

**NONCUSTODIAL FATHERS' PERCEPTIONS
OF VISITATION ARRANGEMENTS**

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NONCUSTODIAL FATHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF
VISITATION ARRANGEMENTS

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Research Paper written by Joann Ruth Gonzales entitled "Noncustodial Fathers' Perceptions of Visitation Arrangements." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Masters of Arts, with a major in Psychology.

Leslie K. Karpis
Major Professor

We have read this
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

In the United States, when a couple with children obtain a divorce the mother usually will gain custody of the children. Custody is defined as the legal and physical caretaking responsibilities of a child or children. Minor children (those under 18 years of age) are involved in 75 percent of all divorces. One million children annually experience the divorce of their parents (Roman & Haddad, 1978). Census data shows that in 85-90 percent of all divorces involving children, mother custody is the accepted norm (Atkins & Rubin, 1976).

Prior to the 1900's the father had absolute property rights over the children (Bohannon, 1970). Because the children were seen as legal property of the father, there were no custody disputes between parents should the marriage dissolve. As property, children had no legal or psychological rights of their own. The fact of father property rights was coupled with the reality that the mother had little opportunity to be financially independent until the twentieth century. Support of the children, thus, was the responsibility of the father who could best provide the children's basic needs.

Early twentieth century saw a shift away from paternal authoritarianism. This shift reflected a growing concern for the rights of children. The "tender years" doctrine stipulated that young children's psychological, emotional, and developmental needs could best be satisfied by the care of the mother. Based on this "tender years" doctrine, courts began investigating the mother's emotional, behavioral, and parental stability. If she, also, met morality requirements to the court's satisfaction, custody of the children was awarded to her.

Sadoff and Billick (1981) recognized that this attitudinal shift was made possible by the following circumstances:

1. Women had new opportunities to earn income;
2. Women were gaining civil rights including the right to vote;
3. Women were granted the right to alimony and child support as a result of divorce and separation from their husbands. (p. 5)

The "best interest of the child" concept gradually overrode the more simplistic "tender years" doctrine. The "best interest of the child" concept meant that the needs and rights of the child would be paramount in custodial decisions. At least on the books, there would be no sex preference in determining custodial suitability. In actuality, however, the child was most

often placed with the mother because of the "maternal instinct" bond (Luepnitz, 1982). Fathers were assumed to be nonnurturant, thus, incapable of caring for the psychological needs of children.

Both the psychological and legal professions increasingly recognized the child's inherent right in questions of custody. In the Garvey vs Garvey custody case, the court concluded:

the welfare of the child itself will be the first consideration . . . the child's own welfare is superior to the claims of either parent whose wishes and personal desires must yield, if opposed to such welfare. (quoted in Sadoff & Billick, 1981, pp. 6-7)

Currently, custody is most often determined by the precedent of mother custody rather than by factual evaluation of parental capabilities, "best interest of the child," or maternal preference laws. The mother custody precedent is perpetuated by (1) the reluctance of judges to take children from their mothers, (2) stigmatization of the mother should she not receive custody, (3) the fact that more mothers request or feel obligated to assume custody, and (4) the presumption that mothers are the proper custodial parent.

Once custody has been established, visitation arrangements between the noncustodial parent and the child are stipulated by the courts. Even when

visitation arrangements are worked out and agreed to by both parents, the judge hearing the divorce case must approve the stipulations. These legal stipulations allowing children to see their fathers are known as "visitation rights." Visitation, thus, is seen as a "right" granted by the court and not a privilege given by the custodial parent. Legal support for visitations provides the noncustodial parent and the child a means of relationship maintenance outside the total control of the custodial parent. Without the legal status of having some physical and legal caretaking responsibilities, visitations may be the noncustodial father's only means of maintaining a relationship with his children.

The majority of research studies on families who have experienced divorce focus their investigations on the custodial parent and the children. Studies which have discussed visitation arrangements between the noncustodial father and child following divorce have directed attention primarily to the needs of the child. The noncustodial father's adjustment to living without his children and the related problems involved in his attempts to maintain ties with them are less frequently referred to and rarely studied systematically.

As a result of increased divorce rates, which have more than doubled since 1960 (Reingold, 1974), and

the overwhelming majority of mother custody arrangements, more and more fathers and their children are being separated and subjected to regulated, "reasonable" visitations. Increasing evidence, however, points to the fact that these regulated arrangements are suspect as to their adequacy in maintaining significant parent/child interaction (Greif, 1979; Keshet & Rosenthal, 1978; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Because of the sparsity of research, few guidelines have been developed for noncustodial fathers who wish to maintain a satisfactory relationship with their children.

Rosen (1977) advocates a freedom of access between children and their noncustodial parents. Free Access is defined by Rosen as the ". . . unrestricted contact between child and the noncustodial parent" (p. 25). In her study, the majority of children reported a strong need for an unrestricted form of interaction with their absent parent. Rosen does not speculate how the noncustodial parents of those children would have answered an access preference question. If access patterns reflect the child's satisfaction with visitation arrangements, as Rosen suggests, will the same be true for the perceived level of noncustodial parent satisfaction?

This paper focuses attention upon what researchers Keshet and Rosenthal (1978) consider a small, but growing trend among young fathers who choose to remain in close contact with their children despite the noncustodial status. Specifically, this paper addresses the noncustodial father's perception of visitations. A number of questions are posed concerning this perception:

1. Does restricted access affect the father's feelings towards maintaining a relationship?
2. Does a satisfactory visiting arrangement imply a satisfactory father/child relationship from the father's point of view?
3. What effect does visitation with his child have on the father's parenting image?
4. How does marital status affect visitation arrangements and the nature of the father/child interaction?

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Access

In 1977, Rosen conducted research on the effects of custody arrangements on children and the degree of access to the noncustodial parent. Access is defined as the freedom of the noncustodial parent and child to interact with each other. Her data were gathered from interviews with 92 children of divorced parents. Among the results of these interviews, four types of access patterns emerged:

1. Free Access applies to unrestricted contact between child and noncustodial parent.
2. Regulated Access refers to situations where child sees custodial parent on a regular basis, such as alternate weekends.
3. Occasional Access relates to situations where there is no set pattern. These sporadic visits may be due to a) either father or child's reluctance to maintain closer contact, b) the custodial parent's attitude concerning the access, or c) the geographical distance between noncustodial parent and child.
4. No Access indicates that all contact between noncustodial parent and the family has ceased. (adapted from Rosen, 1977, p. 24)

Both the legal profession and the psychological profession often disagree over access. Goldstein, Freud and Solnit (1973) have argued that access is not always desirable for the child. They based this assumption upon the theory that the role of the child's caretaker must be protected at all cost. Visitation rights, then, must be the option of the custodial parent. Should the custodial parent see visitation as an invasion in their newly formed family structure, contact between the noncustodial parent and children should be terminated or at least be reduced.

Children of divorce often express a feeling of being disloyal to their mother if any closeness to the father is experienced (Atkins & Rubin, 1976). The child's conflicts of loyalty between parents can be minimized when no access to the noncustodial parent is stipulated, according to Goldstein, Freud and Solnit (1973).

If the Goldstein, Freud and Solnit (1973) perspective of visitation rights are supported, Baer (1972) warns of the possibility for misuse of that power by the former wife. She may manipulate the visits to the point of damaging whatever father/child relationship is left. For their own personal convenience or because of the perceived unreliability of the

father's visits, some custodial mothers will insist on visiting limitations in the divorce agreement.

Visitation arrangements agreed to as part of the divorce are usually referred to as "reasonable visitations." No law clarifies this ambiguous terminology; rather, each judge defines "reasonability" in his/her own terms. Alternate weekend visitation, however, is the accepted and most common access pattern. Visitations may also include a week or two at Christmas or Easter and another two or three weeks in the summer.

Egan, Landau and Rhode (1979), using information gathered from more than 50 divorced families, recommend this regulated, fixed time or "reasonable" access arrangement. "If visitations are to occur, they should occur on a regular basis, since irregular visits can be very upsetting to children" (p. 76). If the noncustodial father does not maintain this consistency, visitation rights should be suspended. "The emotional rights of the child should far outweigh the rights of a sporadic, biological visitor" (Egan, Landau & Rhode, 1979, p. 79).

Rosen (1977) defines "reasonable" access as Regulated Access and applies it to those situations where the child sees his noncustodial parent on a regular but infrequent basis. A number of researchers have concluded

that this type of visitation pattern is inadequate to develop or maintain a satisfactory relationship between young children and their noncustodial parent (Greif, 1979; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Rosen, 1977; Sanctuary & Whitehead, 1970; and Westman, 1972).

One of the most extensive studies of the effect of divorce on children was conducted by Wallerstein and Kelly. Their five-year longitudinal research, known as The Divorce Project, investigated the experience and effect of divorce on 131 children from 60 families in California. In a series of journal articles and book publications between 1975 and 1980, Wallerstein and Kelly draw numerous inferences and implications concerning the question of visitation arrangements and access patterns between the noncustodial father and child.

With references to access, Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) advise a distinction between frequency of contact and value or beneficiality of the father/child interaction. Among the factors considered in assessing the visitation arrangements in their study were the predominant activities and context of the visits. Generally, the more frequent the visits, the more natural and satisfying were the father/child relationship. Kelly points out in a later publication (Kelly, 1981) that "while the frequency of the visits

is not in itself the hallmark of the quality of the parent/child relationship . . ." it did nonetheless serve as an indicator of the parents' perceived visitation satisfaction (p. 347).

Frequency and free access to the noncustodial parent gives the child a sense of control over coping with the detrimental effects of divorce. The control, then, is seen as significant in offsetting the sense of helplessness, frustration, and lowered self-esteem so often reported for children of divorce (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Rosen, 1977). Hetherington, Cox and Cox (1976) found the frequency of the father's contact with his children was associated with a more positive post-divorce adjustment of the child, as well as improved interaction between child and mother.

Frequency of visitation does not mean inflexibility in scheduling. Static and forced visitations, says Salk (1978), would only increase resentment of the child. Kelly and Wallerstein (1977) observed from their research population that older children and adolescents especially resented rigidity "as an unwarranted intrusion of their autonomy" (p. 53). Even the term "visitation" connotes rigidity and artificiality say Atkins and Rubin (1976). There is no room for spontaneity. Spontaneity and the ability to

make changes in visitation style must be allowed to meet the developmental and environmental changes in both custodial or noncustodial homes.

The evidence cited finds that Free Access or the unrestricted contact between child and noncustodial parent may be the most desirable form of availability for the child. The question arises, however, as to which access pattern is seen as most beneficial from the noncustodial father's point of view. In order to investigate access desirability for the noncustodial father, a review of the effects of child separation on the noncustodial father is needed.

Effects of Separation on the Noncustodial Father

A number of researchers have proposed negative effects of separation on the noncustodial parent. Kelly and Wallerstein (1977) write that:

The out-of-home parent has the task of gradual disentanglement and decathexis from the routine of everyday family life which, however burdensome, provides some measure of support and comfort, even within an unhappy marital relationship (p. 51).

This structure of daily or ongoing interaction provides the maintenance and potential enrichment of the parent/child relationship.

Once the father has moved out of the home he shared with his children, any post-divorce relationship will be constrained by time and location. Often this re-structuring process is accompanied by a sense of loss, deprivation, guilt or even alienation (Kelly & Wallerstein, 1977). Atkins and Rubin write in their book, Part-Time Father (1976), that noncustodial fathers who are no longer authority figures in their child's life often feel hopeless and overwhelmed when problems arise for their children.

Society in general, and the children in particular, may tax the father to prove his love, interest, and support. The child may ask, for example, "Why are you leaving me if you love me?" or "You stopped loving mamma. Will you stop loving me, too?" or "Will you go out of your way just to see me?" For many noncustodial fathers this skepticism creates a major barrier to the father/child relationship (Atkins & Rubin, 1976). It is not enough just to be the child's father; one must continually prove oneself as an appropriate father. This strain and uneasiness of the father/child interaction may whittle away the noncustodial father's desire to be a part of his child's life.

Much of the difficulty associated with the noncustodial father's new position is the lack of appropriate societal support. Too often the role of ex-spouse is associated with the role of ex-parent (Visher & Visher, 1978). Roman and Haddad in their book, The Disposable Parent (1978), blame our current child custody laws which favor the mother as primary caretaker for too often making ex-parents out of fathers. These laws deprive both the noncustodial father and the child of a meaningful relationship as well as devalue the father's parental role.

In a survey of 40 divorced fathers, Greif (1979) focused on the men's perception of their father/child relationship. Based on this survey, Greif reports that the more involvement a father has with his child, the greater perception he has of an ongoing parental role. It is speculated that the more opportunities a man has to interact in a father/child relationship, the more likely he is to view himself as a father. This "father image" perception will then lead to continued father/child interaction (Greif, 1979). Fathering image is here defined as the value or satisfaction level a man places on his fatherhood status.

According to Greif (1979), fathers who had more contact with their children were more satisfied with

their parenting image than fathers who had little or no contact with their children. If contact with the child is limited, fathers will come to see themselves as less of, or devalued as a parent. Eventually, they may come to "act in accordance with the role that had been assigned them: the absent parent" (Greif, 1979, p. 300).

Greif's (1979) study suggests that any imposed structural arrangements (i.e., visitations) are crucial to the adjustment of the noncustodial father after divorce. Fathers who had the least amount of contact with their children evidenced a significantly greater degree of depression, as well as a sense of loss, than did those fathers with freer and more frequent contact with their children.

Roles Played by the Noncustodial Father

Abandonment by the father may be the child's greatest concern (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). For fathers, too, the greatest fear may be that their children will abandon them. In order to compensate for their own insecurity, sense of loss and emotional emptiness, or their need for reassurance, many noncustodial fathers will assume non-traditional father "roles." The most prevalent of these roles is that of the "entertainer."

Greif (1979) found that fathers who had little or infrequent contact with their children were more likely to "entertain" their children once the visits did take place. Despite these fathers' "disdain for being seen as a 'Sugar Daddy'" (p. 298), Greif reports that they continue to indulge the children's whims. This indulgence results from a wish to keep the children so happy that continued visitations will be desired by the child. Overindulgence and permissiveness may serve to diminish the father's own feelings of guilt about having left the family and having inflicted on his children the trauma of a broken home (Atkins & Rubin, 1976).

Entertainment usually takes the form of constant activities outside of a home environment: outings to the park or amusement areas, restaurant meals, or shopping/purchasing trips. Excessive activity may serve to cover the discomfort often experienced between father and child in the visitation situation. As one noncustodial father told Atkins and Rubin (1976),

You feel you can't just 'be' with your kids. You must 'do' things with them, entertain them, see that they have a good time. (pp. 19-20)

This excessive entertainment activity, however, may only serve to fend off the very intimacy a noncustodial father would want to establish with his child. Several researchers have concluded that

"entertaining's" hectic pace serves to decrease the opportunities for meaningful communication between the father and child (Atkins & Rubin, 1976; Capaldi & McRae, 1979). Entertaining, also, provides the child with an unrealistic, unnatural perspective of fatherhood.

Rather than acting as an entertainer to their children, Atkins and Rubin (1976) suggest visitations include time to allow the children to know that they have meaning in the father's life, and that the father is one with whom the child can confide and count on for emotional support and guidance. Three important roles of the noncustodial father's parenting concept are assumed: confidant, emotional supporter, and guide.

First, as a confidant and friend, the child knows the father will be available to share his life. This might take the form of involving the father in the activities and structure of the child's life, as well as having the child participate in the father's new life. Atkins and Rubin (1976) suggest fathers do everyday activities with their children, giving them opportunities to talk and share their concerns.

Second, as an emotional support the noncustodial father may provide his children needed assurance in the unstable and emotional confusion of post-divorce. In the Divorce Project (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980),

anxiety was found to be the central and most widespread response exhibited by children of divorced parents. Fears in these children encompass future needs and security, relationship maintenance with both parents, decreased trust of parental love, and a perception of themselves as the cause of the divorce. Often, these worries resulted in feelings of guilt, lowered self-esteem, and depression. With continued, regular visits, fathers were able to help eliminate their children's misunderstandings concerning security, loyalty, love, and reasons for the divorce. Children who experienced frequent visitation following divorce were found to make better personal adjustment than those children who had infrequent and sporadic visitations from their noncustodial parent.

A third important role of the noncustodial father is that of a guide. Without custody, many men feel they have lost their authority as a parent. As a guide, fathers continue to have the opportunity to shape the values and influence the development of their children. Atkins and Rubin (1976) suggest that visits should give the children the opportunity to get to know their father as a person worthy of giving direction, not an idealized, fantasized figure from their past or the somewhat distorted ex-spouse of their mother.

Until recently, the father's nurturing role after divorce, as well as in the intact family, was seen primarily in terms of the economic support he provided for his children. Society at large, and most fathers in particular, failed to realize the significant role fathers play in the lives of their children. Few individuals acknowledged the satisfaction that could be derived from fatherhood and caring for one's children.

The caretaking role of parents is central to the parenting concept. Often, fathers leave the intact family situation inexperienced with childcare: meal preparation, child health and hygiene considerations, and general homemaking skills. Lack of parenting skills during visitations is often viewed as extremely threatening to the father's self-concept. To remedy the resulting confusion, some noncustodial fathers continue to rely on the children's mother or, perhaps, another female (girlfriend, current spouse or child's relative) for childcare direction.

In order to explore the impact of the caretaking role on the self-concept of fathers after marriage dissolution, Keshet and Rosenthal (1976) interviewed 128 men having partial caretaking responsibilities (not less than two days a week) for their children who were 7 years of age or younger. Rarely did childcare

arrangements involve extended family members. The majority of these men were upper middle-class professionals; thus, the sample was not meant to be representative of the divorced population at large. These men were representative, said the researchers, of a growing trend among young divorced fathers to remain actively involved with their children.

A number of men in Keshet and Rosenthal's (1978) study found the demand of solo childcare responsibilities to be important for their own self-worth. According to their report, fathering required empathy and emotional responsiveness which in turn led to the father's own personal growth. The sense of confidence and accomplishment of these fathers came from the realization that they could care for their children without the direction of another adult (Keshet & Rosenthal, 1978). Thus, the caretaker role may provide the noncustodial father with a more positive parenting image and a more satisfying self-concept.

Capaldi and McRae (1979), in their work with stepfamilies, point out that while the absentee parent may play a diminished role in the life of his child, it does not mean he must be seen as less of a parent. Atkins and Rubin (1976), too, feel that:

Once you are a father, you are always a father. No one can take fatherhood away from you. You can lose it only by default. (p. 38)

Remarriage Effects on Visitation Arrangements

Three out of four divorced women will remarry; four out of five divorced men will marry again as well. With over 75 percent of all divorced individuals remarrying (Atkins & Rubin, 1976), the incidence of remarriage is estimated to affect one million children under the age of 18 each year (Reingold, 1976). Currently, thirteen million children under the age of eighteen are living in stepfamilies (Crohn, Sager, Rodstein, Brown, Walker & Beir, 1981). With such a large population of individuals experiencing remarriage, reviewing its effects on the visitation arrangements seems warranted.

It has been reported that increased difficulties in father/child relationships are experienced when either/or both parents decide to remarry (Egan, Landau & Rhode, 1979; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Visher & Visher, 1979). Egan, Landau and Rhode (1979) suggest these difficulties are due to the fact that parental loyalties, priorities, interests, and living conditions shift away from any previous familial obligations.

These variables often result in a limitation or restriction to previously established visitation arrangements.'

Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) maintain that the noncustodial father/child relationship will decline most notably when the father marries a woman with children of her own or if children are born to the new couple. Difficulty arises from the father's attempt to split emotional involvement between two sets of children. Usually, one set of children will suffer at the expense of the other. In the early stages of the new marriage, when assuring the marriage's success is paramount, the father may decrease involvement with his prior family in order to enhance involvement with the present one. The declining involvement includes less emotional or psychological attachment to the children as well as actual time available to be with the children.

With a new family to support, financial considerations for his first set of children often are reduced. Not only may child support payments become less of a priority, but frequency and quantity of money spent on visitations with these children may diminish.

It has been found that the new wife is often jealous of her husband's continued involvement with his children by a former marriage (Wallerstein & Kelly,

1980). Her resentment over the time or money spent with the children may affect the father's desire to maintain a strong father/child relationship. Stepchildren or children of the current marriage, also, may attempt to influence the father away from any commitment to his children from a former marriage. This influence of the children often takes the shape of reinforcing the father's guilt for time or money spent away from his current family. Increased hassles and guilt experienced in the present family may reduce his willingness to maintain frequent and flexible visitations with his children of the former marriage.

When the mother with custody of the children remarries, difficulties in visitation with the natural father, also, have been reported. Bohannon (1970) found increased problems and tension in stepfamily relationships when the children's biological father attempted to participate with his children in comparison to stepfamilies where the children's father visited only infrequently or not at all. The stepfather may be trying to establish his authority and autonomy with the new stepfamily and view the children's father as an intruder or threat to his territory.

Simon (1964), however, found that a continued, stable maintenance of the noncustodial parent/child

relationship is a positive contributing factor in the child's adjustment to the remarriage in both the custodial and noncustodial homes. The adjustment may be attributed to the child's sense of security. Knowing that their father still cares for them, that father/child interaction will be maintained, and that the father will not be replaced by a new man in their mother's life, these children feel more secure in accepting their newly imposed stepfamily arrangements.

Remarriage, also, may affect the visitation arrangements due to the custodial parent's own anxieties. Visher and Visher (1979) suggest that when the noncustodial parent remarries, the ex-spouse may fear custody arrangements will be challenged. The noncustodial parent may challenge the existing custody arrangement in order to bring the child into his or her newly formed family. The custodial parent, also, may fear a shift in the child's loyalty when the noncustodial parent remarries. An attempt may be made by the custodial parent to sway the child's opinion of the new stepparent or of their absent parent in order to attain the child's acceptance of the established custody.

When remarriage of either former spouse occurs, there may be an increased focus on the new marital union's success, additional economic considerations, and

parental or status adjustment. These three factors may tend to limit the noncustodial father/child interaction. Because these variables limit interaction, a decline in relationship satisfaction between fathers and their children has been reported (Atkins & Rubin, 1976).

Chapter 3

CONCLUSIONS

Four questions concerning the noncustodial father's perception of visitations were addressed in this paper.

Question 1: Does restricted access affect the father's feelings towards maintaining a relationship?

Yes. Restricted and regulated access often affects the noncustodial father's desire to maintain a relationship with his children. These restrictions to access result from various sources. Court ordered "reasonable visitation rights," which limit the father's interaction with his children to regulated intervals, is one important restricting aspect. Rigidity does not allow for development of a father/child relationship. Any repetitious arrangement for visitation, likewise, may stagnate the father/child relationship. Without access freedom and flexibility to reconstruct the visitations to meet maturing, changing needs of both the child and the father, maintenance of a positive relationship will suffer. Imposed regulation of any kind denotes artificiality and a degradation of autonomy. Without control over the visitation schedule or lack of

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schedule, the noncustodial father will acquire a diminishing desire to maintain a relationship with his children.

Question 2: Does a satisfactory visiting arrangement imply a satisfactory father/child relationship from the father's point of view?

Yes. Visitation arrangement satisfaction will lead to the perception of father/child relationship satisfaction. The leading indicator of visitation satisfaction is the establishment of a frequent and flexible access pattern. It has been shown that more frequent contact between father and child enhances their relationship with one another. Frequency in itself does not ensure quality interaction; rather, frequency correlates with more natural, less artificial context of the visitation arrangements. Frequency of access must be coupled with flexibility. Without consideration of the needs of all parties involved, satisfactory visitation will not result.

Question 3: What effect does visitation with his child have on the father's parenting image?

The nature of visitation arrangements affect the image noncustodial fathers have of themselves as parents. Without free and frequent contact with their children, noncustodial fathers feel devalued in their

parenting image. This parental image, of course, results from more than just the interaction between father and child. Society often leads the father to interpret his father role as less important to the welfare of the child than is the mother's role. When he may no longer assist in the caretaking responsibilities as a parent, visitations may be reduced to a continual entertainment series. Without the authority to interact with his child and to make decisions as to where, when, and how long to visit, the noncustodial father is often limited to too short, too hectic, and too few visits. Under these conditions the father may not be able to provide other than an "entertainer" image to himself and to his children.

In order to maintain a positive parenting image, fathers must be allowed the time to have interactions with their children: flexible, consistent avenues of contact representing a variable range of activities with their children. These activities must include more than entertainment. In order to have a perceived parental image, one must act as a parent: caretaker, confidant, emotional supporter, and guide.

Question 4: How does marital status affect visitation arrangements and the nature of the father/child interaction?

When either former spouse remarries, child visitations become more difficult to arrange. Cooperation between the children's parents often deteriorates as new family members impose restrictions to the visits. Should the mother remarry, both she and her new husband may feel the children's place is with the new family unit, not a relatively seldom seen, absent biological father. The new marital union of the noncustodial father, likewise, may take precedence over visitation considerations. With additional involved family members who must be consulted, appeased, and considered, arranging visitations becomes more complex. Financial considerations, also, affect the visitations, especially when the father has reduced monetary flexibility due to new familial obligations.

The psychological restraints after remarriage are just as important as the restraints of money and time. Consideration of custody challenges, whether real or imaginary, may affect either parent's outlook pertaining to access of the children. Jealousy or bitterness of perceived "replacement" for either the spouse or parental role may cause the former spouses either to distort and devalue the need of father and child to maintain a satisfactory relationship.

Research has suggested factors that influence interaction between the noncustodial father and his children. This researcher speculates that noncustodial fathers who have free access to their children will 1) have a stronger desire to maintain a father/child relationship than those noncustodial fathers who have more restricted access patterns, 2) have a more satisfactory father/child relationship in terms of the quality of time spent together, 3) have a positive parenting image, and 4) be affected negatively by the remarriage of their former spouse or themselves since the visitation arrangements and the father/child interaction will be altered.

In order to test these hypotheses, noncustodial fathers could be questioned with regard to the postulates. The responses to a questionnaire would be analyzed according to the noncustodial fathers' current visitation arrangements as categorized by Rosen: Free Access, Regulated Access, Occasional Access, or No Access. The following dimensions of the questionnaire would then be compared to the access mode: 1) factors pertinent to visitation arrangement maintenance, 2) types of activities during visitation, 3) parenting

image, 4) adequacy of the current visitation arrangements as perceived by the subject, his children, former spouse, current wife, and the children's new stepfather as applicable, 5) the effects of either former spouse's remarriage on the visitation arrangements, 6) contributing factors to the maintenance of the father/child relationship, and 7) perceived means to improve the current visitation arrangements.

American society has come a long way from viewing the father as sole property owner, authoritarian, and breadwinner for the family and from viewing the mother as the only one capable of "parenting." Fathers now are seen as capable of caretaking and nurturing their children. At a time when investigators are highlighting this enhancement of the fatherhood role, divorce statistics force the realization of increased father/child separation. With a focus on visitation and access arrangements after divorce, future researchers will be assisted in their analyses of the emotional and psychological needs of men joining the noncustodial father population.

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