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Contributions from noncustodial fathers and reported change after divorce in the quality of life of mothers and children

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Contributions from noncustodial fathers
and reported change after divorce in the quality of life
of mothers and children

by

Marilyn Jo Bruin

A Thesis Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

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Signatures have been redacted for privacy

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

After divorce, the majority of fathers and children no longer share the same household. Noncustodial fathers can continue to provide for their children's economic well-being by contributing child support, goods, and access to services. Fathers can also invest in their children's social and emotional well-being by sharing in a variety of activities with their children. The purpose of this study is to measure the impact of contributions from noncustodial fathers on reported change in quality of life following a divorce for mothers and children.

The study begins by identifying a set of family characteristics that predict levels of reported change in quality of life. Of particular interest is the influence of resource contributions from noncustodial fathers when combined with other family characteristics to discriminate group differences based on scales measuring reported change in a custodial family's quality of life after a divorce.

Family characteristics include the sociodemographic characteristics of the mother, the distance between the father's residence and the custodial home, the father's current marital status, whether he has a visitation agreement, and an indicator of the divorced parents' relationship. The measurement of resource contributions from the father includes monetary transfers in the form of child support payments, contributions of goods and access to services, including clothing, gifts, medical insurance, medical and dental care, and inputs of parental time that are reflected by the father's participation in the children's school activities, help with homework, and vacations.

Three aspects of reported change in the custodial family's quality of life are explored: mother's quality of life; children's quality of life; and quality of time children spent with their father. Mother's reported change in her quality of life since her divorce is measured by her evaluation of

changes in the quality of her housing, neighborhood, health insurance coverage, financial security, and overall standard of living. Reported change in the children's quality of life is measured by their mother's evaluation of changes in the quality of the neighborhood, school, home life, time spent with their mother, recreational activities, health care, progress in school, and overall standard of living, as well as change in the quality of time children spent with their father.

Need for the Study

There is a need to increase our understanding of noncustodial fathers' potential influence on their children's well-being. If resource contributions from fathers are effective in predicting categories of reported change in the quality of life for custodial family members, the importance of such transfers should be encouraged by education and supported by public policies.

An increasing number of children spend a portion of their childhood in a single-parent family. Between 1970 and 1990, the number of single-parent families in the United States increased from 3.8 million to 9.7 million families (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990). In 1990, single parents headed 28% of all families with children (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990). Historically, single-mother families were headed by widows. In the 1990's, the single-parent family is more likely to be formed following a divorce, marital separation, or the birth of a child to an unmarried mother. Ten million mothers, either single or remarried, are rearing 15.3 million children under 18 years of age without the biological father residing in the same household (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990). "About half those recently born in the United States are likely to spend some portion of their childhood in a female-headed family" (McLanahan & Bumpass, 1988, p. 130). On average, these children spend six years of their childhood in a single-parent home (Bumpass, 1984).

The majority of single-parent families consist of a divorced,

separated, or never-married mother and her children (U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1989b; U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1989c). Most fathers become noncustodial parents, losing daily involvement in their children's lives. After divorce many fathers cease to provide financial support for their children. Fifty-eight percent of single mothers with children under 21 have an agreement to receive child support; about half receive full payment, almost 25% receive partial payment, and nearly 24% receive no payment at all (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1991).

Recent research focuses on the likelihood that fathers pay child support, and their ability to contribute child support. There is little research describing other contributions made by noncustodial fathers and how the contributions affect children's well-being (Fletcher, 1989). Teachman, analyzing data from the fifth followup survey of the National Longitudinal Study of the Senior Class of 1972 (NLS-72), documents how noncustodial fathers provide for their children through child support, as well as other resources. His studies support previous research findings that most divorced-mother families do not consistently receive resource transfers from noncustodial fathers (Teachman, 1990a; Teachman & Polonko, 1989). Teachman also describes the characteristics of fathers who choose to contribute to the well-being of their children. Fathers with a congenial relationship with the mother and joint custody are the most likely to contribute resources to their children's well-being. "Fathers who live the farthest from their children are the least likely to provide assistance (vacations being the one exception)" (Teachman, 1991a, p. 365).

Fathers were more likely to provide material goods and unlikely to invest time in activities, such as help with school work and attending school activities (Paasch & Teachman, 1990; Teachman & Polonko, 1989). Forty-five percent of the fathers provided child support during the month before the NLS-72 survey. Gifts were the only resource contributed by a majority (60%) of the fathers. Fathers who made child support payments were also more likely to contribute other resources (Teachman, 1990a). Fathers who

contributed child support and additional resources were also more likely to visit their children and to have joint custody (Teachman & Polonko, 1989; Teachman, 1990a).

Teachman's studies yield information about the kinds of resources fathers provide their children, the characteristics of fathers who choose to make contributions, and the characteristics of families who receive them. This study uses the same NLS-72 data for the same subsample of divorced mothers with child support agreements that were analyzed by Teachman and his colleagues. This research explores how resource contributions from noncustodial fathers affect the lives of mothers and their children.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of literature was conducted to inform an analysis of the relationship between resources from an absent father and reported changes in the quality of life of custodial mothers and children following a divorce. First, studies describing the economic, environmental, and psychological changes experienced by families following the parents' divorce are reviewed. Second, studies are reviewed to identify predictors of noncustodial fathers transferring child support and other resources to their children. Finally, quality of life research, particularly studies about reported changes in quality of life, are examined.

Family Changes after a Parental Divorce

Divorce dissolves a marriage and precipitates many changes for family members. As new family systems are formed, resources and roles are reallocated; family members face many economic, social, and personal adjustments as they manage this transition (Bane, 1979; Gongla, 1982; Hogan, Buehler, & Robinson, 1983; Lazear & Michael, 1988).

Change in economic well-being

Many studies have documented change in the level of economic well-being of family members following a divorce. Almost 90% of the children in single-parent families reside with their mother and therefore share her economic status. The majority of divorced mothers and their children experience a decline in their level of living after a divorce (Bianchi, McArthur & Hill, 1989; Duncan & Hoffman, 1985; Espenshade, 1979; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1990; Weiss, 1984).

Several researchers have analyzed data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) to study the economic well-being of single-parent families. PSID consists of a panel of 3000 household heads representative of the U.S. and 2000 low-income householders who are interviewed annually and provides information about change in family composition and economic well-being.

Weiss (1984) used PSID data collected annually between 1968 to 1979 to compare family incomes before and after divorce.

Separation and divorce brought about reduction of income in every income category, the reduction being the greatest where the marital income had been greatest. In the upper income level, separation and divorce reduced income to about one-half of what it had been in the last married year; in the middle-income level, income was reduced to about two-thirds of what it had been; and in the lower income level, it was reduced to about three-fourths of what it had been (Weiss, 1984, p. 116-117).

Duncan and Hoffman's (1985) analysis of PSID data compared family income one year before a divorce and family income one year after a divorce. For the divorced mothers who remained single, "over 40% had family incomes cut by more than one-half" (p. 488). Lower family incomes persisted as long as the mother remained single (Weiss, 1984). Remarried mothers typically reported higher family incomes than mothers who remain single (Bianchi et al., 1989; Day & Bahr, 1986). Duncan and Hoffman (1985) found that 55% of white divorced women and 42% of black women remarried within five years of divorce. The economic status of remarried-mother families compared favorably to families with parents who never divorced.

Divorce often pushed single-mother families into poverty (Arendell, 1986; Bane & Ellwood, 1986; McLanahan & Booth, 1989; Morgan, 1989). Between 1970 and 1982, marital dissolution or the birth of a child to a single mother accounted for 11% of all beginnings of spells of poverty (Bane & Ellwood, 1988). The median length of a spell in poverty for single mothers and their children was four years, a significant period in childhood (Bane & Ellwood, 1986).

As family incomes decrease after divorce, mothers increase their labor force participation (Arendell, 1986; Bianchi et al., 1989; Duncan & Hoffman, 1985; Peterson, 1989; Riessman, 1990). Mother's initial earnings are often low, overtime they make adjustments to increase their earnings (Arendell, 1986; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1990). "A substantial proportion of those who work may support themselves adequately, although their standard of living is not as high as that of married women" (Peterson, 1989, p. 44). Thirty-three

percent of the single-mother families who move out of poverty do so through increases in their own earnings rather than by remarriage (Bane & Ellwood, 1986).

Although divorce predicted a decline in economic well-being for many women and children, divorce typically resulted in improved economic well-being for men. "The average man who became divorced or separated was actually better off one year later, although the improvements in his situation were less marked than those experienced by the average intact couple" (Duncan & Hoffman, 1985, p. 493). Typically men retained most of their labor incomes, did not pay large amounts of alimony and child support, and therefore did not provide the level of goods associated with their former families (Duncan & Hoffman, 1985).

Environmental changes

One of the major economic adjustments many divorced mothers make is to move to more affordable housing (Mulroy, 1988). Nearly 40% of divorced-mother families move the first year following a divorce (McLanahan, 1984). Although residential mobility did not always result in negative outcomes for mothers and children, single-parent families who move because of financial problems are more likely to be harmed by a residential change (Larner, 1990). "For families who are particularly lacking in economic resources, these moves may be frequent, resulting in many disruptions of friendships, support groups, school progress, and adaptations to familiar surroundings" (Cox, 1983, p. 167). Children of divorced parents are more likely to reside in poorer neighborhoods with restricted access to the best schooling and community resources (Cox, 1983; McLanahan, 1984, 1989).

Change in mother's expectations and perceptions following a divorce

A review of studies measuring mothers' well-being after divorce indicated that mothers expressed both negative and positive reactions to the many changes that accompany the transition from married parent to single parent. Several studies reported perceptions of stress and dissatisfaction as divorcing mothers experienced a decline in their economic well-being and

attempted to fulfill multiple family roles (Arendell, 1986; Newman, 1988; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1990). As divorced mothers adjusted and managed their families, they often reported an improved sense of self-efficacy.

A significant decline in the economic well-being of divorced-mother families implies that family members face a discrepancy between their levels of living after divorce and memories of their levels of living before divorce. Family members endure stress as they manage the adjustments that accompany downward mobility (Arendell, 1986; Hogan et al., 1983; Weiss, 1984; Weitzman, 1986). Their standards of living, or expectations of how they should live, differ from their levels of living or the lifestyles they can realistically maintain with their current level of resources (Arendell, 1986; Hogan et al., 1983; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980).

Economically these women lost their middle-class status, but socially their expectations of themselves and their children remained the same. They still identified with the middle class, but their low incomes prevented them from participating in middle-class activities (Arendell, 1986, p. 39-40).

If the standard of living remains at an unattainable level, it may form a basis of comparison that influences feelings of dissatisfaction with the family's current level of living.

Mothers and children not only deal with discrepancies between their expectations and their circumstances. They often recognize a difference between their level of living and the noncustodial father's level of living. In 1971, Wallerstein and her colleagues began a longitudinal study of 60 divorcing couples and their children in northern California. These individuals are predominantly white, well-educated, and, before the divorce, in families with middle and upper incomes. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with each family member at the time of separation, and 18 months, 5 years, and 10 years after the separation. Wallerstein and Blakeslee described the economic well-being of the children ten years after their parents' divorce.

One in four (children) experienced a severe and enduring drop in their standard of living and went on to observe a major, lasting discrepancy between economic conditions in their mothers' and

fathers' homes. They grew up with their noses pressed against the glass, looking at a way of life that by all rights should have been theirs (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1990, p. 298).

Although divorce may reduce mothers' levels of living, several studies reported increases in self-reports of satisfaction with their lives after divorce (Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991; McLanahan, 1989). Mothers may derive a sense of satisfaction from their work experiences and the control they possess over their finances. Earning a living, managing family resources, and securing credit foster a sense of self-efficacy and "...paid work, unlike housework, led(leads) to a fuller identity as they develop competence, confidence and status outside the home" (Riessman, 1990, p. 171). For a single mother to manage successfully both the provider role and her family responsibilities, the woman often developed a high level of human resources (Hogan et al., 1983). As women learned to rely on their own strengths and manage family responsibilities, they recognized their own competence (Riessman, 1990). After divorce, "many adults, especially women, show(showed) striking growth in competence and self-esteem" (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1990, p. 300).

Mothers who recognize an increased sense of control over their environment and an increase in their self-esteem may perceive these changes as positive outcomes of divorce. An internalized sense of control or a belief in one's own efficacy is one of the most powerful predictors of life satisfaction (Gutek, 1983; Marcoen & Vanham, 1981; Palmore & Luikart, 1972; Wolk & Tellen, 1976).

Divorced mothers who accept and manage the multiple roles of single parenting are likely to provide a model of flexible sex-role attitudes for their children. Sons and daughters learn that their mothers and women in general can function in the workplace as competent providers and managers, as well as function as nurturing parents (Hogan et al., 1983; Riessman, 1990).

Children of divorced parents

A large number of studies have documented negative consequences of divorce for children. Several studies identified a higher probability among

children of divorced parents to exhibit behavior and academic problems compared to children reared in homes with two biological parents (Dawson, 1991; Hetherington, 1982; Peterson & Zill, 1986). Children reared in families with divorced or never-married mothers tended to have poorer than average mental health (Garfinkel & McLanahan, 1986). As adults they were less successful; they had lower levels of educational attainment, labor participation, and earnings (Garfinkel & McLanahan, 1986; Keith & Finlay, 1988). They were more likely to drop out of high school, marry in their teens, give birth out of wedlock, divorce or separate, and form their own single-parent families (Garfinkel & McLanahan, 1986).

The consequences of marital dissolution appear dissimilar for different groups of children (Demo & Acock, 1988; Krein & Beller, 1988; McLanahan, 1985). The younger the child when the parents divorce and the longer the period of childhood spent in a single-parent household, the less likely the child was to complete a high level of education. Boys were more likely to exhibit inappropriate social behavior and academic difficulties than girls from divorced parents or than boys from intact families (Guidubaldi, Cleminshaw, Perry, & McLoughlin, 1983; Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1976; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980).

Parental divorce is a major crisis for children. Especially during the first year of separation, parents are adjusting to new roles, residences, and relationships. When children need support and assurance from parents, the parents are often consumed by their own problems and are therefore unresponsive to the children's needs. Parent-child relationships have been shown to be important predictors of the outcome of parental divorce for children. "The quality of the mother-child relationship is the single most critical factor in determining how children feel about themselves in the postdivorce decade, and how well they function in the various domains of their lives" (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1990, p. 187). Children who received financial support and had fathers who were involved in all areas of their lives were better adjusted to the change in family structure (Furstenberg,

Morgan, & Allison, 1987; Seltzer, 1991; Wallerstein & Huntington, 1983).

Children in single-parent families often assumed adult responsibility for managing the household and earning income (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989; Weiss, 1979). These experiences may foster positive development in children. Both genders were likely to develop domestic and labor market skills. Children reared in divorced-mother families displayed greater maturity, androgyny, and self-efficacy than children living with both parents (Guidubaldi, Cleminshaw, Perry, Nastasi, & Lightel, 1986; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Weiss, 1979).

Transfers of Resources from Noncustodial Fathers

Child support is an income transfer from a noncustodial parent to the custodial parent. It is socially and legally recognized as a means by which absent parents provide for the needs of their children. Absent fathers may also provide their children with a number of other goods and services. This section of the literature review includes studies that document the level of child support payments, identify predictors of child support payments, and identify characteristics of fathers who provide resources to their children.

Child support

In 1989, the average annual child support payment was \$2,995, approximately 10% of the custodial family's income (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1991; Fletcher, 1989; Garasky, 1991). Child support payments were much smaller than the financial contributions fathers made in intact families (Garfinkel & McLanahan, 1986). Child support payments did not keep up with increases in the cost of living nor did they reflect increases in noncustodial fathers' earnings (Beller & Graham, 1985; Hill, 1984).

Child support awards are agreements, either informally negotiated between the parents and formalized by the court, or determined and formally ordered by the legal system. "The receipt of child support is almost totally dependent on the existence of an award or agreement, and the amount received is highly dependent on the amount specified in the agreement" (Peterson &

Nord, 1990, p. 548). Court-ordered awards, versus informal agreements, are related negatively to the receipt of child support (Teachman, 1991b). "Court-ordered payments usually take place when a mutually acceptable agreement cannot be worked out" (Anderson, 1992, p.2). It appears that parents who can work out a child support agreement between themselves are more motivated to abide by the agreement (Beller & Graham, 1985; Sonenstein & Calhoun, 1990; Teachman, 1991b; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1989a).

While characteristics of fathers were most influential in predicting child support awards, several characteristics of mothers were related to the presence of a child support award (Teachman 1990a, 1991a, 1991b). Mother's income was related positively to an award, however, her earnings were not related to the size of the award. Her education had a curvilinear effect; education beyond college reduced the likelihood of a child support award. "Having fewer children, having a child younger than age six, and having been married longer all increase the probability of being awarded child support" (Teachman, 1990b, p. 694).

The father's level of economic resources was the most important predictor of the level of child support payments. Fathers who were employed, and who had higher incomes and levels of education, typically made larger child support payments (Fletcher, 1989; Teachman, 1991b). Residential propinquity was important. Fathers who lived near their children were more likely to provide support (Hill, 1984; Sonenstein & Calhoun, 1990; Teachman, 1991b; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1991). Noncustodial parents who provided child support tended to have more frequent contact with their children (Chambers, 1979; Hill, 1984; Sonenstein & Calhoun, 1990; Seltzer, 1991; Teachman & Polonko, 1989).

The length of time since the marital dissolution was related negatively to payment (Hill, 1984; Teachman, 1991b). Parents' marital statuses were important predictors of the receipt of child support; remarried mothers were less likely to receive child support payments (Garasky, 1991; Hill, 1984, 1992; Sonenstein & Calhoun, 1990). Empirical studies report contradictory

findings regarding the relationship between the noncustodial father's marital status and child support. Garasky (1991) and Robins and Dickinson (1985) reported that remarried, noncustodial fathers provided less child support than unmarried, noncustodial fathers. The presence of children in the father's new relationship significantly diminished the likelihood that he supported the children of his first marriage, even if he was able to support both families (Wallerstein & Huntington, 1983).

However, Teachman (1991a), Sonenstein and Calhoun (1990), and Hill (1984) found remarried fathers were more likely to provide child support. "Fathers who remarry are more family oriented than are fathers who do not remarry, leading to the positive impact on child support payments" (Teachman, 1991a, p. 366).

Other resource transfers

Research has concentrated on monetary child support payments, primarily measuring the ability of noncustodial parents to make child support payments. "Relatively little is known about the nature and extent of other forms of assistance that absent fathers provide" (Paasch & Teachman, 1990, p.3). In 1986, the fifth followup survey of the National Longitudinal Study of the High School Class of 1972 (NLS-72) included questions on "marital history, divorce, child support, and economic relationships in modern families" (Tourangeau, Sebring, Campbell, Glusberg, Spencer, & Singleton, 1987, p. iii). In this survey, mothers were asked to report the amount of child support received and the regularity with which fathers provided other types of resources for their children. The other resources included contributions of goods, access to services, and parental time with their children. The NLS-72 survey provides new information about a broader set of economic transfers between noncustodial fathers and custodial households.

These economic resources differ from child support because typically they are made voluntarily, rather than by court order. They may indicate a strong commitment from the father to provide for his children's well-being (Paasch & Teachman, 1990; Teachman & Polonko, 1989). Noncustodial fathers

can influence their children's economic well-being by contributing material goods, such as clothing and gifts, as well as services such as, medical insurance and routine medical and dental care. These contributions allow fathers to participate directly in purchase decisions for their children (Teachman, 1991).

By making economic contributions other than child support payments, fathers can not only increase the material well-being of their children, they can also remain more involved in their children's lives, continuing to fulfill the parental roles performed while married (Teachman, 1990a, p. 3).

Teachman and his associates analyzed data from a subsample of ever-divorced mothers with child support agreements in the National Longitudinal Survey of High School Seniors in the Class of 1972 (NLS-72). He measured the likelihood and frequency of noncustodial fathers providing child support and other resources (Paasch & Teachman, 1990; Teachman, 1990a; 1991a; Teachman & Polonko, 1989).

Contributions of material resources were more likely than contributions of time and direct participation in children's activities (Teachman & Polonko, 1989). The most regularly contributed alternative type of assistance was medical insurance, which is often included in child support agreements. In 1990, "health care benefits were included in the child support awards of 40% of mothers; however, only two-thirds of the absent fathers required to do so actually provided them" (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1991, p. 1).

Fathers also participated in their children's lives by sharing in their activities. Attendance at school events and help with homework represent a commitment of time and participation that may have special meaning for the relationship (Paasch & Teachman, 1990). Noncustodial fathers were the least likely to make contributions of direct participation in their children's activities (Teachman, 1990a; Teachman & Polonko, 1989).

Findings from Teachman's research support other research findings that have shown a significant proportion of fathers either abandon or are denied a parental role after divorce. "Including child support, only 50% of the

fathers provided at least one type of assistance on a very regular basis" (Teachman, 1990a, p. 21). Twenty percent of fathers never contributed either child support or an alternative resource (Teachman, 1990a).

However, Teachman (1990a) identified a subset of fathers who appeared to show concern for the well-being of their children by contributing a variety of resources. Fathers who made regular child support payments, had a voluntary child support agreement, and shared joint custody were more likely to transfer additional resources (Teachman, 1990a; Teachman & Polonko, 1989). "Fathers who provide at least one type of assistance are more likely to provide other types of assistance to the well-being of their children" (Teachman, 1990a, p. 1). It appears that alternative resources act as complements, rather than substitutes, for regular child support payments and "reflect an underlying dimension of concern for children's well-being" (Teachman, 1990a, p. 5).

The quality of the parents' relationship was a more influential predictor of resource transfers than the socioeconomic characteristics of either parent (Teachman, 1990a). Neither the number nor age of the children, length of the marriage, parents' levels of education, nor parents' current marital statuses were important in predicting transfers of resources other than child support (Teachman, 1991a). Resource transfers were less likely as time passed after the divorce and as geographical distance between children's and fathers' residences increase (Teachman, 1990b). While most resource transfers were not related to the children's gender, fathers were more likely to provide medical insurance and dental care to daughters than to sons (Paasch & Teachman, 1990).

Although Teachman found that remarried fathers were more likely to make child support payments, they were less likely to provide other forms of assistance. "The failure of remarried fathers to provide other forms of assistance may be attributed to the demands on their time and resources made by their new families" (Teachman, 1991a, p. 365).

Quality of Life

There is little published research describing the relationship between children's access to resources and reports of change in quality of life following divorce. This section of the review of literature begins with a definition of quality of life. Research is reviewed about change in family structure and socioeconomic status and their effects on perceptions of change in quality of life. In particular, theoretical and empirical literature on factors that predict reports of change in a family's quality of life are discussed.

Definition and measurement

"Quality of life has been defined as ' . . . the totality of those goods, services, situation and states-of-affairs which are delineated as constituting the basic nature of human life--the essential properties of life which are articulated as being needed or wanted'" (Harland, 1972, p. 17 cited in Harwood, 1976, p. 471). Environmental characteristics such as socioeconomic position, marital status, health, and living conditions combine to influence well-being (Campbell, 1981). Quality of life is a comprehensive sense of well-being, influenced by material resources and subjective perceptions of one's experiences with the environment.

The most accurate measures of quality of life combine objective measures and subjective evaluations of well-being (Glatzer & Mohr, 1987; House, 1986). Objective indicators include sociodemographic and socioeconomic and other measurable characteristics. For example, an income-to-needs ratio is an objective economic indicator of the quality of life within a household. Subjective evaluations are also a very important dimension of quality of life. They measure individual evaluations of well-being. They "measure people's perceptions of their social and psychological condition, their needs and expectations and the extent to which these needs were being fulfilled" (Quality of Life 1980, p. 3). Subjective indicators ask individuals to assess their feelings about their situation and their

ability to function in their environment.

Researchers often consider indicators on a global level as well as for a variety of domains of life. Global measures are overall evaluations and perceptions of life-as-a-whole. For example, "All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life?" provides a subjective, global measure of a respondent's well-being.

Domains are specific aspects of life. A "variety of life domains such as housing, health or social relations has to be taken into account in order to monitor the quality of life" (Glatzer & Mohr, 1987, p. 15). Andrews and Withey (1976) found that satisfaction with life-as-a-whole reflected the sum of satisfaction in significant domains such as income, occupation, home, and family.

Although often easier to measure and verify, objective indicators are not necessarily the most accurate predictors of quality of life (Andrews, 1981). Winter, Bivens, and Morris (1984) found individuals' subjective assessments of changes in their financial situations were related positively to their perceived well-being. While objective indicators, such as income and wealth, were also related positively to perceived well-being, " . . . they were not as important as the subjective measures" (p. 414).

Individuals tend to respond positively to questions on subjective measures of satisfaction. Individuals within stable populations in stable environments were likely to report high levels of satisfaction with their quality of life (Andrews, 1981). "One's subjective satisfaction with any given aspect of life reflects the gap between one's aspiration level and one's perceived situation; but one's aspiration level gradually adjusts to one's circumstances" (Campbell, Converse, & Rodgers, 1976, p. 76). This process of adjustment is part of human nature. If unable to change their situation, over time individuals tend to adapt their expectations to the external circumstances (Andrews, 1981; Glatzer & Mohr, 1987).

Race and quality of life

Self-reports of quality of life tend to be higher among whites than blacks (Andrews, 1991; Andrews & Withey, 1976; Campbell, 1981; Thomas & Hughes, 1986). The relationship between race and subjective well-being remained when social class and income were controlled and was consistent across a variety of domains (Campbell, 1981; Turner & Hughes, 1986). However, Andrews (1991) found that on two measures of self-efficacy, black respondents evaluated themselves higher than did white respondents.

Marital status and quality of life

"A major impact on subjective well-being is one's marital status. Few conditions do more to shape one's daily experience than whether or not one is married, single, divorced or widowed" (Inglehart & Rabier, 1986, p. 23). Married individuals consistently reported greater happiness and satisfaction with life than did single individuals; divorced individuals were less satisfied than singles (Inglehart & Rabier, 1986).

The German Social Report, a longitudinal survey of a representative sample of over 2000 citizens in the Federal Republic in 1978, 1980, and 1984, was designed to measure change in living conditions and well-being in Germany (Zapf & Glatzer, 1987). The questionnaires included subjective and objective indicators of well-being. Compared to the total sample, divorced individuals were much more likely to express feelings of unhappiness, loneliness, and dissatisfaction with their family situation. Nine percent of the respondents considered themselves unhappy; 20% of the divorced respondents reported feelings of unhappiness (p. 98).

Separated individuals reported less happiness and satisfaction with life than divorced individuals (Campbell et al., 1976; Inglehart & Rabier, 1986). "Presumably this is a function of the recency of the unpleasantness involved. . . ." (Campbell et al., 1976, p. 85).

McLanahan (1989) reported very different findings in a study of mothers' and children's well-being after a divorce. While objective measures indicated a decline in the family's economic well-being, the subjective

reports indicated perceptions of improvement in the mother's quality of life. "The overwhelming majority of women reported substantial improvements in the quality of their social lives and sexual relationships, in their career opportunities and in their overall level of happiness after divorce" (McLanahan, 1989, p. 4). The disparity between the objective and subjective measures of well-being may have reflected attempts by women to minimize the costs involved in their decision to divorce. The new control women have over their finances may more than compensate for lower incomes (McLanahan, 1989).

Socioeconomic status and quality of life

Socioeconomic status has been shown to be an important indicator of quality of life. An individual's socioeconomic status, measured either by income, occupation, or education, was related positively to his or her satisfaction with life (Andrews, 1991; Duncan, 1975; Easterlin, 1974; Inkeles, 1960). "The pattern for most life concerns, and also for global well-being, is for members of higher status groups to feel better about their lives than members of lower status groups" (Andrews, 1991, p. 22).

Locus of control was related to occupation and education. "To be located in the higher portion of the stratification hierarchy implies, therefore, a greater potential for experiencing a sense of personal freedom and a greater capacity for internal control" (Easterlin, 1974, p. 121). Locus of control had an indirect effect through occupation and education and a small direct effect on life quality (Abbey & Andrews, 1985).

Factors affecting reported change in quality of life

Major life events, such as divorce and remarriage, influenced reports of change in psychological well-being (McLanahan & Sorensen, 1984). These events typically induced a great number of changes, which, in turn may have influenced reports of change in satisfaction in a variety of domains. Recent changes in standard of living, marital status, and employment had considerable impact on change in general sense of well-being (Headey, Holstrom, & Wearing, 1984; Inglehart & Rabier, 1986). The perception of change as positive or adverse influenced quality of life (Winter et al.,

1984). Change that was perceived as negative influenced negatively a sense of well-being. "It has generally been found that adverse events (e.g., illness, divorce, unemployment) have a statistically significant, but not very large impact on social well-being . . . " (Headey & Wearing, 1990, p. 327). The more adverse the change, the greater the decline in levels of satisfaction and well-being (Headey et al., 1984).

Divorced or separated women were much more likely than married women to perceive their situation as stressful. They described themselves in negative terms: burdened, worried, tied down, lonesome, unhappy (Campbell et al. 1976; Zapf & Glatzer, 1987). A significant decline in level of living, a change in family residence and accompanying social networks, an increase in mother's work hours, and a general perception of instability often followed divorce; these factors may have predicted change in divorced mothers' perceptions of quality of life (Garfinkel & McLanahan, 1986).

The purpose of the above review of empirical studies was to summarize the changes typically experienced by mothers and children following the parents' divorce and to identify predictors of the likelihood that custodial families will receive resource contributions from noncustodial fathers. After divorce, custodial, single mothers assume the responsibility of single-handedly rearing children on low incomes. A review of quality of life research suggests that divorced mothers are more stressed and less satisfied with their lives than are married women. Recently family studies researchers suggest that divorced mothers may increase their levels of life satisfaction as they adjust to single parenting and recognize their ability to control their own lives and provide for their children (Hogan et al., 1983; McLanahan, 1989).

The majority of divorced mothers did not receive large amounts of child support and other resources for their children. Teachman's research has described divorced fathers who provided for their children and the types of resources they were likely to contribute. Fathers with high levels of education and income, and who lived near their children were more likely to

provide for and continue visiting their children after a divorce (Seltzer et al., 1989; Teachman, 1991b). Noncustodial fathers were more likely to contribute child support, goods, and access to services than to participate in their children's activities.

CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND MODEL

This chapter provides a summary of the social exchange conceptual framework, highlighting the specific aspects of the framework that inform the development of a conceptual model to predict the influence of resource transfers from noncustodial fathers on reported change in quality of life for divorced mothers and children. The final section of the chapter describes the conceptual model of the study.

Social Exchange Conceptual Framework

Social exchange theory explains and predicts how individuals and groups make choices and evaluate the outcomes of resource transactions. The theory draws from sociology, anthropology, and behavioral psychology, as well as economics, to explain social interactions and resource transactions (Farrington, nd; Turner & Beeghley, 1981). Social exchange theory includes explanations for the allocation and evaluation of exchanges of love, affection, respect, and information (Farrington, nd; Foa & Foa, 1980; Rettig, 1985).

The most versatile concepts of social exchange theory were defined by behavioral psychologists, Thibaut and Kelley (Farrington, nd; Nye, 1979). Thibaut and Kelley (1959) used social exchange theory to model group behavior. A sociologist, Homan (1950, 1974), developed assumptions and propositions to apply social exchange theory to the study of dyadic relationships. The social exchange conceptual framework has been used to model interaction and exchanges between family members (Farrington, nd). Most significantly for this study, the social exchange conceptual framework models how family members choose their interactions and evaluate the outcome of that choice.

Assumptions

The exchange framework is premised on the economic assumption that human behavior is rational; individuals purposefully evaluate alternatives

and choose the one they expect will provide the most rewarding outcome. Individuals seek and continue those behaviors, relationships, and situations that provide satisfaction and avoid interactions and situations they perceive will result in negative or unpleasant outcomes (Farrington, nd; Nye, 1979; Rettig, 1985; Turner & Beeghley, 1981).

All individuals possess resources that they exchange to obtain the resources they desire from others (Nye, 1979; Turner & Beeghley, 1981).

"The basic assumption of social exchange is that persons depend upon others for the resources necessary to (their) well-being and therefore seek social situations in which to exchange resources through interpersonal behavior" (Rettig, 1985, p. 44). Economic exchanges involve resources such as time, money, information, or material goods. The social exchange framework broadens the definition of resources to include "any item, concrete or symbolic, which can become the object of exchange among people" (Foa & Foa, 1980, p. 78). Emerson (1976) defines resources as "an ability, possession, or other attribute of an actor giving him the capacity to reward (or punish) another" (p. 347).

The social exchange conceptual framework rests on these two general assumptions: 1) individuals make rational decisions; and 2) individuals possess resources and engage in interactions, exchanging their resources to get what they want from others (Turner & Beeghley, 1981). Several specific assumptions or concepts of the framework are relevant for studies that rely on personal evaluations of change. "Individuals vary in the value they place on specific experiences, relationships, and positions" (Nye, 1979, p. 7). The concepts of the norm of reciprocity, comparison levels, and comparison level of alternatives explain how individuals evaluate exchanges; these concepts are appropriate for a study measuring the influence of resource transfers on reported change in quality of life.

The norm of reciprocity

A norm is an accepted expectation for social behavior that "is considered important for the functioning of an ongoing effective society"

(Nye, 1979, p. 4). The norm of reciprocity defines "fair play;" individuals are expected to repay social debts by not harming and offering help to those who help them (Farrington, nd; Gouldner, 1960; Nye, 1979). "It is morally improper, under the norm of reciprocity, to break off relations or to launch hostilities against those to whom you are still indebted" (Gouldner, 1960, p. 175). Parental care is passed from generation to generation under the generalized norm of reciprocity. Parents who received care and attention as children from their parents now fulfill their parental obligations and repay social debts by caring for the next generation (Nye, 1982). Society expects parents to provide for the needs of their dependent children, to supervise and socialize them so that they do not injure themselves or others (Nye, 1982). However, this expectation is more likely to be met in marriage than divorce (Weiss & Willis, 1985).

During the initial adjustment period following divorce, values and expectations for noncustodial parents are especially "confused and ill defined" (Maclean, 1987, p. 43). Society gives absent parents mixed messages about their expected commitment towards their children. Family courts often explicitly require noncustodial parents to provide support for their children. However, until recently, child support awards were not enforced. With little societal pressure to conform to a prescribed norm, noncustodial parents varied in their motivation to provide support (Teachman & Polonko, 1989). After divorce, a mother may expect that the noncustodial father will attempt to parent and contribute to his children's well-being as he did in the marriage. After negotiating child support and visitation agreements, she may expect the agreements now to define his parental role. She may also be aware of the tendency of some noncustodial fathers to abandon their parental responsibilities. The expectations of the divorced mother about how her children's father fulfills his parental role after divorce will influence her evaluation of changes in the family's quality of life.

Comparison levels

Comparison levels are the individual's expectation of what he or she deserves in an exchange (Farrington, nd; Nye, 1979; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Individuals envision both probable and optimal outcomes and then evaluate the outcomes of exchanges against the expectations (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1992). Subjective standards of satisfaction are influenced by the observed outcomes of others in similar positions; the expectation is to receive outcomes similar to others' (Nye, 1979).

Comparison levels are also influenced by past experience. Individuals who have experienced profitable outcomes in the past are less satisfied with the same outcomes than are individuals with a history of unprofitable outcomes. Experience with profitable outcomes raises an individual's comparison level; they expect more before they perceive outcomes as profitable. Individuals who have experienced low levels of rewards in the past have lower comparison levels and are satisfied with fewer rewards (Molm, 1991).

Individuals evaluate their progress toward goals. They compare current experiences with past experiences. Blalock and Wilken (1979) hypothesize that individuals ask themselves, "Am I improving or not, regardless of what is happening to those around me?" (p. 479).

Divorced mothers' assessments of changes in the family's quality of life are influenced by their evaluation of the family's quality of life before divorce. Their assessments of change are also influenced by their perception of any discrepancies between the family's present quality of life and their quality of life when married. Mothers who perceive that changes experienced by the family reflect progression toward family goals will report more positive evaluations of change in quality of life than mothers who perceive a lack of progress.

Comparison level of alternatives

The decision maker's perception of available alternatives influences decisions and evaluation of outcomes (Farrington, nd). Individuals evaluate

recognized alternatives in terms of the costs involved and possible rewards. Perceived outcomes falling below the comparison level are unsatisfactory; the decision maker continues to seek out alternatives. Perceived outcomes at or above their comparison level of alternatives are acceptable and individuals select the least costly acceptable alternative (Nye, 1979). Therefore divorced mothers' assessments of change are influenced by their available alternatives. Positive assessment of change in the domains of the family's life is likely if it is perceived that current family structure provides the best possible alternative.

Family exchanges

Within families, exchanges of material resources, such as food, shelter, and clothing, are intertwined with exchanges of love, respect, and approval. Patterns of exchange between family members develop over time; they are developed and affected by the unique values and characteristics of that family (Farrington, nd). Because emotional exchanges are intertwined with material exchanges, it is difficult for observers to model and evaluate intrafamilial transactions.

The family is the institutional setting where the widest range of exchanges takes place in close relationships over extended periods of time and is the setting in which resources are created, allocated and exchanged to meet physical, safety and higher level needs of family members (Rettig, 1985, p. 44).

After divorce, the allocation of family resources to individual family members is even more complicated, because resources now flow between households. Several researchers use the social exchange framework to explain resource transfers between family members after a divorce (Maclean, 1987; Teachman, 1991a, 1991b; Teachman & Polonko, 1989; Weiss & Willis, 1985). Because noncustodial parents lose control over allocation decisions once the child support or other goods are transferred to the custodial household, they may not derive direct satisfaction by sharing in the children's consumption of resources. They receive diminished utility from the allocation of their resources (Teachman & Polonko, 1989; Weiss & Willis, 1985).

"A resource will continue to flow only if there is a valued return contingent upon it" (Emerson, 1976, p. 359). Healthy, loving children provide emotional rewards for their parents; however, noncustodial parents with infrequent contact with their children may perceive that their parental rewards of respect and affection are diminished. The lack of a societal expectation that noncustodial parents contribute to their children's well-being, and noncustodial parents' perceptions that the costs associated with making those contributions do not return equal benefits explain a lack of resource transfers from noncustodial parents to their children.

However, recent empirical studies indicate that resource contributions from absent parents may be valued highly by children. There is a symbolic value attached to the contribution of goods, services, or time; they are assessed as indicators of the absent parent's love and interest in fulfilling a parental role (Seltzer & Bianchi, 1988; Teachman, 1990b; 1991a; 1991b; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1990).

The Conceptual Model

Based on theoretical and empirical literature, several generalizations can be made and a conceptual model proposed. Resource contributions from noncustodial fathers mitigate the negative economic consequences of divorce for custodial mothers and children. It is assumed that humans are rational, and therefore that resources increasing economic well-being will influence evaluations of change in quality of life. Empirical research findings indicate that resources from fathers influence children's adjustment after divorce. Drawing upon the social exchange conceptual framework and the quality of life literature, it is hypothesized that

- 1) sociodemographic characteristics of the parents and characteristics of their relationship will differentiate among categories of scales measuring assessed change in the custodial family's quality of life, and

- 2) the predictive power of the sociodemographic model will be improved by the addition of resource transfers from noncustodial fathers. The

conceptual model (Figure 1) illustrates that characteristics of the mother, the father, and their relationship, as well as resource contributions from noncustodial fathers, predict levels of reported change in the quality of life for the custodial family after a divorce.

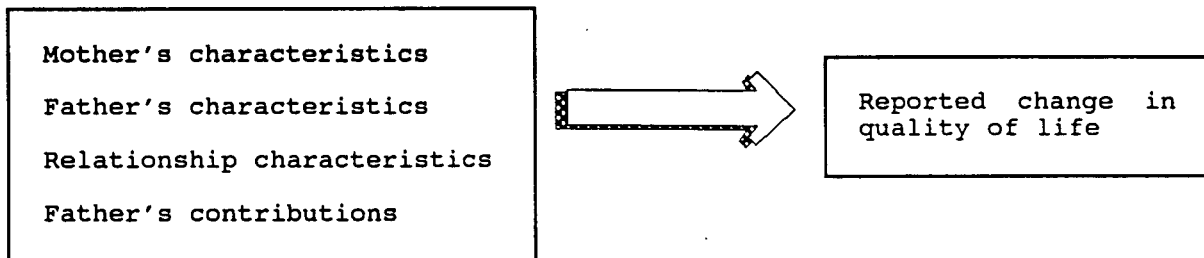


Figure 1. Conceptual model

CHAPTER 4: PROCEDURES

The Data

This study analyzes data from the fifth followup survey of the National Longitudinal Study of the High School Class of 1972 (NLS-72). NLS-72 was designed to provide a nationally representative sample of policy relevant data (Tourangeau et al., 1987). Base year data were collected in the spring of 1972 from 16,683 high school seniors who completed mailed questionnaires. Followups were conducted in the fall of 1973 and 1974. In 1975, surveys were conducted with 93.7% of the original respondents and an additional 4,450 1972 high school seniors. Additional follow-ups were conducted in 1976, 1979, and 1986.

The fifth followup, administered in the spring of 1986, surveyed a subsample of 14,489 members of the 22,652 respondents who had participated in a least one of the previous waves. This wave included "questions on marital history, divorce, child support and economic relationships in modern families" (Tourangeau et al., 1987, p.1). Marital history information about a former marriage was collected from one partner. The fifth wave of NLS-72 included detailed information about child support awards, the regularity of payments over the years, and the dollar amount received in the previous month. The child support information refers to agreements and payments from the dissolution of a first marriage; information regarding subsequent marriages and child support agreements is not included (Teachman, 1990a).

A unique set of questions included in the fifth followup of NLS-72 asked respondents to report the regularity of resource transfers from absent parents to their children. Custodial parents reported resource transfers of clothing, gifts, dental care, medical insurance, and routine medical expenses from the absent parent. Custodial parents also reported the absent parent's contributions of vacations, help with school work, and attendance at children's school functions. These contributions may be made in addition to or in place of child support payments. Typically, these contributions are

not court-ordered. Since they depend on the motivation of the provider, they may be indications of the investments of time, energy, and money noncustodial parents choose to make in the well-being of their children (Teachman & Polonko, 1989; Paasch & Teachman, 1990; Teachman, 1990a; 1990b).

Another set of questions asked respondents to report changes after divorce in a variety of areas of their lives. Respondents were asked if various aspects of their lives and their children's lives improved, worsened, or stayed the same since they divorced their first spouse.

In 1986, the NLS-72 respondents averaged 32 years of age and had been out of high school for 14 years (Tourangeau et al., 1987, p. 1). The original survey drew from a sample of students in their senior year of high school, it excluded information from individuals who did not attend their senior year of high school.

Because NLS-72 provides information from a single cohort, there was limited variation in the variables that measured mother's age and education, and the time frame of the marital and divorce histories. The information was collected from custodial mothers and thus measures of reported change reflect only one family member's assessment. The information about child support and other contributions from fathers referred only to a first marriage. While child support was measured in dollars, the scale of other resource contributions was only reported in degrees of regularity; the magnitude of the other resource contributions was not reported.

Although NLS-72 is a longitudinal study, this analysis uses data from the fifth followup only. This study analyzes data provided by a subsample of the 1986 respondents: mothers who were legally divorced from their first spouse, had physical custody of children from that marriage, and a child support agreement with the first spouse. The subsample consists of 634 divorced mothers, whose marital status may be divorced or remarried.

The Empirical Models

The variables selected to measure the characteristics of the family are listed in the empirical models in Figures 2, 3, and 4. The discriminating variables measure three aspects of the family: mother's characteristics, father's characteristics, and characteristics of their relationship. Quality of life research indicates that socioeconomic characteristics of families such as, race, marital status, education, employment status, and self-efficacy influence self-reports of quality of life and are assumed to influence reported change in quality of life.

The custodial mother's assessment of change in her family's well-being is influenced by her comparison level. Socioeconomic characteristics of the first marriage may form a comparison level and influence her assessment of change in the family's quality of life. Mother's age when first married and an income differential between the family income at the time of divorce and the custodial family's current income are included as discriminators of reported change in quality of life.

Empirical research findings identify several characteristics of noncustodial fathers that predict the likelihood that child support and alternative resources are transferred to the custodial family. Therefore, father's residential propinquity, his marital status, and whether he is allowed visitation predict categories of reported change in quality of life.

There are psychological costs involved in unpleasant interactions; a mother is more likely to view resource contributions from the noncustodial father as beneficial to the family's well-being if the parental relationship is congenial and cooperative. The degree of bitterness experienced between the parents during the divorce, whether they share custody, and jointly make decisions regarding their children, indicate the nature of their relationship.

The length of the parents' marriage and the number of children produced in that relationship indicate an investment in the children. The passage of

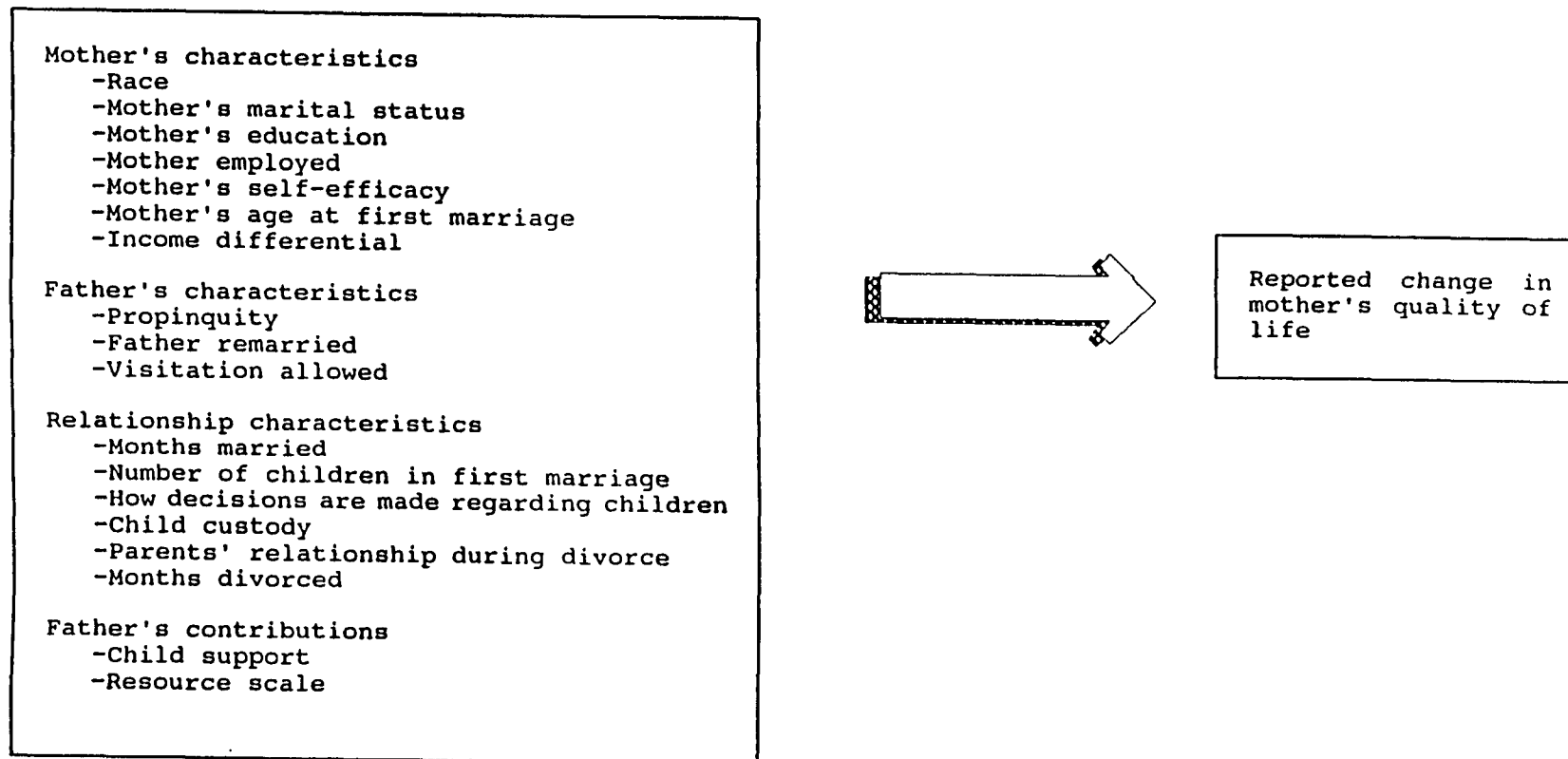


Figure 2. Empirical model: Reported change in mother's quality of life

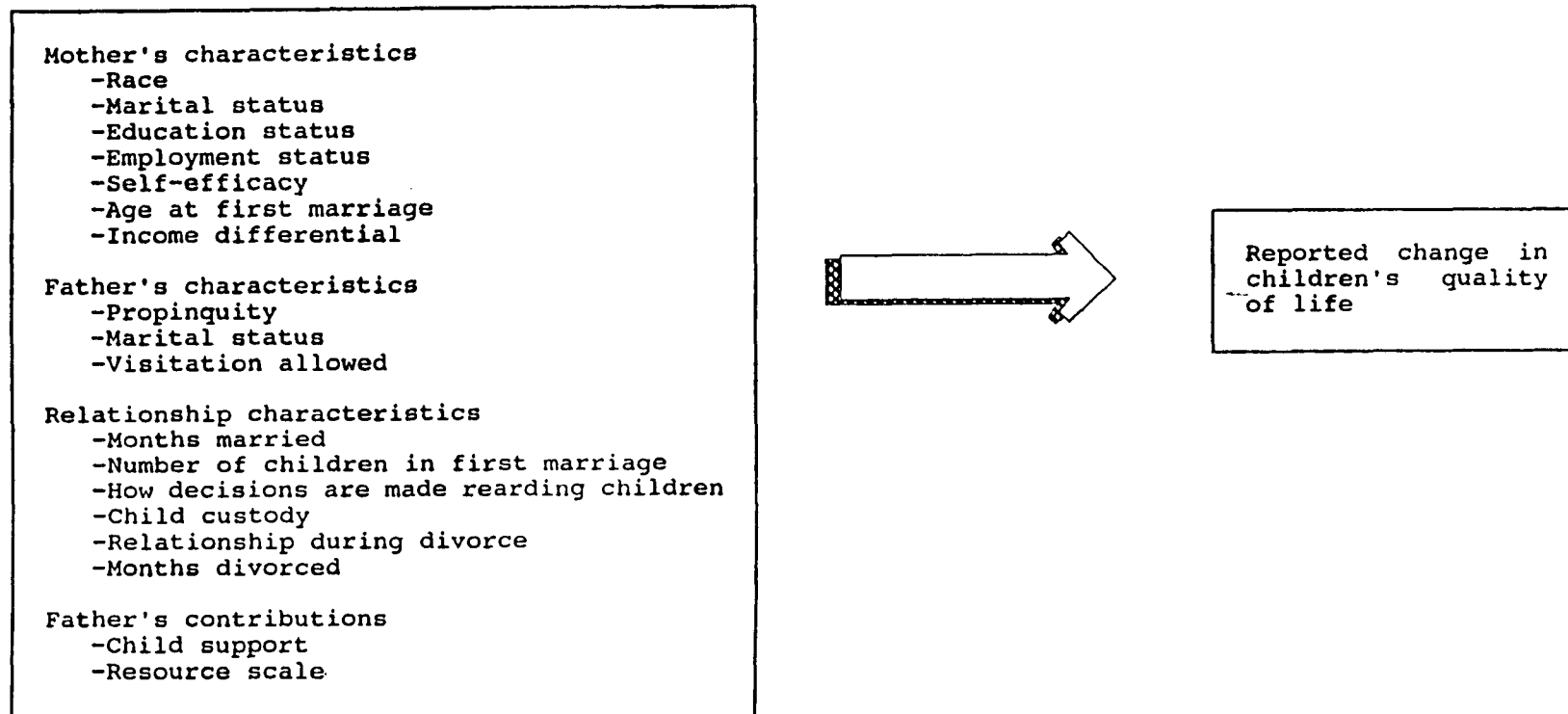


Figure 3. Empirical model: Reported change in children's quality of life

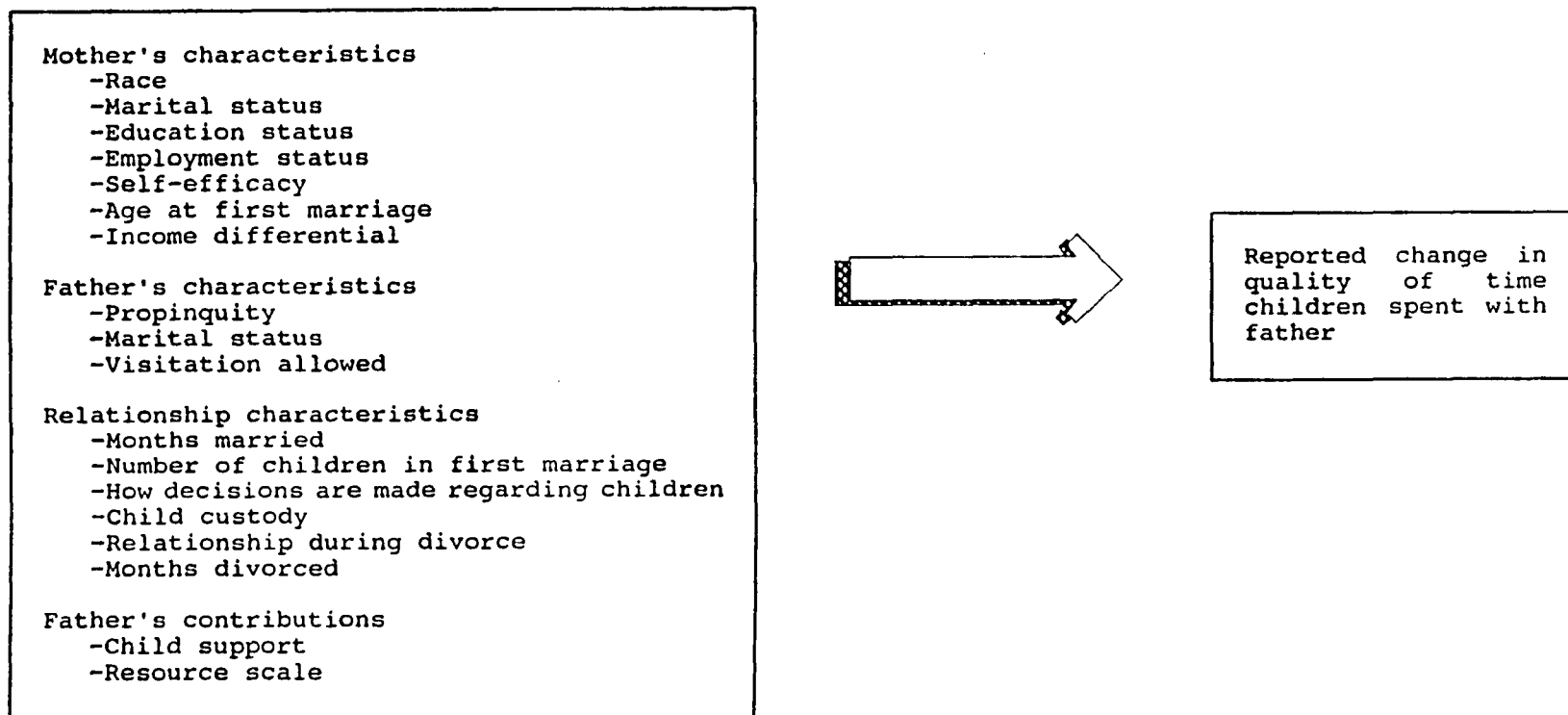


Figure 4. Empirical model: Reported change in quality of time spent with father

time since the divorce indicates the amount of time in which family members may make adjustments after divorce. The number of months since the parent's divorce is included as a measure of the recency of the change in family structure.

The variables measuring child support and a scale of other resources from the father represent his contributions to the well-being of the custodial family. The dependent variables measure reported changes in the quality of life of the mother and her children, and reported change in the quality of time children spent with their father.

The Hypotheses

Three empirical models are evaluated. Research hypotheses for each set of models are stated in this section.

1) Characteristics of the mother, the father, and their relationship discriminate group differences based on responses to a scale measuring reported change in mother's quality of life. A model including resource contributions from noncustodial fathers will discriminate more cases correctly than a model without the variables measuring resource contributions. Therefore, it is hypothesized (in the null form) that the ability of a model including resource contributions is not significantly different from a model without resource contributions in its ability to predict reported change in mother's quality of life.

2) Characteristics of the mother, the father, and their relationship discriminate group differences based on responses to a scale measuring reported change in children's quality of life. A model including resource contributions from noncustodial fathers will discriminate more cases correctly than a model without the variables measuring resource contributions. Therefore, it is hypothesized that a model including resource contributions is not significantly different from a model without resource contributions in its ability to predict reported change in children's quality of life.

3) Characteristics of the mother, the father, and their relationship discriminate group differences in reported change in the quality of time children spent with their father. A model including resource contributions from noncustodial fathers will discriminate more cases correctly than a model without the variables measuring resource contributions from noncustodial fathers. Therefore, it is hypothesized that a model including resource contributions is not significantly different from a model without resource contributions in its ability to predict reported change in the quality of time children spent with their father.

The Variables

Discriminating variables

The analysis is based on responses from mothers. Some variables, especially variables measuring characteristics of fathers, may be prone to error, and the resource contributions may be biased downward (Teachman, 1990). Mothers may not have accurate information about the father's propinquity or his marital status. They may not recognize all the contributions fathers provide for their children.

The discriminating variables defined in this section include measures of sociodemographic characteristics of mothers and fathers and the characteristics of their relationship. Two variables indicated contributions from fathers: child support payments and a scale that measured the regularity of eight transfers of goods, access to services, and time spent in joint parent-child activities.

The discriminating and dependent variables are described in this section. The means, standard deviations, range, and values of the discriminating variables are summarized in Table 1.

Race. A two-category dummy variable was created to indicate mother's race. Black, American Indian, Alaskan native, Asian or Pacific Islander, and other responses were coded "0." White was coded "1." Approximately 89% of the respondents were white. The mean was .894 and the

Table 1. Discriminating variables: Means, medians, standard deviations, values, and ranges (weighted data)

Variables	Mean/Median	Std. Dev.	Values/Ranges
Proportion mothers white	.894	.308	1=White 0=Nonwhite
Proportion mothers remarried	.418	.493	1=Currently married 0=Currently unmarried
Proportion mothers with post-secondary education	.512	.500	1=Post-secondary education 0=No post-secondary education
Proportion mothers employed	.813	.390	1=Working full or part time 0=Not working for pay
Self-efficacy scale	37.674	4.367	25-48
Mother's age first married	240.911	27.453	181-372 months
Income differential	-\$5730.92	\$20259.84	-\$100076 to \$74228
Father's propinquity	3.146	1.405	1=Same neighborhood 2=Same town, > 3 miles 3=Same state, different town 4=Different state, < 500 miles 5=Different state, > 500 miles 6=Don't know
Proportion fathers remarried	.516	.500	1=Currently married 0=Currently unmarried
Proportion with no visitation agreement	.038	.192	1=No visitation allowed 0=Visitation agreement
Months married	77.802	37.571	3-168 months
Number of children	1.500	.673	1-5 children
Decisions	1.570	1.055	1=Mother makes all decisions 2=Father makes all decisions 3=Decide together sometimes 4=Decide together always
Custody	.065	.247	1=Joint or shared custody 0=Otherwise
Parents' relationship	2.602	1.048	1=Bitter 2=Many disputes 3=Some disputes 4=Friendly
Months divorced	64.314	39.690	1-172 months
Child support	\$157.83	287.51	\$0 to \$4000
Resources scale	14.506	7.484	8 to 40

standard deviation was .308.

Mother's marital status. The mother's marital status in February, 1986 was coded as a dummy variable: currently unmarried, "0;" and remarried, "1." Approximately 42% were remarried. The mean was .418 and the standard deviation was .493.

Mother's education. The mother's level of education in 1986 was measured by whether she attended post-secondary courses. This dummy variable was coded: "0," did not attend post-secondary education courses; and "1," attended post-secondary education. Approximately 52% attended post-secondary education classes. The mean was .512 and the standard deviation was .500.

Mother employed. Mother's employment status in February, 1986 was coded: "0," not working for pay; and "1," working for pay, full or part time. Approximately 81% were working for pay. The mean was .813 and the standard deviation was .390.

Mother's self-efficacy. The mother's sense of self-efficacy was measured by a scale constructed by summing the responses to twelve questions each with responses coded from 0 to 4. Responses were recoded to indicate that a consistently high value corresponded to a greater sense of self-efficacy. A response of "4" indicated that the respondent strongly disagreed with statements indicating that luck or chance control their environment, or strongly agreed with statements indicating that they have control over their environment.

Scores ranged from 25 to 48; the mean was 37.674 and the standard deviation was 4.367. The internal consistency of the scale was indicated by a Cronbach's Alpha value of .8257. The questions included in the scale were: "I take a positive attitude toward myself; good luck is more important than hard work for success;" "I feel I am a person of worth, on an equal plane with others;" "I am able to do things as well as others; every time I try to get ahead something or somebody stops me;" "planning only makes a person

unhappy since plans hardly ever work out anyway;" "people who accept their condition in life are happier than those who try to change things;" "on the whole, I am satisfied with myself;" "what happens is my own doing;" "at times I think I am no good at all;" "when I make plans, I am almost certain I can make them work;" "and I do not feel I have much to be proud of."

Mother's age when first married. The mother's birth date was subtracted from the date of her first marriage. Age at first marriage was measured in months and ranged from 181 months to 372 months; the mean was 240.911 and the standard deviation was 27.453.

Income differential. The mother's annual income and the annual income of her ex-spouse were summed to estimate the household income at the time of divorce. To adjust for inflation, the sum was multiplied by one plus the change in the Consumer Price Index between the year of divorce and 1985; therefore incomes were measured in constant 1985 dollars (US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1992). Since child support was included as a separate variable, it is subtracted from custodial household income in 1985. Current net household income minus the adjusted household income at the time of divorce provides the income differential. The mother's current marital status may influence the magnitude of the income differential, since the income of her marital partner was included in the current household income. The mean is -\$5730.92 and the standard deviation was \$20259.84, with a range of -\$100076.14 to \$74228.27.

Father's propinquity. The geographic distance between father's residence and the custodial household was reported in six categories: "1," same neighborhood; "2," same town, more than three miles; "3," different town in the same state; "4," different state, less than 500 miles away; "5," different state, more than 500 miles away; and "6," don't know. The mean was 3.146 and the standard deviation was 1.405.

Father's marital status. The father's marital status in February, 1986 was coded as a dummy variable: "0," unmarried; and "1," remarried. Approximately 58% of fathers were remarried. The median was .516 and the

standard deviation was .500.

Visitation agreement. Visitation agreement indicated whether a visitation agreement was made at the time of the divorce. The variable was recoded as a dummy variable and labeled: "0," visitation is allowed; and "1," no visitation allowed. Approximately 4% of the fathers were not allowed visitation. The mean is .038 and the standard deviation is .192.

Months married. The month and year of the first marriage was subtracted from the month and year of the breakup of that relationship. Length of the marriage was reported in months. The mean was 77.802 and the standard deviation was 37.57, with a range of 3 to 168 months.

Number of children. The number of children from the first marriage ranges from 1 to 5. The median was 1.500 and the standard deviation was .673.

Decisions. This variable measured the extent to which both parents were involved in making decisions regarding the children. The coding and corresponding labeling were: "1," mother makes all major decisions; "2," father makes all major decisions; "3," sometimes parents make major decisions together; and "4," parents always make major decision together. The median was 1.570 and the standard deviation was 1.055.

Custody. Custody was coded as a dummy variable and labeled: "0," mother has sole custody or no agreement was formed; and "1," parents have joint or shared custody. Approximately 6% of the parents had joint or shared custody. The median was .065 and the standard deviation was .247.

Parents' relationship. This question asked mothers to recall their relationship with the father during their divorce. The coding and corresponding labeling were: "1," generally friendly; "2," some disputes; "3," many disputes; and "4," it was mostly bitter. The median was 2.602 and the standard deviation was 1.048.

Months divorced. Time between the survey and the first divorce was computed by subtracting the date of the survey, March 1986, from the reported date of the marriage's dissolution. Time since the divorce was measured in

months. The mean is 64.314 and the standard deviation is 39.690, with a range of 1 to 172 months.

Child support. This question asked respondents to report the amount of child support actually received in the month prior to the survey and was measured in dollars. Child support was a continuous variable. Approximately 33% reported \$0 child support received in the previous month. The median was \$157.83 and the standard deviation was \$287.51, with a range of \$0 to \$4000.

Resources. Resource contributions from the father was a scale formed by summing responses to the question, "Other than child support payments that your first spouse may make, how regularly does your spouse do the following: pay for clothes for the children; pay for presents for the children; take children on vacation; pay for routine dental care; carry medical insurance for children; pay for uninsured medical expenses; help children with their homework; and attend children's school events?" The response framework is "1," never to "5," very regularly. Approximately 33% responded that they never received any of the resource transfers. The scale mean is 14.506 and the standard deviation is 7.484, with a range of 8 to 40. The internal consistency of the scale is measured by a Cronbach's Alpha value of .8643.

Dependent variables

The dependent variables are described in this section. The means, standard deviations, and ranges are listed in Table 2.

Table 2. Dependent variables: Means, standard deviations, and ranges

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	Range
Reported change in mother's quality of life	15.096	3.127	6-18
Reported change in children's quality of life	20.820	3.061	8-24
Reported change in the quality of time children spent with their father	2.487	1.004	1-4

Reported change in the mother's quality of life. Reported change in the mother's quality of life was measured by a scale composed of six items. The question asked, "In your opinion, is your own standard of living now better, worse or about the same as it was during your first marriage in terms of the following: quality of own housing; quality of own neighborhood; own health insurance; own financial security; own job satisfaction; and own overall standard of living?" The response framework and coding for each of the six items was: "1," quality is worse; "2," quality is the same; and "3," quality is better. The median was 15.096 and the standard deviation is 3.127, with a range of 6 to 18. The internal consistency of the scale is measured by a Cronbach's Alpha value of .8677.

Reported change in the children's quality of life. Assessed changes in children's lives after divorce were measured by the question: "In your opinion, are your children now better off, worse off or about the same as they were during your first marriage in terms of the following: quality of neighborhood where they live; quality of schools which they attend; progress in school; quality of home life; quality of time they spend with mother; quality of recreational activities; quality of health care; and overall standard of living?" The response framework and coding for each of the eight items was: "1," quality is worse; "2," quality is the same; and "3," quality is better. A scale sums the responses. The median was 20.820 and the standard deviation was 3.061 with a range of 8 to 24. The internal consistency of the scale is measured by a Cronbach's Alpha value of .8511.

Change in the quality of time children spent with their father. Mothers answered the question "In your opinion, are your children now better off, worse off or about the same as they were during your first marriage, in terms of the time they spent with their father as compared to before the divorce?" The coding and corresponding labelling were: "1," quality is worse; "2," quality is the same; "3," quality is better; and "4," don't know. The mean was 2.487 and the standard deviation was 1.004.

Analyses

Frequency distributions were examined for all variables. Missing values were recoded in order to retain all cases in the analysis. Missing values for variables that were normally distributed were recoded to the mean value. Median values were substituted for missing values for variables measuring income and child support. The distributions for measures of reported change in the domains of quality of life were skewed, therefore missing values were recoded to the modal values.

Fourteen years elapsed between 1972 when the NLS-72 panel was organized, and 1986, when the data in the fifth followup were collected. Some original sample members were lost and additional members were added in subsequent waves. The analyses in this study weighted data to account for any differences in responses due to the attrition of sample members.

Formal tests of normality of each dependent variable and a log transformation of each dependent variable were conducted to compare the distribution of the variables to a normal distribution. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z statistic tests the distribution of variables, in this case a normal distribution (SPSS, 1988). "The Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z is computed from the largest difference (in absolute value) between the observed and theoretical distribution functions" (SPSS, 1988, p. 737). The p-values indicate that the distribution of each dependent variable varies significantly from a normal distribution. The results are summarized in Table 3.

The distributions of the dependent variables clearly are not normally distributed. "Discriminant analysis is a statistical technique which allows the researcher to study the differences between two or more groups of objects (subjects) with respect to several variables simultaneously" (Klecka, 1980, p. 7). Discriminant analysis allows comparisons across categories and does not require normality in the dependent variables. This statistical technique measures whether a set of variables discriminates between groups, how well

Table 3. Formal test of normality for dependent variables

Variables	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	<u>p-value</u>
Reported change in mother's quality of life	66.616	.0001
Reported change in children's quality of life	64.274	.0001
Reported change in quality of time children spent with their father	86.293	.0001
Log of reported change in mother's quality of life	74.666	.0001
Log of reported change in children's quality of life	62.199	.0001
Log of reported change in quality of time children spent with their father	97.363	.0001

they discriminate, and which variables combine to provide the best discrimination (Cliff, 1987).

The research strategy was to categorize the dependent variables and use the 16 variables measuring family characteristics in discriminant analyses to predict group membership of reported change in mother's quality of life, reported change in children's quality of life, and reported change in the quality of time children spent with their father. "In discriminant analysis, a linear combination of independent (discriminating) variables is formed and serves as the basis for assigning cases to groups" (Norusis/SPSS, 1990, p. 6).

Reported change in mother's quality of life is categorized into three, approximately equally-sized groups. In group 1, the scale ranges from 6 through 14 and has 217 members. In group 2, the scale ranges from 15 through 17 and has 287 members. Group 3 has 230 members with a score of 18, all of whom reported that their quality of life was better in every domain.

Reported change in children's quality of life is categorized into four approximately equally-sized groups. In group 1, the scale ranges from 8 through 18 and has 150 members. In group 2, the scale ranges from 19 through 21 and has 160 members. In group 3, the scale ranges from 22 through 23 and has 117 members. The fourth group consists of 207 members who reported that the children's quality of life improved in every domain.

Reported change in the quality of time children spent with their fathers had a response framework of four answers; "1," quality is worse, had 141 members; "2," quality is the same, had 127 members; "3," quality is better, had 268 members; and "4," don't know, had 98 members. "By default, discriminant (analysis) assumes the prior probabilities of group membership to be equal" (Norusis/SPSS, 1990, p. 39). Because the distribution of responses did not result in four equally-sized categories, the priors subcommand, which specifies the exact percentage of known cases in each category, was used in the discriminant analysis for this dependent variable. "Specifying a list of prior probabilities is often used to produce classification coefficients for samples with known group membership" (SPSS, 1988, p. 468). The groups correspond to the response framework and the membership of cases is: 22% in group 1; 23% in group 2; 39% in group 3; and 16% in group 4.

The first step in the discriminant analysis is to identify an optimal model, defined as a parsimonious set of best discriminators that combine to correctly classify cases for each dependent variable. Discriminating variables are used to improve the percentage of case correctly categorized.

The forward stepwise procedure in discriminant analysis measures the set of variables' accuracy in predicting group membership and orders the variables according to their individual ability to discriminate. The most powerful discriminator is entered first, and the second discriminator is selected as the variable best able to increase the discrimination criterion in combination with the first variable. Subsequent variables are selected

according to their ability to contribute to further discrimination in combination with the variables already selected (Klecka, 1975).

This study uses a forward stepwise procedure with a selection criterion of tolerance .001 and F to enter of 1.0 to measure the relative discriminant power of each of the 16 variables, and lists the discriminators in order of their individual contribution to predicting group membership. The optimal set of discriminators is selected by running and comparing 16 discriminant analyses for each dependent variable. The first analysis includes only the best discriminator; each successive analysis adds the next most powerful discriminator until all sixteen family characteristics are included as discriminators. A measure of percent reduction in error is calculated at each step. The measure of percent reduction in error indicates when the addition of discriminators ceases to improve substantially the ability of the model to discriminate between groups. The percent reduction in error is the criterion to include variables in the optimal model.

The second step in the analysis was to measure the influence of the two variables measuring the father's contributions, child support and other resources. The discriminant models with the variables measuring resource contributions from fathers are compared to the models with only the family characteristic variables. A test for difference in proportions is calculated to compare each model with the 16 variables measuring family characteristics and the same model including the two variables measuring the resource contributions for each dependent variable. The same test evaluates the optimal models with and without the resource variables for each dependent variable. The test of difference in proportions was calculated by the formula:

$$(X - Y) / [P (1-P) / 2n]^{1/2} = \underline{z}$$

where,

X = percent cases correctly predicted with resource transfers

Y = percent cases correctly predicted without resource transfers

P = A common proportion between the two models, calculated by summing the

cases correctly grouped in the two models and dividing the sum by twice the sample size (1268).

$n = 634$

The value of \underline{z} was then squared to form the Chi-square test statistic, which was used to test for the significance of the difference in proportions (Agresti & Finlay, 1986).

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

The results of the analyses are reported in this chapter. The results of the discriminant analyses, to identify parsimonious optimal sets of discriminating variables, are reported. The parsimonious optimal models with the variables, child support and a scale of other resources, are evaluated against the parsimonious optimal models without the variables measuring contributions from noncustodial fathers. The comprehensive models with the variables, child support and a scale of other resources, are evaluated against the comprehensive models without the variables measuring contributions from noncustodial fathers.

Selection of Parsimonious Optimal Models

With discriminant analysis it is possible to study the capacity of individual discriminating variables to group cases according to categories of reported change in quality of life. Increasing the number of discriminating variables does not automatically improve classification. The percent of cases correctly classified decreases if poor discriminators are introduced into the model. The model improves only if additional variables are good discriminators and, when combined with the other variables, increase the model's predictive power (Norusis/SPSS, 1990). Discriminant analysis can also be used to select the smallest set of variables that provides the best discrimination of group membership for each dependent variable.

Reported change in mother's quality of life

The procedure for selecting the parsimonious optimal set of discriminating variables for reported change in mothers' quality of life is summarized in Table 4. The variables are listed in the order determined by the forward stepwise procedure. The percent of cases correctly grouped is reported for each step. A percent reduction in error is calculated by subtracting the percentage correctly grouped in the smaller model from the percent correctly grouped in the larger model. The difference is divided by

Table 4. Summary of discriminators for reported change in mother's quality of life

Discriminators ¹		Percent in correct group	Percent reduction in error
1	Decisions ²	45.49	
2	Income differential ²	49.53	8.88
3	Months married ²	52.48	5.96
4	Mother's marital status ²	55.54	5.83
5	Mother's self-efficacy ²	53.05	-4.48
6	Mother's education ²	52.68	-0.70
7	Visitation allowed ²	56.80	7.82
8	Mother's age married	53.70	-5.46
9	Father's propinquity	55.34	3.05
10	Number of children	56.02	1.23
11	Custody	56.93	1.62
12	Father's marital status	56.55	-0.67
13	Parent's relationship	57.04	0.87
14	Race	57.14	0.18
15	Mother employed	56.65	-0.86
16	Months divorced	58.12	2.59

¹Each step includes all the variables in the previous steps with the addition of the variable listed. For example, in step four the discriminant analysis includes decisions, income differential, months married and mother's marital status as discriminators.

²Discriminator is included in the optimal model.

the percent correctly grouped in the smaller model. The percent reduction in error indicates the contribution of the variable, when combined with the variables in the previous steps, to reduce the number of correctly classified cases. When the variables measuring mother's sense of self-efficacy and education are combined with the previously listed variables, the predictive power of the model is reduced. These variables either provide redundant information when combined with the previously listed variables or the information these variables provide reflect a different factor.

information each variables provides reflects a different factor when combined with the variables measuring which parent makes decisions for the children, the income difference between the marital household and the current custodial household.

With the inclusion of father's visitation agreement, seven discriminators (decisions, income differential, months married, mother remarried, mother's self-efficacy, mother's education, and visitation) combine to categorize correctly 56.80% of the cases. The comprehensive set of 16 family characteristic variables correctly predict group membership for 58.12% of the cases. The model with 16 variables improves classification by less than 2%, therefore, the parsimonious model with seven variables is selected as the optimal model for reported change for mother's quality of life.

Because the responses are grouped into three categories, 33.3% of the cases are expected to be correctly grouped according to chance. The 7 variables in the parsimonious optimal model and the 16 variables in the comprehensive model provide information to improve the percent of cases correctly grouped to 56.80% and 58.12% respectively.

Family characteristics are conceptualized as representing three areas of the family: characteristics of the mother, the father, and the parental relationship. While the majority, four, of the discriminating variables in the optimal model measure characteristics of the mother, variables from all three areas are significant discriminators and are included in the optimal model to discriminate reported change in mother's quality of life.

Reported change in children's quality of life

The results of the discriminant analyses to identify the best set of variables to predict correctly reported change in children's quality of life are summarized in Table 5. Responses of reported change in children's quality of life are grouped in three categories, 33% of the cases are expected to be grouped correctly according to chance. Nine variables, months since divorce, whether one parent or both parents make decisions regarding

Table 5. Summary of discriminators for reported change in children's quality of life

Discriminators ¹		Percent in correct group	Percent reduction in error
1	Months since divorce ²	36.93	
2	Decisions ²	41.42	12.16
3	Father remarried ²	40.23	2.87
4	Income differential ²	41.19	2.39
5	Father's propinquity ²	43.75	6.22
6	Months of marriage ²	43.84	0.21
7	Number of children ²	47.92	9.31
8	Mother remarried ²	48.05	2.71
9	Mother's age married ²	48.30	5.20
10	Parent's relationship	48.00	-0.62
11	Mother's self-efficacy	48.42	0.88
12	Race	48.69	0.56
13	Mother's education	49.14	0.92
14	Custody	49.15	0.02
15	Mother employed	48.59	-1.14
16	Visitation allowed	48.72	0.27

¹Each step includes all the variables in the previous step with the addition of the variable in the step. For example, in step four the discriminant analysis includes months divorced, decisions, father remarried, and income differential.

²Discriminator is included in the optimal model.

the children, father's current marital status, the difference between the family income before the divorce and the custodial family's current income, father's propinquity, length of the first marriage, number of children from the first marriage, mother's current marital status and mother's age when first married together correctly categorize 48.30% of the cases in categories of reported change in children's quality of life. The 16-variable model correctly predicts group membership for 48.72% of the cases, a less than 2%

improvement in percentage of cases correctly grouped. Therefore the nine-variable model is selected as the optimal model for reported change in quality of children's quality of life.

The conceptual model categorizes the discriminating variables as representing three aspects of the family. Four of the variables represent characteristics of the parental relationship. Three variables, the income differential comparing the household income before divorce and the current family, the mother's current marital status, and mother's age when first married are conceptualized as characteristics of the mother and two characteristics of the father, his propinquity and if he has remarried are included in the optimal model for reported change in children's quality of life.

Reported change in the quality of time children spent with their father

The results of the stepwise analyses of discriminating variables to predict reported change in the quality of time children spent with their fathers are summarized in Table 6. Father's propinquity, which parent or parents makes decisions for the children, mother's education, mother employment status, the months the parents were married, number of children from the marriage, the mother's current marital status, and whether the father allowed visitation are retained in the parsimonious model. Once again, variables representing all three conceptual aspects of the family are included as significant discriminators in the optimal model.

The forward stepwise procedure reveals that the optimal set of family characteristics differs between the models that predict group membership for each dependent variable. In other words, the set of variables that best predicts responses to a scale measuring reported change in quality of life for mother differs from the optimal set of variables predicting both reported change in children's quality of life and reported change in the quality of time children spent with their father.

There are four categories of responses of reported change in the quality of time the children spent with their father. According to chance,

Table 6. Summary of discriminators for reported change in quality of time spent with father

Discriminators ¹		Percent in correct group	Percent reduction in error
1	Father's propinquity ²	37.24	
2	Decisions ²	39.74	6.71
3	Mother's education ²	46.17	1.62
4	Mother employed ²	44.75	-3.08
5	Months of marriage ²	45.66	2.04
6	Number of children ²	43.89	-3.88
7	Mother's marital ²	47.30	7.77
8	Visitation agreement ²	47.41	2.33
9	Race	46.41	-2.11
10	Mother's self-efficacy	46.82	0.88
11	Father remarried	46.60	-0.47
12	Custody	47.00	-0.86
13	Income differential	47.64	1.36
14	Mother's age married	46.06	-3.32
15	Parent's relationship	46.44	0.83
16	Months since divorced	46.73	1.09

¹Each step includes all the variables in the previous step with the addition of the variable listed in the step. For example, in step four the discriminant analysis includes father's propinquity, decisions, mother's education, and mother employed.

²Discriminator is included in the optimal model.

25% of the cases should fall into each category. The eight variables in the optimal model correctly predict group membership for 47.41% of the cases in categories of reported change in quality of time children spent with their father. The model with 16 variables reduces the percentage of cases correctly categorized to 46.73%.

Testing the Influence of Father's Contributions

The next step in the analysis was to compare models without the variables measuring child support and other resource contributions, against

models including the variables measuring contributions of child support and other resources. A test for a significant difference in proportions was calculated to compare the proportion of cases correctly explained by the optimal models without the variables measuring child support and other resources contributions, against the optimal models including the variables measuring child support and other resource contributions. For the sake of comparison, the comprehensive models with and without the variables measuring child support and other resource contributions are included. The comparisons and results of the test for a significant difference in proportions are summarized in Table 7 and discussed in the following sections.

Reported change in mother's quality of life

In the comprehensive model to categorize group membership for reported change in mother's quality of life, inclusion of child support and a scale of other resource contributions variables raised the percentage of cases classified correctly from 58.12% to 61.62%, a reduction in the classification error 6.02%. The percent reduction in error was calculated by subtracting the percentage correctly grouped in the smaller model from the percent correctly grouped in the larger model. The difference was divided by the percent correctly grouped in the smaller model. The test for difference in proportions indicates that the addition of the two resource variables significantly improved the discriminating power of the model to predict group membership correctly. That is, 58.12% is significantly different from 61.62% of the cases correctly grouped at the .05 significance level.

In the optimal model to categorize group membership for reported change in mother's quality of life, inclusion of the child support and other resources reduces the classification error by 9.68%. The test for difference in proportions, comparing 56.80% and 62.30%, indicated that the addition of the child support and other resource variables significantly improves the discriminating power of the model to predict group membership at the .05 significance level.

Table 7. Comparisons of models for the three dependent variables

	Reported change in mother's quality of life			Reported change in children's quality of life			Reported change in quality of time children spent with their father		
	Percent in correct group	Percent reduction in error	Test for difference in proportions (χ^2)	Percent in correct group	Percent reduction in error	Test for difference in proportions (χ^2)	Percent in correct group	Percent reduction in error	Test for difference in proportions (χ^2)
Discriminating variables without resources	58.12			48.72			46.73		
Discriminating variables with resources	61.62	6.02	6.46 **	52.25	7.25	6.35 **	46.95	.47	.03
Optimal model without resources	56.80			48.30			47.41		
Optimal model with resources	62.30	9.68	16.11 **	51.61	6.85	5.59 *	48.00	1.24	.18

* Significant difference at .10 level with 2 degrees of freedom (2, .10) = 4.605

** Significant difference at .05 level with 2 degrees of freedom (2, .05) = 5.991

Reported change in children's quality of life

In the comprehensive model that categorized group membership for reported change in children's quality of life, including the variables, child support and a scale of other resource contributions increased the proportion of cases correctly categorized from 48.72% to 52.25%, a reduction in the classification error of 7.25%. The test for difference in proportions indicates that the addition of the two resource variables significantly improves the discriminating power of the model to correctly predict group membership. The difference in proportions between the two models is significant at the .05 level.

In the optimal model the including the variables measuring child support and other resource contributions increases the proportion of cases correctly predicted from 48.30% to 51.61% or reduces the classification error by 6.85%. The test for the difference in proportions is significant at the .10 level.

Reported change in quality of time children spent with their father

The comprehensive model of 16 family characteristics correctly predicts groups membership in reported change in the quality of time children spent with their father in 46.73% of the cases. Including the variables measuring child support and other resource contributions to the comprehensive model of 16 family characteristics increased the cases correctly to 46.95% of the cases; a .47 percent reduction in classification error. The parsimonious model of eight variables measuring family characteristics correctly predicts group membership for 47.41% of the cases; adding the variables measuring child support and other resource contributions increases the percentage of cases correctly categorized to 48.00%, a 1.24% reduction in classification error.

The addition of the variables measuring contributions from the noncustodial father increases both the comprehensive and optimal models' ability to categorize group membership correctly in reported change in mother's quality of life and reported change in children's quality of life.

The test for difference in proportions suggests that the improvement in the ability of the models to discriminate is significant. The variables, child support and scale measuring contributions of other resources does not significantly change the model's ability to discriminate reported change in quality of time children spent with their father.

The measurement of the dependent variable, reported change in the quality of time children spent with their father, is different from the other two dependent variables. The variables, reported change in mother's and children's quality of life, are based on measurement scales that were then collapsed into three categories. The variable, reported change in the quality of time children spent with their father, asked mothers to evaluate the quality of time children spent with their father at the time of the survey compared to the quality of their time together when the parents were married. The response framework included "better off," "the same," "worse off," or "don't know." The mothers who answered "don't know" may be very different from the mothers who could make an assessment.

While the variables suggested by the literature review are helpful in predicting group membership in mother's and children's quality of life, they may not be as appropriate for the dependent variable of reported change in quality of time children spent with their father. The percentage of cases correctly predicted is lower for this variable than for the other two dependent variables. It is also possible that divorced mothers' responses are not the best indicators for this variable. After divorce, she may not directly observe interactions between the children and their father, and therefore may not be an accurate evaluator of changes in the quality of time they spent together.

Discriminant Analyses to Measure the Relative Power of Discriminating Variables

A final step of the discriminant analysis is to identify the most powerful discriminating variables for each dependent variable. "One of the

desired end-products of the (discriminate) analysis is identification of the 'good' predictor variables" (Noursis/SPSS, 1990, p. 6). The order of entry of the discriminators in the prediction equation is left to the stepwise method. The forward stepwise enters variables one at a time, selecting at each step the variable that contributes the most to the prediction equation, and produces a summary table listing the discriminators in the order in which they enter the equation. Table 8 lists the 18 discriminating variables, in

Table 8. Order of discriminators in forward stepwise procedure

	Reported change in mother's quality of life	Reported change in children's quality of life	Reported change in time spent with father
1	Resources	Resources	Father's propinquity
2	Mother remarried	Months divorced	Resources
3	Income differential	Father remarried	Mother's education
4	Months married	Income differential	Mother employed
5	Decisions	Father's propinquity	Decisions
6	Visitation allowed	Number of children	Mother remarried
7	Mother's self- efficacy	Mother's self- efficacy	Number of children
8	Mother's education	Parents' relationship	Months married
9	Child support	Months married	Visitation allowed
10	Mother's age when first married	Race	Race
11	Months divorced	Mother employed	Mother's self- efficacy
12	Number of children	Mother's education	Child support
13	Parents' relationship	Mother's age when first married	Income differential
14	Father's propinquity	Mother remarried	Father remarried
15	Race	Custody	Custody
16	Custody	Decisions	Mother's age when first married
17	Mother employed	Child support	Parents' relationship
18	Father remarried	Visitation agreement	Months divorced

time, selecting at each step the variable that contributes the most to the prediction equation, and produces a summary table listing the discriminators in the order in which they enter the equation.

In the models of reported change in mother's and children's quality of life, the scale measuring the father's contributions of other resources is selected as the first variable to enter the prediction equation. In the model predicting group membership in categories of reported change of quality of time spent father, the scale measuring the father's contributions of other resources was preceded by one variable, father's propinquity.

In contrast, the variable measuring a direct money transfer, child support, ranks much lower in every model of reported change. In the model of predicting reported change in the mother's quality of life, the variable measuring father's contribution of child support is selected at the ninth step. In the model of reported change in children's quality of life, child support is the seventeenth variable to enter the equation, and in the model of reported change in the quality of time children spent with their father, it is the twelfth variable selected. Compared to the 16 variables measuring family characteristics and the variables measuring the amount of child support, the scale of other resource contributions from noncustodial fathers is a very powerful predictor of reported change in mother's and children's quality of life.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter reviews the purpose and hypotheses of the study. This chapter includes a discussion of the findings of the study and suggests implications for future research, policy, and education.

Purpose and Hypotheses

The purpose of this study was to identify a set of discriminators to predict group membership in categories of reported change in mother's and children's quality of life, and reported change in the quality of time children spent with their fathers after the parents divorce. Of particular interest were the two discriminating variables that measure resource contributions from noncustodial fathers. The null hypotheses stated that the variables, child support and a scale of other resource contributions, did not affect the ability of the models to predict reported change in quality of life correctly for mothers and their children, and reported change in the quality of time children spent with their fathers.

Major Findings and Discussion

It was hypothesized, in the null form, that there were no significant differences when child support and a scale of other resources were added to the model of family characteristics. The results summarized in Table 7 failed to support two of the hypotheses. The first hypothesis dealt with mother's reported change in quality of life. There was a significant difference in the number of cases correctly categorized when child support and a scale of other resource contributions were added to both the optimal parsimonious model and the model with 16 family characteristics to predict reported change in mother's quality of life.

The results in Table 7 also failed to support the second hypothesis, which predicted that including child support and a scale of other resources would not improve models of family characteristics to predict reported change

in children's quality of life. Again, the number of cases correctly categorized improved significantly when child support and a scale of other resource contributions were added to the optimal parsimonious model and the comprehensive model with all 16 variables of family characteristics.

The results of the discriminant analyses summarized in Table 7 supported the third null hypothesis. Including child support and a scale of other resource contributions from noncustodial fathers did not improve significantly the ability of the models to predict reported change in the quality of time spent with father. The child support and other resources variables did not significantly improve either the optimal parsimonious model or the comprehensive model including all 16 family characteristics.

The variables selected as best predictors for categorizing cases correctly varied among the models. Even though the data were collected from the same family member, mothers, the findings suggested that the best predictors of reported change in quality of life for mothers were different from the best predictors of reported change in quality of life for children and reported change in the quality of time children spent with their fathers. Although four characteristics of mothers were included in the optimal parsimonious model, other factors also influenced reported change in mother's quality of life. The variables measuring whether the father was allowed visitation, which parent or parents made decisions regarding the children, and the number of months the parents were married were included in the optimal set of predictors. Characteristics of the noncustodial father and the mother's relationship with him influenced the mother's assessments of change in her life after divorce.

Children who resided with their mother were assumed to share her lifestyle. Variables measuring characteristics of both parents were important in categorizing correctly cases of reported change in children's quality of life. Even though the children lived with their mothers, characteristics of their fathers appeared to influence the reported changes in their quality of life. For example, father's marital status entered the

equation before mother's marital status. Only three of the mothers' characteristics--the difference in the family income before divorce and the current family's income, mother's marital status, and mother's age when first married--were included in the optimal model for reported change in children's quality of life. The findings suggested that noncustodial fathers and the parental relationship were important in influencing reported change in children's quality of life after a divorce. Previous research has shown that children benefit from good relationships with both parents and are influenced by the parents' relationship with each other (Chase-Lansdale & Hetherington, 1988; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1990).

A comparison of the variables selected as good predictors by the forward stepwise procedure across the three models identified several commonalities and suggested several interesting findings. The variable measuring whether parents made decisions regarding their children jointly or separately was selected very early in the prediction equations for all the models. This variable indicated whether the mother made all decisions, the father made all the decisions, or the parents made decisions jointly. This variable and the preponderance of relationship characteristics included in the parsimonious optimal models, may indicate that the extent to which the parents were cooperating on behalf of the children may be a better predictor of reported changes in quality of life than were the individual characteristics of either parent.

It is interesting that the noncustodial father's contributions did not improve significantly the model predicting group membership in reported change in the quality of time the children spent with their father. This finding suggested that perhaps the material things fathers contribute may not influence the quality of the time he spends with his children. However, the results were difficult to interpret, because the scale included contributions of both material goods, services, and time. If the contributions of direct participation in the children's activities were separate measures, it would have been possible to measure the influence of parental time separately from

the other resource contributions in predicting reported change in the quality of time children spent with their father.

The results of the findings summarized in Table 7 were mixed. Two research hypotheses were supported, child support and other resources contributed by noncustodial fathers influence reported change in quality of life for mothers and children. The findings did not support the third hypothesis, that the father's contributions would influence significantly reported change in the quality of time the children spent with their fathers. Compared to child support, the scale measuring the regularity of other resource contributions was a more powerful predictor of reported change in quality of life for both mothers and children.

The results suggested that children's quality of life continued to be influenced by the characteristics of their fathers and the contributions he provided, even though they resided with their mother. The parents' relationship with each other during the divorce was also an important predictor of reported change in quality of life for both mothers and children. The forward stepwise method in the discriminant analyses indicated that the scale measuring the regularity of the father's contributions of goods, access to services, and participation in his children's activities was a good discriminator in predicting membership in categories of reported change in both mothers' and children's quality of life.

Public policy emphasizes the importance of fathers' contributions of child support for the well-being of their noncustodial children. The empirical findings in this study suggest that other contributions may be even more important influences of change in quality of life. The conceptual framework of social exchange suggests that exchanges between family members are symbolic and may have inflated values for the recipients (Foa & Foa, 1980). The voluntary nature of the resources that fathers contribute may increase further the value associated with their receipt (Teachman, 1990a).

Fathers should be encouraged to provide for their children in a variety of ways and to participate in activities with their children. Their

contributions are important in their children's lives. Mothers may profit by supporting noncustodial fathers' endeavors to provide for and to parent their children. Noncustodial fathers who provide for their children and function in the parental role should be recognized and rewarded for the contributions they make toward their children's well-being.

Implications for Further Research

There is still much to understand about how noncustodial fathers influence changes in the quality of life for mothers and children after a divorce. This study used mother's assessments of changes in quality of life for her family as dependent variables. This study could be replicated with objective measures of change in well-being. For example, an income differential and a change in household wealth could also be used as dependent variables to measure change in economic well-being.

This study uses the mother's assessments of how various domains have changed since her divorce. Longitudinal data would measure several types of change, how a variety of changes relate to self-reports of quality of life, and how self-reports of quality life vary over time.

The NLS-72 sample provides information about a cohort of individuals attending their senior year of high school in 1972. It would be helpful to replicate this analysis with a more diverse sample of individuals. A sample consisting of several cohorts could test better the influence of the variables measuring the length of time following changes in family structure to predict reported change in quality of life correctly. The passage of time is necessary for adjustments that families may make to accommodate changes caused by divorce; the relationship between time and reported changes in quality of life is an important factor in an analysis of reported changes in quality of life for family experiencing a divorce.

The parent responsible for making decisions for the children was an important predictor in all the models tested. Further research is needed to explore this relationship. It would be useful to know which aspect of

decision making is important. Is it parental cooperation in decision making, or only one parent making all decisions, that predicts reported change in quality of life for mothers and children after divorce?

The findings of the analysis did not support the hypothesis that contributions from noncustodial fathers influence reported change in the quality of time children spent with their fathers. Mothers' assessments may not be good measures of change in the quality of time children spent with their fathers. A variable measuring the amount of time spent together or a differential measure comparing the amount of time spent together before and after the divorce, could at least indicate if the father's presence or absence predicts change in the quality of time spent together. Assessments taken from each family member--mothers, fathers, and children-- might provide better measures of change in the quality of time spent together. It would also be interesting to measure the relationship between reported change in quality of time children spent with their father and reported changes in the other domains of their lives.

Implications for Family Life and Public Policy

Education and public policy should support healthy family functioning. The large numbers of families experiencing divorce exerts pressure on policy makers to understand the effects of divorce on family members and to implement programs to mitigate negative outcomes. The findings of this study suggest that both parents influence reported change in mothers' and children's quality of life after divorce. Both parents need to recognize their roles and support each other in influencing the quality of life for their children. Custodial mothers need to recognize and support fathers in providing for and interacting with their noncustodial children.

Previous research has supported policy positions that the contribution of child support from noncustodial fathers is an important influence on children's well-being following a divorce. This study found that the scale measuring other resource contributions was entered before the variable

indicating the monetary contribution of child support for each model of reported change in quality of life. A variety of resources from noncustodial fathers may be as important or more important than the contributions they make in child support. After divorce, fathers need to be encouraged and supported to fulfill a parental role beyond providing monetary support.

Noncustodial fathers should be encouraged to be involved in parenting their children after a divorce. The father's participation continues to influence how the mother assesses the changes the custodial family experiences after divorce. Family life education should convey the importance of contributions made at the discretion of the father, beyond the influence of the legal system. The contributions that fathers make directly to their children and their direct participation in the children's activities influence reported change in quality of life. In addition to benefits to the children, mothers should note that these contributions influenced their assessments of change in their own quality of life.

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