This is to certify that the

dissertation entitled

**Children's Transfers Among Postdivorce Family Households:
A Journey Into Grounded Theory**

presented by

Shawn Johnson Fulton

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

_____Ph.D._____ degree in __Human Ecology__

Linda Nelson

Major professor

Date _1 Nov. 1994_

MAGIC 2

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JAN 1 4 1999 90 10		APR 1 6 2004
FEB 1 1 2000		
SEP 3 0 2002		
AUG 1 0 2005		

CHILDREN'S TRANSFERS AMONG
POSTDIVORCE FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS:
A JOURNEY INTO GROUNDED THEORY

By

Shawn Johnson Fulton

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Family and Child Ecology

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ABSTRACT

CHILDREN'S TRANSFERS AMONG
POSTDIVORCE FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS:
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Theoretical concepts which relate to postdivorce family life are virtually nonexistent. Researchers have not explored "how" the postdivorce family functions across households. This interpretive, qualitative, grounded theory study focused on development of data based concepts and preliminary propositions which relate to postdivorce transfers. Four Caucasian, middle SES postdivorce families participated in this study. Each family was comprised of two divorced biological parents and one child between ages 8 and 14. Each informant took part in two in-depth ethnographic interviews. As family members with direct experience in postdivorce children's movement between parental residences, these individuals were asked to discuss their transfer experiences with the researcher.

This theoretical inquiry traced the development of several data based concepts which relate to postdivorce transfers. These include postdivorce family life, family membership belief, transfer plan, and postdivorce transfer sequence. Further, it has been proposed that these data based notions are housed within three interactive theoretical concepts: the binuclear ecosystem, normative postdivorce development, and change. Preliminary propositions drawn from this research have been outlined. Terminology derived from this

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research appeared, or was synonymous with, words used in recent

postdivorce literature. Thus it appears that key aspects of this research are

supported by current scholarly writings and that these research outcomes offer

a foundation for future related theoretical research. Study results are expected

to be useful to postdivorce family researchers and theorists, marriage and

family therapists, medical personnel, clergy, school officials, community

leaders, and postdivorce family members.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the memories of my father Glen Johnson who gave me his tenacious Swedish spirit, and to my daughter Krysta Fulton who was conceived and miscarried during this study.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express deep gratitude to my committee chairperson, Dr. Linda Nelson, who introduced me to qualitative research while on sabbatical in Argentina! She was extremely generous with her insights throughout the course of this study. I am glad for the many times she urged me to "keep going" through this sometimes overwhelming process.

I am sincerely thankful for the support and understanding I received from Dr. John Schneider. His integrity and challenging questions helped me design and defend this research. His validating spirit gave me hope as I experienced losses. I wish to offer my appreciation to Dr. Lillian Phenice and Dr. Donald Melcer who gave me the freedom to do an exploratory study and offered key support at various times during this study. I am also grateful for the input I received from Dr. Margaret Bubolz. She introduced me to theory development and grounded theory research, and led my proposal committee meeting in the early phase of this study.

In addition to my committee faculty, I want to recognize the creators and administrators of our Marriage and Family Therapy specialization, Dr. Dolores Borland-Hunt and Dr. Melcer. Throughout my training they introduced me to diverse teaching and therapy approaches and allowed me to create my own unique therapeutic perspective.

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PREFACE

This theoretical inquiry evolved out of my personal experience. Ten years ago, I married my husband Bill. He had two young children from a previous marriage who lived out of state. Thus, my marriage marked the beginning of my experience as a stepmother. Having no models for this role, I did an intense study of empirical literature on the topic. I was most influenced by Constance Ahrons' systemic term the "binuclear family" (1980). I realized I had married not only my husband and his children, but his former wife as well. We are all connected to, and dependent upon, one another. This realization blended well with the systemic training I received in the area of marriage and family therapy. Throughout my graduate school career I have had many opportunities to write and teach about binuclear issues as well as to counsel postdivorce systems.

Three major ideas motivated me to complete this study. First, throughout our marriage I have seen my children by marriage several times a year including extended summer visits. Over time I became intrigued by the many changes my family and I experienced as the children relocated from one parental home to the other. Second, I decided that binuclear theory concepts were worthy of further development. Without a dual-household emphasis, only half of the system is being studied.

The third idea focused on methodology. Initially, my theoretical ideas were based solely on my personal experiences as a noncustodial stepparent. I realized that if valid theory was to be developed, concepts and their

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relationships had to be be grounded in empirical data. Thus, an inductive, grounded theory approach was selected for this study.

This dissertation was intended to facilitate the personal development of postdivorce families, including my own. My long-term professional goals are to generate binuclear theory and implement therapeutic interventions based on that design. Currently, my interests focus on the transfer experiences of postdivorce families. My personal agenda is to continue to be part of a growing binuclear family. Underlying these aspirations is a commitment to help expand cultural empathy for these systems. My hope is that my work as a researcher, marriage and family therapist, and mother by marriage will lead to a deeper understanding of binuclear issues among postdivorce families and those who surround them.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The American family is in a state of flux. The "traditional" family, the nuclear model, is becoming outnumbered by postdivorce systems (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987). Intact families are "on the way to losing their majority status" (Jacobson, 1987, p. 258). Remarried families will outnumber nuclear families by the mid 1990s (Galvin, 1989).

With the current divorce rate holding steady at 50% (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987; Furstenberg & Spanier, 1984; McGoldrick & Carter, 1989), it is expected that by the year 2001, 40% of children in the United States will spend some time residing with one parent (Hodges, 1991). Further, it is believed that a growing number of children with divorced parents ". . . are having some of their needs fulfilled in two or more family constellations, not just one" (Sager et al., 1983, p. 39).

Researchers report that American societal perceptions of the postdivorce family are in the midst of a major transformation. Contrary to the traditionally negative stereotype often associated with postdivorce and stepfamily family life, divorce is becoming viewed as a potentially positive institution within our culture (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987). There are few relational norms in remarried families (Ahrons & Rodgers; Ahrons & Wallisch, 1987; Giles-Sims, 1984; Pasley, 1987). Those most common are unhealthy, pervasive prejudicial ideas thought to be promoted by childhood fairy tales such as Cinderella and Snow White (Visher & Visher, 1979, 1989, 1993;

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Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). However, Ahrons and Wallisch challenged societal

norms which have viewed divorce as a "social ill." Several researchers are

calling for theoretical frameworks which perceive postdivorce family life as

functional and potentially healthy, rather than deviant and socially

unacceptable (Ahrons & Rodgers; Ahrons & Wallisch; Carter, 1987; Ganong &

Coleman, 1984; Ihinger-Tallman & Pasley, 1987; Jacobson, 1987).

Ahrons and Rodgers (1987) have requested that societal views of

postdivorce families as deviant shift to a more normative perspective. The

authors stated,

> To change our thinking about divorced families--to remove from them
> the label of deviance or pathology--does not mean merely to have lip
> service to accepting them as alternative forms of familying. We must
> unambiguously acknowledge and support them as normal, prevalent
> family types that have resulted from major societal trends and changes.
> (pp. 201-202)

Other researchers have been critical of the "deficit comparison" model

which has been commonly used in stepfamily research (Ganong & Coleman,

1984, 1987; Ihinger-Tallman & Pasley, 1987). This approach compares

children in stepfamilies to those in nuclear families. Ganong and Coleman

wrote, "The primary assumption underlying this approach is that variations from

the 'intact' nuclear family (e.g., stepfamilies) produce undesirable effects on

children" (1987, p. 96). Researchers using this model are being challenged to

alter their designs, and compare stepfamilies among themselves rather than to

nuclear families (Furstenberg & Spanier, 1984; Ganong & Coleman, 1984).

This change in perceptions is apparent in other arenas as well. Rather

than viewing divorce as a shameful indiscretion which must be hidden, several

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sources are spreading awareness that postdivorce families exist and are

meeting the needs of these unique systems. Examples include: educational

programs which teach adults and children about divorce and remarriage

issues (Crosbie-Burnett & Elsen, 1992; Fitzpatrick, Smith & Williamson, 1992)

and assist remarriage adjustment processes (Einstein & Albert, 1986; Mandell

& Birensweig, 1990), and self help books for postdivorce parents (Coleman &

Ganong, 1989; Lown, McFadden, & Crossman, 1989) and children

(Boegehold, 1985; Burt & Burt, 1983; Seuling, 1985). On the community level,

school administrators are creating policies which are sensitive to the needs of

children from postdivorce families (Crosbie-Burnett & Skyles, 1989), and

teachers are learning how to aid children through parental divorce (Brodkin &

Wallerstein, 1990; Rossiter, 1988). Thus, it appears that the postdivorce family

is gradually gaining acceptance within the United States.

Statement of the Problem

Although recognition of, and support for, the postdivorce family is

growing, postdivorce related theory is in an embryonic stage of development.

Ahrons and Wallisch wrote, ". . . we have almost no theory-based knowledge

of what a healthy divorced family looks like as it develops" (1987, pp. 228-229).

While social science may have evolved beyond beliefs that families must live in

one location, ". . . we have not yet worked out how a family continues to

function as a family across two, or even three, households" (Ahrons & Wallisch,

p. 229). Ihinger-Tallman and Pasley (1987, p. 131) reported that in most

remarriage research, derivation and testing of theory is usually circumvented.

This study focuses on one aspect of postdivorce family life that has not been addressed in scholarly literature. The experience has not been recognized as an important part of postdivorce life. It remains largely hidden in American culture. Yet, it may take place in the lives of 40% of the children in this country. This phenomenon is the process by which postdivorce families move children between parents, or what the researcher initially termed "visitation transfers." In this study, the researcher set out to gain understanding about this well-kept secret.

The goal of the current research was to create preliminary propositions relating to "visitation transfers" or "moments of transfer" in postdivorce families (see Appendix A for terminology which is unique to this study). The guiding question for this inquiry was, "What happens in binuclear families when children are transferred for visitation?" One key outcome is that the "visitation transfer" notion changed considerably as the study evolved.

Theory is important because it helps us understand a phenomenon from the inside out; systematic comparison of empirical facts can lead to the creation of data based theoretical postulations (Bubolz, 1991). Theory development offers a practical means to explore and comprehend new and valid ideas (Chafetz, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Such discoveries may lead to deeper understanding of certain issues, and/or practical applications which may improve specific situations. Within the context of this study theory development was expected to expand understanding of visitation transfers through the creation of concepts and preliminary propositions. Future

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research may further this process and help develop clear propositions, testable hypotheses, and family therapy interventions to be used with postdivorce families.

Research Methodology

Since qualitative approaches are well suited for the generation of theoretical ideas (Cavell & Snyder, 1991; Daly, 1992; Gilgun, 1992; Handel, 1992; Moon, Dillon & Sprenkle, 1991) and grounded theory research is specifically designed to promote theory development (Daly; Gilgun; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), the researcher selected an interpretive, grounded theory approach to study visitation transfers. Further, because grounded theory and ethnography emphasize understanding the participant's viewpoint and use of common language, the researcher combined these qualitative approaches.

This study focuses on the early stages of theory development. Theoretical developments are "discussional" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pp. 31-32). That is, they are less formal and structured, and more narrative and descriptive, than a fully developed propositional theory. Though theory is ultimately inclusive, it was not the goal of this study to complete a theoretical inquiry, but rather to begin one.

Assumptions

Several assumptions have shaped the researcher's perspective on this study. These ideas will be presented in two sections: broad and domain assumptions (Chafetz, 1978).

Broad Assumptions

This study is based on an ecological research model. Due to the vast number of interpretations and applications of the term "ecology," Wright and Herrin wrote, there ". . . probably is only one commonly recognized and accepted element of ecological thought" (1988, p. 253). That is, at the very minimum the ecological framework includes ". . . the study of interrelationships among organisms and their environments" (p. 253). Hook and Paolucci offer a similar broad definition: "Generally, ecology is the study of the relation of organisms or groups of organisms to their environment" (1970, p. 315). Other basic assumptions are housed within the ecological perspective. Specifically, one must assume an organism/environment interrelationship is real, orderly, and can be empirically observed and measured through the direct and indirect use of human senses.

Domain Assumptions

In this study, the ecological model is specifically applied to two systems, humans and families. Human ecology assumes that humans are an integral part of the natural ecosystem. Humans are separate from, yet connected to, other species which ". . . share the same delicately balanced ecosystem"

(Herrin & Wright, 1988, p. 168). The human ecosystem encompasses a systems perspective which assumes all parts of the system impact the entire system, and cybernetic notions of feedback, homeostasis, and circular causality are present (Watzlawick, Bavelas, & Jackson, 1967). Thus, all beings and environments are interrelated; one part cannot be viewed as separate from the "whole" (Wright & Herrin, 1988).

The notion family ecology integrates the idea that both systems and ecosystems play an integral role in achieving a full understanding of the family. Thus, it is assumed that effective families are "active, creative agents of change" (Wright & Herrin, 1988). Further, the researcher assumes that a primary function of the family is to socialize its children. Youngsters are viewed as entitled recipients of parental fairness and nurturance (Boszormenyi-Nagy, 1992; Boszormenyi-Nagy & Spark, 1984). Ethical, moral and cultural beliefs are passed transgenerationally through family patterns and myths (Boszormenyi-Nagy, 1992; Boszormenyi-Nagy & Spark, 1984; Framo, 1981, 1992; Kerr, 1981; Kramer, 1985) and ethnic traditions (Mindel & Habenstein, 1981). Finally, this research was based on the researcher's untested idea that the interdependence between binuclear subsystems would become more clear when explored within the context of "visitation transfers."

Binuclear and Ecosystemic Ideas

This research stems from a theoretical base which joins binuclear and ecosystemic theory. The following discussion will address binuclear family

definitions and related assumptions. The researcher will then review how ecosystemic and binuclear ideas converge in this study.

Binuclear Family

Conceptually speaking, the binuclear family is comprised of all postdivorce family members, including the children, parents, stepchildren, and stepparents from the parents' first marriage and all subsequent marriages. However, in this research, the term binuclear family is operationalized as a divorced couple and one of their biological children who moves between parental households.

There are four assumptions integrated into the binuclear approach utilized in this study. First, all binuclear family members, parents and children, have experienced a marital separation (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987). Second, all children within the binuclear system are products of the coparents' marriage. This intentionally excludes children born into a dating, cohabiting, or any other heterosexual relationship. A third assumption is that the binuclear research family has a dual subsystem focus. Sager et al. (1983) emphasized the interpersonal complexities which can result as a consequence of multiple remarriages. Because this theory is in the early development phase, such complexity will be avoided. The operational definition used in this research is limited to dual-subsystem units. Finally, binuclear families may or may not include biological parents who have married a new spouse.

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Binuclear Ecosystem

By employing the family ecosystems model (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993), the binuclear family can be viewed as a Human Environed Unit which encompasses two family households and the interaction between them (see Figure 1). The discontinued marriage and the former spouses' decisions to live separately lead to the development of two nuclei or dual household locations for the postdivorce family.

The binuclear system is embedded within the natural physical-biological, human built, and social-cultural environments (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993). The former partners divide themselves and may perceive their environments as separate from one another. However, it appears children draw the two parent subsystems together (Jacobson, 1987). They are the only family members who have membership in both parental households (Visher & Visher, 1979, 1993). Thus, it seems likely that the two parental subsystems remain interdependent. Each plays a major role in shaping the environments of the other. Ecologically speaking, one binuclear subsystem can not be fully comprehended without understanding the other and the interaction between the two.

The binuclear ecosystem is a micro or minirange idea (Bubolz, 1991) which is in the early stages of development. It is being created by the researcher in an effort to address the unique structure of the binuclear system. This approach offers an organizational framework within which researchers may explore various facets of postdivorce family functioning.
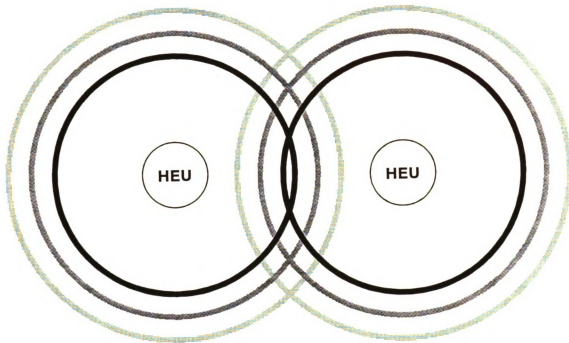
Human Environed Unit - HEU

Natural Physical-Biological Environment

Human Built Environment

Social-Cultural Environment

Figure 1. Binuclear ecosystem

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The binuclear ecosystem is conceptually defined as a family ecosystem which encompasses two households and the interaction between them. The binuclear ecosystem is operationalized as a system in which divorced parents' interdependence is shaped by their relationship(s) with their biological child(ren).

CHAPTER 2. PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

Although the number of postdivorce families is increasing, related

empirical literature has only recently begun to emerge (Esses & Campbell,

1984; Ihinger-Tallman & Pasley, 1987). Thus, it is not surprising that scholarly

literature on "visitation transfers" is minimal. In an effort to shed light on these

transfers, this literature review is broad in scope and it focuses on ideas which

appear to be associated with visitation transfers and the binuclear family

context in which they occur. This literature review will be divided into three

sections: binuclear family research; grounded theory and ethnographic

research; and a brief summary.

Binuclear Family Research

This section will focus on three studies which have explored binuclear

families. The first two are longitudinal research projects. Wallerstein's and

Kelly's California Children of Divorce Project (1980) appears to be the only

published qualitative study which explored visitation issues following divorce.

While they did not identify their theoretical base as "binuclear," Wallerstein and

Kelly focused on both subsystems within the postdivorce family.

The Binuclear Family Research Project was a multimethod study which

centered on the coparental relationships within binuclear families (Ahrons,

1980, 1989, 1993; Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987; Ahrons & Wallisch, 1987).

Although visitation was not addressed specifically, the data based concept

"coparenting styles" offers helpful background information for the present inquiry.

Pertinent findings from one other researcher will be included in this review. Jacobson (1987) based her research on a linked family system typology which can be used to investigate visitation within binuclear systems. Like Wallerstein and Kelly, Jacobson did not term her approach "binuclear." However, the dual subsystem emphasis was an integral part of her research. While Jacobson's research design was quantitative, some of her statements seem to relate to the current research.

California Children of Divorce Research Project

The California Children of Divorce Research Project was an exploratory, qualitative study of divorcing families which emphasized the children's perspective (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). This discussion will be divided into three sections: research methodology, relevant outcomes, and critique.

Research Methodology

Wallerstein's and Kelly's (1980) project focused on 60 families (131 children) who were primarily Caucasian, middle socioeconomic status (SES), Californians. Each family in this study was interviewed three times over a 5 year period. Informant contacts were made through a 6 week, free, "divorce counseling" course, in which the authors/researchers offered support and information. At that time all parents and children willing to participate, were interviewed together and separately.

One year later, informants were invited to take part in a follow-up

consultation. Individuals in 56 of the original 60 families were interviewed, and

school teachers assessed the academic and social progress of each child

(Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Five years following the initial contact, 58 of the

original 60 families provided follow-up information. In addition, 101 of the

original 131 children were interviewed, and school input was obtained for the

children.

Relevant Outcomes

Most pertinent to the current research is the authors' summary of

"hostilities surrounding visiting" (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980, p. 141). Children

found parental conflicts, preceding or following the visits, deeply distressing.

The writers report,

> . . . nearly half the children had witnessed intensely antagonistic
> exchanges between parents at the time of visiting. . . . In general, the
> opportunities for hostile exchange were legion; it seemed to some
> youngsters that crossing a mined field was the prerequisite for reaching
> their absent fathers. (p. 141)

Although approximately one-third of the children had parents who

restrained their hostility toward each other when their children were present,

most of the children ". . . felt cheated and betrayed by the prelude of hostilities

between parents. . ." (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980, p. 142). After the transfer of

children between parents was completed, and visitation with the noncustodial

parent had begun, most children were able to "shake off" the anxiety and enjoy

the visit (Wallerstein & Kelly, p. 142). The noncustodial parents (usually

fathers) who continued regular visits were those who could cope with the

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complexity, ambiguity, and emotional stresses connected with visiting their children. The authors called for ". . . a rethinking of visiting issues. . ." which would include involvement of both parents (p. 134).

Research Critique

The major strength of Wallerstein's and Kelly's (1980) longitudinal research appears to be the depth with which the authors explored individual family members' perspectives of divorce. Most notable is the emphasis placed on the child's reality.

Due to the unique qualitative approach utilized in this study, replicability is unlikely. It is probable that the personal relationships developed between the authors/researchers and their participant families impacted their data. However, as Mitchell (1991) indicated in his discussion of qualitative methodology, without this close connection between researcher and participant, it is unlikely that such information could have been accessed. Finally, because the participant sample is nonrepresentative, Wallerstein's and Kelly's outcomes are not generalizable.

Binuclear Family Research Project

The Binuclear Family Research Project (Ahrons & Wallisch, 1987) was a longitudinal study in which the family system was the unit of analysis. This section is divided into three segments: research methodology, coparenting styles, and research critique.

Research Methodology

A representative sample of 98 divorcing couples was drawn from Dane County, Wisconsin, court records. Participant restrictions required that both spouses were county residents with at least one minor child, and visitation took place between the noncustodial parent and child at least once every 2 months (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987). Research data were gathered from biological and stepparents in each binuclear system (Ahrons & Wallisch, 1987). On average, the biological parents were in their mid 30s and had been married 11 years (Ahrons & Wallisch, p. 231). The sample families were Caucasian and middle SES status. Children were not interviewed.

Semistructured interviews were conducted in respondents' homes by trained graduate students. Open-ended and structured questions were used. In addition, binuclear family genograms, two Q-sort procedures, and a paper-and-pencil Hopkins Symptom Checklist were incorporated into the study (Ahrons & Wallisch, 1987, p. 230). The interviews were designed to measure the ". . . extent and quality . . ." of the adult relationships within the binuclear system (Ahrons & Wallisch, p. 230).

Coparenting Styles

While Ahron's research has led to some interesting quantitative findings, none relate specifically to the transfer process which is the focus of this dissertation. However, the data based notion of coparenting styles appears to be relevant to the participants of this research.

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Four postdivorce coparent relational types were generated from the data gathered in the Binuclear Family Research Project (Ahrons, 1989; Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987). These relationship styles represent a continuum of differences ranging from very friendly to extremely hostile.

At one extreme of the continuum are the "Perfect Pals" (Ahrons, 1989; Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987). These postdivorce couples maintain a close, respectful coparental bond and have a basic willingness to accommodate one another. Perfect pals generally have joint custody of their child(ren), and share decision-making and child care responsibilities. These coparents often celebrate holidays together and maintain relationships with each other's families. When conflicts arise they are resolved between coparents.

While perfect pals were relatively rare in study outcomes, the second group, "Cooperative Colleagues," were more common (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987). Though these couples are not good friends and have often had stormy past relationships, they manage to overcome differences and work together for their child's best interests (Ahrons, 1989). Joint custody arrangements are less common among cooperative colleagues than perfect pals. Nevertheless, children in these families tend to have a high degree of contact with custodial and noncustodial parents (Ahrons & Rodgers). While key events, such as weddings, graduations, and bar/bas mitzvahs, are held jointly, there is less camaraderie among cooperative colleagues than perfect pals. Despite their differences, both parents accept child related responsibilities and put the child's needs first (Ahrons, 1989; Ahrons & Rodgers).

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"Angry Associates," the third set of coparents on Ahrons' continuum, carry unresolved bitterness and resentment from the former marriage and divorce (Ahrons, 1989; Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987). This anger is often vented through legal battles centering on custody, visitation, and child support issues. Noncustodial parents send late or incomplete child support payments; and custodial parents often alter or deny visitations. In-laws may become entangled in, or estranged from, the former spouses' conflictual relationship (Ahrons & Rodgers). Likewise, children in these families are caught between their parents, causing ongoing loyalty conflicts. Ahrons and Rodgers viewed negotiations among these couples like "tiptoeing through a minefield" (p. 127). However, while conflicts between such parents are plentiful, they do not have the strong hostility present among the "fiery foes."

The "Fiery Foes" are unable to cooperate as coparents (Ahrons, 1989; Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987). They tend to focus on the negative aspects of their previous marriage and view their former spouse as the enemy. This fosters an attack-counterattack escalation pattern (Ahrons & Rodgers; Watzlawick, Bavelas, & Jackson, 1967). Child custody is usually granted to one parent, which leads to further coparental disagreements. Fiery foe coparents are unable to accept each other's parental rights (Ahrons, 1989; Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987). These couples return to court often, relying on the legal system to facilitate their long-term feud.

Visitation issues are major sources of conflict among fiery foes. Ahrons and Rodgers noted, "Access to children by the noncustodial parent will be a

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source of continued strife. When visitation rights are exercised, one or both parents are likely to use these times to identify recurring or new provocations" (1987, p. 128).

Ahrons and Rogers (1987) distinguished between functional and dysfunctional divorce. The authors wrote,

> A functional divorce is one in which spouses are able to move through the transitions of disorganizing the nuclear family without creating severely debilitating crises for themselves and other family members. Additionally, they are able to move through the transitions of reorganization without suffering significant relational losses to children, extended kin and friends. A dysfunctional divorce results in an enmeshment of familial relationships in the spousal relationship. This type of divorce most frequently sets the stage for prolonged and permanent psychic injury to one or more family members. (p. 131)

Ahrons and Rodgers (1987) identified the first two styles of former spouse relationships, i.e. perfect pals and cooperative colleagues, as functional postdivorce systems. In these binuclear families both parents had continuing relationships with their children and supportive, cooperative relationships with each other. The authors suggested that functional postdivorce families comprised approximately 50% of all divorcing families.

Meanwhile, the last two coparenting styles, i.e. angry associates and fiery foes, were categorized as dysfunctional postdivorce families. Such systems are unable to reorganize after their divorce. Coparents tend to draw others into their unresolved conflicts, which often leads to psychic injury of children and/or parents. Approximately 50% of all divorcing families fall into the angry associates or fiery foes categories (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987).

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<u>Research Critique</u>

The primary strengths of the Binuclear Family Research Project are its longitudinal approach and the development of data based "coparenting styles." Further, it appears to be the only study thus far to research a representative sample of the binuclear system over time.

Despite these points, Ahrons & Wallisch (1987) questioned the generalizability of the research findings. Due to the Caucasian, middle SES status, and liberal community base of the sample, the authors cautioned readers not to generalize their outcomes to the broad population. Ahrons and Wallisch (1987) viewed the results as hypotheses, requiring further testing.

One drawback of this research is the lack of information gathered from the children's perspective. The nurturance and protection of the child is a major thrust behind Ahrons' functional binuclear family. Input from children would give a more complete understanding of the "family" perspective.

<u>Linked Family Systems</u>

Jacobson (1987) established a classification scheme for remarried families. This discussion is divided in four segments: Jacobson's typology, research methodology, research outcomes, and research critique.

<u>Jacobson's Typology</u>

Jacobson's step-system structural typology (1987), was based on the (step)child's custodial and noncustodial household membership. The author identified six postdivorce family types. Three were families in which children

lived with their biological mother and visited their biological father; three were

those in which they lived with their biological father and visited their biological

mother. Jacobson described these types,

> Type 1. Child lives with a single mother and visits a remarried father;
> Type 2. Child lives with a remarried mother and visits a remarried father.
> In this instance the child has two stepparents--one in the live-in
> household and one in the visited household. Type 3. Child lives with a
> remarried mother and visits a single father. (pp. 261-262)

Types 4, 5, and 6 paralleled these types. However, in them, the child lived

with the father alone or with a stepparent, and visited the mother (Jacobson).

Jacobson's research design offered a framework for exploring the

between binuclear subsystem visitation process. Children were given a central

role in this approach. Jacobson wrote that stepchildren ". . . are not part of a

'one parent' family but rather a two-parent, 'two-household' family" (1987,

p. 268), between which they carry covert and overt communication.

Research Methodology

The primary purpose of Jacobson's cross-sectional, exploratory study

was to test the "linked family system" model (1987, p. 261). This quantitative

research focused on the relationships between (a) family type and children's

adjustment behaviors and (b) contact time between children and their

noncustodial parent and the children's adjustment (p. 263).

Jacobson (1987) drew her informants from Los Angeles, California,

marriage records. Sample screening criteria required that the marital couples

had (a) at least one marital partner who was previously divorced and at least

one child (age 8-17) from the former marriage, (b) at minimum, a high school

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education, and (c) child(ren) who had lived in their household for at least 1 year before the study and had seen their noncustodial parent at least once during that time. In addition, both biological parents had to live within 150 miles of Los Angeles and be willing to participate in the study.

Jacobson's sample included 176 children, their 352 biological parents, and 227 stepparents. The participants were primarily middle SES status. The children were divided among the family types as follows: ". . . 50 in Family Type 1, 51 in Family Type 2, 42 in Family Type 3, and 33 in Family Type 4" (1987, p. 263). Only one of the three father custody family types (4) was used because estimates indicate that very few children in postdivorce families live with their biological father.

Each child and (step)parent was individually interviewed in each subsystem household. The interviews were led by trained mental health professionals. (Step)parents' perceptions of children's competencies and problems were assessed using the Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist (Jacobson, 1987).

Research Outcomes

According to Jacobson's study, in most cases younger children (8-12) spent more time visiting noncustodial parents than did their older siblings (13-17). This supports the findings by Sager et al. (1983) which indicated that teenagers' autonomy and sexual development may conflict with the remarried family's need for cohesion. No relationship was discovered between children's

behavioral outcomes and the amount of visitation time spent with the

noncustodial parent (Jacobson, 1987).

Jacobson's findings give support to the notion of binuclear family

interdependence. She wrote,

> Some linked family systems appear to live 'in tandem,' friendly or not,
> and must make arrangements that include attention to the 'other family'
> in planning schedules, weekend arrangements, vacations, and so forth.
> Reactions to happy or distressing life events in one household (death,
> marriage, taxes) can spill over to the 'other' household through the
> child. . . . The children reported the delicacy of working out relationships
> with two families who often had different values, lifestyles, and ideas
> about discipline. (1987, p. 270)

Research Critique

The major strengths of Jacobson's (1987) work are the introduction of a

theoretical framework which delineated several types of binuclear systems and

the model's emphasis on the child's "linking" capacity in these families. In

addition, Jacobson incorporated key aspects of the ecological perspective in

her framework. The entire classification is based on a child's visitation

between binuclear subsystem households. This is a crucial factor in binuclear

system research given that both subsystems are interdependent (Ahrons,

1980; Sager et al., 1983). However, there are two major disadvantages in

Jacobson's model. First, this approach excludes postdivorce families in which

neither partner has remarried. According to Ahrons (1980) this family

constellation is still considered a binuclear system. Second, there is no

provision for joint custody families in which children move between parental

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Grounded Theory and Ethnography

In this study the grounded theory approach of Glaser and Strauss

(1967) and Spradley's ethnographic interview process (1979) have been

merged. Both of these study techniques will be reviewed in this discussion.

Grounded theory is a qualitative research approach which compares

systematically gathered data in an effort to develop theory. The emphasis is

on the creation of valid concepts and theoretical ideas, not verification of

hypotheses (Bubolz, 1991). The purpose of grounded theory research is to

". . . build theory that is faithful and illuminates the area under study" (Strauss

& Corbin, 1990, p. 24).

The "constant comparison method" is used to generate grounded theory

(Glaser & Strauss, 1967); that is, data are gathered, reviewed, and compared

continuously through the data gathering and analysis processes (Bubolz, 1991;

Hidalgo de Avila, 1991). Through this "constant comparison," data based

concepts are likely to emerge and form relationships (Chafetz, 1978; Bubolz,

1991). The primary goal of this approach is to create theory that is based on

the actual life experiences of participants. By utilizing this process theoretical

outcomes are grounded in the data, not the researcher's viewpoint or

interpretations (Glaser & Strauss).

Like grounded theory, ethnography emphasizes the importance of

understanding the participant's reality from his/her perspective. The primary

purpose of an ethnographic interview is for the researcher to understand the

informant's (native's) perspective, and perceive the cultural meaning

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associated with this viewpoint (Hidalgo de Avila, 1991; Manczak, 1984;

Spradley, 1979). Given the crucial role the researcher plays in this process

(Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Spradley, 1979), it is essential to have guidelines

for this endeavor. Ethnographic researchers have outlined specific techniques

utilized to step into the reality of participants. These include building rapport,

asymmetrical interactions, and the use of descriptive and contrasting questions

(Spradley). Of key importance is that the participant be viewed and treated as

the teacher (Spradley).

Strauss and Corbin (1990) wrote that good science and theory are

dependent upon the researcher's balance between personal creativity and

scientific discovery. The development of theoretical sensitivity requires

capitalizaing on the researcher's personal, professional, and literary

backgrounds, while maintaining distance from them. Schatzman and Strauss

(1973) underscore this perspective. The authors suggest the researcher

assume the role of the participant through ". . . systematic listening without

applying one's own analytic categories" (Schatzman & Strauss, p. 69). Not

until after "comparative analysis" does the researcher apply his/her own

"developing framework" (p. 69-70).

Summary

Several researchers have emphasized the interdependence of the

binuclear family subsystems (Ahrons, 1980, 1989, 1993; Ahrons & Rodgers,

1987; Ahrons & Wallisch, 1987; Jacobson, 1987; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980).

However, none of these researchers have explored how or if the binuclear

subsystems' reliance on one another is present as postdivorce families move children between parental residences.

The lack of postdivorce theory has prompted researchers, theorists, and family therapists to call for more empirical inquiry in this arena. Though some studies discuss visitation transfers in part, and raise potentially critical related issues, as yet none have specifically focused on visitation transfers. Because of this, the researcher elected to use grounded theory and ethnographic research processes to explore visitation transfers.

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CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

In this study, ethnographic and grounded theory research techniques were combined to create an interpretive, participant oriented, data gathering and analysis process. More specifically, ethnographic interviews were utilized as a practical means of gathering data to use for developing grounded theory.

This chapter will focus on how the methodological aspects of this research were completed. The first section will describe the research process used in this study. This will be followed by an overview of other methodological issues. The chapter will end with a review of the research participants' characteristics and a brief summary of study findings.

Research Process

This discussion will review the research procedures utilized in this study. This overview will be divided into two sections: the research plan and the actual research events. The research plan was designed before the study began. It mapped out how the researcher intended to carry out the inquiry. The actual events section focuses on variations in the research plan which evolved as the study progressed.

Research Plan

Qualitative inquiries are rarely completed in clear "phases" (Gilgun, 1992). Such was the case in this study as well. However, for the sake of

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clarity, description of this research plan will be divided into four segments: participant selection, data collection, theoretical analysis, and researcher's role.

Participant Selection

Grounded theory research emphasizes the discovery and development of concepts. Thus, the participant selection process focused on accessing ideas, not individuals (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). For this reason, informant selection in this study was nonrandom. This segment will center on procedures for participant selection criteria, contacts with ministers in an effort to access participants, and potential participant contacts.

Participant selection criteria. The families who participated in this study were expected to meet two guidelines. The required criteria were (a) the binuclear family had moments of transfer during and previous to the interview time period and (b) the identified research child either resided with the biological mother and visited the biological father, or lived with both parents in a joint custody situation.

Because it is the central focus of this research, moments of transfer were a top priority in this selection process. Informants were to have experienced visitation transfers during and before the time of the study. Both parents were required to have been physically present during moments of transfer.

Recent research has suggested that only 10% of children in postdivorce systems live with their biological father (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987; Jacobson, 1987). In addition, Ganong and Coleman (1987) wrote that biological mother

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custody families were the most accessible and most researched postdivorce family constellation. Thus, Jacobson's mother custody Family Types (1 through 3), were priority participants in this study. Utilizing a common stepfamily type provided for potential comparison (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984) with other studies using the same family constellation, such as Jacobson and Wallerstein and Kelly (1980). Further, due to the increase in the number of joint custody families (Ahrons & Rodgers), these postdivorce systems were included in the participant selection criteria.

It was desirable, but not essential, that all participating binuclear families had at least one remarried couple that had wed within the past 3 years. This criteria was added with the hope that research findings might be comparable to others', such as Ahrons & Rodgers (1987), Jacobson (1987), and Wallerstein and Kelly (1980).

The second nonessential selection criterion was that the identified research child was between the ages of 6 and 11. Those below age 6 were excluded because it was expected that they would be unable to clearly articulate or clearly dramatize their transfer experiences. Due to the autonomy and sexuality difficulties teenagers can experience within remarried families (Sager et al., 1983), and the likelihood that they would be less involved in visitation than their younger siblings (Jacobson, 1987), it was preferred that they not participate in this research.

Minister contacts. The researcher anticipated some difficulties recruiting binuclear families for this study because remarried families often remain hidden

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by masking themselves as nuclear systems (Visher & Visher, 1993). In an effort to circumvent this potential problem, local ministers were asked to identify postdivorce family systems affiliated with their churches.

Three religious organizations were chosen because of their "liberal" orientations, and the likelihood that they would be willing to help with this study. Ministers at three local protestant churches, with which the researcher had no ongoing relationship, were asked to identify potential participant families who met specific criteria. Each minister was sent an introductory letter describing the research, participant criteria, and their potential role in the process.

Following this, the researcher met privately with each minister to describe study details. The ministers were asked to complete four tasks: (a) identify divorced coparents who fit participant guidelines, (b) make a personal contact with both biological coparents in each identified binuclear system and briefly describe to them their potential role in this study, (c) call the researcher with names and phone numbers of potential informants who agreed to further contact, and (d) introduce participants to the researcher.

In an effort to ward against the possibility that the ministers would select only "functional" coparenting systems (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987), the researcher incorporated three safety measures into her meetings with the ministers. First, she identified herself as a stepfamily member "pioneering" her way through postdivorce issues. In addition, she wove nonjudgmental comments into the discussion, indicating to the minister that the researcher

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knew stepfamily life was "a tough job," and that no one "had all the answers." Further, while discussing each minister's family selections, the researcher emphasized the minister's inclusion of divorced coparents who may, or may not, have felt their family was functioning well.

Potential participant contacts. According to the research plan, the ministers were asked to contact the best known coparent. If this coparent was interested in taking part in the study, the minister was to request that he/she describe the project to his/her former spouse and ask if the researcher could call the former spouse regarding research involvement.

Following this, the researcher planned to contact the participants identified by the ministers, and review with them the research process and participant screening questions. After introducing herself as a doctoral candidate at Michigan State University, the researcher expected to explain that she was ". . . conducting a research project on children transferring between their postdivorce parents for visitation." Parents were to be told the study would involve two individual interviews which would each last a total of 3 hours. The children's total time commitment was to be 2 hours. Informants were to understand the researcher expected their study involvement to be confidential, which meant their names were not to be revealed to anyone by the researcher. When, and if, both coparents and one research child were willing to take part in the study, the researcher intended to invite them to an initial meeting (see Appendix B). Once this meeting was scheduled, an introductory letter would be sent to each coparent and child (see Appendix C).

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During the initial meetings the researcher planned to meet with each potential coparent and child participant. There were three purposes for this gathering (see Appendix D). The first was to further motivate the potential informants to become involved with the study. Emphasis was placed on the participants' roles as educators (Spradley, 1979). In addition, potential participants were to be told that once they completed the study a small contribution would be made in their name to a charity organization of their choice.

The second purpose of this meeting was to exchange information between the researcher and participating families. The researcher intended to explain the study's purpose, the informants' time commitments and potential roles in the interview process. She planned to discuss audiotape recording the interviews and the reasons for it, verify that each potential research family met the participant selection criteria, review the consent form (see Appendix E, forms 1 and 2), and request and respond to questions from the potential participants.

The researcher intended to show the child interview questions to the coparent(s) (see Appendix F). Coparents were to be asked not to discuss the questions with their child until their interviews were completed. Parents were to be asked to share thoughts or requests relating to the child interview format.

The third and perhaps most critical goal in the initial meeting was to establish a comfort level with the families. A trust relationship was to be fostered as the researcher included nonjudgmental phrases which

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communicated empathy toward postdivorce family issues. Further, because the researcher's stepfamily role, i.e. noncustodial stepmother could be viewed as negative by some potential participants, the researcher chose to identify herself as a "stepparent" only. Her noncustodial status was not to be discussed with participants.

At the close of this meeting participants were to be asked to sign the research consent form and complete a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix G). During this period the researcher planned to meet briefly with each potential research child. After spending time in "friendly conversation" (Spradley, 1979), the researcher intended to describe to the child the interview process and his/her potential part in it. This effort was designed to help build rapport with the child and aid the development of researcher/parent relations.

Data Collection

All coparents and research children were expected to participate in two individual ethnographic interviews. Both will be reviewed in this discussion.

Coparent interviews. The coparent interviews were designed to progress through Spradley's ethnographic interview process (1979). The interviews were to begin with friendly conversation, recording and project explanations, and included descriptive and contrast questions.

Initial questions were broad and descriptive (see Appendix H). Each coparent interview process was to begin with the grand tour question: "Will you please describe a visitation transfer from your point of view?" Follow up questions stemmed from the participants' responses. Coparents were also to

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be asked metaphor and advice questions which related to visitation transfers. The first interview was to end with a taking flight discussion (Spradley, 1979) and a reminder about the next scheduled meeting.

The second interview was designed to focus on the participant's perceptions of community support and follow up questions from the previous meeting (see Appendix H). This session was to end with the researcher thanking the participant for his/her input and obtaining the name of the charity organization he/she had selected. According to the research plan, all coparent interviews were expected to take place in a private setting and be tape recorded for transcription purposes.

Child interviews. The researcher planned to begin each child interview with friendly conversation, and recording and project explanations (Spradley, 1979). As in the adult interviews, the children's interviews were to be completed in a private setting. Parents were requested to give the child and researcher privacy while remaining in the near environment.

The child interviews were designed to include either a role play or an imagination activity, both of which concentrated on the child's understanding of the visitation transfer process. For the role play, children were expected to portray a visitation transfer using small dolls. In the imagination session they were to be requested to imagine a visitation process and describe it to the researcher (see Appendix F).

The role play was created for children around ages 6 through 9; the imagination session for youngsters about age 10 and up. These age

delineations were intentionally vague due to the researcher's desire for flexibility (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). An immature 10-year-old child may have been asked to participate in a role play, while a more mature 9-year-old might have been requested to do the imaginary process. Judgments as to which children would do which activity were to be made by the researcher in advance of the interviews based on her previous knowledge of the child.

All child interviews were designed to close with a 10 to 15 minute "fun time." This was to be a closure period during which the child selected an activity. A follow-up letter of thanks was to be sent to each coparent and child who completed the interviews.

Theoretical Analysis

The primary goal of this data analysis process was to begin a theoretical investigation by developing preliminary propositions which related to visitation transfers in postdivorce families. To accomplish this goal, the researcher planned to use the constant comparison method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to analyze interview transcripts. In this process evidences were to coded according to categories which stemmed from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Codes were to be based on folk or common terms used by informants (Spradley, 1979). After repeated comparison of the data, theoretical patterns, properties, higher and lower order concepts, and preliminary propositions were expected to emerge (Bubolz, 1991; Chafetz, 1978; Hidalgo de Avila, 1991; Strauss & Corbin). Additional analysis techniques were not identified before the process began. However, options included the use of data displays (Miles

& Huberman, 1984) and domain analyses (Spradley). The researcher also planned to read literary materials to enhance her understanding of the data. Such resources were also expected to help generate questions and direct theoretical sampling (Strauss & Corbin). It should be noted that the terms theme, idea, and notion were to be used interchangeably to identify a general pattern which appeared among the data.

Researcher's Role

The researcher planned to assume the dual role of ethnographer and theorist. Her primary goals throughout this study were to understand visitation transfers from the viewpoint of multiple participants (Jarret, 1992; Manczak, 1984; Spradley, 1979), report the data accurately (Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Spradley), and maintain objectivity as the theoretical ideas developed (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Marshall & Rossman).

While gathering data, the researcher planned to make a neutral self-presentation and maintain openness toward the participants' perspectives. For example, during interviews, the researcher planned to be neutral and pleasant in demeanor and dress, show interest in the participant's responses, and ask follow up questions to build data accuracy (Spradley, 1979). Woven throughout this process was Spradley's emphasis on the participant as teacher. The interviewees were the experts; the researcher the listener. In addition, the researcher planned to focus on interpersonal rapport building, asymmetrical interactions, and the use of descriptive and contrasting questions (Spradley). The researcher planned to restate questions using native terms

and express interest in an effort to build the researcher/participant relationship (Spradley).

The researcher planned to maintain a research journal throughout the research process. This record was to contain study notes for each coparent and child interview, and final summaries for each research family. To foster data accuracy, field notes were to be jotted briefly during the interviews and a "condensed account" was to be created just after the meetings ended. Following this, the researcher intended to write an "expanded" version of each interview in which initial facts, thoughts, and impressions were to be more thoroughly developed (Spradley, 1979). Dates and times of each entry were to be noted.

Actual Research Events

In most study situations, the researcher followed the previously described plan. However, some unanticipated events required that the research plan be expanded or altered. This discussion will focus on research plan changes which transpired during the research process. Thus, unless otherwise stated, research procedures progressed according to the research plan outlined previously. This section will cover participant selection, data collection, and theoretical analysis issues which evolved as the study progressed. Each segment will include a summary of research plan outcomes.

Participant Selection

    Although the criteria for informant selection were not altered, the procedures used to connect with potential participants had to be modified. Changes were made in both the minister and informant contact procedures.

    <u>Minister contacts.</u> Contrary to the research plan, in all instances the ministers did not know or preferred not to contact one of the potential participant coparents. Two of the ministers told the researcher that their reasoning for this was that in most cases divorced couples choose not to attend the same church. Thus, the ministers were asked to contact the best known coparent, discuss the study with him/her, and request permission for the researcher to phone the informant.

    Two potential participants who were accessed through the church ministers did not take part in the study. In one situation, a postdivorce father was willing to participate, but his former spouse was not. According to the father, his relationship with his former spouse was conflictual. Before she declined, he told the researcher that he was not sure about his former spouse's involvement as she could be "touchy about these things." He said, "She's not real open to that type of inquiry."

    This divorced couple had two children ages 7 and 10 who lived with their mother. The coparents had joint legal custody of the children and neither had remarried. The father told the researcher he saw his children "every other weekend and one night on the off weeks."

The other family that did not take part in this study declined because they did not meet the research criteria. In this situation the postdivorce father did not have regular contact with his son.

Potential participant contacts. During the first coparent research interview it became clear that the researcher's use of the term "visitation" could be offensive to some participants. This led to an informant contact methodology change. Rather than stating that she was conducting a research project on "children transferring . . . for visitation," the researcher told potential participants she was exploring what it was like ". . . for postdivorce families when children went from one parental home to another." In addition, informants were asked for their term for what the researcher had previously called "visitation transfer." The folk word selected by the participant was then used throughout the interview.

While initial meetings were expected to take place at the contact minister's churches, five of the eight initial meetings took place in the potential participants' homes. Other, more public, settings were chosen according to the researcher's and potential participant's scheduling and geographic needs. Thus, while the researcher had planned otherwise, the ministers did not attend these events.

It appears that efforts to build safety within the researcher/participant relationship were effective. All the families that agreed to an initial meeting, signed the research consent form at that time and completed the entire research interview process.

<u>Data Collection</u>

The interviews in this study took place from November, 1991 to May, 1992. As the data collection process evolved, it became evident that two methodological changes were needed. One related to interview locations; some were more private than others. The other modification stemmed from the research children's developmental stages.

<u>Coparent interviews.</u> The researcher's goal was to interview participants in a private setting. This was achieved in most cases. Of the 16 coparent interviews, 10 took place in participant's homes, 4 in private work places, and 2 in public restaurants. During the restaurant interviews, research topics were not discussed when waitpersons were nearby. As in the initial meetings, these places were selected according to participants' schedules and geographic availability. The coparent interviews ranged in time from approximately 45 minutes to 2 hours and 15 minutes.

<u>Child interviews.</u> As the data gathering process evolved, it became clear that the planned child interview activities were too childish and were therefore not suited for the older children who participated in this study. Two findings support this idea. First, when asked for their input, five of the six parents whose children were ages 11 and 14, requested that their child be asked to discuss his/her experience directly, rather than through a role play or imagination activity. These requests were honored. In these instances, the researcher simply talked with the older children about their visitation transfer experiences. The only coparents who did not request this change were the

parents of the 8-year-old. Consequently, this child was the only one to complete the role play.

Second, each child interview was expected to end with a "fun time." This was designed to be a brief period during which the researcher and child would do an activity which the child selected. However, because most of the children in this study were older than the preferred ages of 6 to 11, the nature of this fun time changed also. For example, during his fun time, the 8-year-old chose to draw and color a favorite sports car and show the researcher a pet mouse, while the 11- and two 14-year-olds talked with the researcher about other topics, such as their pets and friends.

The eight interviews with children in this study took place in private or semiprivate areas of the child's home. In three interviews the researcher and child had complete privacy. In one case, the researcher and child sat at a kitchen table with occasional visits and inquiries from other family members. Research related conversation and the tape recorder stopped during these interruptions. The length of the children's interviews varied from a minimum of 30 to a maximum of 60 minutes.

Theoretical Analysis

As previously stated, qualitative data processes often overlap in time. In this study, analysis began as the data were collected and transcribed. However, this discussion will be divided into two parts: data transcription, and data review and coding.

Data transcription. A primary purpose of qualitative research is to
understand the meaning of the informant's statements as s/he does. Thus,
throughout the transcription process the researcher made every effort to
include words, sentence structures, and punctuation marks which seemed to
best express the participant's perspective. Because this is a subjective
process, and thus open to validity problems, the researcher designed
guidelines for transcription of probable punctuation and content selection.
Each will be discussed in this segment.

The transcription punctuation choices made by the researcher were
based on three guiding criteria. Sentence breaks were made when the
participant's words and vocal intonations appeared to indicate that s/he had
completed a thought. Similarly, paragraph breaks were created when the
interview discussion seemed to move to a different topic. Occasional **bold**
letters and exclamation points were used to show vocal emphasis on specific
words or phrases.

Other criteria were used to determine what audiotaped content would be
included and excluded. Instead of noting all utterances (such as "uh" and
"um"), only the words exchanged between the informants and researcher were
included. In addition, false sentence starts and tangential words such as "you
know" were not included in the transcriptions. Pauses less than 18 seconds
were not identified. Finally, the researcher's expressions of interest, such as
"mm-mmm," or "uh-huh," "I understand," "I see," "Okay," or "Yeah," were not

noted. These statements were used to express interest, not add to the interview discussion.

Occasionally, the researcher could not clearly delineate the participant's words. In these cases, the phrases "(inaudible word)" or "(inaudible words)" were used to indicate one or more verbal syllables were heard, but the meaning was unintelligible. When the researcher had a guess as to the meaning of an inaudible word, this idea was listed in parentheses and quotations.

The researcher's interpretations and responses were separated from observable phenomena by the use of brackets. As the transcription process progressed, all of the bracketed thoughts, opinions, and/or observations of the researcher were inserted in the proper places within the interview transcriptions.

Data review and coding. As stated in the research plan, it was anticipated that documentation of and reflection upon research data would lead to an emergence of common patterns or themes. Thus, throughout the transcription process the researcher looked for data based ideas relating to visitation transfers. The transcriptions were used to corroborate the researcher's condensed and expanded accounts.

When the transcription process was completed for each family, written summaries were created. These reports addressed data organization, procedural changes, background issues, and potential research concepts for

each family. The family summaries became more indepth as data gathering continued and cross-family comparisons were made.

Throughout the analysis phase of this study, the researcher continued efforts to remain objective and neutral toward the data. This was fostered by focusing on the data and requiring potential labels and concepts to appear within them. Coding was completed according to data based ideas and applied consistently across all research family data.

After the interviews and transcriptions were completed, the researcher read and reread the data with the specific intent of concept discovery (Gilgun, 1992). Various questions were asked as the researcher combed the interview transcripts, for example, "What is this? What does it represent?" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 63) and how is it similar or dissimilar to other data based ideas? The research journal was used to document evolving ideas.

Evidence criteria. As data coding progressed, a set of criteria were designed to guide the researcher's choices as to which data would be included in this study. Evidences were required to focus specifically on visitation transfers and occur across at least three families. When possible these examples included statements from both children and parents. Evidences were used only once in the development of the theory, that is, no example was used to support more than one emerging theoretical concept. An additional coding criterion was added when it became clear that two mother custody and two joint custody families participated in the study. When

exploring differences between the two custodial groups, two examples were required from each of them.

Development of these criteria served two major purposes. First, it helped clarify and organize the researcher/theorist's ideas. What had been enigmatic during the preliminary analysis phase began to assume a substantive form. Second, the data were consolidated. Instead of reviewing up to three floppy disks of information per family, the researcher now had only one per family. The researcher also created demographic profiles of each research family, and used data displays (Miles & Huberman, 1984) to clarify evolving ideas. As specific concepts began to emerge, they were rechecked for applicability and accuracy. Initial codes changed as more data were added. Through this constant review, the data based concepts gradually evolved.

Finally, although the data are reported within this dissertation within a conceptual framework (Bubolz, 1991), it is expected that this analysis process will continue long after the dissertation is completed. Further ideas continued to evolve as this dissertation was written.

Other Methodological Issues

In addition to the research process employed in this study, three methodology ideas will be reviewed. They are: research validity, research reliability, and study limitations.

Research Validity

The purpose of grounded theory research is to generate valid theoretical concepts (Daly, 1992; Gilgun, 1992). The researcher's responsibility to understand the informant's position is at the heart of this process. Schatzman and Strauss stated, "[Data gathering and analysis] . . . must take into account the ways that the actors themselves understand what they are doing" (1973, p. 67).

Throughout this study the researcher followed the research plan designed to further her understanding of how individuals comprehended their own visitation transfer experiences. She used accuracy checks, kept her ideas and interpretations separate from those of the participants, and maintained openness toward the informants' perspectives.

One key example of this lead to the development of a data based term for what the researcher had previously identified as a "visitation transfer." After describing the visitation transfer process, the researcher asked informants for a word or phrase which they used to identify that experience. Once the participants had chosen their own terminology, the researcher incorporated it into the interview process which followed. Comparison of the terms selected by the participants lead to the evolution of data based terms. Thus this process was based on the participants' perspectives, not that of the researcher.

Research Reliability

The grounded theory approach was selected for this study because of its emphasis on generating valid theoretical concepts from data gathered through inductive processes (Daly, 1992; Gilgun, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Because the goal of the theoretical analysis phase of this research was to create valid concepts and explore potential relationships between them, reliability was not a major consideration. However, the researcher did draw comparisons among research families and between the study data and current literature. Each will be discussed in this section.

Having interviews with each family participant provided the researcher with several potential comparisons during data analysis (Handel, 1992). Comparisons were made among and across binuclear family members. As more families were studied, similarities and dissimilarities were explored across specific family members, i.e. biological mothers, fathers, and children, and binuclear families (Handel). Thus, several comparisons across multiple information sources helped build internal validity and procedural reliability (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

In addition, the concepts from this study are comparable to others which appear in current literature. Comparing study outcomes is supported by Jarret who wrote that when case studies are compared with existing research they do not stand alone (1992, p. 194). The author views case studies as adding to "the larger cumulative knowledge base" (Jarret, p. 194). Some

terminology from other researchers has been integrated into the theoretical outcomes of this study (see Chapter 8). It appears that the themes discovered through this research are similar, and in some cases identical, to terms used by other postdivorce family researchers. Given the embryonic state of this research topic, it appears this research is "on track" with regard to concept and theory development.

Study Limitations

This research has limitations which have impacted the research data and the preliminary propositions drawn from them. These include the retrospective data gathering approach used in this study, researcher bias, and issues which relate to the participants involved in this research.

Retrospective Approach

Because direct observation of visitation transfers would likely alter them, the researcher chose to access information about visitation transfers via retrospective interviews. However, in this method, the researcher is forced to depend on each participant's memory, which can be unreliable and invalid.

In order to access the most accurate retrospective data, participating families were expected to have regular visitation transfers during the research interview process. Thus, while some interview questions required participants to reflect on their past, they were also discussing experiences which were very recent. Use of this approach also accessed a greater variety of data, in that

informants were able to remember some transfer experiences which transpired several years before the study.

Researcher Bias

As with any study, researcher bias was present in this inquiry. The sole researcher in this study is a Caucasian, middle SES status woman with Scandinavian heritage. She is a marriage and family therapist who had taught and counseled others about postdivorce family issues. Her interest in this area stemmed from her role as a noncustodial stepmother. While these background issues undoubtedly impacted the interactions between the researcher and study participants (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Schatzman & Strauss, 1973), like Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) and Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989), they also equipped her to empathize with the research informants (Daly, 1992; Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Mitchell, 1991).

Further, in an effort to better understand the realities of others, the researcher has studied family and cultural diversity (Mindel & Habenstein, 1981) as well as her own family history. She received value awareness training and worked with several ethnic groups. Thus, through training and practice, the researcher did her best to maintain "disciplined subjectivity" (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982).

This notion was also applied to the previous theoretical ideas the researcher had developed on the topic of visitation transfers. These notions were created before this research began and were not based on empirical data. Thus, throughout this study the researcher made efforts to separate her

previous impressions from the developments which evolved from the data in this study (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973).

Research Participant Issues

There are several informant related ideas which can be considered as limitations linked with the theoretical sample represented in this research. They are: the demographic group, coparenting styles, and children's ages represented among the informants. Each will be considered in this discussion.

The families in this study were Caucasian, generally middle SES status, and well educated. While the purpose of grounded theory development is to sample ideas, not individuals, a wider range of theoretical samples and more informants would have brought more breadth and depth to this inquiry.

All the participating research coparents had generally positive relationshps and could be considered "cooperative colleagues" (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987). That is, all of them honored their child support and visitation transfer arrangements; all communicated with one another regarding their child's needs. None of them had major coparental differences, and none had been to court since their divorces. While these couples were not friends per se, they did seem to work together for their child's best interests.

In addition, it appeared to the researcher that children in the participating families had regular contact with both parents. Similar to statements made by Wallerstein and Kelly (1980), noncustodial parents seemed to cope well with the many diverse issues connected with their visits with their children. Thus, while Ahrons was hesitant to view the coparenting

styles as generalizable, it appears that, like the results reported by Ahrons and Rodgers (1987) and Ahrons and Wallisch (1987), cooperative colleagues were common among the participants in this research.

Further, because there seems to have been an absense of "angry associate" and "fiery foe" coparents in this study, it seems likely that the families who self-selected for this research were primarily "functional" according to Ahron's and Rodger's definition (1987). That is, the participating parents had ongoing relationships with their children and generally cooperative relationships with one another. It appeared to the researcher that the participating families were moving through nuclear family disorganization without creating "permanent psychic injury" to one or more family members or cutoffs between parents and children (Ahrons & Rodgers). While some research coparents did describe having arguments at the time of the transfers, none discussed the open hostilities documented by Wallerstein and Kelly (1980).

Although there is no way to be certain, self-selection appears to have shaped the constituency of the study participants. It is suspected that less functional postdivorce systems, such as one that declined involvement, chose to remain hidden (Daly, 1992; Visher & Visher, 1979) and avoid the shame of exposure (Kaufman, 1985), while cooperative coparents self-selected because they were more comfortable being interviewed about postdivorce family life. It is also possible that despite the researcher's efforts, the ministers may have contacted coparents who were primarily cooperative and functional.

This creates a paradox for postdivorce family researchers. Incorporating data from less functional postdivorce families would expand the findings of this study. However, such families may not be willing to discuss their visitation transfer experiences primarily because they are having difficulties with them. In addition, the contact persons may shy away from identifying or contacting less functional families because, at some level, they want to avoid exposing the difficulties these groups are experiencing. Thus, this missing piece limits the evolution of this theory. Creating ways to access these hidden family perspectives is an ongoing challenge for postdivorce family researchers.

Finally, there is one child-related issue which may have limited the theoretical discoveries in this study. The child interviews were designed for children between ages 6 and 11. The parents who were willing to be interviewed had children between ages 8 and 14. Thus many of the research children were beyond the preferred age range. Because of their maturity, the child imagination session was not utilized, and the role play was used only once.

However, the data obtained from these interviews were clear and contributed to the researcher's understanding of each child's perspective on visitation transfers. Although the researcher had preferred the younger age group to avoid budding autonomy and sexuality dilemmas of adolescents which might obscure data gathering, all the children were informative participants. Sexuality and autonomy issues may have been present, but did not appear to confound the data gathering process.

In summary, because this was an initial step in theory development, a small group of participants was sought (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Participant families were confined to those who fit the selection criteria and were willing to discuss their postdivorce visitation transfer experiences. As a result, it appears that four Caucasian, middle SES, "cooperative" coparents self-selected for study involvement. Further, these parents had children who were between ages 8 and 14. It is unknown at this time how these limitations impacted the theory which has evolved from this research. However, it is expected that data from additional theoretical samples could augment the theoretical outcomes of this research.

Research Participant Characteristics

This section will review general demographic information and specific postdivorce issues which relate to the informants in this study. This discussion will close with a brief summary of the informant characteristics.

General Demographic Information

The participants in this study agreed to involvement based on a confidentiality agreement with the researcher. Thus, to protect the confidentiality of study participants, the researcher will report general demographic information only.

Four binuclear families participated in this research; all met the required selection criteria. Three of the four families included a coparent who had remarried. In order to find four participating binuclear families, it became

necessary to include young adolescents in this research. One child was 8 years old, one was 11, and two were 14 years of age. All had regular contact with both biological parents.

The four families were Caucasian and middle to upper-middle SES. All coparents had been divorced once. The divorced parents were in or entering midlife. The fathers ranged in age from 38 to 43. The research mothers were slightly younger than their former spouses and between 36 and 42 years of age. There were two boys and two girls who participated in this research.

With regard to education, six of the eight coparents had pursued schooling beyond a bachelor's degree. Three of the men had achieved graduate degrees in their respective fields; one had some college experience. Two of the four women had received graduate degrees, one had attended graduate school, another had an associate degree.

All coparents had full time professional positions, with the exception of one mother. In this case, the mother worked part time. Her income was supplemented by child support which brought her annual income into the middle SES status range. The fathers' annual incomes ranged from $40,000-$50,000 to $75,000-$100,000. The mothers' incomes were equivalent to or lower than that of the fathers; they ranged from $10,000-$15,000 to $40,000-$50,000 annually.

Finally, a variety of religious preferences were represented among this group of participants. These included Catholic, Protestant, Quaker and Agnostic.

Postdivorce Issues

In addition to the general demographic variables, two key postdivorce issues will be covered in this discussion. They are: child custody arrangements and child support agreements.

Child Custody Arrangements

There were two child custody plans represented among the participating families in this research. Two of the families had joint custody, with the research child moving between parental homes regularly. Of these families, one child moved between parental homes daily. The other had experienced a variety of living arrangements which included moving between parental homes weekly, living with her father and staying with her mother every other weekend, and living with her mother and staying with her father every other weekend. While the latter examples may appear to be forms of mother and father custody, the coparents viewed themselves as having joint custody.

The other two binuclear systems in this study had mother custody situations in which the research children moved from their mother's homes to their father's for regular visits. One of these children saw his father every other weekend and Wednesday evenings; the other visited his father every 6 to 8 weeks during one time period and once every 2 to 4 weeks during another.

While specific postdivorce family structures were identified in the informant selection criteria for this research, numbers of each were not. This was done to keep options open to include as many families as possible. It was unplanned, and in many ways fortuitous, that two mother custody and two

joint custody families participated in this study. This allowed for comparisons across two examples of each family structure.

Unfortunately, only one mother custody family fit into Jacobson's (1987) typology. The others did not fall into any of Jacobson's types because either the coparents had not remarried, or they had joint custody.

Child Support Agreements

Child support agreements varied among the participants. One set of joint custody coparents elected not to have any child support exchange between parents; in the other, the father sent $100 to $200 monthly to the mother for support of the research child. Among the mother custody families, one father sent $800 monthly for two children ($400 per child), another sent $300 to $500 monthly for the research child's support. One coparental couple negotiated a reduction in child support, due to the father's job shift and an accompanying income decrease. As far as it is known, all child support arrangements among these families were consistently honored.

Summary

Thus, the families involved in this research were Caucasian, primarily middle SES status, and well-educated. The parents were in midlife, had school age children, and represented several religious backgrounds. The coparents appeared to fit the "cooperative colleague" style (Ahrons, 1989; Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987). Child custody arrangements were joint or mother

custody. All research children saw both parents regularly. Child support

ranged from none to $400-500 dollars per month and was paid regularly.

Study Findings

The results of this research focus on terminology development. The

conceptual framework (Bubolz, 1991) which emerged from this inquiry

describes or relates to what the researcher initially termed "visitation transfers."

When this study began the phrase "visitation transfer" was defined as "the

process by which postdivorce families move children between parents for

visitation." However, this notion changed considerably as this research

progressed. This modification process will be described in the chapters which

follow.

The next three chapters trace the development of data based concepts

which have emerged from this study. The primary ideas are entitled: family

membership belief; transfer plan; and between transfer expectations. These

notions form the basis for an evolving theory which is presented in Chapter 8.

CHAPTER 4. RESEARCH FAMILY INTRODUCTIONS AND PERCEPTIONS

In order to familiarize the reader with the participants in this study, the background of each research family is briefly reviewed in this chapter. These introductions are followed by an exploration of an idea termed "family perceptions." The chapter closes with a summary of theoretical statements which stem from the data and are integrated into the theory that is presented in this research.

Family Descriptions

Of the four families that participated in this study, two were mother custody and two were joint custody. This discussion will be divided accordingly.

For confidentiality purposes, family members were identified by pseudonyms selected by the researcher. In an effort to help the reader distinguish between the two custodial groups, one group has names which start with letters from the beginning of the alphabet. The other has names which begin with letters from the end of the alphabet. Specifically, one mother custody family's name begins with B, the other A; and one joint custody family's name begins with S, the other W.

Mother Custody Families

Family B

Barb and Bob had been divorced 8 years at the time of the research interviews. Their only son, Barry, was 8 years old. Barb had full physical and legal custody of Barry. During the research interviews, Bob was visiting Barry every 2 to 4 weeks on weekends. Bob had remarried.

Family A

At research interview time, Ann and Aaron had been divorced for nearly 3.5 years. They had two sons: Andy, the research child in this study, was 14 years old; Art was 16 years of age. Ann had full physical custody of the boys, and Aaron and Ann shared legal custody. Aaron's visitations took place every Wednesday evening and every other weekend. Neither Aaron nor Ann had remarried.

Joint Custody Families

Family S

Stan and Sara had been divorced 4 years when the research interviews took place. They had two children. Sue, the research child in this family, was 14 years old. Following her parents' divorce, Sue opted to live with both of her parents by moving between parental residences daily. Stan and Sara had joint physical and legal custody of Sue. Stan's and Sara's son, Sam, was 17 years old when his parents divorced. At that time, he decided to live with Sara's sister in another state. Stan had remarried.

<u>Family W</u>

At the time of the research interviews, Wendy and Wally had been divorced for 9 years. They shared joint legal and physical custody of their only daughter, Wanda, who was 11 years old. During the research interviews, Wanda stayed at her mother's home most of the time and saw her father every other weekend. Wendy had remarried.

Family Perceptions

This study set out to explore the question, "What happens in binuclear families during visitation transfers?" While this research question guided the data gathering and analysis processes, the term "visitation transfer" underwent a critical change as the study progressed. This shift was prompted by a participant's reaction during the first research interview. Wally, a joint custody father, was disturbed by the researcher's phrase "visitation transfer."

In response to Wally's reaction, and at the outset of all remaining interviews, the researcher asked participating parents for the terms they used to identify their children's moves between parental residences. The researcher then used the terms chosen by the informants throughout the remaining interviews. The following discussion explores findings that stemmed from this inquiry. It should be noted that the children's word choices were not specifically asked for. Rather, the researcher observed, then utilized, the common word selections they made.

Evidences

Exploration of each family's perceptions led to a key finding in this study. It appears that mother custody and joint custody families had differing ideas on how children fit in with each binuclear subsystem. Family perception evidences are divided into two segments: mother custody and joint custody data.

Mother Custody Data

Barb, Barry's mother, said she viewed Barry's "visits" with Bob, Barb's former husband, as if Barry were spending time with an uncle. She stated, "I just get the feeling he [Bob] is more like an uncle. . . . That's the impression I'm giving Barry, too. He doesn't **live** with his dad . . . he **visits** like an uncle."

Meanwhile, Bob did not use the term "visit." However, he did [comfortably] use the word "home" to describe Barry's mother's household. At the end of a weekend with Barry, Bob said he told Barry, "You're going home today."

Like his father, 8-year-old Barry did not use the term "visit," but he did view his mother's residence as "home." While describing events that commonly took place before he left his father's house to go to his mother's, Barry said, "They're all hurrying around and everything. . . ." The researcher asked, "Who's all hurrying around?" Barry replied, "My dad because he's the one that drives me back home usually."

Aaron, a noncustodial father, described making "visitation" a priority in his postdivorce life. He remarked,

Before, if we were still together as a fam[ily]--if I had them all the time, I would have probably played golf tonight. It wouldn't have been such a big thing. Now absolutely, I wouldn't even **think** of it. I love to play golf. That's one of the things I like. [It's] one of my favorite pastimes. That takes a back seat to visitation.

Ann, Aaron's former wife, discussed how she handled the boys' "visitation" schedule. She stated, "I was always very lenient with visitation, not because I care about him [Aaron], but I didn't want to hurt the kids."

It appears from these data that mother custody family members viewed the child(ren) as being at "home" or living with the custodial mothers and "visiting" the noncustodial fathers.

Joint Custody Data

It seems that joint custody family members perceived this issue very differently than did their mother custody counterparts. Wally was offended by the researcher's use of the term "visitation transfer." He thought the legal system's "traditional" practice of "awarding" custody to the mother, and every other weekend and Wednesday night visitation to the father, was unfair. Wally was adamant that father-child relationships were just as important as those between mother and child. He had integrated this conviction into his life by developing a close relationship with his daughter, Wanda. Wally [tersely] told the researcher,

> Wanda doesn't visit, she **lives** here. . . . I guess I get real mad at society because the lady always gets custody and the father, man is the support. He pays child support and the mother gets custody. . . . It just burns me up. . . . It may be true typically, but it's not true of me!

Later, Wally elaborated further on this topic. He said, "It's very definitely not a case of visiting. She [Wanda] lives here. She has major possessions and things here. And she still has a collection of friends here. . . . 'Visitation' just rings all the wrong kinds of bells."

Wally's former spouse, Wendy, agreed with this idea. She viewed her daughter as having two homes.

> I've always tried to avoid "going home," that phrase. [In the following sentence Wendy spoke as if she was speaking to Wanda.] "Yes, now you're going home to Dad's house." Because I feel like both of them are her homes. . . . For me, it's important that I don't give myself that psychological negative that she really lives with him but she's just visiting me.

In another interview context, Wendy said, "She [Wanda] has literally a home on both sides. It's not that one of them is a visiting place and one of them is a home. But that she has two spots that are hers."

Eleven-year-old Wanda reflected on "living at each" parental home as a toddler. She explained,

> . . . As long as I can remember I've been switching back and forth. I remember living at each house for a week. . . . They've been divorced since I was two. And I don't remember ever having both parents in one house when they were married.

The other joint custody family in this research appeared to hold similar views. Sara, whose daughter moved between parental households daily, told the researcher, "I think, because it's so frequent, I don't think either of us think of it in terms of a visitation. We're sharing equally in the time that Sue is with us. . . . It's not, 'You'll be visiting your dad.'"

Stan, Sara's former husband, recalled feeling "positive" about Sue's desire to be with both parents at the time of the divorce. He told the researcher,

> She [Sue] indicated she wasn't happy with the way the situation was. She was away from her parents for too long of a period. When she was with her mother she didn't like being away from me. . . . And when she was with me she didn't like being away from her **mother**. . . . So I thought that was real positive . . . in the sense that she cared very strongly about both of us. And I think that's extremely important. . . . I was very glad to hear that she had strong relations with both of us and that it was difficult to be away from both parents.

While discussing the importance of parental support of children in postdivorce families, Stan referred to his daughter moving "from one home to another" each day. He said,

> I guess the only thing that I would like to reemphasize, is just how precious and how important children are. And that parents need to recognize that and to really make efforts to . . . do everything that they can to be supportive and understanding in a . . . very difficult situation. [Stan continued slowly and quietly.] And one that she [Sue] faces--not just because she goes back and forth from one home to another--but one that she faces hundreds of times every day with her friends, and with her work, with her relatives, with herself.

Meanwhile, Sue spoke of this arrangement more graphically. She said, "I'm split halfway. But I'm here [with my dad] Mondays and Wednesdays and we include Friday with the weekends. And that's every other weekend." The researcher asked, "And then you're with your mom. . . ." Sue filled in, "Tuesdays, Thursdays, and every other weekend."

Related Theoretical Statements

It appears that the researcher's question about "visitation transfers" led to discussion of how postdivorce family members viewed their family

composition. Mother custody data suggest that the research children "lived with" their custodial mothers and "visited" their noncustodial fathers. However, joint custody family data support the notion that joint custody children did not "visit" their parents' residences; instead, they "lived" in both parental "homes."

Mother custody family members gave no indication that they were offended by the term "visitation transfer." In fact, they used the terms "visit" and "visitation" throughout their interviews. Wally was offended by the researcher's "visitation transfer" terminology, while two other joint custody parents indicated the term "visit" was not one they would select, and another did not use the words "visit" or "visitation."

These findings led to the development of three concepts. They are: mother home and joint home perspectives and a higher order concept, family membership belief. The phrase "home perspective" was chosen as a concept title for mother and joint custody families because the data seemed to indicate that participants linked their use of the term "home" with the residence of the parent(s) who had custody of the child. For example, Barry's "home" was with his mother, while Sue and Wanda "lived with" both parents. The terms "mother" and "joint" were selected to differentiate the two unique views present in the research data. They are both data-based words.

Mother Home Perspective

The mother home perspective is conceptually defined as a belief that a postdivorce mother has custody of her biological child. The mother home

perspective is operationalized as a binuclear family outlook in which a child lives with his or her mother and visits his or her noncustodial father.

Joint Home Perspective

The joint home perspective is conceptualized as a belief that two postdivorce parents share custody of their biological child. The joint home perspective is operationally defined as a binuclear family outlook in which a child lives with both parents and visits neither parent.

The mother and joint home perspectives can also be applied to families or family members who espouse a specific belief. For example, a mother home mother is a biological mother who uses the mother home outlook, and a joint home family is a binuclear system that employs the joint home perspective. These terms will be used in the following chapters.

Family Membership Belief

Family membership belief is a higher order concept that houses the mother and joint home perspectives. This concept hinges on the notion of "where a child belongs." This phrase is defined as the physical location at which a child resides.

Family membership belief is conceptualized as a family's opinion as to where a child belongs. Family membership belief is operationally defined as family members' views on which parent a child lives with and/or visits. Mother home and joint home perspectives are conceived as two different family membership beliefs.

CHAPTER 5. TRANSFER-RELATED THEMES

As in the previous chapter, the data reviewed in this discussion focus on the terminology informants used to identify their experiences as research children moved between binuclear households. Three transfer-related ideas appeared in the research data and are reviewed in this chapter. They are: child and parent transfer viewpoints, transfer circularity, and transfer perceptions. Discussion of each of these ideas will begin with a series of evidences and end with a summary of related theoretical statements.

Child and Parent Transfer Viewpoints

The initial transfer-related idea centers on the transfer arrangements of research children and parents. It appears from these data that children and adults had differing transfer experiences.

Evidences

The data reviewed in this discussion are divided into two segments: child and parent routines. Evidences from parents and children from both mother and joint home families are used to support each pattern.

Child Routines

Three research children used the term "switch" to identify their moves between parental residences. Wanda, a joint home child, told the researcher, "I used to go a week at my dad's house, a week at my mom's house, a week at my dad's. . . . And then the switch was generally made at school."

Sue, a joint home child, explained, "I used to go to a bus stop down here [near my father's house], and my mom used to take me. My mom used to drive me down there in the morning . . . and then I switched over there."

Andy, a mother home child, used the term in one of his interviews. While describing his moves between parental households he said, "It's just like a normal thing. Wednesdays get ready and go, and every other weekend pack up and switch to my dad's house. It's just like a routine thing now."

Meanwhile, Wendy, a joint home mother, used the word "switching" during an interview. While describing her divorce process, Wendy said, "There were only 8 or 10 other families in [Name] County who were actually working on joint custody, with switching the child physically from house to house on a regular basis."

In addition to the term "switch", several research informants described the children as moving "back and forth" between parental residences. Aaron, a mother home father said, "There really have been no problems as far as transportation back and forth."

Sue, a joint home child, reflected,

It's kind of hard to go back and forth so often . . . just 'cause you have got to remember everything. Like, "Do I have clothes at someone's house?" . . . Sometimes I have one shoe . . . at one's house and one at the other's. And I have contacts, and I have to make sure I have all my st--[Sue stuttered here. She probabably intended to use the word "stuff."] I have one bottle that I have to rinse them out every night. And I have to remember to take that back and forth every other night. And so it's really tough on that. And so sometimes I get really frustrated 'cause I have to remember, when he picks me up, everything to get [sic].

In the following example, Wendy, a joint home mother, compared

daughter Wanda's movements between homes when Wanda was young and

at the time of the interviews. She related,

> I used to worry when she was young that she was a ping-pong ball, that she was bouncing back and forth. And that there would never be a soft, warm thing on the other end. It would always be bouncing back and forth. . . . I almost think of it now as . . . Wanda lives in a big house with lots of rooms. And that she kind of moves from room to room. . . . A different side of her is reflected in each of these different bedrooms, but . . . they're all her, and they're all a warm, safe spot for her to be--a refuge.

While each of these participants had unique views of the research

children's moves between parental residences, two common themes appeared

among them. According to these data, mother and joint home participants

viewed research children as "switching" "back and forth" between parental

households.

Parent Routines

Meanwhile, parents appeared to have a different set of activities

surrounding their children's movements between households. For example,

two themes that appeared in the data were parental "pick ups" and "drop offs."

Wally, a joint home father said, "One [parent] or the other would pick up and

drop off [Wanda] at school or at the baby sitter." And Sue, a joint home child

explained, "My dad picks me up from my mother's house, when I get home

from the bus and he gets out of work."

Joint home parents Stan and Sara recalled phrases they said to Sue.

Sara would tell Sue, "Your dad said he'd be picking you up a little late this

evening. Stan said he would tell Sue, "I'll drop you off at your mother's at 6:00

tonight."

Mother home parents Ann and Aaron also used variations of the "pick

up" and "drop off" themes. While discussing his visit patterns, Aaron said, "I

usually left from work on Wednesday [and] dropped them [Andy and Art] off."

Ann emphasized her desire to allow Aaron flexible visitation scheduling. As

she did so, she said Aaron had "picked them [the boys] up." She told the

researcher,

> But the biggest thing is . . . the kids can see their dad whenever. I'm
> not ever stopping them from seeing their dad. . . . He came and got
> them last week during spring break for about three hours one day
> during the week. [He] picked them up and took them out . . . [for]
> maybe 3 or 4 hours.

Another idea that appeared in the data came from mother home father

Bob and his son Barry. Bob viewed himself and Barb as "exchanging" Barry

for visitation. He said, "The exchanges are usually pretty simple." Bob used

this term again when he described the end of a visitation transfer. He

remarked, "I'll say good-bye [and] confirm the time that we're to meet for the

exchange . . . on the way back. And we go on." Bob's 8-year-old son, Barry,

used the word "exchange" in his research interview; i.e., "Then we meet at

McDonald's and they [Bob and Barb] exchange me [laugh]."

In other instances, parents said they would "get" their children. For

example, when asked what term he used to describe his sons' movement

between homes, Aaron responded, "'I've got the kids Wednesday.' That's

more or less the phrase I use. 'I've got the kids,' whatever day." Wendy said

her in-laws used this term as well, but from a different vantage point. She recounted, "I know that my in-laws talk about me getting Wanda. As if I was **snatching** her from the jaws of an evil being. But . . . that's not what I think about it."

Other parents described "taking" their child to the other parental residence. Stan said he asked Sue, "Do I need to take you to your mother's?" Bob described himself saying to his son, "Today we're going to take you to meet your mom."

Related Theoretical Statements

These data imply that there are differences between children's and parents' experiences as children move from one parental household to another. It appears that children "switch" "back and forth" between parents, while parents "pick up," "drop off," "exchange," "get," and/or "take" children. These findings led to the development of four concepts: switch; facilitate; a higher order concept, transfer functions; and a core concept, postdivorce transfer. It should be noted that the concepts in this segment form the foundation for the core concept postdivorce transfer cycle. This idea will be defined later in this chapter.

Switch

The term "switch" and the notion of the child's movement "back and forth" came from the participants. Thus, this terminology was selected because it appears to reflect the reality of the research families' experiences.

Switch is conceptually defined as a child's task within the postdivorce transfer cycle. Switch is operationalized as a child's movement back and forth between parents.

Facilitate

The parental activities of "picking up," "dropping off," "exchanging," "getting," and/or "taking" children can all be viewed as facilitative responsibilities within the transfer process. The terms "pick up" and "drop off" were selected for use in the operational definition because they appeared consistently across the research families. In addition they are simple, common words used by the informants and seem to encompass the other data-based themes, i.e., exchange, get, and take.

Facilitate is conceptualized as a parent's task within the postdivorce transfer cycle. Facilitate is operationally defined as parental picking up and/or dropping off of a child as he or she switches between parents.

Transfer Functions

This concept encompasses the parent and child experiences defined previously. The term "function" was chosen by the researcher. It was selected because it seemed to express the notion of what parents or children did during transfers.

The concept transfer functions is conceptually defined as parents' and children's behavioral responsibilities in the postdivorce transfer cycle. The concept transfer functions is operationalized as the children's switches

between parental homes and parents' facilitation of the switches. The transfer function of parents is to facilitate; the transfer function of children is to switch.

Postdivorce Transfer

The concepts discussed thus far form the basis for a core concept in this research: postdivorce transfer. This concept is conceptualized as the postdivorce family's experience of a child's movement from one parental household to another. Postdivorce transfer is operationally defined as a child's switch between parents and parental facilitation of the switch.

Transfer Circularity

Another transfer-related notion that emerged from this study focuses on circular images the research participants used to portray a child's movement between parental residences. As in the previous set of evidences, this notion stemmed from joint home and mother home families.

Evidences

Stan's rounded hand motions accompanied the following description of his daughter's daily movements between joint households. As Stan, a joint home father, spoke he moved his hands as if he were repeatedly turning an object upside down and right side up. He said,

> On a daily basis she has to make that adjustment. And she has to understand where she is, what the situation is, how she needs to respond, how she needs to do things, what things are acceptable, what things are not acceptable, and that whole thing every 24 hours.

The researcher asked Stan to describe his hand movements because the tape player would not capture them. He responded,

> What I was doing was changing my right hand from the top to the bottom, and conversely with my left hand. I would think that it's almost like turning your world upside down and changing things 180 degrees. And I find it extremely surprising that she can do that as well as she does.

Wendy, a joint home mother, described her family as a complex, interdependent "system" that rotated like orbiting planets. As Wendy spoke, she moved her index fingers through space in front of her. While each "finger track" was diverse, it appeared to the researcher that both revolved around two "points." She stated,

> It's almost planetary because it's mathematically as complex as the planetary systems. . . . If you look at the stepparent and the parent as being two points at one end of a string and the ex-spouse and maybe the ex-spouse's wife or husband being on the other end, instead of having the two ex-spouses sitting at the other ends of the string and their new spouses rotating solely around them and the child at that end, it seems to me that you've got a complex interdependence of those orbits that look like the planetary system. They [the parents] rotate not only around their ex-spouses but around the children . . . and the other [step]parents in a **wide** circle. . . . I'm thinking of one of those toys of the interlocking rings that spin around each other. . . . It's kind of a globe--a sphere of rings that roll around each other. . . . That's the image that I'm seeing in my head. It's more planetary, or **solar** system kind of a system as opposed to . . . just two little tightly knit circles rolling around each other.

Wally, a joint home father, discussed the "timing" of several "rotation" schedules. He suggested that they become less frequent and longer in duration as a child grows older. He asserted,

> The trend seems to be that the older the child gets, the longer the stays at each house become. I've seen that in a couple of different families that have been on a couple of days, or up to a 1-week rotation, and then would expand that to [a] 2-week rotation as the children got older.

And in this one family in particular it eventually moved to the point where they didn't rotate at all. The boy stayed with his dad and the girl stayed with her mom. The rotation cycle sort of lengthened to not cycling at all.

In the years following his divorce, Bob traveled several miles by plane to pick up and drop off Barry. Bob, a mother home father, used the circular notion of turning around to describe his part in Barry's visitation process. He related,

> I would fly out, get him, fly him back, and turn around and fly him back. . . . Sometimes I'd try to figure out a way--like my sister had friends, and a couple times I'd pay for her airplane fare. 'Cause that way I wouldn't have to go. But she would fly one way and bring him back. There were other people that would fly with him. It wasn't always me.

Related Theoretical Statements

These data led to the creation of two new ideas: the concept "cycle," and elaboration of the concept "postdivorce transfer" which became "postdivorce transfer cycle." Each of these notions will be reviewed in this discussion.

Cycle

The term "cycle" was chosen to represent this circular notion for two reasons. First, Wally used the terms "cycle" and "cycling" in his interviews. Second, several circular or cyclical images appeared in the data. For example, among the research participants, a child's movement between parental homes is represented as a "world" that turns upside down, or a planetary orbit that moves around two key locations. Wally used the term "rotation" to describe the timing of a child's movement between parental residences. Finally, Bob

described turning "around" when he was going to return Barry home to his mother.

The concept cycle is conceptually defined as a repeated process that is round. Cycle is operationalized as the child's rotation from one parental home to another.

Postdivorce Transfer Cycle

The term "cycle" can be joined with the concept postdivorce transfer to create a second core concept: postdivorce transfer cycle (see Figure 2). Postdivorce transfer cycle is conceptually defined as repeated transfer functions of parents and children. Postdivorce transfer cycle is operationalized as a child's recurrent switches between parents and parental facilitation of the switches.

Figure 2 integrates the data based notions switch, facilitate, and cycle. The circle at the left of the diagram represents a biological mother; the square at the right, a biological father. The smaller square/circles depict a postdivorce child. The back and forth movement of a child's switches are reflected in the arrows which direct the reader's eye right and left. Adult facilitation of the switches is represented by a second set of arrows that "pick up" and "drop off" where the child's switch begins and ends. The cyclical notion is illustrated by a circle which is comprised by the concept arrows. This circle depicts the repetitive nature of the transfer functions switch and facilitate. Joined together these images portray recurrent child switches and parental facilitation of them.

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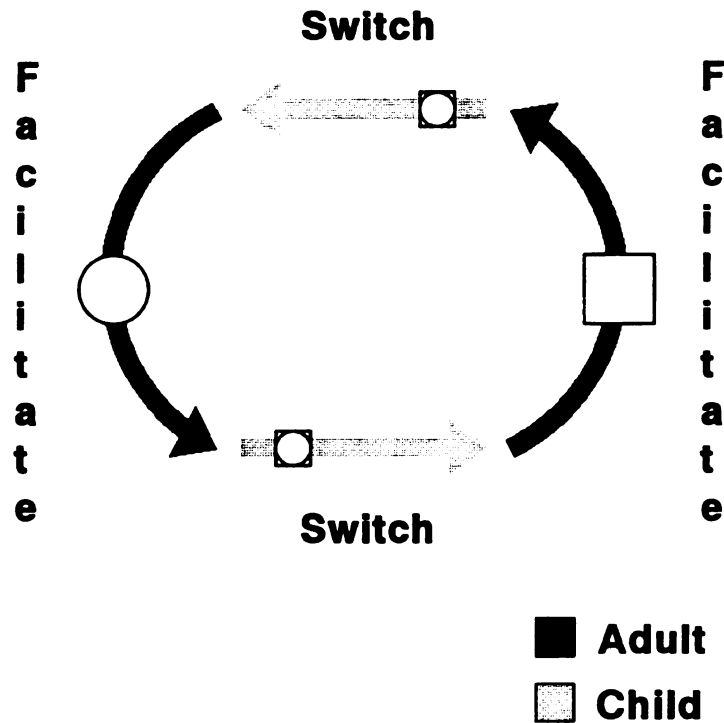
Figure 2. Postdivorce transfer cycle

Transfer Perceptions

The final transfer related theme centers on the terms research

informants used to identify or describe their transfer experiences. These

outcomes hinge on the researcher's use of the term "visitation transfer." There

appear to be two divergent transfer related perceptions represented in these

data.

Evidences

These ideas seem to be associated with the participants' membership

beliefs. Thus, the following evidences are presented in two segments: mother

home and joint home families.

Mother Home Families

Mother home family members appeared to be quite comfortable referring to the children as "visiting" the noncustodial parent. For example, when asked what word or phrase she used to describe her son's movement between parental households, Barb said, "I don't really use a **word**, I guess, just he's going to 'go visit his dad.'"

In the other mother home family, parents Aaron and Ann used the term "visit" during their initial phone contacts. Ann told the researcher she was the custodial parent and "he [Aaron] visits" the children. Aaron explained he had "reasonable visitation rights," which meant he saw his boys every other weekend and every Wednesday evening.

Further, in one of Aaron's interviews, he indicated that some time periods in his visitation pattern were easier than others because he missed his boys when he did not "see" them. Aaron said,

> The weekend visit, I know I'm going to see them again that following Wednesday. So that's not quite as bad as the two-week period, obviously. And the Wednesday visit, like tonight, it's not as bad 'cause I know I'm going to pick them up Friday night. . . . I don't see them tomorrow. But Friday night I pick them up again.

These data imply that the mother home family members in this study viewed their children as visiting their fathers and living with their mothers. They did not seem to have a formal word or phrase to identify what the researcher had initially termed "visitation transfer."

Joint Home Families

Meanwhile, joint home families appeared to have a different view on this topic. When asked what name she gave to Wanda's movements between parental homes, Wendy, a joint home mother, chose the term "custody transfer." She told the researcher she selected this phrase in an effort to quell Wally's distaste for the term "visitation." She said,

> We talk about "custody transfer," since we are joint custody, as opposed to a custodial parent and a visitation parent. "Visitation" . . . Wally finds . . . real offensive. He had really bad experiences with Friend of the Court being a father. He felt like everything was slanted toward the mother's point of view. And so we've tried to use emotionally nonloaded terms to talk about things.

The other joint home parents Stan and Sara did not have a "formal" word or phrase they used to identify Sue's moves between homes. Sara related,

> We use words like, "Your dad said he'd be picking you up a little late this evening." And I can't think of anything more formal than that, except . . . "You'll be with your dad this weekend." It's not, "You'll be visiting your dad," . . . but "You'll be with him" or "He'll be picking you up."

Stan responded similarly. He stated, "It's simply a matter of, 'Do I need to pick you up from your mother's?' or 'Do I need to take you to your mother's?--that kind of thing."

Related Theoretical Statements

Three concepts evolved from these evidences. They are: visitation transfer, custody transfer, and a higher order concept, transfer plan. Because these data imply there are differences between mother home and joint home

transfer ideas, the researcher used divergent conceptual terms and definitions for each.

Visitation Transfer

The researcher's initial definition of the term "visitation transfer" was challenged and ultimately transformed through the data gathering and analysis processes. Wally's response to the researcher's use of the phrase led to the discovery of divergent ideas between mother and joint home families.

The researcher elected to use the term "visitation transfer" for mother home families for two reasons. First, mother home systems used the terms "visit" and "visitation" in their research interviews. Participants appeared to be accustomed to using this word. Further, it seemed appropriate to merge the word "visit" with the term "transfer," which was the focus of this research. To the researcher's knowledge, none of the mother home family members were offended by the phrase "visitation transfer."

Thus, the meaning of the phrase "visitation transfer" was altered considerably through this research process and now has a data-based definition. Visitation transfer is conceptually defined as a mother home family's experience as a child moves between parents. Visitation transfer is operationalized as a mother home child's switch from custodial to noncustodial parent, or vice versa, and parental facilitation of the switch.

Custody Transfer

The researcher elected to use Wendy's term "custody transfer" for two reasons. First, it was a thoughtful, data-based notion. As Wendy explained, the phrase "custody transfer" is "emotionally nonloaded." That is, it embraces a sensitivity to both joint home parents rather than favoring one over the other.

Second, the words "custody transfer" seemed to envelop themes that joint home families espoused and mother home families did not. Instead of visiting one parent and living with the other, joint home children appeared to be viewed as living in both parental homes. Further, joint home parents saw themselves as sharing "custody" of their children. Joint home youngsters moved between parental homes but were not outside a parent's custody. This contrasts with the mother home notion that children leave a custodial parent to visit a noncustodial parent.

Custody transfer is conceptualized as a dual parent family's experience as a child moves from one parent to another. Custody transfer is operationally defined as a joint home child's switch between parents and parental facilitation of the switch.

Transfer Plan

The development of the previous concepts suggested there were two different transfer models represented in the data from this study. It appears these divergent transfers are congruent with family membership beliefs; one occurs among joint home families and the other in mother home families. This

discovery pointed to the need for a higher order concept which encompassed the two transfers and incorporated the family membership belief notion.

Transfer plan is conceptually defined as a binuclear family's enactment of its family membership belief. Transfer plan is operationalized as family patterns surrounding a child's movement either between two homes where he or she lives, or between one home where he or she lives and another in which he or she visits. Custody and visitation transfers are viewed as two unique transfer plans.

CHAPTER 6. FAMILY ACCOMMODATIONS

Thus far, this theoretical inquiry has addressed terminology that is part of or relates to transfers. In this chapter the focus will change to accommodations family members make during a different part of the postdivorce transfer cycle: the time period after and before postdivorce transfers.

Family Accommodations

The researcher did not intentionally seek information regarding family experiences after and before transfers. However, as the data gathering and analysis processes evolved, it became clear that several participants described similar themes about these times. The following evidences imply that parents and children have divergent processes during the interim after and before transfers. As in previous chapters, this discussion begins with a review of data based evidences and closes with a summary of related theoretical ideas.

Evidences

Because there appear to be two divergent family accommodation patterns in these data, this discussion is divided into two segments: parent and child behaviors. Ideas in this section spread across mother and joint home families.

Parent Behaviors

Several parents made statements suggesting their own behaviors changed as their children moved in and out of their homes. For example, Wally, a joint home father, said his meal and work schedules were more "structured" when Wanda was living with him. When she was with her mother, Wally said he had more "single-type activities." He explained,

> In terms of just general lifestyle, the weeks she [Wanda] is not here I tend to work late and keep stranger hours, as it were. When she is here, I have to pick her up from school and then come home and feed her and get her to scouts or whatever is going on. So my life is more structured when she is here. . . . When she is not here . . . I don't have this influence imposing structure on my life. So it reverts more into the single lifestyle where I go and come at--I won't say random times--but stranger times. I may not come home until 7 at night and work late. Back at one job I was actually working **very** long hours on the weeks I didn't have her. . . . When she is here I tend to cook more. When she is not here I tend to eat out more. . . . And I organize my life around the weeks with and the weeks without [Wanda]. And do . . . single-type activities on the weeks she was gone--either going out dancing or visiting with friends, or whatever.

During Wanda's early childhood years, she had weekly custody transfers. Wanda's weekly moves in and out of Wally's home were unsettling for Wally due to his repeated changes from "single" to parent lifestyles, and back again. He felt longer periods with his daughter were more stable. Wally related,

> We traditionally did a one week on, one week off kind of thing. And it was unsettling to me in that I never really got all the way towards being a single person or all the way towards being a parent. I kept changing . . . all the time and . . . never got stable in one or the other. So on the occasional times when Wanda would be here for 2 or 3 weeks at a stretch, I would get completely and comfortably into the parent role--and actually liked that.

Aaron, a mother home father, said he organized his schedule according to whether or not his children were with him.

> Before [divorce] you don't have any set schedule. . . . You're together as a family unit. . . . But when you only have one night [with your children], you try to keep that one night free. 'Cause it's a hassle to change nights. You don't want to miss a night, or at least I don't. . . . But it's just getting into that schedule. . . . I'll get with other couples that want to go canoeing for a weekend. [Aaron spoke as if someone was asking him the following question.] 'Is it a weekend you have the kids or you don't have the kids?' 'Cause sometimes we take the kids. Sometimes we want it to just be the adults. So you're always flipping that calendar to see if it's a weekend you have them or not.

Aaron's former wife, Ann, remarked that she enjoyed her "single life" when her sons visited their father. She [gleefully] said,

> And when they go [Ann whispered the following three words] I love it [laugh]. To be totally honest, it is **wonderful**. Because I've got a new life now. A single life. And I go do things. And even if I don't have anything to do, I'll stay here by myself and I'll read. I'm a reader. I have a lot of books. Or just sit and watch TV. The peace and quiet is [Ann whispered the following word] fantastic [laugh]. But I still look forward to them coming home. I always do. 'Cause I like to see how their weekend went and all that . . . but I also do enjoy when they [Ann whispered the following word] go [laugh].

This theme was also present among the joint home mothers who had remarried. Sara and Wendy had time with their children when the children were present, and time for their new marriage partners when their children were gone. Sara felt she had "the best of both worlds." She and her new spouse, Steven, each had a joint home daughter who moved in and out of their home regularly. Yet they still had time for their relationship. Sara related,

> Steven and I have some nights when we have no children, other nights when we have both. Other nights when we have just one. And on some nights, the door closes [sigh], we're going to sit down—we're going to have a quiet dinner . . . and it'll be just the two of us. And it feels good for the marriage to have the best of both worlds in that way

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too. And that's something we've learned to not feel guilty about but to enjoy it. I'd recommend it for all marriages [laugh].

Wendy, a joint home mother, said there were "advantages" to having times when she and her new husband were "childless." She told the researcher,

> I think we were real comfortable with what we had even though we had a lot of people who were real incredulous that we could live with that. It didn't bother me. In fact, there were some advantages to having a week where I didn't have a kid. I could work later. We could go out to movies whenever we felt like it. We could play at being "childless couple," and that was kind of nice because it was a new marriage and we needed some time where we didn't always have a kid.

These data imply that parents change behaviors as their children move into and out of their parental residences. When the children are present, parents seem to focus on their needs. When the children are gone, parents appear to do different activities alone or with others.

Child Behaviors

Like the parents in this study, the children seem to have experienced behavioral changes after and before transfers. However, the following evidences suggest that research children's processes were different from those of the parents.

Sue, a joint home daughter, moved from one parental household to the other each day. She discussed the diverse "worlds" of her parents with the researcher. She said,

> It is like a whole different world at one person's house to the next. 'Cause at one person's house I have a whole family, and at my father's I just have him and my brother when he comes home once in a while. And so it is hard to switch sometimes mentally, 'cause you have totally

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different rules [and] expectations . . . when you're at the other person's house.

Sue described the contrasting rules and expectations of each of her parents.

> At my mom's are rules--I have a little calendar of things [cleaning tasks]. I have to do one each night and I'm supposed to sign up. . . . And I have to do it that night and try to fit it in with my homework and stuff. And she doesn't want me watching that much TV. . . . And there's certain ways to put dishes in the dishwasher that are different from my father's, and it's sometimes hard to remember, and I get told different over and over. And I have expectations. My mother expects me to . . . try to work on my homework right away. Even though I'm a very good student, she always asks me what my homework situation is like. . . . And then at my father's, he doesn't ask about my homework. He just asks me how school is. . . . He knows I keep a good grade average and stuff. . . . And that is better just 'cause I feel like he trusts me more. And his expectations of me, when I come over, is [sic] [for] me to help him with dinner. On the weekends is really the only time he has me do a job, by help cleaning the house or just doing garbage is my regular job . . . and just caring for my cats and that's it.

Sue's father, Stan, had some awareness of the differences between his household "patterns" and those of his former wife. He said, "I don't know what goes on over there. . . . But I would certainly think, with the different individuals, the different personalities, that there would be different approaches and different ways to handle things."

Barry lived alone with his mother. He told the researcher that the worst part about visiting his father's home was listening to his 2-year-old half-brother cry. He said, "He [Barry's half-brother] makes so much noise that I don't like him very much. . . . He's always crying [laugh]. . . . He stops for a couple minutes and then he starts up again." The researcher inquired, "So what happens when he cries?" Barry replied, "I plug my ears [laugh]." The

researcher asked, "What do other people do?" Barry said, "Try to make him

quiet. And that's basically all they do [laugh]."

Barry advised other children visiting their noncustodial parents to

become acquainted with the "neighborhood" and "friends." He explained,

> You have to get familiar with the neighborhood. Because I'm still not familiar with the subdivision that they live in . . . like friends and stuff. You have to meet new friends. You can't just . . . call them up and say, "Hey, can you come here and play?" . . . You can't just walk out in the neighborhood if you're not familiar with it. I can go sort of. I know where a park is. And I spend some of my time fishing because they live on a pond.

Barry's father, Bob, viewed Barry as assuming divergent roles in his two

households. Bob said,

> It's a change in the way he is. . . . It's almost like he's a little bit of a different kid with me than it [he?] is with her. There have been times when the kid he is with her transcends a little bit when he's with me. So he has a hard time adjusting out of how he is with her and how he is with me. And some of it is . . . that she, at least for a long time, tended to treat him a lot more like a little baby, and I would tend to treat him a lot more grown up. And so when he would make that trip to me, he had to grow up. . . . But definitely there was a different feeling. . . . And she said to me maybe once or twice about how--in a negative way-- about how different he would be when he would come home. And I think I tried to explain it this way. I said, "Maybe it's just because when he's with me I treat him more grown up." And whenever she takes him back . . . [she'll] be really hugging him and babying him. And he seems to have trouble getting back into that. . . . The trouble I'm having with the [Barry's] transition isn't so much the simple stuff of [Barry] not wanting to be with me or not wanting to be with her. But more with [Barry] having to adjust to a different family and a different role that he plays.

Wendy, a joint home mother, openly discussed one of the "differences"

Wanda experienced as she moved from Wally's to Wendy's home. She told

the researcher,

She [Wanda] will occasionally watch a movie on HBO [at Wendy's house] that I know that her dad wouldn't approve of her watching. And I'll say, "Just don't tell your dad." And even if she told her dad it would be okay. But it's one of those jokes about "Here are where Dad's limits are. And here are where the differences are." And it's like we're acknowledging the differences between the two houses as opposed to trying to make everything equal on both sides.

Related Theoretical Statements

It appears from these evidences that parents and children have different accommodation patterns after and before postdivorce transfers. Three conceptual themes evolved from these data. They are: adult lifestyles, child roles, and a higher order idea, between transfer expectations. Two additional core concepts will be discussed: postdivorce transfer sequence and postdivorce family life.

Adult Lifestyles

Parents in this study seemed to arrange their activities around their child's times in and out of their households. The child's presence or absence appeared to influence parental activities.

Before presenting the adult lifestyles definition, the term "structure" will be introduced. This word was used by Wally, who felt his life was "more structured" when Wanda lived with him than when she lived with her mother. This theme was present among other participants who described having times with and without children and arranging their schedules differently during these periods.

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Structure is conceptually defined as family members' living patterns.

Structure is operationalized as the family system's involvement in family and/or

childless activities, which is largely influenced by the child's presence or

absence.

As this definition implies, there appear to be two structures present

among the parents in this study. They are: family structure and childless

structure. The data suggest that the child's moves from one parental

household to the other required adults to alternate between "family" or "parent"

focused behaviors and "childless" or "single" ones. This phenomenon was

what Wally referred to as his "general lifestyle." While all of the aforementioned

terms appeared in the data, for clarity purposes, two were used in the

definitional process. The researcher chose to use the term "family" rather than

"parent" because "family" could apply to both children and parents. The word

"childless" was selected because it applied to both single and remarried

couples in the study.

Family structure is conceptualized as a way of life in which parents and

children tend to focus their lives on the child's needs. Family structure is

operationally defined as organization of parent and child activities around the

child's meals, driving needs, and general schedule.

Childless structure is conceptually defined as a way of life in which

adults tend to focus their lives on their own needs or those of their current

spouse. Childless structure is operationalized as an individual's organization

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of activities which may include working long hours, reading, watching television, eating out, dancing, attending movies, and visiting friends.

The previous terms and definitions provide a foundation for the notion of adult lifestyles. The concept adult lifestyles is conceptualized as an adult family member's responsibility changes after a transfer has been completed and before one takes place. This concept is operationally defined as a parent's shift between family and childless structure which corresponds with a child's transfers in and out of his or her household.

Child Roles

It appears that research children's experiences were different from those of their parents. While the parents' structure seemed to change between family and childless as children moved in and out of each household, the children remained in a family structure within both parental households.

However, the children seem to transfer between parental "worlds" and the "rules" within them. Further, the children appear to adapt to divergent family situations and near environments associated with each parental residence.

The term parental "world" was selected for use in this definition because it was data based and seemed to express the child's perspective with regard to movement between parental domains. The term "rules" was also data based and was chosen because it encompassed the wide range of presumptions parents maintained within their households.

Finally, the term "roles" was included in this definition because it was used by Bob in describing the changes he witnessed in Barry as he moved between households. Further, the plural form of this term seemed to express the diverse experiences research children had in each parental world.

The concept child roles is conceptualized as children's adjustment to divergent rules as they move between parental worlds. It is operationally defined as a child's orientation to different parent realities, including household cleaning, homework, neighborhoods, friendships, and family member processes.

Between Transfer Expectations

The evolution of the previous concepts suggested that there was an overarching idea that encompassed the multiple changes parents and children experienced during the intermediate period after and before a transfer.

The researcher chose the term "between" because it succinctly expresses the time period after a transfer ends and before another begins. The term "expectations" was selected because it was data based. Sue used this word in the context of explaining the diverse "roles" she had in each parental world. In addition, the word "expectations" seemed to incorporate the statements of other participants that referred to covert or overt agreements about how families lived together and what was "expected" of each person. Further, the word "expectations" seemed to be broad enough to envelop the numerous behavioral changes binuclear family members may experience during the interim between transfers.

Between transfer expectations is conceptualized as repeated behavioral assumptions among binuclear family members during the time following and previous to postdivorce transfers. This concept is operationally defined as postdivorce adult lifestyles and child roles. It appears that the various between transfer adjustments made by parents and children are based on family expectations. Figure 3 depicts the concepts adult lifestyles, child roles, and their structural differences. The divergent structural patterns of binuclear children and parents are illustrated using dual circular images which are placed to the right and left (after and before) the postdivorce transfer cycle. Biological mothers and fathers shift between family and childless structures. This drawing suggests that parents' lives literally revolve around their child's presence or absence. Meanwhile, children are the focus of attention in both parental worlds. They move from one family structure to another.

Postdivorce Transfer Sequence

The previous concepts and definitions form the basis for a higher order concept: postdivorce transfer sequence. This concept literally combines the notions postdivorce transfer cycle and between transfer structures.

It appears there are multiple processes taking place in and around postdivorce transfers. Thus, the core concept postdivorce transfer sequence was developed. The term "sequence" was chosen because it encompasses the transfer events that have been explored and defined in this research. The term "sequence" also incorporates the cyclical notion that is inherent in these theoretical ideas.
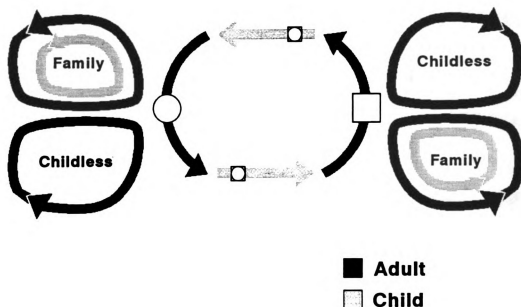
Figure 3. Between transfer expectations:
Adult lifestyles and child roles

Postdivorce transfer sequence is conceptually defined as successive behavioral events which occur during and between a child's movement among binuclear households. Postdivorce transfer sequence is operationalized as the repetition of the postdivorce transfer cycle and between transfer family expectations.

Figure 4 is a pictorial synthesis of the data based ideas which emerged from this research. This concept houses the notions of postdivorce transfer cycle, between transfer expectations and the circular, repetitive nature of these ideas. The multiple interactive cycles represented among these concepts can be viewed as a series of divergent events postdivorce parents and children experience.

Facilitate

Switch

Family

Childless

Childless

Family

Switch

Facilitate

■ **Adult**

☐ **Child**
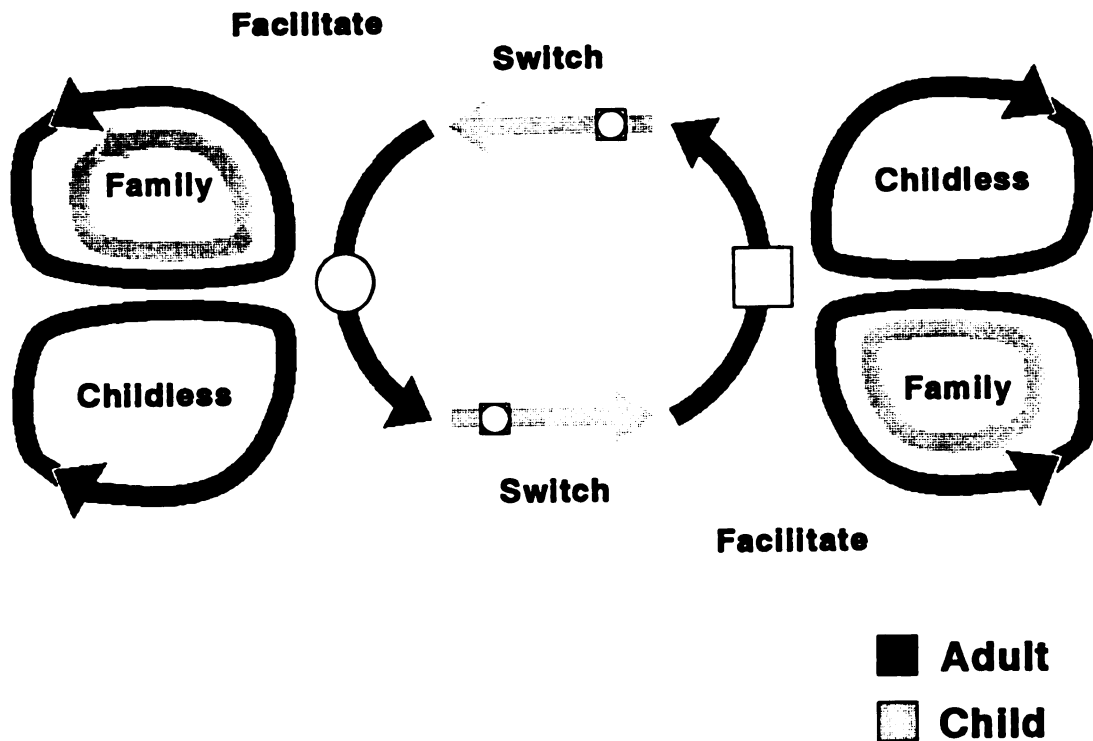
Figure 4. Postdivorce transfer sequence

Postdivorce Family Life

Finally, a summarizing core concept is required to house the many concepts that have evolved during this study and the related ideas which may emerge in the future. The phrase "family life" was added to the term postdivorce because it encompasses the beliefs (family membership belief) and behaviors (transfer plan and postdivorce transfer sequence) which have been identified by the data based concepts from this study. It is also broad enough to include multiple facets of postdivorce systems which have not yet been discovered.

Postdivorce family life is conceptualized as the beliefs and behaviors of binuclear families. Postdivorce family life is operationally defined as family membership belief, transfer plan, and the postdivorce transfer sequence.

CHAPTER 7. SECOND LITERATURE REVIEW

Two literature reviews are included in this study in order to separate ideas which developed before and during the research process. The initial literature review was completed before data gathering and analysis began. The ideas in this chapter were discovered as data analysis progressed.

As stated in the first literature review, few postdivorce researchers have specifically addressed the postdivorce transfer process, and those who have, appear to have done so without clearly defining their terminology. Throughout this study, the researcher sought further scholarly information which could relate to the data based concepts. Although the references are infrequent, they do exist. Further, some literature based terms are identical or similar to those which emerged from this research.

This literature review will be divided into two sections: postdivorce family life and contextual ideas. The latter provides a theoretical framework for the former. These findings and those which were included in the initial literature review are woven into an emerging theory which is summarized in the following chapter.

Postdivorce Family Life

This section explores three data based concepts which evolved from this research. They are: family membership belief, transfer functions, and between transfer expectations. The themes transfer plan, postdivorce transfer cycle, and postdivorce transfer sequence will not be addressed in this literature

review because ideas related to them were not found in the current research literature.

Family Membership Belief

The concept family membership belief described in this dissertation is not specifically cited in the literature. However, a second literature review led to the discovery of several ideas which appear to relate to the family membership belief concept. This section will review boundary related ideas and the mother home and joint home perspectives.

Boundary Related Ideas

One set of authors wrote, "Among stepfamilies themselves there is a disagreement even to what members belong 'in the family'" (Visher & Visher, 1979, p. 15). Other researchers identified several emotional issues remarried families must address. These include physical boundary ideas such as ". . . Membership (Who are the 'real' members of the family?). . . . Space (What space is mine? Where do I really belong?)" (McGoldrick & Carter, 1980, p. 269).

Pasley (1987) used a quantitative research model to focus on boundary ambiguity in one subsystem of the postdivorce family. Her findings suggest that ". . . residential location is the most important factor in determining ambiguity. . . ." (p. 222). "Physical ambiguity" was determined by asking remarried couples to state which family members lived with, and did not live with, them. The spouses whose responses were identical were identified as

having "low physical ambiguity." Those who had differing answers were classified as having "high physical ambiguity" (Pasley, p. 218). Pasley's concept physical boundary ambiguity and family membership belief appear to have some common themes. The definition of family membership belief centers on where a child belongs, or where s/he lives and/or visits; and physical boundary ambiguity explores confusion regarding which children do or do not live with a remarried couple. Both ideas address opinions about household membership issues and focus on the question of where a child lives or does not live.

The primary difference between Pasley's physical boundary ambiguity (1987) and family membership belief is that Pasley's concept is based on a single postdivorce subsystem. Rather than addressing where a child lives or belongs when s/he is not living with a remarried couple, Pasley asks only whether or not the child lives with a remarried couple. However, family membership belief encompasses both parental households and the child's membership in each. Family membership belief integrates the binuclear notion that a child is living with or visiting one parent when s/he is not with the other.

Mother Home Perspective

The mother home perspective related literature seems to be divided. Some authors emphasize binuclear relationships; others focus on the single parent in one postdivorce subsystem. Each will be addressed in this segment.

Binuclear emphasis. Ahrons & Rodgers contended that the term "single parent family" applies only when a custodial parent "has not remarried and no

longer has any meaningful contact with the former spouse" (1987, p. 21). All other postdivorce constellations are viewed as binuclear families (p. 121).

Bradt and Bradt (1986) shared a similar perspective. The authors challenged the perpetuation of the phrase "single parent family." They wrote, "A household may have but one parent, but if we don't join in discounting the resource of the noncustodial parent, we will see 'two-household families' and 'resident and nonresident parents' where single parents used to be" (p. 302).

Single parent emphasis. Other researchers do not seem to share these viewpoints. Terms referring to an individual parent raising children alone were widespread in the literature. For example writers referred to the one parent family (McGoldrick & Carter, 1980; Weiss, 1975), single parent family (McGoldrick & Carter, 1980; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989; Weiss); and a parent having sole custody (Wallerstein & Blakeslee). While it is possible that all of these writers were identifying situations in which custodial and noncustodial parents had severed all meaningful contact, they did not define these phrases nor discuss their terminology selection process.

Further, while joint custody and fathers with primary custody have become more common among postdivorce parents in recent years (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987; Arditti, 1991; Buehler, 1989), several writers referred to single parents or one parent families as typically being headed by mothers (Ahrons & Rodgers; Arditti; Buehler; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989).

Joint Home Perspective

Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) used the term "joint custody" in their

book. The phrase was delineated as follows,

Joint physical custody, or shared custody, is a new family form in which
divorced parents share parenting in separate homes or, put another
way, where children literally have two residences, spending substantial
amounts of time alternately with the mother and the father. (p. 256)

The authors state further, "The central psychological argument for joint custody

therefore rests on the importance of maintaining two parents in the postdivorce

family" (p. 257).

This concept was used by other writers as well. Ahrons' (1980)

conception of the "binuclear family" calls for nurturance from both biological

parents. It was also stated that ". . . children function best after divorce if they

are able to maintain satisfactory contact with both parents" (McGoldrick &

Carter, 1989, p. 405).

Transfer Functions

It appears that some current references focus specifically on the

postdivorce family's involvement in transfer functions. The literature which

relates to the concepts switch and facilitate will be reviewed in this discussion.

Switch

Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) used the term "shuttle" while

addressing postdivorce children's movement between parental households.

The authors inquired, "What is it like to shuttle between two homes? How

does the children's experience differ from those of the adults?" (p. 258).

The term "switch" appeared in the literature along with other words

which appear to be associated with switch behavior. In the following quote,

Wallerstein and Blakeslee wrote about postdivorce children's movement

between parental households. They stated,

> When we examined the children's lives, it soon became clear that the amount of time spent in either household is not the critical issue, but the sheer frequency of transitions between households can be upsetting. For example, a child can spend one week at each parent's house or can switch homes every other day. The amount of time spent with each parent is roughly equal but one child experiences many more transitions or changeover days than the other child. (1989, p. 270)

Some writers used the phrase "back and forth" while discussing

children's movements between postdivorce parental households. One

research parent stated, "'. . . we're on an every-other-day routine, and this kid

is going back and forth maybe fourteen times a week'" (Wallerstein &

Blakeslee, 1989, p. 261). Other authors wrote, "In day to day activities,

successful remarried families have worked out innovative and creative ways of

dealing with transitional situations such as . . . when children move back and

forth between their two households" (Visher & Visher, 1990, p. 9).

Facilitate

Ideas which related to parental facilitation of the children's switch

between parental households appeared in the literature as well, although that

word was not used. Research parents were referred to as parents who were

". . . dropping off or picking up children" (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989,

p. xviii); and interacting ". . . when children are picked up or delivered" (Keshet,

1980, p. 519).

Between Transfer Expectations

The term "between transfer expectations" was not addressed in the

literature. However, there appear to be some statements which could be

interpreted to apply to the lower order concepts adult lifestyles and child roles

which comprise the between transfer expectations notion. Both of these ideas

will be reviewed in this section.

Adult Lifestyles

Adult lifestyle shifts between family and single structures seem to be

related to two excerpts from Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989). They wrote,

> Changeover days are difficult for adults as well as children. . . . Parents
> report intense feelings of missing their small children at changeover.
> Then, after 3 days or a week of readjusting to the freedom of being an
> adult in an adult world, the parent gets the child back. This constant
> shifting takes an emotional toll on parents. (p. 262)
>   Parents say it is easier to start new relationships within the . . .
> structure of joint custody. Women are especially pleased to be able to
> enjoy a more spontaneous social life--to bring a date home or stay out
> late on nights the children are at the father's home. (p. 265)

Child Roles

Some researchers included comments which seem to relate to the child

roles concept. One researcher noted, ". . . the children reported the delicacy

of working out relationships with two families who often had different values,

lifestyles, and ideas about discipline" (Jacobson, 1987, p. 270).

A joint custody participant stated,

> Talk about schizophrenic life. When my son goes to his dad's house,
> he jumps on the furniture, hangs from the chandeliers, and stays up till
> ten or eleven. . . . At my house, he's got lots of limits and his life is very

compartmentalized. It's two different worlds. (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989, p. 265)

Further, Wallerstein and Blakeslee reported that diverse bedtime and television rules were a theme among the joint custody respondents in their study.

Contextual Ideas

Three contextual ideas are included in the theory which is emerging from this research. They are: the binuclear ecosystem, normative postdivorce development, and change. This literature review will include ideas which augment the previous literature on normative postdivorce development. It will also include a section on change related literature. The binuclear ecosystem was addressed in Chapter 1 and will not be reviewed in this chapter.

Normative Postdivorce Development

In addition to the researchers cited in the first literature review, it appears there are additional postdivorce writers who view the postdivorce family as becoming more widely accepted within our society. While discussing the growing pervasiveness of stepfamily life, Visher and Visher stated, "Stepfamilies have become a normative American family" (1990, p. 4).

Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1980) view the postdivorce family as "uncharted territory" which requires its own theoretical model. They wrote,

> Because our understanding of . . . family life is almost entirely based on the intact family, the divorced family has been looked at as a variation on or departure from the intact family. But now we are finding that the divorced family is an entirely new family form, one that needs to be looked at entirely on its own. The reality we observe in today's divorced families does not fit the psychological ideas that we were brought up

with professionally. Instead of guessing as we go, we need to develop new theory and understanding to match the new reality (p. 17-18).

This idea can be related to other literature which suggests that divorce and remarriage represent an additional developmental hurdle for many individuals and families. McGoldrick & Carter reported,

> As a first marriage signifies the joining of two families, so a second marriage involves the interweaving of three, four, or more families, whose previous family life cycle course has been disrupted by death or divorce. So complex is the process whereby the remarried family system stabilizes and regains its forward developmental thrust that we have come to think of this process as adding another whole phase to the family life cycle for those involved. (1989, p. 399)

Change

Andrews, Bubolz, and Paolucci (1980) include the notion of change as a key dimension in family ecosystems. The authors stated, "A family ecological approach recognizes that family systems are dynamic, in a constant state of change and adaptation" (p. 43). According to the writers, systemic maintenance and change ". . . assess the extent to which the environment is orderly and clear in its expectations, maintains control, and is responsive to change" (p. 38).

The ecosystemic notion of environmental interdependence blends well with Melson's (1980) definition of the term "adaptation." She wrote that a system's adaptation is "the process of establishing and maintaining a relatively stable reciprocal relationship with the environment" (p. 219). According to Melson, a system is in a constant state of adaptation as it shifts between stability and change.

It appears that energy and change are closely associated. Andrews et al. described energy as "the life blood of human systems" (1980, p. 34). The authors discussed various levels of energy organization required for system maintenance. They wrote,

> A minimum supply of energy is required on both the individual and family system levels for system maintenance and sheer existence--to maintain essential functions for survival. . . . Additional energy or more efficient use of energy is required for transactions with other systems beyond the family. . . . Still higher levels of organization of energy use are needed for adaptive, creative behavior to enable a system to cope with changing environments and rules. (p. 34)

Postdivorce family development processes include ". . . accepting the need for time and patience for adjustment to complexity and ambiguity . . ." (McGoldrick & Carter, 1980, p. 272).

Summary

It appears that current postdivorce literature contains ideas which relate to several of the lower order concepts from this research. Specifically, mother and joint home perspectives, transfer functions, switch, facilitate, adult lifestyles and child roles are related to this literature as well as the data. In most citations authors used terms which were analogous to or synonymous with the data based ideas from this study. The word "switch," and the defining terminology "belong," "back and forth," "pick up," "drop off," and "shift" specifically appeared in the literature.

The researcher chose to maintain terms which emerged from the data because those which appeared in the literature were not clearly defined, and/or did not have a clear relationship to or with the data based ideas. At this time it

seems that the concepts which evolved from this study have more empiracal

support than those used in the literature.

CHAPTER 8. EVOLVING THEORY

The outcomes of this research are summarized in this chapter. This overview will begin with a model which has emerged from this theoretical inquiry. The data based concepts defined in previous chapters form the foundation for, and are integrated within, the proposed theory. The chapter will close with a related list of preliminary propositions followed by a brief summary.

Emerging Theoretical Model

The findings from this research have been synthesized in a theoretical diagram (see Figure 5). The proposed theory focuses on the data based concept postdivorce family life and three contextual ideas which encompass it. All of these ideas are incorporated into Figure 5 and reviewed in this discussion.

Postdivorce family life involves three key data based concepts: family membership belief, transfer plan, and postdivorce transfer sequence. Family membership belief is viewed as housing two perspectives: mother and joint home. Two transfer plans appear in these data: visitation and custody transfers. It appears there is a stochastic, coextensive relationship between the concepts family membership belief and transfer plan.

Postdivorce transfer sequence encompasses two data based ideas: postdivorce transfer cycle and between transfer expectations. Postdivorce
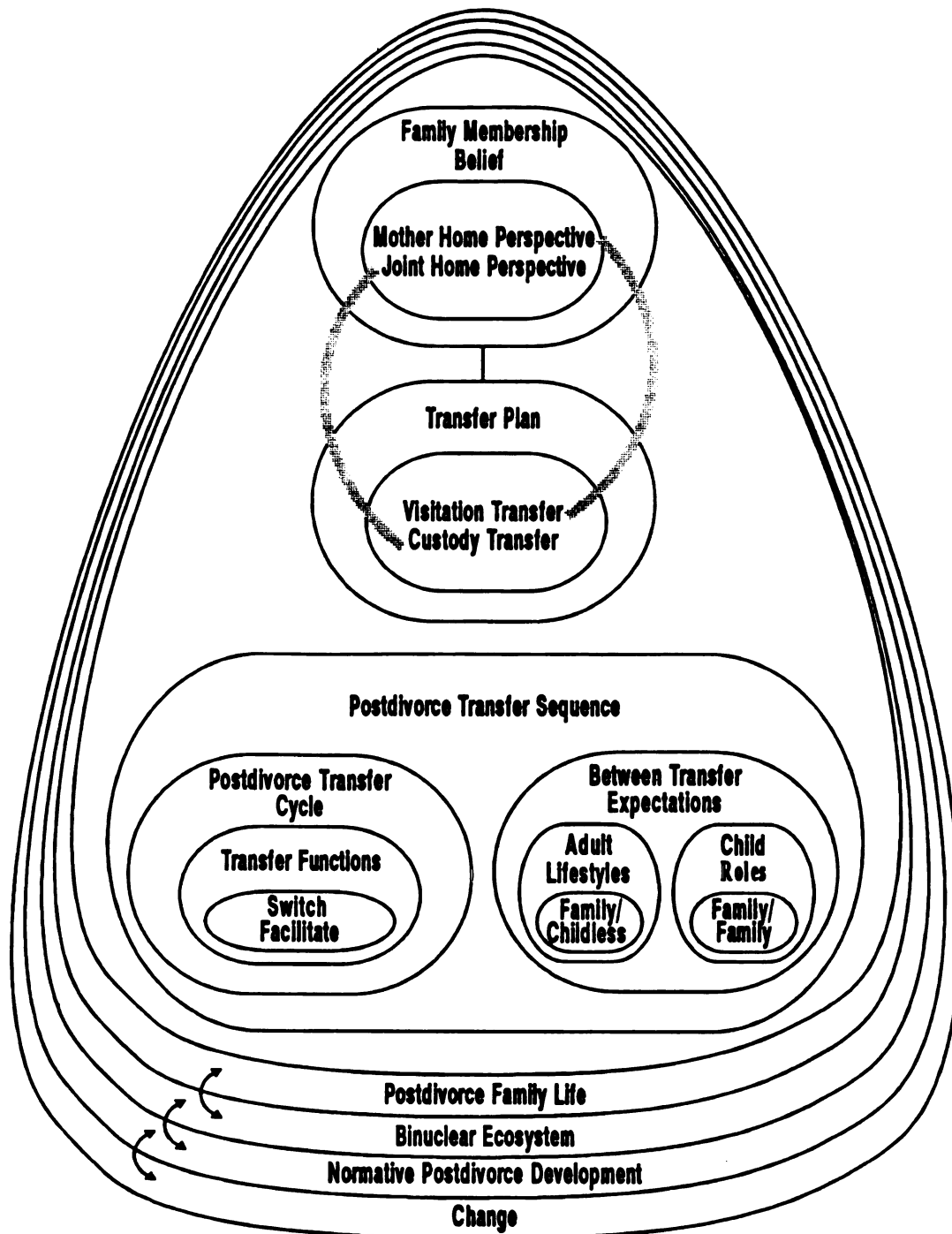
Figure 5. Emerging postdivorce theory

transfer cycle focuses on two repeated transfer functions: children's switches between parental homes and parental facilitation of the switches. The concept between transfer expectations centers on the divergent experiences of postdivorce parents and children after and before transfers. In adult lifestyles, parents shift between family and childless structures; child roles require children to shift between parental worlds and remain in a family structure.

Postdivorce family life is enveloped within three interactive contextual concepts: the binuclear ecosystem, normative postdivorce development, and change. Thus, the outcomes from this research suggest there are multiple normative changes which occur in binuclear ecosystems. These include, but are not limited to, the data based concepts which have emerged during this study. Specifically, a binuclear family's effort to establish and maintain a membership belief, transfer plan, and postdivorce transfer sequence are viewed as adaptive responses to parental divorce.

The emerging postdivorce theory shown in Figure 5 integrates all of the data based concepts from this study. The concepts family membership belief, transfer plan, and postdivorce transfer sequence are presented in oval shapes which are intended to convey the exploratory, preliminary nature of these ideas. Postdivorce family life and the three contextual ideas are presented as nested interactive egg shapes which encompass, and form a foundation for, the lower order concepts from this research.

After viewing the theoretical model for a while, the reader may perceive a three-dimensional quality. The contextual ideas may appear as stairs which

step up to a platform that holds the data based concepts. This optical illusion demonstrates the foundational role of the contextual concepts in this research. The binuclear ecosystem, normative postdivorce development, and change form a solid base on which new ideas may be built.

Preliminary Propositions

This section lists 14 descriptive (Bubolz, 1991) preliminary propositions which have evolved from this inquiry. The propositions are listed in **bold** and followed by a discussion which addresses the theoretical ideas. While they will not be restated in this chapter, the concepts and figures which stem from this study are viewed as preliminary propositions. Preliminary propositions 1-10 are definitional in nature (Bubolz), and outline the major findings of this research. Eventually, it is expected that these propositions will evolve into measurable, testable hypotheses which will form the basis for therapeutic interventions.

1. **Mother home and joint home perspectives are two divergent family membership beliefs.**

2. **Mother home and joint home families are binuclear systems.**

3. **There is a stochastic, coextensive relationship between the concepts family membership belief and transfer plan. Mother home families have visitation transfers; joint home families have custody transfers.**

4. **Children and parents in postdivorce families have divergent postdivorce transfer cycle transfer functions.**

5.   Children switch, while parents facilitate the children's switches during the postdivorce transfer cycle.

6.   Parents and children have divergent between transfer expectations.

7.   Parental lifestyles include a shift between two divergent structures, family and childless.

8.   Children do not shift structures, they remain in a family structure within both parental households.

9.   Child roles include adjustment to divergent parental worlds and the rules within them.

10.   Postdivorce family life is housed within three interactive theoretical notions; they are the binuclear ecosystem, normative postdivorce development, and change.

11.   The majority of postdivorce families are mother home families.

12.   There is interdependence between divorced parents in separate natural physical-biological, human built, and social-cultural environments.

13.   Change is a common occurrence in postdivorce family life.

14.   Postdivorce family life requires high energy output from postdivorce family members.

Proposition Discussion

It seems appropriate that joint home families be viewed as binuclear systems. In these systems two parents share custody of their biological child and the child moves between two parental residences. However, this research espouses a binuclear family outlook for mother home families as well. Using

Ahrons' and Rodgers' (1987) definitions, no "single parent families" participated in this study. A "two-household" or binuclear outlook was maintained in the mother home perspective. Although mother home children live with their mother and visit their father, they are viewed as having relationships with both parents.

It appears that the concepts family membership belief and transfer plan occur simultaneously. It is proposed that a family with a specific membership belief will probably have a transfer plan which reflects the family's membership belief. For example, among the participants in this research, mother home families viewed their children as visiting their noncustodial parent and accordingly had visitation transfers; joint home families viewed their children as living with both custodial parents and therefore had custody transfers.

Although a "father home perspective" was not represented among the participants in this study, and such families are not as large in number as mother and joint home systems, they do exist. Thus, it seems logical to integrate father home families into this discussion. This perspective would include postdivorce families in which children live with their fathers and visit their noncustodial mothers. Further, in keeping with the stochastic, coextensive relationship proposed previously, it is postulated that father home families would experience another form of visitation transfer in which children visit their noncustodial mothers.

The concept transfer functions appears to be directly associated with statements made by Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989). The authors' use of the

term "shuttle" seems to address the core of the transfer functions idea. The word appears to parallel the notion of children moving between homes and parental facilitation of their switches. The authors did not define the term "shuttle." However its use conjures images of astronauts being propelled through space between planets or an instrument used to carry woof threads to and fro between the warp threads of a weaving loom. Whether these meanings were intended by Wallerstein and Blakeslee is unknown. However, both of these ideas can be related to the "back and forth" movement incorporated into the definition of switch. Further, the concept transfer functions can be viewed as a response to Wallerstein's and Blakeslee's question, "How does the children's [shuttle] experience differ from those of the adults?" (p. 258) Within the context of this research there appear to be clear differences between the transfer experiences of parents and children. In essence, children switch and parents facilitate.

The binuclear ecosystem focuses on two family subsystem environments and their interaction. Specifically, this study centers on the social-cultural environments of binuclear family members as they relate to the natural physical-biological moves of postdivorce children. For example, the concept family membership belief is a family's opinion as to which parent a child lives with and/or visits. Similarly, the family's transfer plan can be viewed as a physical enactment of a family membership belief.

Further, the physical events within the postdivorce transfer sequence are shaped by the social-cultural patterns of the binuclear family. A child's

repeated switches, and parental facilitation of them, are responsibilities parents and children assume in the postdivorce transfer cycle. These responsibilities reflect the family's value that children have contact with both parents. Changes within adult lifestyles and child roles can be viewed as expectations family members establish between transfers.

Change related ideas appear throughout the data based notions in this research. In a broad sense, the core concept postdivorce transfer reflects a family's adjustment to a new family situation. The postdivorce system evolves from the nuclear to a binuclear family as parents end their marriage and children move between two parental residences. The fact that family members must determine where a child lives and/or visits reflects the family's adaptation to postdivorce status. Further, a transfer is a type of change; repeated transfers can be viewed as a cycle of changes which allows children to have contact with both biological parents.

The change theme is reflected in other defining terms and phrases which evolved during this research. These include: switch, movement, back and forth, facilitate, picking up, dropping off, parental shifts between family and childless structure, and children's adjustment to divergent parental realities.

The notion of change was also present among some literature which supported the notions of switch and facilitate. Specifically, Wallerstein and Blakeslee used the terms "shuttle" (1989, p. 258), "changeover days," "transitions between households" (p. 270), and referred to the child's movement "back and forth" (p. 261). All of these notions are change oriented.

The data based concept transfer functions was alluded to by Wallerstein and Blakeslee, who viewed "frequent transitions" as requiring multiple adaptations by postdivorce family members (p. 270). Furthermore, the concepts family membership belief, transfer plan, and postdivorce transfer sequence can be viewed as adaptive responses to a marital dissolution. Such changes are not necessary in nuclear families in which, traditionally, both parents and their children belong in the same household. Applying the ideas of Andrews, Bubolz, and Paolucci to this study, it appears that postdivorce systems must survive, maintain transactions with other systems, and organize ". . . adaptive, creative behavior to enable [the] system to cope with changing environments and rules" (1980, p. 34). It seems logical that the postdivorce family's constant and complex adjustments require high degrees of energy and patience.

Summary

This empirical inquiry marks the beginning of a theory. Data based terminology which relates to postdivorce family life has begun to form. Conceptual ideas have been defined and may be altered as the constant comparison process continues. It is expected that the preliminary propositions stated in this chapter will provide a basis for further postdivorce theory development, including propositions and testable hypotheses.

Further, because several data based terms from this study were identical or similar to literature based ideas, it seems safe to assume that the lower order concepts emerging from this study relate to terms used by other postdivorce researchers. Thus, because these ideas are relatively unknown, it

seems appropriate to believe that this theoretical inquiry is establishing a starting place for future theoretical developments in the realm of postdivorce family life.

Finally, it appears that the discovery of these data based concepts responds directly to scholarly researchers' requests for postdivorce theory development. The research outcomes speak directly to the request for clarification of ". . . how a family continues to function . . . across two, or even three, households" (Ahrons & Wallisch, 1987, p. 229). In short, postdivorce families "function" by forming and enacting family membership belief and assuming behavioral responsibilities throughout the postdivorce transfer sequence. All of these data based ideas are viewed as normative, adaptive changes which take place in response to a parental divorce.

CHAPTER 9. SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter will review the research process and findings from this dissertation. Following this a discussion will explore potential implications from this inquiry.

Research Summary

The primary goal of this study was to begin to develop theoretical ideas which relate to the notion of postdivorce family "visitation transfers." To explore this topic the researcher held in-depth, individual, qualitative interviews with the biological mothers, fathers, and one transferring child from four binuclear systems. Study participants were asked to explore their perceptions of visitation transfers. Parents were in midlife; children ranged in age from 8 to 14. Data were gathered between November 1991 and May 1992. Written transcripts of the interviews were analyzed using the constant comparison method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Previous to this time binuclear research had not explored "how" postdivorce systems functioned across households (Ahrons & Wallisch, 1987). This study addressed postdivorce family beliefs and behaviors which relate to postdivorce transfers. The research has helped to develop postdivorce family terminology. Specifically, the concept "family membership belief" focuses on how family members view their constituency; the "transfer plan" notion addresses how family members enact their family membership belief; and the concept "postdivorce transfer cycle" addresses the behaviors of children and

parents during and between transfers. All of these data based ideas are viewed as normative changes postdivorce families are likely to encounter as they adapt to parental divorce. In addition, the researcher's initial term "visitation transfer" changed greatly throughout the course of this study. Participants' discussions of their view of visitation transfers prompted the development of the concepts family membership belief and transfer plan. The term "visitation transfer" became identified as one type of transfer plan.

Research Implications

The primary significance of this inquiry lies in the fact that it has begun. This dissertation has identified and defined data based concepts and laid the groundwork for forthcoming theory in the realm of postdivorce family life. There are additional implications, however, which relate to theory, research, and practice. Each will be explored in this section.

Theory

Three theoretical implications stem from this study. First, the basic methodology designed for and utilized within this research is well suited for the development of theoretical notions. Second, theoretical concepts and preliminary propositions can emerge from informants' common language through use of the constant comparison method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The third significant theoretical outcome is that future studies may build on the findings from this research. This may include further refinement of the data based concepts and preliminary propositions from this study or inquiries

which focus on transfers in other systems, e.g. when foster family children visit their biological parent(s) or when nuclear family youngsters spend time with relatives or family friends. It seems likely that study of these circumstances would produce themes similar to those found in this research.

Future Research

Two topics address the issues surrounding future studies in the area of postdivorce transfers and postdivorce family life. They are: methodological considerations and potential research ideas. Each will be covered in this discussion.

Methodological Considerations

One important methodological implication relates to the self-selection of participants. The informant families that agreed to be interviewed for this study appeared to be functional, cooperative (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987) systems. Consequently, it seems they were open to discussing their family experiences with a researcher. However, at least one binuclear family that declined study involvement appeared to have some potentially dysfunctional traits (Ahrons & Rodgers). This suggests that functional coparents are more likely to self-select for postdivorce transfer studies.

A more in-depth exploration of transfers across Ahrons' four coparental styles is needed. However, unless less functional systems are accessed the evolving theory will be skewed toward functional binuclear families. It may be that less functional systems could be accessed through a safer research mode

such as mailed questionnaires. While less qualitative information would be gained through this process, at least some data could be garnered.

Further, in this study the researcher attempted to side-step access difficulties by asking ministers to contact potential participants. This presented difficulties on two major levels. First, not all postdivorce families attend church. Thus, the theoretical sample was already somewhat limited. Secondly, postdivorce coparents who go to church do not attend the same one. Because of this, future research participants will need to be approached differently. This may involve using court documents as others have done (Ahrons & Wallisch, 1987; Jacobson, 1987) or seeking contacts through court ordered programs, clinical settings, and postdivorce support groups.

Another methodological issue relates to the ages of the children who participated in this research. This study was based on a concern for, and decision to include input from, latency-aged children from divorced families. However, the families which self-selected for study involvement had older children who were not suited for the more youthful activities designed by the researcher. It is likely that had younger children taken part in this research some outcomes would have been different. Consequently, in order to gather from a broad theoretical sample, it seems crucial that forthcoming research involve latency age children.

A third methodological notion involves parental remarriage. Ahrons and Wallisch (1987) have suggested that coparental interactions change considerably when and if one divorced parent marries. In this research three

of the eight parents had remarried and four were planning to do so. It is not

known how these factors may have impacted the outcomes of this research.

However, it seems prudent to examine a variety of remarried and nonremarried

coparental constellations in future studies.

Potential Research Ideas

Because this research endeavor marks the beginning of a theoretical

inquiry, many potentially related ideas are as yet unexplored. One top priority

is to continue to build on the findings of this research. Ideally this would

include the creation of a longitudinal study which would incorporate the

methodological changes discussed previously. This long-term study would

include an expanded theoretical sample which could incorporate divergent

SES, ethnic, religious, and geographic groups. It would also involve

participants from a variety of individual, family, and postdivorce development

stages.

Further, while the focus of this theory is at the mini or microlevel

(Bubolz, 1991), it is acknowledged that the social-cultural patterns of these

families interact with the societal belief systems which surround them. Thus,

exploration of postdivorce families' interfaces with the legal system, hospitals,

schools, churches, extended family, and other community resources would

likely shed further light on postdivorce family experiences.

Over the course of this inquiry several potential theoretical themes

occurred to the researcher, but were outside the criteria established for this

study. This information was present in the data but did not seem to impact the

concepts and preliminary propositions which evolved in this study. One such notion was loss and grief (Schneider, 1984, 1994; Whiteside, 1989a, 1989b). When asked about their postdivorce transfer experiences, some parent and child informants in this study described feeling intense emotional pain in relationship to the transfers. Thus, investigation of postdivorce family members' feelings of loss around transfer experiences could provide helpful information.

On a related note, some participants suggested their emotional pain around transfers decreased as the time since the marital divorce increased. This notion may relate to other studies which have reported that emotional pain around divorce issues decreased over time (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Pasley, 1987). Therefore, it seems that time since divorce is an important concept. A study comparing the transfer-related loss experiences of postdivorce systems with varied lengths of time since divorce could lead to further insights.

Other ideas which stemmed from these research data were the practical transfer considerations with which the families contended. These included various transportation modes, geographic distances between parental households, and transfer frequency and duration patterns. Further, in some instances, relatives or children assumed facilitative roles in the transfer process. These ideas were mentioned by the informants in this study but not in sufficient frequency to meet the analysis criteria. All of these behaviors reflect decisions made by postdivorce family members. Exploration of their

decision making processes could add further understanding to current literature on postdivorce family life.

The notion of empowerment (Capra, 1983; Nelson & Hidalgo de Avila, 1993; Vaines, 1988) began to emerge during this study but was not within the boundaries of the research. Several of the cooperative coparents in this study told the researcher about pragmatic ways they managed transfer issues. These ideas included the use of a large suitcase to move a toddler's toys between parental homes and allowing a child private time after a transfer to adjust to a new parental residence. Perhaps one way to empower postdivorce systems experiencing transfers is to provide them with practical transfer management ideas which come from functional (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987) binuclear families. While this notion requires further research and gathering of information, it could be the next step toward development of therapeutic interventions with postdivorce systems.

There were some general research themes which evolved during this study but appeared across fewer than three families. These related to coparental tension, cooperation, flexibility and working together for their child's best interest. Similarly the nature of the actual divorce, i.e. mutual agreement, betrayal, contested, seems to be a potentially important theme.

Finally, while there appear to be some parallel relationships between current literature and the findings of this research, the specific meanings of these relationships are unclear at this time. The most salient example of this is the distinction between mother and joint home families. This was a natural

division in this research because two of each family perspective were represented in the data. However, it is unknown how or if these differences would appear among other theoretical samples of binuclear families. Thus, to clarify the terminological outcomes of this study, additional research is needed in this area.

<div align="center">Practice</div>

Some practical ideas have been discussed previously in the research discussion. While these notions may be applied in the future, at this time they are being formulated, and require further study. However, it appears there is one crucial, practical lesson from this inquiry. It focuses on respecting the words used, and meanings intended, by participants. This key finding stemmed from the researcher's unintentional offense of a study informant. One joint home father's distaste for the term "visitation transfer" led to the development of data based concepts which were used by, and believed to be inoffensive to, participants. This experience has direct implications for the terminology choices made by family support workers who interact with postdivorce family members. Support workers such as family therapists, medical personnel, educators, clergy, and government agency employees can learn from the researcher's social blunder. Without being aware of joint home beliefs, well meaning family "helpers" may unwittingly offend some joint home family members.

Concluding Statement

This study has produced a descriptive, definitional (Bubolz, 1991)

theoretical foundation for the study of postdivorce transfer experiences. There

is much that remains to be learned about postdivorce systems and their

transfers. The next logical step will be to continue the constant comparison

method of Glaser and Strauss (1967) by comparing additional data to the

findings of this study. It is expected that through this effort other concepts

may be woven into this process, thus giving further validity to the data based

notions which have evolved.

Perhaps the most salient outcome from this study is that words are

forming around the postdivorce transfer phenomenon. Having a title for this

experience makes it more real, conscious, and less secretive. As this theory

evolves it is expected to continue to clarify the realities of binuclear family life

and aid social understanding of these unique systems.

APPENDICES

Terminology Definitions

There are some terms which are unique to this study and require clarification. The words and phrases are listed alphabetically.

"Coparents" or "coparental couple: Two divorced parents who have a common biological child. The term "coparent" is used to identify one of these divorced parents.

Custody Terms: (for clarity, these items are not alphabetized),

Custody: Maintenance of a child.

Legal Custody: "Decision-making responsibilities concerning children's health, education and welfare" (Buehler, 1989, p. 76).

Physical Custody: A child's "custodial and affectional care" (Buehler, 1989, p. 76).

Custodial parent(s): The biological parent(s) who is (are) responsible for the legal and/or physical care of a child. This responsibility may be given to one or both parents.

Noncustodial parent: A biological parent who lives outside the child's home. This parent may or may not have legal custody responsibilities, but generally does not assume a physical custody role.

Joint custody: A postdivorce family arrangement in which both biological parents assume equitable responsibility for the legal and physical care of a child. In this context "equitable" does not necessarily mean "equal" (Buehler, 1989).

Postdivorce Family: This phrase is synonymous with the binuclear family defined in Chapter 1. The phrases binuclear and postdivorce family are used interchangeably in this research.

Remarriage: The marital union of a coparent and his or her new spouse. This is not to be confused with coparents who divorce and "remarry" each other.

Transfer: The movement of a child between postdivorce parents.

Appendix A (cont'd).

"Visitation transfer" and "Moment of transfer:" In Chapters 1 through 3 these terms are used interchangeably and are defined as the process by which postdivorce families move children between parents for visitation. The meanings of these terms changed dramatically over the course of this study and are addressed specifically in Chapters 4 and 5.

Initial Phone Contact with Potential Participants

Contact name (code): _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Researcher's self introduction.

Arrange for 10-15 minute phone conversation.

Give a brief explanation of study.

Review informant's time requirements (including child interviews).

Discuss confidential nature of research.

Offer a summary of research results upon study completion.

Review participant requirements for study involvement.

Ask for and respond to informant questions.

Ask if the participant is willing to take part in study.

Set initial meeting time, place, give/receive directions (discuss parking if necessary).

Obtain participant's mailing address and best times to reach him/her by phone.

Close with reminder of meeting time.

Introductory Letter to Potential Participants

date

Shawn D. Fulton, M.A.
6329 Rosedale
Lansing, Michigan 48911
(517)393-1845

Name
address

Dear (contact name),

I was glad to speak with you (weekday). I would like to tell you more about myself and the research I am doing. I am a doctoral candidate in the Marriage and Family Therapy Program at Michigan State University. I am also a stepparent. I have done therapy with postdivorce and remarried families for five years.

As I mentioned to you, I am conducting a research project on visitation in postdivorce families. Specifically, this study will focus on divorced couples who currently, or have in the past, transfer(ed) their child between them for visitation. Through individual interviews, this research is expected to help deepen our understanding of the "visitation transfer" process, and ultimately help other divorced partners and their children through it.

Reverend _____, gave me your name as a person who may be interested in taking part in this study. I am looking forward to meeting with you to discuss the specifics of the research and your potential role in the process.

Please know that your role in this study will be confidential. Your name will not be revealed to anyone by me. Any oral or written reports stemming from this study will not include your name. Also, a summary of the research results will be offered to you.

I am looking forward to meeting with you at (place) next (day/date) at (time). Your help in this research will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Shawn D. Fulton

Initial Meeting with Potential Participants.

Contact name (code): _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Introduction by minister.

(When possible, the researcher will ask to meet the identified research child before the meeting begins. To help build researcher/child rapport, the researcher will offer the child his/her choice of toys to play with during the meeting. The selection will include crayons and paper, a small collection of legos, and a larger set of legos for older children. These will be collected at the end of the meeting).

Researcher's self introduction.

Present study.

Describe participants' roles and time commitments in research.

Explain the need for tape recording interviews.

Discuss child interview times with custodial parent(s).

Explain confidential nature of the study.

Offer research summary when study is completed.

Verify that participants meet research criteria.

Offer contribution to participant's choice of charity.

Review children's interview questions with parents and ask them for any questions or requests they may have about the children's interview questions.

Review consent form.

Give participant the demographic questionnaire.

Appendix D (cont'd).

Ask for and respond to questions from participants.

Brief meeting with child. While playing with the child and the toy provided by the researcher, the researcher will describe the research in children's terms. For example, the researcher may tell the child that she is doing a report on families with children who move between their mom's and dad's houses. The researcher will explain that she would like to ask the child about his/her experiences in his/her family. The researcher will ask the child if he/she would be willing to participate in the research.

Set schedule for coparent and child interviews.

Appendix E

Participant Consent Forms

Participant consent form 1. (Form 1 was used with custodial parents)

Consent to Participate in Research

I have attended an introductory meeting in which Shawn Fulton, M.A. has described this research. I understand the study's purpose is to gain deeper understanding of visitation transfers among postdivorce families, and that my involvement will help Ms. Fulton develop a theory focusing on these events.

I understand my child and I will be taking part in individual interviews. I realize the interviews will be tape recorded for research purposes. I am aware I will be completing questionnaires.

Ms. Fulton has informed me of my rights and my family's rights to confidentiality as it relates to this study. I understand my name will not be included in any reports stemming from this research.

I realize my involvement in this study is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time. If I should have questions or concerns which stem from my participation in this study, I will direct them to Ms. Fulton.

I have been told, if I complete the research process, a small contribution will be made to my church or another charity of my choice. I am aware that a summary of research outcomes will be offered to me.

I consent to participate in the research described above.

Signed _____   Date _____
            (Parent's Signature)

Child participant: _____

Custodial parents' signatures provide for children's involvement.

Appendix E (cont'd).

<u>Participant consent form 2.</u> (Form 2 was used with noncustodial parents)

Consent to Participate in Research

I have attended an introductory meeting in which Shawn Fulton, M.A. has described this research. I understand the study's purpose is to gain deeper understanding of visitation transfers among postdivorce families, and that my involvement will help Ms. Fulton develop a theory focusing on these events.

As a participant in this study I understand I will be taking part in individual interviews. I realize the interviews will be tape recorded for research purposes. I am aware I will be completing questionnaires.

Ms. Fulton has informed me of my rights and my family's rights to confidentiality as they relate to this study. I understand my name will not be included in any reports stemming from this research.

I realize my involvement in this study is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time. If I should have questions or concerns which stem from my participation in this study, I will direct them to Ms. Fulton.

I have been told, if I complete the research process, a small contribution will be made to my church or another charity of my choice. I am aware a summary of the research outcomes will be offered to me.

I consent to participate in the research described above.

Signed _____   Date _____
      (Parent's Signature)

Examples of Child Interview Questions

Role Play (with dolls):

Let's imagine that the boy/girl is getting ready to go spend time with his/her Dad or Mom (current noncustodial parent). Show me, with the dolls, what you think would happen during this time. (Follow up with return to current custodial parent.)

During that time, what is most enjoyable for the young boy/girl?

During that time, what is least enjoyable for the young boy/girl?

Who can he/she talk with about what it's like to move between houses?

What advice would you give this young boy/girl about moving between two houses?

Is there anything else about moving between two houses that you'd like to tell me about?

Imagination session:

Let's imagine that a good friend of yours is getting ready to go spend time with his/her dad or mom (current noncustodial parent). Tell me what you think would normally happen during this time. (Follow up with return to custodial parent.)

During that time, what is most enjoyable for the young boy/girl?

During that time, what is least enjoyable for the young boy/girl?

Who can he/she talk with about what it's like to move between houses?

What advice would you give this young boy/girl about moving between two houses?

Is there anything else about moving between two houses that you'd like to tell me about?

Demographic Questionnaire

(This questionnaire will be completed by each coparent at the initial meeting. To protect the participant's confidentiality, the first page will be removed when the participant hands the completed questionnaire to the researcher. This page will be kept in a protected file separate from other research information.)

I'd like to ask you for some information about yourself. Please write your name, address and day and night time phone numbers in the space provided below.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone numbers (day) _____ (night) _____

One of your children has been selected to take part in this study. In the space provided below please write what he/she calls everyone in your home. Please indicate their ages as well.

Names   Ages

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix G (cont'd).

Please choose the best answer for each question and circle the letter next to it.

1. Which best describes your employment status?

    A.   self employed
    B.   employed by someone else full time (35 hours or more per week)
        number of hours worked per week: _____

    C.   employed by someone else part time (less than 35 hours per week)
        number of hours worked per week: _____
    D.   full-time in the home-no job outside the home
    E.   unemployed
    F.   part-time student
    G.   full-time student
    H.   retired

If you marked self employed, employed by someone else, or full-time in the home-no job outside the home in question 1 please answer questions 2 - 4. If you did not mark any of those three answers continue to question 5.

2. Please give us some information about your work.

    A.   What is your main occupation or job title?

        _____

    B.   What are your main duties on the job?

        _____

        _____

3. How many hours per week do you generally work at all jobs?

    _____

Appendix G (cont'd).

4. Please circle the letter next to the amount that comes closest to income you personally earned (before taxes) last year.

A.	less than 6,000	G.	30,000 - 39,999
B.	6,000 - 9,999	H.	40,000 - 49,999
C.	10,000 - 14,999	I.	50,000 - 74,999
D.	15,000 - 19,999	J.	75,000 - 100,000
E.	20,000 - 24,999	K.	over 100,000
F.	25,000 - 29,999		

5. Please circle the amount that comes closest to your total family income (before taxes) last year. Include all forms of income.

A.	less than 6,000	G.	30,000 - 39,999
B.	6,000 - 9,999	H.	40,000 - 49,999
C.	10,000 - 14,999	I.	50,000 - 74,999
D.	15,000 - 19,999	J.	75,000 - 100,000
E.	20,000 - 24,999	K.	100,000 - 125,000
F.	25,000 - 29,999	L.	over 125,000

6. Do you or your spouse pay child support?

A. No
B. Yes

How much child support do you pay **per child** per month? (Circle the letter).

A. $25 or less
B. $25 - 99
C $100 - 199
D. $200 - 299
E. $300 - 499
F $500 - 699
G. $700 - 899
H. $900 or more

Appendix G (cont'd).

7. Do you or your spouse receive child support?

A. No
B. Yes

How much child support do you receive **per child** per month? (Circle the number).

A. $25 or less
B. $25 - 99
C. $100 - 199
D. $200 - 299
E. $300 - 499
F. $500 - 699
G. $700 - 899
H. $900 or more

8. What year were you born? _____

9. What is your sex? (Circle the appropriate letter).

A. Female   B. Male

10. What is your race/ethnic group? (Circle the appropriate letter).

A. Black/Negro
B. American Indian/Alaskan Indian
C. Asian/Pacific Islander
D. Hispanic/Chicano
E. White/Caucasian

11. What is your present marital status? (Circle the letter).

A. Never married
B. Married
C. Remarried
D. Separated
E. Divorced
F. Widowed
G. Living together

Appendix G (cont'd).

12. How many times have you been married, including your current marriage? (Circle the letter).

    A.   once
    B.   twice
    C.   three times
    D.   four times or more

13. How did your last marriage end?

    A.   divorce
    B.   death of spouse
    C.   other (please specify) _____

_____

14. A.   Who does your former spouse live with (i.e. alone, husband/wife, roommate, girlfriend/boyfriend, or other)? Please do not use actual names.

_____

    B.   About how far away does your former spouse live from you?

_____

    C.   About how often do you see your former spouse (face to face)?

_____

If you are remarried and your current spouse has been divorced, please answer question 15. If you are not remarried or your current spouse has never been divorced please continue to question 16.

Appendix G (cont'd).

15. Who does your spouse's former spouse live with (i.e. alone, husband/wife, roommate, girlfriend/boyfriend, or other)? Please do not use actual names.

_____

B. About how far away does your spouse's former spouse live from you?

_____

C. About how often do you see your spouse's ex-spouse (face to face)?

_____

16. What is your religious preference? (Circle the letter).

A. Catholic
B. Protestant
C. Jewish
D. Other _____
    (Please list denomination)
E. No religious preference

17. Please list the highest level of education you have completed. (Circle the letter).

A. 8th grade or less
B. some high school
C. completed high school
D. vocational training/trade school
E. some college
F. completed college
G. some graduate work
H. graduate degree
I. other (please specify) _____

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. This information will be kept confidential.

Appendix H

Examples of Coparent Interview Questions

Visitation Transfer

(Note: The following question was added after the researcher's first interview. The participant's response was then used throughout the individual's interview process.)

I'm using the words "visitation transfer," to talk about this, but it can be called many things. What terms do you use to describe this event?

Will you please describe a visitation transfer (their term) from your point of view?

These probes will be used as follow-up questions or if these items are not covered:

> How would you describe your experience in the time leading up to a visitation transfer (their term)?

> How do you experience the visitation transfer (their term) itself?

> How do you experience the time just after the visitation transfer (their term)?

These questions are to be used as warranted, but not necessarily in sequence:

> Have your visitation transfers (their term) changed over time? If so, how?

> What times during the visitation transfer (their term) process are most enjoyable to you?

> What times during the visitation transfer (their term) process are least enjoyable to you?

> How would you characterize your relationship with your former spouse?

> What image, object, or feeling, represents your experience throughout the visitation transfer (their term) experience?; your (research) child's experience?; and that of your former spouse?

Appendix H (cont'd).

If you had a good friend who was seeking your advice about having visitation transfers (their term), what would you tell him/her?

External Support

Who do you talk with about your visitation transfers (their term)?

Speaking as a person who has (or has had) visitation transfers (their term) on a regular basis, what kinds of support do you feel from the surrounding community?

Closure

Are there any questions or topics we didn't cover in this interview that you'd like to ask?

What are your thoughts about participating in this study?

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