that "the role of male primary parenthood is filled with uncertainties, and causes one to question one's parenting abilities" (p. 75). Rosenthal and Keshet (1981) found that men, at the beginning of the transition to primary caregiver, often depended on their children to enable them to define their roles. They found the fathers in their study seemed to lack "internal standards for success as a father" and depended on their children's "reactions to enable him to define his role" (p. 68). Other researchers have found that custodial fathers define their parenting abilities by how appreciative, respectful, well behaved and affectionate the children are (Ambert, 1982, 1985; Mendes, 1976; Strom, Fleming & Daniels, 1984; Appollo, 1985). This initial relationship generally moves to a parenting strategy, which involves the children more as peers (Luepnitz, 1981), results in greater understanding of children's needs (Frey, 1986), improved communication (Stewart, Schwebel & Fine, 1986; Schleisinger & Todres, 1976) and more involvement in family decisions (Strom, Fleming & Daniels, 1984; Smith & Smith, 1981). Although custodial fathers seemed more lenient after divorce they do not appear to allow their children to control them (Luepnitz, 1982; Santrock, Warshak & Elliott, 1982). Overall, studies have generally reported that fathers enjoy positive parent-child relationships when they are custodial parents.

Stewart, Schwebel and Fine (1986) found that custodial fathers had fewer problems in general adjustment than those without custody. They suggested that men who are less well adjusted may be less likely to seek and gain custody of their children after divorce. Most studies report that fathers who become primary caregivers perceive themselves as capable and successful in parenting their children and handling



household tasks (Greif, 1987, 1985; Chang & Dienard, 1982; Watson, 1981; Mendes, 1976; Schlesinger & Todres, 1976; Bartz & Witcher, 1978; Gasser & Taylor, 1976; Risman, 1986; Nowling, 1987). 82% of Greif's (1985a) sample of 1,136 single fathers rated their relationship with their children as good.

Warshak (1987) suggested that the parenting skills with which fathers need the most help are the identification of their children's feelings and effective communication. He said that fathers "respond to their children's expression of emotion in ways that encourage the children to hide and repudiate their feelings (eg. by criticizing and lecturing)" (p. 21). Fathers have themselves reported that they not only had the most difficulty in caring for the emotional needs of children but that this area was of greatest concern to them (Mendes, 1976; Keshet & Rosenthal, 1978; Bartz & Witcher, 1978). However, the twenty-seven single fathers that Smith and Smith (1981) interviewed were not as concerned about their ability to care for their children's emotional needs. Twenty two percent of fathers reported that they had trouble in this area, whereas, seventy-eight percent expressed varying degrees of concern in this area but believed that they could handle most problems (p. 416). Custodial fathers also seem to experience "role strain" that results from conflicts between their child care responsibilities, social needs and work responsibilities (Keshet & Rosenthal, 1978; Bartz & Witcher, 1978; Chang & Dienard, 1982; Gasser & Taylor, 1976; Hipgrave, 1982; Frey, 1986; Orthner, Brown & Ferguson, 1976; Lewis, 1978). The fathers Smith and Smith (1981) interviewed reported that their perception that they had to prove themselves capable of caring for their children alone intensified this strain.

Two longitudinal studies have been reported regarding father's perceptions of their parenting role and functioning. After two years, Ambert found that, the custodial

father's satisfaction was essentially stable while their children's behaviour had improved in certain categories. Greif (1987) completed a five year follow-up study and concluded that the fathers' satisfaction with their children did not increase markedly. Many felt they were doing a worse job as a parent. Greif suggested that this change may not relate to their own parenting skills but rather to the complexity of raising teenagers rather than younger children.

### FACTORS MEDIATING CUSTODIAL FATHERS' FUNCTIONING

Pfeffer (1981) discussed the implications of divorce on child development. She said, "Special parental responsibilities include meeting the emotional and nurturing needs of the child, providing financial security and furnishing a model for self esteem and social adjustment of the child." (p. 25). The father custody and divorce literature highlights several factors that may mediate how custodial fathers perceive their abilities to care for their children. The three main, although not necessarily independent, factors are:

- 1) Child characteristics that include sex, age and personality;
- 2) Motivation for custody;
- 3) Post divorce family functioning that relates to the amount of conflict, access to the noncustodial parent and support systems.

Studies imply that how children perceive the functioning of their parents may also be affected by these factors.

#### Child Characteristics

Sex: Fathers generally expressed satisfaction with raising either sex. They seemed satisfied in how the children were doing and in rating themselves as parents

(Greif, 1985; Strom, Fleming & Daniels, 1984; Orthner & Lewis, 1979; Mendes, 1976). Although custodial fathers were satisfied with their relationships, they tended to worry more about daughters. Their concerns related to their daughter's sexual behaviour and lack of female role models (Greif, 1985; Mendes, 1976; Bartz & Witcher, 1978). They were also more likely to note a need for differences in socialization of boys and girls (Orthner & Lewis, 1979).

Fathers in these studies partially agree with other research findings that children fare better with the same sex parent in a single parent family. Zaslow (1988, 1989) extensively reviewed the research to determine if boys are more negatively affected by parental divorce than are girls. Her conclusions were that outcome may relate more to quality of parenting due to custodial arrangement than to divorce itself. She found that several research studies corroborated that there are fewer positive outcomes for daughters in father custody. Others who have reviewed the research findings have come to similar conclusions (Kalter, 1987; Hetherington, 1989; Warshak, 1986; Thompson, 1986).

Some key findings that have been referred to come from Santrock, Warshak and Elliott's (1982) study. They found that boys in father custody are more socially competent than girls in father custody and that girls in mother custody are more socially competent than boys in mother custody. Peterson and Zill (1986) concluded that problems in living with the opposite sex parent may be more detrimental in adolescence, a time when the establishment of an appropriate sexual identity is an especially important aspect of development. Despite these indications that children fare better with a custodial parent of the same sex, others have found that boys were more likely to show signs of maladjustment following a family breakup and whether the child lived

with the same-sex or opposite sex parent did not predict the child's adjustment (Fidler & Saunders, 1988; Kline et al., 1989). These studies, however, contained very few father-custody families.

Although the research that assesses the child's viewpoint is extremely limited, there is an implication that children may prefer to be with the same sex parent. Boys, in particular, seem to state a liking to be with, or a yearning for fathers (Shiller, 1986; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989; Hetherington, Cox & Cox, 1982; Wallerstein, 1987; Wolchik, Braver & Sandler, 1985). Warshak and Santrock (1983) presented findings concerning children's responses to a projective story about parental divorce that provided further support for the prediction that opposite sex custody is problematic. No child living with the same-sex parent attributed a preference to the child in their story to live with the opposite sex parent. However, fifty seven percent of the children of divorced parents who were living with the opposite sex parent described the child in the projective story as living with the same sex parent. "If children are projecting their own feelings into their stories, then this finding suggests that children living with the same-sex parent are more satisfied with the custodial arrangement than are children living with opposite-sex parents" (p. 43).

Age: Although fathers are more likely to have custody of adolescent children, particularly teenage sons (Hanson, 1981; Orthner & Lewis, 1979; Giles-Sims & Urwin, 1989; Parke, 1981), Greif (1985a) found that fathers were less satisfied with their relationship with their older children, and in how they saw them progressing. While fathers may be less satisfied in parenting their older children, older children may adjust better to divorce because they have the cognitive ability to address both emotional and practical issues (Springer & Wallerstein, 1983; Hetherington, 1980).

Some have suggested that age may be the most powerful variable moderating children's reaction and adjustment to their parents' divorce (Kurdek & Siesky, 1980a, 1980b; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989; Hetherington, 1980; Hodges & Bloom, 1984). Wallerstein (1983b) indicated that "the child's perception and understanding of the family events are filtered through a prism that has been cut and shaped by the child's chronological age and developmentally-related needs, conflicts and wishes, as well as a great many factors, including individual differences" (p. 268). Kurdek and Siesky (1980a) found that older children were more likely to "possess positive perceptions of both parents that are a realistic combination of both positive and negative attributes" (p. 375).

Clingempeel, Shurwall and Heiss (1988) suggested that, because of differing perceptions and understanding, responses to custody arrangements may vary as a function of age. They said that studies have not compared age related responses across different custody types. They hypothesized that custody arrangements may have less effect on adolescents than on younger children because of their expanded social net works, their extrafamilial activities, and their greater mobility (p. 154). Frankel (1985) wrote that children's needs change over time so that a custodial arrangement that succeeds during one phase of development may prove inadequate or even problematic at a later stage.

Personality: Clingempeel, Shurwall and Heiss (1988) said that personality and temperament may affect a child's adjustment to post divorce custody arrangements. Warshak (1986) also speculated that children with different temperaments may react differently to the same parental style. No research is available to examine how custodial fathers perceive their ability to parent children of different temperaments and

personalities.

### Motivation for Custody

From a review of the research studies it can be concluded that those fathers who really wanted to be parents, or sought custody of their children, were the most likely to adjust easily to single fatherhood. They tended to perform more adequately and perceived themselves as more nurturing parents (Mendes, 1976; O'Brien, 1982; Hanson, 1980, 1981; Greif, 1985; Wilson, 1988; Orthner & Lewis, 1979; Risman, 1988). Lowenstein and Koopman (1978) found that the self esteem of boys whose fathers had sought to raise them was higher. "Thus it seems that the desire to raise a child affects the quality of parenting in the home" (p. 203).

Those who sought custody tended to be highly involved with their children prior to divorce and were not willing to share the parental role after separation (Stewart, Schwebel & Fine, 1986; Giles-Sims & Urwin, 1989; Bartz & Witcher, 1978; Chang & Dienard, 1982; Smith & Smith, 1981; Appollo, 1985; Rosenthal & Keshet, 1981; Watson, 1981; Hanson, 1980). Turner (1984) found that those who sought custody fell into two categories. One group sought custody immediately and had been very involved prior to the divorce, and the other group sought custody at least two years later because they were dissatisfied with visitation or the parenting their children were receiving. Mendes (1976) and O'Brien (1982) categorized "seekers" as those who negotiated for custody in the belief they were the better parent and, alternatively, those who aggressively sought custody. Most did not seek custody through the courts and were able to negotiate with their exspouse (Greif, 1985; Gersick, 1979; Bartz & Witcher, 1978). However, there were many more legal contests among paternal as among

maternal families (Luepnitz, 1981; Ambert, 1984).

Another group of custodial fathers was labelled as "assentors" (Mendes, 1976; O'Brien, 1982). This group did not enjoy being single parents and generally had not been involved in parenting prior to divorce. Within this group, those that gave themselves the worst rating as parents, being the least prepared and least confident, were fathers whose wives had deserted them (Greif, 1985a, 1985b). Greif (1985a, 1985b) said that children in this situation also feel abandoned and may resent mothers and fathers. It may be harder for fathers to establish a relationship with them because of the emotional turmoil following their mother's desertion (Greif, 1985a, p. 46). Another group of "assentors" who assumed custody because of special circumstances such as mother's illness, her financial difficulties, or her inability to handle the children also experienced difficulty in parenting but positive relations seemed to grow with time (Mendes, 1976; Hanson, 1980). In this group of assenting fathers are those whose children seek them out especially during adolescence. During this time one third go to live with their fathers and one half of these children stay with them. (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989)

Although fathers who seek custody of their children perceive their parent-child relationships as better than those who assent to custody, children from "assenting" families in Hanson's (1980) study did not perceive their relationship with their fathers as being worse than those in families where fathers had sought custody of the children.

#### Post Divorce/Separation Functioning

How the custodial father perceives his ability, and how his children perceive his ability to parent, may have something to do with parental adjustment, conflict in the post-divorce family and the support and involvement of the non-custodial parent and

others. Some believe that the post divorce/separation family functioning is more important than the custodial arrangement in assuring the child's needs are met (Rasmussen, 1987; Heath & McKinnon, 1988; Ahrons, 1981; Hetherington, 1989). Parental stress affects children's adjustment in that, it affects parent's childrearing practices and quality of life. Adjustment of the child seems to relate to adjustment of the parent (Guidbaldi & Perry, 1985; Wallerstein, 1987; Berger, 1983; Colletta, 1979; Fishel, 1987).

Belsky (1981) used a "transactional framework" to explain how functioning and relationships in the family affect the quality of parenting. This framework could be extended to the post divorce/separation family in speculating how conflict and lack of access to the noncustodial parent may ultimately reflect on how the child's needs are met. Parental conflict in the post divorce/separation family has been the most powerful variable in predicting poorer adjustment (Luepnitz, 1981, 1986; Neugebauer, 1989; Kalter, 1987; Rutter, 1983; Block, Block & Gjerde, 1986). Emery (1982) concluded that "parents involved in conflict with each other are probably poorer models, are more inconsistent in their discipline, and place more stress on the children" (p. 324). Isaacs, Leon and Kline (1987) asked two hundred children to draw a picture of their families. They found that if there was conflict in the family it was likely one parent would be left out. They inferred that it is quite possible that parental hostilities may alienate the child from the resident as well as non resident parent (p. 109). Others have come to similar conclusions (Hetherington, 1980; Price, McHenry, 1988).

Defrain and Eirick (1981) found that fathers in their study were more likely than mothers to take sides against the noncustodial parent. However, others found that custodial fathers reported having high quality relationships with their exspouses



(Stewart, Schwebel & Fine, 1986; Greif, 1985a). It has been suggested that each parent's ability to support the child in maintaining a qualitative relationship with the other parent was very important (Peck, 1989; Neugebauer, 1989; Drill, 1987; Lowerstein & Koopman, 1978; Rosen, 1979; Koopman & Hunt, 1988). Ahrons (1981) studied fifty four divorced couples. She found that the majority continued to interact with one another; those who interacted the most frequently were supportive and co-operative parents. Men tended to perceive less conflict and more support.

Research studies show that non-custodial mothers tend to be more involved with their children than noncustodial fathers (Greif, 1985; Santrock, Warshak & Elliott, 1982; Watson, 1981; Luepnitz, 1982). Drill (1987) who studied young adults found that those who came from custodial father homes showed similar attitudes towards both parents, rating mothers as highly as fathers. Wallerstein (1983b) said that the beginning findings regarding children who remain in the custody of their fathers suggest that feelings of unlovability, unworthiness and rejection are even stronger where the mother has relinquished or abandoned the child and is an inconsistent visitor (p. 272). Greif (1985a), from his study of noncustodial fathers, concluded that the more involved the exwife is with her children, the easier single parenthood is for the father.

The noncustodial mother can serve as a support system for the father, increasing his parenting ability (Lowerstein & Koopman, 1978). Custodial fathers reported that support of others such as family, friends and co-workers is generally available to them and researchers have indicated that it is important in increasing the father's parental functioning (Ambert, 1985; Bartz & Witcher, 1978; Santrock, Warshak & Elliott, 1982; Hanson, 1980; Risman, 1986). Ambert (1985) said, "the father is generally appreciated and the children hear about it or see it. In turn the father also

hears it and believes it, perhaps eagerly so, because such belief certainly contributes to the bolstering of his ego. He in turn subtly passes the message to his children, a communication which further reinforces the internalization process" (p. 23, 24).

### NONCUSTODIAL MOTHERS

Noncustodial parents are not well understood (Wilbur and Wilbur, 1988). Very little literature is available regarding mothers without custody. Fischer (1983) studied attitudes towards noncustodial mothers and compared them to what is known from research. She concluded that noncustodial mothers are judged to be "relatively rare and societally disapproved" (Greif, 1987; Greif & Pabst, 1988; Chesler, 1986). As a result they are often unsure about what this role involves (Greif, 1987).

Greif (1987) found that, of his sample of five hundred and seventeen noncustodial mothers, two-thirds had difficulty and felt guilty. Phyllis Chesler, in her book Mothers on Trial, suggested that more mothers are losing custody although they are "good enough" parents. She said that custody with the father is often portrayed as more favourable to the courts. She contended that life for these noncustodial mothers is often very painful. Fischer (1983) found that most mothers did not run away, nor were they found unfit by the courts. Those who have interviewed mothers without custody have concluded that feelings expressed by the mothers, and reflected in their relationships with their children, often seemed linked to ways in which the custody situation came about as well as the mother's personal agenda for herself (Fischer, 1983; Greif & Pabst, 1988; Greif, 1987; Koehler, 1982). Women sometimes chose not to have custody of their children, not because they did not want or like their children but because they recognized that being the custodial parent would not be the best

circumstance for their children (Koehler, 1982). The reason mothers most often did not have custody related to lack of money (Greif, 1987; Greif & Pabst, 1988). Greif (1987) found that those who voluntarily gave up custody were the most comfortable in their role as noncustodial mothers. If the mother recognized the father as being capable in a primary caregiver role she seemed more apt to be satisfied in her role. "By his competence, this father makes it easier for the mother to give up custody because he offers a viable alternative" (Greif & Pabst, 1988, p. 90). Greif and Pabst (1988) also concluded that the mothers who gave custodial fathers higher ratings as parents also gave themselves higher ratings and tended to be more involved with their children.

Koehler (1982) found that the three mothers she interviewed, retrospectively felt that leaving their children in the custody of the father was the best possible decision at the time. Greif and Emad (1989) reinterviewed thirty-nine mothers of the original sample of five hundred and seventeen after five years. They found that seventy-two percent of the mothers felt that things had worked out for the best for them and their children. These mothers said that they felt stronger and more confident since becoming noncustodial and described themselves to be more involved with their children, particularly those who were older. Greif and Emad (1989) suggested that this may relate to the exspouse blocking visitation of younger children and that during adolescence children may be more interested in pursuing relationships with peers than visiting the noncustodial parent. From a child's point of view, little is known about the role children perceive their noncustodial mothers to play in their development.

#### CHILDREN'S PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL FUNCTIONING

The literature has indicated that society does not fully understand custodial

fathers and noncustodial mothers, viewing them somewhat sceptically. Much of the research on custodial fathers has focused on their perceptions of their parenting abilities and their children's experiences. Less is known about noncustodial mothers' perceptions of their ability to parent and the role they play in the post divorce family. There have not been any studies that provided data on paternal custody children's perceptions of specific parental domestic activities when there is a conflict between societal and family norms (Radin & Russell, 1983, p. 209). Very little is known about how these children view the functioning of both parents in meeting their needs (Briggs & Walter, 1985; Neugebauer, 1989; Ambert, 1980; Hanson, 1985; Santrock, 1987).

Richards (1987) claimed that "the weakness of some of the work on fathers is that it appeared to be concerned with the relative claims of mothers and fathers to parenthood rather than a description of the child's needs and world" (p. 14). Neugebauer (1989) also believes that children seemed overlooked in their familial role. He said, "a paradigm of protection exists which highlights the subservience of children and maintains the importance of parents in defining what constitutes the 'best interest' of their children" (p. 167). Neugebauer went on to say that, "Despite their obvious dependencies, children make sense of their worlds and are able to interpret parental influences." Amato (1987), using a large Australian sample, interviewed primary school and high school children and parents about family relationships and activities. Although the correlations between children and parent's ratings were statistically significant, they were low, tending to be higher for adolescents than primary school children. An example of the discrepancy in perceptions of parents and children came from Santrock, Warshak and Elliott's (1982) study. The children in this study ranged in age from six to eleven. Forty percent of the parents indicated that the children wished their parents

would get back together. However, when the children were interviewed eighty-five percent said they wished for a reunion of the parents.

Others have suggested that children's perceptions may largely influence how the child is affected by the divorce experience (Kurdek & Siesky, 1980; Khoe, 1986). Drill (1987) concluded, from her interviews with young adults whose parents had divorced, that depression is related to the young adult's perception of the parents rather than to the divorce itself. Fry (1983) suggested that the child's perception reflects a certain psychological reality for the child and "he or she is perhaps best able to speak to the issue of what are for him or her the personal sources of anxiety or conversely security, conflict versus harmony and so on within the family" (p. 44).

Khoe (1986), in discussing the merits of gaining the child's perceptions of parental functioning suggested that it would be important to assess the unique strengths and weaknesses of parents as they correspond to the child's needs (Lewis & Wallerstein, 1988). She said this "would be important in determining the emotional fit between parents and children" (p. 34). Neugebauer (1989) suggested that educating parents of children's perceptions and needs would foster a greater understanding of their children. A paucity of child-centred research, does give us impressions of how children perceive their parents to function regarding meeting their needs in the post divorce/separation paternal custody family.

#### PERCEPTIONS OF PATERNAL CUSTODY CHILDREN

Furstenberg and Nord (1985) interviewed 2,279 children aged seven to eleven. They were interested in finding out about the pattern of parenting of both the resident and nonresident parent in divorced families. Each child's interview contained a series

of questions about the nature of contact with the outside parent and the respondent's subjective impression of the quality of that contact. The small number of paternal custody children in the sample may limit the generalizability to children of such homes. However, the study does provide certain impressions of how paternal custody children perceive the functioning of their parents and how they evaluate their relationships. Some of the key findings are:

- 1) Contact with the outside parent tends to be social rather than instrumental. Resident parents disproportionately assume the responsibility of child care.
- 2) Noncustodial mothers tend to be much more active in childrearing than noncustodial fathers. Contact does not seem to drop off over time. Nonetheless, they tend not to have frequent and continuous contact with their children.
- 3) Paternal custody children tend to be more satisfied with the noncustodial parent than are maternal custody children.
- 4) Most children who see their noncustodial parent, on an almost regular basis, do not complain about the amount of love or attention they receive (p. 902).

Peterson and Zill (1986) interviewed 1,423 children aged twelve to sixteen. This study also had a very small father custody sample. Parent-child relationships were measured by using the child's responses to a set of four items about each biological parent. These items were closeness, frequency of doing things together, amount of affection received, and aspiration to be like the kind of person the parent is. Paternal custody children reported more positive relations with their custodial and noncustodial parent. Well over half the children maintained positive relations with mothers. Boys in father custody homes tended to report better relationships with their fathers and girls

reported better relationships with their mothers.

Another group of studies whose main emphasis was to compare perceptions of children in mother custody and father custody families revealed other aspects of custodial parent functioning. These studies, however, give little indication of how the children perceived the parenting abilities of the noncustodial mother. They tended to focus on the child's perceptions of the divorce. Fry and Leahey (1983) studied seventy-five boys and seventy-five girls from mother and father headed homes. Each child was interviewed and asked to identify positive and negative events that had occurred in the previous year, explaining how they related to the custodial parent. Father custody girls more than mother custody girls expressed concerns about the father's frequent absence from home, verbal fights and drinking. Boys in father custody homes perceived less discrimination from outside sources than did mother custody boys. The generalizability of this study is limited to mental health populations since this was the make up of the studied sample.

Warshak and Santrock (1983), as part of a study to determine children's perceptions of divorce in father and mother custody homes, also assessed the child's perceptions of the parental role, attitude toward each parent and desire for more contact with each parent. They found that both father custody boys and girls said that they resembled their fathers most. Father custody girls were more likely to express negative feelings about their parents going out and were more likely than boys to express a wish for more visits with the noncustodial parent. Children in this study generally indicated a preference for the same-sex parent-child custodial arrangement.

Fry (1983) studied seventy-eight girls and fifty-four boys in middle class father and mother custody homes. The sample came from day cares with the average age

of those in mother custody being 7.7 years and those in father custody 10.4 years. The purpose of the study was to survey perceptions of children and to examine children's responses to parenting styles and parent-child issues by comparing custodial homes. The measures used included a standard interview schedule, a mood rating scale, and two personality rating scales. Data were also collected as a structured record of "theme-oriented conversations" from discussions that developed in peer groups of boys and girls. From this study Fry (1983) concluded that in the realm of physical care fathers are not perceived to be very effective, are described as fun and entertaining, give more positive sanctions, provide more flexibility to the child and opportunity for initiation by the child. Father headed children did not expect their custodial parent to be around too much, appearing not to miss him when he was away. Fathers were perceived by children to be less effective than mothers in reading to the children and were reported to become impatient when the children were upset. They were also seen as engaging much less frequently in hugging and cuddling their children. Although this study does give us some clear indications of differences in parenting styles of custodial mothers and fathers, the discrepancy in ages of father and mother custody families could potentially account for many of these differences.

Two other studies looked more directly at paternal custody children's perceptions as opposed to comparing them to mother custody samples. Hanson (1980) examined the relationship between single custodial father's social class, parental history and reason for custody, and the nurturing quality of the parent-child relationship as perceived by both the fathers and their children. Thirty seven fathers with ninety-five children ranging in age from four to eighteen were included. Children's perceptions of the nurturing abilities of their fathers were collected by requesting their completion of



two standardized instruments. No significant correlations were found between the father's social class, parental history and reason for custody, and the parent-child relationship as perceived by children. This study's main limitation, because data was collected by standardized measures only, is that it does not portray "how" children in father custody homes perceive the functioning of their parent.

Greif and Wasserman (1985), as part of a larger study on single fathers, interviewed twenty-one children, aged two to nineteen. Their purpose was to draw attention to some of the issues that children being raised by their fathers may face and to look at the single-father headed household from the child's perspective. Fathers were present at most interviews which may have curtailed the free expression of many of these children. Although this study did not look indepth at the parenting skills of the custodial fathers and noncustodial mothers, a few issues were identified as being unique in paternal custody homes. Children perceived the amount of housework they did was greater than in the intact home and that the home was not as organized as when the mother was still there. Where there was still regular contact with the noncustodial mother, there was much interest in her well being and spending time with her. Daughters assisted more in the housework and their experiences differed because of issues of female sexuality.

## CONCLUSIONS

Since the 1970s the women's movement promoted the removal of sex roles distinctions and women, in increasing numbers, have moved into the workplace. Fathers, simultaneously, have become more involved in caring for their children. Divorce rates have escalated and more men are becoming the primary caregivers of

their children. However, this post divorce family configuration is not well understood and often looked at with scepticism by the community in general and professionals in mental, legal and educational areas.

A review of the literature that exists since the mid 1970s suggests that fathers play an important part in their children's development and can be nurturant when given the opportunity. Studies comparing custodial arrangements suggest that children in father custody homes are as well adjusted as those in other custodial arrangements. Father custody literature has primarily focused on describing perceptions of fathers to show how they function as primary caregivers. Those who were interviewed or responded to questionnaires appear to view themselves as competent. Factors such as the child's age, sex and personality, how custody was obtained, and conflict, child's access to the noncustodial parent and support of others in the post divorce family have been identified as affecting the father's feelings of adequacy.

The literature relating to noncustodial mothers is limited and gives little indication about their parenting abilities and the role they play in their children's lives. Mothers who were interviewed often seem to feel unsatisfied in their role but feel giving up custody was in "the best interest" of the child. They tend to remain involved in the lives of their children.

What appears to be lacking in understanding paternal custody homes is the child's view of how his needs are met by the custodial and noncustodial parent. A few studies have provided impressions by, for the most part, comparing children's perceptions of the custodial parent in father and mother custody homes. Perhaps, rather than comparing custodial parents it would be more important to get a more indepth understanding of how the child perceives both his parents as functioning in the

post divorce/separation family where the father is the primary caregiver. How do paternal custody children view the parenting abilities of their fathers in meeting their needs? What role do they see the noncustodial mother taking and what are their perceptions of her parenting abilities? Are their perceptions of their parent's adequacy mediated by factors similar to those which have been identified, in the literature, as affecting fathers' views of their own competence as a parent? Are there other factors which affect how paternal custody children view the parenting abilities of their mother and father? With these questions in mind this study looked at how children in paternal custody view the parental functioning of both the custodial and noncustodial parent. The following chapter outlines the methodology which was utilized.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter focuses on discussing methodological considerations, procedures for obtaining requisite participants, manner in which data was collected and analyzed, and issues concerning credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of the study. The purpose of this study was to understand how paternal custody children perceive the functioning of their custodial and noncustodial parents and to understand the factors that may influence these perceptions.

#### METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In considering the purpose of the study, a qualitative approach was determined to be most appropriate. As children's perceptions were to be considered in relation to their parents' functioning and in attempting to discover underlying factors that may affect these perceptions, a research approach that discerns meaning or attempts to interpret the meaning, or perceptions, of children was adopted (Tesch, 1990). Our understanding of how children in paternal custody perceive their parents to function is limited, however, divorce and father custody literature do provide us with a conceptual framework and "guiding hypothesis" on what may influence children's perceptions (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). In qualitative research, the "researcher looks for systematic connection between variables identified in the literature - keeping an ever

toward bringing knowledge into view" (Field & Morse, 1985, p. 5) would be most effective in interpreting paternal custody children's perceptions.

An extensive review of these approaches supported the decision to use qualitative methods. Allender (1986) wrote:

"What is needed is the recognition that in many different ways reality is determined by how we look at it." (p. 180)

Stake (1978) said that it is his belief that "the most effective means of adding to understanding of all readers will be approximating through the words and illustrations of our reports, the natural experience in ordinary personal involvement." (p. 5) Thinking in a similar vein, Marshall and Rossman (1989) in their book Designing Qualitative Research, wrote:

"It is essential in the study of people to know just how people define the situation in which they find themselves." (p. 46)

Leininger (1985) said that:

"Grasping the totality of how events, situations and experiences fit together and form the people's viewpoint and world view is a major feature of qualitative research." (p. 7)

She went on to say:

"The qualitative paradigm also includes an assumption about the importance of understanding situations from the perspective of the participants in the situation." (p. 12)

In identifying the qualitative methodological approach that was most suitable to this study, a decision was made that the intent was not to be concerned with theory building as much as with interpretation and description. However, as Tesch (1990), in describing the various branches of qualitative research explained:

procedure, being encompassed in the specific qualitative research method that is chosen.

The method chosen for this study is the case study method, focusing on description and explanation. Yin (1989) explained that in using the case study method a "descriptive approach may help to identify plausible causal links to be analyzed" and Jacob (1988) commented that the descriptive phase is important to "understand participant's meanings." Yin (1989) reported that when the case study is focused on explaining, a set of causal links must be stipulated in regard to the phenomenon and further explained that, "In most studies the links may be complex and difficult to measure in a precise manner." (p. 113)

The decision to use the case study method in this research endeavour was based on the question that was to be investigated. The primary focus was on "how" children perceive the functioning of their parents, which would entail the descriptive portion of the study, and the secondary focus was on "why" they perceive this functioning as they do or, in other words, what factors affect their perceptions. This entailed the explanatory portion of the study. Yin said that:

"In general, case studies are preferred strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed and when the investigator has little control over events." (p. 13)

He also suggested that a case study is most desirable when the study question arises out of a desire to understand complex social phenomenon. Stake (1988) supports the use of the case study method when the object of study is a "complex, dynamic system" and explained that, "We want to understand its' complexity." (p. 256) Yin (1989) also suggested that the case study "allows the investigator to retain the holistic and

but confines the "attention to those aspects that are relevant to the research problem at the time." (p. 256) Cohen and Manion (1989) explained that:

"The case study probes deeply and analyzes interactions between the factors that explain the present status or that influence change or growth." (p. 125)

Stake (1988) differentiated the case study method from other studies by explaining that:

"In most other studies, researchers search for understanding that ignores the uniqueness of individual cases and generalizes beyond particular instances. They search for what is common, pervasive and lawful. In a case study there may be an ultimate interest in the generalizable. For the time being, the search is for understanding the particular case, in its idiosyncrasy, in its complexity." (p. 256)

The case study method is best summarized in Yin's (1989) technical definition:

"A case study is an empirical inquiry that:

- investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when
- The boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which
- multiple sources of evidence are used." (p. 23)

The first two defining features of the case study have already been considered in this discussion. The third feature relating to multiple sources of evidence was described by Yin (1989) as the case study's "unique strength". The case study can employ both quantitative and qualitative evidence. As discussed in the data collection section of this chapter, one source of evidence in this study has a quantitative aspect to it, however, it was primarily used to support qualitative description and explanation.

Use of the case study in this research project was most appropriate because of the limited number of families that are structured so that the custodial parent is the father. It appeared important, in gaining children's perceptions, to understand them first in the complexity of the individual situation. In planning this study, a multi case

a multi case approach:

"By using the case study simultaneously in two or more settings, it is possible to compare and contrast the settings. This method doubles the researcher's work, but the constant comparison of the two settings provides richness and important insights for theory development." (p. 88)

Yin (1989) said that the multiple case strategy "should be considered like multiple experiments" and Kennedy (1979) discussed the merits in relation to generalizability.

The case study method has a long history. In the area of psychology it dates from Freud. Although it had fallen into disrepute, much emphasis on the necessity to adopt strict scientific procedures has again highlighted the value and advantages of its use in a variety of research areas (Driscoll, 1990; Kaplan & Duchon, 1988; Swanson & Beath, 1988). Several researchers (Swanson & Beath, 1988; Walker, 1980; Cohen & Manion, 1989) have argued for the use of the case study, emphasizing the fact that the case study can serve multiple audiences and become a common ground for communication and collaboration between researcher and practitioner. Walker (1980), in discussing practitioners said:

"They all tend to make judgments on the basis of knowledge of the particular instance, rather than by reference to research findings. Perhaps we might even try to improve such research rather than to merely condemn it." (p. 34)

In concluding this section that outlines the basis of what was considered in selecting the case study methodology, it is appropriate to emphasize once again that this method has advantages "when the aims are understanding, extension of experience, and increase in conviction in that which is known." (Stake, 1978) "And, most certainly, ascertaining what people think exists and why they think so is at least as important as verification of some a priori postulate about cause-effect relationship that the evaluator



## CASES

Each child involved in the study was defined as a case. A maximum of two children in each family was involved in the study.

The following criteria were set for participation:

1) The child must range in age from eight to fourteen years. A school aged sample was selected because "Cognitive abilities are characterized by their ability to mentally represent their perceptions and to view themselves and their actions objectively. The improved linguistic and cognitive abilities and positive adult relationships make school-aged children excellent research subjects for qualitative researchers." (Deatrick & Faux, 1989, p. 191) Amato and Ochiltree (1987) reported their findings that "children from about the age of seven generally had adequate verbal ability and understanding to cope with an interview about family life." (p. 670)

2) The child must come from a home where the divorce or separation was finalized at least one year ago to account for adjustment problems in the first year as reported by researchers such as Hetherington, Cox and Cox (1985), Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) and Thompson (1986).

3) The child must be in a home where the father has had physical custody for approximately one year or more. It was not necessary that the father have legal custody.

4) The child must have, at least, occasional access to his or her mother.

5) The custodial father should not be remarried or living with a mate.

A collective description of the cases appears in Chapter Four.

Various approaches were taken to gain volunteers for the study. A variety of

experiences, whereas, a variety of sources "broadens the potential range of experiences available to the researcher." (Morse, 1989a p. 120) Each approach taken to solicit volunteers will be reviewed.

1) An ad was placed in a newspaper with weekly city-wide circulation in the Volunteer section. This resulted in two responses from custodial fathers, each of which did not fit the criteria. (see Appendix A)

2) A colleague spoke to an acquaintance who is a custodial father. He agreed that the researcher could contact him. This man was contacted by telephone and agreed to have the researcher meet with himself and his two sons.

3) Associations such as the Children and Parent Equality Society and One Parent Family Association were contacted and the researcher was invited to speak to these groups. The Children and Parent Equality Society appeared supportive of the intended research project, however, membership mainly involves noncustodial parents. A noncustodial mother from this group suggested that her exhusband would participate, however, he had remarried thus excluding him from the project. A custodial father who is a member of the One Parent Family Association volunteered that his daughter might be willing to be involved. A meeting was scheduled to meet with this man and his daughter and they agreed to participate.

4) Professionals such as lawyers and psychologists were contacted. Initial contact was by means of a telephone call. If the person appeared interested they were asked if they would like further information. Many could not think of a client who fit the criteria, with remarriage being named most often as the excluding criteria, but requested the information in case they thought of someone. A sample letter is included in

review and research plan. A total of thirteen lawyers was contacted and all except two requested further information. These two said that they were not involved in custody of children but recommended other lawyers. Of all lawyers contacted, four lawyers recommended five families. One of these families was a shared custody situation and was used as the pilot study. Two lawyer referrals were not clients. One recommended a colleague to the study, another an acquaintance. Confidentiality was a concern to lawyers. All decided that the best way to deal with confidentiality was to inform their client of the study, leaving it to the client to contact the researcher.

One lawyer who was contacted is the Chairperson of the Alberta Branch Canadian Bar Association, Family Law Section. He offered to announce the study at a monthly meeting and to place a notice in their newsletter. This did not generate any response. It appeared personal contact was best.

Three psychologists were contacted. No appropriate subjects were generated from two of the practices, however, a third contacted four of his clients and got their permission to give their names and phone numbers to the researcher. Two live out of town and were not contacted by the researcher, a third was interested in participating but had remarried and the fourth agreed to participate.

Once telephone contact was made with the custodial father, the study was explained to him and the criteria were reviewed. If he expressed interest in participating (as they all did), an appointment was made to meet the children at their home. At the first meeting with the father and children, the intent and importance of the study were explained. The time involvement of the father and children, and issues of confidentiality were discussed. Questions from the family were entertained. A copy of a thesis of another study was sometimes shown to the children. All families expressed interest.

The father was given a contract (see Appendix C) to read and sign. He was then asked if there was space in the home where the child and the researcher could have privacy. If two children in one family were involved, time was spent with them individually. At this time the Assent Form for Children (see Appendix D) was reviewed. Confidentiality, tape recording, time involvement, and using a pseudonym in reporting results were explained. Questions were answered. Each child was allowed, individually, to decide whether or not to participate. When they verbally suggested that they were interested (all did), they were asked to sign the Assent Form for Children.

Seven families and a total of eleven children agreed to participate in the study. Although it was clearly explained to the children and fathers that they could discontinue at anytime, no one dropped out of the study or expressed disinterest at anytime. Contacting sources for volunteers and gaining families' approvals to participate took approximately one month.

### PILOT STUDY

The pilot study was completed with a family who fit all the criteria except the fact that the custodial arrangement is a shared one where the child spends equal time with each parent, with rotation happening every four days. The child, James, is nine and has a five year old brother. The pilot study helped the researcher to refine her data collection plans with respect to both the content of the data and the procedures to be followed. Because of this study the researcher became aware that:

- Data collection would best be accomplished in three visits that would generally require one hour each.
- Some interview questions were changed to bring greater clarity to them. The

sequencing of questions appeared to work well and was retained. A question was added to the interview schedule, asking the child if he could think of questions that should be asked of other children. In asking James this question it appeared that this was an effective method of focusing on factors that the child thought were most important.

- In administering the BPS (Bricklin Perceptual Scales), it was realized that the child may be a little bored in having questions repeated as is the standard practice, first to gain verbal responses, then to gain nonverbal responses. If the child was warned that this would happen, administration was much smoother.
- The researcher became aware that younger siblings may feel excluded. In subsequent interviews, if a younger child was present, he or she was included by giving him or her a short interview and then listening to the tape or he or she might be asked to draw a picture. At the end of the session a small gift was given to the younger sibling as well as the participant child.

## DATA COLLECTION

### Instruments.

Faux, Walsh and Deatrick (1988) suggested that instruments used in research with children need to reflect accurately the child's perceptions, attitudes and knowledge about a topic and not just adults' perceptions of what they think children perceive. (p. 181) Deatrick and Faux (1989) discussed the merits of using multiple methods in collecting data from children. Despite the intended focus of case studies, they all share a dependency on multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 1989; Driscoll, 1990; Kaplan & Duchon, 1988). In this study, demographic data was collected from the father and three

instruments were used to collect data from the children. Each of these instruments will be described and discussed.

1) Questionnaire.

A questionnaire (see Appendix E) was completed by the custodial father to share demographic information and reason for custody. The portion of the questionnaire relating to custody was adapted from Hanson's (1980) study.

2) Kinetic Family Drawing. (Burns & Kaufman, 1970)

The Kinetic Family Drawing (KFD) was used to build rapport with the child and to get the child's perceptions of family members, including personalities, actions and styles. Faux, Walsh and Deatruck (1988) said that using drawings at the beginning of meetings can decrease anxiety and build the child's confidence since drawing a picture is a known, familiar task that the child can accomplish successfully. Andrews (1986) suggested that the theory behind the KFD is that the child's responses, as portrayed in the drawing, can show much better than his words on how he sees himself as a member of his family and illustrate family dynamics.

The decision to use the Kinetic Family Drawing was based on previous research that has used family drawings and reported its usefulness (Shiller, 1986; Warshak & Santrock, 1983). The instructions to the child were to draw a picture of everyone in the family doing something. After the drawing was completed the child was asked to tell the researcher about his or her picture. Appendix F contains the guide that was used in posing questions to the child. The verbal responses were tape recorded and transcribed. Sources relating to the KFD and children's drawings were studied extensively (Burns & Kaufman, 1970, 1972;

Burns, 1982; Knoff & Prout, 1985; Di Leo, 1983). The Kinetic Drawing System for Family and School Scoring Booklet by Howard Knoff (1985) was used to score the instrument.

In terms of psychometric properties, Touliatos, Perlmutter and Strauss (1990) reported on the reliability of the KFD. They reported that using Mostkoff and Lazurus' findings test/retest reliabilities range from .46 to .90. Knoff and Prout (1985) suggested that certain KFD variables are sensitive to children's transitory personality states. Touliatos, Perlmutter and Strauss (1990) reported interrater reliabilities as ranging from .86 to 1.00. Andrews (1986) explained that validity is usually assessed by using the known group methods but explained that validation is needed in terms of individual signs and global characteristics. (p. 92)

### 3) Bricklin Perceptual Scales. (Bricklin, 1990)

The Bricklin Perceptual Scales (BPS) elicits information about the child's perception of each parent's functioning in four areas: competence, supportiveness, follow-up consistency, and possession of admirable character traits. Although the instrument is at a "pioneering" stage, it has been noted for its usefulness (Lanyon, 1986; Schutz, Dixon, Lindenberger and Rutter, 1989). Before the BPS was built into the design of this study, a psychologist used it with three children who were being assessed to provide a recommendation for custody and gave the researcher extensive feedback as to the usefulness of the instrument.

The BPS is made up of sixty four questions, thirty-two of which apply to each parent. Examples of questions are: "How well does Dad/Mom do at making you feel loved?"

"If you were having a problem with a school subject how well would Mom/Dad do at helping you to understand and deal with what is troubling you?"

The instrument has two aspects. The child first responds verbally and then nonverbally. Bricklin (1990) suggests that the instrument be primarily used as a nonverbal tool. However, in this study, questions were used as a structured interview and verbal responses were tape recorded and transcribed (see Appendix G). Although children were not pressured to respond verbally, they were reminded occasionally that they could give examples in response to questions. Only one child responded minimally, appearing to be more caught up with responding nonverbally. Most children were quite willing to expand and give examples. There generally appeared to be a correlation between verbal and nonverbal responses. However, younger children who had difficulty expressing their feelings, were able to more clearly define their perceptions through this instrument, by responding nonverbally.

For each question posed to the child, the child was presented with a 3.5" by 8.5" long card on which appears a horizontal black line with "very well" printed on one end of the line and "not so well" on the other. Each card was placed in a cardholder box on a piece of styrofoam. In response to the question, the child punched a hole through the line using a stylus pen. On the reverse side of the card a scoring grid gave a scoring range from one to sixty. Scores were transferred to a score sheet. (See Appendix H) Total point scores were calculated for each area, for each parent. The number of items in each area in which each parent scored the highest, was also calculated.

Although the BPS has a quantitative aspect to it, the numbers were used



to more fully explain qualitative data and to illustrate patterns or trends. Stern (1989) supported use of quantitative data in qualitative research by explaining that "A continuum can be a handy device for picturing some kinds of data since every process has a polar quality." (p. 137) In a personal communication with Dr. Bricklin (Sept. 1990), he suggested to the researcher that the instrument is not meant to generate statistical information but is designed to compare each child to him or herself. He explained that depending on the child the extremities of responses can vary and therefore are not easily compared between children.

No research was located that used the BPS. All reliability and validity data come from the author. Bricklin (1990) explained that, "there is no reason to expect the measurements reported here to exhibit any degree of stability, since they should vary in accordance with change in the child's perceptions." Despite this acknowledgement, Bricklin reported on twelve cases that were retested within a seven month period after shifts in family arrangements and reported that in all twelve cases there were no significant changes in scores although some subtest changes were noticed. The author also provided concurrent validity information. He reported on several validity studies (Bricklin, 1984, p. 43-45). Two of these studies used the BPS to decide the parent most fitted to be granted custody where custody was in dispute. In the first, two professionals unfamiliar with the case histories of a group of twenty-one children were asked to review large amounts of data and independently arrive at an opinion of which parent was best suited to be the custodial parent. Except for one case, there was one hundred percent agreement between the remaining cases and the BPS designation. BPS designations achieved a very satisfying

ninety four percent agreement with judges' choices in courtroom settings (twenty-nine cases in the original phase of the study; this number has stayed near ninety percent on several hundred more cases.)

#### 4) Interview.

An interview schedule (see Appendix I) was designed as a "focused interview" (Yin, 1989) that included some closed-ended questions, but an attempt was made to include as many open-ended questions as possible. Although the schedule was followed closely, it was presented conversationally and the researcher was flexible in omitting questions if they already had been answered in a prior section or were not applicable (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). Flexibility also allowed the researcher to ask additional questions to inquire about information that the child presented and the researcher did not anticipate. The questions were presented in an order that was believed to be least sensitive to more sensitive. If the child showed some reaction to a question, questioning was stopped and the child was asked if he or she wanted to continue.

Much time was spent in building rapport with the child by asking questions about age, school, friends and interests. An attempt was made to structure the interview questions so that children would not feel threatened by being put into a situation where they must compare parents or defend their family structure. Questions were formulated so that they were interesting and understandable by children (Field & Morse, 1985). The researcher received much help in this regard from a psychologist who has had considerable experience in interviewing children. Content was also checked in this way. Content of the interview was based on the literature. Several sources were very

helpful (Luepnitz, 1981; Schutz, Dixon, Lindenberger & Ruther, 1989; Gardner, 1982). Interview material was tape recorded and transcribed. Children were often interested in listening to portions of the interview and time was taken to do this.

### Procedure

Data was collected in three to four visits. Visits were arranged according to the family's schedule and the families were reminded that these could be rearranged if it became inconvenient for them. This rarely happened. Some families preferred to set all appointments at the initial visit; others scheduled them on an ongoing basis. Most fathers left the home while data was collected from their children, taking the opportunity to run errands. Others removed themselves to another part of the home. If two children from a family were involved in the study, the researcher first gathered data from one and then the other. Except for one family, this was completed in one extended visit. An explanation will be provided as to what each visit entailed.

1) Once the family agreed to participate, data collection started at the first visit. The father completed the questionnaire. Time varied as to completion. Some completed the questionnaire in ten minutes while others took about thirty minutes, writing out explanations pertaining to information requested. While the father filled out the questionnaire in another room, the child completed the family drawing (KFD) and interpreted the drawing to the researcher. This tended to be a relaxed, informal time and took twenty to forty minutes. The explanation of the drawing was taped and later transcribed.

2) At the second visit, any questions that may have arisen from transcribing the

explanation of the family drawing were asked of the child. The interview (see Appendix I) was completed at this time. The time needed to complete this interview ranged from forty-five minutes to one and one half hours. The interview was taped and transcribed. Transcriptions ranged from nine to eighteen pages, single spaced.

3) Approximately ten minutes of the third visit were devoted to reviewing, with the child, any questions that may have come to the researcher's attention in transcribing the interview. The Bricklin Perceptual Scales was then used with the child. Verbal responses were tape recorded and later transcribed. Administration of the BPS took thirty to fifty-five minutes, depending on the child's verbal explanations.

4) Although the fourth visit was primarily scheduled for the child to check the transcripts for accuracy of information, sometimes questions that remained after reviewing all data collected, were asked of the child.

### DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

A unique feature of the case study method is its use of multiple sources of evidence. This allows several lines of inquiry to be pursued with ultimate convergence. However, before the sources of evidence are reviewed and analyzed together, they must be analyzed separately. In the same way, individual cases must be analyzed before a multi-case analysis is completed. The data analysis and interpretation will be explained as having been completed on three levels.

#### Level One - Analysis of Sources of Evidence.

For each case, each source of evidence was thoroughly reviewed and scored if necessary.

1) The questionnaire was reviewed and summarized.

2) The KFD was scored and analyzed using the methods outlined in the Data Collection section of this chapter.

3) The interview, interpretation of family drawing, and verbal responses to the BPS were transcribed into a WordPerfect (word processing) file that allowed for use of the Ethnograph. "The Ethnograph is a set of interactive, menu driven computer programs designed to assist the ethnographic/qualitative researcher in some of the mechanical aspects of data analysis." (Siedel, Kjolseth & Seymore, 1988) This program was used with an IBM Personal Computer. The Ethnograph program formats the manuscript into lines that are forty characters in length, thus leaving the entire right hand side of the page empty. It also sequentially numbers each line of the transcript. Each transcript was read four to six times. The eleven transcripts were read concurrently and a list of sixty code words was developed that identified certain topics in the interviews. Codes generally were close to what the child spoke about. For example if he or she spoke about being similar in personality the code word used was "personality". Occasionally the code words reflected the meaning the researcher gained from what the child said. The transcripts were then reread and hand-coded (see Appendix J). Code words were added as necessary but the original list proved to be thorough. If a code word was added, prior transcripts were reexamined.

4) The Bricklin Perceptual Scales, nonverbal portion, was scored and scores were entered into the computer resulting in a printout such as contained in Appendix H.

#### Level Two - Individual Case Analysis and Interpretation.

Each case was studied by simultaneously considering all sources of

evidence. For each case a ten page outline based on the BPS (see Appendix K), was developed to facilitate integration of information and note factors that might relate to the child's perceptions. This information was considered holistically and categories, patterns and conclusions were noted. A plan for writing up the interpretation of the case was then developed that included viewing the data in light of existing findings reported in the literature and theories.

### Level Three - Multi Case Analysis and Interpretation.

At the third level of analysis the Ethnograph became an extremely valuable tool. Hand codes were typed into the computer. The Ethnograph program then sorted through every occurrence of a given code. For example if the code word was "homework", the program would go through all interview, BPS and KFD data from each case and retrieve the segments that were coded "homework". This was printed along with the source, identifying instrument and person speaking. The information contained within each code was reviewed thoroughly and summary notes were made. As the researcher proceeded into this phase, categories and patterns emerged and code information was combined to reflect these. For example, a pattern regarding "how the custodial father's role has changed" pulled together information that had been coded as "discipline - dad", "attitude to Dad positive", "child responsibility - Dad", as well as other codes. This is a process that John Siedel (1991) terms "de-contextualization" and "re-contextualization".

Nonverbal scores of all participants of the study, in regards to the Bricklin Perceptual Scales, were also examined to provide clues as to patterns that

would highlight similarities and differences between children's perceptions. When these were identified, they were examined to determine if the interview data, verbal responses to the BPS and KFD information would corroborate the patterns. The development of patterns and categories evolved after ceaseless interaction with all sources of data. Commonalities then became apparent. If there were differences, an attempt was made to explain these using individual case studies. Factors which might reflect in how children perceive the functioning of their parents were studied across cases for frequency and plausible causal links were considered and discussed in relation to theory and previous research.

#### METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES CONSIDERED

In qualitative research the issues of reliability and validity are dealt with differently from the way they are handled in quantitative research. Guba and Lincoln (1989) questioned traditional, positivist criteria for constructivist approaches. They proposed four alternative constructs that more accurately reflect the assumptions of the qualitative paradigm and are more relevant in regards to discussing what was considered in developing this study. The four constructs that Guba and Lincoln (1989) proposed, as alternatives to considering reliability and validity are: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

#### Credibility

In many ways the construct of credibility parallels the positivist construct of internal validity. Guba and Lincoln (1989) explained this by saying that, "...instead of

focusing on a presumed 'real' reality 'out there' the focus has moved to establishing the match between the constructed realities of respondents (stakeholders) and those realities as represented by the evaluator and attributed to various stakeholders." (p. 237)

In this study credibility was increased in several ways.

- 1) Data collection was extended over three to four visits "to overcome the effects of misinformation; distortion, or presented 'fronts'; to establish the rapport and build the trust necessary to uncover construction." (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 237)
- 2) What Guba and Lincoln label as "negative case analysis" was used. Each pattern or category identified as common to most children was examined in detail to account for, and explain, those that were different.
- 3) The interview schedule was designed so that any of the researcher's preconceptions would not be revealed to children and that they would be equally comfortable in discussing both parents. This interview schedule was thoroughly reviewed by an expert.
- 4) Participant checks were developed. These included checking perceptions with the child as the interview proceeded, conducting follow-up interviews on a continuous basis to clarify data inconsistencies and misunderstandings and by requesting that each child read the transcript of the interview to check for accuracy. Children took the task of reading transcripts very seriously, sometimes identifying errors in spelling of names. Younger children had more difficulty with this task and the researcher generally read the transcript to them, stopping after every page, and instructed the child on how to signal the researcher if he or she heard something that was not recorded correctly. Children did not note



errors in the transcripts, however, they occasionally stopped the researcher to expand on a topic.

5) Credibility of this study was increased by using four sources of data (Yin, 1989; Stake, 1988; Brink, 1989). The sources of evidence provide enough variety to deal with difficulties that sometimes arise if only an interview is used. In explaining the problem with relying exclusively on an interview Schatzman and Strauss (1973) said:

"First any person may be no more able to describe and explain his own action than anyone else's: his vocabulary may be poverty stricken, or his perspective too difficult to comprehend by listening or reading alone (also he may lie or 'put on' the interviewer)." (p. 6)

### Transferability

Transferability is the parallel to external validity or generalizability. Field and Morse (1985) explained "that generalizability is not the purpose of qualitative research but the purpose is to elicit meaning in a given situation and to develop reality-based theory." (p. 122) Best and Kohn (1986) said that "A single case study emphasizes analysis in depth, though it may be fruitful in developing hypotheses to be tested, it is not directed toward broad generalization." (p. 93) In presenting each case in this study much of the detail has been retained in reporting so the reader can transfer whatever is applicable to his or her situation. Guba and Lincoln (1989) explained that:

"Transferability is always relative and depends entirely on the degree to which salient conditions overlap or match." (p. 241)

The multi case analysis leads to more valid "generalizations" or external validity. However, the generalizations must be treated with caution considering the small number of cases and the volunteer aspect of the group. The commonalities identified in this

way can be treated as transferable to "most" children in paternal custody, meeting the same criteria, but prudence must be used in extending generalizations.

### Dependability

Dependability is the parallel to reliability. Reliability is regarded as an assessment of stability "But if the phenomenon can also change and change is central to the growth and confinement of construction - then reliability is useless as a goodness criterion." (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 236) When we examine children's perceptions of their parents' functioning, they are subject to change if the parent changes. The instruments used to collect data are also designed to reflect these changed perceptions. Therefore reliability, as used in the traditional sense, does not apply to this study. However, several measures were taken to increase the dependability of the findings. Deatrick and Faux (1989) and Faux, Walsh and Deatrick (1988) in their discussions of conducting research with children provided a basis for considering dependability issues.

- 1) Situational factors were considered. The data collection was conducted in the comfort of the child's home. A prearrangement was made with the father to have space that was private. The child was involved in deciding to participate in the study and issues such as confidentiality were carefully explained.
- 2) Personal factors were considered. The child was closely observed for fatigue and anxiety. Fatigue did not appear to be a problem as meetings were scheduled at times of convenience to the family and child. The family was also very aware that they could rearrange a meeting with the researcher if the child had other commitments or was tired. In a few instances, children did show

emotion in discussing their families. At these times the researcher always stopped, commented to the child on her observation and asked the child if he or she wanted to continue. In all cases, this appeared to compose the child; the child spoke about the feelings and reassured the researcher that he or she was willing to continue.

3) Administrative factors were considered. All interviews were tape recorded to ensure accuracy. This also provided the researcher with the freedom to interact with the child so the child would not get bored. Notes of observations were made immediately after each meeting with the child.

4) Another factor that was considered was the wording of the interview questions. As mentioned previously these were checked by a psychologist who has had extensive experience with children to ensure the wording was appropriate for the cognitive level of children between eight and fourteen years old. If children cannot understand a question, their responses are not dependable.

### Confirmability

The fourth construct identified by Guba and Lincoln (1989) has to do with confirmability.

"This means that data can be tracked to their sources, and that the logic used to assemble the interpretation into structurally coherent and corroborating wholes is both explicit and implicit in the narrative of the case study." (p. 243)

The construct of confirmability is particularly important regarding how the case is reported. Stake (1988) compared the researcher's reporting to that of an "author of TV documentary or a biographer telling a story of one's person's life; drawing some

conclusions, yet leaving room for readers or listeners to make up their own minds." (p. 255) Yin (1989) explained that "each report should still contain enough data so the reader of the report can draw independent conclusions about the case study." (p. 99) Cohen and Manion (1989), in reviewing the advantages of the case study suggested that the report should "form an archive of descriptive material sufficiently rich to admit subsequent reinterpretation." (p. 150)

In the following chapter, which discusses the findings, an attempt has been made to be detailed in what was discovered about each child. Supportive data are also included in the Appendixes. The researcher has attempted to integrate all sources of data to come to some conclusions concerning each case, however, does not purport this to be "truth". The researcher understands that "the user will probably, like the judge in court, study an array of available examples and pick the one that most closely approximates his own situation." (Kennedy, 1979, p. 676)

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### INDIVIDUAL CASE ANALYSIS

#### INTRODUCTION

The overall goal of this research project was to determine how paternal custody children view the functioning of the custodial and noncustodial parent. The purpose of the research was to describe and explain. Description centered around the documentation of how the paternal custody child perceives his custodial and noncustodial parent's ability to care for him or her. The explanatory aspect of the research revolved around identifying causal networks that may shape his or her perceptions (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 78). Focus was on factors that have been identified in the literature as, perhaps, being important in affecting children's perceptions. Such factors as the child's age, sex and personality, motivation of the father to gain custody and post divorce family functioning were considered. Each child was studied in his or her own uniqueness and the total group was studied to distinguish salient themes, patterns and categories in the collective participants meaning structure.

In the following section each individual case will be presented with a description of the child and post divorce family, using information gleaned from fathers' responses to the questionnaires, child interviews, and the Kinetic Family Drawing. Identities and location of residence have been altered. The analysis of the child's perceptions of parental functioning is presented within the framework of the Bricklin Perceptual Scales integrating into it interview data, verbal and nonverbal responses to the Bricklin Perceptual Scales and information presented through the Kinetic Family Drawing.

Competence, supportiveness, follow-up consistency and admirable traits of the custodial and noncustodial parent were the four areas of primary interest, in terms of the child's perception. The child's perceptions relating to competence of the parent were judged as relating to how capable, able or fit the parent is in meeting the child's everyday needs and in helping the child meet his or her everyday responsibilities, in being able to deal with others and in being able to communicate. Supportiveness was judged to be an ability to provide understanding, security, confidence and a feeling of being loved. Follow-up consistency was related to enforcement of homework, chores, bedtime limits and other areas related to discipline and rules. Admirable traits, as perceived by the child were looked at in three areas - trustworthiness, attitude to and relationship with others and personal attributes.

#### INDIVIDUAL CASE ANALYSIS.

##### CASE #1 PATRICK BROWN

Description of child and post separation family.

Patrick is a polite, attractive, well-groomed, seemingly confident, fourteen year old, grade nine student. His report card, which his father proudly showed the researcher at their first meeting, suggested that in terms of academic achievement his performance is excellent. Patrick said that he "doesn't really like classes" but just likes socializing with his friends and suggested that most of the people in his class are his friends. He was able to express himself well and although he seemed very capable in analytically assessing the negative and positive functioning of his parents, his mood often seemed to have undertones of anger.

Patrick described his family as consisting of his Mom, Dad, his nine year old

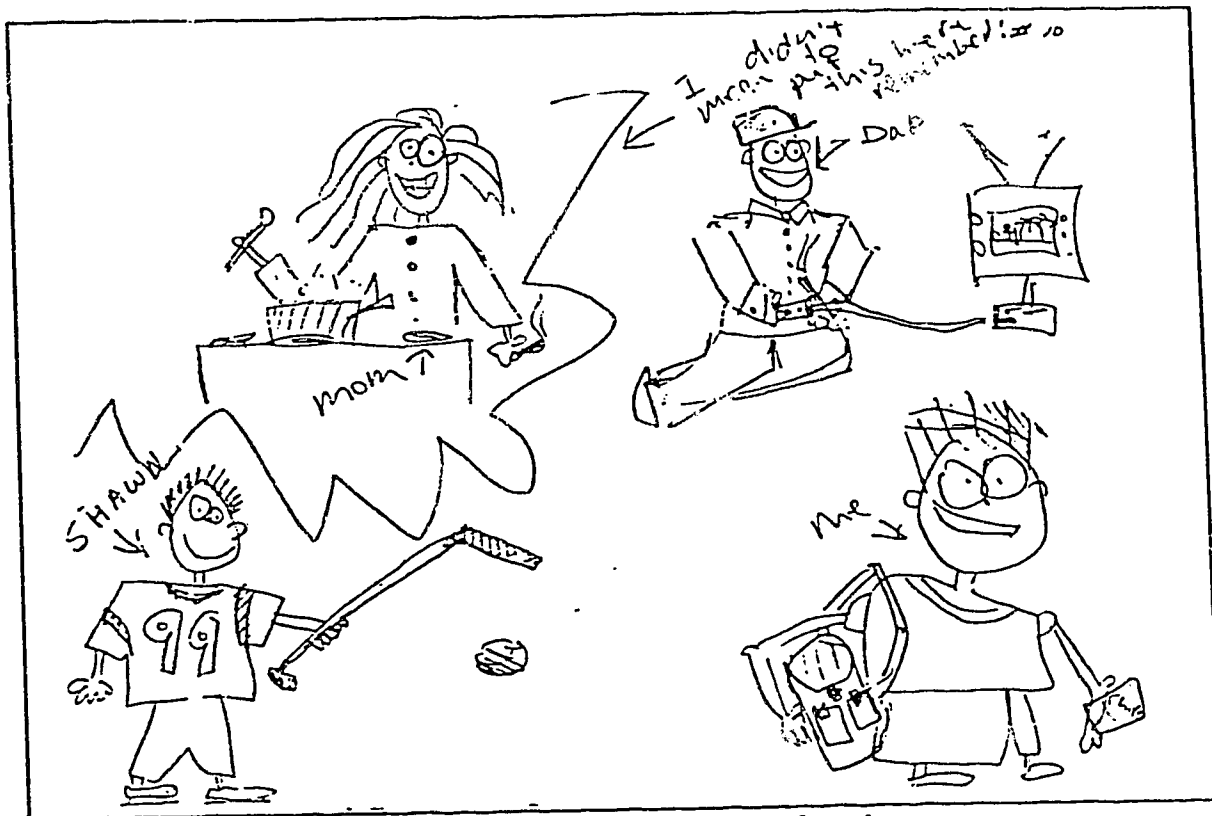


Figure #1 - Patrick's family drawing

brother Shawn and himself. Dad is a forty-five year old school teacher. Patrick described his mother as "thirty-five or thirty-eight years old". She is also a school teacher, lives in a town several hours from their home and has a "boyfriend". Mr. Brown indicated that he had been married to Patrick and Shawn's mother for fourteen years and four years ago they separated. He said that his wife became unhappy and wanted to be free to pursue her own life and career. This decision seems to continue to bring emotional distress to Mr. Brown and was evident at our first meeting when he brought out photo albums and talked about their life as an intact family. Mr. Brown sees himself as having been the primary caretaker before the separation and as doing "extremely well" now in functioning as a parent. Patrick sees his parents as having cared for him equally before the divorce. "They did the same but they did it in different

ways is what I'm trying to tell you"

Mr. Brown has had interim custody, as awarded by the courts, since the initial separation and because he actively sought custody can be described as a "seeker". Patrick feels custody was given to his father for financial reasons as his mother, at the time of the separation, was a University student.

The children see their mother every second weekend when she picks them up and returns them to her home. Patrick said that he is able to phone his mother whenever he feels it is necessary. Mr. Brown indicated that he encourages his sons to see their mother because "she is their mother." Although Mr. Brown said that he encourages his son's relationship with their mother, Patrick seems angry at what he perceives as his father's attempts to curtail or interfere with access to his mother. He cited an incident where Mr. Brown made plans to take his sons to a hockey game on a weekend when they were to go with their mother.

Overall, Patrick is not totally satisfied with the access arrangement. He said:

"Now, I'd like to spend more time with my Mom. It's not like I'd like to spend more time with my Mom than my Dad. It's just like now I spend once every... like every odd weekend or whatever, and I don't like that. I just wish it could be more equal... but it just can't work that way cuz they're at different places that are quite far away."

Patrick stressed that he would like to spend more time with his mother because he is more like her in interests and in the way they think.

"We have the same interests. She likes mythology, so do I. She likes art, so do I. She likes sculpture, so do I."

He also indicated that, although his Mom and Dad are equally capable of caring for him and his brother, there are further reasons for his Mom to be involved more extensively in his future care.

"But I think my Mom has had more experience, not because, like, she's had



other children. It's just that she was a mother like for ten years before they broke up so she sort of knows us better and knows what to do better than my Dad. So I guess it would be helpful to us in the future if Mom took care of us, but, I don't know, my Dad's not doing a bad job. He's doing quite a good job but I think my Mom has more experience in these kinds of matters."

In completing his drawing (Figure 1) of his family, Patrick said that he tried to draw their "personalities" because he likes everyone's personality but explained that he did not draw their interactions, when he drew a line around Mom with a note saying, "I didn't mean to put this here, remember?" Perhaps interactions are a problem for Patrick, particularly those between his mother and father as may be suggested by his father's turned back to his mother in his drawing suggesting poor communication between the two. This lack of communication in the post separation relationship of his parents seems, also, to anger Patrick although he tries to be understanding. He sees his mother as quite "civil" towards his Dad. He feels that his Dad is "probably going to hold a grudge forever now". He said

"I think he's pretty immature about that. I'm sure it's hard for him. I'm sure that he's mad at her. He should at least start... not start again, but not forgive because it's no one's fault. Not start over, but just to be more civil. I wish he could release all his anger so they can just be normal. They don't have to be totally loving. They don't have to like each other a lot but just so they don't... not as strangers but as acquaintances. Maybe they can be like that. I hope so."

Although Patrick seems to see his mother as more "mature" in the post separation relationship, he also indicated that he did not want to hear any of her criticism of his father.

Patrick indicated that female family and friends have tried to be helpful but suggested that as he has grown older, he has become quite resentful about being treated differently. In describing his aunt, he said that she would bake things for us and say, "Oh, you need cookies and everything." He went on to say angrily: "As if my

Dad can't make them himself! Well, I doubt if he can, but he can go out and buy them." In Patrick's case it seems that the support of others makes him feel "alienated", as he terms it, but at the same time underlines his father's competence in providing things that may be considered in a woman's domain.

#### Perception of custodial father's functioning.

Patrick perceives his father as someone who makes his children a priority, suggesting that he often overextends himself by not only doing the cooking but also bringing the food to him and his brother, doing most of the cleaning and, unquestioningly, dropping whatever he is doing to attend to their medical, social, or academic needs. He sees his Dad as particularly supportive in instilling confidence and said, "He always says, you can do everything." Similarly, Mr. Brown seems to do well in helping Patrick deal with new situations and feel secure at times of difficulty by being patient in providing help and willingness to listen. "Overall kindness" is a trait that Patrick attributes to his Dad saying "if he heard about you, he would drop things at the drop of a pin if you asked him to." Patrick views his father as someone who generally cares about people, is able to deal with them well and enjoys their company but feels that he sometimes sacrifices his time with people because he "worries about us too".

Patrick's projection of his father as sacrificing was paralleled by his portrayal of a father who is permissive about rules and discipline. This seems to worry Patrick. He feels that, perhaps, there are too few rules but he said that,

"It's not like he doesn't care. It's just that he thinks it's O.K. He cares if he thinks its bad but a lot of things he doesn't see anything bad with, like staying up and watching T.V. He says if you wake up it's O.K."

Patrick feels that the rules are lax because his father did not have this responsibility

before the separation.

"Like he's becoming more strict. He's becoming... he's strengthening his rules and Mom, she stayed the same."

As Patrick sees it, his father is someone who generally hides his emotions but his anger can be very cutting and hurting. Patrick feels that his Dad does "an excellent job" of making him feel loved until he gets angry and then, he said, "when he's mad you feel, sort of, not very good." Mr. Brown seems to have difficulty accepting criticism and arguing constructively, often resorting to "I do all these things for you and it's not fair for you to get mad at me all the time." Not only does Mr. Brown appear to show anger, which Patrick does not totally understand, but Patrick finds that his father has difficulty in helping him deal with and attend to his emotional needs. He seems to have particular difficulty in dealing with anger, saying, "He doesn't do well at all because if I get angry, he'll get angry too." Despite the anger and what Patrick perceives as his father's tendency to "get depressed" Patrick sees his father as being in a good mood more than "half the time" and as someone who likes to joke and laugh a lot.

Concerning communication, Patrick views his Dad as very capable in discussing factual information but as having more difficulty in discussing things such as sex and matters of more emotional or personal nature, saying, "I don't know if it's just my feelings but he doesn't understand lots of today's things." When he was asked to give some examples, Patrick said:

"He can't really understand that a guy and a girl can go to a movie without being boyfriend and girlfriend. He can't really understand that. He can't really understand that you have to look nice to make an impression... Things like that, not major things but minor things. I think my Mom understands those things better."

Patrick suggested repeatedly that his mother understands those things more because,

first, she is more like him, and, second, a fact that he emphasized in all interviews, that she is younger.

Overall, Patrick seems to see his father as sacrificing, permissive, and supportive, putting his sons' needs above all. He also projected his father as having difficulty dealing with emotional and personal matters.

#### Perceptions of noncustodial mother's functioning.

The weekends that Patrick spends with his mother are very special, from his perspective. He said that she plans special meals and special activities. He finds her to be very competent about providing for his brother's and his physical needs. Patrick suggested that his mother promotes a "structured" environment that encourages independence. Patrick suggested that his mother's decisions, concerning their care, are based on "thinking". If meals are missed the children must make their own and if messes are made, they must clean them up. Patrick said:

"I like the fact that you can have fun but when it's time to do something, you do it..." "My Mom's rules will always be in my heart as the major ones and my brother will probably be more like my Dad than my Mom."

Patrick appears to admire his mother because "she likes to take care of herself and look nice." One of Patrick's strongest messages related to his need to spend more time with his mother because she understands him, attributing this to her age and to the fact, as he put it, "I'm much more like my Mom." He said, "I usually stick around my Mom and everything cuz she's younger and she's more fun," and suggested that he likes shopping with her for "neat, snazzy things," going to movies, almost anything, "Except I don't like going out and doing things I would usually do with my friends, with her." Patrick described his mother as "more in tune" with his life thus being understand-

ing and comfortable to talk to. He seems to see her traits of being in a good mood about "eighty to seventy-five percent of the time", her ability to laugh and joke and her age, as making her very approachable. He also finds that she is clear in her communication, is assertive, is "emotionally open", understands "today's problems" and is able to key into his feelings because of their similarity. Patrick generally sees his mother as able to argue constructively and maintain her temper.

Although Patrick feels comfortable in communicating with his mother and finds that she is easily able to recognize his feelings, he also suggested that at times she is not as emotionally supportive as he would wish her to be and finds her reactions quite confusing. Patrick gave his mother a low rating on the Bricklin Perceptual Scales regarding the question of how well she is able to make him feel loved. He also replied:

"She does O.K. but sometimes she's too harsh like in the way she talks or when she gets mad, sometimes she's pretty mean. She doesn't really know what she's saying until afterwards so she's not really great."

Caution was projected about how Patrick views his mother in her interpersonal relationships that involve him. For example, he suggested that she might prefer that he not know her friends as she would be jealous if they became more friendly with him. Despite Patrick's perception that his mother is able to recognize his feelings, he suggested that she has difficulty in letting him express his emotions, may make fun of his fears and is not always a patient listener because "she sort of tries to let you explain it but she does it overbearingly."

Overall, Patrick sees his mother as providing a "structured" environment that is comfortable to him and which provides more independence for the children. He sees her as a very special person whom he relates to well because of her age, traits and personality, which he recognizes as similar to his. He finds her "in tune with today's

problems" and a capable communicator on most issues. Patrick seems to find his mother most lacking in the area of providing emotional support in regards to making him feel loved and secure.

### Conclusions.

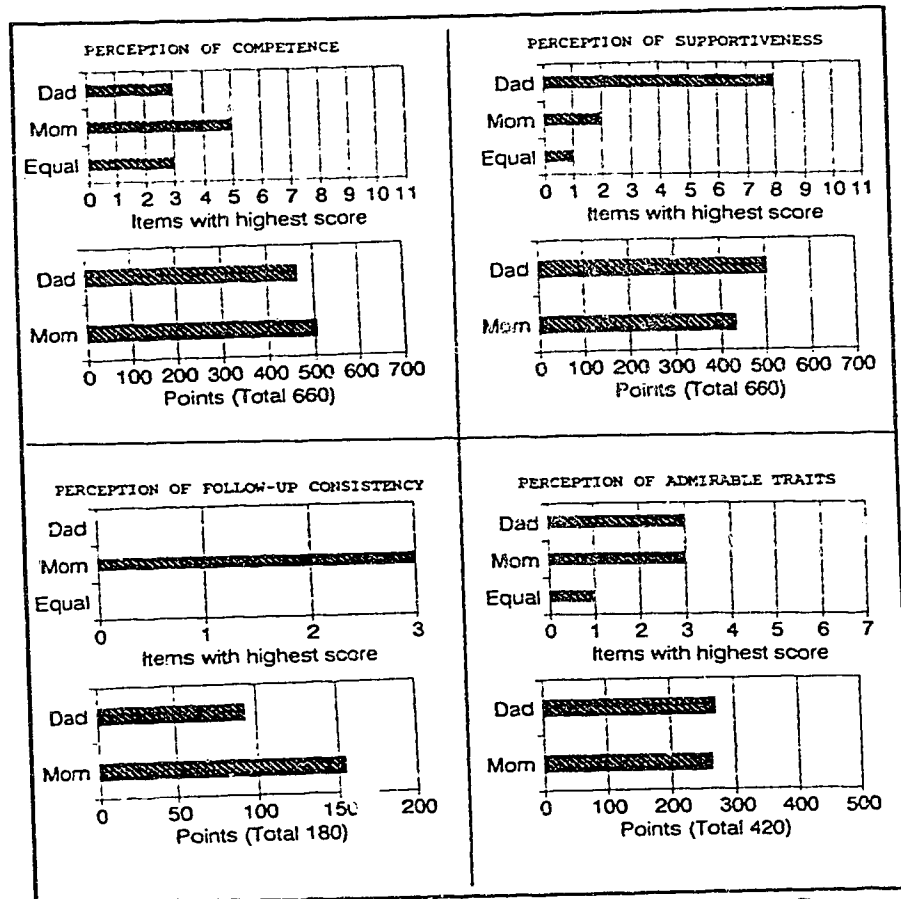


Figure #2 - Patrick's Bricklin Perceptual Scale Scores

Overall, on the Bricklin Perceptual Scales, Patrick rated his parents as equal and capable in providing for his care but with each parent possessing strengths and weaknesses in different areas. This was consistent with interview data and information from the Kinetic Family Drawing. Figure 2 shows that Patrick rated his mother as more competent and this was particularly in terms of communication skills. In the area of

supportiveness, he rated his father's abilities as better. Patrick's responses suggested that his mother provides the most structure or follow-up consistency. Both parents are seen to have equal admirable traits, although in different areas. Patrick's overall assessment of the functioning of his parents is consistent with previous research (Drill, 1987) that suggested that when children live with their fathers, there are no significant variations between the attitudes towards each parent.

Patrick's perceptions of both his parents seem guided by his age, in that, he is able to look at their strengths and weaknesses. Kurdek and Siesky (1980) found that older children are more able to look at positive and negative qualities of their parents. Although Patrick is able to see the positive caring qualities of his father, his positive perceptions seem subdued by his Dad's emotional functioning and lack of experience in certain domains. However, his perception that others may view his father as not being able to provide in certain areas may heighten his perception of his father's competence. Patrick's perceptions of his noncustodial mother, and his continuous request for more time with her, seem related to her younger age and personality, which he sees as similar to his. As an adolescent, Patrick seems to find both factors important in providing him with a parent who is more understanding of issues that are of significance to him such as sex, dating and appearance. For Patrick, age of and personality of his parent seem more vital than relating to the same sex parent. Patrick's perceptions of his mother, in terms of follow-up consistency seem affected by her pre separation role. He views her parenting strategies, which contribute to a "structured environment", to be preferable. Patrick also seems to perceive that she plans their time together to be "special".

The factors that seem to have emerged as having the greatest impact on

Patrick's perceptions of his custodial and noncustodial parents are:

- 1) age of the noncustodial parent,
- 2) personality of the noncustodial parent,
- 3) child's age,
- 4) pre separation care,
- 5) emotional functioning of parents.
- 6) emotional functioning of child - anger re access, conflict
- 7) reaction of others
- 8) environment, and
- 9) parenting strategies.

#### CASE #2 SHAWN BROWN

Description of child and post separation family.

Shawn, Patrick's nine year old brother, is attractive and friendly. He is in grade four and is also an excellent student. Shawn spoke only of one friend and an older cousin with whom he likes to spend time. His responses to the interview questions tended to be limited and he often did not respond verbally to the questions of the Bricklin Perceptual Scales. Overall, he responded more often and more enthusiastically to questions related to his mother than his father.

There was a sense of sadness as Shawn spoke about the disintegrated family and his feelings of being torn when leaving either parent's house. He said, "It's hard sometimes, it's sad, you sort of get hurt... You don't really want to go and you do want to go." It seems that the separation of his parents has contributed to feelings of instability and, perhaps, a poor self concept as may be suggested by Shawn's Kinetic



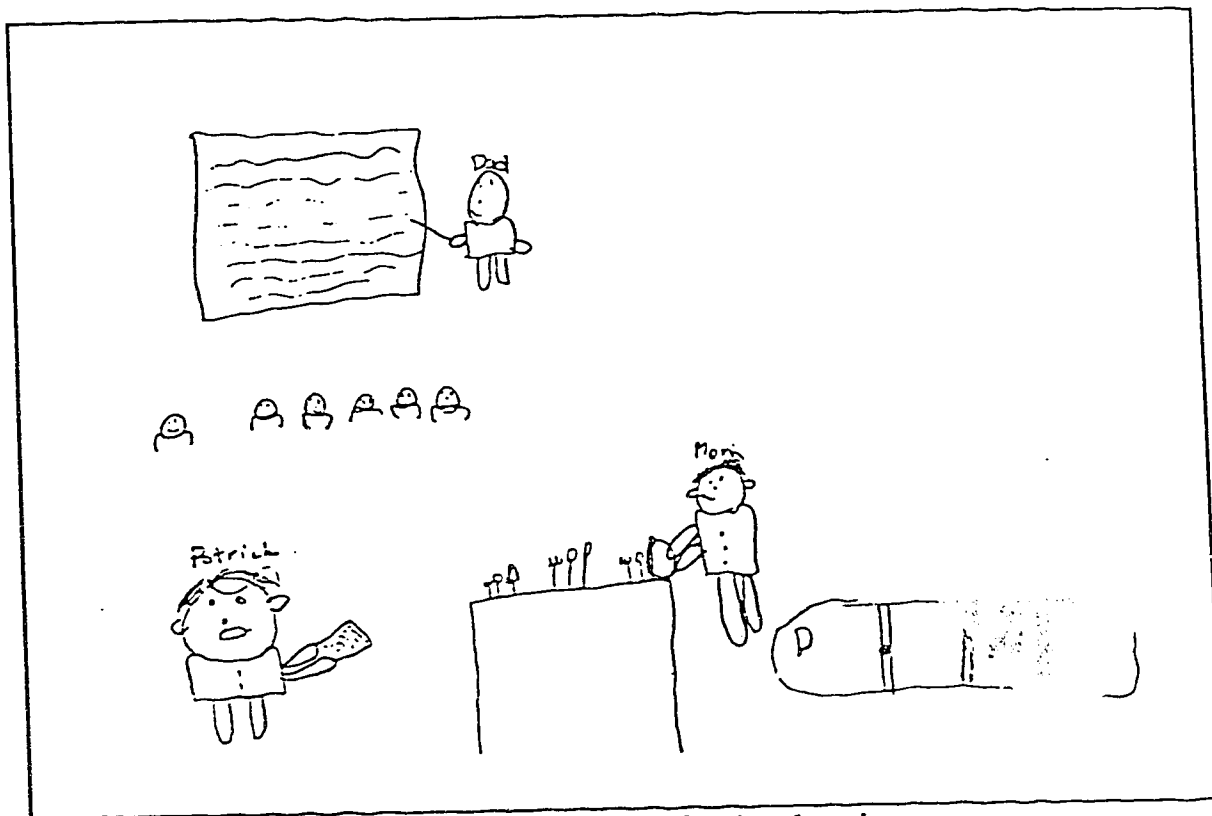


Figure #3 - Shawn's family drawing

Family Drawing (Figure 3) where he drew himself small, encapsulated and with no feet (Knoff, 1985).

Shawn, in drawing his family, first identified the person setting the table as Dad then erased the name and changed it to Mom; he then drew Dad teaching school. Upon completion of his picture, when he was asked if he would change anything about his family drawing if he could, he said, "That we're all doing something together instead of apart." Shawn's sense of loss of his intact family seemed at the forefront of many of his reactions. He spoke of a time when both parents attended concerts and soccer games and went on to say, "now sometimes at concerts my Mom will come but sometimes not." Near the end of our interview Shawn suggested that an important question to ask other children would be, "If their Mom and Dad were together would

they feel the same as they did before, or different?" When he was asked as to what his response would be, he said:

"Happier. They wouldn't fight and they'd do stuff for us together and they'd take us places together and they'd help us together."

Shawn said that now his parents sometimes "don't want to see each other and sometimes they sort of talk," but unlike his older brother, he did not seem involved in his parent's denigration of each other.

Before the separation, according to Shawn, his parents were quite traditional, with his mother attending to household tasks and his father playing with them. He mumbled that now they were "both" good at caring for him. Shawn suggested that he is most like his Dad. When he was asked in what ways, he said "hardness", which he explained as "well, we don't sort of... we sort of get mad at the person and start screaming at the person and stuff." In his picture (Figure 3) he drew himself like Dad with the hair omitted. This can symbolize "low physical vigour" (Burns & Kaufman, 1972).

Shawn sees his grandparents and other members of his Dad's family as involved in his care and taking interest in him particularly when he is sick, and in attending special concerts.

#### Perception of custodial father's functioning.

Shawn perceives his father as a "good teacher" who cares about and enjoys people, is trustworthy in word and deed and stays in a good mood "most of the time". Like his brother, Patrick, Shawn sees him as a father who puts his children's interests above everything else. Shawn said, "He helps me a lot and he's a good Dad." Continuing his description of his father he said:

"He likes to do stuff with us. He takes me to lots of places that I want to go at times when we're supposed to do something else."

Shawn described his father as doing such things as attending parent teacher meetings, concerts, soccer games and going public skating and bowling with him. However, he said that if he could, he would make his Dad younger so, "he'd play with me more."

Mr. Brown, according to Shawn, has no difficulty in meeting all his children's physical needs. Like Patrick, Shawn portrayed his father as someone who does all the cooking and cleaning, drives him to school and provides care, or arranges with his family to care for Shawn when he is sick. He perceives his Dad as permissive, saying that since the separation Dad's rules are "more easier rules". Shawn suggested that although there are household rules about leaving things lying around, his Dad only enforces them "sometimes". In the area of homework or providing information, he sees his father as a good resource but finds Dad will often refer him to his older brother. Shawn's responses suggested that he views his Dad's communication skills as quite average.

From Shawn's point of view, Mr. Brown is a father who instills confidence, is generally understanding and provides a sense of security. However, like Patrick, he also sees him as someone who gets angry easily, cannot accept criticism and sometimes lacks patience. Tied into his Dad's anger is his perception that Dad has difficulty in helping him cope with his own anger.

Overall, Shawn's perceptions of his father tend to be consistent with those of Patrick, although generally presented more positively. This may be reflective of his age (Bricklin, 1990). He also sees his father as someone who gives his children priority in attending to their needs but he wishes that Dad was younger and more energetic for play. Shawn views his Dad as permissive. From Shawn's perception, Mr. Brown has

difficulty controlling his anger and, in turn, some difficulty in helping him calm down when he is angry.

#### Perception of noncustodial mother's functioning.

In describing his mother, Shawn said, "She always has time for you" but suggested that he would "like her to have more time to play". When he is with his mother she entertains him by taking him to, and participating with him in, different sporting activities. Shawn said that his Mom does all the cooking and cleaning and indicated that she does very well in caring for his medical needs and handling emergencies. In the area of following up on rules, he said that his Mom does "really good!" and went on to say:

"If she asks you to do stuff and if you don't do it, she starts getting mad but after awhile it gets pretty nice."

Shawn perceives his mother as a good, clear communicator who is helpful in providing information in different areas including sex. He views her as "pretty good" about being assertive, arguing constructively and accepting criticism. She maintains a positive mood "most of the time", has good interpersonal skills, and generally enjoys people, "sometimes" helping them. Shawn views his mother as trustworthy in caring for his possessions and said she is "O.K." in keeping promises.

The responses that Shawn gave suggested that his mother does very well in showing him that she loves him, can recognize when he is emotionally needy, is patient, provides security and instills confidence. Shawn's verbal and nonverbal responses suggested that his mother gives him a certain strength and he projected a sense of caring for, and pride in, her "long hair" and how,

"She has to teach lots of Math but she can hang in there and she's a good

teacher and the school kids like her."

Overall, Shawn painted a picture of a parent who meets his needs in all respects and that he admires and cares about.

### Conclusions.

Shawn appears to view both of his parents as good parents who are capable of meeting his needs and seems proud of their professional accomplishments. However, Figure 4 which portrays his nonverbal rating of his parents on the Bricklin Perceptual Scales suggests that he may, unconsciously, view his mother as the stronger parent. In Figure 3 Shawn drew his mother largest, perhaps, signifying, again, that he sees her as stronger and more powerful.

Shawn shows signs of sadness, lack of security and feelings of being torn and described a longing for the reconciliation of his parents. These symptoms have been described by Wallerstein and Kelly (1976) as quite typical of children in the first year after divorce. One half the children in their study continued to be symptomatic one year later. In Shawn's case where the finality of divorce has not occurred, despite the fact the separation has existed for four years, the symptoms may continue. Drill (1987) whose research involved young adults suggested that children who show disparity in their attitudes to each parent tend to be more depressed than children who rate both parents equally. Although Shawn is much younger than those involved in Drill's study, this may explain some of Shawn's assessment of the functioning of his parents.

Shawn describes himself as being like his Dad in that they both are "hard", getting "mad at the person and start screaming and stuff". It seems that Shawn has identified with his father in terms of their emotional difficulties that likely relate to the fact

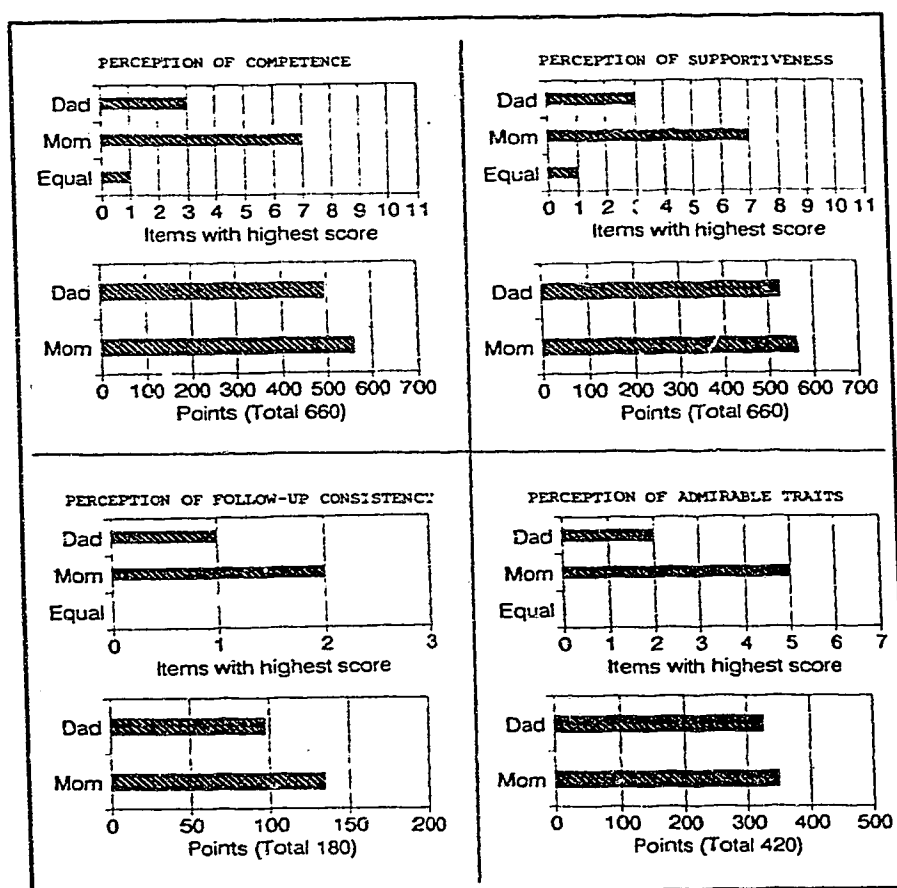


Figure #4 - Shawn's Bricklin Perceptual Scale Scores

that neither has accepted the finality of the separation. Dad and Shawn both may be stuck at the same stage of mourning, "pining and yearning for the lost person" (Jacobson & Jacobson, 1987). Previous research has suggested that parental adjustment affects childrearing practices and quality of life, with adjustment of the child often related to adjustment of the parent (Lowery, 1985; Guidbaldi & Perry, 1985; Berger, 1983; Wallerstein, 1987; Colletta, 1979; Fishel, 1987). Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) wrote that, "It is often true that an unhappy adult finds it hard to be a nurturing parent for unhappiness can deplete the adult's capacity to provide the care and understanding that children need." (p. 11) Shawn's higher rating of his mother on the Bricklin Perceptual Scales, his more energetic responses regarding her and the fact that

he replaced Dad with Mom in his drawing and drew himself closest to Mom suggest that he needs more nurturing from her.

In summary, Shawn appears to identify with his father in terms of their emotional difficulties and, therefore, may see that his father and he have the same weaknesses. Shawn's perceptions of his parents' functioning, seeing his mother as the stronger parent, seem to be mediated by his emotional functioning that is intertwined, and quite likely affected by, the emotional functioning of his father.

The factors that seem to have emerged as having the greatest impact on Shawn's perceptions of his custodial and noncustodial parent are:

- 1) child's emotional functioning - perception of loss
- 2) parents' emotional functioning
- 3) parent's profession and
- 4) age of custodial parent.

### CASE #3 MATTHEW NOLAN

Description of child and post divorce family.

Quiet and shy is how Matthew could be described at our initial meeting but as rapport developed he became very expressive. He often was slow in responding to questions, appearing to be very conscientious about explaining himself. Several qualities emerged in our meetings. First Matthew seems to have a good sense of humour, reflected often by the twinkle in his eye, he has a gentleness about him and is very polite, thanking me for coming at the end of each of our meetings. Matthew is an only child, eight years old, in grade three, likes school and appears to have several friends, quickly naming eight boys as his friends. He said, "I'd hurt their feelings if I

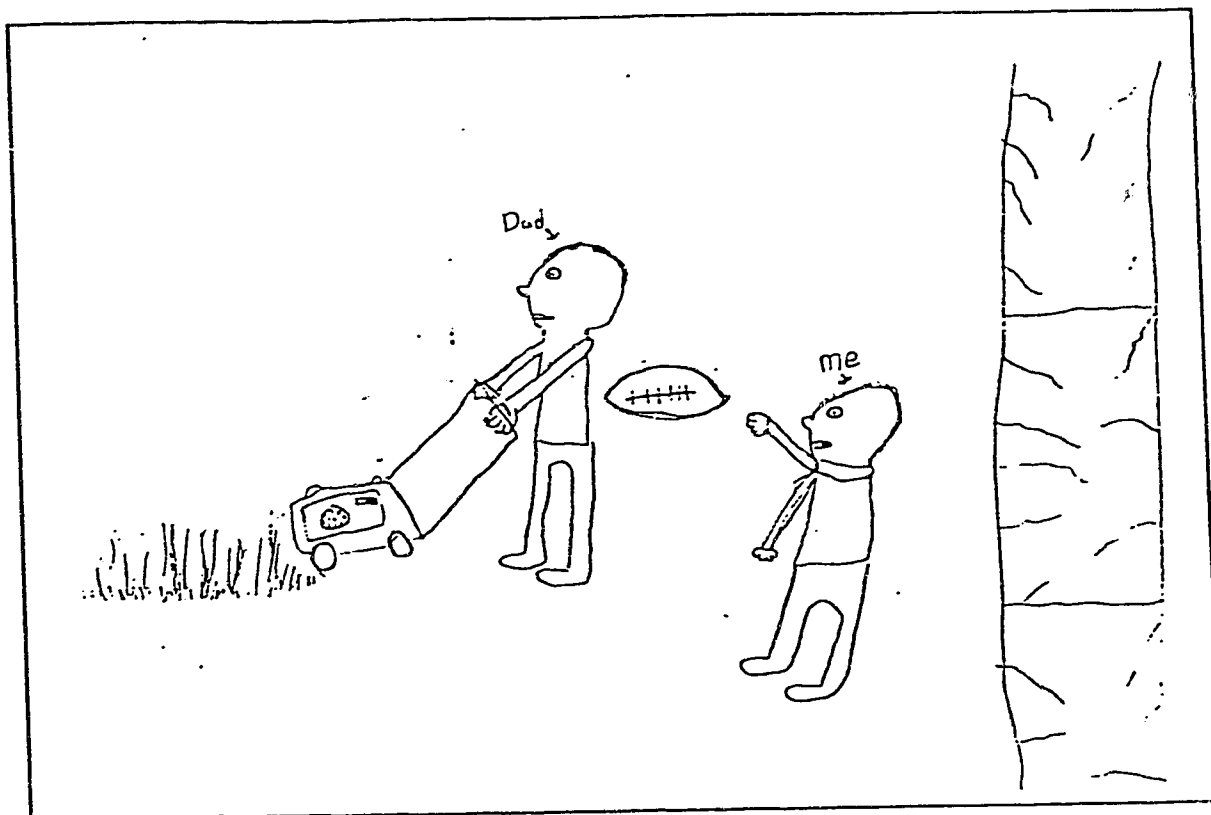


Figure #5 - Matthew's family drawing

said who was my best friend." Matthew described himself as being like "both" of his parents.

Matthew's father is thirty years old and is employed as a bus driver. His mother remarried and has a new job as a manager of a food outlet. Mr. Nolan reported that he was married to Matthew's mother for four years and that four years have passed since the divorce. He said that before the divorce both he and his wife shared equally in Matthew's care and Matthew agreed with this. Mr. Nolan rated himself as doing "very well" as a parent.

For the first three years after the divorce Mr. Nolan shared Matthew's custody with his wife. The custodial arrangement was such that each parent cared for Matthew for two month intervals, being responsible in that time for making all decisions about



his care. Visitation was arranged with the noncustodial parent during the two month period. Mr. Nolan said that his exwife actively pursued custody through the courts. He said that then he was concerned about his right to see his son and "especially my son's right to see both his parents". As a final resort, Mr. Nolan said that he asked for sole custody because of his exwife's endless attempts to remove Matthew from the province. The judge's decision was that Matthew would have a more stable life with his father and thus awarded sole custody to Mr. Nolan. Matthew has now been living with his father for one year.

Concerning custody, Matthew was unsure how that was decided but when he was asked how he felt about the decision he painfully replied, "Well... not really happy because I wanted to see my Mom. I'm getting used to it." Although moving back and forth, in his opinion, was disruptive, Matthew said, "Well I said to my Dad that I want to keep it the way it is, going back and forth and seeing both of you the equal amount of time." He explained, "Cuz your mother might be missing you and if you're with your Mom, it might be the same with your Dad, he might be missing you. Whoever you're not living with and not seeing the most, it probably would be that way too."

When Matthew was drawing his family (Figure 5) he asked if he should include his mother and when he was informed that it was his decision, he chose not to. Later when asked why he had decided not to include her, he said, "because she usually wasn't out there", referring to when they were out in the yard.

At the time of the first meeting Matthew had visited with his mother only on two weekends in the previous year because she had been living outside the province. By the time of the second meeting, his mother had returned and phoned him. Two months later, it appeared that his mother had returned to stay. Matthew said that he had spent

a "couple of weeks" with her at Christmas and was looking forward to a planned visit for his birthday.

Matthew perceives his parents' relationship as having improved. He said that previously they had argued over spending time with him. He sounded stronger and relieved as he talked about the friendly encounter he had witnessed between his father and mother's new husband and said:

"After Jack (mother's husband) had eye surgery, my Dad asked him how he was doing so I guess they made up again... It's a better idea than fighting."

Matthew's father seems to be strongly supported by his own mother. Matthew spoke about his grandmother babysitting when his Dad is at work, cooking on those occasions, helping with homework and attending concerts.

#### Perception of custodial father's functioning.

Matthew's description of his father was conveyed with a deep sense of caring and admiration and a confidence of feeling loved by his father as he explained, "he's good at that." As he spoke of his father's abilities in meeting his daily physical needs he portrayed a man who is very capable and responsible. Mr. Nolan has rearranged his work schedule so that he is at home at lunch and after school. Although this means that he leaves early in the morning before Matthew goes to school, supervision for Matthew has been arranged with the basement tenant. If Mr. Nolan happens to be at home in the morning, he will often walk Matthew to school and if it is storming, he will pick him up after school. Matthew advised that his Dad cooks all the meals when the two of them are together. Mr. Nolan does most of the cleaning but Matthew usually helps him, particularly with vacuuming and sweeping. Regarding medical care or handling emergencies, Matthew views his Dad as very capable. He said:

"If it was my Dad's day... well it wouldn't really matter if it was his day off or not, he might sometimes stay home and take care of me and I would stay in bed most of the day."

When speaking of helping with difficult homework, Matthew said, "He's real well at that" and suggested that not only does he have the knowledge but also the patience. He sees his father as "pretty good" about ensuring that his homework is completed. As far as ensuring that chores are properly done, he said:

"He's very good at that because if he says for me to vacuum the rugs and my favourite T.V. show is on or I want to do something that I was planning after school, I might not always do a good job and he would always check to see that I do a good job."

Matthew said that his father is also good at enforcing bedtime limits. If rules are not obeyed, Matthew said that Dad will "just remind me to do it". He explained:

"I guess he's a little stricter... Yeah, because before he might let me get away with it but now he wouldn't."

In describing the activities that he does with his Dad, Matthew emphasized their similar interests. This, essentially, is what he tried to picture in his family drawing (Figure #5), explaining that they both like mowing and football. He explained that he helps his Dad with the mowing and other chores such as gardening, cleaning the garage and repairing a bicycle. He seemed to be saying that not only do they enjoy working together but they enjoy playing together. He said:

"I like, after lunch, we usually play soccer in the backyard and I like that. I like playing football with my Dad. Sometimes afterwards we go to the park and I bring my baseball and I hit the ball."

Matthew and his Dad work and play together and Mr. Nolan also seems to have impressed upon Matthew the importance of relaxation. Matthew explained that he will say, "It's relaxing time. Can you go get a book?" and he went on to say:

"We can't always be on the go so I usually relax. I'll read a book, we might play a game or... I don't know all sorts of things."

Mr. Nolan has made Matthew understand that sometimes the things that they do will be things that Matthew especially likes and at times it will be things that Mr. Nolan chooses.

Matthew's father's involvement and assistance with his activities seem to instill a certain confidence in Matthew. From Matthew's description and responses to the Bricklin Perceptual Scales, Matthew's father seems to do very well in being understanding and making him feel secure. The only area where Matthew gave his father an average rating was in the area of being a patient listener saying that he does "pretty well". Overall, Mr. Nolan seems to provide an excellent atmosphere for communicating. Matthew explained that he finds his father approachable in discussing interpersonal problems, gaining information or expressing personal concerns. He generally perceives his Dad as having good communication skills and above average in maintaining a good mood but perceives him as having great difficulty in arguing constructively and said, "If someone says something about him, he'd get real steamed."

Some traits that Matthew admires about his Dad are his trustworthiness and his altruism. In discussing his willingness to help others he said:

"He's excellent at that. Our next door neighbour, Tim, he didn't really need the help but my Dad wanted to make it a surprise. We were shovelling the side walk and my Dad said, 'We might as well do Tim's'..."

Matthew's satisfaction with his father was explained in his comment, "I wouldn't change anything about him because I like doing the things my Dad likes and he likes doing the things I like." Matthew seems to perceive and be impressed by his father's fairness.

In describing himself as a future parent he said:

"I'd make rules around the house like my Dad did and I'd say that sometimes we'd do things that I like and sometimes we'd do things that you like."

Overall, Matthew's description of his father portrays a parent who is competent

and supportive. His assessment of him on the Bricklin Perceptual Scales suggests a parent who is, decidedly, quite superior (Bricklin, 1990). Matthew seems to perceive his father's greatest weakness as his temper. His description of Mr. Nofan's parenting style seems to fit with what has been described in the literature as authoritative parenting (Grief, 1985). This is a parenting strategy of warmth, clear setting of rules and regulations and extensive verbal give and take.

#### Perception of noncustodial mother's functioning.

Although Matthew's time with his mother has been limited, he seems secure in the thought that his mother loves him and conveys confidence that she has the ability to care for him well. His perception of her abilities to provide care appears to relate to his experience of living with her while his parents shared custody. Matthew's mother seemed to very competently provide for his physical needs and supervision but Matthew sometimes hinted that more of her attention was directed towards her new partner.

Matthew explained that his mother was good at enforcing homework saying, "she wouldn't let me get away with it," but suggested that she was average in helping solve a school subject problem and being patient in doing so. He also perceived her to do well at enforcing chores and bedtime limits. Her rule regarding going to bed early on school nights, which is also a rule at his father's house, is one Matthew feels that he would like to change. However, when he focused on his future parenting, he thought that it would be an important rule and one that he would implement. Like his father, Matthew's mother would simply remind him if he did not follow the rules.

Matthew vividly described time spent with his mother and, as he did so, there was a sense of enthusiasm and excitement. He said:

"I like going outside in the winter because we usually throw snow at each other. We like drawing pictures together. We like reading books to each other, swimming, and board games."

Matthew seemed pleased that his mother had helped with field trips when he was in Grade One. Even helping with the cleaning was projected as an enjoyable activity that he described as, "I would take my shirt off and I would wet two face cloths and she would put Mr. Clean on and I would put my two feet on the two face cloths and walk and slide my feet around." The relationship Matthew described with his mother and the activities that he shared with her appeared to make him feel secure about their relationship. From his responses to the Bricklin Perceptual Scales, Matthew seems to express that his mother makes him feel confident, secure and is generally understanding. The only area in which he assessed her as merely average was in recognizing his emotional needs.

Communication is an area in which Matthew seems equally comfortable with his mother and father. He also views his mother as informative, approachable, and as generally having good communication skills. His responses suggested that Matthew perceives his mother as having good interpersonal skills, as assertive, good at accepting criticism but, like his father, as having difficulty with arguing constructively. He also suggested that although her mood is good, most of the time, it can be affected by whether or not she has access to him.

From his responses to the Bricklin Perceptual Scales, Matthew appears to perceive his mother as trustworthy in caring for his things but when it comes to keeping promises he said she does "a little O.K. She promises me that I can stay up late on the weekend and then she might not let me."

Matthew's responses to the Bricklin Perceptual Scales and to interview questions

suggest that he views his mother as a very capable parent. Her greatest difficulty is arguing constructively. Some difficulty, from Matthew's perception, appears to relate to ability to maintain a positive mood. These perceptions likely relate to past conflict over his custody and care. Matthew also suggested that his mother may have some difficulties in helping and being patient with homework, recognizing his needs and keeping promises.

### Conclusions.

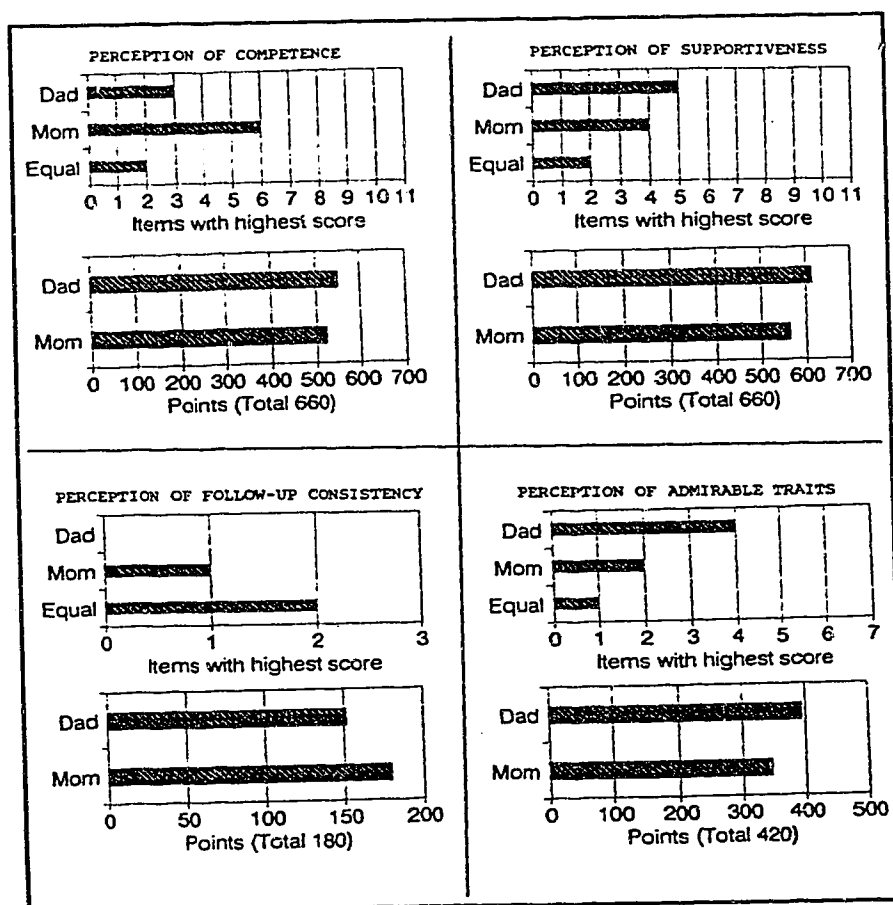


Figure #6 - Matthew's Bricklin Perceptual Scale Scores

Matthew perceives his parents as extremely capable of caring for him. Both parents are rated fairly equally in the four areas of functioning as illustrated by the

total points in each area (Figure 6). Although Matthew, in terms of items, rates his mother as more competent and his father more supportive and having more admirable traits, the difference within each is generally modest. There are, however, some more significant differences in how, according to his responses to the Bricklin Perceptual Scales, he perceives his parents as able to respond to and care for him. More substantial items score differences on the Bricklin Perceptual Scales suggest that Mr. Nolan is the stronger parent in regards to solving a school subject problem, dealing with a bully, recognizing Matthew's emotional needs and keeping promises. Matthew's mother, according to his perceptions, is a more patient listener and is more likely to ensure that homework is done. Both parents appear to have difficulty in arguing constructively.

Although Matthew did not rate his parents as providing identically for his care, he seems to have an all encompassing perception that they both are capable. In describing his parents' abilities he said, "I think it's equal." Matthew, however, according to his responses to the Bricklin Perceptual Scales may perceive his father as slightly more patient in providing for his care. This may relate to his constant emphasis on his father's fairness and their similarities.

Matthew's perception that his parents are both capable of caring for him appears to relate to his experiences with both of them as single parents when they shared custody. His perception of his father as very capable may relate to parenting strategies associated with warmth, fairness and openness. Matthew also seems to identify with his father. This may be in terms of gender and similar interests. Matthew may feel free to regard his mother as a good parent because of his father's attitudes. The primary one is that a child should have access to both parents. Another, which is perhaps



related, is the striving for a less conflictual relationship between himself and his exwife. Although Matthew continues to view his mother as a very capable parent, he seems to perceive her as not always being attentive to all his needs. This may relate to his perception that much of her attention is directed towards her new partner.

Despite some lingering sadness over the new custody situation, Matthew continues to view both his parents as capable of providing for his "best interests". His affection for both parents is illustrated by his responses to a request to describe what he would include in a story about his Dad. He said:

"The first thing I would say is that I really like him a lot. Then if I was writing about my Mom, I would put down that I like her a lot. And I like doing things with both of them, both my Mom and Dad. In the story, they wouldn't know who is who."

The factors that have emerged as having the greatest impact on Matthew's perceptions of his custodial and noncustodial parents are:

- 1) post divorce experiences with each parent as a single parent,
- 2) father's parenting strategies - "authoritative" parenting,
- 3) gender and interests of custodial parent,
- 4) custodial parent's attitudes regarding access and conflict
- 5) noncustodial parent's new family responsibilities, and
- 6) environment created by parents.

#### CASE #4 JACKIE LAROCHE

Description of child and post divorce family.

Petite, attractive, friendly, yet shy, and possessing a sense of humour that is displayed by the twinkle in her eye are the characteristics that best describe this fourteen year old, grade eight student. Jackie recently moved to Edmonton with her

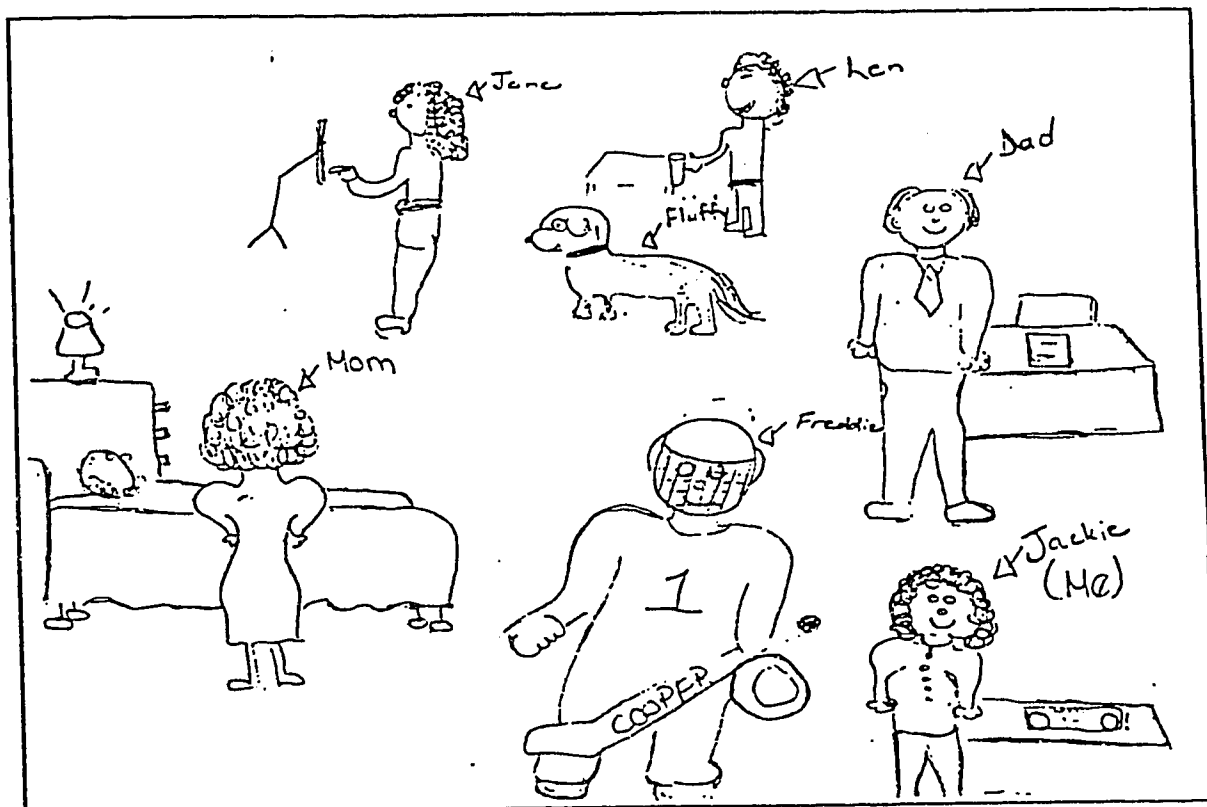


Figure #7 - Jackie's family drawing

father from Winnipeg where her mother resides. Difficult economic times in the Winnipeg area required Mr. Laroche to seek employment elsewhere. Jackie has four friends at her new school and described school as "kind of fun" but expressed concern that some people at her school are "rude". The two people whom Jackie considers her "best friends" live in Winnipeg.

Jackie has two other siblings, a nineteen year old sister and a sixteen year old brother. Her father is forty seven years old and is employed as a manager in the construction business. Jackie's mother is thirty eight years old, a nursing aide and is remarried. Mr. Laroche reported that he was married to Jackie's mother for fifteen years, they separated five years ago and have been divorced for three years. At the time of their marriage breakup, Jackie's mother was having serious problems with

alcohol but Mr. Laroche describes her as now being a "reformed alcoholic".

Jackie and her brother, Freddie, initially came to live with their father but he found it very difficult to care for them and gave up custody to their mother. Mr. Laroche reported that, after a period of time, he was lonely and invited his older daughter, Jane, to live with him. A short while later, he had three children living with him. A problem between his exwife's husband and his son brought Freddie to live with him. Jackie came to live with her Dad after her Mother struck her, causing bruising. Jackie said that the "fight" resulted from an incident where her stepfather, Len, and mother decided that she should write lines because she "failed a Social test". She described how she got angry with her step father and told him that he could not require her to do this because he was not "her real father". Her mother then got angry and struck her. After a friend's mother reported the incident, Social Services directed Jackie to live with her father and she has been with him for the past two years.

Mr. Laroche would be considered an "assessor" according to the literature which looks at motivation for custody. He said that although he has had custody of all three children for periods of time, there is no legal custody arrangement. As a parent, he reported that he does "quite well" but finds cooking difficult and would rather be married. Mr. Laroche described the predivorce care of his children as shared equally by him and his exwife. Jackie agreed that he helped cook, clean and played with the children but said that her mother did more in providing for their care. Jackie also perceives her parents as both having been involved with her after the divorce, despite who she was living with. Concerning attendance at parent teacher meetings she said:

"If I was living with my Mom, she might go or my Dad might go and if I was living with my Dad, my Mom might still go... And whoever went my Dad would always tell my Mom and my Mom would tell my Dad."

Jackie also spoke of both parent's involvement in her many sports and extracurricular activities after the divorce.

Despite all the difficulties that this family has had, Mr. Laroche described his exwife as a "good mother" and from his description, and Jackie's as well, he appears to have a good relationship with his exwife. At the first meeting Mr. Laroche encouraged Jackie to show her mother's new wedding photograph. Jackie said:

"Dad says his best friend is Mom... My Dad says that he really trusts my Mom and my Mom... I really haven't heard her say anything because I haven't asked her. Dad, the subject came up because he brought it up. It's not that Mom doesn't think about things about Dad but it's just that I've never brought it up around her. She just doesn't say, I like this about your Dad or I like that."

Jackie continued to speak of her parent's positive relationship at all meetings and upon being asked why this relationship was so positive, she replied, "I guess because they have three kids!"

Family seems very important to Jackie and she described how she enjoys spending time with "all" her family including her stepfather. Jackie emphasized her loneliness for her family. Her instability within the family matrix may be emphasized in her family drawing that shows her with no feet (Knoff, 1985). Jackie said:

"Our goal is to move back soon, really soon, like in the next couple of months. That's why if I miss my Mom or something I always say so many months until we move back there. As soon as we go back there, my brother will be living with us too. It'll be just like it used to be."

Perhaps Jackie's longing for her family is heightened by the family she remembers and mourns.

"I grew up in a home that was family oriented where we all did things together. It wasn't like I'm going out, bye. On certain days we'd do things together, we'd all sit down and have supper and watch movies all together."

Jackie reported that she sees her mother every three to four weeks with either her mother coming to visit or Jackie going to visit her mother. About their visits she

said, "I just never think its long enough but it's as long as it'll get." She said that when she is going to visit her mother she is, "Happy! Cuz I live with my Dad so it's no big deal if I'm away from him for a couple of weeks. I love him and everything. I miss him but I don't." She said that at the time she was directed to live with her father, "it felt O.K. and I'm still glad I'm living with my Dad but sometimes I wish I was living with my Mom." At another time she said:

"I feel bad because I'm not with my Mom like I used to be. Like I used to talk to her on the phone... Like everyday I would phone her and now I can only talk to her about once a week."

Jackie perceives herself as being primarily like her mother, explaining that they like to do similar things like cooking and sewing and that they are alike in appearance. She thinks that, to a limited degree, she is like her father because they both "like Math".

#### Perceptions of custodial father's functioning.

Jackie said that her father does "very... very, very well" at making her feel loved and she said that she appreciates "how hard he tries to take care of me." She said:

"He always tries to make the right decision. I can't give an example but if it's not the right decision, he'll try to think of a better one."

Her responses suggested that she perceives her father to be trustworthy and helpful to others as well as herself.

Jackie reported that her father "makes the more "difficult meals", and sometimes they share in the cooking. She said that at other times they'll go out for dinner. The cleaning is normally Jackie's job and she sometimes does the laundry but on weekends, she and Dad do these chores together. Mr. Laroche calls his daughter at noon and after school and "every half hour" if she is sick, to check on her. Jackie described the rules at their home as, "I'm supposed to clean my room, clean up the

house, pick up the messes which I sometimes do." She went on to say that her father has difficulty in enforcing the rules and sticking to his threats to ground her. She said:

"My Dad doesn't like to ground us and stuff. He'll threaten to do it so then when he threatens to do it, we do whatever we didn't do, but Mom sticks to the grounding."

Jackie said, about enforcing bedtime limits, "As long as I get up in the morning, lots of times he lets me stay up late because I've been good." Her friends who also come from divorced families "think Dad is doing a good job but they think he spoils me."

Jackie described her father as her companion and confidant. She said:

"We do pretty well everything together... only if he has a meeting or he goes out with his best friend. It just depends."

She described their time together as watching T.V. or movies and going to the mall. Whatever they do, she describes as "family oriented". In discussing their relationship, she said that, "He tells me everything and I tell him everything." She said that he will discuss problems with his job and loneliness for his family and friends. She indicated:

"He doesn't hold anything back from me because he trusts me enough to tell me."

Jackie explained that the things she would discuss with her father are her feelings regarding school and how much she misses her family.

Although Jackie often spoke of how understanding her father is, other descriptions seemed to contradict this, portraying a father who sometimes makes her feel insecure. Most of the difficulties with her father relate to how they communicate. She perceives him to have difficulty in arguing constructively, in accepting criticism, in being patient regarding such things as homework and in maintaining a positive mood. Jackie views her father as clear and assertive in his communication but described him as "closed-minded". "He doesn't listen to what I have to say because I might be right."

Lots of times he doesn't listen to it." But Jackie is optimistic that things are changing because she went on to say:

"Now he listens to it because I told Mom that I got mad and she talked to Dad and asked him to listen to what I have to say."

Perhaps her drawing (Figure 7), where she has placed herself near Dad and drawn herself like Dad, portrays a wish to be closer and more understood and also may illustrate her admiration for her father that she often expressed by such statements like, "I like him for the person that he is."

As a source of information, Jackie judges her father to be lacking, particularly regarding certain topics such as religion and sex. She appeared embarrassed about discussing sex with her father and said:

"I guess I can't really judge because I haven't really asked him. I would if I had to. I would probably go to my Mom first."

Jackie also seemed embarrassed and insecure about discussing or getting help from her father regarding issues for which she might need medical aid.

Overall, Jackie perceives her father as caring about her and being very concerned about making the best decision regarding her welfare. She sees herself as his companion and confidant and appears to identify with his loneliness. Jackie appears to support her father emotionally and instrumentally. She seems to have particular difficulty discussing personal, female issues with her father and finds that he is not "open-minded", being very quick with his temper. She perceives that he does not always give her an opportunity to express herself.

#### Perception of noncustodial mother's functioning.

Jackie described a mother whom she admires and feels is competent,

supportive, dependable and trustworthy. Having lived most of her life with her mother, she sees her mother as someone who is able to meet her physical needs, is a fair, consistent disciplinarian and is able to show her that she is loved, making her feel secure, confident and understood. Confidence and security are promoted by the activities which Jackie and her mother share when they are together. Some of these include "sitting and talking, baking pies, doing stuff in the kitchen, sharing clothes, doing each other's hair and playing children's games." Jackie said: "She likes to keep me busy because I get bored easy." Jackie sees her mother as someone who understands her and has good communication and interpersonal skills, is in a good mood most of the time but may have some difficulty accepting criticism although she said, "She's better than my Dad." She perceives her mother as a good source of information and an emotional support. Jackie said:

"...I think my Mom is more understanding with girl problems than my Dad is. Most times I think Mom is more understanding in those kind of areas than Dad is. I'm embarrassed to talk to Dad."

Overall, in describing her mother and in responding to the Bricklin Perceptual Scales, Jackie portrayed her mother as a parent who could be considered "superior" (Bricklin, 1984). She seems to see her mother as providing the stability that she so desperately needs at a time when she has been physically moved from her family and friends. This physical move has resulted in less emotional support than she is familiar with getting from her mother. Jackie's preoccupation with her need for her mother's warmth, affection and understanding may be emphasized in her family drawing (Figure 7) where she drew her mother with her back turned and with a lamp near her mother (Burns & Kaufman, 1970,1972; Burns, 1987). Adolescence is a time when Jackie would be developing her feminine identity. She appeared to emphasize her need to share



with her mother much of what could be considered feminine.

## Conclusions.

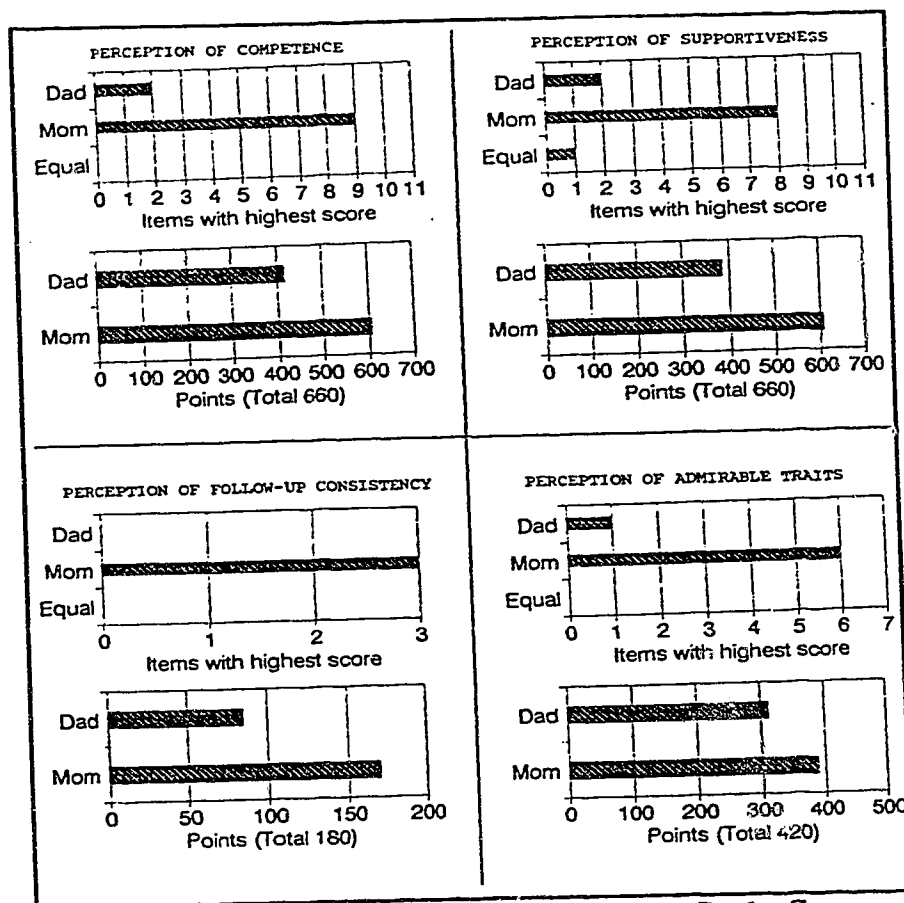


Figure #8 - Jackie's Bricklin Perceptual Scale Scores

Figure 8 shows that in responding to the Bricklin Perceptual Scales, Jackie portrayed her mother as the stronger parent in all areas. This was supported by most verbal comments that Jackie made both in response to the Bricklin Perceptual Scales and to interview questions. However, Jackie also very clearly described her father as a caring, devoted parent whom she admires. The major difficulty that she spoke about concerning her father was his inability or difficulty in communicating in a supportive, understanding manner. Some communication difficulties Jackie talked about related to

personal, gender, age specific, issues that she feels her mother is better able to handle.

Jackie appears to support her father emotionally and instrumentally, functioning often as a companion. This may, also, account for her perception of her mother as the stronger parent, as her father may not be providing her with the parenting she needs because of his own emotional difficulties or insecurities and feelings regarding his competence as a parent. Through the move to Edmonton, Jackie's loss of her mother and family has been intensified. This may, in turn, promote some glorification of her relationship with her noncustodial parent and, perhaps, place some blame on her custodial father for this loss.

The factors that have emerged as having the greatest impact on Jackie's perception of the functioning of her custodial and noncustodial parents are:

- 1) gender,
- 2) personality and interests of child and noncustodial parent,
- 3) age of child,
- 4) emotional functioning of custodial parent,
- 5) physical move away from noncustodial parent/perceived loss, and
- 6) parenting strategies of custodial father.

#### CASE #5 BART BENSKY

Description of child and post divorce family.

Bart is a fourteen year old, grade nine student who describes himself as "eccentric" and as having four friends whom he characterized as "almost as weird as I am". He appears to be very comfortable with adults and obviously enjoys explaining his sophisticated interests regarding science and computers. Bart appeared much more

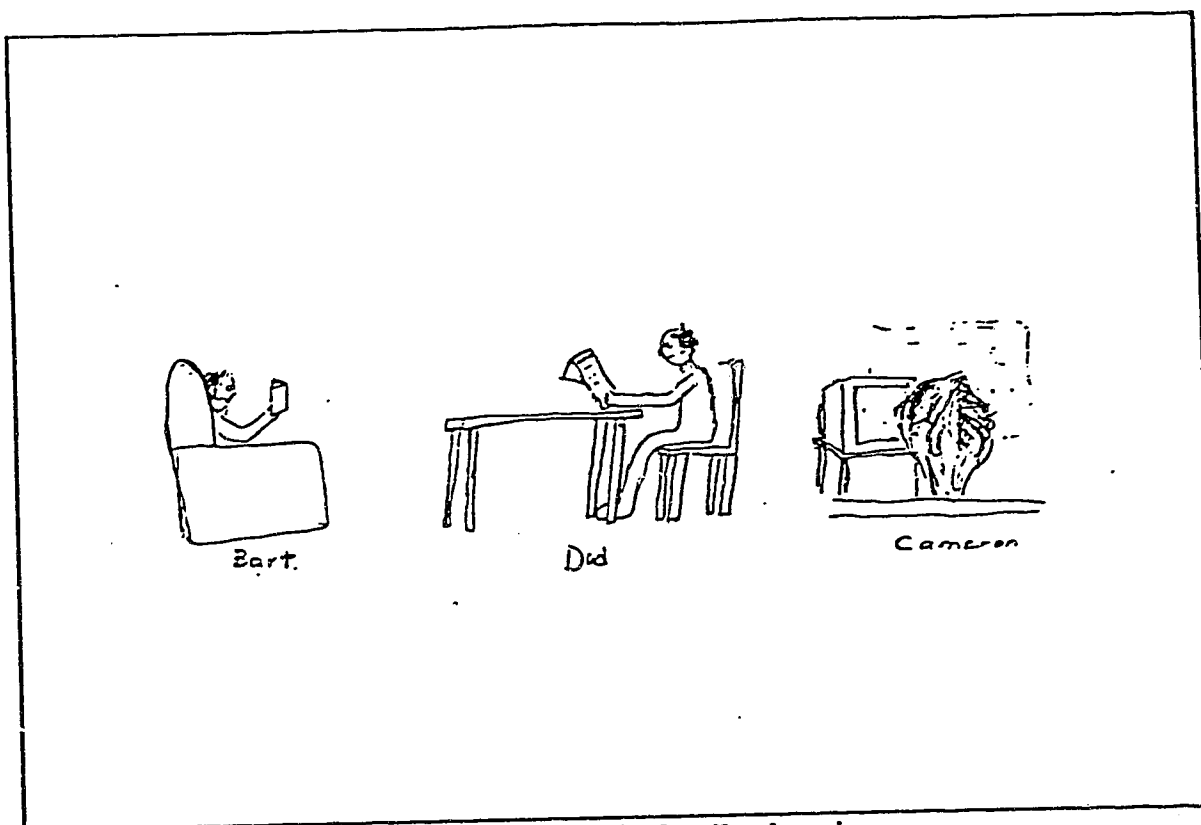


Figure #9 - Bart's family drawing

comfortable and enthusiastic when describing his projects such as the "balloon popper" that he invented than in talking about his family. Bart participates in the "Academic Challenge" program at school.

Bart's nine year old brother, Cameron, is described by both Bart and his father as very different from Bart. Mr. Bensky said that his two sons are two "extremes". Bart's father is a fifty-one year old civil servant. His mother is also a civil servant and lives in another province with a new partner. Mr. Bensky reported that he was married for fifteen years and has been divorced for two years. His sons have been with him since their mother left. Mr. Bensky and his exwife agreed that the children would be better off with him as she wanted to be free to pursue her own personal life. When Bart was asked how it was decided that he should live with his father he said:

"Well, basically it was a matter of gender and that Mom wanted to be moving to Regina and Dad didn't, you see. I think it was probably best. Me and Dad, we have a similar personality... sense of humour."

This sense of similarity or identification with his father is very aptly illustrated by Bart in his drawing (Figure 9). The rotation of Cameron also may illustrate his "difference" from Bart and his father (Burns & Kaufman, 1972).

Mr. Bensky said that before the divorce, his exwife was primarily responsible for the care of the children. Bart agreed with this but viewed his father as having been the one who helped with homework, saying that his mother "wasn't much for helping with homework". Mr. Bensky rates himself as doing "very well" in caring for his children but spoke of "overload" and no support system for fathers like him who have no family in the city. Bart did not perceive much conflict between his parents before the divorce and in describing his parent's present relationship said, "They're pretty civil to each other over the phone and that sort of stuff."

Bart explained that he visits his mother once or twice a year for a "couple of weeks" and that she phones weekly. In describing his visits with his mother he said:

"Well, the summer vacation sort of drags on because Mom has to work and there's not much to do in Regina. It gets a bit boring if you're there more than a week."

Describing how he feels when he arrives home from his mother's, he said, "Well, glad to be back home!" He said that he never wishes to live with his mother, one reason being that she lives in Regina and the other reason he gives is, "Her personality isn't as much like me, that sort of thing."

#### Perception of custodial parent's functioning.

One of Bart's strongest messages regarding his father is that he admires him

and thinks that he is a "nice person". Bart said that his father is trustworthy, "hard working" and "isn't really gotten down by conditions". He said that his father "gets tired but it doesn't like... yes, get him down." Bart appreciates his father's sense of humour and interesting stories such as "when I was young..." or "life cycle of soap". Bart described his father as able to maintain a good mood "most of the time" but also described him as "Old Faithful". This is a name that his brother, Cameron, has given their father. Bart said that he thought "Old Faithful" is a good name for his father because,

"Well, he rumbles and fumes in the background sort of continuously and every once in a while he blows his top. The rumbling isn't real, real rumbling. It's like uhhhhh, that sort of thing. It's not like 'Oh I hate you!' That sort of thing."

Bart explained that his father is able to show him that he loves him, is understanding, and makes him feel secure and confident. His understanding and patience sometimes surprise Bart. Bart spoke of a time when he had forgotten to do several assignments at school and found himself in a situation where there were "about seven assignments and only two days to do them in." He said,

"...I almost panicked. Well I probably did, but not for long, and he helped me out a good deal on that. I'm always worried about telling him but then when I tell him, he really helps me get it done."

Homework and school is an area where Bart perceives much support although he generally does his homework on his own. Mr. Bensky attends parent teacher meetings when necessary. Much of the confidence that Bart has seems to stem from the close relationship he has with his father because they share interests in science and computers. Bart explained that he is able to "discuss theories with him" and finds his father to be a reliable source of information.

Bart perceives his father as having good communication skills and to be able

to accept criticism but to, generally, lack the ability to be assertive. He sees his father as able to argue constructively "to a point". He said that his father gets "overloaded occasionally" and suggested that he is bothered by arguments between Cameron and his father that are "triggered by homework". Although he perceives his father to be supportive of him in terms of homework he does not perceive his father to give his brother the same support. He seemed to empathize with his brother when he said:

"Well, he definitely needs a boost to his self confidence. As soon as the slightest mistake is made, he puts himself down further. It's a chain reaction."

Bart seems to portray the lack of communication between his father and brother in his drawing (Figure 9) and emphasizes the positive relationship between himself and his father.

From Bart's perspective, Mr. Bensky appears to be a father who is able to meet his children's physical needs. Bart reported that his father does all the cooking and almost all the cleaning, is able to deal with emergencies "perfectly" and does "very well" in looking after their medical needs. Because Mr. Bensky attends to all the cooking and most of the chores around their home, this leaves Bart with "lots of spare time to read after school and stuff like that". This is something that Bart particularly appreciates and likes about living with his father. Bart does not perceive his father as being a strong disciplinarian. He reported that he knew there were rules but he explained that he could not think of any, saying:

"I know there are some, otherwise it would be chaos but I can't think of any, off hand."

Overall, Bart perceives his father as a special, caring man whom he feels very close to and identifies with. His only concern regarding his father has to do with his father's relationship with his brother, Cameron. He does not perceive this relationship

to be as positive as their's. From Bart's description, it appears that Mr. Bensky exclusively provides for the physical needs of his children and does not expect them to share in doing household chores.

#### Perception of noncustodial mother's functioning.

Bart perceives that his mother does "very well" at making him feel loved and his responses indicated that he feels that she is trustworthy in word and deed. She does well at providing for his physical needs when he is with her. At his mother's home, Bart helps a "little" by cleaning up after himself. Bart said that his mother ensures that rules are followed and chores are done. Bart perceives his mother to be somewhat helpful in dealing with new situations and coping with fears but as having much more difficulty in recognizing his emotional needs and helping him cope with his emotions. As to finding his mother a good source of information or having good communication skills, Bart views his mother as lacking in this area. While comparing her to his father, Bart said:

"We don't have the same kind of conversations. I can't describe my theories to her. She likes to think she's the boss and she is but... ah..."

Bart perceives his mother to be assertive in a negative manner and to have difficulty arguing constructively and accepting criticism. This he explained in the following comments where he discussed how he would change her if he could:

"I'd probably get rid of that attitude that she's right... Well, she says don't do this, don't do that, very detailed and picky, and that sort of thing."

Bart went on to say:

"Well, when I'm trying to argue a point about something, she will be certain that her opinion is right."

From his responses to the Bricklin Perceptual Scales, Bart also seems to perceive his

mother as someone who has some difficulty, or a lack of interest, in relating to others. Bart, however, does not see his mother's communication and interpersonal skills as affecting her mood and said that she is able to maintain a good mood "almost all the time".

Although Bart seems aware that his mother loves and cares for him, his nonverbal communication as well as the perceptions that he shared verbally suggested that in many areas he is uncomfortable with his mother and, perhaps, angry with her. He made no attempt to include her in his family drawing and complained about spending lengthy periods of time with her. Bart perceives his mother as having difficulty in supporting him emotionally and in instilling a sense of confidence and security by sharing interests through activities and communication.

#### Conclusions.

Figure 10 shows that Bart perceives his father to be more competent, supportive and to have more admirable traits than his mother. He views his mother as better able to enforce homework and chores. Bart's responses to the Bricklin Perceptual Scales are consistent with his responses to interview questions and his family drawing (Figure 9). Although Bart perceives his father to be the parent who better meets his needs, his responses do not suggest that his mother is not capable of parenting him. However, he does not always appreciate her way of relating to him. Bart does not seem to enjoy the environment that his mother creates as much as that created by his father.

Bart stressed two factors as having an impact on how his needs are met in the post divorce family. One of these is gender. He said that "Dad is probably better" at taking care of him and went on to explain that he thinks fathers are generally better at



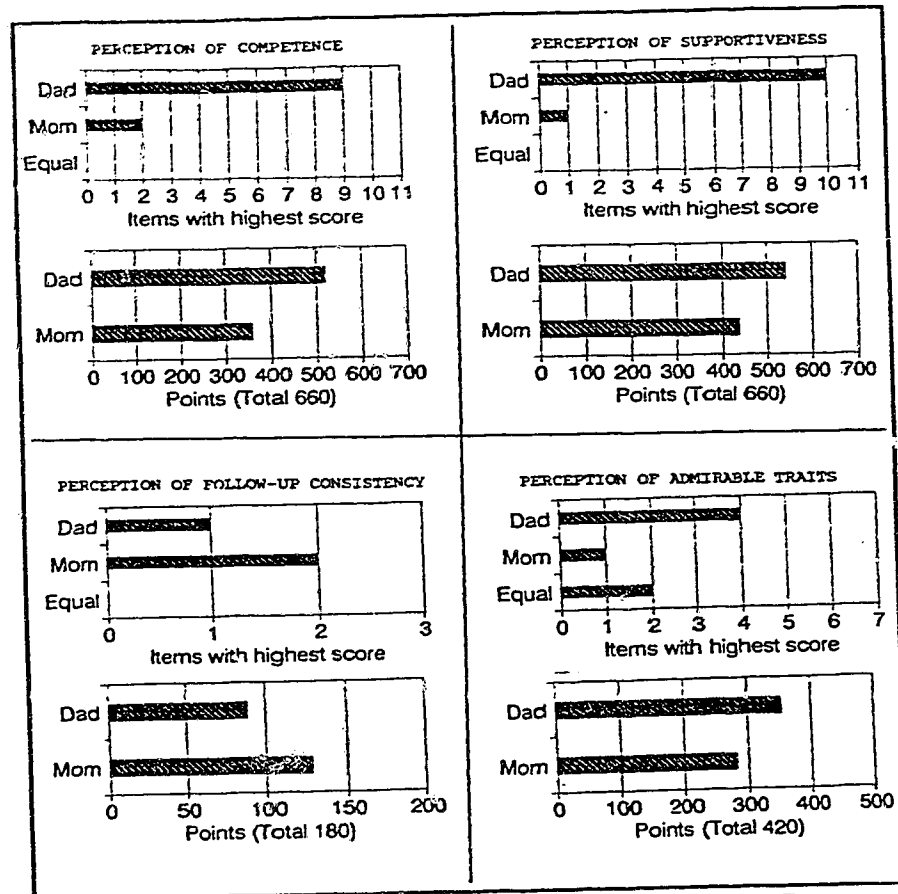


Figure #10 - Bart's Bricklin Perceptual Scale Scores

caring for boys because, "they understand each other better." The other factor that Bart viewed as having a major impact on parent's ability to meet their children's needs is personality. Bart continuously stressed that his Dad and he have "similar" personalities and that this results in a very positive relationship. Bart suggested that in talking to other children it would be important to "Get more of an idea of their Dad's personality compared to theirs."

The factors that seem to have emerged as having the greatest impact on Bart's perceptions of the functioning of his custodial and noncustodial parents are:

- 1) gender of custodial parent,

- 3) parenting strategies of noncustodial parent and,
- 4) environment.

#### CASE #6 CAMERON BENSKY

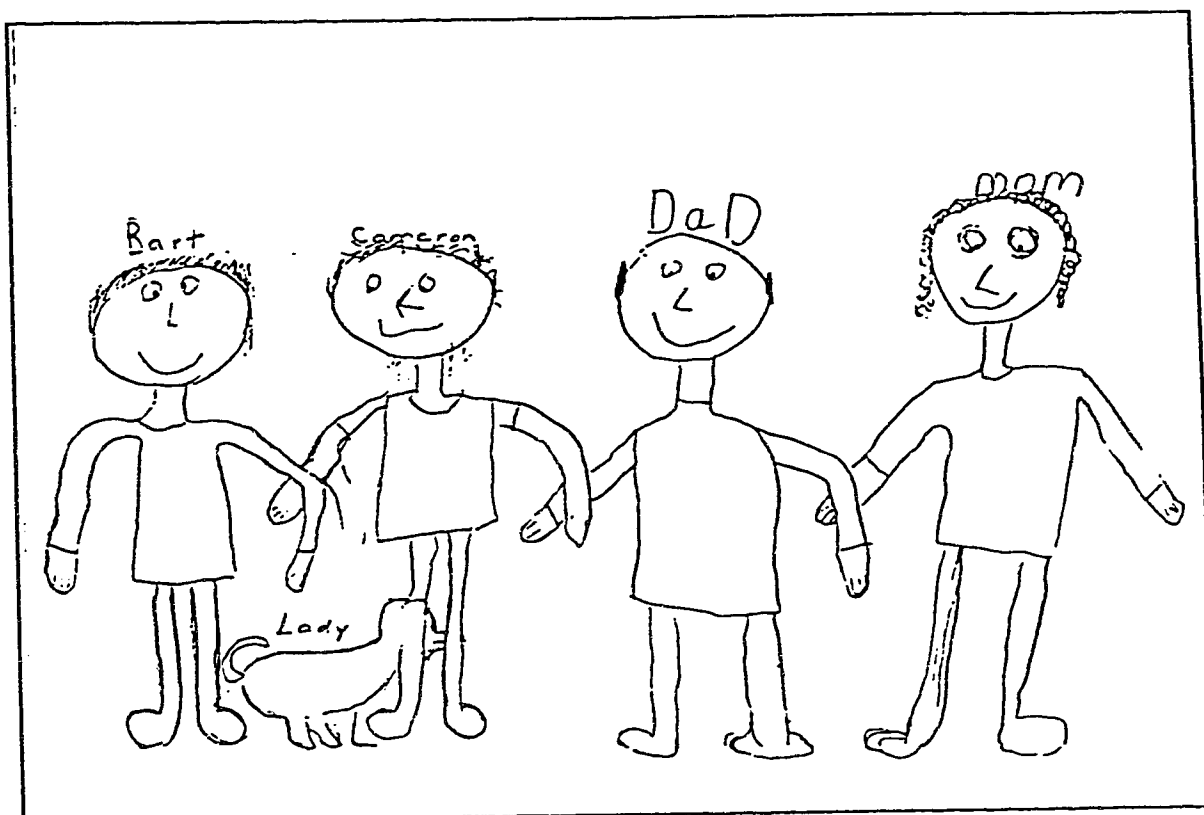


Figure #11 - Cameron's family drawing

#### Description of child and post divorce family.

Cameron is Bart's twelve year old brother. He is in grade six, finds school "pretty easy", has four female friends and enjoys watching television and playing with construction toys. Lady, his dog, is very special to him. Cameron appeared shy, is small for his age and his responses often reflected thinking at a concrete level. His responses were usually brief with "I don't know" being a common response to questions. Cameron's non verbal responses were often telling. He sometimes

appeared sad but usually seemed energized when he spoke about his mother. Cameron's tendency to be evasive may be portrayed in his family picture (Figure 11). Research has shown that children who draw their families inactive may tend toward evasiveness or defensiveness (Knoff & Prout, 1985).

Cameron drew all his family as similar figures and this may suggest that he admires and loves them (Burns, 1982; Burns & Kaufman, 1972). He said that in his picture, his family is "standing and looking happy... because they love each other". Cameron, in some ways, seems to deny the reality of his parent's divorce and he continues to feel sad and hurt at the thought of this reality. This was apparent as he described, tearfully, how his mother said, "Cameron, I'm going to leave." Cameron said that he did not understand how custody was decided and felt sad about it at the time but is now feeling "happier".

Cameron agreed with his father and brother that his parent's predivorce care was very traditional. However, where Bart did not see conflict before the divorce, Cameron did and it made him feel sad. His perception of his parent's present relationship is similar to that of his brother, saying they get along "nicely". Cameron spoke about his mother's weekly phone calls and their summer visits. He said that he always looks forward to seeing her but, like his brother, is happy to come home. However, he sometimes wishes that he could live with his mother. Cameron feels that he is more like his mother, explaining, "I have her nose and her skin."

#### Perception of custodial father's functioning.

Cameron described his father as "loving and caring", good at keeping promises and helpful to others. His responses suggested that he sees his father as someone

who understands his emotional reactions and who makes him feel confident by saying, "you can do it!" Some gestures of caring that Cameron spoke about include his father holding his hand in an unfamiliar situation, carrying him up to bed and tucking him in, attending school functions and taking him to special places. Like his brother, Cameron described his father as doing all the household chores and not expecting help from his sons. He also appears to perceive his father as very capable of handling medical needs and emergencies.

Although Cameron tended to respond positively, verbally, to most questions regarding his father on the Bricklin Perceptual Scales his nonverbal responses were not always consistent with verbal ones. Cameron's nonverbal responses suggest that he may not view his father as very patient and approachable. Cameron said that his father is in a good mood "most of the time" but also suggested that he has difficulty accepting criticism and arguing constructively. His sensitivity to this may relate to his assessment of his father as, generally, a poor source of information. Whereas, Bart views his father's ability to communicate as a strength, Cameron seems to view it as a weakness. Another major difference in the perceptions of the two brothers relates to discipline. While Bart perceives his father as generally not finding it necessary to discipline, Cameron often mentioned and appeared troubled about being excessively "grounded".

Cameron's family drawing (Figure 11) may portray and explain some of Cameron's reactions to his father. It appears that Mr. Bensky treats Cameron as the much younger child although Cameron is only two years younger than Bart. Bart is treated more as an equal. Cameron has drawn himself between his father and brother and of equivalent size, suggesting that he desires more attention from his father and

that the attention should be similar to that which his brother receives. The inconsistent verbal and nonverbal responses suggest that Cameron has some ambivalent feelings towards his father, recognizing the caring qualities but simultaneously being sensitive to what he may perceive as unequal treatment between himself and his brother.

#### Perception of noncustodial mother's functioning.

Cameron, in describing his mother said, "I like everything about her." He appears to view her as someone who is trustworthy, cares about people, is generally in a good mood and is able to accept criticism and argue constructively but does not do well at being assertive. His nonverbal responses to the Bricklin Perceptual Scales suggest that he generally perceives her to be a good source of information. Cameron's mother is able to show him that she loves him and makes him feel secure by speaking to him in a calming voice and physically touching him and generally makes him feel confident and comfortable. Although Cameron perceives his mother to be patient in allowing him to share feelings, like his brother, he does not see her as someone who is able to recognize, quickly, and understand his feelings.

Cameron perceives his mother as able to look after his physical needs but suggested that she may have some difficulties attending to everyday medical problems. Although she, like their father, does not expect help with household chores, he views her as someone who ensures rules are followed. Cameron said, "She watches all the time." He went on to say that if they do not follow Mom's rules, "She just sends us to our rooms," implying that this is not as disturbing as being grounded.

Overall, Cameron appears to view his mother as competent in providing for his physical needs, easy to communicate with, consistent and fair in discipline, able

to show her love but as having some difficulty in recognizing his emotional needs. He portrays her as someone whom he admires, cares for, and he appreciates what she does and has done for him.

### Conclusions.

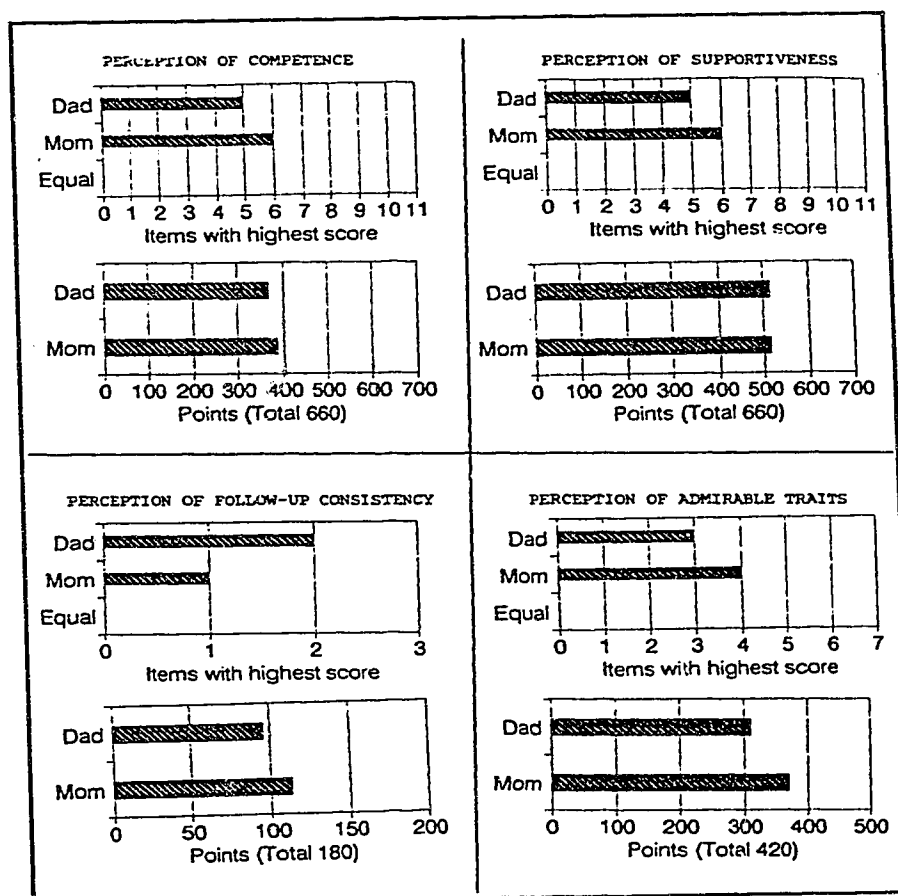


Figure #12 - Cameron's Bricklin Perceptual Scale Scores

Although Cameron verbally expressed that his father is better at caring for him, Figure 12 shows that he rated his mother slightly higher in all areas of functioning on the Bricklin Perceptual Scales. The greatest discrepancies between his assessment of the functioning of his parents relate to their ability to argue constructively and accept criticism, with his mother being rated as more competent. It appeared to the researcher

that Cameron does perceive his father as very capable in caring for him and that he feels very loving towards his father. However, it appeared obvious that he did not share the same kind of relationship with his father that his brother does. Mr. Bensky and his son, Bart, have developed a close relationship because they both appear to function at a very high cognitive level, sharing similar interests. Cameron appears to need more emotional support and may feel excluded from this relationship because his interests and level of functioning differ. His perceptions of the "unapproachable" nature of his father also may be preventing him from seeking the support that he needs to deal with the loss of his intact family. This may have resulted in what appears to be an idealization of his mother and the unacceptance of the reality of the divorce.

In the intact family, his mother may have been able to provide him with a consistent sense of security because of what he perceives as a more approachable manner and similarity. Although his identification with his mother is on a very concrete level, "eyes and skin", she may be more responsive to him generally because of their similarities.

The factors that seem to have emerged as having the greatest impact on Cameron's perceptions of the functioning of his custodial and noncustodial parents are:

- 1) personality,
- 2) parenting strategies,
- 3) emotional functioning of child - loss of intact family and,
- 4) similarities to noncustodial parent.

## CASE #7 TAMMY COWAN

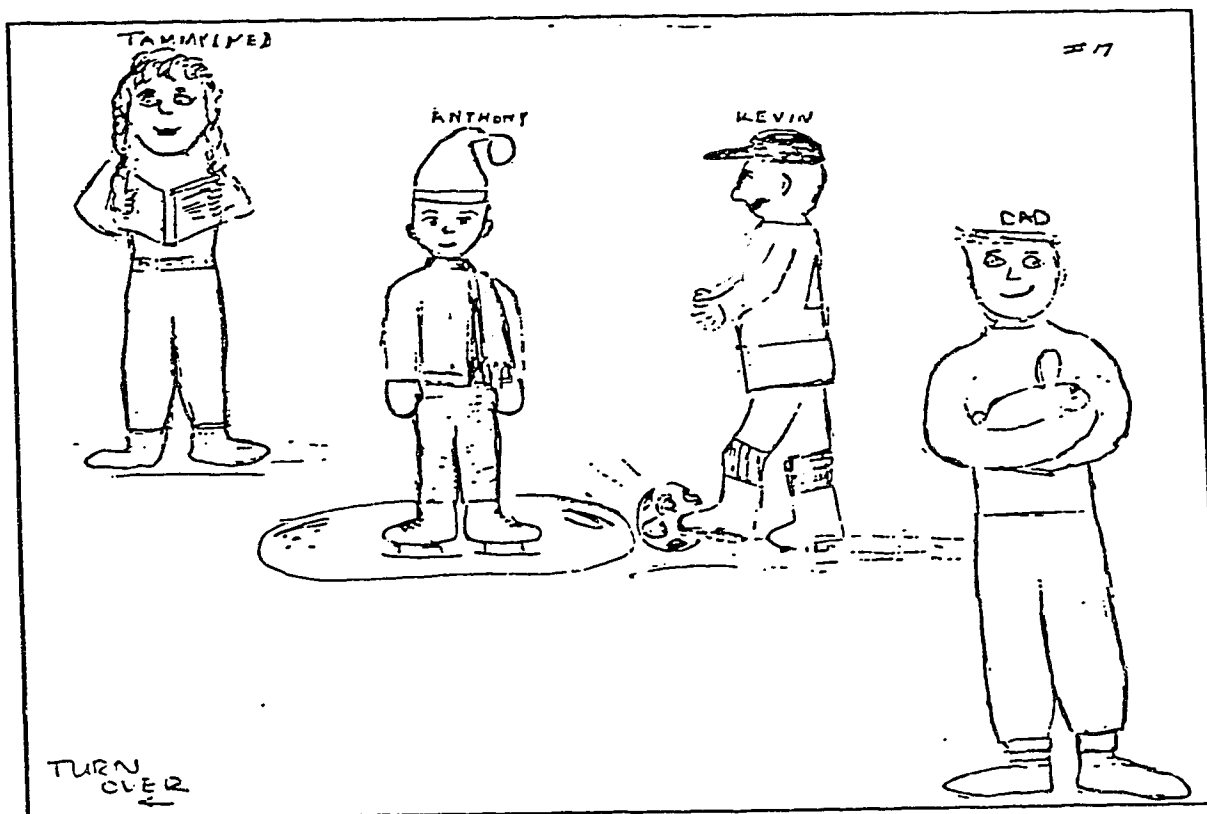


Figure #13 - Tammy's family drawing (front)

## Description of child and post divorce family.

Fourteen year old Tammy describes herself as "quiet and individual and I don't like being around people a lot... but I also like to be with my friends sometimes and to be with other people." She said that she has three friends with whom she shares activities and confides in. Tammy is in grade nine and finds school has become easier because her teachers are "nice so it's easier to learn". In her spare time, Tammy enjoys watching television, talking on the telephone, baking and reading. Tammy is a pretty, gentle girl who appeared confident in relating to an unfamiliar adult and projected a strong sense of caring about her family, with a particular responsibility for her younger



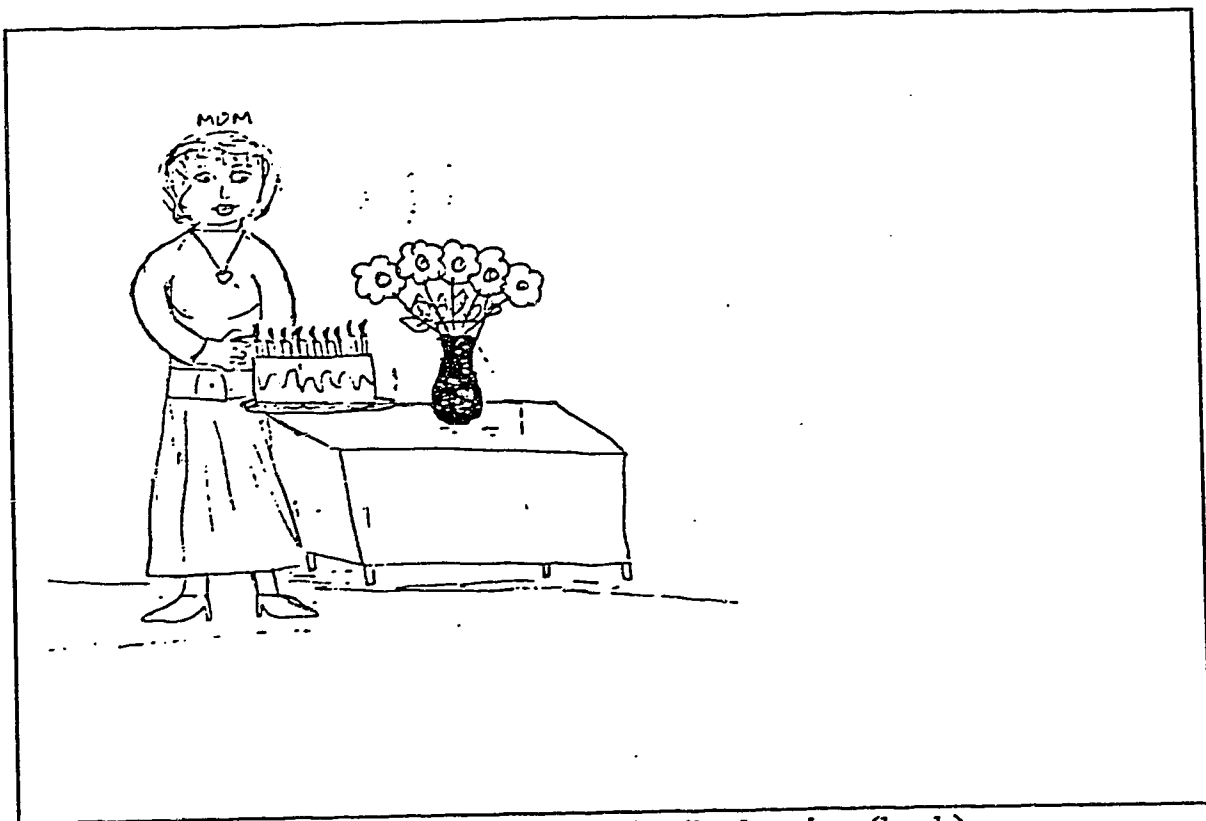


Figure #14 - Tammy's family drawing (back)

brother. She appeared very co-operative about sharing information about her family and took care to complete a drawing of them with which she was satisfied, saying that what she liked best about her drawing is "that everyone is doing something that they enjoy."

Tammy has two siblings, twelve year old Kevin and six year old Anthony. Her father is a forty year old lawyer. Her mother is thirty-six years old, employed in magazine sales and Tammy described her as someone who "moves often". Although she presently lives only ten minutes away by car, Tammy said, "I would like it if she could live closer and it would be more convenient and everything."

Mr. Cowan reported that he was married to his exwife for ten years and that five years have passed since the divorce. He described predivorce care of the children

as equal. Tammy's interpretation of predivorce care could be termed more traditional with, in her view, her father being primarily involved in entertaining the children and her mother handling the household. Mr. Cowan rated himself as now doing "very well" as a parent.

When the marriage first broke up, Mr. Cowan's exwife left with the children and "within six months returned". He said:

"I believe this was a face saving device on her part as she made it known to me that I was a better parent and that the kids would be better off with me. In short, she did what was in the best interests of the children."

Mr. Cowan suggested that both him and his wife are suited as parents and emphasized the importance of a mother to her children. As Mr. Cowan did not actively seek custody, he could be considered an assessor. Tammy said that she likes the custody arrangement and plans to live with her Dad until after she goes to university. Living with her mother is something that she would not consider. In her view,

"All our friends are here and it's easier to go to school. Like it's fun growing up here because there are lots of things to do that are close by here."

At another time Tammy said: "I like the environment here, Mom moves a lot so we don't get to know anyone around there" and further described the environment at her father's home as "relaxing and comfortable."

Tammy visits her mother every weekend from Friday after school to Saturday evening, when the children return home so that her brothers can play hockey Sunday morning. On Mondays Tammy's mother spends time with each child individually and Thursday evenings she takes all of them together to participate in some activity. Commenting on this arrangement, Tammy said:

"Well, sometimes it's inconvenient because I have to do my homework and stuff but on the weekend if I want to go to my friends I just tell her."

She said that although she enjoys spending time with both parents, most times she enjoys being at her father's home because there is "more to do" and that upon arriving from her mother's home she does not necessarily feel better but, "It just feels like I'm coming home, like when you come home from an occasion."

Tammy perceives that both of her parents are good at caring for her "cuz both care for us and everything." Both parents attend parent teacher meetings and concerts, sometimes going to these events together. Tammy described her parent's relationship as "O.K." but said that "sometimes they fight over money and everything". She said, "They should talk about it and not scream and yell and everything" and said that when they criticize each other she feels "uncomfortable". Tammy identifies with both of her parents saying:

"I am most like my Mom. I look exactly like her. I have my Dad's temper because I always yell. I guess I'm like my Mom and my Dad but my Dad's more sociable. He's better with people and stuff."

In this post divorce family, Tammy perceives much support from paternal and maternal grandparents. She said that she likes to spend time with her maternal grandmother because both of them enjoy baking. Both sets of grandparents attend school concerts and Tammy's maternal grandmother often cares for her when she is ill.

#### Perception of custodial father's functioning.

Tammy portrayed her father as someone who is "loving and caring" and "honest and funny". She emphasized his interpersonal strengths and positive attitude to others. Tammy sees her father as someone who is involved in the school and community, is a good leader, can solve disputes and is extroverted in his approach to people,

displaying a sense of humour that she admires. She said:

"He can take jokes and everything and he's not always serious but when he wants to be he will."

Tammy views her father as someone who is in a good mood "most of the time" and average in his ability to accept criticism. The one thing she would change about him if she could is his "bad temper". Although Tammy sees her father as someone who generally makes her feel confident, secure and can identify when she is upset, she also explained that his temper can interfere with her comfort in approaching him with problems of a more emotional nature. However, Tammy stressed her father's approachability in regards to, and capability in, helping with school problems and homework. She said he is "good" at helping "because he's smart..." and further explained that "If I'm not doing good I usually tell my Dad about school stuff." Tammy explained that her father is generally a good source of information but she said that if she needed information regarding sex, "I probably wouldn't talk to Dad. I'm not sure. I'm not sure if he would be helpful."

Mr. Cowan sets bedtime limits for his children and he is fairly consistent in enforcing these. Tammy said that "When he wants to be strict he can," emphasizing his ability to clearly set forth what is expected. She perceives her father as very capable in ensuring that she completes her homework and chores. Although the Cowan's have a "nanny" who comes to their home to cook and clean every day for four hours during the after school to dinner period, the children are expected to help with the chores. Tammy said:

"Kevin does the shovelling and I do vacuuming. Well, me and Kevin take turns vacuuming and I sweep the floor and wash the floor and just tidy up and Anthony mostly does the garbage."

If the rules are not followed, the children are "grounded" and that means staying in their

rooms, with "no T.V., phone or anything". Tammy perceives her father's rules to have changed since the divorce, saying:

"...We didn't usually do chores because my Mom would usually clean up but we still had to do our homework and go to bed at a certain time."

Tammy views her father as very involved in a demanding career but outlined how capably he has organized for the children's care with the "nanny" coming everyday and his exwife or her mother caring for the children when they are sick. When her father is not at work, Tammy perceives him as someone who makes his family a priority and is involved in completing household chores and cooking. She said that, "Dad never used to cook but now he does a little bit more cooking" on weekends and "The things he can cook, he's pretty good." Tammy spoke about the many activities that she and her brothers do with their father such as going out to dinner, skating, going to movies, going to church, and she said he "comes to all our games". "We always do things as a family so I guess we're good together as a family."

Overall, Tammy views her father as someone who makes his family a priority despite a demanding career. She outlined his ability to organize to meet the children's physical needs, his interest in and involvement in their activities and responsibilities, and his consistent, clear approach to discipline and rules. Her major difficulty with her father is what she perceives to be his "bad temper", resulting in lack of emotional support when it is sometimes needed. She also described a caution as to how helpful her father would be in providing her with information regarding sex.

#### Perception of noncustodial mother's functioning.

Tammy perceives her mother as "good" at showing her that she loves her "because she always tells us that she loves us". She described her mother as a "quiet,

sensitive, patient" and understanding individual. Tammy's mother, from her perspective, is a good listener and someone whose strength is in providing emotional support. She described her as generally being in a good mood, ignoring criticism "if she doesn't like it" and being able to argue constructively because "she's calm and patient." Although Tammy, for the most part, perceives her mother to be supportive and loving, she also views her as lacking an ability to be clear about her expectations and this has resulted in a conflict between them that could explain why she drew her mother on the back of her family drawing (Figure 14)(Burns & Kaufman, 1972). In clarifying this Tammy said:

"Well she's not the person that you know if she really means it if she says it because she's not strict... When she yells... like when she says it the first time it's no big deal but my Dad when he says it you can tell that he means it."

When Tammy was asked how she thought her mother should handle this she said "Just tell them once but tell them like they know for sure with your voice but not to scream and stuff." She said that her mother will say something to them "again and again", not being clear, and then she will "start screaming". Tammy explained that they are presently seeing a counsellor and she could see that the situation is improving.

Tammy assessed her mother as average about keeping promises and in dealing with and helping people but did not describe these as strengths. She perceives her mother to be capable of meeting her and her siblings physical needs and enforcing the completion of homework "because she knows that it is important". However, Tammy views her mother as only somewhat helpful in completing assignments "because she didn't go to University so she'd probably be in between." She perceives her mother as being an inadequate source of information regarding religion because she "doesn't go to church". Being of the same gender seems important in promoting her mother's approachability regarding matters such as sex and medical problems. She said that

if she can arrange it, she gets her mother to take her to the medical clinic when necessary. Tammy perceives her mother as very involved with the children when they visit her.

Overall, Tammy views her mother as a caring, patient, calm, understanding and, generally, supportive parent. She perceives her mother's greatest weakness, and the cause of conflict between them as her inability to be clear about her expectations with the children. Gender seems a factor in promoting approachability regarding subjects of a personal nature.

### Conclusions.

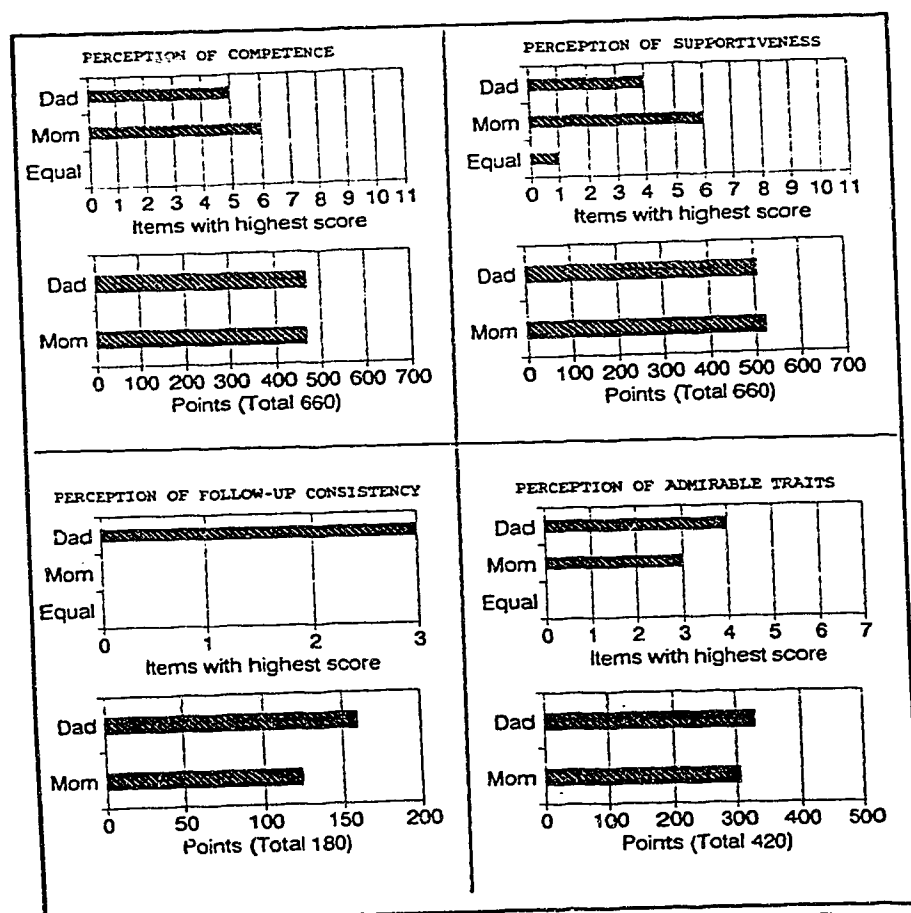


Figure #15 - Tammy's Bricklin Perceptual Scale Scores

Figure 15 shows that Tammy perceives both of her parents to be competent, supportive and to possess traits that she admires. Her mother may be somewhat more understanding and patient but her father is more consistent and clear in communicating. Tammy perceives both parents as very able to provide for her physical needs and to support and participate in activities with her. Her parents both seem to have impressed upon her the importance of their children. Most of Tammy's perceptions seem guided by her experiences with both her mother and father as single parents who have been very involved with the children. Tammy, ultimately, rates her parents as both being very capable parents with strengths and weaknesses in differing areas. Tammy appears to be impressed by the parenting strategies that her father uses to clearly communicate his expectations. However, she perceives his "temper" to limit his approachability. Her mother, who is more emotionally supportive and approachable, lacks clarity and consistency. Tammy seems more comfortable in approaching her mother with feminine or personal issues but views her as a less reliable source in dealing with homework difficulties. The environment of her father's home appears to lend a certain security to Tammy's life. Tammy's age may be a factor that guides her perceptions of how her parents are able to meet her needs as she appeared able to, fairly, look at the strengths and weaknesses of both.

The factors that have emerged as having the greatest impact on Tammy's perceptions of her custodial and noncustodial parents are:

- 1) Open, ongoing access to both parents,
- 2) parenting strategies/characteristics (positive and negative) of custodial and noncustodial parent, consistency, clarity/temper - father  
approachability, emotional supportiveness/lack of clarity - mother,



- 3) environment created by custodial parent,
- 4) gender of noncustodial parent,
- 5) age of child, and
- 6) education of parents.

#### CASE #8 KEVIN COWAN

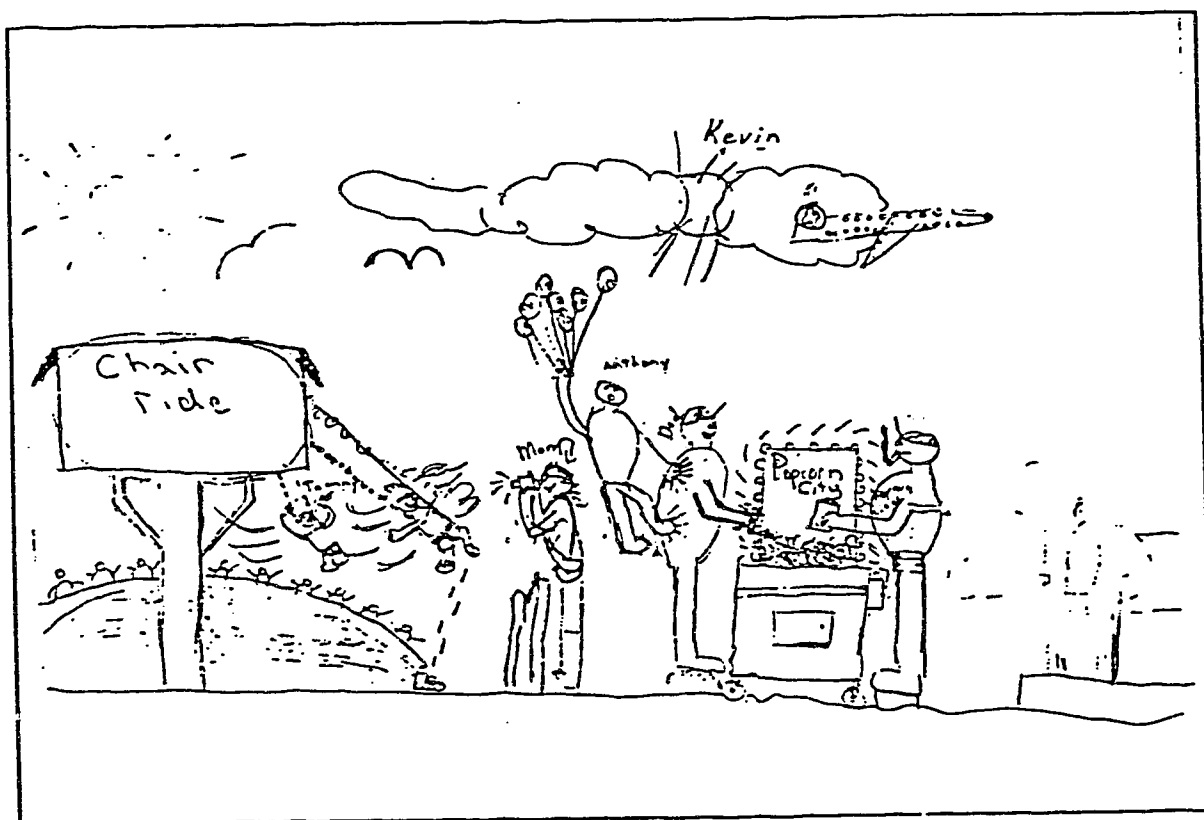


Figure #16 - Kevin's family drawing

#### Description of child and post divorce family.

Kevin is Tammy's twelve year old brother. He likes drawing, watching T.V., playing Nintendo and is in grade seven at school. About school he said:

"You can say that school is pretty boring but you got to get an education but I hate it... The only thing I really like about it is that my friends are there... I have lots of friends at school."

Kevin is a very friendly, handsome child who exudes warmth and caring. In discussing his family, and the divorce and post divorce experience, Kevin appeared to be open and honest in expressing his emotions, sometimes appearing anxious and sometimes sad. The anxiety may be portrayed in his family drawing (Figure 16) where the two clouds "hover over the heads" (Burns, 1987) of the family. Kevin erased the sun and placed it between the two clouds, perhaps, signifying a preoccupation or need for warmth and love.

Kevin spoke of his memory of the "big fight" that resulted in his parents splitting up and said:

"I remember sitting on the stairs crying because I thought it was all my fault and all that... I was thinking to myself that I might have started it by asking the wrong question and they started yelling about it."

He also showed anxiety when discussing his access to both parents and said:

"I'm happy about it that I can see both of my parents but there's kind of a bit of a hassle cuz I think there's a fight over the kids, like I should get the kids this time. There's always a hassle over money."

Concerning his parent's conflict over "kids and money" he said, "There's like good things and bad things about parents like they get along pretty much well," but he worries that "maybe next time they'll take each other to court" to prevent one or the other from seeing the children. He explained: "I'm scared that might happen so I couldn't see either of them." Kevin also spoke of his feelings of being torn when his parents criticize each other. In explaining this feeling he said, sometimes,

"I guess I'll go with my Dad because I live with him or I'll go with my Mom because I haven't seen her in awhile. Like it's hard, like I don't know who's right... It's like... you see a magic show. You don't know what's happened when someone disappeared. Like you're astonished cuz you don't know what happened. That's what kind of happens to me."

Kevin said that the care his parents provided before the divorce was "pretty

equal". His description of the care was much like his sister's description. He said that his mother cooked, cleaned and played with the children. His father played with the children and helped out with "lots of the cleaning" after work. Kevin perceives that the decision that Dad should have custody was a financial one. Although he thinks that his mother has a "good job" he said, "Like I don't think it's enough to support three kids cuz we're all growing and we need lots to eat." Regarding the custody decision Kevin said:

"I'm happy to be living with my Dad because I can see my Mom at the same time I can see my Dad, so we can see each other some time."

His remarks often suggested that consciously he has accepted the custody decision but he continues to wish the family was together and mourns the loss of the intact family. Kevin explained:

"I don't think that I really wish living with my Mom but I don't think I really wish living with my Dad."

Kevin commented that living with his father gives the illusion that he spends more time with him. He said:

"My Mom still spends more time with us because we can see my Dad only a little bit of times because he usually gets home at six o'clock, six-thirty. I probably see my Mom more but it seems like I'm seeing my Dad more. I enjoy seeing both of my parents."

Kevin said that going back and forth is "inconvenient" and "it's kind of a hard timetable to keep." When he was asked how it can be resolved, he replied, "Well, I don't mind it. It's just that I don't like it, sometimes. I don't really mind it!" One of the things Kevin enjoys about leaving his parent's homes and arriving back is the demonstration of affection between himself and his parents. Kevin explained that upon leaving his father's home he says, "See you Dad" and said "you come back and you've kind of missed him. We give each other hugs. Same thing with Mom."

Kevin regards both of his parents as good at caring for him. In relation to his parents he said, "In some parts I'm quiet like my Mom and in some parts I'm loud like my Dad", identifying with his father's "corny sense of humour". Like Tammy, Kevin views both of his parents as involved in his activities. He explained:

"They always try to make it as best they can even if they see only half an hour. They always try to make it to everything I do."

#### Perceptions of custodial father's functioning.

Kevin described his father as his "hero" and characterized him as "nice and kind and sharing". He appeared realistic in his description of his Dad, discussing his positive and negative perceptions. Kevin sees his father as someone who is very good at demonstrating his love but also explained that he "probably gets on your nerves lots of times but you appreciate that he helps you out a lot."

His father's understanding, supportiveness and ability to create a sense of security and confidence are important to Kevin. He spoke about his Dad's ability to recognize, and help him cope with, situations when he is angry or upset. Kevin said:

"...Sometimes if I walk down here with my head down he'll say 'What's wrong Kevin?' and I'll usually say 'nothing' and he'll usually drag it out of me."

He also described techniques for coping with anger, such as beating a pillow, that his father has encouraged him to use.

Kevin appears to trust and admire his father's ability to listen, be patient and supportive. He suggested that these characteristics are important in his father's occupation, contributing to his success as a lawyer but are also important in their family. Kevin said he "understands what you want to talk" and "He works with people cuz he's kind of a counsellor... He's used to talking with people." He explained that

he usually talks to his Dad about school and interpersonal problems. His discussions with his father are sometimes of a hypothetical nature involving values or need for clarity of what is the correct way to handle a situation. Kevin commented on how "like usually before something happens, probably a coincidence or something, I usually talk to my Dad about it and then something will happen." Kevin described Mr. Cowan as an approachable source of information regarding homework, religion and sex. As to getting sex information he said that despite his own discomfort he knows Dad can do very well, "Cuz like he tries to explain it to me and I go 'O.K. Dad'. (laughs) Both my parents are understanding about that." Despite his father's general approachability, Kevin views his father's temper as sometimes interfering. Kevin said:

"You can talk to him because he's real easy to talk to but sometimes he gets mad if you tell him something he doesn't want to hear like if you get a bad mark on your report card. He might get mad sometimes but usually he takes it pretty well."

Kevin described his father's ease with people as helping him feel comfortable. He explained that in gatherings where everyone is unfamiliar to him, his father would make him feel comfortable "because he always knows everyone". Kevin views his father as a good leader and able to solve disputes. He described how his father might handle a situation where he was fighting with his little brother. His father would say:

"Kevin, if you beat Anthony up, I can beat you up so that you know how Anthony is feeling when you are beating him up. He doesn't really beat me up. He just wrestles with me and tickles me and talks in a higher voice, like he makes his lip hang down and he pretends to punch me."

Mr. Cowan has impressed upon Kevin what he expects from the children. Completion of homework is a priority. Chores must be done and bedtime limits must be adhered to although Kevin sees some flexibility about bedtime limits. Kevin said that in his Dad's home there are

"Certain curfews, certain rules like don't talk back, respect the older person... rules like you can't go somewhere unless you tell somebody. If you're grounded you have to stay in your room until you have permission to leave. There are regular, everyday, all the time, rules like you have to brush your teeth everyday before you go to bed and when you wake up."

Kevin explained if rules are not followed, his father might ground them after giving them a "serious talking to". Kevin views his father as someone who attempts to teach financial responsibility by requiring him to explain why he should spend his money. He said, "He'll probably agree to it but not at the very start of it."

Like his sister, Tammy, Kevin perceives his father as very capable of meeting their physical needs or arranging for these needs to be met by others. He also sees his father as very involved in all his activities and making these a priority. Kevin commented:

"Like Dad won't get carried away with a football game or something like that and forget that he has to take you to a lesson..."

Despite his appreciation of his father's involvement in his activities, he also perceives his father as "pushing him too much in hockey".

Overall, Kevin views his father as a caring, committed parent. He also perceives him to be a person who has control and dominance in the family as may be illustrated by his elevated position in the family drawing (Figure 16) (Burns & Kaufman, 1972). Kevin seems to take pride in his father's professional status and perceives that the skills that come from his father's success as a lawyer also contribute to his success as a father who is patient, understanding and generally easy to communicate with. Like Tammy, he sees his Dad as sometimes having difficulty in controlling his temper, thus lowering his approachability especially about discussing school grades. He perceives his father as someone who views his children as a priority.

Perception of noncustodial mother's functioning.

Kevin perceives that his mother makes her children a priority and she makes him feel special and loved. He explained that when he is sick,

"Mom will come and visit me and ask me how I'm doing and she'll phone me and ask me if I need anything and she'll rush over and let me have whatever I want. If I need cough medicine or if I'm vomiting real bad, she'll come and help me."

Her ability to listen patiently and talk to him is what Kevin likes best about his mother and he explained this by saying:

"When you talk to her she'll really listen, like she won't be distracted if someone... if Anthony starts crying she won't go off and say 'Just a minute I'll be right back'. She'll just stay and talk to you and then I'll say, 'O.K., you can go and reprehend him,' or something like that. (laughs) She'll go, 'Are you sure?' and I'll go 'O.K.'"

Kevin's mother also makes him feel special by her involvement in his activities and the things they do together. He explained that she takes him to soccer games and cheers for him. She participates in "Hockey Moms" which he described as, "It's a hockey thing that helps out with hockey and that. She doesn't know much about hockey but she likes helping." Some activities that Kevin enjoys doing with his mother are swimming, making cookies, going to recreational events and playing games. He said that he enjoys his mother's involvement in games and the silliness she sometimes displays when she plays with him. He said, "It makes you kind of happy. It gives you a happy day!" Confidence is something that Kevin also perceives his mother to inspire. Kevin commented that,

"She makes me feel good at Christmas concerts like if I say I've got a hard part, she will say, 'You can do it!' She'll say things like that."

Kevin's perception is that when he and his siblings are with their mother, her time is theirs although she has lots of friends whose company she enjoys. He explained that,

"Sometimes on the weekend she likes to spend time with other people. Like sometimes... but when we are there she asks us if we want to spend time with them."

In terms of understanding his emotions and needs and making him feel secure Kevin generally perceives his mother to be very supportive but he sometimes finds her inconsistent in keeping promises and in helping him cope with fears. Kevin described his mother as being particularly irritated and losing her temper when fights occur between the children. He explained that he often supports and "helps" her when this happens. However, Kevin perceives his mother as having improved in handling situations where there are family fights since they started seeing a psychologist. He said that she now uses "time outs" as punishments.

As a source of information Kevin described his mother as "not too bad" and regarding helping with homework, he finds her patient and said "she'll do the best she can". Kevin's responses suggested that, perhaps, being a source of information and helping with homework are within his mother's capabilities but not her strengths. Providing for the physical needs of her children while they are in her care is an area that Kevin perceives his mother as handling well. At her home, the children may help but they are not really expected to do chores.

Overall, Kevin views his mother as caring for and loving her children and designates them as being of prime importance in her life. He perceives her supportive, communication style as a real strength. He views her as not having total control and not being consistent in terms of handling the children but that with the help of a psychologist this is improving. Although he perceives her to be an above average source of information there is an implication that in terms of communication she is better at being supportive than as providing actual information.



## Conclusions.

Figure 17 shows that on the Bricklin Perceptual Scales Kevin rated his father more positively on a greater number of items in the area of competence and admirable traits. He rated his mother as supportive on more items. This is generally consistent with interview data. However, it must be noted that when points are inspected in each area there is not much discrepancy, signifying that scores were generally close and that, overall,

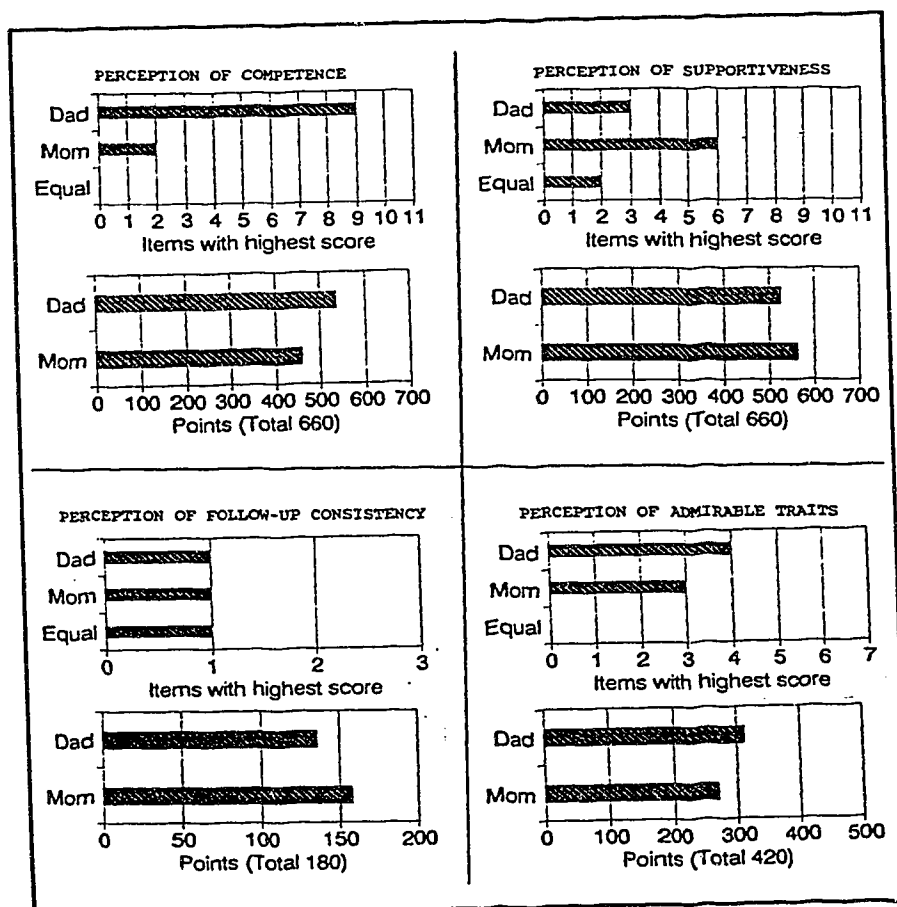


Figure #17 - Kevin's Bricklin Perceptual Scale Scores

Kevin views both of his parents as very capable. The only item on which Kevin rated both his parents as having considerable difficulty is arguing constructively and this he

discussed at some length, highlighting his disturbance about it.

Overall, Kevin appears to regard his parents as functioning well to meet his needs. He said, "All the qualities of what kids want in parents is what my parents have." When questioned as to what these might be he said:

"Probably... kind, sharing, ability to talk to them, working with people, having hearts that won't be interfered. Like they won't say, 'O.K. I'm tired of talking to you here's twenty bucks and leave me alone or something like that.'"

Kevin said that he could not want anything to be different because as he said, he has "all the things that I need, that I could get and that I want - food, clothing, shelter and parents." Parents he regards as very important and described as heroes explaining, "say it's your Dad, your Mom, your parents in general, because they take the time to look after you." In describing what he would be like as a parent he said, "I'd try to be as nice as my parents but I'll also try to be as strict as my parents."

Many areas in which Kevin perceives his father to be competent in and possess traits that he admires seem related to his father's profession. He perceives his Dad as a person who is able to take charge, is capable, has excellent interpersonal and communication skills and is knowledgeable about many areas. His father's profession also seems to influence his perception that his father possesses a more powerful position from which to care for him because of the stronger financial status it creates. Kevin perceives his mother to be an extremely supportive, caring parent. In a sense, Kevin views his parents as being a complement to each other, both being very capable but possessing strengths in slightly different areas. Kevin's ability to look at the strengths and weaknesses of both his parents may relate to his age and to the fact that he has open access to both parents and thus has been exposed to the functioning of both as single parents.

There are two major factors that may subtly affect the way Kevin perceives his parents to function and may relate to a need to depict positively both parents. After five years Kevin appears to continue to mourn the loss of the intact family, perhaps, continuing to take some responsibility for their parting. Although Kevin depicted both of his parents as very capable, caring parents, each on their own, he continuously gave the impression that he would prefer to have them function as a team. The other factor is the continuing conflict between his parents and their tendency to get angry. Kevin projects this as having the possibility of leading to the loss of his access to one or the other of the parents that he so much cares about and needs. As words of wisdom to other children in a similar situation he said:

"You can tell them... if they like seeing both parents then they should, like, be happy and don't hold grudges because it could turn into something... I'm just guessing but you could tell them that they shouldn't hold grudges because they might hold a grudge back at you and then you wouldn't get to know each other. Say, if you did that for five years and then you moved away and then they died and you didn't have a chance."

The factors that seem to have emerged as having the greatest impact on Kevin's perceptions of his custodial and noncustodial parents are:

- 1) father's profession - influencing parenting skills, admirable traits, financial status,
- 2) open access and involvement of both parents in post divorce family,
- 3) emotional functioning of child - mourning loss of intact family - anxiety related to conflict,
- 4) age of child, and
- 5) environment.

## CASE #9 LORNE ELGERT

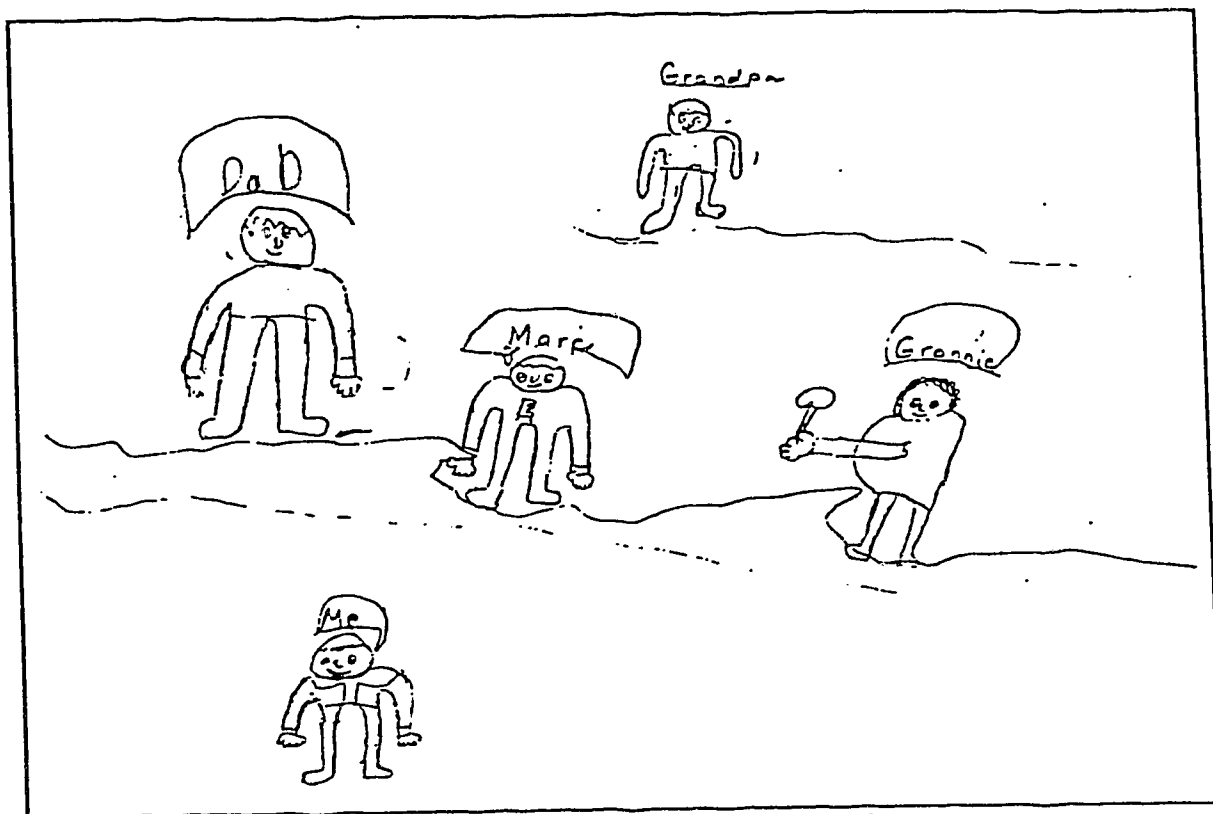


Figure #18 - Lorne's family drawing

Description of child and post divorce family.

This small framed, attractive eight year old boy gets pleasure from drawing, playing Nintendo and watching television in his spare time. Lorne, who is in grade three, enjoys school and named fifteen boys as his friends. Although Lorne seemed comfortable about participating and co-operating in this project, his responses were often limited because he could not remember such things as life before the family breakup or who told him that he would come to live with his father. Lorne's speech was often hushed and he generally appeared to lack confidence. Figure 18, Lorne's family drawing, further suggests feelings of insignificance, inadequacy and evasion (Burns, 1982; Burns & Kaufman, 1972). Lorne's verbal responses to the Bricklin

Perceptual Scales sometimes did not match the nonverbal ones.

Lorne lives with his father, paternal grandparents and five year old cousin, Marc, in his grandparents' home. Marc's mother, Mr. Elgert's sister, was killed in a car accident two years ago and Mr. Elgert is presently attempting to adopt Marc legally. Marc is a very active child, demanding everyone's attention and, to the researcher, it appeared that he created considerable tension in the home. This tension is, perhaps, illustrated by the single line drawings of the mouth and underlining of Lorne's grandmother, his father, and Marc (Burns & Kaufman, 1970,1972).

Lorne said that he likes everyone in the family. He reported that his father is thirty-two years old and is employed as a food clerk and his mother is employed as a bartender. Mr. Elgert reported that Lorne's mother and he lived together in a "common law" relationship for four and one half years and that they have been separated for three and one half years. Lorne's mother had custody of him from the time of separation until one year ago when Mr. Elgert was awarded custody by the courts. Mr. Elgert explained that prior to this time he had very sporadic access to his son, at the "whim" of Lorne's mother, seeing him once or twice a month but sometimes not seeing him for "months at a time". Lorne agreed that he did not see his father often prior to custody and said that he saw him "maybe at school sometimes". In reporting how he had gained custody Mr. Elgert wrote:

"Since she would not let me be part of my son's life, legally, I set out for court appointed visiting rights. The judge couldn't make a decision since our affidavits conflicted, so he asked for a psychological assessment. The psychologist concluded after a study that the mother was pathological in her relationship to her son. She was also found schizophrenic."

The psychologist then encouraged Mr. Elgert to seek custody. Mr. Elgert could be

that was not his original intention.

Lorne did not know how custody was decided. He explained that he is happy to see his Dad more but he misses his Mom and sometimes wishes "to be with her again". Lorne may not feel totally a part of, and accepted, in his new family. Lorne's drawing (Figure 18) seems to portray this. He placed himself significantly apart from the others. Lorne visits his mother very second weekend. He has frequent telephone contact with his mother with either of them calling each other "like a couple times a week". Although Lorne has not witnessed conflict between his parents, he said that they "fight sometimes" when "I'm usually not around". Lorne commented that he thinks both parents are "good at caring" for him and that he is similar to both parents. He explained that he is like his father in that he enjoys playing the drums and like his mother because he enjoys doing dishes.

#### Perception of custodial father's functioning.

Mr. Elgert's involvement with Lorne in recreational activities appears to inspire a certain confidence in Lorne and promotes a good feeling about his father. He described his father as "nice" and spoke of going ice skating, bowling and said, "Well, right after supper he goes out and plays hockey with us." He explained that his father plays with them "mostly every night but when his back started to hurt he didn't." Lorne's father also helps with soccer. Because Lorne is in a new situation, he appeared unsure as to what his father's participation might be in some of his activities. He knew that Dad would attend parent-teacher meetings but he was unsure as to whether or not he would attend his concert. Lorne seems to view his father as patient

Lorne's responses suggested that he perceives his father to be generally in a good mood, willing to accept criticism but not necessarily clear in communicating. He said, about his ability to argue constructively, that he does "not so well". Lorne's responses reflected a certain amount of insecurity in his relationship with his father, perhaps, because Mr. Elgert seems to vary in showing support. Concerning how well his father does in showing him that he loves him, he said that he does, "mmm well... very well." Lorne's implied that while Mr. Elgert might listen patiently to him while he tells about some difficulty, and might help him cope with some fears in certain situations, this is something that he cannot depend on getting from his father on an ongoing, consistent basis. His perception is that Mr. Elgert does not do well at recognizing and helping him deal with emotional needs. Lorne's father has, also, not impressed him with his ability to keep promises. Lorne reported that if he has a problem he usually talks to his teacher or some of his classmates.

... moved by his father's drums

big car and enjoyment of and willingness to help others, including himself.

#### Perception of functioning of noncustodial mother.

When Lorne spoke about his mother there appeared to be more energy and enthusiasm in his voice. He said that she does "very well" at making him feel loved and his responses suggested that he perceives her as understanding him, making him feel secure and confident. Lorne described with enthusiasm some activities that they share such as going to a favourite restaurant, swimming, roller skating, going to the mall and playing baseball in the summer. Lorne perceives his mother as clear about what she expects from him. He explained that she has "lots of rules... I can't jump around, can't turn the T.V. up real loud and can't play Nintendo for real long." He said that if he does not follow the rules she would get angry and say, "Lorne, follow the rules!" Lorne also seemed very secure about her ability to meet his everyday needs and arrange for his care when she must go to work. Although his mother does most of the cooking and cleaning, she involves him with cleaning his room and helping with the dishes. Lorne perceives his mother as helpful with homework but suggested that she does "not so well" at ensuring that homework is done. He views her as a good source of information, backing his perception up by referring to experience. Lorne explained that "She helped me when I was in grade two." Lorne's responses suggested that he perceives his mother as communicating clearly, maintaining a positive mood "very often", and having good interpersonal skills. However, he views her as having difficulty arguing constructively, being assertive and being a good leader.

Overall, Lorne described his mother as a capable parent in meeting his day to day needs, communicating clearly and delineating what is expected in the household



and being very supportive but he seems to view her as lacking some authority and control.

### Conclusions.

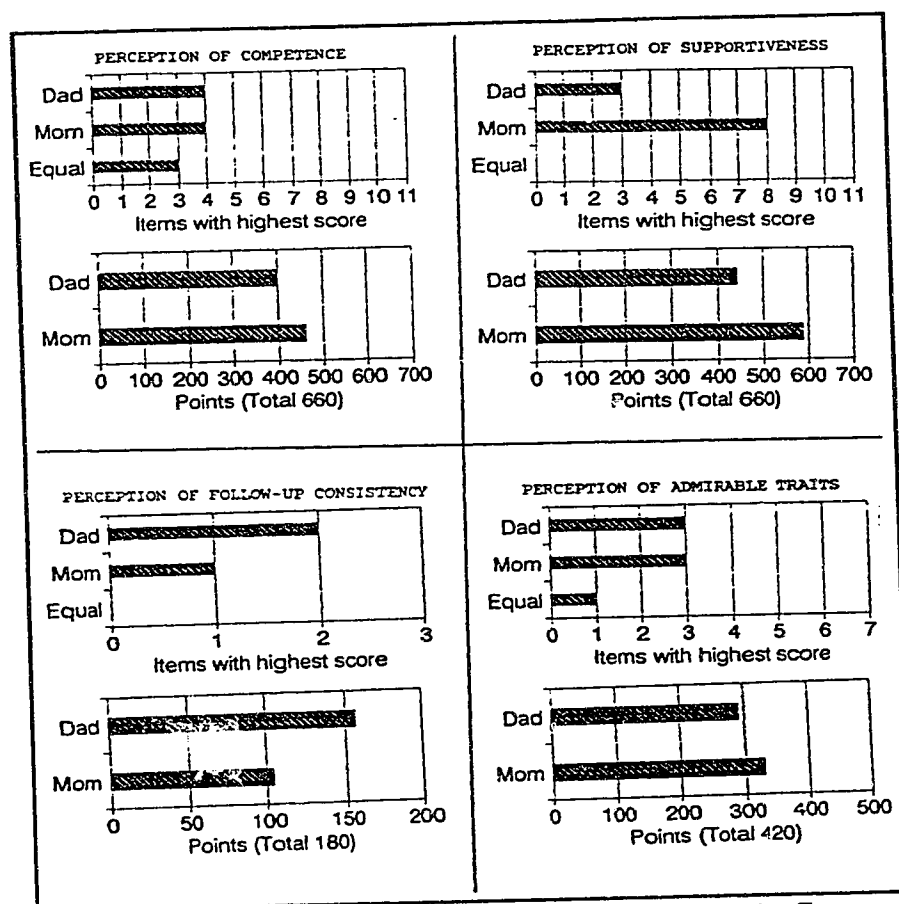


Figure #19 - Lorne's Bricklin Perceptual Scale Scores

Figure 19 shows that on the Bricklin Perceptual Scales Lorne rated his parents equally, in terms of items, in the areas of competence and admirable traits. However, in both areas, he rated his mother more highly in terms of points. This means that on the items where he assessed his mother as the stronger parent the discrepancy was larger in favour of his mother. The results reveal that Lorne perceives his mother to be

... and trust and his father as better at enforcing

homework assignments and bedtime limits.

Lorne's perceptions of his mother's supportiveness and his confidence in her care are likely based on the seven and one half years life experience he has had with her. His father, on the other hand, has had limited experience in a full time capacity in this role and appears to have focused on catering to the social, educational and some physical needs of Lorne. Emotional and psychological needs are more difficult to meet. Mr. Elgert relies on his own parents to provide much of the nurturing Lorne requires. He may not have been psychologically or emotionally prepared to take on the role of "full-time Dad" as he did not initially set out to gain sole custody.

Lorne's perceptions may be based on the fact that he has been taken from a home where he was an only child and placed in an environment where another child is very demanding for attention. The energies that are needed to provide support to him in making this new adjustment may be more focused on giving Marc the attention he demands. Lorne also may view his father as being much more powerful than his mother in that he was able to take him from her and may feel obligated to support her. Lorne, for the various reasons discussed, may idolize or exaggerate his mother's capabilities as he remains insecure in his new environment.

The factors that seem to have emerged as having the greatest impact on Lorne's perceptions of his custodial and noncustodial parents are:

- 1) experience of mother's care,
- 2) motivation for custody,
- 3) emotional functioning of child/mourning loss of relationship with mother,
- 4) lack of experience of custodial parent,
- 5) post custody family environment, and

- 5) perception of powerful father.

CASE #10 DIEDRE EISENHAUER

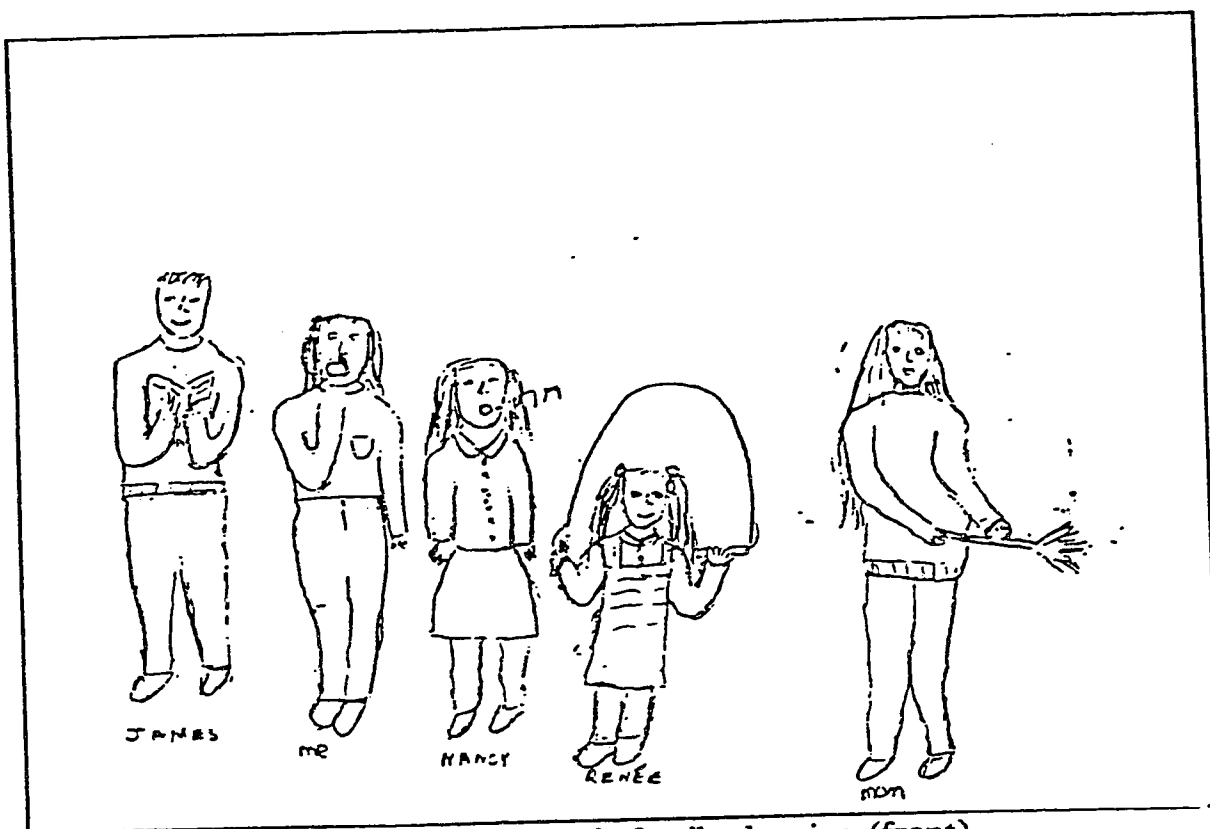


Figure #20 - Diedre's family drawing (front)

Description of child and post divorce family.

Initially, Diedre appeared shy but rapport developed quickly and she became very expressive. She is thirteen, in grade nine, participates in jazz dancing and enjoys watching television and drawing. Diedre was particularly critical of her own attempts at drawing her family (Figures 20 & 21) and displayed this criticism of herself at other times. She said that what she likes best about school is "Probably just that my friends are there and I can be with my friends."

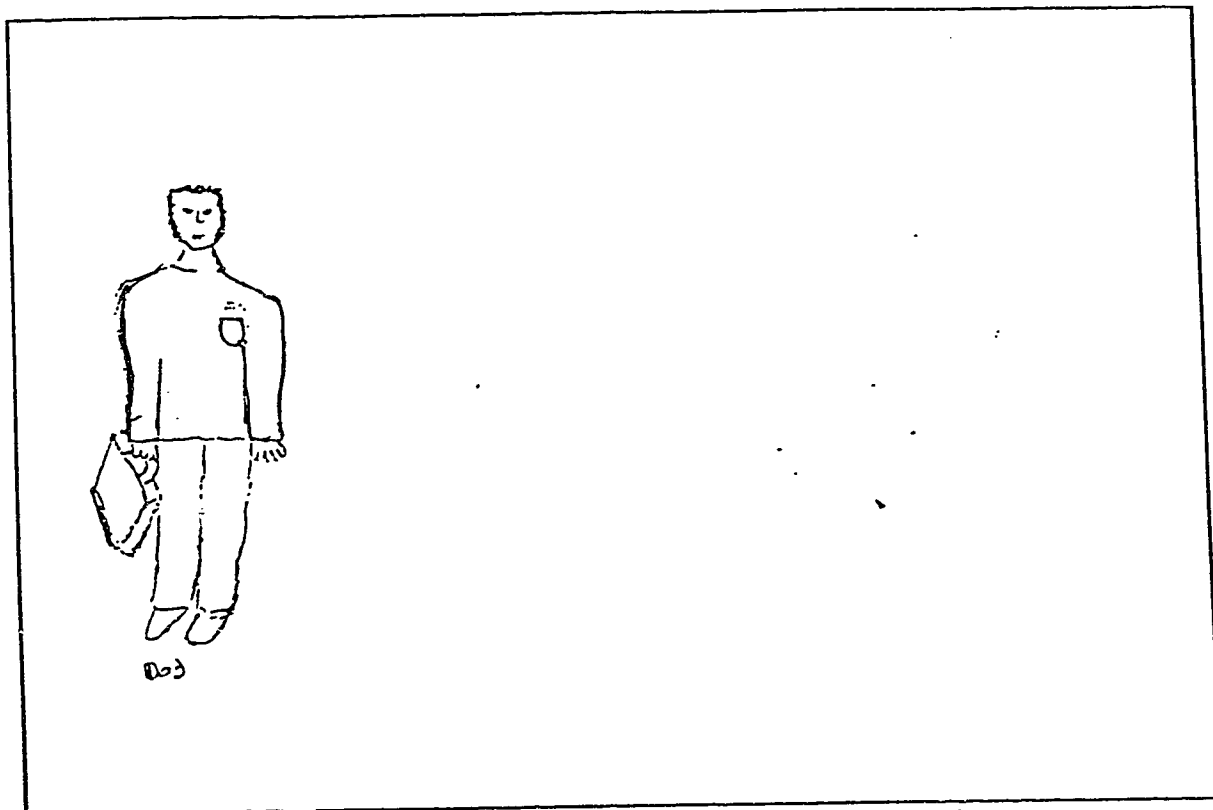


Figure #21 - Diedre's family drawing (back)

Diedre included all the members of her family, as it existed before her parents divorced, in her drawing. James, her fifteen year old brother, and Nancy, her ten year old sister, also live with their father. Renée, her six year old sister, lives with her mother. Although Diedre said about her family, "I like to stay with them equally," her comments often suggested that she is closest to Nancy. Her father is a thirty seven year old chemist, is black and was born in Africa. In referring to her drawing of him she said, "He's carrying a briefcase because he works a lot." Her mother is in her thirties, is Scottish, is a homemaker, has remarried, and has two other children from her present marriage, aged two and one. Regarding her mother, Diedre explained:

"Well, actually I drew her cleaning because she always does that. She always cleans and dusts. The kind of duties of a housewife."

Diedre perceives herself to be like her mother because they both "like shopping".

Mr. Eisenhower reported that he had been married to Diedre's mother for twelve years and that four years have passed since the divorce. He said that before the divorce he shared equally in the care of the children. Diedre's perception was that her mother cared for the children and completed the household tasks while her father played games and took them on outings, giving as an example, "...sometimes he'd take us to his work so we could see what he does at work."

According to Diedre's father, his exwife initially left with all the children except James. Diedre soon expressed a desire to come and live with her father so he fought for custody because she wanted to live with him and her mother did not wish to relinquish custody. Mr. Eisenhower, therefore, could be considered a seeker. Diedre views the custody battle as having been difficult and biased. She said:

"I had to go through a lot of psychologists and stuff. They thought I was too young and they didn't think it was right for a man to be taking care of kids. They thought it was a lady's responsibility so they wouldn't let me come to live with my Dad. Like I had to go to courts and I had to go through psychiatrists. Finally they changed their decision because they thought I was just doing a lot of things just to come and live with my Dad so they thought I was getting a bit out of hand so they just let me come and live with my Dad."

Diedre explained that she was "happy" with the decision because, after she came to live with her father, her relationship with her mother improved and has continued to be positive. Now, she said that she "sometimes" wishes that she lived with her mother when she gets "mad at Dad".

Mr. Eisenhower reported that the children are able to see their mother "at any time". Diedre described a rotating three week visiting schedule. One week Renée comes to stay at her father's home; another weekend, James, Diedre and Nancy go to their mother's home and on the third weekend there is no visitation. She said that they

speak to their mother on the telephone "several times a week". Diedre explained that leaving her Dad's apartment to go to her Mom's home, and vice versa, is "no big deal".

She said:

"Well, it's just a weekend and we call him... and ask him how he's doing and then on Sunday we come back here."

Concerning her mother's home she said, "Sometimes it gets boring at Mom's and sometimes it's fun."

In describing her parents' present relationship Diedre said that they do not speak to each other often and explained:

"Well, sometimes they do and stuff but they're not really friends. I guess it's O.K. because some parents when they're divorced, they like to yell at each other and stuff like that. So it's O.K., I guess, better than fighting with each other."

Diedre said that she would prefer to have her parents together but went on to say, "then in a way I'd rather it be the way it is now."

Perception of custodial father's functioning.

Diedre perceives her father's work as important to him, however, not as important as his children. Her description of him emphasized his love, supportiveness, caring and desire for the success of his children. She said:

"He does a lot for us and he tries to get home early from work to be with us."

Diedre portrayed her father as someone who is excellent at understanding and recognizing the emotional needs of his children and at displaying empathy. She described her father as enjoying being with and helping people, and tactfully solving interpersonal problems. His confidence in dealing with people and new situations is extended to her. For example, she said that if she was going out for the first time with

a new friend, he would say, "act the way you normally act and don't try to be somebody else." Although Diedre views her father as expecting his children to perform to the best of their abilities, he does not necessarily expect them to be the best. Diedre explained:

"He just tells me to think to myself that I can win and even if I don't win, I still learned just from trying."

Mr. Eisenhower stresses and enforces homework. He is willing to spend much time, patiently, helping Diedre with her homework. She views her father as a good resource in helping with homework and providing information on such topics as religion but his ability to provide sex information is limited. She explained that he would not be "helpful at all. He'd say something like you're too young to even be talking about having children."

The emphasis on homework is a major irritant for Diedre and may explain why she has placed her father on the back of her drawing (Figure 21) (Burns & Kaufman, 1972) and portrayed herself eating an apple that may symbolize school activities (Figure 20) (Knoff & Prout, 1985). In discussing her drawing she said, "I don't know why I chose an apple because I don't like apples." About homework she said:

"Well, sometimes it makes me mad when Dad always gets us to study. It makes me mad because sometimes you don't feel like studying any more and you've studied a lot. You just don't feel like studying any more than that."

Another irritant to Diedre is the chores she must do. She described a schedule that Nancy and she have devised so that the three children rotate in doing the household cleaning tasks, viewing it as a necessary evil in that if the chores are not done Dad "hounds you so you always make sure that you get them done cuz it's just a headache." She explained that since the divorce:

"It's different because now there isn't a Mom at home to do the vacuuming and

stuff so when my Dad is at work we've got to do it and we've got to do the dishes and sometimes he calls to ask us to cook but other times he comes home and cooks for us. We kind of alternate and take turns with the cooking. We do all the chores because there's no mother here to do it here for us."

Diedre perceives that her father's emphasis on studying and doing chores is the outstanding difference in his role before and after the divorce. She commented that:

"Actually before the divorce he didn't pay as much attention... Well, he paid attention to us but not as much because my Mom was there to do that... And he didn't really pay... he wouldn't be as strict. He wasn't there as much but he knew Mom was doing it all but... that's about it. He's a bit strict when it comes to things we've got to do."

Diedre perceives her father as strict, assertive, clear in making his expectations known and also perceives him to have difficulty in arguing constructively, accepting criticism and in keeping some promises.

Although Diedre complained about doing the household chores she said that her father generally makes breakfast and cooks five out of seven days a week. Her irritation regarding cooking may relate to a perception that her father relies on her much more to do the cooking when he is unable to, than on her older brother. Perhaps a traditional attitude is at play here despite the nontraditional role Mr. Eisenhower plays. As far as meeting other physical needs, Diedre seems to view her father as competent and managing well within the limitations that are placed upon him. She said that if she is sick:

"He can't stay home from work but he usually calls really often and tells me to take my medicine... and asks how you're feeling and stuff like that."

Diedre's complaints about her father appear to relate to a rigid parenting style. There also appears to be a perception that her involvement in household tasks may relate to her gender as she seems to view her brother as being in a favoured position.



Diedre's complaints are consistent with the findings of Grief and Wasserman (1985) and Oppawsky (1989) that extra work was a common complaint and daughters were assisting in housekeeping more than sons, even when there was an older son in the family. Despite her complaints about her father's strictness about homework and chores, his temper and difficulty in keeping some promises, her overall picture of her father is a man who is also sensitive to her needs and generally "easy to get along with". She seemed proud when she reported that people tell him, "You're raising your kids really well."

#### Perception of noncustodial mother's functioning.

From Diedre's description of her mother one could assume that they have a positive relationship that generally heightens Diedre's self esteem. Diedre said, "She's nice, easy to talk to and get along with." Her ability to communicate with and feel understood by her mother appears to be the pillar of their relationship. She views her mother as having the ability to quickly detect when something is not right. Explaining her mother's ability to be a good listener she said:

"Well, she'd probably think of us as friends rather than a mother and daughter and then let me express my feelings and say whatever I have to say."

Perhaps because of her age and gender, in speaking of her ease in discussing sexual matters with her mother Diedre explained, "Well I would probably find it pretty easy because my Mom is easy to talk to compared to my Dad." Diedre views her mother as being supportive and is impressed that her mother will "stick up" for her when she is in an argument with her stepfather.

Despite her mother's ability to promote her feelings of understanding, security and confidence, Diedre perceives her mother's new family responsibilities as curtailing

the amount of time her mother has for her. She said that she enjoys sharing activities with her mother but explained that most often it is not possible. Diedre said:

"Well, sometimes she does if she's got time cuz she's got so many kids and she doesn't have much time because she's got to take care of the babies."

She also views her mother's responsibilities as, perhaps, affecting her patience saying, "She doesn't criticize me as much as my Dad. She yells at me a lot..." Although Diedre views her mother as helpful and patient in aiding with homework and often involves her new husband, she said:

"Well, she wouldn't stick around much because she has more responsibilities to do so she probably would come back and check up on me."

Diedre sometimes enjoys the time at her mother's but sometimes "its kind of boring". This seemed to relate to her mother's preoccupation with other family responsibilities.

Diedre explained that her mother is very efficient at looking after the children's physical needs. She said that all meals at her mother's home are looked after and commented that what she likes best about visiting her mother's home is that her mother does the cleaning. Diedre explained that her mother "may ask us to vacuum, load the dishwasher," but "usually we stay out of her way. That way she can't ask us." The one responsibility that Diedre has at her mother's home is to help with the babysitting and she described it as "kind of fun".

Diedre perceives her mother to be a sensitive, caring individual who is easy to communicate with. She appreciates that her mother looks after all the household responsibilities but, simultaneously, seems to regret that her mother's many family responsibilities curtail the time that they have together.

## Conclusions.

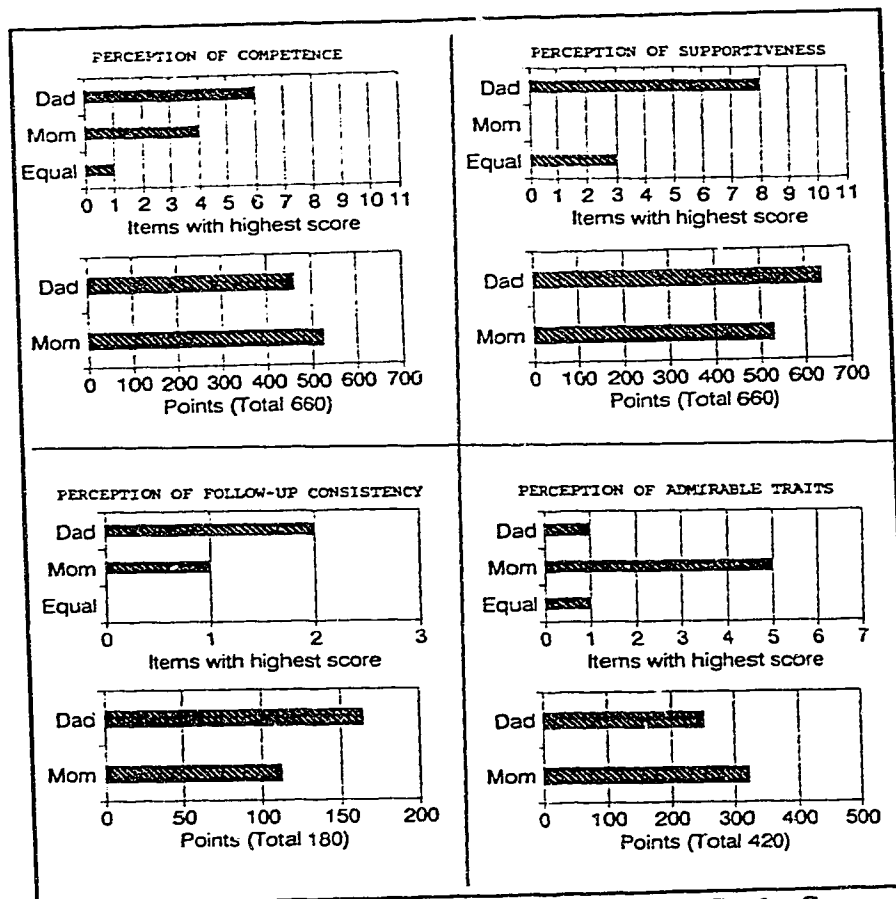


Figure #22 - Diedre's Bricklin Perceptual Scale Scores

Diedre's description of her parents and responses to the Bricklin Perceptual Scales suggested that she perceives both parents as capable, playing a major role in her life. The open access that she has to her parents may enhance this perception. Figure 22 shows that according to Diedre's responses to the Bricklin Perceptual Scales, she perceives both of her parents to be competent but to have varying strengths and weaknesses. Her father appears to be more competent in helping with school and interpersonal problems. She regards her mother as a far more reliable source of information in relation to sex and views her as generally being a more patient, fair person in communicating. At adolescence when Diedre needs a parent in whom she

is able to confide and learn from about topics of a more sensitive and personal nature, her mother's role may be more important to her than ever before. Although Diedre described her mother as a supportive person, on the Bricklin Perceptual Scales, she rated her father as being more supportive. The discrepancy in her perceptions of her two parents may relate to her view that her mother has limited time to be supportive because of new family responsibilities.

Despite the understanding and empathy shown by her father Diedre also views her father as having a rigid parenting style that she considers somewhat unfair. He emphasizes and insists that homework and chores be done. She perceives that he gets angry easily if his rules are not adhered to and perceives that he does not necessarily consider his children's point of view. Diedre also appears to view her father as treating her older brother in a favoured way because of his gender. These are all factors that contribute to an underlying anger Diedre displayed towards her father. Despite this anger, Diedre's statements about her father show that she recognizes that he is a parent who considers the welfare of his children a priority. Diedre explained that both parents are "just as good but Dad is just a bit better because he cares more about my studies than my Mom does." Although she complained about her father, when discussing her future role as a parent, she said:

"Probably I would be like my Dad, as a parent... Stress a lot on their studies... Make sure they've got a good background."

The factors that seem to have emerged as having the greatest impact on Diedre's perceptions of her custodial and noncustodial parents are:

- 1) open access to both parents,
- 2) new family responsibilities of noncustodial parent,
- 3) rigid parenting style of custodial parent,

- 4) additional responsibilities of children in custodial home,
- 5) age of child, and
- 6) gender of child.

#### CASE #11 NANCY EISENHAUER

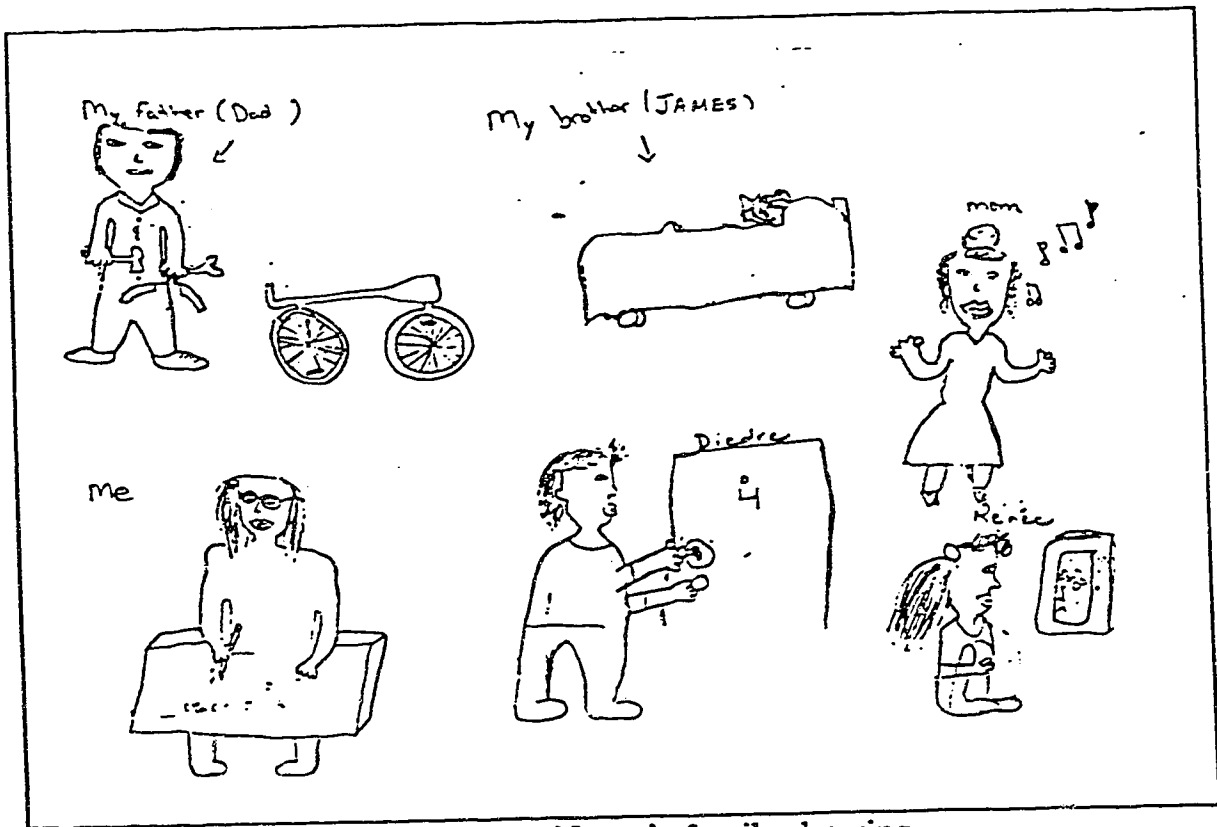


Figure #23 - Nancy's family drawing

Description of child and post divorce family.

Nancy is Diedre's ten year old sister. She is an attractive, very expressive child who appears confident, particularly regarding academics. She is in grade five and explained, "I'm a very good student." Nancy enjoys colouring, reading, drawing and talking to her "Teddy Mouse". She has lived with her father for one year and has developed a good friendship at her new school. Some of her difficulties in past

relationships with children have centered on her perception of their intolerance and insensitivity to her colour. Nancy gave various examples of insensitive treatment and explained that "one of the things that I couldn't stand when I was living with my Mom is that my Mom is married to a white man now and she has two white children. Everyone would ask me if I'm adopted."

Nancy's father reported that she expressed the desire to come and live with him about one and a half years ago. He said that he tried "to convince her Mom to let her have her wish but she was against it and wouldn't talk about it." Mr. Eisenhower reported that after seeking legal counsel his exwife decided to grant Nancy her request but also expressed to him that her greatest fear was that she would not see Nancy again. He explained that he assured his exwife that she could see Nancy "at any time". Concerning her choice of living with her father Nancy commented:

"I knew I would be living in a different environment and I sort of felt slightly happier. Not very much, because I only got to see Dad on weekends then. It was a tough decision."

She further explained her conflicting feelings:

"Now... I don't regret coming to my Dad's. Sometimes I regret leaving my Mom's place... I don't know how to put it. My Mom did Mom activities. My Dad does Dad activities with me and here I don't have a Mom but there I had a stepfather and a Mom but a stepfather isn't a full father... so sometimes I miss having my Mom and Dad together."

Nancy's comments and illustration (Figure 23) suggested that the separation of her family has instilled some insecurity (Burns & Kaufman, 1972) but Nancy attempts to understand and rationalize the divorce situation. In expressing her observations of her parents' present relationship she said, "They're nice to each other, sort of like friends but they wouldn't marry each other again" because "they weren't made for each other."

The divorce, in Nancy's perception, has not changed the care she receives from her parents. She described the predivorce care as more equal than the traditional one described by her sister. Nancy enjoys and looks forward to the time she spends with her mother and wishes her Jazz dancing lessons did not "break up" the weekend. In discussing the care her parents provide and her similarity to her parents she said that they "both care" and she said that she is like both parents, explaining:

"I like baking, so does my Mom. My Mom likes doing my hair in different styles. I like doing that. Things like that. Pretty girlish things. I'm more like my Dad because my Dad uses computers and I like using computers and I like fixing things... mechanical things and making things."

#### Perception of functioning of custodial father.

From the researcher's conversation with Nancy it seemed evident that she admires her father and that he enhances her feelings of confidence and importance. She spoke about him as a man who has "lots of friends". She perceives that he does extremely well in showing her that he loves her and she explained that what she likes best about him is:

"Probably that he cares about us. There are actually people in the world who couldn't care less about their children. I like the fact that my father cares for us very much."

Nancy explained that she knows that her father cares because

"For one thing if he didn't care he wouldn't help me with my homework. He wouldn't care if my grades were good and the supper wouldn't be on the table every night. It would just be make it yourself. And if we were sick he wouldn't take care of us."

Many of Nancy's descriptions of her father emphasized her feelings of being paramount in his life. She said:

"If I've got the measles or something like that and we're out of calamine lotion, he'll go out and buy a hundred bottles if I needed it."

His attention to homework, school and extracurricular activities, and belief in her abilities, impress her. Nancy described his reaction if she was in a competitive event as, "If you try you can do it. I want to see my kid on the top." Mr. Eisenhower plays board games, goes to the library and to the mall with his children. These activities all contribute to an environment which Nancy seems to appreciate which enhance her perception of her and her sibling's importance to him. Nancy said:

"I like doing things with him that normally I don't like to do with others, like special things, I guess that you could call it."

Although Nancy perceives that her father keeps promises about doing activities with her, she expressed some regret and said:

"To Diedre, his promises are always the same. He promises we will go to the mall but the mall is open when he has meetings... He'll say tomorrow and he means next year."

Her father's ability to be patient and understanding seem to create a certain security and confidence in Nancy. Nancy's perception that her father understands her because of their similarity is significant, highlighting her feeling of importance. She described his ability to recognize that something is wrong by observing facial expressions. Nancy explained that her father thinks that they both look alike.

"He thinks that we both have the same kinds of expressions so he knows when I'm sad... he thinks, "When I'm sad, how do I look like?"

Communicating with her father, about almost anything, is comfortable for Nancy although she said that she sometimes speaks to her "Teddy Mouse" before she speaks to Dad. Nancy views her father as being in a good mood "ninety-six percent of the time". However, she explained that her father does not appreciate criticism. She views him as more capable of handling an argument than her sister Diedre does. She said:

"Well, if it's a serious, serious argument, he'll just leave the room because he'll know that he'll start yelling. If it's a calm argument, he'll stay calm."



Like her sister, Nancy perceives that her father makes it clear as to what he expects from the children and if they do not follow his requests, "He just sort of gets mad but he doesn't say anything about it." Nancy explained that the children must

"Get everything done before he gets home... try to keep your bedroom and everything in it clean, as much as possible. Try to always make sure you have clothes for the next day. Don't stay on the phone too long. He can't stand it! He likes us to at least leave a note when we're going to our Mom's"

Nancy's father's "strictness" contributes to a feeling that she is accepted by others. She believes that others react positively to her because her father ensures she is well dressed and looked after.

Overall, Mr. Eisenhower has impressed upon Nancy that she is very significant in his life. She seems to believe that he is an excellent parent. These perceptions are based on the things he does for her and her siblings, the activities that they share, the emotional supportiveness that he demonstrates, the pride he shows in her successes, an environment he creates that she believes is for the children's benefit and the similarity she considers herself and her father to share. Her greatest criticism of him relates to what she perceives as his inability to keep promises to Diedre.

Perception of functioning of noncustodial mother.

What Nancy most appreciates about her mother is "the fact that she cares". She perceives her mother to be approachable as a source of information and support. Nancy views her mother as a parent who is in a good mood "ninety-eight percent of the time", clear about making her expectations known, able to take criticism but disliking sarcasm, and being patient and calm in a discussion or argument. Although Nancy's rating of her father on the Bricklin Perceptual Scales suggested that she perceives him to be slightly more supportive in dealing with situations in which she may feel insecure,

her overall reactions about her mother suggested that she perceives her mother as also being an excellent source of support. She said, "she's basically the same as my Dad."

Nancy also described her mother's rules as being "pretty much the same as my Dad's rules," and explained that regarding discipline

"My Mom and Dad aren't like other people. They don't send me to my room for three thousand hours or three thousand years. She'll say, 'Go up to your room for ten minutes and try to cool down and think about what's happening.'"

She expressed her appreciation of the fact that at her mother's home the children are not expected to help with the household tasks. Nancy perceives her mother as competent in meeting all her children's physical needs, attending to emergencies and helping with homework. She views her mother as a trustworthy person and explained that if she makes a promise she "may forget but will eventually keep the promise."

Like her sister Diedre, Nancy perceives that her mother's new family responsibilities may curtail her time for involvement with her and others. She explained that her mother had considered becoming one of her Guide teachers but "Now she's got the two children and she doesn't have time because she has to be watching them because they're babies." There are several activities which Nancy enjoys sharing with her mother such as going to the mall, baking and sitting on the sun porch, "doing nothing just sitting there". However, she also indirectly expressed some resentment about having to share activities that she was not involved in deciding upon or did not enjoy. Nancy explained that, together, they "watch soap operas" but said "That's pretty boring though!" She complained that her mother "takes us to the movie store and just leaves us in the car". In speaking about this, she stressed that, perhaps, this was a key area where the "environment" created by her father is more desirable, more child-

centred and more directed to involving the children in decision making.

In summary, Nancy perceives her mother to be an excellent parent who is capable of attending to her physical, emotional and educational needs. However, she perceives that her mother lacks time and, perhaps, motivation to attend to social needs that contribute to an overall feeling of confidence that she is paramount in her mother's life.

### Conclusions.

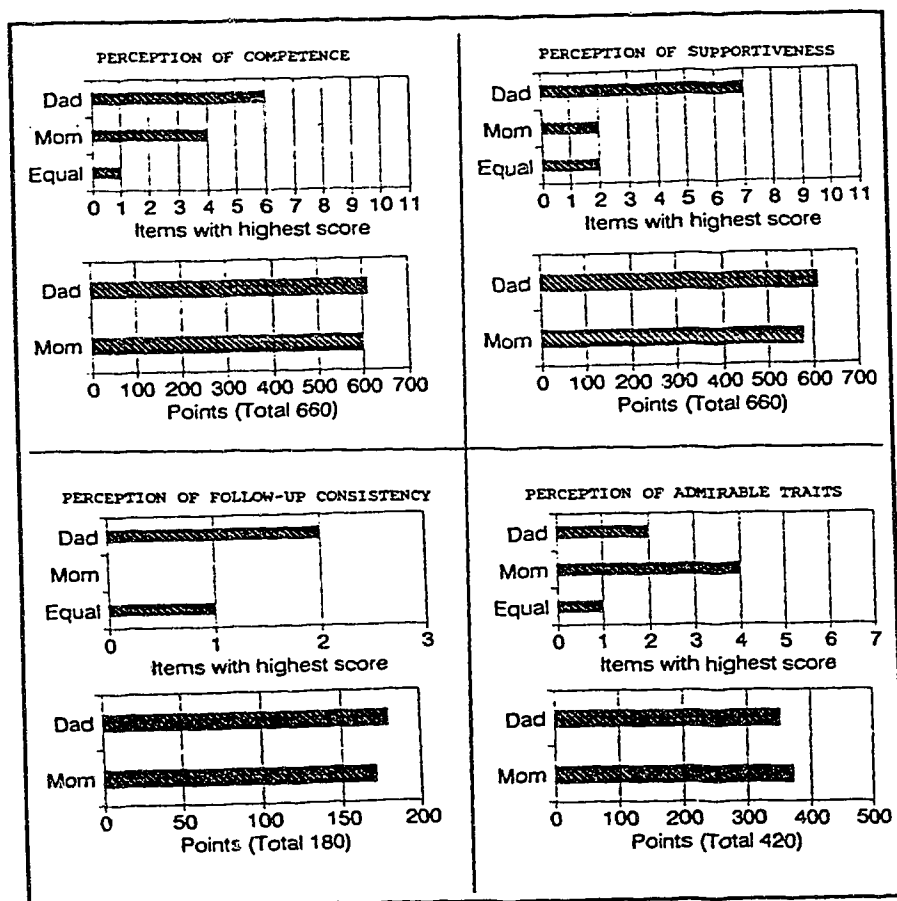


Figure #24 - Nancy's Bricklin Perceptual Scale Scores

Nancy's overall responses to the Bricklin Perceptual Scales suggest that she perceives both her parents as functioning at a superior level (Bricklin, 1990). Figure 24

shows that Nancy rated her father more highly in the areas of competency, supportiveness and follow-up consistency. She rated her mother more highly in the area of admirable traits. However, if points in each area are inspected one observes that the discrepancies are slight. One factor that appears to most affect Nancy's perception of her parents is the ongoing access she has to both and her perception that both use superior, and similar, parenting strategies. She emphasized that her mother and father are good at meeting her needs, explaining that

"The reason I think that is that they both care and they both have a chance to help me in some way."

The lack of conflict between her parents likely enhances Nancy's opportunity to relate to both parents positively. Her identification with her father appears to contribute to her slightly more positive perception of him. She identifies with him regarding their appearance, academic success and race. Nancy's mother's new family responsibilities appear to affect her perception of her mother's ability to contribute time to their relationship and she seems to view her father as more committed. The environment that her father creates contributes to a heightened self esteem and to a feeling that she and her siblings are a priority in his life. Part of the environment that Mr. Eisenhower creates includes ensuring that the children are well dressed and follow his rules. Nancy perceives that in the eyes of her friends, and those who know the family, her father is very capable of bringing up his children and this, in turn, results in their acceptance of her.

The factors that seem to have emerged as having the greatest impact on Nancy's perceptions of her custodial and noncustodial parents are:

- 1) ongoing access to both parents/lack of conflict,
- 2) similar parenting strategies of both parents,

- 3) similarities to custodial father - appearance, interests,
- 4) race of custodial parent,
- 5) noncustodial mother's new family responsibilities,
- 6) reaction of others, and
- 7) environment.

### SUMMARY

Eleven paternal custody children were studied. Each child and his or her family is described. A description of how each child perceives the parenting effectiveness and strategies of both the custodial and noncustodial parent follows. Conclusions, about each case, are then drawn by the researcher in regards to the child's perceptions of parental functioning and the factors which appear to influence these perceptions.

## CHAPTER 5

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### MULTI CASE ANALYSIS

##### INTRODUCTION

The analysis of each individual case highlights that children who are in the custody of their father experience life after divorce or separation in diverse ways. Their perceptions of how their parents meet their needs vary and appear to be influenced by a variety, and complexly related group of factors. Children in the same families may describe their parents similarly but view them as meeting their needs in differing ways. Despite the differences, when the data was synthesized, certain themes and patterns became apparent that were common among most or all of the children. Ten factors that seem to influence children's perceptions of how their custodial and noncustodial parents meet their needs emerged.

The following section presents a collective description of the eleven children and their families. It includes an analysis of an overall, powerful theme regarding the importance of both parents in meeting the needs of the children and describes the changing roles of custodial fathers and noncustodial mothers, as well as, a pattern of their respective strengths and weaknesses. The factors that seem to influence the children's perceptions of their parent's functioning are also discussed. Findings are interwoven with the researcher's comments and reference to the literature.

##### DESCRIPTIVE DATA

A total of eleven children, seven boys and four girls, from seven families participated in this study. The children range in age from eight to fourteen. Four are

ten years old and under and seven, twelve and over. All of the children reported having friends and enjoying school. One child said he was not particularly fond of attending school but said that he appreciated the importance of an education. The fathers of the children range in age from thirty to fifty one, all are employed, three collect salaries in the range of twenty to thirty-nine thousand dollars and the others earn over forty thousand dollars annually. Three own their own home, one rents a house, two live in apartments and one lives with his parents.

One custodial father is separated, five are divorced and one has ended a common-law arrangement. The parents of the children that were studied had lived together for varying lengths of time. Two of the parents were together for four years and the others were together for ten to fifteen years. Two to five years have passed since the marital breakups. Fathers have had custody of one to three children for one to five years. Five of the children came to live with their fathers after the courts awarded custody. Awards were granted for varying reasons, including psychological difficulties and residential instability of mothers and a child's difficulty in getting along with her mother. The children of two families stayed in the fathers' custody after the parents agreed to this arrangement and the mothers left to pursue their own lives. In one case the child decided to go live with her father and in the other the child was directed by Social Services to live with her father after her mother hit her, causing bruising.

Eight of the children came to live with their fathers immediately after or shortly after the marital breakup. After one year, one of these children returned to her mother for two years and has now returned to her father and has been with him for two years. Another child was involved in a shared custody situation until one year ago and the

other two children came to live with their fathers after living with their mothers for two to three years.

Access to the noncustodial mothers is generally regular but frequency of physical visits varies in this group of children. Almost all the children have at least weekly contact with their mothers by telephone. This includes the two families whose mothers live in another province and the one whose mother lives in another town. One family sees their mother several times a week, three see her every two or three weeks, one once a month and two families see their mothers once or twice a year. In one of these families, the mother has recently moved back to Edmonton and visiting has increased. The regular access described by this group of children is consistent with literature that reported that mothers describe themselves as involved in their children's lives (Grief & Emad, 1983; Grief & Pabst, 1988).

Five families have grandparents who live in the same city. All are involved with them. They babysit, attend concerts, care for them when they are sick and share activities such as baking. Most of the involved grandparents are paternal but in one case the maternal grandmother is very involved with the children. This family also sees their mother most often. One child lives at the home of his grandparents with his father and they are involved in his day to day care. Hanson (1986) concluded that, from reviewing the father custody literature, it seems that most custodial fathers received moral support from their parents but not instrumental support. In this group of children, it appears that many grandparents also provide instrumental support.

Most children in this group described their parents' relationship as only somewhat conflict ridden before the marital breakup. Diedre gave a common response:

"Sometimes they got along pretty good but other times they argued a lot and got into a lot of fights but most of the time things were O.K.."



Most children wished their parents were together but tried to be understanding. There was much discrepancy in describing their parents' present relationships. Some described conflicts, most described an ambivalent, "civil" relationship and one characterized the relationship between her parents as "best friends".

Overall, in this group of children, there was considerable variance as to age, sex, length of custody, reason for custody, age and financial status of fathers, access to the noncustodial parent and relationship of parents. Despite this variance the following theme regarding the importance of both parents as contributors to meeting the children's needs became evident.

#### IMPORTANCE OF BOTH PARENTS.

Divorce did not destroy the need for two parents.

Bautz and Hill (1991) conclude that, "Children do not expect their parents to divorce, and they often do not understand the reasons why their parents divorce." Santrock, Warshak and Elliott (1982) reported their findings that, "Children want to live in two-parent families rather than one-parent families." These conclusions were supported by the comments of the children who participated in this research study. They displayed feelings of sadness and anger and described the feeling of being torn between the two most important people in their lives. Patrick said:

"...I didn't really care who I lived with, I just wanted it to be the same but now looking back on it, I realize it couldn't have been.. so I didn't only want to stay with my Dad and I didn't only want to stay with my Mom."

Diedre explained, "I'd probably rather them still be together but then in a way, I'd rather it be the way it is now." Most, like Diedre and Patrick, said they now have accepted the marital breakup but others cling to the fantasy of a family that was happy and

intact. Shawn, upon completion of his drawing, said that he wanted to show that his family was "all doing something together instead of apart." Kevin wishes that he could portray through his family's cheeks their happiness and Cameron clung to a fantasy as he drew his family, including his parents holding hands and explained that, "they love each other". Divorce and separation may have physically divided the couple whom these children call parents, and whom they considered caretakers of the family, but the children strongly emphasized that the marital breakup did not destroy their need for two parents and for a family, although many were willing, unhappily, to accept that the family would have a new structure. Tammy explained that what is important is that, "they have a Mom and a Dad and they see both regularly and they can handle their responsibilities with their children and everything."

Importance of the custodial as well as noncustodial parent was highlighted by the family drawings. Most children included both parents. However, three children excluded their mothers. Bart, who appeared to be very satisfied with an exclusive relationship with his father left his mother out of the drawing. Matthew asked if he should include his mother but decided not to, perhaps, illustrating his struggle with the reality of his situation. Lorne did not bring his mother into a family in which he perceives her to be strongly disliked. Two of the children, Diedre and Tammy, drew one of their parents on the back of their pictures but their comments did not diminish their importance. They merely illustrated conflict, or perhaps a power struggle both are presently experiencing with that particular parent. The children's drawings generally emphasized the separateness of the parents but portrayed the parent's importance to them. Children's comments about their pictures affirmed that each parent's uniqueness was something that was appreciated and desired.

### Appreciation of parents.

This group of children perceives that both parents contribute to their development. Although begrudgingly in most cases, they accept that this will be done separately. Children generally appreciate both of their parents and expect their parents to appreciate each other in a parenting capacity. In four of the families the children did not perceive conflict between their parents in the post divorce/separation situation. In the families where there is some kind of tension the children expressed annoyance at their parents. Kevin commented, "there are good things and bad things about parents." Patrick explained, about his parent's criticism of each other:

"When they start saying those kinds of things... to my Dad I usually say, 'Dad, I don't want to hear it. I don't care what you think'... And to my Mom I'll say, 'Mom, please, O.K.' and she'll say, 'Well, Patrick it's the truth' and I'll say, 'Well, Mom, whenever Dad says anything about you I say, 'I don't want to hear it and when you say something about Dad I don't want to hear'."

### Regarding both parents as competent.

Perhaps a key reason that the children do not want to hear their parents criticize each other is that these criticisms are contrary to how they perceive and regard the other parent. According to their perceptions, as noted by their nonverbal responses to the Bricklin Perceptual Scales, they regard both parents as capable of meeting their needs (see Table 1 ). Most of this group of children also regard both parents as being, overall, equally capable of meeting their needs but their responses suggested that they perceive each parent as contributing in differing ways. Only two children perceive their parents to vary substantially in being capable of meeting their needs. The nonverbal scores on the Bricklin Perceptual Scales also suggest that another two children see

TABLE 1 BRICKLIN PERCEPTUAL SCALES

Child	TOTAL POINTS	
	Mother	Father
Patrick	1356	1334
Shawn	1610	1445
Matthew	1616	1711
Jackie	1772	1199
Bart	1209	1505
Cameron	1386	1289
Tammy	1420	1462
Kevin	1451	1510
Lorne	1483	1296
Diedre	1489	1517
Nancy	1718	1757

- Scores of 800 or less - signs of early or continuing deprivation
- Scores of 1700 + - superior
- \*\* Important to note - raw scores cannot be compared from child to child as may vary depending on child's age etc...

their parents varying, somewhat, in their abilities to provide care. However, all four explained that both parents are capable and three emphasized the need for both parents. This assessment is generally consistent with previous research that suggested that when children live with their fathers no significant variation between their attitudes toward each parent was found (Drill, 1987). A possible explanation may relate to the fact that children in the custody of their fathers tend to have regular contact with their mothers. Interestingly, the children in this study whose noncustodial mother is geographically removed rated their mothers slightly to substantially higher on the Bricklin Perceptual Scales. Bart, whose mother lives in another province, rated his father substantially higher on the Bricklin Perceptual Scales. Perhaps, when the noncustodial parent is not readily accessible the custodial parents abilities may be

exaggerated or undermined in comparison.

Table 1 shows that six children, nonverbally, gave their fathers higher ratings on the Bricklin Perceptual Scales. In five of these cases the difference was slight as compared to the score given to the mother. When the children were interviewed only two said that their fathers could care better for them and one of these was a child who, nonverbally, rated his mother as better at caring for him. Most children explained that both of their parents are capable of caring for them and supported their perceptions by their experience. Nancy explained that she knew that both can care equally because "both have a chance to help me in some way." Some children recognized that both can care for them but perceived that there were differences. Patrick said, "but Mom has more experience" and Diedre explained, "Dad cares more about studies."

The children's ratings and responses regarding the ability of both parents to care for them, support most of their views that it does not matter which sex parent cares for the children. However, Jackie qualified her statement that both can care by saying, "but Mom can be more understanding with girl problems". Only Bart was very definite that children are better off with the same sex parent because "they understand each other better." Although most of these children did not perceive that sex was a major consideration in their parent's ability to care for them, they did perceive that "others" think it makes a difference. They based their perceptions on their experiences. Patrick spoke about female family and friends who insisted on baking for him and his brother; Diedre talked about her custody experience in the courts where she perceived that professionals were biased against fathers getting custody; and others spoke of the "time" factor. They explained that people generally think Dads have difficulty in doing household chores and in providing care because of other responsibilities. Kevin

explained that he somewhat agrees that "time" is a problem but that he feels it does not have anything to do with caring. Nancy's opinion is that people in general do not understand the equal caring capabilities of men and women because "a lot of children live with their Moms, not so many live with their Dads..." and, consequently, people do not understand that fathers can care for their children.

Custody arrangement relatively unimportant - access important.

Most of the children did not perceive custody arrangement to be of great consequence. Patrick expressed his view that, "who you live with doesn't mean you love that parent more," and Kevin explained that if he lived with his mother he probably would not have "turned out" much differently. Only Bart and Tammy were very definite that they would like to continue primarily residing with their fathers. Both said that they enjoyed their environment and would not want to move. Bart also explained that the personality difference between him and his mother would not lead to a positive arrangement. The other children admitted that at times they think of living with their mothers because they, "sometimes get along better", "do different things", "need to share problems" and "miss her". However, all of this group, except Jackie, could anticipate living with their fathers until they were nineteen or twenty years old. Some reasons that they gave for considering the paternal custody structure to be advantageous to their particular situation related to a preferred financial position, stability, environment, gender and personality.

More important than custody arrangement, in the view of these children, was time to spend with each parent. Almost all said they want more time with their mothers and Kevin explained that he would like more time with his father. Matthew said that he

would like to go back to a shared custody situation. Patrick explained that he would like to "spend a week at my Mom's and a week at my Dad's but it just can't work that way cuz they're at different places that are quite far away." Jackie reported that, "I just never think it's long enough but it's as long as it'll get." The children also recognized that there were some inconveniences to visiting their mothers but on considering the alternatives most said, "It's not that bad!", and "I don't really mind!" Kevin and Matthew spoke about being "shifted" around, others described their Mom's house as "boring" and Tammy spoke about the disruption. She explained that sometimes she has homework to do or would rather visit friends. However, she did explain that she can usually arrange with her mother to visit later.

#### Complementary parents.

The children in the study perceive that what is in their "best interest" is that after divorce or separation both parents continue to be involved in their lives. Most accept, with great difficulty that the family structure has changed but do not accept that a parent is eliminated. Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) stated that:

"In a reasonably happy intact family, the child gravitates to one parent then to the other, using a combination of skills and attributes from each in climbing the developmental ladder. With access to both parents, children intuitively create their own recipes for growing up based on a rich mixture of what they value and respect. The parents complement one another, so that when one is unavailable, the other steps in to meet the child's needs." (p.233)

Children in this study who perceive their contact with both parents to be open generally rate their parents equally. Levy (1988) disputed Goldstein, Freud and Solnit's (1973) assertion that a child should be placed with the one "psychological" parent, by explaining that most children have two psychological parents. Each may not be "good enough" in all respects. This, indeed, is what seems to be supported by the views of

the children who participated in this study, not that either parent is not capable of caring for his or her child but that every child needs both parents. Both parents have different contributions to make to his or her child's development. Children did not perceive custodial arrangement to be important, however, most did recognize the reality and advantage of a particular type of physical custody. What seemed most at issue with this group of paternal custody children was that both parents be involved with them as they grow up.

This study did not intend to compare as much as to find out how children in paternal custody perceive their parents, individually, meeting their needs. However, children seemed to do this naturally, emphasizing, simultaneously, that both parents can care for them and are important to them. Certain trends did emerge as to the changing roles, strengths and weaknesses of the custodial and noncustodial parents, highlighting the children's satisfaction with, and wish for change concerning their parents.

#### FATHER'S ROLE HAS CHANGED

Most children described a fairly traditional predivorce/separation arrangement that involved the father working outside the home and the mother staying home with the children. Many described this as "equal" and tended to recognize that fathers were involved with them. Kevin explained, "I would say it was probably equal and my Mom probably spend more time with us because she didn't have to work." Some children spoke about their fathers occasionally helping with cooking or cleaning. Before the marital breakups the fathers' involvement with their children tended to center on playing, taking them on outings, helping with homework, and participating in and supporting school and extracurricular activities. All children perceived their father's roles to have



changed quite dramatically. Some of their comments were:

"He does more now. He cooks and cleans and stuff like that."

"He wasn't there as much but he knew Mom was doing it all..."

"He never really used to cook but now he does a bit more... When he gets home, he like... helps clean up and everything."

Although most of this group of children perceived their fathers to be relatively uninvolved in the household responsibilities and meeting their physical needs during the marriages of their parents, they now perceive them as doing quite well in managing their households. These perceptions are somewhat discrepant from the perceptions of the group of children Fry (1983) interviewed. Fry's group described their fathers as poor cooks, being late in doing laundry, disorganized and forgetful in household management and generally did not perceive their fathers as effective in the realm of physical care. The eleven children in this study described a typical day in their fathers' homes. Most of the children are awakened by their fathers and about half the children mentioned their fathers as involved in getting them to school. Two fathers do little cooking, one hires someone to cook for the family during the week and the other's mother cooks. Five fathers do all or most of the cooking. Matthew's grandmother cooks when she babysits but his father cooks when they are alone. Diedre and Jackie were the only children who perceived that they were expected to cook, however, both explained that their fathers do "most" of the cooking. The children generally seemed to appreciate their father's culinary efforts. Cameron, who was generally reserved during interviews, enthusiastically announced that what he likes about his father is his "cooking", particularly his "spaghetti". His father did not cook at all before the divorce but he believes that he handles this task very capably.

Household responsibilities, such as cleaning, are approached in a variety of

ways. Most children are expected to help in some way but the expectations vary. Only one family hires occasional help to clean but the children are also expected to contribute significantly. Some families approach household responsibilities as a team effort. Three children said that they are not expected to help with cleaning and only do so if they want to. Two fathers who do all the cooking, also tended to take care of all or most of the household responsibilities. Interestingly, these two families shared two commonalities. In both of the families the children were boys and the fathers were older. Female children tended to be more extensively involved in helping with household chores and were more likely to report that they do chores alone. Male children tend to do chores with their fathers or not at all. In families where both genders are represented, chores are sometimes divided along ~~gender~~ traditional lines. Kevin described his responsibilities by saying, "like I'm the oldest so I have to do the shovelling because Anthony is too young to do the shovelling." He did explain that he sometimes helps with the vacuuming but said, "Tammy usually does the cleaning because she's the oldest." Diedre complained about her older brother's lack of involvement and her father's expectation that she should be more responsible, particularly regarding cooking. She explained:

"It's mostly me. James doesn't do anything. He's lazy. It's mostly me but today James did cook something. I think Dad asked James to put some chicken in the oven, so James did that. He did that today because I was at our school dance."

Lamb and Lamb (1976) reviewed literature that discussed findings that fathers are more concerned than mothers about sex differentiated behaviour in children. This attitude may be carried into the paternal custody home despite the nontraditional role the father, himself, plays.

Ensuring that children are supervised and receive care when they are ill are

two other areas that are new to most custodial fathers. All children perceived their fathers to be conscientious about arranging supervision before and after school if the child was under twelve years old. The teenagers also spoke about their fathers calling after school or at lunch hour. If the younger children are sick, the fathers will stay home from work or arrange with a relative to provide care. Older children tend to stay home alone but some children described their fathers as calling "real often from work". Most fathers take their children to the doctors themselves, however, a few children said that relatives would take them. Two teenage girls said that they preferred going to the doctor with their mothers. All children perceive their fathers as capable of handling everyday medical problems, such as taking out a sliver, but many said, "sometimes he's not that gentle".

Discipline and enforcement of expectations is an area that these eleven children regarded as involving a major change for most of their fathers. They described parenting strategies from permissive to rigid but, overall, seemed to view their fathers as less rigid than their mothers. Similar findings have been reported by others (Fry, 1983). The three older fathers were described as more permissive and catering by their children. Shawn said that the rules at his house are "easier rules" than when his mother was there. Some children could not remember what the rules were. Bart said, "... can't really think of it. I know there are some, otherwise it would be chaos but I can't really think of any off hand." Several children mentioned that others think they are "spoiled". Patrick described his father's tendency to "spoil" him and his brother. He explained:

"Then about five or five thirty, he doesn't really tell us when supper's done. He just brings it himself. He brings it to us. We're probably pretty spoiled but he doesn't really say that it's ready so we don't really have a chance to come get it so he'll bring it down."

However, even in the more permissive families, the fathers were viewed as "strengthening" their rules. Diedre and Nancy, whose father basically was not involved in this domain in the intact family is described as "strict" by both. Diedre said, "He makes sure everything is done." Other fathers were also regarded as having changed. Matthew explained that his father is becoming a little stricter, "Because before he might let me get away with it but now he wouldn't." Tammy explained that her Dad does very well about enforcing rules. She said that rules have changed particularly regarding chores and explained, "we didn't usually do chores because my Mom would usually clean up but we still had to do our homework and go to bed at a certain time."

Fathers have continued to share similar activities with their children as they did before the marital breakup. It was, perhaps, through sharing these activities in the intact family that the bonding, Lamb and Lamb (1976) discuss, developed. All children seem relatively close to their fathers, feel their fathers' love for them, appreciate the new caretaking responsibilities that their fathers have undertaken and continue to enjoy activities such as they did before. Children discussed playing board games, going to the mall, library, dinner or other outings, participating in sports and watching television. Although a clear trend did not emerge, there may be some sex differences in the kinds of activities that custodial fathers participate in with their children and in which they encourage their involvement. More boys tended to talk about their own and their father's involvement in sport activities.

The eleven children studied, generally, regarded their fathers' role as having greatly changed from that in the intact family. Most seemed appreciative of the environment created by their fathers that they described as "relaxed", "spacious" and involving some decision making. Despite comments about additional responsibilities

that the children were expected to take on, only one female child complained to a great extent. However, some trends as to sex related expectations, regarding responsibilities and activities, did emerge. Most children viewed their fathers as doing well at ensuring their day-to-day needs are met and seemed cognizant that most of these responsibilities are new to him.

### STRENGTHS OF CUSTODIAL FATHERS

Paternal custody children perceive that their fathers are generally able to meet their physical and emotional needs. However, it appears from their responses to the Bricklin Perceptual Scales and to interview questions that, perhaps, the father's collective strengths lie in promoting academic, cognitive and social development. Most of the areas in which children perceive their fathers to be somewhat stronger than their mothers have to do with inspiring and assuring that the children do their best to succeed, and in modelling and helping develop interpersonal skills. The areas of strength that were discussed by paternal custody children regarding their fathers seem to relate closely to the roles their fathers played in the intact family.

#### Supporting academic achievement.

All paternal custody children in the group studied, perceive their fathers as valuing academic achievement and taking an interest in them, individually, by attending parent teacher interviews and school related activities and helping with homework. Fathers are perceived to be very helpful in solving school problems. Tammy explained, "he's good because he's smart..." Matthew reported that, "He's real well at that because last year I would get homework and he would help me with it and there was

this real hard page..." The children most often mentioned mathematics as a subject that they found their fathers to be most helpful with. The one child who questioned her father's patience in helping with homework, valued his help with "math".

Overall, the children perceive their fathers to be patient at helping with homework. Nancy explained:

"Well, the first time he would circle the question or put a little "x". If I kept getting it wrong, that question kept frustrating me, he would say something, let's say it's five times five. He would say, 'What is five times five?' He would have me stop, think about it and answer the question."

The children also perceive that their fathers do well at ensuring homework is done.

Some comments were:

"He wouldn't leave my side for a minute."

"He always makes me lay it out on the table. It's just that if he went out on business and I didn't get my homework done, he'd wake me up early in the morning to get it done."

Diedre believes her father stresses studying too much and said, "... sometimes it gets me kind of mad when my Dad always gets us to study." However, she explained that when she is a parent, she will "stress a lot on their studies... make sure they've got a good background." Several children had picked up on the "importance of an education" from their fathers and most of the older children spoke about going to university.

The findings regarding this small group of children differ from Shilling and Lynch's (1985) findings. They compared father custody and mother custody eighth graders and concluded that children are better off with mothers because children perceive mothers to be more interested in school and, accordingly, achieve better. The findings are more consistent with those of Strom, Fleming, and Daniels (1984). They compared married and single fathers and concluded that single fathers are more supportive of creative behaviour, get less frustrated and spend more time with their

children.

#### Modelling interpersonal skills.

Almost all the children view their fathers as someone who enjoys and cares about people. Their fathers' abilities to take on positions of leadership, deal with interpersonal problems fairly and effectively, and ability to keep promises are highly regarded. These strengths in the fathers appeared, from their comments, to instill a certain security and pride. A few of the children questioned their father's ability to keep promises to the family. Although they regarded their fathers as trustworthy in this regard with others, they mentioned that, in their view, "he doesn't take seriously promises to the family."

#### Communication/supportiveness

Children most often talk to their fathers because he is "physically" there. They regard him as a good source of information about matters of a less sensitive nature or with which he has had experience. Some topics that they mentioned discussing with their fathers relate to school, values, their plans, theories, movies and computers. Seven children indicated that they view their fathers as a good source of religious information.

Most children in this group perceive their fathers as supportive, making them feel, generally, loved and important. They view their fathers to be slightly better than their mothers at creating confidence and calming them if they are angry or fearful. Many talked about their ability to discuss fears with their fathers and gave as examples that if they were angry their fathers might: suggest beating a pillow, tell stories or act

silly, or suggest visualization/calming techniques. Fathers seemed to have a way of supporting to promote the children's sense of being a priority in their lives. Often this may mean putting the child's interests ahead of his.

#### WEAKNESSES OF CUSTODIAL FATHERS

Only one child perceives that her father might have some control and remove himself from a situation where he might potentially lose his temper. Ability to control their tempers and accept criticism were, overwhelmingly perceived to be collective weaknesses of custodial fathers. Other researchers have made these observations (Fry, 1983; Grief, 1985; Warshak, 1987; Finkelstein, Rosenthal & Rosenthal, 1978). Concerning their fathers' ability to stay calm in an argument, this group of children said:

"Not good at all!"

"A little below average until he starts to scream and rant and rave if he doesn't get his way."

"Not so good because he usually blows his temper!"

Although children in this group generally perceive their fathers to be emotionally supportive, they emphasized that their father's temper can interfere and make him less approachable. Patrick, in discussing how well his father does at making him feel loved said, "pretty good until he's mad... when he's mad you feel sort of, not so good." The father's temper also may interfere with his ability to listen to a child, as he or she reacts emotionally. Tammy said he would "probably start yelling himself".

Socialization of men may include a belief that as the "man of the house", he should not be criticized and that suppressed feelings are a requirement to being truly masculine. Finkelstein, Rosenthal, and Rosenthal (1978) suggested that custodial fathers are in a difficult position because when they deal with emotions of their children,



they are dealing with emotions that they, themselves, have never learned to manage and control. It must be emphasized that the children did, generally, regard their fathers as able to meet their emotional needs providing security and confidence but that the father's temper did deter them, at times, from reaching out to their fathers.

#### Providing sex information.

Another weakness that has been previously reported (Grief, 1985a, 1985b; Bartz & Witcher, 1978) was confirmed by the perceptions of this group of children. A few of the boys did not perceive their fathers as having difficulty in this area, particularly Bart. All three teenage girls perceived difficulties and said that they would not approach their fathers to get sex information. However, a gender related distinction was not clear. Several of the boys, as well as girls, recognized their mother's experience in bearing children and their mother's comfort with the subject matter. About his father, fourteen year old Patrick said:

"Way worse than my Mom! Like he'd clam up. He couldn't handle it. So not so well. Like he'd be helpful but it would be sort of tough to go through for me cuz... I don't know, he just wouldn't be great."

#### MOTHER'S ROLE HAS CHANGED

The predivorce/separation family configuration was such that the mother stayed home with the children. The children described their mother as cooking, cleaning, making rules and playing with them. When children, presently, visit with their mothers, they perceive that not much has changed in their relationship. They, merely, recognize and emphasize the limited time they have together. Mothers continue to do the cooking and cleaning and the expectations of the children are limited to cleaning up

their messes and helping with chores such as the dishes. Children sometimes view, what could otherwise be termed chores, as "fun" when they are with their mothers. Some of these include grocery shopping, babysitting stepsiblings, baking and helping complete certain cleaning jobs. All said that their mother's rules have not changed and many implied a confidence in her rules and suggested that their mothers were generally consistent in enforcing these rules. Jackie explained, "But my Mom sticks to the grounding but my Dad doesn't like to ground us and stuff."

Although the children suggested that their mother's role had not changed, their comments implied that they recognized a certain amount of change. For example, Patrick said

"...My Mom tries to have more fun into the weekend than normal weekends would be. So she tries to have a good time while we're there... She'd just do more than you'd usually do in a weekend."

Children, in their descriptions, mainly focused on the fact that they like their mothers and believe that they care, and discussed the activities that they enjoy doing with their mothers. Shawn said, "She always has time to do things for you." Some things they enjoyed are talking, shopping, going on outings to museums and recreational events, participating in sports and outdoor activities and going out to eat. Matthew explained, "I like going outside in the winter because we usually throw snow at each other." Jackie enthusiastically described, "We bake pies... go through her clothes and mine... do each others hair... play certain... kiddy games... kick around the park... go out for supper... go for a drive." Bart, who of the eleven children, seemed least enthusiastic about his mother said, "We do stuff like we see some of the few sites but when that's done, it's more like hanging around the house and that's about it." A few others also complained about occasional boredom at their mother's homes. These complaints

seemed to relate to their mother's new work and family responsibilities and new home that restricted access to their friends and familiar surroundings.

The children identified certain areas where their mothers were less involved. One of these was in providing medical care. Only Kevin and Tammy's mother continues to be actively involved. Most, however, seemed confident that if they are ill when they are with their mothers, she will provide the care they once knew. Patrick said, "Like she sort of hovers over me, every five minutes saying, 'Are you O.K.?' 'Do you need another pillow?', whatever." They also viewed their mother as handling simple medical problems gently and efficiently.

Another area of change related to the mothers' involvement in their activities. Some focused on past involvement and projected conflicting feelings of sadness and happiness. A few suggested that their mothers may occasionally attend school concerts if they are informed. Kevin and Tammy were the only children whose mother is actively involved in attending concerts, parent-teacher meetings and Kevin explained that she participates in "Hockey Moms" and attends his soccer games.

Although the children did not recognize distinct, definite changes in their mother's role, their description confirmed a role that is generally confined to entertainment and excludes most of the routine caretaking responsibilities of household management and day-to-day involvement in activities. These findings are similar to those of Furstenburg and Nord (1985).

## STRENGTHS OF NONCUSTODIAL MOTHERS

Strengths of noncustodial mothers seem to relate to perceived strengths and roles in the intact family. Mothers are viewed as efficient in providing day-to-day care

and in making clear their expectations of their children. Their strengths in contributing to their children in the marital disrupted family appear to lie in promoting emotional and social development. The focus appears to be on promoting the child's acceptance of him or herself.

#### Communication/supportiveness/approachability.

This group of paternal custody children perceives their mothers to have a greater capacity to control their tempers and be clear in communicating. They also perceive them to, generally, be better than fathers at accepting criticism and staying in a good mood. This leads to children viewing them as slightly better at listening and generally enhances the perception of supportiveness and approachability. Mothers are perceived to express and accept emotions more easily and most teenagers seem to view them as friends. Patrick described his mother as "more in tune" with his life and explained:

"My Dad sort of, not hides his feelings... he'll keep them more in. My Mom's kind of more... I don't know what the word is. Passionate, is probably the closest I'm going to come to describing it. Like she says what she feels. She's more emotionally open, I guess."

Kevin said, "When you talk to her she'll really listen" and Diedre explained, "...she's easy to talk to and get along with."

Both boys and girls seem to perceive their mothers to be capable and sensitive in dealing with matters of a personal nature. Except Bart, all perceive communication regarding topics of sex to be comfortable and positive. Nancy reported:

"I would find it quite helpful because she knows where babies come from because she's had more than one. She would understand my questions."

Teenage girls, especially, emphasized that they would regard their mothers as more approachable about gender specific, delicate matters. Jackie explained, "Most times

I think Mom is more understanding in those kind of areas than Dad is. I'm embarrassed to talk to Dad."

#### Discipline.

Children, concerning the ability to be clear about what was expected from them, perceived their mothers to be strong. Their perceptions appear to be based on their experience in the intact family. Only Tammy perceives this to be a particular difficulty for her mother.

#### WEAKNESSES OF NONCUSTODIAL MOTHERS

Although, comparatively, mothers are regarded by their children as able to control their temper and accept criticism, two thirds of the children felt their mothers were at their best for a limited time. Some of their comments were:

"I don't think she'd do well."

"She yells at me a lot."

"But sometimes she's too harsh like in the way she talks or when she gets mad, sometimes she's pretty mean. She doesn't really know what she's saying until afterwards or she's not really great."

#### FACTORS IMPACTING PERCEPTIONS

In synthesizing the perceptions of paternal custody children regarding how these parents contribute to meet their needs and, in assessing the overall importance of parents to their children several factors emerged as, perhaps, influencing the perceptions. Many factors are interrelated.

# 1. Personality/Interests/Gender.

"Interviewer: In trying to learn more about children who live with their Dads, can you think of any other question I should ask other children?"

Bart: ...Get more of an idea of their Dad's personality compared to their's.

Interviewer: How do you think personality might affect how they view their Dad?

Bart: Well, I don't know. It's probably positive but... I don't know.

Interviewer: So you think if they're more similar in personality...?

Bart: It would be a positive sort of reaction. I don't know. I don't have anything to compare against."

All of the children, to some extent, appeared to agree with Bart that there is a "positive sort of reaction". Personality and interests are perceived to be the most common linkage between parents and their children, seeming to affect the children's perceptions of the way their parents function to meet their needs and relate with them. Gender was sometimes tied into this because children often seem, to relate to parents along gender specific lines, although cross gender identification was also evident. For example, Nancy explained that she likes baking and doing hairstyles with her Mom. With her Dad, she likes using the computer, and making and fixing mechanical things. Patrick reported that, in his opinion, "Me and my Mom are more alike so I like hanging around with her."

Half the children identify with both parents; they vary in age and gender. Four children said that they are more like their mothers. Two are boys. One emphasized personality and interests while the other emphasized appearance. All of the girls identify with their mothers, primarily regarding appearance and interests, but only one exclusively so. The others said they are like "both" parents. Two children said that they are more like their fathers. Both are boys. One identified positively, stressing personality, and the other negatively, relating to his father's "hardness". In most cases, if the child identified with both parents, this was reflected in fairly equivalent Bricklin Perceptual Scales Scores. If the child suggested that he or she was more like his or

her mother or father, the rating tended to favour that parent. In the case where the child identified negatively with his father, he rated the mother more favourably. In one family the older brother identifies closely with his father, the younger with his mother. Their ratings corresponded with their identification.

This group of children, generally, did not perceive a same sex parent relationship as preferable but emphasized the importance of a relationship that was based on personality and interests, and, accordingly, judged their parent's functioning in meeting their needs as being related. The children did, however, seem to attach some importance to, and identified with, the same sex parent. Several implications arise from these findings. "The parents are the primary identification figures, and children, take on characteristics from both in complex ways." (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989, p. 102). The availability of two parents of opposite sex may be important to provide children, at minimum, with opportunity to address developmental issues involving gender (Lamb, 1986). At maximum, they provide models and support for full personality growth and development. Warshak (1986) reported, "The child's identification with the same sex parent is an important component of personality development and this identification may be more difficult to sustain when the parent is less available." The findings from this study confirm this, to some extent; but strongly suggest that the identification that may be more critical to maintain, in the child's view, is the one of similarity in personality.

## 2. Parenting strategies and environment.

All the children viewed their parents as having some positive strategies in dealing with them. No parent was viewed as totally permissive or totally rigid. However, a preferred parenting strategy seemed to be shared among the children and tended to

affect their perceptions of how that parent functions to meet their needs. Children prefer and appreciate an open, straight forward, two way communication; a fair disciplinary style; and warmth and ability to comprehend the child's needs, putting them before the parent's needs. The children described and emphasized a preferred strategy as one where expectations and consequences are clear and fairness prevails. Kevin knows what his father's "punishments are if you disobey". Both he and his sister appreciate their father's clarity about what is expected and willingness to explain why it is expected. Matthew appreciates his father's fairness and, accordingly, perceives him to be very capable as a parent. Diedre complained about her father's rigidity about studying but understands the importance of studying and will model herself on her father when she is a parent. On the other hand, one child complained about her mother's difficulty in making clear what she means and another complained, "She thinks she's the boss..." Others complained of their father's "closed mindedness", inconsistency and unfairness in "grounding" them.

This group of paternal custody children appeared to base many of their perceptions as to how competent their parents are able to meet their needs on the parenting strategies that they adopt and the environment that they create. The style of positive parenting that they prefer is termed "authoritative" parenting by Baumrind (1971). Much has been written about this style of parenting as preferable and resulting in children who are more competent (Santrock & Warshak, 1979; Heath & MacKinnon, 1988; Lamb, Pleck, & Levine, 1985; Schutz, Dixon, Lindenberger & Rutter, 1989; Grief, 1985; Radin & Russell, 1983; Lynn, 1974). Interesting, the children in this study seem to identify this style as one that they view as favourable to meeting their needs.



### 3. Emotional functioning of parent/child.

Children who perceived their custodial fathers as sad, angry or depressed tended to view them as less effective in caring for them. In each case the noncustodial parent was judged to be the stronger parent when the responses to the Bricklin Perceptual Scales and interview questions were considered. Four of these children have mothers who do not reside in the same city. This may confirm suggestions that the noncustodial parent can play a very supportive role to both her children and their father, increasing his parenting capacity (Lowerstein & Koopman, 1978).

Emotional functioning of the custodial parent appears to be interwoven with, and impact on, the emotional functioning of the child. Children who talked about sadness, and appeared to be struggling with the loss of the intact family, tended to have fathers whom they perceived as having their own difficulties. Matthew is a good example of a child who is somewhat sad but views his father as strong, approachable and moving toward conflict resolution in his relationship with his exwife and, consequently, perceives his father as an excellent parent. Several researchers have commented on the importance of parental adjustment as a predictor of child adjustment (Drill, 1987; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989; Lowery, 1985; Felner & Terre, 1987; Wallerstein, 1986; Guildubaldi & Perry, 1985). Grief (1985) found that if the father was doing well, the children tended to be doing well. Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) said:

"It is often true that an unhappy adult finds it hard to be a nurturing parent for unhappiness can deplete the adult's capacity to provide the care and understanding the child needs."(p. 11)

Children, in this study, did not directly link up their father's emotional functioning and theirs, and suggest that it reflected on the father's ability to meet their needs. Their suggestions as to the relationship tended to be subtle.

#### 4. Age of child.

Age of the child did not seem related, overall, to the perception of how the parent functions in meeting the child's needs. What was emphasized was the perception of the noncustodial mother's ability to deal with age related personal concerns such as dating and age related reactions to the marital disruption, as discussed by Wallerstein and Kelly (1980). Age did seem to relate to the way children are able to verbalize their perceptions of how their parents care for them. An overall developmental trend was evident with younger children generally being more complimentary to their parents. However, in response to the Bricklin Perceptual Scales their nonverbal responses varied but were not always backed up by verbal comments. Verbal comments were often inhibited or suppressed. Older children tended to be more expressive, giving a variety of critical and complimentary examples about the qualities of their parents. When younger children gave examples they often related to concrete, physicalistic descriptions. Older children used more abstract, psychological inferences such as speaking of "emotional openness". These findings are similar to the findings of Kurdek and Siesky (1980).

#### 5. Predivorce care/experience in post divorce/separation.

As previously discussed, the role the child perceives the parent to play in the predivorce/separation or pre custody situation continues to impact on how he or she perceives the parent's functioning in the new family arrangement. Children referred to each of their parent's competence, basing their perceptions on their experience in the intact or pre paternal custody family. They were willing to recognize that their

fathers could learn to provide physical care and be concerned about matters of discipline and emotional needs. However, they tended to emphasize their father's strengths as related to their role in the intact family.

Those who have, or had, an opportunity to have easy access to both parents in the post divorce/separation family tend to perceive that both function well, although, perhaps, in differing ways. In response to a question of how a child might know that his or her parents care, several children replied similarly to Nancy, "Both have a chance to care for me in some way."

The following factors that were identified as impacting on children's perceptions of how their custodial and noncustodial parents function to meet their needs were not general but could be important in understanding differing perceptions.

#### 6. Parent's new family responsibilities.

Two children of one family recognized that their mother's remarriage and resultant children contribute to less time for her involvement with them. Although both recognize their mother as a capable parent, both rated their father slightly higher on the Bricklin Perceptual Scales and responded in the interview in such a way as to suggest that in their father's life, they may be more of a priority. Another child indirectly suggested that, in his view, his mother's new mate had, perhaps, become the center of her attention. He also rated his father slightly higher on the Bricklin Perceptual Scales. Mother's employment was also viewed as affecting availability of time. As parents take on new family responsibilities, children from the original intact family may perceive that their noncustodial parent is less available to care for them.

## 7. Parent's profession/job.

A few children spoke about their parent's professional accomplishments with pride. This may relate to their perceptions of how well the parent is able to function in meeting their needs. As status of employment is often related to education, some children viewed the more educated parent as more helpful in areas relating to school. One child also spoke about the transference of communication and people skills from his father's workplace to the parenting domain, heightening his perceptions of his father's abilities.

Kind of employment generally impacts on the financial status of the parent. The area that was most hinted at or directly discussed, related to the parent's ability to afford the costs involved in raising a family. Particularly by older children, it was perceived to be an asset to be living with their fathers. Others have found that the financial situation is related to the child's adjustment after divorce (Chesler, 1986; Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1982, 1985; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Wolchik, Braver, Sandler, 1985; Ambert, 1984).

## 8. Reaction of others/race.

The reaction of others may affect, to some extent, how children perceive their custodial parent. The reactions may be positive or negative. For example the reaction may be defensive thus heightening the perception of the father's ability. Patrick's view that women friends and relatives are patronizing may heighten his perceptions of his father's abilities to care for him. More positive reactions may result because of compliments directed at the fathers that the children hear or the reaction the children themselves feel from others as to their presentation.

Another significant factor was introduced by a child who is a product of an interracial marriage. Nancy found that as a consequence of her mother's remarriage to a "white" man and the resultant "white" children, as a dark skinned child she was asked, often, if she was adopted. Nancy was disturbed by this and she seemed to imply that in her move to be in the custody of her father, she was in the primary care of someone whom she could be more comfortable with and who could, perhaps, understand her better. The literature reports that some courts have presumed that the biracial child's interests are best served by placement with the custodian the child most closely resembles physically (Rohman, Sales & Lou, 1987; Clingempeel, Shuwall & Heiss, 1988). Nancy seems to strengthen the courts position, in that, from her perspective her interests are best ~~served~~ served by her father whom she most resembles physically.

#### 9. Age of parent.

A few children spoke about their father's age as a factor in how they relate to each other. Two adolescents appear to be drawn to their younger mothers, perceiving them to be more understanding about issues that are age related. Patrick described his mother as "more in tune with my life". He said:

"I guess cuz my Dad, I don't know if it's because he's older. He's just not as aware of things. She's like aware of everything. She, like I don't know what to say, understands today's problem. I guess that it's something you could say because she's younger..."

A younger child explained that he wished he could make his father younger, "So he'd play with me more."

Age of the parent also appeared to have subtle implications when the children's perceptions of their parents are considered. The three fathers who are over forty-five

years old seemed to be viewed as permissive, catering and, somewhat, inconsistent.

#### 10. Motivation for custody.

Whether the father fought for or assented to custody did not appear to have a major impact on children's perceptions of their custodial parent's functioning. However, in cases such as Jackie and Lorne's where sole custody may not have been fully anticipated, the children perceived their fathers as having more difficulties.

#### SUMMARY

Study and analysis of how eleven paternal custody children perceive the abilities of their custodial and noncustodial parent to serve the child's "best interests" proved to be extremely interesting and highlighted the complexity of how parents and children relate in the divorced or separated family. Analysis was based on four sources of data - the child's responses to an interview, the Bricklin Perceptual Scales, the Kinetic Family Drawing, and a questionnaire completed by the custodial father. Each child's perceptions of how his or her parents relate to him or her appear to be based on varying factors. In families where two children were studied, the general descriptions of the parent tended to match quite closely but variance was noted in their perceptions of how each parent functions to meet his or her needs. The analysis of the individual cases heightens the importance of considering each and every child's needs in deciding as to custody after marital breakup.

Despite the differences between individual cases, when the data was synthesized and studied across cases, certain themes or patterns became apparent that are common among all or most of the eleven children. The most salient theme relates to

the importance of a continuing relationship with both parents and the recognition that both are capable of caring for him or her. Rather than perceiving the parents as providing identical care, they tend to view them as complementary.

The intact families, of which most of the children were members, were described as traditional in that the mothers were generally responsible for the household and children, and the fathers were responsible for bringing in an income. The father's predivorce/separation involvement with his children was primarily on a social or educational level. Children recognize that their fathers' role has changed and view them as competent in meeting their day-to-day needs and recognize that in this new family structure, they are also expected to assume new household responsibilities. Custodial fathers' strengths are perceived to relate to ensuring and supporting success in the world outside the family. Helping with academic endeavors, modelling interpersonal skills and being a general source of information regarding many topics were specifically identified as strengths. Although generally viewed as able to support emotional needs, fathers' tempers were viewed as a weakness and described as curtailing approachability. Fathers are not perceived as an ideal source of sex information particularly by girls, but no clear gender related differences were noted.

Although the children did not recognize distinct, definite changes in the noncustodial mothers' role from that in the intact family, their descriptions confirmed a role that is generally confined to entertainment and excludes most of the routine caretaking responsibilities of household management and day-to-day involvement in activities. Mothers are viewed as approachable regarding delicate subject areas, emotionally supportive and generally consistent and clear about expectations. Noncustodial mothers were also viewed as having some difficulties with temper but, in

comparison to the custodial fathers, the children perceived them to do well.

Ten factors appear to influence the children's perceptions of how their custodial and noncustodial parents meet their needs. Five factors affect how most children perceive their parents' functioning in the paternal custody home. They related to:

- 1) personality, interests and gender,
- 2) parenting strategies and environment created,
- 3) emotional functioning of parent and child,
- 4) predivorce/separation care or experience in the post divorce/separation family, and
- 5) age of the child.

The other five factors were identified as being of importance to particular children in this group and may relate more extensively to a larger population of paternal custody children and to how they perceive their parents' abilities to care for them. These factors are:

- 1) new responsibilities taken on by noncustodial parent,
- 2) parents' professional/employment,
- 3) reaction of others/race,
- 4) age of parent, and
- 5) motivation for custody.



## CHAPTER 6

### GENERAL DISCUSSION

This concluding chapter relates the findings to the stated purpose and the insights provided by children are discussed. Methodological contributions and implications for professionals, parents and society are highlighted. The findings suggest areas in which future research should focus and these are discussed. Limitations of the present study are considered. The chapter concludes with a reflection on how this study will affect the researcher's approach as a professional.

#### RELATING FINDINGS TO STATED PURPOSE.

The intent of this study was to determine how paternal custody children perceive the functioning of both the custodial and noncustodial parent and to uncover factors that may underlie these perceptions. The eleven paternal custody children who participated in this study provided many insights into their parents' ability to provide nurturance to them. From each child it was learned that children's needs and relationships differ and are often very complex. Therefore it is difficult to make assumptions about custody of children and what is in the individual child's "best interests", based on generalizations. Stake (1978) explained that "Good generalizations aid the understanding of general conditions but good generalizations can lead one to see phenomena more simplistically than one should." (p. 6) However commonalities of children's perceptions do provide guidelines and those gained from this study will be discussed.

From the children, as a group, it is learned that custodial fathers assume a different role from that in the intact family. They perceive their fathers as, for the most part, doing well in their new roles and perceive that they are able to provide for physical needs and be emotionally supportive. Fathers are perceived to be more involved in discipline than in the intact family. Most paternal custody children perceive themselves as more involved in household responsibilities. There may be a trend to gender related expectations regarding responsibilities and activities of the children by the custodial father despite the nontraditional role he, himself, plays. Despite the fact that paternal custody children recognize and applaud that their fathers have quickly adapted to providing day-to-day care, they seem to emphasize their fathers' strengths as similar to those identified in the intact family; relating to promoting their academic, cognitive and social development. They identify the weaknesses of their fathers as relating to controlling temper and accepting criticism and, to being comfortable in providing information related to sex and personal issues. Several fathers get some help from others, however, children seem to perceive their fathers as quite self sufficient in providing care for them.

The eleven paternal custody children continue to perceive their mothers as caring and special, emphasizing that they play a very important role in their lives. All children who participated in this study visit with their mothers but the most prevalent complaint related to the fact that in their view there was often not enough time. Although the children did not recognize definite changes in how their mothers relate to them, they described their mothers as involved in their social and emotional development, playing primarily a social role. The children generally view their mothers as approachable about emotional, personal and sensitive issues. They view them as, also,

having difficulty in remaining calm in stressful situations, however, view them as doing much better in this regard than their fathers. Perhaps the most critical information we gain from these paternal custody children is that they perceive their fathers as able to raise them competently and that they need and value their mothers' contributions to their care in ways that are somewhat different from the ways in which the father provides nurturance.

We learned from this group of children that a complex group of factors appears to affect how they view the custodial and noncustodial parents' functioning and the role that they see their parents playing in their lives. The five key factors that seem to influence the children's perceptions of how their parents function relate to: 1) personality, interests, gender; 2) parenting strategies; 3) emotional functioning of child and/ or parent; 4) prior experience with parent and 5) age of child. Children appear to identify strongly with their parents regarding personality, usually emphasizing interests and, sometimes, gender. The findings suggest that children's perceptions of how well the parent functions to meet their needs may relate along the lines of identification through personality. Children in this study appear to perceive a parent who has fair, clear, and defined expectations of them, to be a capable parent. When children sense that a parent is experiencing some emotional difficulties, they seem to regard them as having more difficulty in functioning to provide and care for them. Long term experience appears to have much to do with how children perceive parents in the paternal custody structure. If their mother was the primary care giver in the intact family, they generally continue to value and feel confident with her abilities. However, if in the post divorce/separation period, they perceive both parents to be readily accessible and sharing in their care, they tend to view both parents as being equally

capable of caring for them. The children also seemed to identify access to their mothers as important to deal with developmental issues and age related reactions to the marital breakup. The expression of children's perceptions varies with age, with older children able to be more verbally expressive, describing more easily their parents' strengths and weaknesses. As these eleven children described their parents' abilities to care for them some also suggested, directly or indirectly, that their parents' abilities to nurture them may be affected by the new responsibilities of the custodial parent, career of the parent, reaction of others, race and age of the parent and motivation for custody.

#### METHODOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS.

The case study method has distinct advantages for researchers who wish to make a practical contribution to professionals who work with families and children living in alternate family structures after marital breakup or are involved in making decisions about custody. Lawyers and mental health professionals, in particular, are familiar with a case approach. They understand that the "decision reached in a single case may be generalized to future cases." (Kennedy, 1979, p. 673) In this study, the case study method facilitated tracking many details in an effort to promote the understanding, and unravel some complexities, of how paternal custody children perceive and relate to their custodial and noncustodial parent. Wood (1982) in her study of preschool children's experiences with divorce said:

"All of these factors have to be examined concurrently to obtain a clear picture of children's experiences of growing up in divorced homes. Yet most existing studies focus on only one or two of them, analyzing only aspects of children's lives." (p. 51)

Others may look at the data that has been presented and come to different

conclusions. However, in an area where our knowledge is rather limited, the case study method does demonstrate that each child perceives and relates to his or her parents differently. Despite the fact that children in the same families may describe parents similarly, their perceptions of how they relate to the parent and how the parent meets his or her needs varies. The case study method allows us to understand each child in depth and to expose the factors which influence his or her perceptions. A multi case analysis in this study allows us to understand that some perceptions of paternal custody children are similar and this contributes to our overall understanding of children's experiences in paternal custody homes.

Use of the case study method requires that data be collected in various ways or from various sources. In this study, data was collected by using the Kinetic Family Drawing, Bricklin Perceptual Scales, an interview and a demographic questionnaire. The extended contact that was required to collect data in these ways promoted rapport and thus facilitated disclosure. It allowed children to express themselves in a variety of ways. Whereas some children had more difficulty expressing themselves when interviewed, they were more able to express themselves by drawing or responding to the Bricklin Perceptual Scales. The case study method, as used in this study, can heighten our confidence in, what is traditionally considered, the validity of the data. The case study method allowed us to have an indepth view, from the perspective of the child, as to how a nontraditional family structure facilitates his or her growth and happiness.

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR LEGAL PROFESSIONALS.

There are several implications for legal professionals that arise from the findings

of this study. Perhaps the most important is that, according to children's perceptions, fathers can care for them even when their energies have not been focused in this area in the intact family. Children appear to, generally, be satisfied in living with their fathers, often emphasizing the practicalities of the physical arrangement. However, it is extremely important that the legal community also recognizes the value that children place on both parents. If decisions are to be made considering what children regard in their "best interests", children who are placed in the custody of their fathers must have access to their mothers unless this is termed undesired by the child or determined as dangerous to the child's welfare. Many legal custody decisions regarding children are based on a premise that one parent relinquishes authority over the children. Almost all the children in the study emphasized the importance of a continuing involvement with their noncustodial mothers but each case must be looked at individually to determine the extent of their desired involvement. Foster (1983) said

"Each case should be decided on the basis of its individual facts. Psychiatric generalizations should not decide concrete cases. It should be the dynamics of the individual case that controls the particular result." (p. 477)

Another consideration is whether the child should be consulted in custody matters. Although the children in this study were not presently involved in an adversarial dispute, which could considerably change their participation, the wisdom and depth of their responses suggest that children eight years old and over can be involved and consulted regarding perceptions of the functioning of their parents and how they ultimately fulfil their needs. From our data, and other studies, it is important to note that children of differing ages respond differently.

Schutz, Dixon, Lindenberger and Rutter (1989) wrote:

"Most judges maintain that, perhaps next to a death penalty case, custody battles are the most unpleasant, difficult and unrewarding aspect of the judicial

function. Few winners ever emerge. If there is a loser, it is usually the children, and more often than not, both of the litigants are bitterly disappointed with the result." (p. 14)

If children are to be nurtured in a way that, in this study, they describe as most satisfactory to them, then the legal community must encourage an ongoing collaborative involvement in child rearing by both parents. Much has been written about parents solving custody disputes by mutual consent rather than a custodial arrangement imposed on the family by judicial mandate (Rohman, Sales & Lou, 1987). Some have specifically investigated the benefits of mediation of marital disputes and concluded that a post divorce relationship that is more likely to promote co-parenting results if custody is not decided in an adversarial manner (Bautz & Hill, 1991; Pearson & Thoennes, 1988). These studies suggest that if children are to grow with the nurturance of both parents a method involving both parents in deciding on long-term care must be established. Donald T. Saposnek (1991), in an excellent article, discussed the value of including children in the family mediation process. Lawyers should advise mediation to their clients as an alternative to the adversarial approach, emphasizing what is known, and what children describe, as "best" for them. It is difficult to apply a rational model to emotionally laden situations but lawyers must be careful not to fuel the flames of emotion by encouraging the adversarial approach indiscriminately.

The legal community should collaborate with psychologists and family counsellors to help families achieve an arrangement that is truly in the "best interests" of children. For example, if one parent is determined to be the parent with whom physical custody is to the advantage of the children, the entire family, including the noncustodial parent should be involved in a plan to promote the children's growth and development.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

The implications of the findings of this study for mental health professionals are multifaceted. There are implications regarding custody assessments and recommendations for custodial arrangements after divorce. Involving the family to decide the custodial arrangement and promoting the wholesome functioning of the post divorce/separation family are also implied.

Psychologists who may be involved in making recommendations for custody should recognize the value of including, within their assessments, a system to gain a child's perspective of how his or her parents function to meet his or her needs. Khoo (1986) wrote:

"...Each parent has unique strengths and weaknesses corresponding to the child's needs. Assessing these strengths and weaknesses would be important in determining the fit between parents and children." (p. 34)

Our data shows that children do have definite views about how their parents function. In determining a recommendation for custody some factors that seem to affect children's perceptions of the functioning of their parents such as personality, parenting strategies, emotional functioning, age of parent and child, child's experience with the parents, race and career of the parent, should be considered. Psychologists must recognize that the nontraditional paternal custody structure may be "in the best interests" of particular children and must recognize the importance of the role of the noncustodial mother.

Mental health professionals can play a critical role in assuring that children, as emphasized by the eleven children in this study, get what they consider is important to them - the involvement of both parents in their care. These professionals can play a



vital role in assisting parents to establish a working relationship vis-à-vis their children. One priority would be to help them separate the remaining marital conflict from parental issues. The findings of this study emphasize that from the child's perspectives both their parents play an important role in promoting competence of their children and most children stress the need for both parents. A key to acting as a vehicle to build strong, happy children may be as Ahrons (1981) describes:

"The process of coparental redefinition requires that divorced spouses separate the spousal and parental roles, terminating the former while redefining the latter." (p. 415)

The findings of this study suggest that parents "parallel" parent rather than "co-parent" and this has been discussed by others (Selzer, 1991; Furstenburg & Nord, 1985). Early involvement of both parents in counselling can contribute to "...providing problem solving methods which give hope to parents who might otherwise be inclined to give up their quest to keep in contact with their children" (Burrett, 1988, p. 35) and to promote true "co-parenting".

Within the counselling environment, the implication of such factors as personality, gender, parenting strategies and skills, emotional functioning, age of parent and child, and race can be openly discussed. Custodial parents who become primary caretakers may need help in understanding the child in their care who is more similar in personality to their exspouse. An understanding of the importance of the noncustodial parent to deal with certain aspects of the child's development should be considered. Parents can be informed as to what strategies seem to promote growth of healthy children and can be encouraged to adopt these. Parents should be made aware of how their emotional functioning affects the child and the parent should be encouraged to care for him or herself. Since children perceive ability to control temper to be a

problem for both mothers and fathers, therapists can be helpful in encouraging parents to adopt strategies that could heighten their approachability to their children. Mental health professionals should discuss with families such things as the implications of the noncustodial parent moving to a distant location, taking on new responsibilities, the impact of living with a parent of a different race, the child's insecurity with approaching the parent for sex information, and prepare the parents to deal with these critical issues.

Mental health professionals could, perhaps, encourage families to reassess where they are at as time passes after the marital dissolution. As a society we are encouraged to have yearly checkups to ensure physical health. It seems that it is time to encourage families to examine, with the help of a professional, their health as a family outside the marital structure that will continue to ensure the "child's best interests" are considered.

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Schools need to recognize and promote the equal roles of males in parenthood and to recognize that paternal custody children perceive their fathers to be capable as primary caregivers. The children in this study recognized their fathers' emphasis on education and ability to be helpful with academic endeavours. It is important for the school system to promote and encourage this. The educational system should consider more ways in which fathers can be involved in education outside the home. Children seemed impressed with their fathers' knowledge in a broad variety of areas. Perhaps, schools could creatively involve fathers in participating in school activities in this way. Schools also should consider how to get mothers, including noncustodial mothers, more involved in their children's educational activities. Some children

mentioned that their mothers might attend school activities if they are informed. The school could encourage families to do this.

Educators must be extremely sensitive in dealing with the divorce experience as part of the curriculum. One child in this study described, in detail, how painful this experience can be. It must be recognized that although divorce has become more prevalent, few individual children take comfort in this. The school curriculum should explore all family structures, including nontraditional forms such as the paternal custody home. All family structures should be considered as equivalent, each possessing its strengths and weaknesses. In family life courses, at the high school level, there should be more of an emphasis and understanding of the role of parents. Students should understand that much of parenting can be learned, despite gender. Since the schools are dealing with parents of the future, it is important to discuss with them how they can be involved with, and provide direction to, their own children.

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR PARENTS AND SOCIETY

The findings of this study can help custodial fathers and noncustodial mothers to understand how in their individual cases they are meeting their children's needs. Custodial fathers may feel more confident that their children perceive them to be capable. They also may understand more clearly how critical to their children the continuing relationship with their mothers is. Noncustodial mothers must realize how highly regarded they are by their children. Custodial fathers should look critically at their expectations of their children and assess the implications of fostering traditional expectations. The findings, for society, suggest that paternal custody is a viable family arrangement after divorce in the eyes of children. Society must be educated regarding

this alternative family structure so that families considering this arrangement can feel free to choose it if it appears best for their children.

The 1970s brought us literature that highlighted the importance of the role of the father in the child's development. As we progress into the 1990s and accept the reality that divorce has affected almost half the population, we are beginning to recognize the importance of the involvement of both parents in all family forms. We also recognize that fathers, as well as mothers, can care for their children. Fathers, in the past, were primarily involved with their children on a social level. Today's father, with few role models, is moving towards a more comprehensive caring role. Fathers are being encouraged to be involved in a nurturant role with their children after divorce and within the intact family structure. Books such as Divorced Fathers written by Gerald H. Hill (1989) are becoming more commonplace. This practical book deals with such topics as communicating with your child, parenting style, discipline and child-centred time. Magazines such as Chatelaine are publishing articles such as "Parenting: dad style mom style" which deals with the differences that remain in parenting between the genders despite a move to the 90s ideal of men and women as equal partners in child rearing. Availability of this type of information should be promoted.

Our study has some very specific implications for society. As children seem to perceive that their parents' abilities to nurture them are affected by the parents' emotional functioning, more of an effort must be made to provide support to single parents, especially fathers. Support programs that include the teaching of parenting strategies should be promoted. Parents need to understand more fully their importance to children despite their marital relationship. The media can help educate parents of the child's viewpoint. Included in this education would be a discussion of how factors

such as personality, emotional functioning, parenting strategies, age of child and parent, experience with the parent, new responsibilities of the parent, race and employment of the parent, and motivation for custody may all affect the child's perceptions. As some of these findings are at a very exploratory stage, society must encourage and support more research in the area of paternal custody and all other family structures after divorce or separation.

### FUTURE RESEARCH

Neugebauer (1989) said that

"A more accurate understanding of children's needs and desires regarding divorce, custody and visitation can dispel common misunderstandings regarding 'best interests' of the child." (p. 167)

This study of paternal custody children's perceptions has contributed in a small way to this understanding, however, it also highlights the need for further research. Stake (1978) said that the case study "proliferates rather than narrows. One is left with more to pay attention to rather than less." (p. 7) Some research studies that would contribute further to our understanding are listed below.

1) This study could be replicated with other custodial arrangements such as maternal and joint custody.

2) The study could be replicated with two groups of paternal custody children - those with noncustodial mothers who continue to be involved and those whose mothers no longer have contact. The perceptions of the two groups could be compared. A factor that would be interesting to watch for in this type of study is whether contact with the noncustodial parent affects the child's perceptions of the custodial parent.

3) Since much has been discussed about the merits of same gender custody, and in this study the children did not emphasize the advantages of this arrangement, it would be valuable to follow girls in paternal custody, longitudinally, to determine how they fare in the long term.

4) Personality, or identification with parents, appears to be a much emphasized factor in how children perceive their parents' functioning. A worthwhile study could correlate adjustment and satisfaction with custodial arrangements by looking at personality of child and personality of the custodial parent. Instruments such as the Myers Briggs Type Indicator and Murphy Meisgeier Type Indicator for Children could be used to assess personality.

5) Custodial fathers should be studied to determine their attitudes about sex differentiated roles.

6) Much more research must be focused on the effects of remarriage and, age, race and employment of parents regarding the perceptions of children as to their functioning of their parents after divorce or separation.

7) In this study we did not systematically assess custodial fathers' attitudes towards their exspouses' involvement with their children. A future study could assess these to try to determine if fathers' attitudes are related to children's attitudes towards their noncustodial mothers.

8) Children who have experienced divorce and then been required to participate in a curriculum in the school setting, which includes discussion of divorce, should be consulted to gain their reactions.

9) Other researchers who have studied maternal custody families have discovered that many bright children do not continue with post secondary education.

Some perceive this to relate to lack of finances. Father custody children should be studied longitudinally to determine their academic achievement and post secondary accomplishments.

10) Children in this study perceived that society may not understand and fully appreciate the possibility of the paternal custody arrangement. Future research should focus on gaining the perceptions and looking at the experience of the children, custodial father and noncustodial mother.

11) Another study could look at the perceptions of children who remain with their mothers while their siblings reside with their fathers.

12) A study in which the child's perceptions of the stepparent, who meets his or her day-to-day needs, are compared to his or her perceptions of the noncustodial biological parent could be conducted.

#### LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of the study may be limited by the small number of participants, however, if the number of participants had been increased and interviews had been the only means of data collection, the quality of understanding of the perceptions of the children would not have been as extensive. The findings may be influenced by the father's motivation to participate. If fathers who initially made contact to participate were concerned about how they are doing in the custodial role, the findings could be affected by a group of fathers who are highly motivated to do well. However, we must keep in mind in discussing limitations that the case does not have to be representative of all other cases. A unique case helps us to understand more typical cases (Stake, 1988). The results of this study are not entirely generalizable because generalizability

is the responsibility of the reader who must ask, "What is there in this study that I can apply to my own situation, and what clearly does not apply? " (Walker, 1980, p. 34). However, replication using eleven single cases does allow us to generalize or transfer to some extent. The fathers of the children varied somewhat in age, education, type of employment, length of marriage and length of custody. Children also varied in age, gender and interests. "The range of characteristics included in a sample increases the range of population characteristics to which generalization is possible." (Kennedy, 1979, p. 665)

The perceptions of the children were solicited but the understanding of the post divorce/separation family is limited by the minimal participation of the custodial fathers and no participation by noncustodial mothers. Another limitation of the study is that in integrating the data from four sources, somewhat different conclusions may be reached by others.

#### PERSONAL APPROACH INFLUENCED BY STUDY

I have learned a tremendous amount from conducting this study and anticipate that it will greatly influence my professional work. As professionals our personal experiences always impact on the attitudes and values that we bring to our work. I personally have not experienced divorce and have mostly come to understand it through the literature and friends and clients who have shared their experiences. To have shared with paternal custody children their experiences of divorce or separation and perceptions of the functioning of their parents after divorce or separation was an exceptional experience that will, no doubt, influence my professional work. The study showed me how the same parent can function differently with children in his or her



family. Then again, the parent may function similarly to meet individual children's needs within the same family, and yet, children may perceive a different way of nurturance. This study also heightened my awareness that generalizations are valuable but also should be viewed with caution. One such generalization that comes to mind has to do with children being better off in the care of the same sex parent. Three of the four girls in this study were content to live with their fathers, recognizing the advantages of their particular situation. This does not suggest that they did not want access to their mothers or need them for specific developmental issues.

The study affirmed to me that fathers can be primary caregivers of their children. Children's high regard for their mother's capabilities as a parent and expressed need for her involvement was something that I did not anticipate. I understood before conducting the study that children need both parents but I did not anticipate the depth of the need until I was able to understand this from the children's viewpoint. Wilbur and Wilbur (1989) wrote that we should "accept the reality that divorce never eliminates a parent but merely changes the family structure." (p. 437) They explained that it is not in the "best interests of children" to be denied a relationship with one of their parents. The children in this study confirmed to me that we must be careful not to judge hastily that access should be denied because of reasons such as alcoholism or psychological instability. Perhaps the relationships in certain situations must be supervised but unless the child wishes so, the access should not totally be denied. The children who participated in this study emphasized how little children are told about their parents' divorce but how well they do in trying to figure out for themselves what is happening. I believe children should have some explanation of what is happening.

My experience in conducting this study affirmed that children are very wise and

have a great depth of understanding. The eleven children made me aware that only they can most contribute to our understanding of what is in their "best interests". Giles-Sim and Urwin (1989) said that:

"While children risk feeling caught in the middle of such decisions, they also risk being in situations not in their best interests by not expressing their views."

(p. 78)

In my work I would encourage involvement of children over the age of eight in assessing the functioning of their parents to help decide their future in the post divorce/separation family.

Finally, I recognize the value of using a variety of instruments to gain information from children to increase depth and reliability. I found the Bricklin Perceptual Scales to be an excellent tool to use with children of all ages but it was particularly valuable with younger children or children who may be defensive or lack self confidence. It is a tool that allows us to measure what is meant by such responses as "good", "not so good" and "sometimes". I learned that in talking to children one must take time, affirm them and generally convey to them that you trust them. I truly value having had the experience of conducting this study and believe that it has prepared me well for future professional endeavours that may involve custody decisions and restructuring families after marital dissolution.

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## APPENDIX A

### **VOLUNTEER FATHERS**

Fathers who have physical custody of their children after divorce are needed to participate in a University of Alberta research study. Children must be 8-14 yrs. old, & have been in their father's custody for approximately one year or more. For more information, call Eileen, at 430-6341.

**APPENDIX B**

November 1, 1990

Chairperson, Alberta Branch CBA Family Law Section  
Edmonton, Alberta

Dear XXXX:

Thank you for taking the time today to let me tell you about the research project I have undertaken involving children who are in the custody of their fathers. As I indicated in our conversation, I am a graduate student in the Department of Educational Psychology, University of Alberta.

You mentioned that you could bring this study to the attention of the other lawyers who will be attending your CBA Family Law Section meeting on Thursday. I would be very appreciative of any referrals of former father clients who have custody. I understand the confidentiality involved and that the lawyers would be required to contact the fathers to gain their permission before recommending them to my study.

The data gathering of this study would take about one half hour of the father's time and three hours of the child's time. The data obtained from the child would require two or three sessions depending on the age of the child. All information gathered would be treated as confidential and for purposes of reporting the results, identities would be altered. Participants would also have the option to opt out of the study at any time. The fathers should have had custody for approximately one year, at least one of the children should be eight to fourteen years old, and the children should have some access to the mother. Custodial fathers should not be remarried. Enclosed please find a summary of my proposed study which you might want to review. If anyone else would like a copy, they can contact me and I would be happy to provide it.

With divorce becoming very prevalent in our society it seems important to examine father custody as an option. Although some of the research since the mid 1970's has investigated the fathers' perceptions, we have virtually no information that assesses this family configuration from a child's perspective. I believe the results of my study will be valuable to professionals such as yourself who are involved in custody decisions. My research project should be completed by September, 1991 and I certainly would be willing to discuss the results of my study at that time.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me (430-6341) or my

Supervisor, Dr. Len Stewin (Department of Educational Psychology 492-1144). I will call you after your meeting to find out if you have anyone that you can recommend to my study or if there are other lawyers whom I can contact.

XXXX, once again, thank you!

Sincerely,

Eileen A. Baril



## APPENDIX C

ID \_\_\_\_\_

**EILEEN A. BARIL  
UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY**

The purpose of the research project which I am considering is to increase understanding of perceptions of children who are in the custody of their fathers after divorce. This would take approximately twenty minutes of your time to fill out a questionnaire and approximately three hours of your child's time (1 to 1 1/2 hours on two or three separate occasions). The child will be asked about his/her experiences in living in a paternal custody home. The interview will be taped-recorded and at the completion of the study all tapes will be erased. When the study is reported you and your child will be identified by pseudonyms. All information that is gained from yourself and your child will be considered confidential. I would request that you refrain from asking your child to share information that he or she divulged to me.

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT I, \_\_\_\_\_ HEREBY agree that both I and my child(ren) will participate in the above described project.

I give permission for my child(ren) to be interviewed and for these interviews to be tape-recorded. I understand that the information will be published, but my name or the name(s) of my child(ren) will not be associated with the research.

I understand that I am free to deny any answer to specific questions on the questionnaire. I also understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and terminate my participation at any time.

I have been given opportunity to ask whatever questions I desire, and all such questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

DATE:

FATHER'S SIGNATURE:

\_\_\_\_\_

RESEARCHER:

\_\_\_\_\_  
EILEEN A. BARIL

## APPENDIX D

ID \_\_\_\_\_

## ASSENT FORM FOR CHILDREN

- (1) I \_\_\_\_\_, state that I am \_\_\_\_\_ years of age and wish to participate in the program of research being conducted by Eileen Baril, B.Ed.
- (2) The purpose of the research is to learn more about children who live with their fathers after divorce.
- (3) This study involves about three hours of my time. I will answer some questions privately with Eileen Baril, and what I say will be tape recorded. The tapes will be erased after Ms. Baril completes her study.
- (4) No one but Ms. Baril will know what is said. When Ms. Baril writes about what I say I will be given a pseudonym (fake name).
- (5) No one is making me do this , and I can stop talking at any time if I want to.
- (6) If I have any questions about the talk, I can ask my father or Ms.Baril.
- (7) What I say will be used to help others learn about what it is like to live in a family where the father takes care of the children. It will give a better understanding of how children in homes with their fathers see their father's and mother's ability to care for them.

DATE:

CHILD'S SIGNATURE:

RESEARCHER:

Eileen Baril

## APPENDIX E

## PATERNAL QUESTIONNAIRE

ID \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_

1. Age \_\_\_\_\_

2. Are you employed? \_\_\_\_\_  
unemployed? \_

3. Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

4. What is your yearly income at present?  
\_\_\_\_\_ under \$20,000  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$20,000 to \$39,000  
\_\_\_\_\_ over \$40,000

5. Length of marriage before divorce \_\_\_\_\_

6. Length of time since your divorce \_

7. Length of time you have had custody of your child(ren) \_

8. Do you have custody of all your children? \_\_\_\_\_ Please elaborate if you do not.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. NAME OF EACH CHILD

SEX (M/F)

AGE

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

\*Please circle the names of the children of which you presently have physical custody.

10. Before the divorce who was primarily responsible for the care of the children:

\_\_\_\_\_ me  
 \_\_\_\_\_ my wife  
 \_\_\_\_\_ we shared equally  
 \_\_\_\_\_ other (please specify)

11. How often do your children see their mother ? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ .

12. Which of the following statements relate to the reasons why you have custody?  
CHECK ALL the statements that apply to your experience and circumstances surrounding custody.

- \_\_\_\_\_ a) I automatically received custody because of the circumstances.
- \_\_\_\_\_ b) I got custody because my wife was not prepared physically or emotionally to care for the child(ren).
- \_\_\_\_\_ c) I got custody when my wife was incarcerated (jail, prison).
- \_\_\_\_\_ d) I got custody when my wife was hospitalized, and I have had the child(ren) ever since.
- \_\_\_\_\_ e) I got custody when my wife left with another partner.
- \_\_\_\_\_ f) I got custody because my wife wanted to be free to pursue her own personal life and career.
- \_\_\_\_\_ g) I did not want custody, and my wife did but the courts awarded the child(ren) to me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ h) Neither of us wanted custody, but someone had to take them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ i) I got custody because my children wanted to live with me, and that was fine with me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ j) I did not want custody at first, but it worked out all right.
- \_\_\_\_\_ k) The fact that I have custody is due to circumstances beyond my control.
- \_\_\_\_\_ l) I wanted custody of the child(ren) and my wife did not.
- \_\_\_\_\_ m) I fought for custody because I wanted the children.
- \_\_\_\_\_ n) My wife and I mutually agreed before we separated that the child(ren) would be better off with me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ o) I got custody because the courts felt that I was the better suited parent.
- \_\_\_\_\_ p) I got custody because I was the primary caring parent before the divorce.
- \_\_\_\_\_ q) I got custody because the children wanted to live with me and I





## APPENDIX F

### KINETIC FAMILY DRAWING

DRAW A PICTURE OF EVERYONE IN YOUR FAMILY, INCLUDING YOU, DOING SOMETHING. TRY TO DRAW WHOLE PEOPLE, NOT CARTOONS OR STICK PEOPLE. REMEMBER MAKE EVERYONE DOING SOMETHING - SOME KIND OF ACTION. WHEN YOU ARE FINISHED DRAWING, WRITE EACH PERSONS NAME BY THEIR PICTURE.

1) TELL ME ABOUT YOUR PICTURE. WHAT IS EACH PERSON DOING? TELL ME ONE OR TWO THINGS ABOUT EACH PERSON IN YOUR PICTURE.

2) WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT YOUR PICTURE?

3) IF YOU COULD CHANGE ANYTHING ABOUT THIS FAMILY PICTURE WHAT WOULD IT BE?

## APPENDIX G

# SAMPLE RESPONSES TO BRICKLIN PERCEPTUAL SCALES

5.\* How well does Dad do at making you feel really loved?

#12 A lot.

#11 Good.

#10 He does it pretty good up until he's mad. When he's not mad he does an excellent job but when he's mad you feel, sort of, not very good.

#13 He's good at that. If someone was fighting or picking on me he'd say don't do that. He would cheer me up.

#14 Very,very,very,very,very,very well! So he goes to the top of the line.

#15 Quite well!

#16 A lot.

#17 Pretty good.

#18 Good! I think all the parents make you feel that way.

#19 Mmm, well. Very well.

#20 Very well. If I'm not feeling too good, he would ask me what's wrong and he would sit down with me and get me to talk out my feelings.

#21 I think does really good. Sometimes he can make me mad though when he yells at us for the dumbest reasons.

37.\* How well does Mom do at making you feel really loved?

#12 Well.

#11 ...

#10 She does it O.K. But sometimes she's too harsh like in the way she talks or when she gets mad sometimes she's pretty mean. She doesn't really know what she's saying until afterwards so she's not really great.

#13 Good, good.

#14 Very,very, very well.

#15 Mmm. Very well.

#16 She would hug me.

#17 Good because she always tells us she loves us.

#18 Good.

#19 Very well.

#20 Well basically the same as my Dad. If I feel left out of the family. Say at Christmas everybody got a thousand presents and I got one, she would say, "Your birthday is so close to Christmas. How can you expect that we can go and get you a million presents for your birthday and then go and get you a million presents for your Christmas. Basically your birthday presents are your Christmas presents too."

#21 She doesn't really criticize me as much as my Dad. She yells at me a lot but..I don't know ...I guess she does a good job just like my Dad does.

10.\* If you had question about sex and babies how helpful do you think you would find to talk to Mom about this?

#12 Not bad.

- #11 Very helpful.
- #10 Pretty helpful. But she's sort of freaky.
- #13 She might not know the answers but she is good at the ones she knew. She would answer them.
- #14 Helpful.
- #15 Not too well.
- #16 She would tell me where babies came from.
- #17 Pretty good I guess.
- #18 Mmmm....not too bad.
- #19 Very helpful.
- #20 I would find it quite helpful because she knows where babies come from because she's had more than one. She would understand my questions.
- #21 Well I would probably find it pretty easy because my Mom is easy to talk to compared to my Dad.

42.\* If you had question about sex and babies how helpful do you think you would find to talk to Dad about this?

- #12 Pretty well.
- #11 ....
- #10 Heh! Heh! Way worse than my Mom. Like he'd clam up. He couldn't handle it. So not very well. Like he'd be helpful but it would be sort of tough to go through for me cuz I don't know he just wouldn't do great.
- #13 Good.
- #14 Not so well.(laughs embarrassed) I guess I can't really judge because I haven't really asked him. I would ask him if I had to. I would probably go to my Mom first.
- #15 Very helpful.
- #16 Not very good.
- #17 Mmm. I probably wouldn't talk to Dad. I'm not sure. I'm not sure if he would be helpful.
- #18 Lots! Cuz like he tries to explain it to me and I go "O.K. Dad".(laughs) Both my parents are understanding about that.
- #19 Not so well.
- #20 Hmm. He would say...I don't know how to put this. He would answer the question and he'd say it very slowly so that I could understand it.
- #21 Not very helpful at all. He'd say something like you're too young to even be talking about having children.

19.\* In an argument, how well does Dad do at staying calm?

- #12 Not so hot!
- #11 Not so good.
- #10 Not well! Not well!
- #13 Sort of because if someone says something about him he'd get real steamed.
- #14 Oh boy! Not too good. I can't say not so good but kind of average I guess. A little below average until he starts to scream and rant and rave if he

- #21 She would probably sit with us and help us and explain it a bit better. Probably even get our step Dad to help us with it.
- 54.\* If you were having a problem with a school subject, how well would Dad do at helping you to understand and deal with what it is that is troubling you?
- #12 Not so well.
- #11 ...
- #10 Good.
- #13 He's real well at that. Because last year I would get some homework and he would help me with it and there was this real hard page. There was this big box and they were cut into little boxes, numbers down one side and you had to answer the questions in the boxes. He would correct them.
- #14 Without getting mad or just plain helping me? Medium.
- #15 Very, very, good.
- #16 He would help me with the answers.
- #17 Good because he's smart and he helps me with it.
- #18 Very much!
- #19 Very much.
- #20 Well he would make me go over the question what would seem like a million times until I found the mistake but of course he'd be sitting right beside me until I got the right answer.
- #21 He'll keep me up until about twelve midnight explaining it and explaining it. He won't let me leave the table. He'll sit with me until I understand it and then he'll give me a few problems and then it all works out at the end.
- 21.\* If a neighbour needed some help, how often would Dad be willing to give it?
- #12 Pretty often.
- #11 ...
- #10 He'd be really willing, like he helps the neighbours a lot.
- #13 He's excellent at that. Our next door neighbour, Tim. He didn't really need the help but my Dad wanted to make it a surprise. We were shovelling the sidewalks and my Dad said, "We might as well do Tim's but we didn't have enough time because he said that in the middle of the job. We had to go somewhere. We finished our sidewalk and we had to go somewhere and we didn't have enough time. I'd put it There because I'm in cubs and he's a helper. We didn't have to but we could if we wanted to the rink and help them fix it up and he offered to help on that and when he had to leave I didn't want to leave because I was having so much fun. And the next day they were doing the painting and I wore my raggedey clothes and I asked My Grandma if I could go help paint. She said O.K. and I helped paint with my best friend.
- #14 Very well.
- #15 Quite often.

- #16 A lot!
- #17 Good.
- #18 Lots, because all our neighbours help each other out.
- #19 Very well.
- #20 Well....if the neighbour needed help to go win the war in Iraq, my Dad probably wouldn't go to Iraq just to help the neighbour to win the war but if it was something like moving, he would most likely help him.
- #21 Well if the person was in circumstances where they needed the help, my Dad would do anything. He's a caring person.

53.\* If a neighbour needed some help, how often would Mom be willing to give it?

- #12 All the time!
- #11 Mmm sometime.
- #10 Sometimes. She doesn't really care about the neighbours a lot. Like she likes to be friends with them, like I do. I think it really matters to her. If it's serious she'll try and help but if it's something dumb like, can you come and help me clip the hedges I can't reach them. She'll say, "Forget it do it yourself its your hedges!"
- #13 Good. She cleans houses and if someone needed her to clean their house she would go and do it.
- #14 All the time.
- #15 Mmm. Somewhat often.
- #16 A lot.
- #17 Probably not as much as Dad but kind of in the middle but a little bit over that.
- #18 I don't know my Mom kind of moves around so I don't really know. Like if they did need help she would probably offer help because she always offers help.
- #19 Very well.
- #20 Well she would have to be quite willing. I would have to think so.
- #21 Well she's probably the same as my Dad. She would do it if it was really important.

## APPENDIX H



**Bricklin Perceptual Scales**  
**Child Perception of Parents Series**  
 Barry Bricklin, Ph.D.

**Scoring Summary**

Child's Name Tammy  
 Child's Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Child's Age 14  
 Date Tested \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mother's Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 Father's Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Father's Address \_\_\_\_\_

Current custody arrangement \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Total Items, Mother 15 out of 32  
 Total Items, Father 16 out of 32

Total Points, Mother (clinical use) 1420  
 Total Points, Father (clinical use) 1462

**PERCEPTION OF COMPETENCY**

Mother column (Odd numbers)	Father column (Even numbers)
Ability to solve ownership problems (Cards 33 & 1)	
Scoring Order 1 <u>47</u>	Scoring Order 2 <u>46</u>
Ability to be reliable source of information (4 & 36)	
Scoring Order 3 <u>20</u>	Scoring Order 4 <u>49</u>
Ability to communicate clearly (39 & 7)	
Scoring Order 5 <u>49</u>	Scoring Order 6 <u>45</u>
Ability to be reliable source of information (10 & 42)	
Scoring Order 7 <u>50</u>	Scoring Order 8 <u>34</u>
Ability cope with emergencies (45 & 13)	
Scoring Order 9 <u>47</u>	Scoring Order 10 <u>56</u>
Assertiveness (16 & 48)	
Scoring Order 11 <u>36</u>	Scoring Order 12 <u>31</u>
Ability to argue constructively (51 & 19)	
Scoring Order 13 <u>42</u>	Scoring Order 14 <u>6</u>
Ability to help solve a school subject problem (22 & 54)	
Scoring Order 15 <u>37</u>	Scoring Order 16 <u>53</u>
Ability to help with everyday medical problems (57 & 25)	
Scoring Order 17 <u>58</u>	Scoring Order 18 <u>51</u>
Ability to help child deal with a 'bully' (28 & 60)	
Scoring Order 19 <u>34</u>	Scoring Order 20 <u>50</u>
Leadership skills (63 & 31)	
Scoring Order 21 <u>46</u>	Scoring Order 22 <u>46</u>
T O T A L <u>466</u>	<u>467</u>

**PERCEPTION OF SUPPORTIVENESS**

Mother column (Odd numbers)	Father column (Even numbers)
Patience (2 & 34)	
Scoring Order 23 <u>50</u>	Scoring Order 24 <u>43</u>
Degree of love (37 & 5)	
Scoring Order 25 <u>52</u>	Scoring Order 26 <u>56</u>
Ability to help child deal with new situations (8 & 40)	
Scoring Order 27 <u>41</u>	Scoring Order 28 <u>50</u>
Ability to help child calm down (43 & 11)	
Scoring Order 29 <u>49</u>	Scoring Order 30 <u>34</u>
Ability to recognize child's needs (14 & 46)	
Scoring Order 31 <u>51</u>	Scoring Order 32 <u>47</u>
Ability to produce feelings of security (49 & 17)	
Scoring Order 33 <u>49</u>	Scoring Order 34 <u>51</u>
Ability to help child cope with fears (20 & 52)	
Scoring Order 35 <u>52</u>	Scoring Order 36 <u>56</u>
Ability to help child cope with fears (55 & 23)	
Scoring Order 37 <u>37</u>	Scoring Order 38 <u>46</u>
Ability to help child deal with new situations (26 & 58)	
Scoring Order 39 <u>50</u>	Scoring Order 40 <u>47</u>
Ability to create feeling of confidence (61 & 29)	
Scoring Order 41 <u>50</u>	Scoring Order 42 <u>46</u>
Ability to be a patient listener (32 & 64)	
Scoring Order 43 <u>43</u>	Scoring Order 44 <u>31</u>
T O T A L <u>524</u>	<u>507</u>

**PERCEPTION OF FOLLOW-UP CONSISTENCY**

Mother column (Odd numbers)	Father column (Even numbers)
Enforcing homework assignments (35 & 3)	
Scoring Order 45 <u>45</u>	Scoring Order 46 <u>50</u>
Enforcing bedtime limits (6 & 38)	
Scoring Order 47 <u>32</u>	Scoring Order 48 <u>53</u>
Enforcing household chores (41 & 9)	
Scoring Order 49 <u>47</u>	Scoring Order 50 <u>57</u>
T O T A L <u>124</u>	<u>160</u>

**PERCEPTION OF  
ADMIRABLE CHARACTER TRAITS**

Mother column	Father column
Ability to keep promises (12 & 44)	
Scoring Order 51 <u>37</u>	Scoring Order 52 <u>50</u>
Trustworthiness (47 & 15)	
Scoring Order 53 <u>37</u>	Scoring Order 54 <u>32</u>
Trustworthiness (18 & 50)	
Scoring Order 55 <u>46</u>	Scoring Order 56 <u>53</u>
Degree of altruism (53 & 21)	
Scoring Order 57 <u>44</u>	Scoring Order 58 <u>55</u>
Enjoyment of other people's company (24 & 56)	
Scoring Order 59 <u>51</u>	Scoring Order 60 <u>60</u>
Ability to accept criticism (59 & 27)	
Scoring Order 61 <u>50</u>	Scoring Order 62 <u>38</u>
Ability to maintain positive mood (30 & 62)	
Scoring Order 63 <u>41</u>	Scoring Order 64 <u>40</u>
T O T A L <u>306</u>	<u>328</u>

**Bricklin Perceptual Scales**  
**Child Perception of Parents Series**  
 Barry Bricklin, Ph.D.

**Scoring Summary**

Child's Name Lorne  
 Child's Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Child's Age 8  
 Date Tested \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mother's Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 Father's Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Father's Address \_\_\_\_\_

Current custody arrangement \_\_\_\_\_

Total Items, Mother 16 out of 32  
 Total Items, Father 12 out of 32

Total Points, Mother (clinical use) 1483  
 Total Points, Father (clinical use) 1296

**PERCEPTION OF COMPETENCY**

Mother column (Odd numbers)	Father column (Even numbers)
Ability to solve ownership problems (Cards 33 & 1)	
Scoring Order 1 <u>53</u>	Scoring Order 2 <u>58</u>
Ability to be reliable source of information (4 & 36)	
Scoring Order 3 <u>58</u>	Scoring Order 4 <u>53</u>
Ability to communicate clearly (39 & 7)	
Scoring Order 5 <u>57</u>	Scoring Order 6 <u>4</u>
Ability to be reliable source of information (10 & 42)	
Scoring Order 7 <u>38</u>	Scoring Order 8 <u>4</u>
Ability cope with emergencies (45 & 13)	
Scoring Order 9 <u>57</u>	Scoring Order 10 <u>36</u>
Assertiveness (16 & 48)	
Scoring Order 11 <u>17</u>	Scoring Order 12 <u>56</u>
Ability to argue constructively (51 & 19)	
Scoring Order 13 <u>3</u>	Scoring Order 14 <u>3</u>
Ability to help solve a school subject problem (22 & 54)	
Scoring Order 15 <u>60</u>	Scoring Order 16 <u>60</u>
Ability to help with everyday medical problems (57 & 25)	
Scoring Order 17 <u>58</u>	Scoring Order 18 <u>59</u>
Ability to help child deal with a 'bully' (28 & 60)	
Scoring Order 19 <u>58</u>	Scoring Order 20 <u>58</u>
Leadership skills (63 & 31)	
Scoring Order 21 <u>2</u>	Scoring Order 22 <u>8</u>
T O T A L 461	399

**PERCEPTION OF SUPPORTIVENESS**

Mother column (Odd numbers)	Father column (Even numbers)
Patience (2 & 34)	
Scoring Order 23 <u>59</u>	Scoring Order 24 <u>53</u>
Degree of love (37 & 5)	
Scoring Order 25 <u>53</u>	Scoring Order 26 <u>49</u>
Ability to help child deal with new situations (8 & 40)	
Scoring Order 27 <u>38</u>	Scoring Order 28 <u>57</u>
Ability to help child calm down (43 & 11)	
Scoring Order 29 <u>58</u>	Scoring Order 30 <u>12</u>
Ability to recognize child's needs (14 & 46)	
Scoring Order 31 <u>59</u>	Scoring Order 32 <u>2</u>
Ability to produce feelings of security (49 & 17)	
Scoring Order 33 <u>55</u>	Scoring Order 34 <u>48</u>
Ability to help child cope with fears (20 & 52)	
Scoring Order 35 <u>56</u>	Scoring Order 36 <u>4</u>
Ability to help child cope with fears (55 & 23)	
Scoring Order 37 <u>43</u>	Scoring Order 38 <u>56</u>
Ability to help child deal with new situations (26 & 58)	
Scoring Order 39 <u>57</u>	Scoring Order 40 <u>55</u>
Ability to create feeling of confidence (61 & 29)	
Scoring Order 41 <u>57</u>	Scoring Order 42 <u>54</u>
Ability to be a patient listener (32 & 64)	
Scoring Order 43 <u>53</u>	Scoring Order 44 <u>56</u>
T O T A L 588	446

**PERCEPTION OF FOLLOW-UP CONSISTENCY**

Mother column (Odd numbers)	Father column (Even numbers)
Enforcing homework assignments (35 & 3)	
Scoring Order 45 <u>2</u>	Scoring Order 46 <u>60</u>
Enforcing bedtime limits (6 & 38)	
Scoring Order 47 <u>48</u>	Scoring Order 48 <u>56</u>
Enforcing household chores (41 & 9)	
Scoring Order 49 <u>54</u>	Scoring Order 50 <u>41</u>
T O T A L 104	157

**PERCEPTION OF  
ADMIRABLE CHARACTER TRAITS**

Mother column	Father column
Ability to keep promises (12 & 44)	
Scoring Order 51 <u>50</u>	Scoring Order 52 <u>7</u>
Trustworthiness (47 & 15)	
Scoring Order 53 <u>38</u>	Scoring Order 54 <u>9</u>
Trustworthiness (18 & 50)	
Scoring Order 55 <u>54</u>	Scoring Order 56 <u>55</u>
Degree of altruism (53 & 21)	
Scoring Order 57 <u>58</u>	Scoring Order 58 <u>56</u>
Enjoyment of other people's company (24 & 56)	
Scoring Order 59 <u>56</u>	Scoring Order 60 <u>56</u>
Ability to accept criticism (59 & 27)	
Scoring Order 61 <u>19</u>	Scoring Order 62 <u>54</u>
Ability to maintain positive mood (30 & 62)	
Scoring Order 63 <u>55</u>	Scoring Order 64 <u>57</u>
T O T A L 330	294

## APPENDIX I

## INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

### INTRODUCTION

I'd like to find out more about you and your family. As you know people are different and families are different. For example, some people are good at sports, others can't do a thing with sports but are great at talking to people or drawing. In some families the children live with their moms, some live with their mom and dad, some live with a relative like a grandparent and some, like you, live with their dad. It's kind of neat how we all have these differences between families and people.

1. I'd like to first have you tell me about yourself. Let's start by having you tell me how old you are? What grade are you in at school? What is school like for you? What do you like best at school? least? Do you get much homework? If you need help with your homework, who helps you? When your school has parent-teacher meetings, who goes? Does your school have any Science fairs, plays or concerts? Who from your family, if anyone, goes? What kinds of things do you like to do in your spare time or when you're not at school? Who are your best friends? Can you tell me about them? Is there anyone else in your family, or that you know, that you like to spend time with? What kind of things do you do with your mom that you really enjoy? What kind of things do you do with your dad that you really enjoy? Not all moms and dads have time or like to do such things as leading Guides or Scouts, coaching soccer or baseball or helping with field trips. What about your mom and dad, do they help out with any of the things that you do?

### BACKGROUND OF DIVORCE AND CUSTODY

2. Right now you live with your dad. How was it decided that you should live with your dad or do you know? How did you feel when it was decided that you would live with your dad? How do you feel now?

3. Different families have different ways of doing things when the family is together. What I mean is that in some families mom cooks; in some families dad cooks and in some families mom plays with the kids and in others it's the dad who mostly plays with the kids. When your family was still all together or before your parents divorced what kinds of things did Dad do for or with you? What kinds of things did Mom do for or with you? Overall, before your parents divorced, would you say that your Mom or Dad did most of the things around home such as cooking, cleaning, combing your hair, giving you a bath or playing with you? Or did they both do these things about an equal amount of the time? Is this the same or different than now? If it is different, how?

### ACCESS TO NONCUSTODIAL PARENT

4. When do you see your mom? How does that work out for you? What do you do when you are with your mom? When you leave your Dad's house to go to your mom's, what is it like for you? How does it make you feel? When you leave your Mom's house to go back to your Dad's what is it like for you? How do you feel then?

## DAILY ROUTINE AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

5. Tell me about an ordinary day at your Dad's house. For example, does someone wake you up, get your breakfast, drive you to school, make your lunch, cook dinner, help you get ready for bed? Who does the cooking and cleaning? Do you help? What do you do? What do you think about how things happen on an ordinary day at your house? What do you like best about how things are at your house? What would you like to be different?

6. Describe an ordinary day when you are with your mother. Does someone wake you up, get your breakfast, drive you to school, make your lunch, cook dinner, help you get ready for bed? Who does the cooking and cleaning? Do you help? What do you do? What do you think about how things happen on an ordinary day at your Mom's house? What do you like best about how things are at your Mom's house? What would you like to be different?

7. Different families have different rules. Even in the same families, moms and dads have different rules. What are the rules at your dad's house? How good is Dad at making sure you usually follow the rules in your house? Have your dad's rules changed since the divorce? If so, how?

What are the rules at your Mom's house? How good is Mom at making sure you usually follow the rules in her house? Have your mom's rules changed since the divorce? If so, how?

8. When you need to talk about something important, for example if you had a problem with school or with a friend or just something very personal, who do you talk to? Can you tell me about a time when you had something important that you needed to talk to someone about?

9. Tell me about what happens if your Dad has to go out. Who takes care of you (or stays with you)? If you are visiting your Mom and she has to go out, what happens?

10. If you are sick, what happens? If you get sick at school, who would come and pick you up from school? Who takes you to the doctor? Who stays home with you?

## DESCRIPTION OF PARENT

11. If you had to write a story about your Dad, what would you say? What are some of the things that you like best about him? As you know, no one is perfect. If you could change some things about Dad, what would they be?

12. If you had to write a story about your Mom, what would you say? What are some of the things that you like best about her? As I said before, no one is perfect. If you could change some things about Mom, what would they be?

## PRE AND POST DIVORCE CONFLICT

13. Think about how things were for Mom and Dad when they were together. How did they get along? For example, did they argue and fight? How was this for you? Tell me about how they get along now. How is that for you?

14. When you're happy with a friend it's easy to say good things about him or her and when you're upset with him or her you can easily say bad things about him or her. What kinds of things do your parents say about each other? What do you do when this happens? How does it make you feel?

#### SEX OF CUSTODIAL PARENT

15. Some people think dads can care better for boys and moms can care better for girls. However, in many families moms care for boys and in others dads care for girls. Do you think it makes a difference as to who raises the children? In your case, who is better at caring for you, Mom or Dad? Why do you think that?

#### REACTIONS OF OTHERS

16. At one time you lived with your Mom and Dad and now you live with your Dad. Do you think others sometimes think dad's have trouble caring for children? How well do you think others think your dad is able to care for you? Has anyone such as a friend, teacher, or friend's parents ever said anything to you or treated you differently than when your family was together?

#### FUTURE

17. Would you say you are more like your Mom or Dad? In what ways?  
Someday, if you are a Mom (or Dad) what will you be like?  
What will your husband/wife be like as a parent?
18. Do you ever wish you lived with your mother? Why?
19. When you are older, say perhaps sixteen to eighteen will you still live with your father? Why do you think so (or why not)?

#### OTHER

Maybe you can help me out a little. In trying to learn more about children who live with their Dads can you think of any other questions I should ask other children? (Ask these of them) Are there other things I should know about children who live with their Dads? about you?

## APPENDIX J

NUMBERED VERSION OF KYLE 8/6/1991 19:34

Page 1

spend time with?  
 K: Not really. The other people I like to spend time with are my cousins and Dad. I play hockey with him. But not ice hockey because he's too rough and I just like playing games with him, like Nintendo, with my Dad. But sometimes when I play Nintendo with my Dad, he always gets hyper and starts beating me up because I beat him in the games or something like that. I like playing games with my Mom like Monopoly. I like playing with my family. But I really don't like playing with Anthony because if I ever beat him in something he'll start crying, then I'll get the blame.  
 E: What kind of things do you do with your Mom that you really enjoy?  
 K: We go swimming a lot, play lots of board games and we play on this big chalk board we have. We play ..we make all these drawings and we make cookies together and all that.  
 E: What kind of things do you do with your Dad that you really enjoy? You talked about Nintendo and hockey.  
 K: Nintendo and hockey, board games. I like playing lots of board games with my Dad. You can talk to him because he's real easy to talk to but sometimes he gets mad if you tell him something he doesn't want to hear like if you get a bad mark on your report card. He might get mad sometimes but usually he takes it pretty well. But usually I like playing the same things with Dad. You can ask him to go somewhere, anywhere like Bullwinkles. Every Sunday we go somewhere. Same with my Mom every Monday we go somewhere. We go with my Mom, or every Thursday. Every Sunday, my Dad usually takes us to somewhere like Boston Pizza or Bullwinkles, whatever we want to do.  
 E: That sounds nice. Not all moms and dads have time or like to do such things as leading Scouts, coaching soccer or baseball or hockey. What about your Mom and Dad, do they help out with any of the things that you do?  
 K: My Mom participates with Hockey

2941  
 295  
 296 relatives  
 297  
 298  
 299  
 300  
 301 act. with Dad  
 302  
 303  
 304  
 305  
 306 act. with Mom  
 307  
 308 imp. of family  
 309  
 310  
 311  
 312  
 313  
 314  
 315 act. with Mom  
 316  
 317  
 318  
 319  
 320  
 321 act with Dad  
 322  
 323  
 324  
 325  
 326  
 327 communication  
 328  
 329  
 330  
 331  
 332  
 333  
 334  
 335  
 336 act with Mom  
 337  
 338  
 339  
 340 (end act with Dad)  
 341  
 342  
 343  
 344  
 345  
 346  
 347  
 348 Mom sup. act.



NUMBERED VERSION OF KYLE 2/6/1991 19:34

Page 2

K: Usually Sharon and Tammy. Dad make	638	
lots of food. I like the food he	639	
makes cuz he makes good pizza.	640	
E: Do you help?	641	
K: Sometimes I make macaroni or soup	642	
when I'm babysitting Anthony because	643	
those are the only things that I know	644	
how to make. So I usually just make	645	
that. Sometimes I help with baking	646	
but Tammy usually never lets me here.	647	
E: Is there anything else that you do	648	
to help out around the house?	649	
K: I usually help out with chores and	650	
when my dad's home we do cleaning and	651	
I do what my Dad tells me to do	652	
like, "go put our stuff away".	653	
E: Can you tell me what kind of chores	654	
that you do?	655	
K: Chores?...Vacuum, shovel. Just	656	child resp. D
normal chores like everyone else does	657	
like washing dishes. Sometimes I do	658	
something else. It's usually	659	
rotating, like take out the garbage,	660	
clean the bathroom and then we switch	661	
around.	662	
E: What do you like best about how	663	
things are at this house?	664	
K: Probably the times when we can see	665	
Dad and the times when we can see	666	Imp. of fam.
Mom. Like there's lots of fights	667	
like all the time we're fighting,	668	sublet
like between me and Anthony or me and	669	att. to Dad CP
Tammy, but not too bad. But not like	670	
between Dad and Tammy or me and Dad	671	
or Dad and Anthony. Dad usually	672	
likes to break the fights up or solve	673	Satisfact D
them. Like he says, "Kevin, if you	674	
beat Anthony up, I can beat you up so	675	
you know how Anthony is feeling when	676	
you are beating him up.". He doesn't	677	
really beat me up he just wrestles	678	
with me and tickles me and he talks	679	
in a high voice, like he makes his	680	
lip hang down and he'll pretend to	681	
punch me.	682	
E: So he's kind of funny sometimes?	683	
K: Ummhmm.	684	
E: What would you like to be different	685	
at this house?	686	
K: I wouldn't want anything to be	687	
different because it has all the	688	Satisfact D
things that I need, that I could get	689	
and that I want- food, clothing,	690	change D
shelter and parents.	691	
E: Now tell me about an ordinary day	692	

## APPENDIX K

## OUTLINE FOR INDIVIDUAL ANALYSIS

PAGE 1

## BACKGROUND

PAGE 2

PERCEPTION OF COMPETENCE DAD

**\*\*Meeting everyday needs and helping child meet everyday responsibilities**

Food

## Cleaning

Med Care #25

Emergencies\_\_\_\_\_#13

Homework\_\_\_\_\_#54

**\*\*Competence in regards to dealing with others**

## Solve Ownership Problems\_\_\_\_\_#1

Leadership\_\_\_\_\_#31

Bully #60

## ★★Communication

Source of information \_\_\_\_\_(religion)#36  
 \_\_\_\_\_(sex) #42

Clearness        #7

Argue Constructively\_\_\_\_#19

Assertiveness\_\_\_\_\_#48

PAGE 3                      PERCEPTION OF SUPPORTIVENESS - DAD

**\*\*Degree of Love**\_\_\_\_#5

**\*\*Being understanding**  
**Patience**\_\_\_\_#34

Recognizing child's needs\_\_\_\_#46

Patient Listener\_\_\_\_#64

**\*\*Providing Security**  
 Help child calm down\_\_\_\_#11

Feelings of Security\_\_\_\_#17

Cope with fears\_\_\_\_#52  
 \_\_\_\_\_#23

**\*\*Creating confidence**

Activities with Dad

Deal with new situations\_\_\_\_#40

\_\_\_\_\_#58

Feelings of Confidence\_\_\_\_#29

PAGE 4                      PERCEPTION OF FOLLOW -UP CONSISTENCY DAD

Enforcing

**\*\*Homework**\_\_\_\_#3

**\*\*Chores**\_\_\_\_#9

**\*\*Bedtime Limits**\_\_\_\_#38

PAGE 5                      PERCEPTION OF ADMIRABLE TRAITS DAD

**\*\*Trustworthiness**\_\_\_\_#15

\_\_\_\_\_#50

**\*\*Keeping Promises\_\_\_\_\_#44**

**\*\*Attitude to and relationship with others**

Altruism\_\_\_\_\_#21

Enjoyment of others company\_\_\_\_\_#56

**\*\*Personal attributes**

accept criticism\_\_\_\_\_#27

maintain positive mood\_\_\_\_\_#62

PAGE 6

PERCEPTION OF COMPETENCE MOM

**\*\*Meeting everyday needs and helping child meet everyday responsibilities**

Food

Cleaning

Med Care\_\_\_\_\_#57

Emergencies\_\_\_\_\_#45

Homework\_\_\_\_\_#22

**\*\*Competence in regards to dealing with others**

Solve Ownership Problems\_\_\_\_\_#33

Leadership\_\_\_\_\_#63

Bully\_\_\_\_\_#28

**\*\*Communication**

Source of information \_\_\_\_\_(religion)#4  
 \_\_\_\_\_(sex) #10

Clearness\_\_\_\_\_#39

Argue Constructively\_\_\_\_\_#51

Assertiveness\_\_\_\_\_#16

PAGE 7                      PERCEPTION OF SUPPORTIVENESS - MOM

**\*\*Degree of Love\_\_\_#37**

**\*\*Being understanding**  
**Patience**      **#24**

## Recognizing child's needs #14

Patient Listener #32

**\*\*Providing Security**  
Help child calm down \_\_\_\_\_ #43

Feelings of Security\_\_\_\_\_#49

Cope with fears\_\_\_\_\_#20  
#55

## **\*\*Creating confidence**

## Activities with Mom

Deal with new situations\_\_\_\_\_#8

#26

Feelings of Confidence\_\_\_\_\_#61

## PAGE 8 PERCEPTION OF FOLLOW -UP CONSISTENCY MOM

## Enforcing

## \*\*Homework #35

**\*\*Chores\_\_\_\_\_#41**

**\*\*Bedtime Limits** #6

## PAGE 9 PERCEPTION OF ADMIRABLE TRAITS MOM

**\*\*Trustworthiness #47**

**#18**

**\*\*Keeping Promises\_\_\_\_\_#12**

**\*\*Attitude to and relationship with others**

Altruism\_\_\_\_\_#53

Enjoyment of others company\_\_\_\_\_#24

**\*\*Personal attributes**

accept criticism\_\_\_\_\_#59

maintain positive mood\_\_\_\_\_#30

PAGE 10

CONCLUSIONS