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ABSTRACT

The diagnosis and evaluation of families applying for family therapy is necessary to identify problems in their relationships that can be effectively integrated into treatment. In the Family Distance Doll Placement technique, a diagnostic tool for assessing patterns of closeness and distance within the family, parents are asked to make up stories about a family involving five different emotional themes, and to place a family of four dolls to represent what is happening in their story. Research involving 30 families divided into groups, with 10 families in each group, had shown that parents of emotionally disturbed boys and parents of boys with learning problems differed from parents of normal boys in their use of particular types of doll placements. The present study showed that these parents also differed in the kinds of family relationships that doll placements were used to portray. Parents in the two symptomatic groups told stories in which family members were not fully individuated. Mothers of the emotionally disturbed boys portrayed intensely ambivalent family relationships, with superficial closeness between several family members dependent on the separation of another member from the family. Parents of boys with learning problems emphasized family "togetherness," banding together and protecting the family from a threatening external community. In contrast, parents of normal boys perceived family members as individuals who felt close to one another and integrated into the community. (Stories told by parents are appended.) (Author/NB)

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Story Themes from the Family Distance Doll Placement Technique:
A Method for Assessing Patterns of Closeness and Distance

in Families of Disturbed and Normal Boys

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Abstract

The Family Distance Doll Placement technique is a diagnostic tool which can be used to assess patterns of closeness and distance within the family. Parents were asked to make up stories about a family involving five different emotional themes, and place a family of dolls to represent what was happening in their story. An earlier paper had shown that parents of emotionally disturbed boys and parents of boys with learning problems differed from parents of normal boys in their use of particular types of doll placements. The present paper showed that these parents also differed in the kinds of family relationships that these doll placements were used to portray. Parents in the two symptomatic groups told stories in which family members were not fully individuated. Mothers of the emotionally disturbed boys portrayed intensely ambivalent family relationships, in which a superficial closeness between several members of the family was dependent on the separation of another member from the family group. Parents of the boys with learning problems emphasized family "togetherness" in order to band together and protect the family from a threatening external community. In contrast, parents of normal boys perceived family members as individuals who felt close to one another and integrated into the community.

Story Themes from the Family Distance Doll Placement Technique:

A Method for Assessing Patterns of Closeness and Distance

in Families of Disturbed and Normal Boys

The diagnosis and evaluation of families who are applying for family therapy is necessary in order to describe problems in their relationships that can be effectively integrated into treatment (Cromwell, Olson, & Fournier, 1976). The Family Distance Doll Placement technique can be used to assess patterns of distance and closeness within the family as a whole and between various family members (Gerber, 1973, 1977; Gerber & Kaswan, 1971, 1977). As such, it can provide useful information for both therapists and clients (Cromwell et al., 1976).

In the Family Distance Doll Placement technique, each family member is asked to make up stories about a family, and then place a family of four dolls on a board to represent what is happening in his or her story (Gerber, 1973, 1977; Gerber & Kaswan, 1971, 1977). Each person completes five stories and doll placements for a "Loving Family," "Happy Family," "Worried Family," "Sad Family," and "Angry Family."

Studies with this technique have shown that families with an emotionally disturbed member use excessive closeness or distance in their placements of dolls representing family members (Gerber, 1973, 1977; Gerber & Kaswan, 1971; Villeneuve & Roy, 1984). Other studies, using similar techniques, have shown that emotionally disturbed individuals use overly close or distant doll placements (Fisher, 1957; Hobbes, 1966; Klopper, Tittler, Friedman, & Hughes, 1978; Weinstein, 1965). However, the meaning of these deviant doll placements has been difficult to infer, since subjects in these studies have not usually been asked to describe their family relationships in any way. In the Family

Distance Doll Placement technique, stories are told along with the doll placements that are made, so it is possible to analyze the stories in order to understand why family relationships are perceived in terms of overly close or distant relationships.

There appears to be a link between different types of psychological disorders in children and patterns of interpersonal relating in parents. Parents of children manifesting different types of symptoms have been found to be differentiated from one another by the types of relationships they portray between people on projective techniques (Singer & Wynne, 1963). The present paper was concerned with comparing the stories told to doll placements made by parents of symptomatic and normal children. In a previously-reported study (Gerber, 1977), it was found that parents of symptomatic boys differed significantly from parents of normal boys in their family doll placements. These differences involved the groupings and subgroupings of the family unit described by the Family Grouping Schemata Categories, shown in Table 1. Mothers of emotionally disturbed boys used the "Triad with isolate" grouping, in which three dolls were grouped together and one doll was isolated, more often than mothers of normal boys. Both parents of the boys with learning problems used a "Semi-circle grouping," in which all four dolls were placed closely together in a semi-circle, only partially turned towards each other, more frequently than parents of normal boys.

Insert Table 1 about here

The present paper was concerned with analyzing the stories associated with the doll placements that differentiated each of the groups of parents of

symptomatic boys from the parents of normal boys. The purpose was to explore whether the projective material in the stories differentiated between these parents, as did the physical distance measures involved in doll placements.

Three groups of parents were studied, each with a boy 8 to 13 years of age. There were 10 families within each group, making a total of 30 families who participated in the study. In the "Disturbed" group, the boy manifested symptoms of emotional or behavioral disturbance; in the "Learning Problem" group, the boy had serious learning problems and attended a special remedial school; in the "Normal" group, the boy had no emotional or behavioral problems.

The final part of the paper will compare the stories for doll placements which the mothers of the Disturbed boys used more frequently than mothers of the Normal boys. The second part of the paper will compare the stories for doll placements which both parents of the Learning Problem boys used more frequently than parents of the Normal boys. Patterns of closeness and distance in the stories will be examined separately for the positive story themes (loving and happy family) and for the negative story themes (worried, sad, and angry family).

Story Analysis

Comparison of Mothers of Disturbed Boys with Mothers of Normal Boys

Mothers of the emotionally disturbed boys made significantly more use of a "Triad with isolate" family grouping (see Table 1), in which three dolls were grouped together and one doll is isolated, than mothers of normal boys. A total of fifteen stories were told by the mothers of the disturbed boys for this family grouping category, as compared with five stories told by the mothers of the normal boys. The mothers of the disturbed boys told seven

stories involving positive emotional themes and eight stories involving negative emotional themes. The mothers of the normal boys told one story involving a positive emotional theme and four stories involving negative emotional themes.

All of the stories that were analyzed are presented in the Appendix.

Mothers of disturbed boys--Stories involving positive emotions. In five out of the seven stories, the members of the triad (the three dolls which are grouped together) are united by their relationship to the separate member of the family, rather than being united by some feeling or task which has no bearing on the separate member. The triad may be united in various ways-- watching the person who is separate perform a special task, giving a gift to the isolate, or desiring to exclude a member of the family. The members of the triad do not usually seem to feel any particular warm feelings for one another or for the person who is separate from the family.

In five of the seven stories the major construct underlying the break-up of the family into two parts, the triad and the isolate, seems to be that one part of the family performs an active role for the benefit of the other part of the family, which performs a passive role. For example, one part of the family is performing a task which is observed by the other part of the family, or one part is the gift-giver and the other is the gift-recipient.

A story which exemplifies both of these characteristics is the following:

The family is watching a little league game at the park and the son is at bat and they're all saying, "Come on get a hit," and they're all feeling loving and happy toward their boy who is at bat and their girl who is sitting beside them. Being happy and having a good time at the park.

Here the members of the triad, the father, mother, and daughter, are united by the fact that they are watching their son play baseball. The son,

the family's "champion," is a narcissistic representation of the parents. The act of playing ball is not seen as an act the boy performs as an individual, but as an act done for the parents. In terms of overt behavior, the boy plays the active role and the parents and daughter play the passive role. The story is told as an example of a loving family. However, when the story-teller speaks of the family's feelings, the focus is on the parents having feelings about the boy primarily and the girl secondarily. No reference is made to the children's feelings. The triad's pressure on the boy to achieve cannot be experienced by the boy as loving or happy. In addition, the mother excluded the boy from the family in her first statement. She said, "The family is watching a little league game." The boy is not watching, but playing in the game.

Mothers of disturbed boys--Stories involving negative emotions. In four of the eight stories the triad is united by their concern for the person who is separated from the family. The kinds of misfortunes which happen to the isolate involve a lost toy, a father called out of town on business, a child who is lost, and a mother's psychotic break. In these stories the theme directly parallels the spatial arrangement of the dolls. The triad is unified in their focus of concern and feeling; the isolate is separated from the family by an event which is beyond his or her control.

In the remaining four stories the interpersonal alignments and splits are complex and do not follow the simple triad-isolate patterning. All of these stories involve conflict between members of the family. Sometimes the conflict is contained within the triad, in which case the fourth member of the family generally escapes from the family psychologically in order to avoid the conflict (as in the story below). In other cases, the conflict takes place

between a member of the triad and the member who is separated from the rest of the family. An example of the former type of story is the following:

Well, the mother and the older boy are locked in battle. The younger child regresses into his corner and into isolation and the father is very much torn in his support of either mother or older son because emotionally he tends to react similarly to his wife, but intellectually he understands that the immediate issue is really not the important one and the child is asserting some very real needs. . . . Fortunately, the wife, her grudge and anger doesn't last too long and boy has conciliatory nature. Although he's not one to ask for forgiveness, his way of establishing contact is to pretend nothing has happened after awhile. . . . They guiltily approach younger child and woo him back into community of togetherness.

The spatial placement of figures is one in which the mother, older boy, and father are together and the younger child is separate. At the moment when the story takes place, the triad is concerned only with their own conflict, rather than with the isolated child. In contrast to the unification of the triad which is implied by the spatial placement of the dolls, there is much dissension. The conflict involves two members of the triad--the mother and older boy. The third member of the triad, the father, feels caught between his wife and son. There are indications that the father cannot differentiate himself enough from his wife and son to take an individual stand. The conflict is never resolved. The older boy denies what had happened. The members of the triad regain a semblance of unity by guiltily joining forces to bring the frightened younger child back into the family.

Mothers of normal boys--Stories involving positive emotions. Only one story fell into this category. It would seem that these mothers do not associate this kind of triad-isolate split with positive emotional themes. The one story which was told is as follows:

Oh, I wish you got me earlier in the day. Happy family going to the beach. Kids are in the water. Father is in the water with them and/or watching it from the beach.

The mother relates to the examiner in a friendly way, implying that in spite of her seeming resistance, she would have told a better story at another time. She excludes herself from the activity in the story. However, in contrast to the stories told by the mothers of the disturbed boys, her exclusion does not become the main focus of the story. Instead, the children enjoy themselves in the water. The father plays with them or watches them, as he chooses. Each person can be involved in his own separate activity without risking the family's integrity as a unit.

Mothers of normal boys--Stories involving negative emotions. In three out of the four stories, the separate person had chosen to be alone or to remain separated for his own reasons. One member of the triad, or the triad as a whole, is concerned over the separation and wishes that the separate person had not left the family. However, in two out of the four stories, there is an empathic acceptance on the part of the member(s) of the triad, of the separate person's need to be psychologically or physically alone. There is an awareness of the feelings of both sides of the family--of the separate person and of the member(s) of the triad. In contrast to the stories told by the mothers of the disturbed boys, there is no overt conflict and the triad does not require the separation of the family member in order to unite them. For example:

. . . in our family when my husband is worried he likes to be left alone and grapple with his own problems and I go the opposite way, I get sort of frantic and anxious and overreact the other way, trying desperately to get in the middle and work things out. I think in our family it should be more the middle way. I'm kind of overanxious and he's underanxious.

In this story the father is placed separate from the rest of the family to illustrate his physical and psychological withdrawal from the mother and children. The mother wishes that he did not withdraw, but is able to accept his need to do so. In contrast to the stories told by the mothers of the disturbed children, the isolate's separation (withdrawal by father) is not necessary to unite the remaining members of the family.

Comparison of Parents of Boys with Learning Problems with Parents of Normal Boys

Both parents of the boys with learning problems had made significantly more use of a "Semi-circle" family grouping category, in which dolls were grouped into a semi-circle (see Table 1), than parents of normal boys. This grouping category seems to imply that family members are physically together, but are not really involved with one another, since they are only partially turned towards each other. The parents of the boys with learning problems used this family grouping category for a total of twenty-two stories, as compared with nine stories told by the parents of the normal boys. The parents of the boys with learning problems told a total of eleven stories involving positive emotional themes and eleven stories involving negative emotional themes. The parents of the normal boys used this schema for six stories involving positive emotional themes and three stories involving negative emotional themes.

Parents of boys with learning problems--Stories involving positive emotions. In six out of these eleven stories, the story-teller elucidates a principle, which defines what a loving or happy family is supposed to mean. The principle generally states that the family should be close and together. The emphasis is on family togetherness, but there is little or no mention of

specific activities or interactions in which the family is involved. Eight of the eleven stories are told using flowery, story-book generalities.

The premium placed by these parents on "togetherness" can perhaps best be illustrated by an example. This story is told by one of the mothers, when asked to tell a story about a loving family:

A loving family would be close, everybody loves everybody else in it. Same as a happy family again. They really mean the same thing, I think--acceptance of everyone in the family--expression of it (is in) loving feelings, loving words, talk about it. (After a question from the experimenter as to what is presently taking place in the family, she continues.) Well, I think the family is together and I think the parents are on the outside of the family protecting the children within. I would say the children would have the feeling of love, responsibility, but also not being asked to be grown up, asked to be what their age is--in that sense, protection.

In this story, the mother first states a principle in which a loving family would be close, accepting of one another, and together. It appears as if she does not know from experience what a loving family would be like, but has to construct the way it would be. This is emphasized by her repeated use of the word "would," as in the phrase, "a loving family would be close." There is no individuation of family members mentioned. Even when the mother is explicitly asked about activities the family is engaged in, she fails to give any. She responds with another principle about the need for the parents to protect the children. This idea, that the children need protection, is interesting in the light of the stories involving negative emotional themes which are told by the parents of the boys with learning problems. In these latter stories, the external world is seen as very threatening to the family, so it is understandable that the children would need protection from it.

Parents of boys with learning problems--Stories involving negative emotions. In six out of eleven stories, the family is presented as together

because of problems involved in the family's relationship to the external world. In four stories a family member is presented as inadequate in his functioning in the outside world--often a child is seen as inadequate in his school functioning and the family is concerned about this. The world is presented as inadequate, in terms of meeting the family's needs, in several stories. In the most extreme stories, the world is presented as hurtful or dangerous, and the family needs to unite in order to deal with this. An example of one of the more extreme stories is the following:

. . . the dog is lost and everybody is looking for this dog and the boy finds that a neighbor has poisoned the dog and so he runs to tell the rest of the family about this--a neighbor has poisoned the dog they love. So they are going to go together to see this neighbor. I don't know what possible reason there could have been to poison the dog.

In this story, someone in the community malevolently kills the dog and creates a problem for the family. The family bands together, first to seek the dog, and later to confront the neighbor. The family group must maintain itself as a unit in order to survive in a jungle-like world.

Parents of normal boys--Stories involving positive emotion. In five out of six stories, the family is described as being together, but the main emphasis is on a specific activity in which the family is participating as a group. The individuality of each of the members of the family is emphasized in three out of the six stories. This contrasts with the stories told by the parents of the boys with learning problems, which were mainly concerned with the statement of a principle of togetherness. For example, the following story:

. . . This family is very devoted to one another and very kind to each other because they like each other and they're all--they smile a lot and compliment each other. At this point in the story they're having dinner together and each is eager to communicate as

to what they have done during the day and who they had seen and anxious to know what each other had done. They are all very active people who have each done different interesting things and when they tell the story they usually get involved with each other.

In this story, the family is described as being together around the dinner table. They are eating together and talking together. However, they are each interested in the special and unique activities that each member of the family has engaged in during the day. Thus, we get both the togetherness of the family group and the individuality of each member emphasized. In contrast to the way in which the parents of the boys with learning problems perceive the community outside the family, the world outside the family is perceived as an exciting and stimulating place to be by the parents of the normal boys.

Parents of normal boys--Stories involving negative emotions. Only three stories fell into this category, so it is difficult to make generalizations. In all three of these stories the members of the family are together and interacting in some way. The external world is mentioned in two out of the three stories. In contrast to the stories told by the parents of the boys with learning problems, the external world is not seen as inadequate or dangerous. An example of one of these stories is the following:

The mother calls the children--she just discovered that they've been mean to some child and they both take the stand that it wasn't their fault. One story--this one gives another. Mother says she wants the truth. In walks father, inquires what all the anger is about. . . . The mother tells her story; children tell their stories. Father listens and feels imposed upon because he was getting such a variety of stories.

In this story, the family's relations with the community are the focus. However, the children in the family have been responsible for "being mean to" another child. Instead of seeing the other child as to blame, the mother

holds her own children responsible and makes it clear to them that she will not tolerate this behavior. The conflict becomes an internal family conflict, with the father resenting his unasked-for role of mediator. Each parent is differentiated from the other and from the children. Mother, father, and children all have their own individual motivations which are based on their own needs.

Discussion

The present paper has shown that an analysis of the stories told by parents to their family doll placements is very useful in the assessment of family relationships. The parents in each symptom group differed from parents in the normal group in the frequency with which they used a particular kind of doll placement. They also differed in the kinds of relationships within the family which these doll placements were used to portray. Thus, the Family Distance Doll Placement technique, which includes both doll placements and story material, is a useful technique for diagnosing problems in individual family members and within the family as a whole.

Three important issues differentiated the stories told by the parents of the symptomatic boys from those told by the parents of the normal boys: (a) the extent to which the parent viewed family members as separate, autonomous individuals, (b) the degree of closeness between family members which was portrayed, and (c) the degree to which the family was perceived as integrated with the larger community.

The stories told by the mothers of the Normal boys to their "Triad with isolate" doll placements, and those told by both the mothers and the fathers of the Normal boys to their "Semi-circle" doll placements reflected similar themes. Family members were perceived as separate, autonomous individuals.

Each person was portrayed as having individual motivations. Sometimes these motives were similar to other members of the family group, but often they were different. Whenever a story was told about a person who left the family group, he or she usually left by choice, and took individual responsibility for that action. The family group was portrayed as close and unified by the warm feelings which members had for one another. This underlying cohesiveness was so much a part of family life that it was not usually mentioned directly, but was implicit in the stories told by these parents. The external community was viewed as an interesting and exciting place, and interactions with that community were viewed as an integral part of the family's daily life.

In contrast to the mothers of the Normal boys, the mothers of the Disturbed boys did not see family members as separate individuals. In stories involving a person who left the family group, he or she did so because of external pressures, not because of an individual choice. Such separations occurred as a result of a chance event, or because the family member needed to escape family pressures which had become too overwhelming. In the former case, he or she did not take individual responsibility for the decision; in the latter case, the separation was a defensive maneuver. Mothers rarely portrayed the family group as united by warm feelings between members. People were portrayed as experiencing intense ambivalent feelings towards one another. This was reflected in the phrase used in one of the stories--the members were "locked in conflict" with one another. In this particular story, an apparent closeness between the members of the triad was gained at the cost of the separation of another member. This pattern of relationships, in which a superficial closeness between some members of the family group is dependent on the exclusion of another member from the family, has been described by

other researchers (Lidz, Fleck, & Cornelison, 1965; Vogel & Bell, 1960). The stories did not reveal any outstanding difficulties in the families' relationships with the external community. However, all of the significant emotional exchanges took place within the closed social system of the family-- a phenomenon which Framo (1965) has observed to be characteristic of some families with a disturbed member.

In contrast to the parents of the Normal boys, the parents of the boys with Learning Problems did not portray family members as separate individuals. In their stories, there was little mention of specific kinds of interactions taking place between family members as individuals. The semi-circular doll arrangement, which they frequently used, allowed the family to be "together" without facing one another and interacting with one another. These parents emphasized family "togetherness," but portrayed little emotional relatedness between family members. The individual egos of members seemed to be viewed, in Bowen's (1965) term, as a "family ego mass." The relationship between these families and the external community was an issue of major importance for these parents. The external world was seen as nongiving and threatening. In order to survive in this hostile world, the family was described as having to band itself together and protect itself.

It is interesting to speculate about the correspondence between the symptomatic boys' problems and the typical ways in which their parents perceived interpersonal relationships. The mothers of the Disturbed boys perceived a great deal of conflict between members of the family. The Disturbed boys themselves manifested emotional or behavioral problems, which frequently derive from conflicted intrafamilial relationships. The parents of the Learning Problem boys perceived a family's main difficulty as deriving

from interactions with the external world. The Learning Problem boys had major problems in learning basic skills at school, that is, in functioning in the external world.

Other researchers have emphasized the importance for family relationships of the three issues, which differentiated stories told by parents of the symptomatic boys and parents of the normal boys--the individuation of family members, family closeness, and relationships with the external community (Bowen, 1965; Framo, 1965; Mess & Handel, 1967; Vogel & Bell, 1960). The Family Distance Doll Placement technique is a useful method of assessing the way in which a family deals with these issues. In using this technique for diagnostic purposes, it is important to analyze the story material along with the doll placements themselves. This technique can be used to diagnose problems in family relationships that can then be addressed in family therapy and in the individual psychotherapy of family members.

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Appendix

Each story told by parents from a particular family has been given an identifying number. Stories told by Normal parents are numbered 1 through 10; stories told by Disturbed parents are numbered 11 through 20; stories told by Learning Problem parents are numbered 21 through 30. When necessary, the identifying data on the story also state whether the mother or father told the story. Each parent told five stories about a family involving five different types of emotional themes, so the identifying data also state whether a story about a "Loving family," "Happy family," "Worried family," "Sad family," or "Angry family" was told. For example, the identifying data, "Fam. #21, Father, Loving Family" would mean that this was a story about a loving family told by the father in family number 21, a Disturbed family.

The identifying data are followed by a notation in brackets, which refers to the way the figures were grouped. The symbols used are: F = Father doll; M = Mother doll; C = Child doll (the 8 to 13 year old boy who was normal, emotionally disturbed, or had learning problems); S = Sibling doll (the sibling of the target child).

The notation, "CSF-M," would mean that a "Triad with isolate" doll placement was used, and the three C, S, and F dolls were grouped together with the M doll placed separate from them. The notation, "MSCF," would mean that a "Semi-circle" doll placement was used; the dolls were placed in a semi-circle with the M and F dolls on the outside of the semi-circle, and the S and C dolls in the middle.

The asterick following the identifying data indicates that the story was presented as an example in the page .

Comparison of Mothers of Disturbed Boys with Mothers of Normal Boys(Triad with Isolate Grouping Category)Mothers of Disturbed Boys--Stories Involving Positive EmotionsFam. #13, Loving Family (MSF-C)*

The family is watching a little league game at the park and the son is at bat and they're all saying, "Come on get a hit," and they're all feeling loving and happy toward their boy who is at bat and their girl who is sitting beside them. Being happy and having a good time at the park.

Fam. #13, Happy Family (SCM-F)

They're camping and father has been fishing and he's in the stream cleaning his fish and the mother, son and daughter are looking on and thinking about--thinking about cooking them for dinner and feeling happy to be camping and away together on a vacation.

Fam. #14, Loving Family (FSC-M)

This is mother in the kitchen. This is father, who's keeping her company while she's in the kitchen preparing a meal. These are the two children who are outside playing, but who come in ever so often to find out what's for dinner and whether they can have a bite before dinner-time.

Fam. #14, Happy Family (MSF-C)

I don't know. Mother and father and little girl are sitting around the table talking about a birthday party for the little girl and the little boy is in another room wrapping his present for the little girl.

Fam. #16, Happy Family (SFC-M)

Any family activity that we do all together usually is a happy situation. Family has just gotten a new car and father says, "Let's get out of the house," and mother says, "Let's pick cherries in Peace Mountain." I have a better one. Background: Pappa has taken violin for nine years as a child. The oldest boy has taken piano for a year. The youngest boy is going to start taking violin this summer. Momma plays no musical instrument whatsoever and cannot carry a tune. Momma enjoys it tremendously when they get together. I'm there but I'm not allowed to sing because I can't carry a tune, so I'm really kind of looking at them, I guess--let's put it that way.

Fam. #17, Happy Family (FSM-C)

They've each come in from a day's activity which has been very satisfying and rewarding and the positions signify that they're bring in to the family circle to share each his own separate experience.

Fam. #20, Happy Family (FCM-S)

Well, um . . . true story. At Christmas this year we wanted to give Mary something very special. I think we owed her a couple of presents, too. My husband suggested putting enough dollars in cash on the tree so she could buy a horse that had been promised her. He took \$500 and put them in separate envelopes on the tree--with little poems written on the envelopes to indicate

parts of the horse this was to pay for. She was absolutely thrilled with this and she usually isn't thrilled by presents and things. She got the horse. (Q--What is happening right now?) We would be standing around the tree being able to . . . felt we's finally given her something . . . a good time, everyone giggling and happy.

Mothers of Disturbed Boys--Stories Involving Negative Emotions

Fam. #11, Sad Family (CMS-F)

Well, let's have a father, mother--this is fun, I haven't done this in years--little boy and little girl. The father is called out of town on business and the mother and little boy and little girl miss him and are anxious for him to come back. Just how sad do you want this to be? I think that's about as sad as I want to make it. (Q--What is happening right now?) Father is away.

Fam. #12, Worried Family (MFC-S)

A worried family: The mother and father have just discovered that they have been at Farmer's Market and littlest son has wandered off and has gotten lost. They are discussing which one should go and try to encircle him.

Fam. #12, Sad Family (FCM-S)

You really want me to do this? Mother has just found out the little boy has lost his favorite toy and is relating the story to the father who is also feeling blue. The second son has just come in and wants to know what it's all about because he sees a lot of tears in older boy and mother relates older has lost his toy and is very sad.

Fam. #12, Angry Family (SCM-F)

Seeing I have paint all over my hands because the children painted themselves. Mother has just discovered the two boys, instead of painting the fence with her as she asked, have just painted each other--hair and everything with an aluminum paint which she feels might be dangerous to their skin and is trying to explain what might happen if they don't get it off in a hurry. Father is off reading.

Fam. #15, Angry Family (FCM-S)*

Well, the mother and older boy are locked in battle. The younger child regresses into his corner and into isolation and the father is very much torn in his support of either mother or older son because emotionally he tends to react similarly to his wife, but intellectually he understands that the immediate issue is really not the important one and the child is asserting some very real needs. Because he's not immediately involved in the quarrel, he tries to bend over backwards and understand what the older child is really saying, rather than ugly manifestations of quarrel. Wife dimly understands what it's all about and barely controls impulse to strike out verbally at this child. Younger child is ignored. Frightened by tension. His response is to withdraw and pretend it doesn't exist at all. Fortunately, the wife, her grudge and anger doesn't last too long and boy has conciliatory nature. Although he's not one to ask for forgiveness, his way of establishing contact is to pretend nothing has happened after awhile. Makes wife angry because she

holds grudge. Family together. They guiltily approach younger child, woo him back into community of togetherness. (Q--What is happening right now?) Moment when everybody (down?) on this children.

Fam. #16, Worried Family (FSC-M)

The two boys come to . . . the two boys come to their mother and say, "Can we ride our bicycles to Rancho Park," which is three miles away and they promise to be very careful on their bicycles when crossing three major intersections. They go to mother first who says, "What? You're out of your mind," then to father who says, "Yes, if you're careful. You must be home by four o'clock." So the two boys and another friend take off at about one o'clock. Rest of afternoon is spent peacefully by both parents until ten minutes of four, when the mother starts to get very nervous. From four o'clock until four fifteen--she's pacing--quietly pacing--doing constructive things like dishes and laundry. Pappa is theoretically oblivious to it all, reading on couch. By four thirty mother has disintegrated and is insisting that one of them get in the car and go look for them. Father is saying, "OK if they're not home by four thirty he'll do it." By four twenty they roll up--tired, exhausted and having had a marvelous time, and the three males were in cahoots and I still don't think they should have gone on their bicycles across all those streets. Not really a worried family, a worried mother, because I don't think my husband was particularly worried about them, and kids not at all.

Fam. #20, Worried Family (SFC-M)

Worried because of outside or internal pressure? Worried family--I had a psychotic break in '64 and hospitalized for four months and I know from what I heard from my doctor that the family was extremely worried. They were able to get a trained person in to help with children but I don't think my husband knew what to do next and I still get depressed from time to time which was worrisome for my husband. I put them here because I was in hospital over here and they were worried as a family unit. I also feel there's been very little aftermath, at least I like to think (so).

Fam. #20, Sad Family (FCS-M)

Can this be my family when I was a child? But then figures not representational, so couldn't be. I would think hypothetically of a situation of separation or divorce would be a very sad and minimized the situation where children are concerned in middle. Years ago much more common about divorce than today when divorce is so prevalent and I feel very sorry for these children that are almost put up as a ransom--harsh word--selling and buying point between two factions. They--it would seem to me that the pressures on children growing up today are very difficult and this kind of situation would make it very tricky--very difficult for a child to make his way.

Mothers of Normal Boys--Stories Involving Positive Emotion

Family #4, Happy Family (SFC-M)*

Oh, I wish you got me earlier in the day. Happy family going to the beach. Kids are in the water, Father is in the water with them and/or watching it from the beach.

Mothers of Normal Boys--Stories Involving Negative EmotionsFam. #1, Sad Family (MSC-F)

OK, sad family. This is different, not my own situation--someone else's. The husband is very confused and--I've no imagination whatsoever--is his second marriage--seemed like a good situation. She is pregnant with third. He has decided he cannot stand bonds of marriage no matter how much he loves his children. He is distraught by responsibility he can't take--a very intellectual person--but he can't combine high intellect with harmonious situation and so he is--he just comes to visit children. They're in throes of separation and they're . . . younger . . . boys . . . not my boys . . . very sad. She's going to come through all right I don't think he is. I think the boys will do fine too so long as break is made final and they create a new life, perhaps with a new person later on.

Fam. #2, Worried Family (SCM-F)*

Well, in our family when my husband is worried he likes to be left alone and grapple with his own problems and I go the opposite way, I get sort of frantic and anxious and overreact the other way, trying desperately to get in the middle and work things out. I think in our family it should be more the middle way. I'm kind of overanxious and he's underanxious.

Fam. #5, Worried Family (FMS-C)*

Who's going to be worried? Ah, OK, ah, they're all at home busy but the young son is out lost. Where is he? Is he hurt and so on, and they're all worried except him. He's not worried.

Fam. #8, Sad Family (FSC-M)

Family is watching TV--the news. Israel has just been attacked by the Arabs and the family is thinking of their relatives there and there's much sadness and much discussion about, "What can we do to help?" Conclusion was we wouldn't do very much now, so very sad. Would write relatives, see what they needed and hope that things would take a happier note. They continue to watch TV for good news rather than bad news. (Q--What is happening right now?) They would be watching program together.

Comparison of Parents of Boys with Learning Problems with Parents
of Normal Boys (Semi-Circle Grouping Category)

Parents of Boys with Learning Problems--Stories Involving Positive EmotionsFam. #21, Father. Loving Family (FSCM)

Togetherness. Do you want philosophical answer? Again, you don't want to put words in my mouth. Loving family is togetherness. Do you want a story made up? (Answer--Just make up a family situation.) I draw a blank here.

Fam. #21, Father. Happy Family (FCSM)

The two go together. Can't have happiness without having love and affection. Togetherness part is there again and happy family is one that does things together. Afraid I can't help you. I guess I'm not very good about making up stories.

Fam. #22, Father. Loving Family (CMFS)

A loving family. That's a good question, since I'm not quite sure what that word really means. I think it is one that has respect and confidence in one another. You know, I really can't think other than one that's very close--tightly-knit family, ones with common goals, ones that don't need a lot of common influence. Far as story goes I don't know. I'll arrange them as a close family. I don't know on that one--when they do things together, projects together common goals. (Q--What is happening right now?) Nothing in particular. I just put them together to show closeness of family--doing something in common that all concerned would want to do. Maybe all at beach together. In reality what we're probably doing is laughing at Scott, the youngest member of the family.

Fam. #23, Father. Loving Family (FSCM)

Loving family would be in this case there is two children they could own (?) their--their time they're spending all together. They could enjoy their company, be able to have fun together, and I think need to be very short in that respect and just talk about the figures, that all four can hold hands and go out to a part . . . playground, and be in a group. Everybody is in the picture, no strain of either of the four--all go together and can have fun and enjoy themselves.

Fam. #27, Father. Loving Family (MFCS)

Interesting juxtaposition. Loving family--we all love each other. How to express a loving family. Have to think what we're doing in advance? Not too much. Father is next to children this time. I noticed he wasn't the last few times. They're a loving family . . . a story having to do with that. Grown up as a family, liking one another. Since they like and respect each other, I think they could be a loving family. I don't think anything particular has to go along with story as loving family. Think about one another, admire one another, respect one another as individuals and when you ask me what they're doing I'm going to have a hard time. Perhaps coming home from somewhere, trip they were on before, if I can anticipate the question.

Fam. #28, Mother. Loving Family (SFMC)

Once upon a time two people who married and wished to have happy relationship and know love and give love and tried to raise children accordingly. (Q--What is happening right now?) Family circle.

Fam. #28, Mother. Happy Family (SMFC)

I'm at a stalemate on that one. There were these two parents, mother and father, that had nice family of youngsters--very proud of, enjoyed and happy doing things for youngsters and seeing they had happy home life and activities.

Fam. #29, Mother. Loving Family (FCSM)*

A loving family would be close, everybody loves everybody else in it. Same as a happy family again. They really mean the same thing, I think--acceptance of everyone in the family--expression of it (is in) loving feelings, loving words, talk about it. (Q--What is happening right now?) Well, I think the family is together and I think the parents are on the

outside of the family protecting the children within. I would say the children would have the feeling of love, responsibility, but also not being asked to be grown up, asked to be what their age is--in that sense, protection.

Fam. #30, Father. Happy Family (FSCM)

This is a story of the Christmas season, most holiday seasons. These seem to be the happiest times for a group. Think little Judy is probably the giddiest and most excited about these holiday affairs. She usually starts planning days and weeks for holiday affairs. She has less restraint about the giving of gifts and making the days happy with decorations. Make gifts and decorations at school. This sets Judy off and she is usually the leader getting the rest of family involved in things making happy family at Easter. My wife is also excitable although she is more conservative about the spending of money. We tend to cater mostly to the children's excitement, enjoyment and happiness at this time. We knock ourselves out, overdo it at these times. Robert a little more selfish at this time than other members of the family. He likes to be on the receiving end. He's more reluctant about extending himself to make these things forthcoming. He, too, gets a big bang out of these holidays and he looks forward to them almost as anxiously as Judy. Happiness, I think for Barbara and I is when we can have time together without the children although when they're out of our sight we spend most of the time wondering about the children--if in trouble or something, so we never get the opportunity to be away from them or have them out of our minds for awhile. The situation is mother and I to do what we can to add to their happiness and enjoyment.

Fam. #30, Mother. Loving Family (FMCS)

Where they all love each other and everyone wants to do something for the other one. Everybody wants to make the other fellow happy. So the children get up and they take care of their chores and, let's see . . . oh, the father takes 'em all out for dinner--for breakfast, and then they all go to church together. So everybody's very happy and loving and they have a nice, clean house and that's the end of the story. (Q--What is happening right now?) They're all at church.

Fam. #30, Mother. Happy Family (FMCS)

Well, whole family--they get dressed and, ah . . . They got up in morning and mother goes and fix a nice breakfast. This particular morning mother feels real good, you know. This is kind of a true tale, mother doesn't like to cook, so this is special. Ask everyone what they would like for breakfast and everyone like something different, so she fixed what everyone liked--one wanted pancakes, other waffles, other eggs. Mother fixed breakfast for family and before they could get up out of bed she surprised them all and served breakfast in bed. This put everyone in good mood. This going to be fun day. Decided to find out what each wanted to do and make compromise--started at science and industry and wind up at part and play games for all together. (Q--What is happening right now?) They're all together enjoying. Everybody is very happy because others happy. Mother and father very happy because kids are happy. At end of day mother and father can sit and relax--successful day, no squabbling between kids.

Parents of Boys with Learning Problems--Stories Involving Negative EmotionsFam. #22, Father. Worried Family (FMCS)

Oh, gosh. Real story--first one was about--I think major worry today would be problem with our son--this one that is in Clinic School which you know about and problems involved in there. That's about all I can say about that. It is a major concern, not so much to daughter as to mother and father. (Q--What is happening right now?) Nothing in particular that I can see. Actually I set them down I guess just in random order, in size order.

Fam. #22, Father. Sad Family (CFMS)

Well, a sad family. Well, I'm not one that thinks we are a sad family and really have had very little sadness in family. Only thing I can think of is I do quite a bit of talking about political or social problems in society. All I could think of is ghetto-type family with two children, not being able properly to feed cloth and educate them, and their worry and concern. Being culturally deprived the parents probably don't know the worry they should have. (Q--What is happening right now?) Well, the only guess I can . . . Not paying attention to this. Nothing in particular.

Fam. #22, Father. Angry Family (FCSM)

An angry family. Well, our family doesn't get as such in total. Daddy gets angry, Mommy and Daddy get angry, Joe and Alan get angry. I don't think we get angry in total. So I'm trying to think of another example. Difficulty. I believe families normally don't get angry, it's individuals who get angry. Pick one individual in family, Daddy, getting angry at one another. It seems to me Daddy can get angry at Mommy or the kids for something or other, and this is the way it ends up as one of three groups, the kids and Daddy, so I don't know other than that what to say. I don't think these are very good stories, but, ah . . .

Fam. #24, Father. Sad Family (SMCF)

Oh, maybe the boy fell down. Tripped or something and maybe they became concerned about him and ran over to him.

Fam. #26, Mother. Worried Family (FSCM)

(Sigh) . . . um. Big brother is not doing well in school and neither is little brother and mother is very concerned and father's very concerned and big and little brother are concerned and no one can come up with an answer. (Q--What is happening right now?) Oh. Well, they're sitting at the dinner table. (Q--What is happening?) They're discussing it after dinner.

Fam. #26, Mother. Angry Family (FSCM)

Hm--What did I do first? Sad family. Big brother playing his guitar and little brother tells him to shut it up and mother says to little brother that it's all right, it's not that loud, and little brother keeps on, and father gets into the act, and one thing leads to another, and they're all angry at each other. Little brother does not play the guitar. (Q--Does this have something to do with his anger?) It probably does. He would like to play the guitar but does not have perseverance so probably resents it--doesn't always dislike it, just when agitated. Father doesn't like all the squabbling.

That's why he's agitated and he gets so upset, mother gets upset with him, then they're angry.

Fam. #27, Mother. Angry Family (CMFS)*

An angry family. I just got another worried story. Ahm . . . the, ah, the dog is lost and everybody is looking for this dog and the boy finds that a neighbor has poisoned the dog and so he runs to tell the rest of the family about this--a neighbor has poisoned the dog they love. So they are going to go together to see this neighbor. I don't know what possible reason there could have been to poison the dog. (Q--What is happening right now?) Here they are going to neighbors together--angry.

Fam. #28, Father. Angry Family (CFMS)

Once upon a time in an urban community there was this family that one day, little Donny was out playing with the neighbor's children. Little Donny got into a fight with one of his neighbors. It was more or less a trivial matter the argument arose. Little Donny got his nose bloodied. He goes home to mother and says, Michie next door hit him in nose. Pattie had been witness to fight. Mother was very incensed over fact someone had got in fight with her child so she stormed over to neighbor's house and got in word battle with Michie's mother. She told husband when he came home at night and he got incensed. After much bickering with neighbors, father ordered a fence eight feet high built between neighbors so they wouldn't have to associate with neighbors any more. (Q--What is happening right now?) They're just discussing the altercation that had happened when the father comes home from work.

Fam. #28, Mother. Worried Family (SFMC)

Once upon a time there was a family that had taken public education for granted. Due to one child's problems, mother became familiar with the public education system, and familiar with the fact the daughter was not getting the education she should and this worried mother and father and at this point, trying to resolve problem and not knowing how to do so. (Q--What is happening right now?) Sort of a stalemate. We've got in position of what do we do next, what move do we take.

Fam. #28, Mother. Sad Family (SFMC)

That's easy. I don't think I want to go into that. Skip. Pass that one.

Fam. #30, Mother. Angry Family (MSCF)

This is a family that can't get along. I can't think of any. They all want to go to different places, I guess, for an evening out or a day out. Little girl wants to go to park, little boy wants to go swimming or baseball or something, father, he wants to stay home, read newspaper--this sure couldn't be my family. Only one I can't think of is mother. What does she want to do--take 'em all to ballgame. And I suppose to get them to agree on one thing or. So they make a compromise. Little girl, she stays at home and plays in dollhouse. Father and son stay home, work in yard, and mother helps little girl in dollhouse. (Q--What is happening right now?) First like this places no meaning in first part. Compromise paired off. Or if they didn't pair off they could find common interest and play game in house.

Parents of Normal Boys--Stories Involving Positive EmotionsFam. #2, Mother. Loving Family (MSCF)

This is the family going on a walk somewhere, looking out at the world from the security of an inward satisfaction. Everyone seems to have very large eyes. Be very nice, I think. Be together and enjoy each other's company.

Fam. #3, Mother. Loving Family (MFCS)*

That's nice. This family is very devoted to one another and very kind to each other because they like each other and they're all . . . they smile a lot and compliment each other. At this point in the story they're having dinner together and each is eager to communicate as to what they have done during the day and who they had seen and anxious to know what each other had done. They are all very active people who have each done different interesting things and when they tell the story they usually get involved with each other.

Fam. #8, Mother. Happy Family (CFSM)

They're singing. They're playing "Stories in the round," and general feeling of camaraderie.

Fam. #9, Mother. Loving Family (FCSM)

I think a happy family is one in which there is mutual respect, encouragement, respect for other human being as an individual. Each member of family goes through different stages. They go through same stages with children. Takes growth from them, too. The most important factor is understanding and tolerance of each other's feelings. Tolerance--ability to sit back and wait. Just as in experience with other people each encounter brings deeper meaning, ability to fathom situation, and know how to handle it. Respect--respect for each other's interests. Doesn't mean they have to stay together as unit at all times. Respect. (Q--What is happening right now?) Don't look very close. I just put 'em there so I could look at 'em while talking. Not love--went without saying. Have to have love for family, each other and for self.

Fam. #10, Father. Loving Family (CMSF)

Mother and daughter on couch reading, helping with homework. Junior watching TV. Dad comes home from work, "Hi, everybody." He walks over to wife, gives her a kiss and says, "Gee, you look good to me." He pats Robbie, "Why aren't you at the homework, sport?" Gives little girl a kiss, "Hi, honey." She hugs him around neck and says, "Hi, Daddy." He says he wishes someone would mix iced tea he likes. Both Robbie and Pat say, "I want to do it." Both do it. Daddy getting into something more comfortable. They bring tea in. He sits with paper. Robbie starts homework. Mother and Pat continue with reading.

Fam. #10, Mother. Happy Family (FMSC)

This can certainly be brief. Well, all together, happiness. Family is all working together, getting ready to go on a trip to Hawaii, buying new clothes and things they could wear while they're there. They're looking forward to surfing and seeing the sights.

Parents of Normal Boys--Stories Involving Negative EmotionsFam. #3, Mother. Sad Family (MFSC)

They're sad because they feel that one of the children has an incurable disease and he's one of the easier-going children in the household and he's always vivacious and outgoing and kind of an equilibrium in the family and suddenly he has--his personality has changed where he's not quite so active. They have been taking him to various doctors and so far the diagnosis is bleak. You'll have my crying pretty soon. Everyone is sad--brother, because he's not acting the way he used to, parents sad because they fear--because of the outlook for his health. They're sad because of his physical deterioration and father especially sad because he kind of favors this child. (Q--Which child is sick?) Older child. (Q--What is happening right now?) All in living room listening to music trying to be very cheerful, enjoying, perhaps even singing together.

Fam. #5, Father. Sad Family (SFMC)

I can't guess what you're up to. Sad family. I don't know. If sad with each other, it's one thing. If sad because someone ran over the dog, that's another thing. I don't know. Sad family--what would represent that? I don't know. I'm at a loss. Sad family. Why are they sad? They're just sad. I don't know. Say it's sad because of an external occasion. That wouldn't apply. Could be consoling each other. A sad family. Sad with each other in one way or another. (Q--What is happening right now?) Close to unhappy. I assume not mad at each other, just not thrilled with each other. Not unhappy, not happy. Doubt if all four would be the same out of sadness together.

Fam. #8, Mother. Angry Family (FMCS)*

The mother calls the children--she just discovered that they've been mean to some child and they both take the stand that it wasn't their fault. One story--this one gives another. Mother says she wants the truth. In walks father, inquires what all the anger is about. They both start talking together to children, each wanting to impart his story. The mother tells her story; children tell their stories. Father listens and feels imposed upon because he was getting such a variety of stories.

Table 1

Description of the Family Grouping Categories and Psychological ClosenessContinuum

 Psychological closeness
continuum

 Family grouping categories

 I. All four dolls are
grouped closely
together into a family
unit.

1. Circle. All four dolls are grouped closely together in a circle, all facing towards the center of the circle.
 2. Foursome. All four dolls are grouped closely together with two dolls in front and two dolls in back, all facing in the same direction.
 3. Side-by-side. All four dolls are grouped closely together in a line, all facing in the same direction.
 4. Semi-circle. All four dolls are grouped closely together in a semi-circle, only partially turned towards one another.
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 II. The family unit is
split into two separate
parts.

5. Triad with isolate. Three dolls are grouped closely together with one doll placed separate from the rest.
 6. Two dyads. Two subgroups of dolls are made up of two dolls each. Within each subgroup, dolls are placed closely together.
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 III. The family unit is
broken up so that
there are two or more
isolated members.

7. Dyad with two isolates. Two dolls are grouped closely together with each of the other two dolls placed separate and alone.
 8. Everyone isolated. All four dolls are placed so that they are separated from every other doll. There are no close groupings or subgroupings.
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