

### Divorce

#### **The Superiority of Mother and Daughter, Father and Son Custody**

When parents are divorced, boys who are living with their fathers and girls who are living with their mothers seem to be warmer, less demanding, more mature, more sociable, more independent, and to have higher self-esteem than children living with a parent of the opposite sex, according to a study done at the University of Texas at Dallas. The researchers say such custody arrangements may avoid the emotional tangles that can arise if a child becomes an emotional substitute for a spouse, while giving children adult models with whom they most readily identify.

The study included 60 white, middle-class families with children ranging in age from 6 to 11; 33 were boys and 27 were girls. One-third lived with their fathers, one-third with their mothers, and one-third with both parents. The researchers videotaped the custodial parents and children planning an activity together and discussing the family's principal problems. They then had advanced graduate students who did not know the family situations rate the videotaped children on scales of personality characteristics and behavior. Children in each type of family were matched with children in the other types who were the same age, had the same number of brothers and sisters, and whose parents had roughly the same income level.

In contrast to many of the children in earlier studies, the children from the divorced families were generally as well adjusted as the children from intact families. John W. Santrock and Richard A. Warshak, both psychologists, suspect that "because we observed these children and their parents almost three years after the separation, the major stresses of the divorce had already abated."

—Brenda Hirsch

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