

A STEPCHILD'S EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE ACROSS TWO HOUSEHOLDS: AN INVESTIGATION OF RESPONSE PATTERNS BY P-TECHNIQUE FACTOR ANALYSIS¹

Sherry E. Corneal
John R. Nesselroade
The Pennsylvania State University

ABSTRACT

A multivariate, replicated, single-subject, repeated measures (MRSRM) design was used to explore intraindividual variability in emotional response patterns of the stepchild both within and between two households: the mother's and that of the stepfamily. Within this intensive measurement framework, two 12-year-old male stepchildren who resided in their respective single-parent household (mother's) and visited in a stepfamily household (father's) on a regular basis responded to the Subjective Feelings Inventory (SFI) over a two-month period.

P-technique factor analysis of the intercorrelations of repeated measurements of the items for the eight self-reported emotions measured by the SFI revealed consistent differences between the participants in factorial complexity. The analyses also showed that differences in emotional response patterns exist from one household to the next. A more complex factor pattern was found for each stepchild in the stepfamily household than in the single-parent household. A repeated measures analysis of variance to compare the intensity and range of emotion across households for each child indicated very different patterns for the two participants.

INTRODUCTION

The effects of stepfamily life on the development of children has been a focus of family research since the early 1960s. A frequently addressed question has been whether stepchildren differ from children reared in intact, nuclear families on adjustment or cognitive abilities. The long-held belief in the developmental importance of a strong, uninterrupted parent-child relationship and the parent as a source of unconditional love and acceptance leads to an expectation that stepchildren may suffer from the disruption of day-to-day living with the noncustodial parent and potential rejection from the stepparent.

What has been uncovered thus far regarding differences and similarities in comparisons between stepchildren and children reared in intact, nuclear families?

Wilson, Zurcher, and Adams (1975) concluded that the stepchild's experience may be "predominantly positive, predominantly negative, or mixed" (p. 526). In a review of the effects of remarriage on children, Ganong and Coleman (1984) concluded that the majority of studies find that stepchildren do not differ from children in other family configurations. Researchers report that children in step-families do not differ from children in intact, nuclear families with regard to self-sufficiency (Bernard, 1956), school grades (Burchinal, 1964), perceptions of family relationships (Ganong, Coleman, & Brown, 1981), self-concept (Parish, 1981), and ability to form friendships (Bohannon, 1975). Others report that stepchildren, when compared to children in intact, nuclear families, feel more discrimination and rejection (Bowerman & Irish, 1962), have poorer mental health (Langner & Michael, 1963), lower satisfaction with family relationships (Touliatos & Lindholm, 1980), lower self-concepts (Parish, 1981), and perceive both natural and stepfathers more negatively (Halperin & Smith, 1983). Hetherington (1985) found that children who experience parental divorce and the subsequent remarriage of their custodial parent exhibit more long-term problems than children from intact families, but the timing and severity of these problems differ for boys and girls. In light of the ambiguity concerning the effects of being reared in a stepfamily, the present study attempts to uncover the experience of the stepchild via a systematic examination of the day-to-day emotional experience of the stepchild over an extended period of time. The tack followed in the present study is to change the focus of measurement from the concept of a relatively fixed "true" score to the concept of a variant "true" score, with the measurement of intraindividual variability patterns (Nesselroade & Ford, 1987) that reflect the effects of day-to-day events on the child's experience of family life. Given the assumption that the stepchild's experience varies across time, meaningful patterns of intraindividual variability can provide a more informed picture of the stepchild's experience and, ultimately, can serve as indicators of differences (and similarities) between stepchildren and children raised in intact families.

We have attempted to assess coherent within-person variability in patterns of emotion experience of the stepchild who is being raised in two households. To accomplish our objective, we adopted a multivariate, replicated, single-subject, repeated measures design (MRSRM) (Nesselroade & Ford, 1985; see also Cattell, 1963; Zevon & Tellegen, 1982). This design provides information about change within a person by focusing on intraindividual variability manifested over time and situations. Multiple variables are sampled over multiple occasions to identify how those variables are organized over time according to the experience of the individual. In the present study, the result of this type of sampling and consequent analyses is an emotional-response pattern that characterizes the unique content of the child's emotional experience over time in a particular setting. In addition, data were collected to determine the types of activities and people present during behavior episodes. Each person who is studied represents a replication. Of course, the matter of generalizability over persons is a concern to be addressed at some point in the study of a given behavioral phenomenon but, as has been argued elsewhere, it need not always be the initial concern (Nesselroade & Ford, 1985; Zevon & Tellegen, 1982). The strength of the (MRSRM) design is that it allows the researcher to identify fundamental patterns of organization within the individual that can support a more informed search for generalizability across persons.

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Occasions of measurement were defined for the present study in terms of behavior episodes as designated by Ford (1987). A behavior episode is a behavior (or pattern of behaviors) that is coherently organized because of its goal-directed nature (i.e., the presence of purposive behavior). The conception of goal is a broad one and includes seemingly innocuous behavior such as saying hello to another person or the more obvious purposive behavior involved in making a request of someone. Common behavior episodes one might expect to occur in the daily interactions of an adolescent male with his family are mealtimes, conversations, leisure activities, arguments, discipline episodes, and routine activities (for example, a trip to the store or a request for a ride). Behavior episodes that met the following criteria were included in the study: (1) the child was able to identify when the episode began, when it ended, and the activity of the episode; (2) the behavior episode involved an interaction with another family member (or members) so that behavior episodes could be thought of as taking place within the context of the family.

To summarize, an important step both in unraveling the conflicting findings and in further strengthening the information base concerning the development of stepchildren is to attend first to the experience of the individual stepchild that can be structured in terms of patterns of intraindividual variability or change. This can then be followed by systematic examination of interindividual similarities and differences in intraindividual change patterns. The focus of the present research is the emotional experience of the stepchild (as reported by the child) in each of two households in which he lives. Those emotional-response patterns are then compared across households. It is expected that differences will be found between households with regard to the nature and extent of emotions experienced by the stepchild. Because the research questions are exploratory with little literature to guide a predicted direction of differences between households, specific hypotheses corresponding to the nature and extent of emotions experienced were not advanced prior to data analysis.

The analytic steps in the study are guided by four research questions. They are:

1. To what extent are each of eight emotions (interest, jealousy, satisfaction, discouragement, anger, acceptance, embarrassment, and liking) experienced by the stepchild in each household?
2. How are the emotions organized or patterned within individuals?
3. What are the differences and similarities in the stepchild's reported emotional-response patterns between households?
4. What similarities and differences in response patterns exist between the two children studied?

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

The participants were two unrelated male stepchildren who resided in rural Pennsylvania. Each of the children lived with his mother and visited with his father and stepmother on a regular basis. The children were similar to each other with regard to chronological age, number of years spent in a stepfamily, age at the time of parents' divorce, family structure, and time spent visiting in the stepfamily household.

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Child A was 12 years old. His parents had divorced when he was 4 years old. The parents retained joint custody, and A lived with his mother four days each week and visited with his father for three days each week with the weekend days divided between mother's and father's household. In this way, A's weekends include time in each household. He attended the same school during weekdays. His mother had not remarried, and the composition of the mother's household included A and his mother only. A's father had remarried three years prior to the study. Father's household included father, stepmother, A, and A's stepsister, aged 14.

Child B was 12 years old. His parents had divorced when he was 4 years old, and his mother retained custody. B lived with his mother during the week and visited his father on the weekends. His mother had not remarried, and the composition of the mother's household included mother, B, and B's sister, aged 14. B's father had remarried 1 1/2 years prior to the study. Father's household consisted of father, stepmother, and infant daughter (halfsister to B), B, and B's sister.

MEASURE

A measure of subjectively experienced emotions called the Subjective Feelings Inventory (SFI) (Ford, 1987) was used in collecting data. This instrument was designed to measure 11 emotions: interest, satisfaction, feeling accepted, liking others, jealousy, anger, discouragement, embarrassment, boredom, disgust, and contempt. Eight of the 11 emotions have been suggested by the stepfamily literature (Espinoza & Newman, 1979; Lutz, 1983; Visher & Visher, 1978) as being key in the study of stepchildren and thus were chosen for the present study. The emotions are interest, satisfaction, acceptance, liking others, jealousy, anger, discouragement, and embarrassment.

The SFI consists of a pair of items for each emotion. Responses available to the child include "Not at all," "just a little," "pretty much," "very much." Thus, scores can range from one to four on a given emotion item. Previous studies utilizing the SFI yielded test-retest reliabilities of the total instrument of .74 (Lloyd, 1983) and .78 (Ford, C., 1986). The results of these studies indicated, then, that subjects were able to recall their respective emotions surrounding particular events with a high degree of reliability a week after the event had occurred. The participants in the present study were recalling their respective emotions surrounding events of the past few days.

A reliability study was conducted by Ford (1986) to examine internal consistency of parallel items. The results indicate that all of the correlations between parallel items were significant at the .05 level (eight were significant at $p < .001$), and internal consistencies for six of the scales were above .50.

PROCEDURE

A series of 16 to 20 meetings between the investigator and participant took place over a period of 8 weeks. At each meeting, between 8 and 12 behavior episodes were reported by the participant. Data collection terminated when reactions to 80 episodes were collected in each household (mother's and father's), for a total of 160 from each child.

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No data were collected at the first meeting. Instead, it was used to (1) inform the child of the purpose of the study and (2) familiarize him with the idea of a behavior episode by explanation and trial runs. All meetings subsequent to the first meeting lasted approximately one hour. The meeting time for reporting on father's household was immediately following the child's return to mother's home (either that evening or the following day). The meeting time for reporting on mother's household was at the convenience of the child and investigator. The meetings with both children took place at mother's home at a time when mother was out of the house. During these meetings, the following procedure was followed: (a) the child presented a written record of the behavior episodes that had occurred since the last meeting. The child recorded all the behavior episodes that had occurred that day before going to bed at night. Generally, a period of 3 days elapsed between meetings and approximately 20 to 12 episodes had been recorded. (2) Next, the emotional content of each episode was retrospectively reported and measured. The investigator recorded the child's responses on the SFI as the child referred to a blank SFI on which the Likert scale (i.e., 1 = not at all; 2 = just a little; 3 = pretty much; 4 = quite a bit) was printed. In addition, the child was asked to identify who was involved in the behavior episode along with the type of activity present. The investigator recorded this information on the SFI.

ANALYSES AND RESULTS

The scores obtained from the SFI were arranged in four separate data files: a behavior episode ($n = 80$) by emotion response ($n = 16$, two for each of eight emotions) score matrix for both participants in each of two households (mother's and father's). The study of intraindividual variability implies that what one measures manifests variability over time. In the present case, low item-response variability indicates the absence of intraindividual variability. To determine the extent of item-response variability, frequency distributions of each child's responses were obtained for each individual item. An arbitrary cutoff of variance equal to .10 was used to determine which items manifested insufficient variability to contribute meaningfully to change patterns. Those items that did not exhibit sufficient variability (.09 or less) were omitted from further analysis.

The items that were deleted from further analyses included those that measured embarrassment and jealousy. One of the embarrassment items manifested variability in the case of Child A (mother's household). In the other three data sets, variability approached zero. For ease of interpretation, both embarrassment items were deleted. Both jealousy items lacked sufficient variability for both children. This will be discussed in a later section.

Exploratory P-technique factor analyses (Cattell, 1963; Nesselroade & Ford, 1985; Zevon & Tellegen, 1982) were performed to determine intraindividual variation patterns of emotional responses for each child in each household. Numbers of factors were determined by inspection of eigenvalues of the respective correlation matrices. Both the Kaiser-Guttman criterion of number of eigenvalues 1.0 and the scree test (Cattell, 1966) were used. Outcomes are presented in Table 1. Loadings were estimated by an Unweighted Least Squares algorithm (SPSS-X). An oblique (oblimin) rotation was performed, and factors were interpreted.

TABLE 1
DATA CHARACTERISTICS CONCERNING THE
NUMBER OF FACTORS

Child	# of Items	Kaiser-Guttman Criterion	Scree Test	Number of Factors Extracted	% Variance
A Mother's Household	12	2	2	2	85%
A Father's House	12	3	3	3	88%
B Mother's Household	12	3	3	3	67%
B Father's Household	12	4	4	4	79%

CHILD A

Child A's data collected on mother's household yielded a two-factor solution. One factor was labeled Positive and Negative Affect, and the second was labeled Interest. Child A's data collected on father's household yielded a three-factor solution. Factors were labeled Satisfaction, Interest, and Unconditional Love. The factors representing mother's household patterns and father's household patterns are presented in Table 2. The factor intercorrelations are presented in Table 3. Note that in both sets of factors, Interest is essentially a doublet factor.

Household 1 is comprised of child A and his mother, and out of 80 occasions of measurement 76 of the occasions involved interactions with mother only. As child A felt discouraged and angry in mother's household, his feelings of acceptance, liking his mother, and satisfaction decreased. His level of interest varied over time but not in a systematic way with the other emotional states that were measured.

On the days when child A was residing in the stepfamily (father's) household, his emotions varied in a different way than when he was with his mother. Out of 80 measurement occasions, 36 were with father only, 8 with stepmother only, and on 36 occasions father and steprelations were present. The factor labeled Positive and Negative Affect in mother's household becomes disentangled in the stepfamily as two new factors emerge. It appears that child A was now able to experience anger and discouragement without consequent feeling of not being accepted and not liking the person(s) present in the behavior episode. Perhaps the more differentiated three-factor solution in household 2 results from the more complex environment of the stepfamily (i.e., the increased opportunity for interaction with father, stepmother, and stepsister) and represents a style of interaction that is

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TABLE 2
FACTOR LOADING PATTERNS: CHILD A DATA

Variable	Household				
	Mother's		Father's		
	Factor I	Factor II	Factor I	Factor II	Factor III
	Positive & Negative Affect	Interest	Satisfaction Frustration	Interest	Unconditional Love
interest	-.02	.99	-.01	1.00	.00
interest (2)	.08	.92	.01	.99	-.00
satisfied	.72	.18	.77	.12	.01
satisfied (2)	.81	.15	.86	-.01	-.03
accepted	.80	.05	.03	-.06	.90
accepted (2)	.97	-.05	-.09	.02	1.01
liking	1.00	-.12	.48	.01	.52
liking (2)	.98	-.10	.22	.02	.74
discouraged	-.90	-.03	-.91	.04	-.03
discouraged (2)	-.87	-.03	-1.04	.03	.13
angry	-.93	-.01	-.80	.06	-.18
angry (2)	-.93	-.03	-.84	.00	-.17

TABLE 3
FACTOR INTERCORRELATIONS: CHILD A DATA^a

Factor	Factor	
	I	II
I	--	.53
II	.02	--
III	.69	-.08

^aUpper triangular matrix contains intercorrelations for mother's household data; lower triangular matrix contains intercorrelations for father's household data.

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related to that particular context. The factor labeled Positive Affect in mother's household appears to split into two factors (Satisfaction and Unconditional Love) in the stepfamily. This suggests that in the stepfamily context child A is better able to differentiate between feelings of anger and discouragement, on the one hand, and feelings of not being accepted and of not liking or loving the person(s) present, on the other. Despite the differentiation of response patterns, the substantial correlation between Satisfaction and Unconditional Love (+.69) reminds us that the child tends to experience both sets of feelings concurrently.

CHILD B

Three factors emerged from the data of child B in mother's household. A factor labeled Well-Being contained high, positive loadings on items of satisfaction and interest. A second factor, Frustration, was defined by high, positive loadings on anger and discouragement. The third factor, Unconditional Love, was defined by high loadings on feeling accepted by and loving others. In the father's household, the child's rating of his emotional responses yielded four factors. They are labeled Unconditional Love, Interest, Frustration, and Satisfaction. Both sets of child B's factors are presented in Table 4. The factor intercorrelations are shown in Table 5.

In the mother's household, child B's Well-Being was moderately correlated with Frustration and Unconditional Love. The factor intercorrelations suggest a tendency for the child to associate Well-Being more with Unconditional Love and less with Frustration. The emergence of these three factors provides a picture of a child whose emotions are somewhat differentiated. The factor intercorrelations indicate that on occasions when child reported feeling angry and discouraged there was a moderate tendency to also report feeling less satisfied or less interested. Loving others and feeling accepted by them varied together to form a single factor.

In the father's household data, it appears that the factor that was labeled Well-Being in the mother's household data, with high, positive loadings on interest and satisfaction, splits to form two distinct factors. The four factors correlate moderately with each other. The increase in the number of factors is perhaps due, in part, to the increased opportunity for varied interactions in the stepfamily and the opportunity for more leisure activities. Out of 80 measurement episodes, 26 were with father only, 20 with father and sister, 8 with stepmother only, and 26 were with steprelations present.

COMPARISON OF FACTOR STRUCTURES

The factor structure that emerges for each child in his mother's home is somewhat idiosyncratic. For child A, dealing with mother involves a relatively undifferentiated emotional response pattern in that the variables tend to covary in one factor. For child B, dealing with mother involves a somewhat more differentiated pattern than for child A. What child A and child B do share as stepchildren is an increase in the factorial complexity of response patterns from the mother's to the stepfamily household. As noted above, perhaps this reflects an increase in

TABLE 4
FACTOR LOADING PATTERNS: CHILD B DATA

Variable	Household						
	Mother's			Father's			
	Factor I	Factor II	Factor III	Factor I	Factor II	Factor III	Factor IV
	Well-Being	Frustration	Unconditional Love	Interest	Frustration	Unconditional Love	Satisfaction
interest	.86	-.06	.01	.62	-.16	.18	.29
interest (2)	.82	-.02	.10	.53	-.09	.22	.28
satisfied	.81	.00	.00	.09	.02	-.10	1.03
satisfied (2)	.81	-.04	-.03	.29	-.24	.19	.41
accepted	-.03	.06	.41	.04	-.07	.39	.35
accepted (2)	.00	-.12	.69	.13	.05	.63	-.14
liking	.31	.07	.50	.08	-.07	.43	.35
liking (2)	.10	-.24	.51	-.29	-.19	.60	.21
discouraged	-.15	.73	.07	-.01	.97	.01	.03
discouraged (2)	.08	.47	-.05	.29	.66	-.07	-.11
angry	-.05	.93	.05	-.06	1.00	.03	.05
angry (2)	-.18	.72	.05	-.15	.88	.04	.05

TABLE 5
 FACTOR INTERCORRELATIONS: CHILD B DATA^a

Factor	Factor		
	I	II	III
I	--	-.51	.42
II	-.07	--	-.20
III	.27	-.36	--
IV	.24	-.50	.45

^aUpper triangular matrix contains intercorrelations for mother's household data; lower triangular matrix contains intercorrelations for father's household data.

the complexity of interactions and qualitative differences of the stepfamily context.

An important and final question is the following: what are the similarities and differences between children in the change patterns of each emotion across households? By testing the interaction effect of child and household for each emotion using a repeated measures ANOVA, we are able to examine change patterns. A discussion of those results follows.

Both children report a rise in the levels of satisfaction and interest and a decline in the level of discouragement in the stepfamily household. With regard to the remaining three emotions (anger, feeling accepted by and liking others present), the children's change patterns differ significantly one from the other. As child A moves from mother's household to the stepfamily household, his reported levels of feeling accepted by and liking others rise sharply, while child B reports feeling slightly less accepted by others and reports liking others at a slightly higher level. Child A's level of anger declines substantially in the stepfamily household, while child B's anger falls only slightly in the stepfamily household. The results of this analysis suggest that, for these children, the context is an important piece of information in uncovering a stepchild's experience of family life.

ANALYSIS OF ACTIVITIES DURING BEHAVIOR EPISODES

The item means indicate that both stepchildren experienced an increase in interest and satisfaction in the stepfamily households. The data that were collected regarding the type of activity during each behavior episode in each household may account for the increase in the mean level of these positive emotions. These data indicate that in general the stepchild was involved in routine activities and chores more often in mother's household and leisure activities were more prevalent in the stepfamily household. Child A had fewer arguments, made more requests of his parent, engaged in more leisure activities, and ate more meals with the stepfamily than with his mother. Forty-five percent of child A's time was spent in leisure activities and mealtimes in the stepfamily household compared to

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9% in his mother's household. For child B, 73% of the behavior episodes in the stepfamily involved leisure activities and conversation compared to 30% in mother's household. Fifty-seven percent of the behavior episodes in mother's household involved a request from mother to the child. The request was, more often than not, to "help her out."

One could expect interest and satisfaction to increase as pleasant activities such as leisure activities increase, as they do in the stepfamily household. Child B's visits to the stepfamily did occur on weekends, and, in this case, one could speculate that more time was available for leisure activities. For child A, it should not be assumed that the increase in leisure activities was due to weekend visits. The divorced parents of child A retained joint custody, and the weekend was divided between the two households. In addition, both parents were self-employed and created their own work schedules, working the majority of the time at home. The possibility exists for both children that the child and his father share common interests that result in more involvement in leisure activities. In addition, mothers' households were also single-parent households, and the data indicate that the children were asked to do more chores in the mothers' households than in the stepfamily households.

CONCLUSIONS

The present study supports both substantive and methodological conclusions. From a substantive viewpoint, the following conclusions seem warranted — with the qualifications that will follow. First, youngsters' self-reports of their emotions are quite coherent in nature and in their changes and are sensitive to differences in context such as those differences identified between mother's and father's households. Thus, patterns of intraindividual variability or change (both in factor number and nature) have the potential to be valuable outcome measures (dependent variables) in examining a variety of developmental, contextual, and change influences.

Second, there appear to be substantial differences between the child's experiences of day-to-day living in mother's household versus father's household. Context differentially affects the child's emotional responses. For both children, interest and satisfaction increase while anger and discouragement decrease in the stepfamily household. This finding is surprising in light of the tendency in the literature to characterize stepfamily life as stressful and troublesome. In addition, the activities of the stepfamily household are marked by an increase in leisure activities and a decrease in chores.

To the extent that the child's responses differ with context, the data suggest it is problematic to characterize the child by a single score on attributes such as self-sufficiency, self-concept, feelings of discrimination, etc. This raises an important set of questions pertaining to the measurement and comparisons of outcomes for different child-rearing conditions. For example, the more or less stable, "trait-like" attributes (interindividual differences) favored by some psychologists may need to be measured at a greater level of abstraction than an unqualified "true score" on a psychometrically defined dimension or behavioral attribute. For person X situation interaction models, the data suggest the use of such "dependent" variables as level of differentiation of response pattern (e.g., as reflected in number of intraindividual change factors) rather than mere level of score on a selected scale.

Obviously, these conclusions rest on a very restricted sample of individuals. Their generality over individuals certainly needs to be systematically investigated. The conclusions do rest, however, on a relatively rich selection of occasions/situations. When tried, the examination of person generality in the terms identified here should be done without impoverishing the data base with respect to variables and occasions/situations aspects.

From a methodological perspective, the study supports the use of P-technique factor analysis as a promising way to meaningfully structure intraindividual change patterns. The study also demonstrates the usefulness of comparing patterns of intraindividual variability (i.e., comparing child's response patterns between mother's and father's household). This kind of "high order" comparison basis is important, potentially, for studying many different kinds of behavioral development phenomena.

The use of behavioral episodes as a unit of analysis shows promise in the P-technique context. Because our intention was to uncover the *stepchild's* perception of family life, we let the child select into the study the events that characterized his day. In the tradition of phenomenology, we thought an appropriate procedure to uncover the child's experience would be to "listen" to the child rather than to limit his reports to particular events of our own choosing. It is our contention that the child's overarching conceptualization of family life is ultimately based on those events that he selects into memory (perhaps due to the emotional valence of the event). We acknowledge that in our attempt to quantify experience we have set up limitations by forcing the child to respond using a limited set of emotions in fixed categories. Because the child was asked to rate his emotional responses on 160 behavior episodes, we chose to limit the number of emotions so that the task was not an overwhelming one. The emotions that we selected were deemed to be key according to the stepfamily literature (Lutz, 1983; Visher & Visher, 1978) and in parent-child relationships (Coopersmith, 1967).

The implications of the study can be presented in the form of suggestions for those who intervene professionally in the lives of children. First, an assessment of the stepchild's experience of family life should include both the household of residence and the household in which he or she visits.

Second, a one-time assessment of the stepchild's emotional experience might provide a misleading representation of the child's emotional experience. Intensive short-term tracking of emotions as they vary together over time can provide a far richer view of the child's experience. For example, when child A felt angry at mother he tended to not feel accepted by her. But when child A felt angry in father's household his emotional response was more differentiated. There the covariation between feelings of acceptance and feelings of anger occurred at the level of the factors rather than as a one-factor pattern. This kind of information provides an alternative set of measures for tracking development and could prove useful in assessing the intensity and quality of particular familial relationships.

As was previously mentioned, the items measuring jealousy lacked sufficient variability to be included in the analyses. In the present study, jealousy was continually reported by both children as being experienced "not at all" and on very few occasions as "just a little." Our speculation about the lack of variability is as follows. Both children have enjoyed regular visitation with their father, and their parents have maintained an amicable relationship with each other in order to facilitate the task of coparenting. There is evidence to suggest that regular visitation

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with the noncustodial parent and a cooperative relationship between ex-spouses enhance the child's sense of security and place with both parents (McGoldrich & Carter, 1980; Messinger, 1976; Visher & Visher, 1978). When a child feels secure in his relationships, one might expect him to experience jealousy less frequently.

Finally, the study was conducted to uncover intraindividual change patterns and interindividual similarities and differences between those change patterns. On the one hand, the broad picture is one of similarity. Each child's change pattern became more complex in the stepfamily household. On the other hand, the two participants differed systematically in level of differentiation. Child B's responses defined one more factor than did child A's in both contexts. This suggests that the use of normative-based criteria to label clients, at least at the level of traditional variables, may not always be appropriate. Further, the findings emphasize the point that because individuals differ from one another in fundamental ways schemes for obtaining and aggregating data over persons and over time need to be closely scrutinized and evaluated if sound conclusions regarding the nature of behavior and behavior change based on aggregations are to be reached.

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Footnotes

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