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Introduction to the Inaugural Issue

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The inaugural issue of the *International Journal for Family Research and Policy* is a result of selecting thematic articles from the Senator Cools' Roundtable and Symposium on Family Dynamics that was held in Ottawa, Canada from May 13-15, 2011. I would like to thank the Honourable Senator Cools and the Senate of Canada for allowing the journal to publish papers presented at the symposium. Senator Cools made possible the Roundtable and Symposium on Family Dynamics, as well as the referred proceedings that are the basis of this special issue. The authors have to be thanked for their academic work as well as providing valuable research, insights, and policy implications for understanding family dynamics. There were also others who were invaluable in terms of making this issue possible. This includes the hard work of both the journal's executive and editorial boards as well as others who work in the background to ensure that the journal and the inaugural issue came to fruition.[1]

The journal highlights current academic trends and findings within the context of the family related to children and parents, domestic violence, gender paradigms, mental health stresses, custody, and related issues. These articles bring together multidisciplinary North American academics and researchers in order to underscore how these topics overlap impact on children and the family.

This issue is organized into two parts. The first section connects family violence to the impact it has on children and parents. The second section highlights family dissolution, the predicaments of parents, and the influence of family law, culture, and other factors on divorce. Overall, the articles examine interrelated themes that are academic inquiries into research, policy, and other scholarly considerations concerning family dynamics.

The first article by Donald Dutton discusses connections to child custody assessments and domestic violence, critiquing the gender paradigm for examining family violence. His work provides empirical support for why the gender paradigm does not exist. He provides a careful analytic review of the literature that reveals different patterns of intimate partner violence (IPV), making the case for why assessment in custody disputes has to be reconsidered to eliminate the bias against males and to encourage family courts to "operate fairly" and ensure a balanced approach.

Stack, Serbin, Mantis, and Kingdon consider intergenerational cycles of family poverty and childhood adversity. Their longitudinal 35-year study of Montréal families from lower-income neighborhoods examines family violence, fathers' presence versus

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[1] It is often those in the background who bring these issues to fruition. They often are unknown in terms their ongoing contributions and essential role. Brian Jenkins' commitment and invaluable help throughout the process of building the journal from the ground up was invaluable. He contributed to the success of the proceedings and the launching of this inaugural issue. Members of Senator Cools' staff were also indispensable for ensuring the success of the proceedings in order for them to more into an inaugural issue. The proceedings and the launch of the journal were possible with the assistance of Anna Slavina, Midila Anton, Dallas Draper, Peggy Silman, Erica Tucciarone, and other Research Assistants at York University.

absence in the home, and the impact of parental mental health problems on children's health and development. They identify the environmental, social, educational, and behavioural factors that predict positive outcomes for many children and highlight the importance that parents play in this process, as well as examining how negative intergenerational patterns may be broken by positive parenting, cognitive stimulation, and environmental support across childhood.

Hines highlights intimate partner violence (IPV) that men can sustain from their female partners as well as the patriarchal model that assumes that perpetrators of IPV are men and victims are women. Her article discusses research completed based on the first large-scale study of 302 men who sustained severe IPV from their female partners and sought help. Various questions are addressed in the study pertaining to IPV and the impact it has on these men. This research is compared with findings from smaller-scale studies of male victims and research on female IPV victims, concluding with a discussion of the policy and practice implications.

Kruk reviews the literature related to his qualitative study that examines similarities and differences between divorced non-custodial mothers and fathers in Canada. He focuses on a number of post-divorce parenthood issues. His findings indicate that there are many similarities in women's and men's experiences regarding the difficulties they each encounter when parenting at a distance. One of Kruk's key findings is that both parents experience the harmful effects of existing child custody law and policy, pointing to the need for child custody law reform to include joint physical custody presumption.

Kenedy's article begins with the question: Do fathers matter after separation or divorce? The initial purpose of his study was to examine the activism of 208 fathers, mothers, grandparents, and adult children and their post-divorce perceptions of the family law system. One of the unexpected findings that emerged was how frequently separated and divorced fathers reported personal mental health issues and suicide ideation associated with their perception of being dismissed in the courts as disposable "social" post-separation/divorced parents and influencing their activism in the shared parenting movement.

The cultural indifference toward, as well as the confused, trivialized and politicized notions of fatherhood, are discussed by Young and Nathanson. They argue not only that children need fathers, but also that men need fatherhood. This article examines fatherhood in the larger cultural context of reproduction regarding the family, with the hope of broadening and deepening discussions of both sex and gender within the humanities.

Fabricius discusses findings on the associations between parenting time with fathers and father-child relationships in young adulthood. He also analyzes the association between father-child relationships in young adulthood and serious physical health problems in later adulthood. Fabricius notes the strong public support for equal parenting time and the belief that family courts are biased toward awarding parenting to mothers. Fabricius points out that in the Arizona courts, there is support for equal parenting time, and that the public belief suggesting that the bias toward mothers in family courts may be unwarranted in Arizona and elsewhere in the United States. His chapter concludes with a discussion of how custody policy can be reformed to legitimize equal parenting time without sacrificing necessary oversight and individualization.

Overall, this inaugural issue highlights the complexities of family violence and the ideological pitfalls of the gender paradigm and related perspectives. It also emphasizes the impact that the family law system has on parents, children, and family dynamics.

Family Dynamics, Ottawa, Canada
Honourable Senator Anne C. Cools

As a Canadian frontrunner in providing services to women, children, and families troubled by conflict and domestic violence, I acquired insight into the dynamics of families that were afflicted. My years of work in this field have given me deep knowledge of these distressed families, their suffering, and their very human need for healing and reconciliation.

Prior to the Senate, I had worked in these innovative social services, pioneering in domestic violence and its resolution. In 1974, I founded one of Canada's first shelters – *Women in Transition, Inc.,* a United Way Agency. I assisted in the establishment of several other such agencies in Ontario. In 1977, I co-organized Canada's first conference on domestic violence, entitled *Couples in Conflict*, with the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (O.I.S.E.) and my Agency. The guest speaker was Richard Gelles, a foremost U.S. scholar in this area. I was also the field advisor to the York University doctoral student who wrote Canada's first PhD thesis on domestic violence.

My Senate work has included divorce law, child custody and access, as well as child support. I have consistently maintained that a divorce ruptures the relationship between spouses, but not the relationship between parents and their children. I have upheld the notion that post-divorce children are entitled to meaningful and continuing involvement with both their mothers and fathers. Too many ill-considered and ill-conceived public policies have dispossessed children of their fathers, and fathers of their children, never intended by the Canadian Parliament when it adopted the *Divorce Act* in 1986. The first interests of the child's several best interests is the child's interest in his/her own relationship with both parents. For decades, I have held a strong interest in this subject matter. My Senate work on divorce, custody, and access led to the creation of the Special Joint Senate-House of Commons Committee on Child Custody and Access. In 1998, this Special Committee travelled across Canada, held hearings and heard over five hundred witnesses, and was well supported by the public, whose interest was great. The report, *For the Sake of the Children*, recommended shared parenting and the concept of parenting as an act of human sharing. It also upheld the physical, emotional, and psychological needs of children for relationships with their parents, both mothers and fathers.

My discussions with Professor Kenedy made clear that the 2011 roundtable and symposium was much needed. I assembled some of Canada's distinguished scholars and academics in these fields, which are still understudied and unexplored. It is still not well understood that violence is not a gendered characteristic, and that men and women are equally capable of, and do commit, violence equally to each other. These human characteristics are not gendered. Men and women are equally capable of doing good and evil, and are equally capable of being good parents and bad parents. Human love, affection, and the care of children are human qualities, not gendered ones. I thank those who participated in the roundtable and symposium, as well as those who contributed their work to this issue. This collection of referred scholarly work contributes to our knowledge of family violence, divorce, custody, access and their resolution. These articles will add to the comprehension of these human problems, and their consequences for family dynamics and familial relationships.

Section I: Family Dynamics and Domestic Violence
The Gender Paradigm and Custody Disputes

Donald G. Dutton
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Abstract. In 2008, two important sources of information were made available to professionals engaged in child custody assessments. One was the website of the American Bar Association that listed ten "myths" about domestic violence and set the record straight (or so it claimed) by citing empirical studies. The other was the Wingspread Conference on Domestic Violence and Family Courts held in Wisconsin in 2007, which issued the Wingspread Report published in 2008 in a special issue of the Family Court Review on child custody. Both of these important sources used the gender paradigm as their heuristic for family violence. In this paper, I show how empirical support for the gender paradigm does not exist. To the contrary, many large scale studies of domestic violence contradict the gender paradigm and show very different patterns of intimate partner violence (IPV). Assessment in custody disputes has to be recalibrated to eliminate this source of generic bias against males and to allow family courts to operate fairly.

Gender Paradigm

The "gender paradigm" (Dutton & Corvo, 2007; Dutton & Nicholls 2005, 2006), views IPV (intimate partner violence) as primarily male-perpetrated against female victims. Men are presented as intentionally perpetrating domestic violence, in order to maintain power and control in family relationships. In contrast, female violence is rationalized as a result of external circumstances, primarily as a reaction to male oppression. Various empirically demonstrated etiological contributions to IPV (e.g., learning, attachment, and personality) are ignored, as are correlates of IPV perpetration, such as alcohol abuse, depression, reported interpersonal dominance between partners (regardless of gender), and dyadic communication skill deficits.

IPV is portrayed as operating according to a distinct set of factors that specifically generate male power and control. Within this paradigm, male IPV is qualitatively different from female IPV (e.g., Dasgupta, 2001; Swan et al., 2008), *Male-on-female assault* is defined as individual criminal activity, for which the perpetrator is solely and fully accountable. In contrast, responsibility for *female-on-male assault* is assigned to external "situational" or "contextual" factors. Hence, within contexts of past male-inflicted injury, its traumatic sequelae, and a fearfully anticipated, omnipresent danger of physical and emotional re-assault ("battering"), female perpetration is variously justified as pre-emptive, preventive, self-defensive, or child-protective (see Corvo & Johnson, 2003). The most prominent examples are Walker's (1984) Battered Women's Syndrome and Johnson's (2008) "violent resistance" (VR), both of which are precipitated by a "pattern" of male-perpetrated "intimate terrorism" (IT) or "coercive controlling violence" (CCV). In short, IPV is seen as originating with men and "male entitlement," to enforce an acculturated "patriarchy" of male dominance (see Dutton & Corvo 2006, 2007; Dutton, 2006; Dutton & Nicholls, 2005). Rooted in Marxist-feminist theory and victim

advocacy (MacKinnon, 1989), this narrow window on the world both distorts the current state of IPV research and compromises IPV-related family court practice (see Dutton, & Corvo 2006, 2007; Dutton, 2006; Dutton & Nicholls, 2005). This familiar stereotype conflates gender and intimate relationship role and compresses the actual heterogeneity and variance of perpetration and victimization risk within each gender. Gender paradigm proponents ignore and discount the incidence of female violence and male victimization in the population at large (i.e., according to rates repeatedly found in non-shelter samples) because such data are incompatible with current axioms and dogma. By definition, the victims of IPV are "women and children," creating the cognitive frame that, in order to protect children during custody assessments, the male (but not the female) must be assessed for risk. As we will show, a full consideration of the evidence does not support these dichotomous, double-standard explanations or procedures.

The gender paradigm is the current dominant ideological view of family violence. Research studies document this gender paradigm "mind-set" (Dutton, 2006) among mental health professionals (Follingstad, DeHart et al., 2004); domestic violence intervention providers and advocacy organizations (Hamel, Desmarais et al., 2007); family court professionals, lawyers, and judges (Hamel, Desmarais et al., in press); and the American Bar Association Commission on Domestic Violence (see Dutton, Corvo et al., 2009). This bias similarly frames the American Psychological Association's "Resolution on Male Violence Against Women" (www.apa.org).

Perhaps of greater practical importance, the gender paradigm seems firmly established in IPV-related law and social work school curricula, and in continuing education programs for the judiciary, family law attorneys, and mental health professionals (Daugherty-Leiter, 2006), and co-exists with the purported gender-neutrality of statutory family law (Austin & Kirkpatrick, 2004; Kelly, 2003).

Dutton, Corvo, and Hamel (2009) reviewed the impact of the gender paradigm on the American Bar Association website which purported to refute ten myths about family violence. All of the refutations led to conclusions consistent with the gender paradigm, but none of the refutations was empirically supported. The evidence provided by the ABA was either from a government publication with no empirical data or from empirical studies that either confused allegations of abuse or unsubstantiated claims of abuse with real abuse incidence. The difference is important. A study by Bala and Schuman (1999) found that only 23% of allegations by mothers of sexual or physical abuse of children by fathers were substantiated by a judicial decision. Similarly, Johnson, Saccuzon, and Koen (2005) found, in a study of custody disputes in California, that allegations of sexual abuse of children were made against fathers in 23% of cases but substantiated in only 6%. Hence, claims of abuse and verified abuse are different. In large scale incidence studies of child abuse, mothers are more likely to abuse children than fathers (Gaudioisi, 2006; Trocme et al., 2001, 2004). In the former study, the sample size was 718,948 and 57% of physical child abuse perpetrators were mothers. Mothers were involved in 51% of child fatalities; fathers in 38.6%. Large sample studies without a gender-political agenda paint a very different picture than the small sample of cherry-picked results available on the ABA website.

Gender Paradigm: Official Doctrine and the Problem of Professional Judgment

Family court professionals', commissioners', and judges' fuller understanding and sound determination of what constitutes domestic abuse and violence and how it relates to children's best interests are jeopardized by continuing legal and judicial "education" (e.g. indoctrination) that promotes a mind-set primed by gender paradigm advocacy, in which an identical action (with the same context and consequences) performed by a man is more likely to be seen as abusive and requiring criminal action than if performed by a woman. This finding was obtained in a community sample in Los Angeles (Sorenson & Taylor, 2005), and with professional psychologists (Follingstad, DeHart et al., 2004). As Follingstad et al. (2004) showed, every aspect of a psychologist's judgment about what constitutes abusiveness is influenced by experimental manipulation of the gender of the perpetrator. The same actions such as inquiring about a partner's whereabouts are judged as abusive when performed by males but not when performed by females.

This same perceptual set is a cornerstone of Jaffe, Johnson, Crooks and Bala's (2008) "PPP screen", which purports to move assessors away from "overt acts" to "patterns of coercive control long hidden from public scrutiny" (p. 503). Effectively, this elevates uncorroborated reports of vague issues, e.g., of "fear," "power and control," to evidence of a "pattern of abuse." Given the high risk of unsubstantiated accusations in custody litigation cases, as shown above, no uncorroborated data should be considered "evidence." Furthermore, whether a parent abused his or her spouse in the past may or may not be relevant to the child's current or future best interests. When men who have committed abuse in a prior relationship form a new relationship with a different partner, abuse recidivism becomes unlikely (Shortt et al., in press). Whether the alleged parent-perpetrator has a narcissistic, unstable or sadistic personality that would manifest itself in child rearing and sustain itself over time is a more essential question. Several excellent assessment strategies for making these determinations exist, such as Ackerman's (2006) or Gould's (1998) techniques, which test parenting knowledge and awareness and do not rely on uncorroborated accusations.

Paradigm Preservation: Johnson's Typology

In general, *female IPV victims suffer a greater share of serious injuries* than male victims, and are *more likely to express fear of physical harm* (Hamel, 2007). However, Archer (2000) found, in a meta-analysis, that the greater incidence of injury for females was only 0.6 of a standard deviation greater than those of males and more than three decades of behavioral science research on IPV in the general population has consistently found female perpetration at least as commonplace as male perpetration (e.g., Archer, 2000; McDonald et al., 2006; Stets & Straus, 1989; Whittaker, Haileyesus et al., 2007). Unfortunately for probative application in family court evaluation and litigation, gender similarities in rates and types of partner assault and greater rates of female violence to children (input) have been obscured by disproportionate emphasis on the severity of resulting injury (outcome).

By thus omitting significant similarities in the actual incidence of male and female-perpetrated domestic violence within the general population, victim advocates and allied researchers present truncated, empirically skewed and data-poor, emotionally-charged, stereotypic visions of severe IPV – typically called, "wife battering" – as a crude form of patriarchal domination, against which sometimes desperate female victims' only option is "violent resistance." Stereotypic "wife battering" only constitutes a small minority of reports of domestic violence (Dutton, 2012). Nor, as we shall see below, is "wife assault" predictive of child abuse, especially if the wife assault was part of a bilateral pattern of IPV.

Not What but Who: Confounding Type of IPV and Perpetrator Gender

For the most part, Johnson relegates female IPV to the category "situational couple violence" (SCV), formerly termed "common couple violence" (Jaffe, Johnson et al., 2008; Johnson 2006; Kelly & Johnson, 2008).

Jaffe et al (2008) subdivide SCV into "conflict-instigated violence" by either gender (CIV) and female-only "violent resistance" (VR). However, according to them, even within SCV's conflict-instigated scenario, not all equals are equal. Because of undisputed gender differentials – men's greater physical size, upper body strength, and capacity to physically injure, and women's concomitant, disproportionate trauma and induced fear – female-instigated, conflict-engendered SCV is cast as an understandable reaction to male SCV, rather than as a serious problem in its own right (Stets & Straus, 1989; Whittaker, Haileyesus et al., 2007). Violent Resistance (VR), a subset of female situational couple violence (SCV), is also reactive, but to the much more dangerous and consequential male-perpetrated "coercive controlling violence" (CCV): formerly called "intimate terrorism" (IT), "patriarchal terrorism," and "classic battering". In addition, the more serious, exclusively male Coercive Controlling Violence (CCV) category is "patterned," sometimes involving chronic instrumental violence, intended to severely limit the female partner's autonomy by blatant and manipulative uses of physical and emotional "power and control." However, yet another CCV pattern is said to involve perhaps only a single instance of overt violence, backed by subsequent manipulative and uncloaked displays of "male privilege:" tacit and explicit threats, intimidation, economic control, isolation, child hostage-taking, punishment, emotional abuse, and sexual control. In these writings, female intimate violence always has an external cause, originating in male violence and oppression.

As Johnson occasionally acknowledges (Johnson, 2006, footnote 2) *most but not all* severe IPV is perpetrated by men. Thus, in his typology, patriarchal violence was renamed Intimate Terrorism and, subsequently, Coercive Controlling Violence (Kelly & Johnson, 2008). Despite changes in nomenclature, male violence is internally caused by the conscious intent to dominate women. Based exclusively on reports of female victims in shelter, Jaffe et al. (2008, p. 501) declare that "*men are the offenders and women the victims in most cases of this [CCV] type.*" The difference between Coercive Controlling Violence and Violent Resistance is gender-related "*context" and motivation*: when perpetrated by men severe IPV is depicted as instrumental and oppressive CCV, when perpetrated by women as expressive and liberating VR. At the same time, contextual

facts and explanations of bilateral, reciprocal Situational Couple Violence are readily overlooked or dismissed (Austin & Kirkpatrick, 2004), when the woman's greater SCV-related injury or expressed fear results in the male partner being designated the "primary aggressor" (for all practical purposes, the sole perpetrator) in an episode of mutual aggression. Capaldi et al. (2009) found that couples using bilateral IPV and whose violence escalated called police and the man was arrested. As Austin and Kirkpatrick (2004) put it, custody/access evaluators should "carefully investigate the arrest and conviction…*to help uncover information that goes beyond the court record of conviction…so the court can understand the context of the violence*" (italics added).

A Reality Check for the Gender Paradigm

The gender paradigm holds that, in North American, Western European, as well as in other, non-first world patriarchal societies, men use violence and its implicit threat to dominate and exploit female intimate partners. However, US National Survey data show that, in these relationships, women are as controlling as men (Felson & Outlaw, 2007; Stets & Hammons, 2002), dominate relationships as much as men – although the modal distribution of power in North American relationships is egalitarian (Coleman & Straus, 1992) – and initiate IPV as much or more than men (Archer, 2000). The latter finding is partially based on a meta-analytic compilation of over eighty studies of gender and IPV incidence (a combined sample size of more than 120,000 respondents). Further refuting the gender paradigm claim that wife assault is normative, only 2% of a national sample of North American men believes that it is acceptable to hit their wife in order to "keep her in line" (Simon, Anderson et al., 2001). These results, all based on large samples (none of which are reviewed by either Kelly & Johnson (2008) or Jaffe et al. (2008)) disconfirm the assertions made throughout their papers.

Citing Kelly & Johnson as their authority, Jaffe et al. repeat a "scholarly rumor", that serious IPV (CCV, per Johnson's definition) is all but exclusively male perpetrated: again, "men are the offenders and women are victims in most cases of this type." Kelly and Johnson, in turn, rely on Johnson's (2008) book and misinterpretation of Graham-Kevan and Archer's (2003) research (see below). To date, the only empirical *survey* that assessed CCV/IT in the general population is Laroche's (2005) analysis of the 2004 Canadian Social Survey data (n = 25,876). Laroche (2005) operationalized "intimate terrorism" (use of violence for control) with Johnson's control scale. In a non-selective sample of male and female respondents, Laroche (2005) found that IT was committed by 4.2% of male perpetrators (based on female reports) and 2.6% of female perpetrators (based on male reports). This approximate 1.6 to 1.0 male-to-female ratio is not the "male perpetrated pattern" cited by Jaffe et al. (2008). Also, since they are based on reports by IPV victims, these data circumvent Johnson's complaint that surveys preclude self-reports by IT perpetrators.

Johnson's disregarding the evidence of gender inclusive IPV in the general population results in an *inaccurate triptych of IPV,* representing predominantly male-perpetrated coercive controlling violence (CCV); male-and-female, reciprocal but unequally consequential situational couple violence (SCV); and female-perpetrated

violent resistance (VR) –again, defined as a reaction to male-perpetrated CCV (Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2003; Johnson & Leone, 2005).

However, survey data indicates instead that: 15% (or less) male assault of non violent (i.e., non reciprocating and non-retaliating) females; 50% bilateral, reciprocal male-and-female perpetration *and* victimization; and 32% (or more) female assault of non-violent males (Caetano, Vaeth et al., 2008; Morse, 1995; Stets & Straus, 1989; Williams & Frieze 2006; Whittaker, Haileyesus et al., 2007). We would argue that the balanced representation of IPV in the general population, rather than shelter house samples, best forecasts the distribution of IPV among family court litigants.

Obscuring Real Differences in Data under the Myth of Equivalent Methodological Bias

The data from which Johnson derived his typology are self-reports of victimization obtained from female victim shelter residents**.** Johnson equates this selective sampling to a "bias" he attributes to representative sample surveys of broader populations, which he calls "so-called representative surveys" (Johnson, 2006, p. 1004). In this regard, it is plausible for Johnson to propose that criminally culpable CCV men and female partners fearing retaliation would refrain from participating in IPV survey research. However, the "refusal rate problem" is unsupported by data. Survey research finds perpetrators and victims of both genders willing to report their experience of severe IPV (Laroche, 2005).

Shelter - To General Population Extrapolation

Although Johnson based his typology solely on self-reports from samples of women in shelters, he erroneously generalized his findings to the distribution of IPV in the broader community. Dutton (Dutton, 2005; Dutton & Corvo, 2007; Dutton, Corvo et al., 2009; Dutton & Nicholls, 2005) and Graham-Kevan (2007) have criticized this extrapolation as unwarranted, given the unique and self-selected aspects of research using shelter house samples. This problem of overgeneralization from these biased samples is imbedded throughout the articles by Kelly and Johnson (2008) and Jaffe et al. (2008).

Based on this shelter-to-community generalization error, Johnson would have family court professionals evaluate IPV-affected disputes about children's best interest within the parameters of his biased typology. Moreover, most states' statutes institutionalize the gender paradigm mind-set by mandating only the accused and adjudicated (presumably, singularly responsible) perpetrator or primary aggressor (Austin & Kirkpatrick, 2004) to certified batterer intervention programming (BIP) – if he wishes to rebut the presumption that, otherwise, he is unfit for access or custodial rights and responsibilities for his children (Austin & Kirkpatrick, 2004). Austin and Kirkpatrick (2004) comment: "Legal presumptions can act as structural barricades to courts having access to…data, or as Justice Byron White stated… 'Procedure by presumption is always easier and cheaper than individualized determinations'" (pg. 41).

Johnson (2006, 2008) argues that community sample methodology yields data as selective and biased as that collected from shelter houses. However, most shelters neither allow residence to males or allow researchers to ask questions about female use of violence (dismissed as "victim blaming"), and they create a political context in which the possibility of female violence is ignored, excused, denied and goes unmeasured. Hence, the most common forms of violence (bi-lateral, reciprocal violence and female-only perpetration) cannot be documented by studying shelter samples.

A recent study of controlling and violent behaviors used by and against as well as male and female respondents in four different samples (n = 1339), Graham-Kevan and Archer (2007) avoided the sample bias issue inherent in Johnson's research. Using victim and perpetrator reports, Graham-Kevan and Archer (2007) isolated an IT subsample that used more physical aggression and controlling behaviors and inflicted more injuries relative to their partners. In addition, they conclude: "*the present [sub]sample…contrary to Johnson's predictions…contained similar proportions of men and women [as well as of] nonviolent victims*."

Graham-Kevan and Archer (2007) also conclude:

Johnson's typologies may need to be redefined to encompass the failure to find that IT is more likely to be one-sided than SCV in non-selected (i.e. non-shelter) samples. It may be that mutuality differs by sample, with one-sided IT aggression being the norm in selected samples, and mutual aggression in non-selected (representative) samples. An alternative explanation (to Johnson's) is that women identified as victims of partner violence are not asked about their own use of aggression due to assumptions of passivity and stereotypes about "domestic violence". Indeed, when both partners are asked about the use of physical aggression in their relationship near mutuality is evident. (p. 18).

This result replicates survey data findings by Stets and Straus (1989). In non-selected (i.e., non shelter samples), IT (which they defined as repeat, severe violence against a non-violent intimate) is symmetrical by gender. The asymmetrical findings from shelters result from sample selection (only severely victimized women present to shelters) and the exclusion from most shelter research of questions about female perpetration.

In not pointing out that Graham-Kevan and Archer found *gender asymmetrical CCV typical of only one of their four sample groups (the shelter sample),* Kelly and Johnson (2008) cherry-pick and distort the data in a fashion that makes Graham-Kevan and Archer's data appear to support rather than disconfirm Johnson's typology. Actually, since all other groups, including a group of men court-mandated for spouse assault treatment, exhibited gender symmetry in incidence of CCV/IT, the Graham-Kevan and Archer (2003) findings are evidence of the limited heuristic and explanatory usefulness of a typology based exclusively on shelter sample data. Graham-Kevan and Archer write: "in this study, 70% of all IT [intimate terrorists] were found in [i.e. reported by] the shelter sample, 13% were found in the male prisoner sample, 17% were found in the student sample, and, perhaps surprisingly, none were found in the male treatment program sample" (p. 1259). Given Graham-Kevan and Archer's (2003) findings, shelter sample data are clearly unique, not indicative of general population sample data. The

absence of equally sampled shelters for men makes extrapolation of gender asymmetrical CCV from shelter samples to the general population scientifically unsupportable. Even when male reports of CCV victimization are available, Johnson ignores them, analyzing only female victimization reports (Johnson & Leone, 2005). Hence, all of Johnson's research on gender differences in CCV/IT confounds (1) sample selectivity, and biases in reporting one's own violence versus partner violence with (2) gender differences in incidence of CCV (Archer, 1999; Dutton & Hemphill, 1992). This major interpretative error permeates Johnson's work, and is seized upon by Jaffe and others who would preserve the gender paradigm and apply it to sensitive court determinations, despite the evidence.

On the rare occasion when shelter samples are asked about their own use of violence, a very different picture than Johnson's "intimate terrorism" exists. One is a report by the founder of the battered women's shelter movement (Pizzey, 1982), who identified about half of the first 100 women in her shelter as "violence prone," co-perpetrators with a propensity to physically abuse their husbands and/or their children. Ms Pizzey was ostracized from the "movement" for her efforts. Another exception is McDonald, Jouriles, Tart and Minze (2006) who studied "children's adjustment in families with severe violence toward the mother". Contrary to paradigm expectation, when asked, this sample of female shelter residents reported that, in their relationships, "96% of the men and 67% of the women (i.e. themselves) had engaged in severe violence toward the partner...." No other shelter based research that we could find has inquired about female use of violence. Female shelter samples are not asked to report exposures of their children to their own violence. However, a recent national survey of 1615 dual-parent households found that the risk of children's exposure to violence by mothers was 2.5 times that of exposure to violence by fathers (McDonald, Jouriles et al., 2009).

The Forest in the Trees: A Focused View of the Relevant Research Non-selective Sample Studies

In short, when male as well as female victims and perpetrators are sampled, a very different picture emerges (Archer, 2000; Dutton, 2006; McDonald, Jouriles et al., 2006; Whittaker, Haileyesus et al., 2007). Also, well-designed empirical dating studies using comparison groups and finding comparable rates of emotionally abusive and controlling behaviors across gender have been published since the 1980s (Douglas & Straus, 2006; Kasian & Painter, 1992; Rouse, 1988; Stets, 1991). Strong correlations across gender have been found between dominant personality, need to control one's partner and physical violence perpetration in married couples (Riggs, O'Leary et al., 1990; Straus, 2006). Males and females are equally likely to combine the use of physical violence with emotionally abusive and controlling behaviors, the core dynamic of CCV (Cano, Avery-Leaf et al., 1998; Hines & Saudino, 2003). In their comprehensive study of 13,601 dating university students in 32 countries, Douglas and Straus (2006) reported that dominance scores are roughly equal across gender, and that dominance behavior by females increases the risk of severe female-only and mutual IPV more so than does male dominance. Similar findings have been found in clinical populations. Studies by Stacey, Hazelwood and Shupe (1994), on men arrested for domestic violence and mandated to a

batterer intervention program, one-third of the physical violence was perpetrated by the female partner (legally deemed the "victim"), and rates of male-perpetrated emotional abuse and control were significantly higher than female partner rates in only about half of the thirteen categories. More recently, Feder and Henning (2005) reported equivalent rates of injury-causing physical violence among couples dually arrested for domestic violence, with men somewhat more likely to engage in isolation behaviors and women somewhat more likely to engage in verbal abuse. In his study of factors predicting recidivism by men in court mandated treatment groups (who had been arrested and convicted of wife assault), Gondolf (2000) noted that 40% of the female partners of the men said that they (the females) struck the first blow. None of these findings are cited by Kelly and Johnson (2008), and they are absent from Johnson's other work.

The Problem of Controlling Behaviors

An analysis of data originally obtained through the National Violence Against Women Survey (NVAWS) with a sample of over 15,000 currently married or formerly married adults (Felson & Outlaw, 2007) found that: (1) men and women are equally controlling and jealous towards their partners; (2) the relationship between use of control/jealousy and physical violence exists equally for both male and female respondents; and (3) "intimate terrorists" can be either male or female. Regarding the extent to which men and women engage in "intimate terrorism," Felson and Outlaw (2007) conclude that both husbands and wives who are controlling are more likely to produce injury and engage in repeated violence and that "in troubled marriages, men and women differ in their methods of control rather than their overall desire to control." (p. 404).

Similar effects are observed for jealousy, although not all are statistically significant. *"The seriousness of the violence is apparently associated with motive, although the relationship does not depend on gender"* (p. 404). It should be pointed out that the NVAWS was designed, conducted and analyzed by feminist researchers, who sought to prove that violence against female intimate partners is much more serious than violence against male intimate partners.

In the 2004 Canadian General Social Survey (CSS: Laroche 2005), the 25,876 respondents, equally split by gender, were asked about "perceptions of crime" and violence in the home. That is, male and female respondents were asked about instrumental controlling behaviors used against them by their partners (Laroche, 2005). Equivalent rates of severe instrumental abuse were found, with 8% of women and 7% of men reporting victimization in the past five years. Victimization by repeat, severe, fear inducing, instrumental violence (IT/CCV) was reported by 2.6% of men and 4.2% of women. Equivalent injuries, use of medical services and fear of the abuser were also discovered in cases where the abuser used repeated instrumental abuse (Intimate Terrorism). Among male respondents who reported abuse victimization, 79% reported fearing for their life when their female partner used intimate terrorism (compared to 72% of women victims of male IT). Of these men, 65% reported having been injured (compared to 67% of female victims). Thus, contrary to Johnson's formulation, coercive terroristic abuse victimization was reported by comparable numbers of women and men

in the general population. Jaffe et al.'s assertion of an "emerging consensus" that rules out instrumental violence by females is contradicted by this research.

Violence Perpetration Revisited

Furthermore, based on a US National survey, Stets and Straus (1989, 1992) reported that violence by women against either non-violent or less violent men (i.e., husband beating), was double the prevalence of the reverse pattern (wife beating). In the US National survey (n = 5331), 825 respondents reported experiencing one or more assaults. In this victim subsample, couples reported incidents of reciprocal violence (matched for level of severity) in 39% of the cases; 8% of the cases reported a wife battering pattern (male severe violence against a non-violent or minimally violent female); and 16% reported husband battering (female severe violence against a non-violent or minimally violent male). Repeat, severe violence is perpetrated more or less equally across gender, as found in Grandin and Lupri's (1997) analysis of the 1985 U.S. National Family Violence Survey (n = 4,032 men and women), and the Canadian National Family Life Survey (n = 1,123 men and women). These results disconfirm the depiction of all female violence as reactive - an inconvenient result for the gender paradigm mind-set.

The greater relative frequency of female-to-male severe IPV perpetration is even more pronounced in cohabiting heterosexual couples (20% vs. 8.5%) and in dating couples (26% vs. 5%). These data, first published in 1989 by Stets and Straus, are not mentioned by Kelly and Johnson or by Jaffe et al. Two decades later, this pattern was replicated in Whittaker, Haileyesus et al. (2007), which found reciprocal violence (SCV) to be most common (50%), followed by unilateral female violence (32%), followed by unilateral male violence (15%). That is, both surveys found women to be frequently violent, even when their male partner was non-violent (i.e., neither reciprocating at the time nor retaliating later). In fact, several such surveys (see Figure 1) all find bilateral IPV to be most common, followed by female IPV and then male IPV. Thus, the IPV profiled in these surveys involves significant female-perpetrated "abusive-controlling" violence (CCV), not only the reactive forms allowed by Kelly and Johnson (2008) or by Jaffe et al. (2008); female violence in the general population is not, as they suggest, confined to reactive sub-categories of IPV. This evidence further refutes Jaffe et al.'s "emerging consensus." Female coercive violence (CCV) is no longer, as they claim, merely a possibility "that merits further attention." Minimization and denial of substantial data sets of female violence, as we shall see, have important implications for custody assessments that hold the best interests of the child as paramount.

The Impact of Emotional Abuse and Control

Kelly and Johnson (2008) argue that coercive controlling violence (CCV) "does not necessarily manifest itself in high levels of violence," and state a concern for what they term "incipient CCV," in which there is a "clear pattern of power and control but not yet any physical violence" (pp. 481-482). In this definition, the essence of CCV is non-

physical abuse which, according to the authors, is primarily male-perpetrated. However, several large sample studies also contradict this claim (Felson & Outlaw, 2007; Stets, 1991; Stets & Straus, 1989; Whittaker, Haileyesus et al., 2007), finding equal rates of non-physical abuse perpetration across gender. Kelly and Johnson's expanded ("incipient") definition of CCV would seem to contradict the paradigmatic argument that serious partner abuse must be based on male physical size and capacity to inflict more frequent and severe physical injury. In requiring merely the possibility (the "victim's" subjective expectation) – not necessarily any prior episode – of physical abuse or injury, the empirical meaning of behind-closed-doors CCV (coercive battering) becomes even less possible to corroborate and the evaluator's fact-finding more elusive. Within such subjective framing, is it possible to find CCV has *not* occurred? If empirical disproof is not an option, the evaluator's assessment is reduced to relying on the forensic instrument most vulnerable to a wide spectrum of cognitive and substantive bias – clinical judgment (Austin & Kirkpatrick, 2004; Gould, 2004; Martindale, 2005).

Others have questioned a rigid distinction between situational (SCV) and controlling (CCV) violence. In their study of 273 couples seeking marital counselling, Simpson, Doss, Wheeler and Christensen (2007) identified a two-category typology, akin to Johnson's CCV and SCV types. One category consisted of couples with low-level violence and minor physical injury to partners and the other of couples with moderate-to-severe violence and physical injury. Contrary to expectation, in the *low-level IPV group*, Simpson et al. (2007) found *several highly emotionally abusive couples* who they believed better fit a batterer/CCV profile. Likewise, in the *moderate-to-severe violence group* many couples who had *rarely engaged in emotional abuse* appeared more characteristic of SCV.

As noted, because of physical disparities between genders, women generally suffer greater consequences of all but female-only IPV. However, the victimization literature is replete with battered women's accounts describing emotional abuse and control as more psychologically distressing than physical abuse, even when compared to severe physical beatings (Walker, Ballinger et al., 1984). Indeed, on a variety of clinical measures comparing IPV impact, battered women fare significantly worse from exposure to emotional abuse and control than they do to physical assault, e.g., in lowered-self esteem (Follingstad, Rutledge et al., 1990) and PTSD (Arias & Pape, 1999). Less widely acknowledged and discussed are similar accounts from battered men (Pearson, 1998; Hines, Brown et al., 2007). Emotionally abused men evidence symptoms of PTSD and problem drinking (Hines & Malley-Morrison, 2001), and depression (Simonelli & Ingram, 1998). Furthermore, there is evidence that non-physical forms of abuse impact men and women to roughly the same degree. In Vivian and Langhinrichsen-Rohling's (1994) sample of couples seeking marital therapy, male and female victims reported equally high levels of depression following psychological abuse.

In the large sample National Comorbidity Study of gender differences in patterns and reactions to IPV (n = 3,519), Williams and Frieze (2005) found violence patterns, including mild and severe perpetration by both heterosexual partners. Women's victimization was more strongly related to debilitating psychosocial outcomes when violence was one-sided. However, male and female respondents suffered similar social and emotional effects as a result of the most common pattern of IPV in the data – mutual violence.

As with the rest of Johnson's typology, if an "incipient CCV" hypothesis is to be fairly understood and usefully applied in specific family court cases, it should accommodate most relevant facts, not only a selected subset consistent with the gender paradigm. We agree that tacit threats and a clear and present danger of severe violence can intimidate intimate partners' compliance with oppressive conditions having serious consequences, including for exposed children. Evaluations of power and control and potential for abuse to children should be applied to both parents, not unilaterally.

Developmental Trajectory Studies

Another branch of research that contradicts the gender paradigm stereotype of exclusively reactive female violence is the longitudinal study of *female aggression development*. Far from being reactive to current relationship dynamics, female aggression has been assessed as early as kindergarten (Serbin, Stack et al., 2004). Serbin and others' longitudinal studies (Capaldi, 2004; Ehrensaft, Moffit et al., 2004; Moffit, 2001) found that adult women who had been classified as aggressive in kindergarten became aggressive mothers whose children made more visits to the emergency ward. These women were also more likely to use IPV and to choose men who also used IPV. This "assortative (birds of a feather) mating" was also found by Capaldi et al. (2004). For both genders, this indicates a long developing set of antisocial tendencies, including the selection of mates with similar antisocial tendencies. Adult female child abuse, no less than the male partner's instrumental and unilateral abuse and violence, is predictable from long-term developmental (Serbin et al., 2004, Moffitt et al., 2001) and psychopathological features (Ehrensaft et al., 2006).

The Risks to Children from Abusive Parents

The evidence about female caregiver risk to children is similarly clear, and highlights the problem of underestimating female violence in child custody assessments. Despite recent trends toward increased, meaningful paternal participation in day-to-day parenting, mothers are still likely to spend more time, have more contact, and to be primary caretakers of children within the family. This disproportionate responsibility in childrearing may partially explain the results of the two largest studies of child abuse and neglect ever to be conducted. Still, this research is particularly noteworthy, and paints a very different picture than that presented by Jaffe et al. (2008) and Kelly and Johnson's (2008) attribution of men's greater propensity to family violence. One is a study of 135,573 child maltreatment investigations conducted by Health Canada, and published by the National Clearing House on Family Violence (Trocme et al., 2001). This study examined physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, emotional maltreatment and "multiple categories" within the general population. Cases of alleged abuse are further divided into substantiated, suspected, and unsubstantiated categories. Substantiation rates do not, in general, vary by gender of perpetrator and run from 52% to 58%. Compared to biological fathers, biological mothers were found more likely to perpetrate child physical abuse (47% vs. 42%), neglect their children (86% vs. 33%), engage in emotional maltreatment

(61% vs. 55%), and contribute to multiple categories (66% vs. 36%). Biological fathers are more likely perpetrators of child sexual abuse (15% vs. 5%).

The second study, using an even larger sample of 718,948 reported cases of child abuse, was conducted by the United States Administration for Children and Families (Gaudioisi, 2006) and reported that, in 2005, women (58% of the child abuse perpetrators) were upwards of 1.3 times more likely to abuse their children than were men. When acting alone, biological mothers were twice as likely to abuse their children as were biological fathers, and biological mothers were the main perpetrators of child homicide. Also, as described above, McDonald, Jouriles et al. (2006) found that risks of child exposure to violence were 2.5 times higher for female (mother)-perpetrated violence than male (father) violence. Thus, again, the best research data, from the largest and most rigorous studies tell a very different story from that related by Jaffe et al. and Kelly and Johnson. Again, contrary to gender paradigm lore, but in line with the best available research data, family court personnel considering risks to family function and safety, will serve their clientele better with an open, balanced, impartial attitude toward specific evidence presented in each evaluation and hearing, rather than relying on preconceptions about the patriarchal nature of family violence and its effects on children thus exposed or targeted.

The Jaffe Assessment Bias

As detailed above, within Johnson's gender paradigm typology female violence is effectively contained within situational (SCV) and reactive (VR) categories, and, by definition, is excluded from the terrorizing/CCV/"classic battering" category. Likewise, Jaffe, Lemon, & Poisson (2003) previously argued that – because of self-defensive or another reactive "context" – female perpetrated IPV, if not fully justifiable, is more understandable and tolerable, that is, not in the same criminal class as male perpetration. Instead, Jaffe and his colleagues primed custody assessors to regard men as the only true IPV perpetrators, and to suspect male family court litigants' denials of abuse (Martindale, 2005). Contrary to exonerating the accused, such denial may confirm his culpability, because highly abusive men also deny abuse. In contrast, a female "victim's" allegation often deserves the benefit of the doubt; that is, when investigation fails to confirm or disconfirm the occurrence of alleged "behind-closed-doors" incidents, prudence requires "err[ing] on the side of safety" (Johnson & Leone, 2005). Rather than valuing skepticism and independent judgment in forensic practice, this caveat invites family court professionals to depart from the usual expectation that disputant-supplied information will be "biased, distorted, incomplete, or untrue" (Austin & Kirkpatrick, 2004). Instead, evaluators are invited to rely on preconceptions of what "everyone knows" to be true about domestic violence, *a priori*.

The Witch Hunt Model

Jaffe, Lemon, and Poisson (2003) tell evaluators to "review allegations with each party and give each side an opportunity to explain what happened" (p. 47), and to "have the alleged perpetrator complete a standard inventory about the abuse and to engage him in a discussion about what transpired during the course of the relationship". However, this instruction is provided to readers who have been primed to believe that men are perpetrators and that perpetrators lie. Therefore, it is reasonable to ask: are family court professionals being instructed to genuinely assess mothers for evidence of perpetration and fathers for evidence of victimization and to weigh each parent's risk to the child, or are they being primed to focus only on one gender as both a risk and as a potential liar? Essentially, we understand Jaffe et al. (2003) to be encouraging child custody evaluators to distrust male accounts of alleged IPV incidents, and to use clinical pre-judgment to believe the alleged victim. This departure of practice from principle is implicit in the concluding ("primary perpetrator") section of the Jaffe et al. (2008) PPP protocol. Such procedure is in direct contravention of the Ethical Standards for Forensic Assessment (Weissman & DeBow, 2003) which require a neutral evaluative frame of mind and a weighing of contradictory hypotheses about a case. As shown above, there is solid, empirically grounded reason to maintain a gender-neutral framework in forensic assessment of IPV-affected child custody disputes. In contrast, cognitive frameworks, such as the gender paradigm, alter fundamental aspects of sound forensic evaluation come with dramatic consequences for decision making (Kahneman & Tversky, 1973).

When allegations of child abuse are made in child custody cases, the cognitive framework is laid for a witch hunt (Kadri, 2005), in which protestations of innocence are twisted into proof of guilt. In his brilliant history of the trial, Kadri shows how the "Satanic Cult" abuse cases (e.g., the infamous McMartin daycare investigation and prosecution in Los Angeles) were direct extensions of the mindset of the witch hunt (including a panic or hysteria that overestimates incidence and has an unjustified "certainty" of the accused's lying and guilt). Jaffe et al. (2003) is a primer for infusing similarly illogical and irrational beliefs in family court processes. Shear's (2004) review describes it as "a work of advocacy focusing on the plight of battered women and their children, rather than an authoritative text on the assessment and management of cases involving domestic abuse allegations in family courts."

Having misled custody assessors about the frequency of female IPV, Jaffe et al. (2008) instruct them about ways batterers use custody disputes and litigation to extend their own needs for "power and control" *after* mothers and children achieve physical separation from their abusers. Jaffe et al. (2008) cite Jaffe et al. (2003) as their authority, as though the earlier work had been solidly researched. But this is not so. Instead, Jaffe et al. (2003), proffer the following "evidence":

> *One California child custody researcher found her assistants could always identify which court files involved domestic violence; those files were significantly thicker than the non-abuse files, indicating that the parties had undergone much more litigation. Similarly, a formerly battered woman in Berkeley, California told one of the authors that her ex-partner had dragged her into court 42 times in the previous year, arguing over custody and visitation issues.* (p. 61)

Hence, the claim that male perpetrators abuse the court system is based on two uncorroborated second hand reports. The injudiciousness of family court professionals basing crucial decisions on such flimsy "evidence" should go without saying.

It is feasible to hypothesize that controlling personalities of either gender would be motivated to subvert court processes. *Empirically*, however, it has not been established that abusive males do this disproportionately, as Jaffe et al. (2008) claim. In fact, some evidence suggests that fathers report significantly higher rates of acquiescence to mothers' child rearing preferences (Newmark, Harrell et al., 1995) and that many women feel entitled to dominate in the home and to engage in "maternal gatekeeping" (Allen & Hawkins, 1999; Straus, 1999; Vogel, Murphy et al., 2007).

The Unfounded Allegation Problem

Jaffe et al. (2008) state both that "there is virtually no research on the extent to which abuse allegations are clearly false and maliciously fabricated" (p. 508), and then that "it is critical to emphasize that the making of false allegations of spousal abuse is much less common than the problem of genuine victims who fail to report abuse" (p. 508). If there is no research on the extent of false allegations, how could they know these are less frequent than unreported actual assault? In fact, the studies often cited as "evidence" for low rates of false allegations are not designed to assess or detect them (see Dutton et al., 2009).

For example, a study by Trocme and Bala (2005) simply asks custody/access investigators to judge – i.e., to give their clinical impressions – of whether unsubstantiated allegations were made falsely or in "good faith." These court investigators constitute another selective sample: by prior training about the veracity of female victims and the untrustworthiness of "their abusers," family court evaluators are already likely to share the researchers' gender paradigm perspective. Proving false allegations, instead, would require in-depth examination of the "victim's" motives, and most investigations stop short of that, by declaring allegations "unsubstantiated." In a recent review of this outcome, Dutton et al. (2009) could find only one study of abuse allegations in custody cases (Johnston et al., 2005, see below) where an acceptable criterion was used (a judges' decision) to declare an allegation unsubstantiated.

Johnston and her colleagues (Johnston, Lee et al., 2005) conducted a large sample study of allegations and substantiations of abuse in custody-disputing families in California. Substantiations in this study were defined as *any* corroborating evidence of abuse to back up allegations that "had not been dismissed as *entirely* unfounded" (italics added). Johnston et al. (2005) found allegations of child sexual abuse to be made against fathers in 23% of cases studied (and against mothers in another 6%). For any kind of abuse, the numbers were 51% (against fathers) and 38% (against mothers). For any type of abuse, the substantiation rates were 15% (against fathers) and 17% (against mothers). The substantiation rate against fathers for CSA, for example, when actual evidence is used is 6%. Compare this to the 50% substantiation rate found in the national child abuse survey (Trocme et al., 2001) described above. When child custody litigation is the context of the child abuse investigation, the substantiation rates are far lower than when it

is not. While this does not prove false allegations, it does suggest their substantiation in the custody context requires independent corroboration.

Does Spouse Abuse Inevitably Predict Child Abuse?

One issue that permeates the subject of spouse abuse and child custody is the suggestion that men who abuse spouses will also abuse their children. Basing their estimate on shelter samples, Jaffe et al. (2003) put the overlap (both wife and child victims) at 30-60% (p. 30). Appel, Holden et al. (1996) reviewed 31 studies to examine this issue, also finding an average overlap of 40% when the sample was drawn from women's shelters or abused children. However, in "representative community samples" the overlap was 6%. In all studies reviewed, the reporter was the mother. Even with this bias in the data, the confirmatory distortion and the advocacy perspective in Jaffe's estimate is clear. In community samples, the risk of child abuse, given that spouse abuse is proven, is much lower than Jaffe et al. suggest. Furthermore, to the extent that overlap does exist, it typically involves less serious forms of abuse, such as slapping (Appel & Holden, 1998; Slep & O'Leary, 2005). For example, in a representative sample study of 453 couples with young children in New York, Slep and O'Leary (2005) found 51% of couples to engage in both partner and child abuse, but only 2% of these families involved severe violence unilaterally perpetrated by fathers against non-reciprocating and non-retaliating mothers, with one or both parents physically abusing the child. While a gender paradigm has developed that creates a "representative heuristic" (Kahneman, Slovic et al., 1982) containing images of abusive men and victimized women, the research data say something quite different. Relying on samples drawn from a criminal justice system primed to arrest men as IPV perpetrators or from shelter houses available only to women, gender paradigm research has created a false view of IPV, a view compatible with the sociological dualism from whence it derives. The result has been a focused assessment on fathers for potential future abuse in custody litigation. This focus is not supported by the overall incidence of IPV perpetration by gender, the weak relationship between spouse and child abuse, nor the higher likelihood of mothers to perpetrate child abuse.

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Appendix

Figure 1 Incidence Surveys of IPV

Table 1					
Incidence of Intimate Partner Violence in Surveys					
		% of IPV Reports[1]	Male[2]	Female[3]	Bilateral
Stets & Straus, 1989 National FV Survey (n=5,242)	Married	15%	15.6%	35.6%	38.8%
	Cohabiting	35%	14.3%	34.9%	45.2%
Whittaker, et al. 2007 National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent (18-28) Health (n=11,370)		24%	28.7%	71.3%	49.2%
Williams & Frieze, 2005 National Comorbidity Study (n=3,519)		18.4%	21.6%	28.7%	49%
Caetano, et al., 2008 National Survey of Couples (n=1,635)		13%	14.6%	25.6%	59.7%
Morse, 1995 National Youth Survey 1992 (n=1,340)		32.4%	16%	30%	47.4%
1. The percentage of IPV reports from the total population examined in the survey.					
[2] Males engaged in more severe acts of violence (eg. male minor, female none; male severe, female none; male severe, female minor)					
[3] Females engaged in more severe acts of violence (eg. female minor, male none; female sever, male none; female severe, male minor)					

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Breaking the Cycle of Adversity in Vulnerable Children and Families: A Thirty-Five Year Study of At-Risk Lower Income Families

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Abstract. Family poverty and childhood adversity follow an intergenerational cycle. Children raised under conditions of social and economic disadvantage are likely to raise their own children under similar conditions. To break this cycle, we need to understand why it occurs and why children's health and development are threatened by disadvantaged conditions of child rearing. We also need to identify protective processes, such as a healthy and supportive parent-child relationship, that may lead to positive health and development under conditions of risk. The longitudinal findings presented in this paper are a summary drawn from the published results of the Concordia Longitudinal Risk Project: an ongoing, three generational, 35-year study of Montréal families from lower income neighborhoods. The original sample comprised over 4,000 school-aged children. Many of these participants are now parents, and their children have been recruited into the study. Among the long-term processes we examine are family violence, fathers' presence versus absence in the home, and impact of parental mental health problems on children's health and development. Drawing from an in-depth assessment of parent-child interactions from infancy to preadolescence, we show how family interaction patterns over time can help to achieve positive outcomes for children**.** Based on statistical modeling techniques and hierarchical regression, we illustrate the ways in which family poverty and adversity during the childhood of one generation lead to conditions of risk for poverty and adversity in the next, via stressful rearing conditions, family violence, mental and physical health problems, and long-term behavioural problems. From the opposite perspective, we identify the environmental, social, educational and behavioural factors that predict positive outcomes for many children, despite disadvantaged conditions. We also highlight the vital role that parents play in this process and how negative intergenerational patterns may be broken by positive parenting, cognitive stimulation, and environmental support across childhood.

The long-term outcomes of early adverse environmental conditions and maladaptive behavioural histories have been found to be important and meaningful for health and development across the life-course (Moffitt, Caspi, Rutter, & Silva, 2001; Putallaz & Bierman, 2004). Childhood disadvantage and behavioural history may also play important roles in the intergenerational transfer of health and developmental risk from parent to child. The potential pathways from problematic childhood behaviour in one generation to risk for the next are the subject of a growing literature (Capaldi, Conger, Hops, & Thornberry, 2003; Serbin & Karp, 2004). Recent studies confirm the intergenerational continuity of problem behaviour (e.g. Van Meurs, Reef, Verhulst, & Ven Der Ende, 2009), although the mechanisms may involve multiple sociological, economic, biological and behavioural factors (Conger & Donnellan, 2007).

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In order to study the complex processes involved in the transfer of psychosocial, developmental and health risk from parent to child, it is important to identify the early behaviours and conditions for one generation which may subsequently contribute to adverse family environments for the next. For example, some research has focused on the childhood behaviour patterns that predict later negative social and economic outcomes in adulthood, a process referred to as the "cumulative and interactive continuity" of maladaptive behaviour (Caspi, Bem, & Elder, 1989; Caspi, Elder, & Bem, 1987). When the person becomes a parent, this process impacts family functioning and home environment for a new generation of children. Aggressive behaviour, and also the more unusual pattern of childhood aggression combined with social withdrawal, have been shown to predict lower adult status and functioning in educational and occupational contexts, even when controlling for socioeconomic status and income in the individual's family of origin (Kokko & Pulkkinen, 2000; Kokko, Pulkkinen, & Puustinen, 2000; Ronka, Kinnunen, & Pulkkinen, 2000).

Social withdrawal, and internalizing problems more generally, have been shown to predict a variety of outcomes related to lower socioeconomic status and mental health problems in adulthood, although findings are mixed regarding the long term impact of withdrawn behaviour in childhood (Caspi et al., 1997; Denissen, Asendorpf, & van Aken, 2008; Gest, 1997). From a longitudinal and intergenerational perspective, parents' earlier maladaptive behaviour may predict adverse child rearing environments for a new generation. Information concerning such predictors of rearing environments should allow for a better understanding of the complex processes whereby "high-risk" individuals transfer risk to the next generation.

Relations between maladaptive behaviour and later outcomes. Relations between early maladaptive behaviour and later family circumstances have begun to be examined in the literature, especially utilizing longitudinal designs following participants from childhood into parenthood and across generations (e.g. Scaramella, Neppl, Ontai, & Conger, 2008). Maladaptive behaviour patterns in childhood may influence the later life and functioning of individuals and their families through a variety of mechanisms and pathways. They have been found to be closely related to difficulties with school functioning and performance, and ultimately to low levels of educational attainment (Rapport, Denney, Chung, & Hustace, 2001; Risi, Gerhardstein, & Kistner, 2003; Serbin et al., 1998).

Maladaptive behavioural styles may also contribute to early sexual activity and premature parenthood (Bardone et al., 1998; Conger, Neppl, Kim, & Scaramella, 2003; Serbin, Peters, McAffer, & Schwartzman, 1991), to low occupational attainment (Kokko et al., 2000), to marital or family discord (Capaldi, Kim, & Shortt, 2004; Kinnunen & Pulkkinen, 2003) and consequent parental separation, and ultimately to family economic distress and poverty (Bardone, Moffitt, Caspi, Dickson, & Silva, 1996; Kokko & Pulkkinen, 2000). Negative outcomes in terms of educational attainment, timing of parenthood, family structure, and income may have particular importance for child rearing, with respect to the environment in which an individual becomes a parent and raises the next generation. In other words, social and behavioural patterns in childhood may have long-term implications for the conditions under which a subsequent generation is raised.

In addition, early patterns of aggressive behaviour and conduct disorder in girls and boys are predictive of later violent behaviour, and this includes violence and abuse that takes place within domestic and family contexts (Ehrensaft, Moffitt, & Caspi, 2004; Ehrensaft, 2008). While there have been numerous studies relating patterns of childhood aggressive behaviour to criminality and violent offending in adolescence and adulthood, studies are beginning to emerge on the connection between aggression and violence within the home and intimate couple and family relationships (Bardone et al., 1996; Ehrensaft & Cohen, 2011; Smith, Ireland, Park, Elwyn, & Thornberry, 2011). It has been demonstrated that, particularly among men, early aggressive behaviour is a strong predictor of partner violence (Capaldi & Clark, 1998). Moreover, and compounding the risks for couple and family violence, results from studies suggest that aggressive individuals involve themselves with similarly aggressive romantic partners (Andrews, Foster, Capaldi, & Hops, 2000; Capaldi et al., 2003; Temcheff et al., 2008). Aside from direct behavioural continuity, an indirect path from aggressive behaviour in childhood to family violence has been suggested. This path would occur such that childhood aggression predicts other negative life outcomes such as lowered educational attainment, family poverty, and parenting in the context of parental separation or absence, which compromise parenting and family relations and are all documented risk factors for family violence (Temcheff et al., 2008).

Intergenerational transfer of risk. Returning to parenthood and some of the conditions that threaten the environments within which children are raised, there has been a growing interest in studying the transfer of risk from one generation to another. Longitudinal and intergenerational studies provide the framework needed to explain how parents' characteristics and behaviours are transferred to children, as well as examine the processes underlying intergenerational continuities.

Parenting may be affected by a host of risk factors, such as mental health, poverty, and behavioural problems (Stack, Martin, Serbin, Ledingham, & Schwartzman, 2011; Serbin et al., 2011). For example, mothers experiencing cumulative risk factors, such as high levels of economic stress, single parenthood, have been shown to model aggression, view it as an appropriate means of problem-solving, and make more hostile emotional appraisals of ambiguous interpersonal situations when interacting with their children (Dodge, Pettit, & Bates, 1994; Root & Jenkins, 2005). In turn, children from low socioeconomic families tend to show higher levels of aggression at school (Root & Jenkins, 2005). Results from these studies imply that mothers from high-risk backgrounds may not have developed effective problem-solving skills during their own childhoods, and may therefore have difficulty teaching appropriate strategies to their children (Stack et al., 2011).

When adaptive parenting is threatened, the parent-child relationship is impacted and children are placed at risk for psychosocial disturbance (Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1994; McLoyd, 1998). The child may be growing up in an adverse environment (e.g., poverty, stress, lack of parental warmth, hostility, neglect), a lack of resources may be central (ranging from parental resources and including the historical context and current situation), or child characteristics themselves (e.g., temperament, birth status, oppositional behaviour) may be the challenge and set the developmental course. In the face of adverse conditions, it is important to consider the processes of socialization and parenting variables (e.g., maladaptive behavioural styles, parenting

strategies) that influence whether children will emerge socially and emotionally competent. While parenting skills are not the only factor affecting children's emotional development, it appears that parenting behaviours, by themselves and in combination with other risk factors, have profound ramifications for children's social, emotional and cognitive functioning (Stack, Serbin, Enns, Ruttle, & Barrieau, 2010; Stack et al., 2011).

Background of the current project. Consistent with the literature described above, a major focus of the Concordia Longitudinal Risk Project has been to study the intergenerational transfer of psychosocial and health risk during the early and middle years of childhood, and to determine the processes, risk and protective factors that predict both negative and positive outcomes. The Concordia Project is a large, prospective longitudinal study of French-speaking, Montréal, Québec schoolchildren from low socioeconomic urban backgrounds initiated in 1976 by Jane Ledingham and Alex Schwartzman of Concordia University (Schwartzman, Ledingham, & Serbin, 1985). The project began with the screening of 4,109 Francophone school children in regular Grade 1 (years of birth: 1969 to 1970), Grade 4 (years of birth: 1966 to 1967), and Grade 7 (years of birth: 1963 to 1964) classes. Participation in the screening was voluntary, with over 95% of the students consenting to participate.

The children were rated on dimensions of aggression and social withdrawal by means of a French translation of the Pupil Evaluation Inventory (PEI; Pekarik, Prinz, Liebert, Weintraub, & Neale, 1976), which is a peer nomination instrument. The PEI consists of 34 items that load onto three factors: Aggression (20 items), Withdrawal (9 items), and Likeability (5 items). Scale items assess not only the behaviour of the child but also the reaction of peers toward the child. Scale scores on the PEI have been shown to be highly reliable (Pekarik et al., 1976; Schwartzman et al., 1985) and items within each scale are very highly inter-correlated. Sample items for the Aggression factor include "children who are mean and cruel towards other children" and "children who fight all the time and get into trouble." Items in the Withdrawal factor include "children who are too shy to make friends easily" and "children who usually don't want to play with others." The number of nominations received by each child within a class was summed to compute the Aggression and Withdrawal factors. Within each classroom, boys and girls were rated on the PEI in separate administrations. Children were asked to nominate up to 4 boys and 4 girls in their class (from class lists) who best matched each item on the PEI. Scores were standardized within sex and class in order to control for gender differences and class size in base rates of aggression and withdrawal. This procedure enabled appropriate comparisons of each child against relevant norms for gender and age. For a more extensive description of the original methodology and characteristics of the sample, see Schwartzman, Ledingham, and Serbin (1985). Following their identification, a subsample was selected for follow-up at approximately three-year intervals.

The Concordia Project addresses the life pathways of the original children, most of whom are now in their 40s. The original children were assessed at various stages of development, during childhood, adolescence, and adulthood (both before and after becoming parents). The Concordia Project provides an opportunity to examine a broad spectrum of life-course outcomes based on childhood patterns of aggression and social withdrawal. In addition, as many of the original participants are now adults with children of their own, the offspring of the original participants have been included within the

ongoing longitudinal project. The current paper draws from the extensive findings of the Concordia Project over the past 30+ years to focus on the long-term outcomes of childhood aggression within the family context, particularly girlhood aggression. A second focus is on the intergenerational transfer of developmental and health risk from parent to child.

Overview. The first part of the current paper examines child behaviour patterns that contribute to subsequent family poverty and disadvantaged child rearing conditions. The second part concerns the continuity of childhood aggression to violent behaviour in adulthood, including violence within the family context. The third part addresses intergenerational transfer of risk, specifically maternal histories of aggression and social withdrawal, and the environmental and parenting factors that predict children's health, and their behavioural and cognitive functioning. The fourth part of the present paper continues with an overview of family dynamics that relate to children's (offspring of the second generation) development (social, emotional, cognitive). In this section, we describe findings from a series of studies within the Concordia Project, all of which are based on observations of parent-child interactions across time when offspring were preschool to middle-childhood age. In the fifth and final part, we address the influence of fathers' presence vs. absence on the functioning of their offspring and into the next generation.

Part 1: Predicting Poverty and Disadvantaged Child Rearing Conditions from Childhood Histories of Risk

The focus of the first study we will describe is on childhood behaviour patterns (histories of aggression and social withdrawal) that contribute to subsequent family disadvantage in adulthood (Serbin et al., 2011). The objective of this study was to examine pathways from problematic behaviour patterns in childhood to disadvantaged family circumstances in adulthood, conditions that may promote the transfer of risk for disadvantage to the next generation.

Methodology. The sub-sample for the study was comprised of ongoing participants in the Concordia Project who had become parents at the time of the most recent data collection prior to these analyses. The size of the current sub-sample was 550 parents (328 mothers and 222 fathers) identified from among the 845 participants who were interviewed during the update of project records that occurred between 2001 and 2003. Measures included family of origin socioeconomic status (SES: occupational prestige, Nock & Rossi, 1979), childhood aggression and social withdrawal (PEI), academic achievement as measured by standardized measures of mathematics and language arts, school drop-out, age at first child, parental absence, and family poverty after becoming a parent (low-income cut-off score).

Because the relation between childhood risk factors and family outcomes is likely to be complex, direct and indirect paths from childhood behaviour patterns through academic achievement, high school dropout, early parenting, and parental absence to current family poverty were considered within the predictive model. Some of the specific pathways that may threaten child-rearing environments are considered in the conceptual model illustrated in Figure 1 (see Appendix). Observations were included from four

sequential developmental phases. The first is middle childhood: when participants were nominated and rated by peers in terms of aggression and social withdrawal. The second phase refers to the participants' adolescent years and the time at which high school completion normally takes place. "Child's birth" refers to the age at which participants became parents. Finally, "Parenthood" refers to the most recent phase of the project in which these participants are parents of one or more children.

The model in Figure 1 illustrates the hypothesized paths. The first path is from childhood histories of aggression and social withdrawal to academic achievement. At the next stage of the model, becoming a parent during adolescence is associated with several risk factors and can compound existing problems such as learning difficulties, behavioural problems, and academic failure. The next stage of the model involves parental absence. Detrimental effects to both boys and girls can occur in families where children are raised with an absent father (Demuth & Brown, 2004; Ellis & Garber, 2000). However, consistent with the fact that families led by single fathers are growing (Garasky & Meyer, 1996), we included families in which either the biological mother or father was absent in our conceptualization of "parental absence". Family poverty in the final step of the model represents an ecological context that reflects the continuity of disadvantage within a single generation, as well as a probable factor in the perpetuation of risk across generations (Conger & Donnellan, 2007).

Results. We tested the proposed path model, shown in Figure 1, via Structural Equation Modeling (Bentler, 2004; Kline, 1998). Direct paths were found from childhood aggression to adverse child rearing conditions; with paths to young parenthood and parental absence for mothers, and paths to high school drop-out, young parenthood and parental absence for fathers. For both mothers and fathers, withdrawal did not operate directly on school drop-out but was associated with lower academic achievement which in turn led to high school drop-out. Indirect paths accounted for some of the relations between the two childhood behavioural variables (i.e. aggression and withdrawal) and the four "outcome" variables (drop-out, early parenthood, parental absence and family poverty) which were found to be inter-related in both mother and father models, via both direct and indirect pathways (for more details, see Serbin et al., 2011).

Together, the results confirm that problem behaviour in childhood is linked to a sequence of problematic events and conditions leading to disadvantaged child rearing conditions in parenthood. These conditions place their children, a new generation, at risk for a wide variety of developmental, social, academic, economic, and health problems. Disadvantaged "rearing conditions," defined here as low education, early parenthood, single parenthood, and family poverty, appear to be part of the complex processes of cumulative and interactive continuity leading to a wide range of ongoing life-course difficulties (Caspi et al., 1989; Caspi, Wright, Moffitt, & Silva, 1998; Ronka et al., 2000). In addition, these contribute to the intergenerational transfer of risk to the next generation (for more details, see Serbin et al., 2011).

Part 2: Continuity from Childhood Aggression to Family Violence in Adulthood

Patterns of aggressive behaviour that occur early in girls and boys are predictive of later violent behaviour, including violence within family contexts. Utilizing the Concordia Project, Temcheff and her colleagues examined different pathways to continuing patterns of violence toward children and spouses from childhood aggressive behavioural styles (Temcheff et al., 2008).

Methodology. The sample was comprised of a subset of 365 (233 women and 132 men) ongoing participants in the Concordia Project who had become parents at the time of the most recent data collection. To measure self-reported physical violence towards spouse and children we used a modified French translation of the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS: Straus, 1979). Scales on the CTS measure the sexual, psychological, and physical attacks perpetrated by both partners over the past 12 months as well as the lifetime occurrence of these attacks. The scale measuring self-reported violence towards one's spouse included 11 questions, such as "How many times have you thrown something at your spouse?" "How many times have you slapped your spouse?" and "How many times have you beaten your spouse?" The modified version of the CTS was used to examine self-reported violence toward one's children and included four questions: "How many times have you beaten your child?" "How many times have you burnt or scalded your child?" "How many times have you threatened your child with a knife or gun?" and "How many times have you used a knife or gun against your child?" In addition, a demographic information questionnaire was administered via telephone (e.g., educational attainment, family income, martial status, dwelling places of each of the participant's children).

Results. Both direct and indirect pathways were revealed (see Figure 2 in Appendix). Violence towards one's spouse was directly predicted from childhood aggression for both men and women, while the indirect route was through marital separation and lower education. Childhood aggression also predicted parental violence with their children. In predicting violence toward children for mothers, educational attainment and current absence of the biological father from the child's home were also important. Consistent with this finding, in another study with the Concordia Project, which is described in the last section of this paper, Pougnet and colleagues showed that father presence had a positive effect on children's cognitive outcomes (Pougnet, Serbin, Stack, & Schwartzman, 2011). Together with the fact that aggression predicts father absence, evidence of both continuity of aggressive behaviour and indirect pathways to family violence were shown. Although requiring further research and an examination of mediators, aggressive behaviour styles in childhood may be an identifiable precursor to family violence and child maltreatment for both men and women (for details, see Temcheff et al., 2008).

Childhood aggression also predicts women's adult mental health. Elevated rates of both anxiety related problems and depression compared with the general population, as well as substance abuse and severe mental illness such as bi-polar disorder and schizophrenia, have been found in our medical record studies (Schwartzman, Serbin, Stack, Hodgins, & Ledingham, 2009). Behavioural and mental health problems are not only found in one generation, but also for offspring, as discussed in the next section of

the paper. Girls' childhood aggression predicts risks that go beyond the direct effects of family violence. Because childhood aggression leads to many negative adult outcomes that predict health, education, and social functioning, as well as intergenerational risk, it is important to recognize it as a potential sign of problems to come.

Part 3: Intergenerational Transfer of Risk

As discussed above, childhood aggression has many direct and indirect effects on adult functioning, including high school drop-out, early parenthood, single parenthood, and family poverty. In turn, each of these factors increases life-long social and health risk, as well as developmental and health risks in offspring. Results using longitudinal research designs have identified *intergenerational* processes that sustain this continuity.

Study 1. One example of the process through which maladaptive behaviour in the parent generation affects child functioning, is the process by which childhood aggression leads to lowered cognitive stimulation to offspring. It is well known that an enriched home environment is stimulating for children's cognitive development and school success. In this study we examined pathways to current cognitive stimulation by targeting childhood histories of maternal aggression as predictors of maternal scaffolding strategies and quality of the home environment on children's cognitive competence.

Methodology. The sub-sample for the study was comprised of 80 parents (51 mothers and 29 fathers) who were original participants in the Concordia Project. The spouses and children of these parents also participated in this study. Measures included childhood aggression and social withdrawal (PEI), parental distress (Parenting Stress Index, Adibin, 1990), quality of the home environment (HOME; Caldwell & Bradley, 1984), maternal scaffolding (Maternal Teaching Observation System; Saltaris & Samaha, 1998), and children's cognitive functioning (Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale; Thorndike, Hagan, & Sattler, 1986).

Results. In the Concordia Project, mothers' childhood aggression negatively predicted mothers' ability to provide stimulation and scaffolding for children's problem solving, as well as reducing the richness of the home environment with regard to opportunities for cognitive stimulation (Saltaris, Serbin, & Stack, 2004; Serbin et al., 2004; Serbin, Stack, Hubert, & Schwartzman, 2011; Serbin, et al., 2002). Along similar lines, childhood behavioural histories (e.g., social withdrawal) have been found to predict the richness of the linguistic environment, leading to reduced language and communication skills at preschool age (Campisi, Serbin, Stack, Schwartzman, & Ledingham, 2009).

Part of this process is due to the relation between early aggression and later social support satisfaction as well as increased parenting stress. These problems, in turn, reduce mothers' ability to provide cognitive and social support to their children. Children's developing intellectual skills, as well as their long-term school success, may be affected by a relatively impoverished home environment. The risks to offspring from lack of home stimulation are greatest among lower income families, where a small difference in parenting and environment can yield major differences in children's long-term academic performance. Other impacts of maternal problems and lack of support may be seen in children's behavioural problems, including both internalizing (i.e. depression and

anxiety) and externalizing (attentional problems, social aggression) problems (Stack, Serbin, Schwartzman, & Ledingham, 2005; Serbin, et al., 2011).

Study 2. Mothers' childhood aggression and social withdrawal also affect the health of offspring. Young children raised in impoverished environments by parents who are relatively unresponsive to their needs also may experience elevated risk for injuries and illness. We wanted to determine whether mothers' childhood social behavior would add a risk factor for offsprings' injuries and acute illness beyond their previously established risk as children of adolescent mothers.

Methodology. In a 15-year longitudinal study, the medical records of 94 children born to adolescent mothers from the project were examined (Serbin, Peters, & Schwartzman, 1996). The children's annual rates of visits to the emergency room (ER) and to nonemergency medical facilities, post-ER hospitalizations, diagnoses of injuries, acute illness and infection, asthma, and emergency surgical consultations were examined between birth and 48 months of age.

Results. Mothers' childhood aggression were found to predict their offsprings' rate of visits to the emergency room during early childhood over 15 years later, as well as their rate of injuries and injury-related hospitalizations. Illnesses (e.g. infections, asthma) and rates of surgical consultation were predicted by patterns of aggression and social withdrawal as well (for details, see Serbin et al., 1996).

Together, intergenerational risk relating to mothers' aggressive behaviour is confirmed by these results, although the mechanisms of this process remain to be explored. Childhood aggression may "directly" threaten the health of offspring via continuity of behavioural problems in adulthood in the form of poor parenting practices and family violence. In addition, there may be "indirect paths" between aggression and offspring health, via sequelae of childhood aggression such as early parenthood, lowered parental education and income, single parenthood, and increased neighborhood risk. It is also likely that childhood aggression and social withdrawal combine with other risk factors in these families to create a particularly high-risk profile for offspring. For example, adolescent mothers may have relatively few social and economic resources and support available to them, and in this context of scarce resources and lack of support, a pattern of maladaptive behaviour in the parents becomes particularly risky for offspring.

Part 4: An Overview of Family Dynamics and Positive Versus Negative Outcomes for Children

The findings presented in this section are drawn from a subset of the original sample of the Concordia Project. The sample includes 175 parents and their young offspring from among the parents in the previous studies, all of who had children between the ages of two and five years at the time the study began. They were then longitudinally followed at four time points, three years apart: when children were aged one-to-six-years old (two to five for the present analyses), six to eight years, nine to 12 years, and 13 to 15 years, however, the focus of the present discussion will be up to nine to 12 years, as the final time point is still in progress.

Drawing from an in-depth assessment of these parent-child interactions from infancy to preadolescence, we show how some family interaction patterns over time can

predict negative outcomes while others can help to achieve positive outcomes for children. Experienced interviewers went to participants' homes (and schools for the middle-childhood visit) and collected information from the families including family, child, and environment measures. During these visits, parents completed standardized interviews, and questionnaires related to their children (e.g., temperament, health and development) and themselves (e.g., parenting styles, violent behaviour, mental and physical health, and marital relationship), and at the visit during middle childhood, teachers and children themselves also completed questionnaires. Children's cognitive abilities were assessed using standardized testing. Videotaped observations of mother-child interactions in a series of different contexts were also taken.

Mothers' attempts to stimulate children's cognitive growth were examined during a teaching task whereby mothers were verbally instructed to help their child complete age-appropriate puzzles (e.g., Saltaris et al., 2004). Qualitative ratings of mothers' teaching styles revealed that maternal histories of behavioural patterns, particularly childhood aggression, predicted poor scaffolding strategies (Saltaris et al., 2004). That is, Saltaris and her colleagues found that mothers who were aggressive in childhood were less likely to use the task to teach strategies and new concepts to their child, and/or were less likely to encourage independent mastery of the task. In turn, children of mothers with histories of aggression were more likely to have lower IQ scores (Saltaris et al., 2004). Together, these findings imply that, in a sample of economically and socially disadvantaged mother-child dyads, mothers with histories of aggression are less cognitively stimulating when interacting with their preschoolers and children's intellectual growth is thwarted.

In a study by Grunzeweig and colleagues, the manner in which mothers requested their children's compliance was investigated (Grunzeweig, Stack, Serbin, Ledingham, & Schwartzman, 2009). Maternal request strategies and children's behaviour were examined during a task whereby mothers were given a list of requests to give to their preschool-age children. Results revealed that when trying to elicit their toddlers' compliance, mothers with histories of social withdrawn were found to use more intrusive techniques, such as more physical interventions, repetitions, as well as requests that gave children little opportunity to comply. These less effective request strategies subsequently predicted non-compliance and defiance in children (Grunzeweig et al., 2009).

Mother-child conflict resolution strategies were examined when mothers and their nine- to 12-year-old children discussed conflict topics they both rated as especially problematic in their relationship (e.g. bedtime, chores, homework). Martin and her colleagues examined the ability for mothers and children to successfully resolve their disputes and, in the process, for mothers to model effective problem-solving strategies. Results showed that mothers who were both aggressive and withdrawn in childhood, as well as their children, generated poorly sophisticated solutions when discussing their conflicts (Martin, Stack, Serbin, Ledingham, & Schwartzman, in press). These solutions were those that lacked clarity, elaborations, consequential thinking, foresight, and/or were unrealistic. Similarly, a disengaged or less active problem-solving style was found in dyads with mothers with histories of social withdrawal; when deciding which solution to implement, they were vague and only demonstrated a 'sense' of resolution rather than discussing concrete strategies. These findings suggest that mothers who were socially withdrawn, and those both aggressive and withdrawn in childhood, display less

sophisticated problem-solving strategies which appear to be mirrored in their children. Given that problem-solving deficits have long been associated with poor social competence, academic difficulties, externalizing problems, and delinquency (Dodge, 1993; Lochman & Lampron, 1986; Rotheram, 1987; Shure & Spivack, 1982), results imply that children are at risk for a number of social, behavioural and academic problems in the future (Stack et al., 2011). Support that children's solutions paralleled their mothers' childhood behavioural tendencies was also shown. Children of mothers with childhood histories of both aggression and social withdrawal were more likely to generate antisocial solutions (i.e. socially excluding others or oneself from the situation, punishments or aggressive confrontation). Likewise, children of mothers who were withdrawn in childhood generated more solitary solutions, demonstrating a desire to resolve their conflicts on their own (Martin et al., in press).

Finally, in a longitudinal examination of the quality of the mother-child relationship, the Emotional Availability Scales were used (Biringen, Robinson, & Emde, 1988; 1993) to measure the relationship in the same way over time (Stack et al., 2012). Emotional Availability (EA) is a measure that can capture the quality of the relationship from infancy to adolescence. In one study, the quality of the mother-child interaction was assessed using the EA scales during the free play task at preschool and the Jenga task during middle childhood, in the same sample described above. However, in the second study, EA was coded on a different sample of the Concordia Project, when infants were 6 months (Time 1), then again at 12 (Time 2) and 18 (Time 3) months, 4 ½ years (Time 4) and early elementary school (Time 5). Face-to-face (6 months) and free play interactions between mothers and their children were video-recorded.

Across both studies, maternal childhood histories of aggression and social withdrawal predicted negative EA (i.e., higher levels of maternal hostility) during mother-child interactions with offspring at preschool age. In the first study, mothers with higher levels of social withdrawal during childhood had preschool age children who were less appropriately responsive to and involving of their mothers during interactions. In the second study, higher levels of observed appropriate maternal structuring predicted child responsiveness while maternal sensitivity (and structuring) predicted observed child involvement. More maternal social support and better home environment combined with lower stress predicted better mother-child relationship quality. Consistent with findings already presented, results imply that negative behavioural histories in childhood impact parenting skills and the responsiveness and involvement of children during interactions (Stack et al., 2012; Stack et al., 2011).

Part 5: Fathers' Presence Versus Absence and its Influence on Children's Functioning

Much of the research involving families and child outcomes focuses on associations between mothers' parenting and child development. Like mothers, fathers make significant contributions to their children's development and to the cognitive and behavioural functioning of their offspring. The following two studies add to an emerging body of research illustrating connections between fathers and their children's development.

Study 1. In a study examining the development of 138 families from the Concordia Project, Pougnet and colleagues found that fathers' presence in their children's homes in middle childhood was associated with lower levels of pre-adolescent internalizing behaviours for girls, even after controlling for family and socioeconomic factors such as family income, home environment, parental educational attainment and couple conflict (Pougnet et al., 2011). Fathers' parenting also has important effects on their children's development: fathers' positive parental control in middle childhood predicted higher Performance IQ scores and fewer internalizing behaviours for boys and girls in pre-adolescence, controlling for family and socioeconomic factors (Pougnet et al., 2011). These findings add to the growing body of research demonstrating the unique effect of fathers' presence and parenting on children's cognitive and behavioural development. This is consistent with earlier findings that school aged children of involved fathers are more likely to demonstrate more cognitive competence on standardized intellectual assessments (Radin, 1994) and are better at achieving academically (Nord & West, 2001).

Study 2. In another study utilizing the Concordia Project, Pougnet and colleagues examined the connection between father's absence in one generation and the subsequent experience of father's absence by the next generation (Pougnet, Serbin, Stack, & Schwartzman, accepted). The sample included 386 families from lower income backgrounds who participated in two waves of data collection: at Time 1, when they were children, and at Time 2, when they were adults with children of their own. Findings revealed a direct pathway of intergenerational continuity among fathers' absence. That is, girls who lived in a father-absent home during middle childhood were more likely to have children who experienced a similar absence of their fathers, while boys whose fathers were absent while they were children were more likely to live apart from their own children later on. Furthermore, boys who were rated high on aggression measures by their peers in childhood were more likely to become absent fathers later on. Finally, Pougnet and colleagues also found that absence of the father from the child's home was associated with higher levels of childhood aggression scores for females.

Past research suggests there is a strong association between family structure and parenting. Single-parent families, especially single-parent families headed by a single mother, typically have lower socioeconomic levels than two-parent families (Thomson, Hanson, & McLanahan, 1994). Furthermore, these socioeconomic effects due to fathers' absence can have long-lasting impact; father absence has been shown to be associated with offsprings' lower educational attainment, early pregnancy, lower status jobs and lower income (Astone & McLanahan, 1991; McLanahan & Bumpass, 1988). Thus, fathers have an important influence on their children's cognitive and behavioural development, both directly through their presence and positive parenting practices and indirectly by increasing the socioeconomic status of the family. However, both mothers and fathers are important to children's healthy development.

Conclusions

A complex web of disadvantaged personal and family characteristics anticipates problematic child rearing and parenting conditions. In the present paper, we have described some of the ways that individual and family characteristics act in combination over time to establish the environments in which families are raising their children. Our results confirm that there are specific individual and environmental characteristics, identifiable in childhood, which have an enduring impact into parenthood. "Direct" long-term effects of early environment and behavioural characteristics on specific outcomes at adulthood and at parenthood were found, suggesting continuity of both problematic behaviour and of disadvantaged environmental conditions from childhood to parenthood. "Indirect" paths linking the childhood variables to the parenting conditions were also found, however, indicating that early characteristics such as aggression, social withdrawal, and low family socioeconomic status are predictive of a series of negative sequelae. Each of these, in turn, has a potential impact on the cumulative course of development. Furthermore, both parents contribute to the upbringing of their children in terms of the emotional and cognitive stimulation and other support they provide to foster healthy development. However, father absence not only deprives children of the parenting that they should receive from their fathers, but also places huge economic and emotional stress on mothers, making it much more difficult for them to parent as well.

There has been a great deal of progress in recent years in our knowledge and understanding of the complex ways in which aggressive and other maladaptive behaviour places children at risk for ongoing problems across the life course. Our findings have contributed to the evolving picture of the complex ways in which aggression, maladaptive behaviour, environmental and familial conditions place children at risk for problematic family relationships, and ongoing problems across the life course.

Needs for Future Research

Clearly the main implication of our ongoing study for public policy is the need to identify high-risk families and children and families early, and to provide appropriate and comprehensive intervention to meet their needs. Educational, economic, mental health, and social support are all implicated as essential for the healthy development of children from high-risk backgrounds. Moreover, we know some of the negative outcomes and some of the positive family dynamics that would correct or reduce maladaptive patterns. However, what is warranted is to return to changing the *processes* with a focus on the mechanisms (e.g., parenting, relationships, health). More prospective, longitudinal studies are needed, including those that cross generations. More community samples need to be studied. By comparing results with other longitudinal studies we can confirm the risk (and resilience) patterns identified here. However, we can also test the validity of our conclusions about risk and protective processes by structured interventions, using appropriate research designs to evaluate their impact on development. Both research strategies, replication/comparison across studies and populations, and experimental intervention, may be called for at this time.

Implications for Prevention, Intervention, and Policy

Understanding the processes whereby established threats such as poverty place families at risk will be necessary if we are to design effective and efficient support programs. In addition, "unpacking" well-established risk factors, such as school drop-out, early parenthood, parental absence, and family poverty, will be an important step in designing preventive interventions (Serbin, Stack, Kingdon, Mantis, & Enns, 2011). We need to know the specific sequence and mechanisms that underlie intergenerational patterns of risk to health and development.

The fact that there are both direct and indirect paths from childhood characteristics and environment to subsequent outcomes after parenthood may have direct implications for preventive intervention. In particular, intervention efforts aimed specifically at the "immediate" predictors of problems after parenthood, such as young parenthood or failure to complete schooling, may not be most effective for individuals who are at particularly elevated risk within disadvantaged populations. For these individuals, additional risk factors such as problematic behaviour, learning difficulties, and, in particular, the cumulative effects of long-term family disadvantage may all have to be addressed if conditions for parenthood are to be substantially improved. In order to help these high-risk individuals, we may need to address multiple sources of difficulty, with multiple sources of support. Some of the risk factors identified for disadvantaged girls occur prior to parenthood and possibly prior to their late teens, suggesting the need to take a developmental approach to the prevention and treatment of these problems. Whether risk factors for family violence can be addressed most effectively in adolescence and early adulthood, or should be the focus of earlier preventative interventions in childhood, is a question that needs to be addressed both empirically and from a social policy perspective.

Although girls may be less likely to engage in the violent offending typical of aggressive boys, the breadth of negative outcomes associated with girls' aggression is very large (Putallaz & Bierman, 2004; Verlaan & Déry, 2006). Current findings suggest that the arena of family conflict and violence may be particularly relevant for the expression of aggressive tendencies for girls and women. When designing treatment programs to deal with those currently engaging in family violence, it would likely also be necessary to address multiple factors that sustain this pattern as well as potential supports that could protect girls and their families. In particular, intervention efforts aimed specifically at treating family violence, without addressing concomitant life factors such as limited parental education and stressful family conditions, may not be most effective for individuals at particularly elevated risk within disadvantaged populations. Each of the risk factors discussed in this paper contributes a small effect towards the outcome of family violence. Therefore, these findings would most likely be important from a policy and prevention perspective rather than as a source for the development of immediate intervention or treatment programs. Even small effects contributing to change within prevention efforts can have large outcomes in terms of benefits when applied across populations.

In sum, it is clear that there are individuals within disadvantaged populations, such as the inner-city Concordia sample, who are at especially high-risk for long term psychosocial difficulties. These problems are cumulative, and extend beyond the individual to the functioning of the individual's family and future offspring. Because risk is cumulative in these families, and because risk factors can be identified at various points in the course of development, there may be multiple opportunities for preventive intervention. Addressing the complex risk profiles of the most vulnerable individuals will probably require early and targeted preventative intervention in order to improve the long-term course of their development. Together, we have shown that maladaptive behavioural styles in one generation influence the second generation in part by, for example affecting mothers' availability and nurturing qualities and cognitive stimulation resulting in less effective parenting practices and thereby hindering children's emotional, cognitive, and behavioural growth.

On the more positive side, buffering factors (notably social and economic support, coping ability, positive parenting, educational achievement) have also been identified within the Concordia Project. For example, characteristics such as educational attainment may protect individuals from negative outcomes, even under disadvantaged conditions. In the broader literature and in our Concordia Project, parental education has been repeatedly linked with successful parenting and with higher cognitive functioning and academic performance in offspring (Brody, McBride-Murry, Kim & Brown, 2002; Serbin & Karp, 2004). Income (closely related to educational attainment) is also a powerful predictor and contextual modulator of the long-term outcomes of girlhood aggression. Many of the women (and their offspring) are now doing relatively well, despite their poor prospects in childhood or early adolescence. The challenge for researchers in this field is to pinpoint the processes whereby risk and buffering factors operate, as well as the amount of risk for specific negative outcomes that may be quantitatively attributed to specific predictors. Finally, we need to identify the specific risks that might be addressed at different points in development, and to examine developmental risks in the contexts of research, social, educational, and health policy.

Drawn from the findings, there are a number of recommendations for policy and intervention that are important to highlight:

1) There needs to be greater public awareness about the importance of healthy parent-child relationships for children's long-term socio-emotional development. The roots of prevention and reduction of violence are in the development of healthy relationships; in interpersonal relations. Fostering skills and healthy relationships, particularly between parents and their children, begins in the home environment. A healthy parent-child relationship is crucial for the child and is the foundation for the development of future relationships. Building positive and healthy relationships is central to changing negative relationships and forming healthier and stronger families, and this is integral to building a better future for our children. In short, we need to invest in families and children.

2) Negative "family dynamics" (aggressive behaviour, social interaction styles, violence, parenting) play an important role in the continuity of disadvantage from one generation to the next. Socialization processes in the area of the family play key roles in perpetuating maladaptive patterns across generations. Some of these

family related processes include: a) children learn from their parents by observing and modeling their behaviour. Thus, children may mimic aggression or hostile behaviour. The observing of either competent or maladaptive behaviour in the home *legitimizes* these behaviours in other contexts and with other people. b) behaviours of parent and child are mutually reinforced during interactions, and the negative behaviours reinforcing negative behaviours can lead to coercive cycles (Patterson, 2002). If parents are unskilled in positive behaviour and in eliciting positive behaviour from their children, the focus can become negative and negative discipline is underscored. If positive behaviour cannot be modeled, then it is difficult to teach conflict resolution and problem solving skills.

3) Positive dynamics (e.g. support, stimulation, responsive parenting) can play an important role in reducing risk for children from disadvantaged families.

4) There needs to be a greater focus for public policy on issues such as intergenerational links, behaviour problems, parenting, home environment, and family violence to reduce both the impact and prevalence of child poverty and family disadvantage.

5) Support to "at risk" families is critical for prevention of ongoing distress and dysfunction. To support families, we need preventive intervention.

6) Interventions must be appropriate and sensitive to the developmental needs of parents (e.g. young parents) and children (i.e., age and stage appropriate), and may be targeted
Examples:
a. developmentally oriented, parenting education for prospective and young parents (based on research establishing best practices)
b. programs to keep young parents in school and young families together: consider income supports, nutritional supports, housing, job creation and counseling, child care to allow continued schooling or work by parents, home visits by professional (e.g. nurse) for health, nutrition, and parenting education
c. high school level: focus on programs to create positive interpersonal relations, especially between males and females, to break cultural violence patterns

7) Young parents, especially those with high-risk profiles, require economic and social support to successfully stimulate the development of their young children, and to promote physical health.

8) While both mothers and fathers are important to children's development historically, agencies serving children have focused on mothers and have largely ignored fathers. It is essential that both professionals and policy makers improve circumstances for involved fathering during the crucial early years of development within socioeconomically disadvantaged communities. Programs for fathers are needed, especially for those raised in father-absent households, in order to help build specific skills to meet their children's developmental needs,

and to facilitate fathers' emotional support of their children's mothers. Policies should encourage increased, positive contact between children and their fathers (e.g., parental leave for men, parenting classes that emphasize the role of fathers in child development, as well as programs that support couples within their relationships to help prevent parental absence).

9) Our results strongly support the need to provide developmental education, in addition to social and economic support, to high-risk parents with young children. Community support in the form of parenting and child development workshops are needed to foster healthy parent-child interactions (e.g., drop-in programs, groups for new mothers, groups for older children).

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Appendix

Figure 1 (taken from Serbin, et al., 2011)
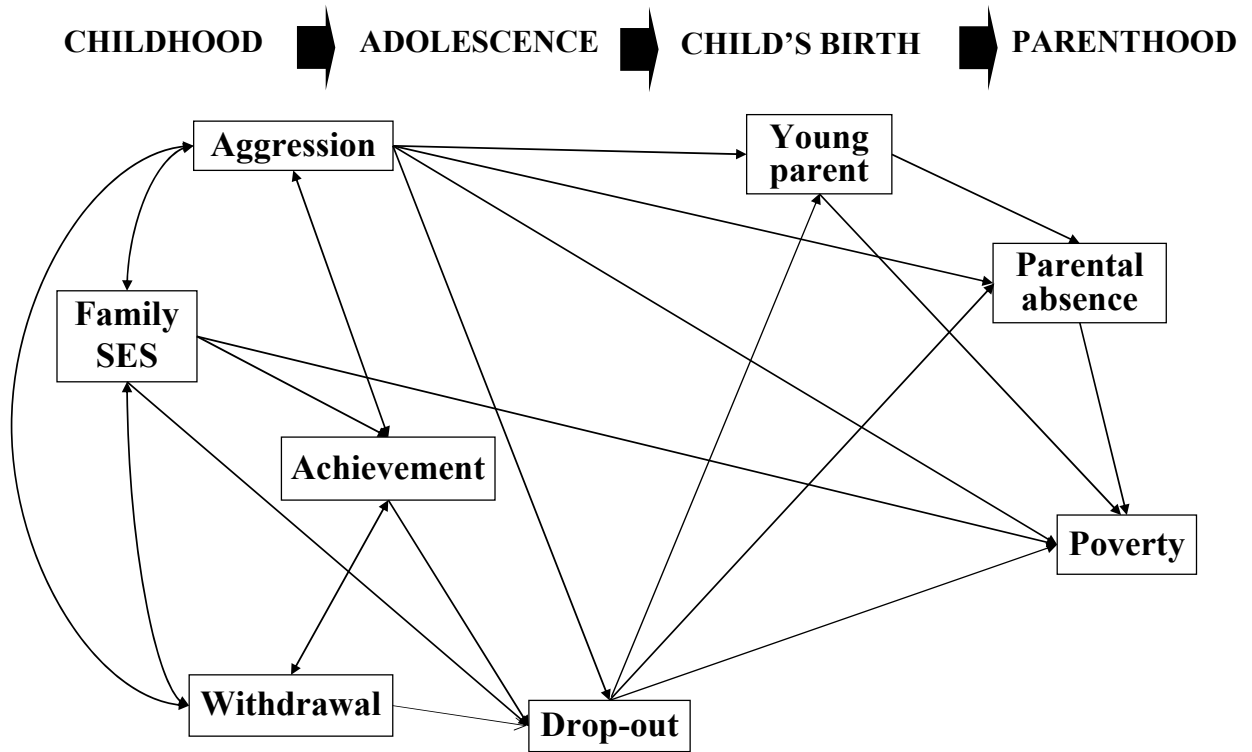
Figure 1. Conceptual model predicting poverty and other disadvantaged rearing conditions. The final, definitive version of this figure has been published in International Journal of Behavioral Development, 35/2, March/2011. With kind permission from SAGE Publications Ltd, All rights reserved. © http://online.sagepub.com

Figure 2 (taken from Temcheff et al., 2008)
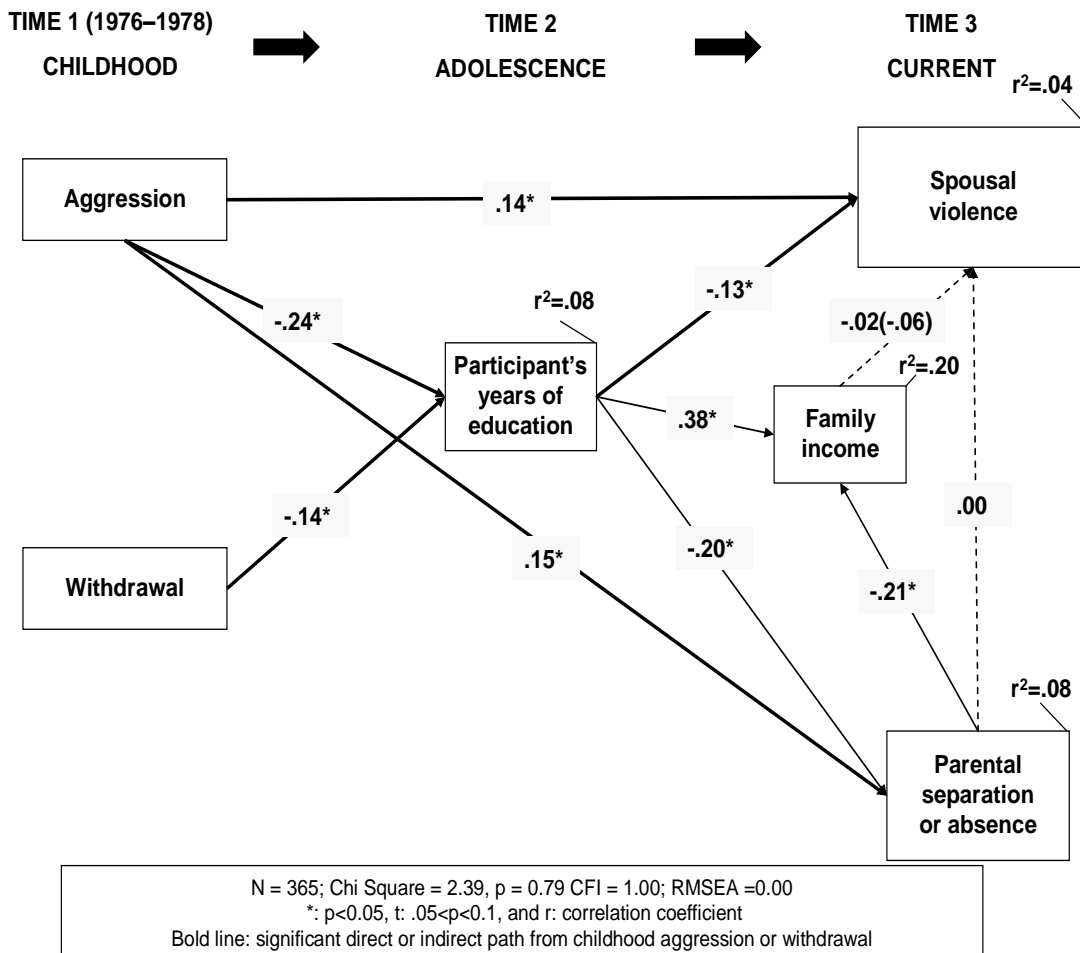
Figure 2. Predicting self-reported spousal violence. © Springer and Journal of Family Violence, 23, 2008, 231-242, Continuity and Pathways from Aggression in Childhood to Family Violence in Adulthood: A 30-year Longitudinal Study, Temcheff, C.E., Serbin, L.A., Martin-Storey, A., Stack, D.M., Hodgins, S., Ledingham, J., & Schwartzman, A., Figure 2, with kind permission from © Springer Science + Business Media B.V.

Overlooked Victims of Domestic Violence: Men

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Abstract. Forty years of research has documented the sometimes severe intimate partner violence (IPV) men can sustain from their female partners, yet research into these men's experiences has remained largely stagnant, and policies and procedures for handling IPV have been based on a patriarchal model that assumes that perpetrators are men and victims are women. We conducted the first large-scale study of 302 men who sustained severe IPV from their female partners and sought help. In this paper, we address five questions: (1) Who are these men? (2) What types of and how much IPV are they experiencing? (3) What are the consequences of this IPV? (4) What prevents them from leaving? (5) What happens when they try to get help? We compare our findings with smaller-scale studies of male victims and research on female IPV victims. We conclude with a discussion of the policy and practice implications of this research.

Intimate partner violence (IPV), which includes physical, sexual, and psychological maltreatment of one partner against another, is a national social and health problem affecting hundreds of thousands of individuals and families a year in Western nations (e.g., Centers for Disease Control, 2006; Laroche, 2008; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). However, when thinking about IPV, we usually think about men as perpetrators and women as victims. National statistics and research conducted over the course of nearly forty years tells a different story: a story whereby women can also be perpetrators and men can be victims.

Although not widely recognized by policymakers, practitioners, or the public as a social problem in Western nations (Straus, 2004), incidence reports of women physically aggressing toward their male partners have appeared since the study of IPV began in the early- to mid-1970s (Gelles, 1974). According to the 2004 Canadian General Social Survey (GSS) (Laroche, 2008), one in eighteen men – or 539,800 men total – in Canada had experienced an act of physical violence from a current or previous spouse/partner in the five years preceding the survey, which represented 45.5% of all IPV victims during that time period (Laroche, 2005). These Canadian results also replicate what has been found in other Western nations, such as the 1995-96 U.S. National Violence Against Women Survey (NVAWS), which showed that 0.8% of men – or approximately 835,000 men – reported being physically assaulted by an intimate partner in the previous year (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000), which represented approximately 40% of all IPV victims during that time period.

These findings of a high rate of violence by female partners have been the source of much controversy because they are inconsistent with the dominant theoretical perspective explaining the cause of IPV – the patriarchal construction of Western and other societies – which posits that men deliberately use violence to maintain power and control in their intimate relationships (Ferraro & Johnson, 1983; Marshall, 1992; Miller & White, 2003). In other words, patriarchal theorists assert that the sole cause of IPV is the gendered structure of society. Men have economic, political, social, and occupational

power over women, a power structure that is reflected in heterosexual romantic and sexual relationships. To maintain their power in heterosexual relationships, men strategically use IPV and have been socialized to believe that IPV is justified to maintain their dominance (e.g., Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Hammer, 2003).

These researchers also assert that women use violence only in self-defense or retaliation against a violent male partner, although evidence on women's motives for violence do not support those assertions (Hines & Malley-Morrison, 2001). Such findings have prompted others (Johnson, 1995, 2006; Johnson & Ferraro, 2000) to suggest that while women may use violence in their relationships, it is low-level, low-frequency physical violence that is reciprocated by their partners and is a result of arguments getting out of hand, whereas more severe violence – or "terroristic violence" – is perpetrated almost exclusively by men. This violence is more frequent and severe, is accompanied by severe psychological abuse, and takes place within a context of that partner asserting power and control over the other partner.

More recent research with large-scale population-based samples (Ehrensaft, Moffitt, & Caspi, 2004; Laroche, 2005, 2008) is casting severe doubt on the assertion that terroristic violence is the almost exclusive domain of men. In the 2004 Canadian GSS, for example, 40% of all male IPV victims were victims of terroristic violence, and 36.8% of the 583,800 victims of terroristic violence were men, findings that replicated the 1999 GSS (Laroche, 2005). Moreover, over the 5-year period that covered the survey, men represented 26.4% of IPV victims who were injured, 13.9% of all injuries requiring medical attention, and 19.3% of all IPV victims who feared for their lives (Laroche, 2008). Similar results were found in the U.S. NVAWS, which showed that in a one-year time period, male victims accounted for 40% of all injuries due to IPV, 27% of all injuries requiring medical attention, and 31% of all victims who fear bodily harm (Straus, 2004; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000).

Thus, a substantial proportion of terroristic IPV victims are men, yet our knowledge regarding male victims – particularly male victims of terroristic IPV – has remained relatively dormant for forty years, and our policies and programs that address issues of IPV have been guided by patriarchal perspectives (Dutton & Corvo, 2006). In social service and criminal justice arenas in particular, patriarchal theories reign, and therefore, most nations pay considerably more attention to and provide services for male-to-female IPV (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2003; World Health Organization, 2005). Because of the lack of attention on male victims of IPV, many male victims over the course of the past few decades have reported that the domestic violence (DV) service system is not always able to provide them with services and that many men are actually turned away (Cook, 2009; Hines, Brown, & Dunning, 2007). It is also likely the services they do receive are not tailored toward men because of a lack of attention and knowledge regarding male IPV victimization (Hines & Douglas, 2011c).

Goals of our Work

In response to this lack of research on male IPV victims, we solicited funding from the U.S. National Institute of Mental Health to study the mental health status of male IPV victims who seek help for IPV victimization. We wanted to provide critical

data to the debate on this issue, data from the male victims themselves, whose voices had not previously been heard in any large-scale way. In 2007, we received two years of funding to collect data on a large sample of male IPV victims. Over the course of the next year, we recruited 302 English-speaking, American men who reported that their female partner had used some form of physical aggression against them in the previous year and who had sought help because of their partner's aggression. We recruited them from a variety of sources, including the Domestic Abuse Helpline for Men and Women (DAHMW; a U.S. national IPV hotline specializing in male victims), and online websites, newsletters, blogs, and listservs that specialized in the treatment of IPV, male victims of IPV, fathers' rights issues, divorced men's issues, men's health issues, and men's rights issues.

Men completed the anonymous survey either over the phone ($n = 16$) or on a secure website ($n = 286$). The survey contained questions that assessed their demographic characteristics; their victimization from and perpetration of the following types of IPV: controlling behaviors (e.g., not allowing to leave the house, monitoring time and whereabouts), minor psychological aggression (e.g., insulting/swearing at), severe psychological aggression (e.g., threatening to harm partner, intentionally destroying something belonging to partner), sexual aggression (i.e., insisting on sex when partner does not want to), minor physical aggression (e.g., slapping, grabbing), severe physical aggression (e.g., punching, slamming against a wall), very severe physical aggression (e.g., beating up, choking), minor injuries (e.g., scrapes, cuts), and severe injuries (e.g., passing out, broken bone); their partners' use of false accusations (e.g., filing a restraining against him order under false pretenses); specific information regarding the most recent violent episode; a 16-item measure of PTSD symptoms; diagnoses of mental illnesses; what prevents them from leaving the relationship (if they have not left yet); and whether they had sought help from a variety of resources, including domestic violence (DV) agencies, DV hotlines, police, medical and mental health professionals, and online sources of support. For each of the sources used, we asked about the helpfulness of the resource and follow-up questions specific to each resource. We asked about both the men's victimization and perpetration of IPV because we wanted to capture an accurate description of the complexity of their intimate relationships.

What follows is a description of some of our results, but fuller and more in-depth analyses of these results, our sampling strategy, and our methodology can be found in our other publications (Douglas & Hines, 2011; Douglas, Hines, & McCarthy, 2012; Hines & Douglas, 2010a, 2010b, 2011a, 2011b, 2012, 2013; Hines, Douglas, & Mahmood, 2010). Our goals for this paper are to provide information on the following questions:

(1) What are the characteristics of men who seek help for IPV victimization?
(2) How much and what kinds of IPV are experienced by male IPV victims?
(3) What are the potential consequences of experiencing IPV for men?
(4) What prevents male victims from leaving their relationships?
(5) What happens when they try to seek help?

Who are These Men?

The majority of the men in our sample (56.5%) were currently in a relationship with their female partners, the most common type of which was a marriage (47.5%), followed by separation (17.9%). Overall, 72.4% of the men were currently or had been married to their female partners. On average, the relationships lasted 8.2 years, and 73.2% reported that minor children were involved in this relationship, with an average of 2 children per relationship. Thus, on average, these were very serious, established relationships (Hines & Douglas, 2010a).

The men were on average 40.49 (SD = 8.97) years of age, and their female partners were on average two years younger (M = 37.91 years, SD = 8.61). The majority of both men (86.8%) and women (74.2%) were White, but the female partners were more ethnically heterogeneous, in that they were significantly less likely to be White, χ^2 (1) = 26.33, p < .001, and significantly more likely to be Asian (9.3% v. 4.3%), χ^2 (1) = 7.84, p < .01. When comparing the representation of men in our study to U.S. Census data (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000), we found that there was an overrepresentation of Whites and an underrepresentation of Blacks and Hispanics; for their female partners, there was an underrepresentation of Whites and Blacks and an overrepresentation of Asians (Hines & Douglas, 2010a).

Overall, the men were a well-educated group, with an average educational attainment between a 2- and 4-year college degree. Their personal income was almost $52K per year, and of those who provided an occupation, their average occupational status approached that of a technician/associate professional. The men were better educated and had higher incomes than their female partners, and were more likely to be working. More than three-quarters of the men were working at least seasonally, but 13.2% were disabled in some way (7.0% of all men were not working because of a disability). Approximately one-third of the men who provided occupations were employed in stereotypical masculine jobs, such as the military, police, firefighting, or construction, or at high-prestige jobs, such as doctors, lawyers, engineers, CEOs, or business owners (Hines & Douglas, 2010a), which is congruent with a previous study of a sample of male IPV victims (Hines et al., 2007).

How Much and What Kinds of IPV are the Men Experiencing?

Types and frequencies of various forms of IPV

Table 1 presents the prevalence and frequency of IPV perpetrated by the female partners against the male helpseekers in the previous year. All of the female partners were reported by their male partners to have used minor psychological aggression, 96.0% used severe psychological aggression, 93.4% used controlling behaviors, and 41.1% used sexual aggression. Among those female partners who reportedly used each of these types of psychological aggression, they used on average 65.12 acts of minor psychological aggression, 28.90 acts of severe psychological aggression, 42.62 controlling behaviors, and 9.60 acts of sexual aggression (Hines & Douglas, 2010a). Thus, the men in our study

sustained controlling behaviors on almost a weekly basis, and severe psychological aggression at least twice a month.

For physical aggression, 100% of female partners were reported to have engaged in physical aggression overall, with 98.7% engaging in minor physical aggression, 90.4% engaging in severe physical aggression, and 54.0% engaging in very severe (i.e., life-threatening) physical aggression. Within the previous year and among those women who were physically aggressive, they were reported to have used 46.72 acts of physical aggression overall, with a mean of 32.01 acts of minor, 16.74 acts of severe, and 7.46 acts of very severe physical aggression (Hines & Douglas, 2010a). Thus, men sustained physical IPV on an almost weekly basis.

Overall, the frequency with which men sustained violence in the previous year is comparable to the frequency of violence sustained in samples of battered women (between 15 and 68 acts per year) (Giles-Sims, 1983; Johnson, 2006; Okun, 1986; Straus, 1990). Other analyses to be presented later are consistent with this conclusion – that the experiences of the men in this sample are congruent with the experiences reported by samples of battered women, who tend to be labeled as victims of terroristic violence. In fact, we conducted extensive analyses to show that this sample constituted a group of male terroristic violence victims (Hines & Douglas, 2010b).

We also investigated the extent to which men perpetrated the various types of IPV to investigate if, perhaps, men are sustaining IPV because they are using it. Overall, 95.4% of men used minor psychological aggression, 40.1% used severe psychological aggression, 45.7% controlling behaviors, 13.6% insisted on sex, 53.3% used minor physical aggression, 19.5% severe physical aggression, 8.3% very severe physical aggression, and 55.0% any physical aggression. All of these rates are significantly less than those of their female partners. Moreover, when examining their frequency of aggression within the previous year, we found that among those men and their female partners who used aggression, female partners were reported to have used each type of IPV at 1.72 times (insisting on sex) to over 6 times (physical IPV, controlling behaviors) the frequency of the male participants (Hines & Douglas, 2010b).

These rates of IPV perpetration among the helpseeking men are similar to the rates found in studies of battered women in shelters (Giles-Sims, 1983; McDonald, Jouriles, Tart, & Minze, 2009; Saunders, 1988), which range from 50%-75% using some type of violence against their male partners (Giles-Sims, 1983; Saunders, 1988), 50%-67% using severe violence (McDonald et al., 2009; Saunders, 1988), 8% beating up their partners or using a knife or gun, and 12% threatening their partners with a knife or gun (Saunders, 1988). Our findings that 55% of male victims used violence, with 19.5% using severe violence, are congruent with or lower than the rates of battered women in shelters, but indicate somewhat similar behavior, regardless of gender, among individuals who are seeking help for IPV victimization (Hines & Douglas, 2010b).

We also asked the men about other behaviors that their female partners might have used that could be considered psychologically aggressive, namely whether their partners issued any false accusations against them. Qualitative studies of male victims have shown that false accusations are a particular problem among male victims (Cook, 2009). In particular, one study of men in Western Australia found that it was so common among their sample of male victims that they labeled it as a separate type of abuse: legal or administrative abuse (Tilbrook, Allan, & Dear, 2010). The authors stated that the

female perpetrators manipulated the system to their advantage and that "this happened because employees of the relevant non-governmental and government agencies hold stereotypes that men are always the perpetrators and that females are the victims" (p. 20).

In our sample, 67.2% reported that their partner falsely accused them of hitting or beating her; 38.7% reported that she filed a restraining order against him under false pretenses; 48.9% of the men with children reported that their partners falsely accused them of physically abusing the children, and 15.4% reported that they were falsely accused by their partners of sexually abusing the children. These findings are congruent with previous qualitative research (Cook, 2009; Tilbrook et al., 2010) and a study that showed that approximately 50% of male victims of IPV stated that their partners gave false information to the court system in order to gain custody of the children or to obtain a restraining order (Hines et al., 2007).

The results are also consistent with a study of families undergoing custody disputes in the court (Johnston, Lee, Olesen, & Walters, 2005) which showed that 21% of women made allegations of physical child abuse against their husbands, 23% of sexual child abuse, and 55% of IPV. Only 6%, 6%, and 41% of the accusations, respectively, were substantiated by the courts. This study also showed similar rates of accusations and substantiations by men against their wives, elucidating that these aggressive behaviors occur regardless of gender (Hines & Douglas, 2010a).

What Happened During the Last Physical Argument?

We asked the men in our sample follow-up questions about their last physical argument with their female partners. In response to the question of who hit whom first in the last physical argument, 93.0% of the men reported that their female partners hit first. Of those men, we asked what their response was to the violence, and the most common response was to get away from her or go to another room (85.4%). The next common response was to yell or curse (62.8%), followed by calling a friend or relative (45.3%), crying (29.8%), calling the police (28.3%), and hitting her back (19.5%) (Hines & Douglas, 2010a).

Men were also given the opportunity to provide qualitative answers to the question concerning their response to their female partner's physical aggression. Examples of such responses include (Hines & Douglas, 2010a):

- "Tried to talk to her about it calmly, saying 'now, if I did that to you, you'd call it abuse.' She answered that she was defending her honor."
- "I tell her that it is not acceptable for her to hit me, or yell at me, especially in front of the children. I also ask her to apologize."
- "I tried to leave and she hit me in the head with a flower pot, then took the phone from me to prevent me from calling anyone."
- "She seemed to be panicking so I wrapped my arms around her…and tried to hold her still until she calmed down - she later said that my holding her that way was physically abusive."

Some critics have argued that because on average, men are bigger and stronger than their female partners, if the female partners are indeed violent, the men can easily strike back, restrain their partner, or leave the premises (Pagelow, 1985). Based on these men's

responses to what happened during the last physical argument, evidence for this critique is mixed. Indeed, the most common response of the men was to get away from their partner in some way, but there is evidence that some men are blocked in their efforts to leave, either through further violence or having their access to transportation blocked. Moreover, the least common response to the female partner's violence was to strike back, and in fact, 20.3% who reported that they struck back in some way stated in their qualitative accounts that it was to restrain her or defend himself. Thus, at most, 16.7% of the men reported that they actually struck back in retaliation (Hines & Douglas, 2010a).

These findings of men being reluctant to strike back against a violent female partner are congruent with previous qualitative research that shows that male victims of IPV are reluctant to hit back either because of moral objections to hitting a woman or because of fear that if he hits her back, he may set himself up to be arrested and/or lose custody of his children (Cook, 2009; Migliaccio, 2001). This issue is exemplified by these quotes from men in our sample: (1) "I have never hit my wife, but today I came close to doing this. It should be noted she has hit me more times than I can remember and kicked me. I grabbed her arms in self defense and held her to the floor. I am a very big and strong man, my wife is tall but thin, not strong at all. I know I will be the one who goes to jail even though she is the one hitting and kicking," and (2) "I asked her why she hit me, and she said, 'because you're bigger than me'. I just felt vengeful for a second and slapped her back. It was the only time I hit her, ever. I cried because I was raised not to hit women, and I felt disappointed in myself that I had crossed that line" (Hines & Douglas, 2010a).

What are the Possible Consequences of This IPV?

Physical Injuries

Prior research shows that presumably because of the average size and strength differentials between men and women, on average women are physically injured more than men as a result of IPV (e.g., Cascardi, Langhinrichsen, & Vivian, 1992; Stets & Straus, 1990). For example, 26.4% of all injuries in the 2004 Canadian GSS were to men, even though men comprised 45.5% of all IPV victims (Laroche, 2008). However, the lower rate of injuries to men should not lead us to overlook the sometimes serious injuries that male victims sustain. Studies of emergency room physicians document that male IPV victims have suffered ax injuries, burns, smashings with fireplace pokers and bricks, and gunshot wounds (McNeely, Cook, & Torres, 2001). The GSS shows that 68.8% of the male victims of severe terroristic violence were injured and that 33.8% feared for their lives (Laroche, 2008). Thus, the potential physical injuries to male victims should not be overlooked.

In our study, almost 80% of male participants reported that they were injured by their female partners within the previous year (see Table 1), with 77.5% sustaining a minor injury (e.g., cut, bruise) and 35.1% a severe injury (i.e., needed medical attention). Moreover, of the male participants who sustained injuries, they were reportedly injured 11.68 times in the previous year (9.73 minor injuries; 4.64 severe injuries). The most common injuries were having a sprain, bruise, or small cut, sustained by 69.5% of men on an average of 4.05 times in the previous year. Of the severe injuries, over 5% of men

reported sustaining a broken bone and over 5% reported passing out (Hines & Douglas, 2010a).

Psychological Injuries

Although my colleagues and I issued a call in 2001 for more research on the psychological effects of IPV against men (Hines & Malley-Morrison, 2001), such potential consequences remain a largely overlooked area. From research conducted on population-based and community samples, we know that men who sustain IPV have higher levels of depressive symptoms, chronic mental illness, illegal and prescription drug abuse (Carbone-Lopez, Kruttschnitt, & MacMillan, 2006; Coker et al., 2002), alcohol abuse (Black & Breiding, 2008; Romito & Grassi, 2007), suicidal ideation, self-harm (Chan, Straus, Brownridge, Tiwari, & Leung, 2008), anxiety (Kaura & Lohman, 2007) and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Hines, 2007). Such community studies, however, have relatively low rates (~4%) of severe IPV, and the mental health outcomes for victims of severe IPV may be exponentially worse than for victims of minor IPV. For example, in the Canadian GSS, the physical and clinical consequences of IPV victimization were concentrated among victims of terroristic violence (Laroche, 2005, 2008).

Our study documented the mental health status of male victims of severe IPV. We focused on two areas: (a) being diagnosed with any mental illness, and (b) symptoms of PTSD. Overall, 23.5% of the men indicated that they had been diagnosed with a mental illness. The most common types were depressive disorders (64.8%), anxiety disorders (47.9%), ADHD (25.4%), bipolar disorder (16.9%), PTSD (12.7%), and alcoholism/substance abuse (11.3%). For all mental illnesses except PTSD, it was equally likely that they were diagnosed with the mental illness before the relationship as it was after being involved with their partner; for PTSD, 75% were diagnosed since being involved with their female partners (Hines & Douglas, 2010a).

It is important to note that research documents that men are unlikely to seek help for mental health issues; in fact, there exists a societal stigma that impedes men from showing emotional vulnerability or admitting to a mental health problem, which leads men to conceal their mental health problems and suffer in silence (Addis & Mahalik, 2003). Thus, it is likely that a larger percentage of these men would be diagnosed with a mental health problem if they sought help. Therefore, we also administered a self-report measure of PTSD symptoms to the men in our sample. PTSD is a psychiatric condition that can follow the experience of a traumatic incident, and its symptoms tend to cluster on three dimensions: persistent re-experiencing of the trauma, persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma, and persistent increased arousal (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). The experience of IPV is generally considered to be a traumatic event (Walker, 2000), and among battered women, about 30%-85% evidence PTSD (Astin, Lawrence, & Foy, 1993; Cascardi, O'Leary, Lawrence, & Schlee, 1995; Gleason, 1993; Kemp, Rawlings, & Green, 1991; Saunders, 1994).

Using the recommended clinical cut-off score for our measure of PTSD symptoms, we found that, similar to samples of battered women, fully 57.9% of the men in our sample suffered from PTSD. Moreover, the average score of the men on our measure of PTSD ($M = 46.56$, $SD = 14.25$) exceeded the clinical cut-off (45), and the frequency of all forms of sustaining IPV was significantly correlated with the total PTSD

score, all subscale scores, and the clinical cut-off variable (see Table 2) (Hines & Douglas, 2011a).

Thus, it seems that the mental health of the men in this sample has suffered as a result of the IPV they sustained. Almost a quarter of the men had been diagnosed with a mental illness, and about 2/5 of these mental illnesses were diagnosed since being involved with their female partners. Although this analysis does not allow us to conclude that the relationship caused their mental illness, it does provide some indication that the IPV the men sustained may have had a psychological impact. In addition, for those men who were diagnosed with mental illnesses before they became involved with their female partners, it is possible that the IPV they sustained may have worsened their symptoms. Furthermore, for the PTSD scale, the men were asked to think about their worst argument with their female partner, and then indicate the extent to which they were bothered in the preceding month by each of the symptoms listed as a result of that argument; thus, some direct links between the PTSD symptoms and the IPV the men experienced can be inferred.

Child Witnesses

Researchers and practitioners have long been concerned about the effects that witnessing IPV between parents can have on children, and for the most part, such effects have been researched on children of battered women in DV shelters (Wolak & Finkelhor, 1998). The research shows that these children frequently witness severe IPV by their fathers against their mothers, and that often, the children are not just passive viewers, but intercede in the violence or were victims of abuse themselves. Consequences of such exposure have been documented in several areas, and include behavioral, emotional, social, cognitive, and physical health problems (Wolak & Finkelhor, 1998).

Little research has documented whether exposure to such violence by mothers against fathers can have similar deleterious effects, but such research needs to be conducted for several reasons. First, the men in our study report that the majority of children had witnessed the IPV, with 59.1% witnessing it, 11.3% at least hearing it, and 9.3% possibly witnessing or hearing it (Hines & Douglas, 2010a). Second, there are qualitative accounts from the men in this study that show that the children are in direct physical danger from the violence that is perpetrated by the women towards the male partners, as exemplified by this statement: "I had been holding the baby during the argument, when she threw the TV remote control towards my head just missing the baby." Third, as mentioned in more detail later, the main reason that male victims with children do not leave their relationships is for the children – they choose to stay to protect their children because they do not want to leave them with a violent mother, and they do not think that they would get custody in a system that questions the legitimacy of female-to-male IPV. Thus, there is a high likelihood that children who witness mother-to-father severe IPV will be exposed to this violence for a much longer period of time than children who witness father-to-mother IPV. Indeed, 1999 and 2004 Canadian GSS data suggests that men tend to stay longer in relationships plagued by IPV (Laroche, 2008).

What Prevents the Men from Leaving?

Some researchers have argued that in comparison to battered women, it is not difficult for male IPV victims to leave their relationships – they have the financial and occupational resources to leave (Pagelow, 1985; Saunders, 1988), and they are not as psychologically invested in their family (Loseke & Kurz, 2005). However, our study sheds doubt on these assumptions. Table 3 presents the men's reasons for not leaving their female partners. As shown, the overwhelming reason they chose to stay typically revolved around their commitment to the marriage and their children. They stated that when they married, it was "for life," and that they are concerned about their children (Hines & Douglas, 2010a)— results that are consistent with a previous qualitative study which showed that men's primary reason for not leaving was a strong objection to what they perceived as abdicating their responsibilities to their marriage and children (Cook, 2009). In addition, the vast majority (71%) of men indicated that they stayed in the relationship because of love, and taken together, these reasons are not congruent with these assertions that men are not psychologically invested in their families.

Also indicative of their psychological investment in their families are fears that men indicated that they may never see their children again if they left, and they also discussed, in their qualitative accounts, their need to stay to protect their children. They expressed fears that they will lose custody of their children, because women predominantly gain custody of children when families divorce or separate (Cancian & Meyer, 1998) and/or their female partners' threats to make false accusations against them so that they would have no possibility of getting custody. More than half of the men in our study reported that such accusations had already been made against them (Hines & Douglas, 2010a).

Additionally, more than half of the men indicated that they did not leave because they had no place to go and did not have enough money to leave (Hines & Douglas, 2010a), results which do not support the assertion that men have enough resources to leave if they wish (Pagelow, 1985; Saunders, 1988). Other men, in their qualitative accounts, discussed the possible negative financial and professional repercussions of leaving through such issues as having their private life made public and/or having their female partners make false accusations against them that could ruin them. Overall, the men in our sample report substantial barriers to leaving (Hines & Douglas, 2010a).

What Happens When They Seek Help?

The literature on male helpseeking, in general, indicates that men are less likely than women to seek help and that men who do seek help must overcome internal and external obstacles to do so (Galdas, Cheater, & Marshall, 2005). Men are not likely to seek help for problems that their larger community deems non-normative or determines that they should be able to solve or control themselves (Addis & Mahalik, 2003). When seeking help for any type of IPV victimization, one can imagine that the obstacles men encounter must be great, given our gendered notions of male and female roles in heterosexual relationships (Lye & Biblarz, 1993; Sweeney, 2007) and the framing of IPV as a women's issue (Arndt, 1982; Walker & Browne, 1985). Indeed, a qualitative study in

Western Australia documented these barriers, which included failure to even recognize that they are being abused; a lack of knowledge regarding IPV against men; adherence to stereotypes that men are supposed to be strong, silent, and tough; fear that no one will believe them; shame and fear that they will be laughed at, ridiculed, and humiliated; fear that they will be judged as weak or having failed as a man; a lack of appropriate services for men; and a desire to protect their female partners, family, and children (Tilbrook et al., 2010).

Although we can imagine how difficult it must be for male victims of IPV to seek help, all of the men in our study sought some kind of help. We required that as an inclusion criterion for our study because we wanted to investigate what happens to men when they try to get help for IPV victimization. In the interest of brevity, we focus here on their helpseeking experiences from the core services designed to help victims of IPV: DV hotlines, DV community agencies, and the police.

DV Hotlines. Almost ¼ of the sample (23.4%) sought help from a hotline that did not specialize in male victims of IPV. Although about 25% of men who sought help from DV hotlines were connected with resources that were helpful, nearly 67% of men reported that these hotlines were not at all helpful. A large proportion of men who called DV hotlines (63.9%) were told that the hotline only helped women, and nearly 1/3 (32.2%) were accused of being the batterer in the relationship. Moreover, 16.4% of the men who contacted a hotline indicated that the staff made fun them (Douglas & Hines, 2011). Qualitative accounts provide a more in-depth understanding of their experiences:

- "They were confused, belligerent, patronizing, offended, indifferent. Thought I was making up a story."
- "Laughed at me and told me I must have done something to deserve it if it happened at all."
- "Told me that women don't commit domestic violence – it must have been my fault."
- "They accused me of trying to hide my 'abuse' of her by claiming to be a victim, and they said that I was nothing more than a wimp."

Local DV Agencies. Almost half of the sample (44.1%) sought assistance from a local DV agency, and 65.2% said that this resource was not at all helpful. Of the men who said the agency was not at all helpful, 95.3% said that they were given the impression that the agency was biased against men, 78.3% were told that the agency does not help men, 63.9% were accused of being the batterer in the relationship, and 15.2% said the staff made fun of them (Douglas & Hines, 2011). Below are their own words describing their experiences:

- "I would say they simply don't believe men can be victims – I especially asked if I could speak to a male counselor; they told me they didn't have one and didn't need one."
- "They just laughed and hung up."
- "They didn't really listen to what I said. They assumed that all abusers are men and said that I must accept that I was the abuser. They ridiculed me for not leaving my wife, ignoring the issues about what I would need to do to protect my 6 children and care for them."

Police. Almost half of the men (46%) had called the police because of their

female partner's IPV; 18.7% found the police to be very helpful, but 56% found the police to be not at all helpful. Table 4 displays the experiences that they had with the police. There was no difference between the proportion of helpseekers and partners who were arrested and those who were placed in jail. In 54.9% of cases, the partner was determined to be the primary aggressor. Among those 62 men, 41.5% said the police asked the helpseeker if he wanted his partner arrested; 21% reported the police refused to arrest the partner, 38.7% indicated the police said there was nothing they could do and left, and 25.4% said the police did nothing, ignored them, or dismissed them (Douglas & Hines, 2011). Qualitative accounts of their experiences with police include:

- "They determined she was the aggressor but said since I was a man it was silly to arrest her."
- "Told me to get her help. Told me to spend the night in a hotel."
- "I was at the hospital with bruising and burned eyes from hot coffee thrown in them. They didn't believe that she did this…and refused to arrest her."

Summary. The experiences of these men tell a story of a minority of DV service providers being equipped to handle the men's experiences, but a majority either dismissing the men at best, or treating the men with suspicion and ridicule. These results are consistent with previous qualitative research (Cook, 2009; Hines et al., 2007; Tilbrook et al., 2010) of men who encountered barriers to obtaining help for IPV victimization. The men in these studies reported that service providers often failed to take action. Police did not respond to calls for help, and men's accounts of abuse were not believed by DV agencies or hotlines. Our findings about seeking help from police are consistent with one study that found that male victims did not feel that the police took their concerns seriously, and were significantly less satisfied with the police response than female victims of IPV (Buzawa & Austin, 1993).

These findings are in stark contrast to the training that victim advocates receive that tells them they need to "start" with the concerns and experiences of the victim, believe victims, not judge them, tell them that the abuse is not their fault, and offer resources. The results are also in stark contrast to the ratings of social services and police by battered women, the large majority of whom find such services helpful and would use them again (Apsler, Cummins, & Carl, 2003; Bowker & Maurer, 1985; McNamara, Ertl, Marsh, & Walker, 1997; McNamara, Tamanini, & Pelletier-Walker, 2008; Molina, Lawrence, Azhar-Miller, & Rivera, 2009; Norton & Schauer, 1997).

Limitations and Future Research

It is important to consider the limitations of our study when interpreting the results for policy and practice implications. Our study is the first large-scale study of male IPV victims, and although it supported the findings of the smaller-scale studies to date, replication is necessary. It is also important to recognize that this was a convenience sample, and the men's experiences cannot be generalized to all male IPV victims. For example, our sample was restricted to men who sustained IPV and sought help in some form. Although we broadly defined helpseeking to include searching the Internet for resources and talking to friends or family members, it is likely that there is a large group of men who do not seek any type of help when sustaining IPV from their female partners

because it is a non-normative issue for men (Addis & Mahalik, 2003; Tilbrook et al., 2010). Moreover, the helpseekers had to have either seen our advertisement on the Internet or called the DAHMW; therefore, helpseekers without access to either of these resources were excluded. Thus, we are likely missing the experiences of important groups who are potentially in need of help and whose experiences could differ from those of the men we surveyed. On a related note, the men in our study are primarily White and well-educated. It is possible that men with lower levels of education or from other ethnic backgrounds might have different experiences with helpseeking, if they seek help at all.

Similar to studies of battered women, we have no way to assess the legitimacy of the self-reported information in this study. It is possible that some of the men may have exaggerated or even fabricated their experiences. That said, it is unlikely that this problem is too widespread, given that the men reported about their experiences on an anonymous, 30-minute Internet/phone survey with no incentives for participation, and the men would have had to overcome several societal and internal barriers to seek help (Addis & Mahalik, 2003) and by this very factor are likely to be reporting legitimate concerns.

Implications for Policy and Programming

It is not unusual for the experiences of victims to be denied when they first surface (Schatzow & Herman, 1989), and we believe that given enough research, the experiences and service needs of this group will be recognized as a reality and legitimate, just as it has for other marginalized groups. Thus, these findings have important implications for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers in the field of IPV:

1. It is important for all who work in the field of IPV – whether policymaker, practitioner or researcher – to acknowledge that both men and women can perpetrate even the most severe forms of IPV and both men and women can be victimized by severe forms of IPV. Serious violence and controlling behaviors demand our attention, regardless of the gender of the perpetrator or victim.
2. Given the serious level of the IPV that these men sustain, it is necessary to educate policymakers, practitioners, researchers and the public about men sustaining severe IPV, their experiences, their barriers to leaving, and resources available. Public education concerning IPV and outreach materials for potential victims should be gender-inclusive, because previous research shows that men are often not the recipients of outreach materials concerning IPV victimization (Hines & Douglas, 2011c).
3. Is it vitally important that policies and procedures be developed that require an increase in training about the diversity of IPV victims for members of the DV service system and all helping professionals who might come into contact with IPV victims.
4. Policies should also require a re-examination by faculty in the social sciences who prepare future social service practitioners concerning their family violence curricula. Education should include the common experiences of all IPV victims, regardless of victim and perpetrator gender, and the important role that frontline staff plays in validating those experiences and providing services to all who need

assistance.

5. Policies should be developed to require a re-examination by police departments with regard to how they handle incidents of IPV and how police officers respond when victims do not meet our gendered notions of the dynamics of IPV.

6. Governments should make it a priority to fund research on male IPV victims, especially to examine other potential consequences of IPV, such as other types of physical and mental health problems. This research is currently 40 years behind the parallel research on female IPV victims.

7. Similarly, it is just as important that governments fund and support research on how female-perpetrated IPV may have an impact on a family system, especially children who live in these households. Their needs have been overlooked for too long.

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Appendix

Table 1
Prevalence and Chronicity of Intimate Partner Violence by Female Partners (n = 302)

Types of Aggression	% of Female Partners Who Perpetrated	Chronicity of Aggression[1] M (SD)
Minor Psychological	100.0	65.12 (24.15)
Severe Psychological	96.0	28.90 (26.20)
Controlling Behaviors	93.4	42.62 (36.25)
Insisting on Sex	41.1	9.60 (8.48)
Minor Physical	98.7	32.01 (34.33)
Severe Physical	90.4	16.74 (22.06)
Very Severe Physical	54.0	7.46 (10.59)
Total Physical (Minor & Severe)	100.0	46.72 (53.48)

Types of Injuries	% of Male Helpseekers who Sustained an Injury	Chronicity of Injuries to Male Helpseekers[1] M (SD)
Minor	77.5	9.73 (12.75)
Severe	35.1	4.64 (7.50)
Total (Minor + Severe)	78.5	11.68 (15.61)

Note. Adapted from Hines and Douglas (2010a).

[1] *Chronicity* is the average number of aggressive acts used by those female partners who were reported to have used any of the corresponding aggressive act.

Table 2
Bivariate Correlations Among Sustained IPV and PTSD for Both Samples

PCL Scale	Controlling Behaviors	Severe Psychological Aggression	Physical Aggression	Injuries
Total Score	.29***	.21***	.25***	.19***
Re-Experiencing	.25***	.12*	.20***	.17**
Avoidance/Numbness	.24***	.21***	.24***	.17**
Hyperarousal	.27***	.23***	.21***	.15**
Scored >45[†]	.26***	.18**	.16**	.11

Note. Adapted from Hines and Douglas (2011a)

[†]45 is the clinical cut-off for PTSD on the PCL.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 3

What Prevents the Men from Leaving

Reason	%
He is concerned about the children (*n* = 126)	88.9%
When he got married, it was for life (*n* = 113)	80.5%
Love (*n* = 178)	71.3%
He fears he may never see the children again (*n* = 126)	67.5%
He thinks she'll change (*n* = 178)	55.6%
He doesn't have enough money to leave (*n* = 178)	52.8%
He has nowhere to go (*n* = 178)	52.2%
He's embarrassed other will find out he's being abused (*n* = 178)	52.2%
He doesn't want to take the children away from her (*n* = 126)	46.0%
She threatened to kill herself if he left (*n* = 178)	27.5%
He fears she'll kill him or someone he loves if he leaves (*n* = 178)	24.2%
Qualitative Responses (*n* = 178)	
Possible financial/professional/other/unspecified repercussions	12.7%
Feels it's morally wrong to split the family/abandon her	7.3%
Fears for the safety of loved ones or pets	4.5%
She threatened false accusations	3.9%
He says her behavior is not her fault (e.g., she's mentally ill or something in her past causes her to behave this way)	2.8%
She is dependent upon him and/or he's concerned about her well-being	2.2%
He didn't know he was being abused/thought it was normal	1.7%
He's dependent upon her in some way (e.g., disability, health insurance)	1.7%
He's afraid to leave	1.1%
The way the system would handle the situation would only make it worse	1.1%
The violence is mutual	1.1%
She discovered his plans to leave and is using tactics to stop him from leaving	1.1%
Thinks no one will believe him	0.6%

Note. Adapted from Hines and Douglas (2010a)

Table 4

Follow-up Questions About Experiences with Police (n = 129 who called the police)

Item	Partner	Helpseeker	χ^2
Police arrested	26.5	33.3	0.83
Of those arrested:	*n* = 35	*n* = 43	
Placed in jail	81.8	88.4	[a]
Charges dropped	50.0	41.5	.05

Note. Adapted from Douglas and Hines (2011)

[a] The expected count for some of the cells was <5 and a chi-square analysis could not be performed.

Section II: Family Dynamics, Parents, and Divorce

The Lived Experiences of Non-custodial Parents in Canada: A Comparison of Mothers and Fathers

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Abstract. This paper reviews the literature to provide an overview of what is currently known about the situations and experiences of mothers and fathers who become the non-resident parent post-separation/divorce. It also documents the results of a new qualitative study of similarities and differences between divorced non-custodial mothers and fathers in Canada in their experience of parenthood after divorce; focusing on (a) patterns of attachment, loss and grief related to involuntary child absence, (b) mothers' and fathers' perspectives on their children's needs in the divorce transition, and their responsibilities in relation to those needs, and (c) mothers' and fathers' perspectives on the responsibilities of social institutions to support divorced parents. I explore mothers' and fathers' views of the salient issues regarding post-divorce parenting, with a focus on the process and outcome of child custody determination. The principal question explored is, "Are the experiences of nonresident parents gender-based, or is their status as non-resident parents a more salient factor in their subsequent relationship with their children?" Findings indicate that there are many similarities in women and men's experiences regarding the difficulties they each encounter when parenting at a distance. A key finding is that both parents experience the harmful effects of existing child custody law and policy, and speak strongly to the need for child custody law reform in the direction of a joint physical custody presumption. I examine mothers' and fathers' own views regarding child custody determination and needed changes in direct service provision to non-custodial parents.

As a long-time researcher of divorced non-custodial fathers, I was approached by a small mutual aid group of divorced mothers in Victoria, British Columbia, to undertake a study of mothers without custody, a largely invisible but growing group often assumed to have either voluntarily relinquished care and control of their children or being incapable of providing their children with the care they need. After interviewing the 14 mothers who volunteered for the study, I found the opposite to be true; non-custodial mothers are no different from other mothers, but through the play of circumstances over which they have relatively little control, find themselves on the periphery of their children's lives subsequent to a legal determination of paternal custody. Their situation parallels that of the non-custodial fathers I had studied for many years, but with some subtle and important differences. This paper documents both the similarities and differences between non-custodial mothers and fathers in Canada, focusing on patterns of attachment, loss and grief related to involuntary child absence; mothers' and fathers' perspectives on their children's needs in the divorce transition, and their own responsibilities in relation to those needs; and mothers' and fathers' perspectives on the responsibilities of social institutions to support parents during and after divorce. We will

explore mothers' and fathers' views of the salient issues regarding parenting after divorce, with a focus on the process and outcomes in child custody determination. Finally, we examine proposals for law reform in child custody determination, and needed changes in direct service provision to this population.

An unasked question in current feminist analyses of child custody determination—is sole maternal custody of children truly in women's best interests?—was raised by the mothers in our study. From their perspective, the present sole custody system is neither in women's nor men's interests, and is not meeting the needs of their children. When mothers find themselves situated in the same position as many fathers after divorce, as non-custodial parents, their views on child custody determination and on needed reforms in child custody process and outcomes overwhelmingly support the need for a legal presumption of shared parental responsibility.

For the purposes of our study, we defined divorce as inclusive of a broad range of co-parenting partnerships prior to parental separation, including never-married parents.

Research on Non-Custodial Parents and Child Absence

While divorce research has mainly focused on the experience of single mothers and increasing attention is being paid to the situation of non-custodial fathers, there remains little research on the growing phenomenon of mothers who lose custody of their children after divorce. The few studies that exist have tended to focus on "voluntarily relinquishing" mothers; those who are involuntarily removed via a court order have been largely ignored in the literature. There are no extant studies comparing the experiences of non-custodial mothers and fathers.

There is strong evidence that non-custodial fathers experience considerable emotional hardship after divorce: the risk of suicide is high for divorced fathers (Kposowa, 2000), and men do not feel sustained by social support systems (Coley, 2006; Warshak, 2000). Jacobs (1986) concluded that the most striking effects of divorce for fathers were in the area of mental health: between 60-80% of men in Jacobs' study reported a number of long-lasting stress-related symptoms such as sleeplessness and reduced energy. For most non-custodial fathers, contrary to the "deadbeat dad" stereotype, the potential loss of one's children and the pre-divorce father-child relationship is of primary concern (Braver & O'Connell, 1998). Kruk (1993) generated a profile of non-custodial fathers as a high-risk population, many remaining at a high level of distress several years after divorce; the absence of their children from their lives, the loss of the parental role, and the constraints of the new "access" or "visiting" relationship, were key factors. Research on non-custodial fathers has documented the following effects of child absence on mental health: loss, grief and learned helplessness (Frieman, 2003; Braver, 1998); depression and apathy (Amato, 2000; Braver, 1998; Kruk, 1993) and inadequacy and feelings of incompetence (Coley, 2003; Hetherington, 2002). Studies have also examined the physical health effects of divorce on these fathers; Jacobs (1986) found that almost half of divorced fathers develop physical symptoms, including weight loss, nerve-related eye and dental problems, high blood pressure, increased drinking, sleeping and eating difficulties, and a host of psychosomatic complaints after divorce.

The research on non-custodial mothers, compared to fathers, is relatively sparse. The first studies were completed in the early 1980's and mainly focused on mothers who had voluntarily relinquished custody after divorce. Paskowicz (1982) challenged the societal prescription that mothers are to be primarily responsible for their children's upbringing, and the primary caregivers of children as stay-at-home moms, finding that voluntarily relinquishing mothers were confident, self-assured, emotionally stable, responsible and successful, transcending prescribed gender-based norms and roles with few if any negative repercussions on their children. Constantatos (1984) examined the factors that affect a woman's decision to relinquish custody, with financial considerations and a preference for paternal caregiving for children being major factors in their decision. Greif and Pabst (1988) examined mothers' adjustment to separation in greater depth, comparing mothers who had voluntarily relinquished custody with those who had custody removed by the court system, concluding that whereas the voluntarily relinquishing were comfortable with their situation, mothers who lost custody had mixed or negative reactions. Depner (1993) found that "voluntarily relinquishing" mothers experienced more painful feelings and a more difficult adaptation to the non-custodial situation than was previously reported. Herrerias (1995) studied 130 voluntarily relinquishing mothers and found that many would deny that they had children, often using an avoidance strategy on the subject of children; and Mayer (1997) reported that non-custodial mothers were highly dissatisfied and distressed regarding their relationships with their children, with few if any sources of support in this regard. No evidence was found that non-custodial mothers were more unfit than custodial mothers in terms of mother-child attachment, living arrangements, abuse, substance use, or other problem areas. Since 2000 there have been few further studies, but the focus has been on ethnographical accounts, including autoethnographical studies, that examine the experiences of mothers in the cultural context of being a non-custodial mother (Eicher-Catt, 2004; Gustafson, 2006; Herrerias, 2008; Pagano, 2000; Richardson, 2006).

Method

We undertook two identical exploratory and descriptive qualitative studies that utilized narrative inquiry as the main approach to data collection, one of non-custodial (and some custodial) divorced fathers, and the other of non-custodial mothers, and then compared the two. Each study was rooted in grounded theory and informed practice principles that emphasize the importance of individual experience in knowledge construction.

Sampling

A survey research method was utilized with a sample of 82 divorced fathers, resident in Vancouver and surrounding regions of southwestern British Columbia, Canada. Recruitment via the Fatherhood Involvement Network of British Columbia, an association of professional service providers and father associations, yielded the first 18 respondents, and from there a snowball sampling approach was used. The sampling

generated 150 respondents who met the study criteria (separated and divorced fathers of dependent children); the first 82 to contact the researcher were included in the study.

Following completion of the divorced fathers study, a mutual aid group of non-custodial mothers in Victoria, British Columbia approached the author with an interest to participate in a research study that would explore the experiences of non-custodial mothers and give voice to their struggles to maintain a presence in their children's lives. Four mothers from the group volunteered as participants and then snowball sampling was used to generate a sample of 14 mothers without custody of their children after separation.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

Each parent participated in one audio-taped face-to-face interview approximately one and one half hour in duration. Instrumentation comprised two phases of narrative storytelling about each parent's personal history as it related to his/her separation from her/his children, and a semi-structured interview with open-ended questions pertaining to children's needs and parental responsibilities in the divorce transition, as well as the responsibilities of social institutions to support parents. The stories of the first phase provided context for the remaining data, and assisted the participants in accessing the memories that would help to inform their responses to the questions in the second phase.

Data Analysis

The research data, consisting of the audio-recordings, transcriptions and a field journal of ongoing notes, were approached using elements of a reflexive grounded theory approach and a constant comparative method of content analysis. This multi-modal approach involved switching between deductive and inductive reasoning and contextualization and decontextualization throughout the analysis. We sought to base theorizing in the data rather than imposing a pre-determined hypothesis, examining the data with existing influences made explicit, but with an openness to the theoretical implications of the raw data (Scourfield, 2001).

A single-case analysis was conducted with each transcript. The classification system of Lieblich et al. (1998) was used, including holistic-form, holistic-content, categorical-content and categorical-form analysis. The holistic-form approach examined narratives for turning points related to mothers' accounts of their divorces and separation from their children. The holistic-content method was used to discover patterns and themes within the context of the whole story. Categorical-content analysis entailed the selection of subtext that corresponds to categories derived from the interview questions. Lastly, a cross-study analysis sought out common themes and negative evidence.

The N-Vivo qualitative data analysis tool was used in the analysis of the data.

Results and Discussion

Eighty two divorced fathers, 65 of which were non-custodial fathers, and 30 of which had no contact with their children, were interviewed, as were 14 mothers without custody, 8 of which had no contact with their children. The fact that all of the mothers were non-custodial parents while some fathers had custody of the children may skew the following results; however, 65 of the fathers were non-custodial parents, and most of the 17 fathers with custody had a period of time as non-custodial parents before obtaining legal custody. The 14 mothers had a total of 32 children, 21 boys and 11 girls. As far as pre-divorce relationships were concerned, mothers reported high levels of involvement in their children's lives and attachment to their children, with 12 of the 14 mothers reporting having been primary caregivers of their children before divorce. The 82 fathers had a total of 182 children; 91 of which were male and 91 female. Eighteen of the 82 fathers reported having been primary caregivers of their children before divorce.

Narrative data. Mothers and fathers were asked to recount the story of their divorce, particularly in regard to their relationship with their children, from the point of parental separation to the present. Although their divorce narratives paralleled each other, some important differences were observed, both in regard to core themes and the progression of the stories themselves (Table 1).

Table 1
Themes and Story Patterns in Parents' Narratives

Core Themes - Fathers:	Core Themes - Mothers:
•Grief and loss; broken attachments with children •Mothers' discouragement of contact, access denial, and parental alienation; mothers as gatekeepers; importance of mothers' encouragement of contact •Adversarial system heightening conflict; support services non-existent or unhelpful •Conflict and violence; abuse of fathers, especially legal abuse; sole custody/removal of custody; false allegations •Effects on children: children's needs not being met; fear and worry regarding children's (emotional) well-being •Financial losses •Positive outcomes: father-child involvement and attachment	•Grief and loss; broken attachments with children •Legal abuse: perceived non-conformity to motherhood ideal by the court; internalization of legal abuse •Physical violence and emotional abuse; effects of witnessing mother abuse on children •Access denial and parental alienation; fathers as gatekeepers •Social stigma, including service providers; mothers actively concealing their non-custodial status •Lack of support services; appearance of support; self-reliance of mothers •Financial losses
Story Pattern - Fathers:	**Story Pattern - Mothers:**
•Precipitating event; family stress, tension •Lack of external social support •Mothers as initiators of separation and divorce •Financial dispute leading to child custody dispute; legal system involvement •Parental alienation; abuse allegations •Heightened conflict; violence; initial paternal disengagement •Effects of conflict and paternal disengagement on children •Structural and psychological obstacles to father-child involvement and attachment •Involuntary paternal disengagement; legal removal of custody •Attempts to reestablish relationship; fathers as self-litigants	•Abuse and violence by former partner •Active resistance of abuse: fight or flight •Resistance judged harshly by the court •Paternal custody award a consequence of mothers' resistance to partner abuse, following mutual allegations of abuse; mothers' accounts discounted by the court •Parental alienation •Structural and psychological obstacles to mother-child involvement and attachment •Involuntary maternal disengagement •Stigma and internalization; judged as undeserving of support services •Attempts to combat deflated self-concept

Seven core themes emerged from fathers' narrative accounts of their divorce process, particularly in regard to their relationship with their children:

1. *Grief and loss; broken attachments*. Divorced fathers experience a grieving process which contains all the elements of bereavement, primarily linked to the loss of their children and the breaking of the attachment bonds with their children.

Painful, painful is the operative word, and mind-blowingly awful, disgusting, disheartening, grief.

2. *Access denial and parental alienation*. Mothers' discouragement of paternal involvement was associated with paternal disengagement in many cases, with access denial and parental alienation featuring in many fathers' stories.

Nothing ever happens to her she just basically goes along and does whatever she wants and nothing ever happens to her…She denies access for a month and I actually got to the point where I went to the police and I said I want to lay a charge and they're like, we don't deal with this; it's a civil matter.

3. *Adversarial proceedings*. The role of the adversarial system in heightening conflict was emphasized, especially when child custody was in dispute.

He (the judge) thought I had delusions of grandeur, because I wanted so strongly to have regular access to my child…He granted the mother sole custody. He wrote these 3 sentences, number one, the father has a basic misunderstanding of the role of the father in a child's life, number two, the mother believes that joint custody can never work for any child even if both parents are fully cooperative and fully communicative. This attitude of the mother's, he wrote, is very unhealthy for the child. And thirdly, he wrote, with this order for sole custody to the mother the father fears, with good reason, that the paternal relationship will be choked off entirely. And yet they're supposed to act in the paramount best interest of the child and it's in the best interest of the child to have all of their relationships choked off on the paternal side.

4. *Partner abuse and legal abuse*. Spousal violence and abuse was reported by several fathers, including physical, emotional, and (especially) legal abuse such as false allegations of abuse, which put fathers on the defensive in the legal process.

Throughout the entire court process it was allegations of domestic violence, sexual abuse, everything, I've had it all thrown at me in attempt to thwart my relationship with my child…The allegations were found to be completely unfounded and made with malicious intent, and this malicious intent has further hampered my parental time with my child. But it didn't do me any good in court, bringing all that material forward to a judge. Put it this way, it all got swept under the table.

5. *Effects on children*. Fathers' stories focused on the effects of ruptured father-child attachment bonds on their children.

My son had an absolute temper tantrum when they found out that they couldn't see me…It was obvious that she was sharing all the aspects of our disagreements with them and at that point, my son became more and more angry, withdrawn, confused, hostile, difficult to control, temper tantrums, really hard to control at times.

6. *Financial losses*. The enormous financial losses incurred by fathers, resulting from both legal fees and child support payments, was another theme.

I've spent $275,000, all my RRSP's, the equity I had in my house, as much as I hate to say it, my son's education fund, my parent's retirement fund, they helped me to the tune of 100,000. Just to get to where we're at today and all I really wanted was to be involved and to have a say.

7. *Positive outcomes*. Those fathers who were able to surmount the obstacles to restoring their relationship with their children focused on positive outcomes and restoration of father-child bonds.

My daughter was two years old and the mom recognized that I was as important if not more important in meeting our daughter's needs ever since she was born...I was supportive and involved.

Seven themes also emerged from our analysis of mothers' narratives:

1. *Grief and loss; broken attachments*. Like fathers, the emotional impact of broken attachments to children was the primary theme in mothers' accounts.

You're broken as a mother and I'm speaking as a mother. I was broken. I don't know that all mothers are broken but for me I was in the deepest depths of despair I've ever experienced, ever.

It's very deep. I felt so depressed, I felt, you know, I thought about suicide, you know, though not going to hang out there very long but I definitely felt like life isn't even worth living, you know. I went through that because, you know, my sweet girls are not in my life. But I got back to, well they're alive and look at what there is to be grateful for. But yeah definitely it's like, well, imagine any, any parent or you know having their children in a sense taken out of their lives through the courts and through manipulation; yeah, it's a very devastating and painful, excruciatingly painful experience and it's constant, it's something that never really goes away. It's just constantly there.

2. *Legal abuse*. Legal abuse and the harsh judgment of the court when mothers' behaviour did not conform to judges' views of the motherhood ideal was a second theme; mothers internalized these judgments, and spoke of their internal conflict as they fought to repair their damaged self-concept as capable and loving parents.

He could steal the children, had all the money and the power, the system congratulated him and gave out, you know, all the kudos to do all the maximum damage legally as he

could.

3. *Partner abuse*. Physical violence and emotional abuse by the former partner was the third theme; mothers spoke of the effects of mother abuse on their children in a poignant way, and were particularly concerned about their children modeling their fathers' behaviour.

So when I left him there was a lot of domestic violence going on, so when I finally left him I went to a transition house because I seen what he was doing to me my children were starting to do as well. They're all boys… I started seeing them treating me the way he was treating me and I wasn't going to stand for that.

4. *Access denial and parental alienation*. Access denial and parental alienation was a fourth theme, with custodial fathers' gatekeeping and controlling behaviours vis-à-vis child access reported as a key factor in their struggle to maintain contact.

If you're told that your mother left you, your mother doesn't love you, and you're told over and over again, the child's going to remember that and then they're going to start to hate that person.

5. *Social stigma*. Fifth, the experience of shame, stigma and humiliation was acute for these mothers, with many actively concealing their non-custodial status.

A mom has to try a lot, lot harder because she has that stigma against her right from the beginning, you're labeled as a hated person that, you know, you're vindictive.

6. *Lack of support services.* The almost complete lack of professional support available to mothers was identified. Many mothers felt judged as unfit parents undeserving of support services.

In my situation I wish there was some way for me to get some sort of support. I felt I couldn't do it, there was no one to talk to. I wish there was someone who could advise me what I could do in particular circumstances and at the time, I felt helpless because I also needed to develop a new life, and I went back to school and I had to look for a job and I wish I had some access to some resources that would have allowed me to place that need, that was my primary need, to have my children in my life…I wish I was offered some sort of financial support so I could do actually do something rather than sit helplessly, rather than not know what I would or should do. Social and legal support, I really didn't know anyone who could advise me, or could help me with my grief and loss.

7. *Financial losses*. Severe financial losses compromised mothers' ability to maintain custody of their children, as fathers' stronger financial position allowed them to obtain better legal help, as mothers were forced to rely on often inadequate legal aid funding.

He had the stability, he had the home, the money, the you know the environment that they

needed. I guess that's what he had going for him. What did I have? I had nothing because I wasn't working because I was a stay at home mom.

The themes that emerged from parents' accounts of their divorce experiences and their diminished relationships with their children followed a certain progression. Fathers described a process where attachment stability was replaced by chaos in the father-child relationship. Fathers' stories typically started with a precipitating stressful event, leading to family turmoil, with few social supports available; fathers sought support services, but were either unsuccessful or found services unhelpful; most fathers were respondents and mothers initiators of the divorce, and fathers either gave up or kept going to court in an effort to preserve their relationship with their children; parental alienation occurred in degrees, with initial discouragement of paternal contact and abuse allegations; with heightened parental conflict came paternal disengagement from children; children's deteriorating emotional well-being became evident; both psychological and structural barriers mitigated against fathers in their efforts to restore their attachment with their children; as fathers struggled with access to children and lost custody of their children in legal proceedings, their absence from their children's lives became permanent; serious physical and mental health problems became evident as fathers' continued efforts to reestablish meaningful contact bore little fruit.

The trajectory of mothers' narratives accounts followed a different pattern: mothers found themselves in either violent or exploitative situations, with several mothers reporting abuse and violence by the former partner; they actively resisted the abuse through a fight or flight response, either leaving the situation or fighting back; their resistance was viewed negatively by the court, with self-defense seen as not in keeping with the motherhood ideal; a paternal custody award was the consequence of mothers' resistance to partner abuse, as mothers' accounts were discounted by the courts; structural and psychological obstacles to mother-child involvement and attachment worked against mothers' efforts to restore their relationship with their children; as mothers struggled with access to their children and lost custody in legal proceedings, their absence from their children's lives became permanent; stigma and shaming of others led to internalization of these judgments, and mothers were made to feel undeserving of support services; finally, mothers strove to combat their formerly deflated self-concept, in the interest of reconnecting with their children in the future.

The primary theme in both mothers' and fathers' narratives was that of their painful feelings associated with the loss of their children and their roles as parents. Mothers' accounts of serious family violence were more in evidence, whereas the theme of false allegations emerged for fathers but less so for mothers. The biggest difference in the narratives related to social and cultural perceptions of non-custodial mothers and fathers, with the stigma and shaming experiences of mothers being more pronounced. Whereas non-custodial fathers who identified themselves as non-custodial parents were able to garner some degree of sympathy in the public realm, mothers without custody were simply assumed to be unfit mothers showing disregard for their children's needs, deserving of their fate, and left largely without support. At the same time, fathers reported that when they spoke of their experience of woundedness and trauma connected to the loss of their children, they were subjected to a mean-spirited cultural response, where such "trauma" discourse was mocked.

Unmet needs and unfulfilled responsibilities. Mothers and fathers were asked for their views of their children's needs in the divorce transition, and their responsibilities as parents in this regard. Tables 2 and 3 summarize their views. As far as children's needs are concerned, according to both mothers and fathers, children need a stable and unthreatened *parental* (not "access" or visiting) relationship with both their parents; and they need to be loved, and in no way felt to blame for their parents' divorce. However, whereas fathers identified security and protection as a core unmet need of children, mothers were more likely to identify the need for inter-parental cooperation and respect, as well as the need for stability and consistency in children's routines and relationships. As far as parental responsibilities are concerned, virtually all of the fathers and mothers cited the responsibility to *be there for your kids*, in some form of loving parental capacity. For mothers, this was followed closely by respect toward the other parent; for fathers, this was followed closely by the notion that fathers basically have only one responsibility: respect for their children's needs. A large number of fathers identified fathers' responsibility for ensuring the safety, security and protection of their children; this was less likely to be cited by mothers as a core maternal responsibility. Thus whereas fathers tended to see their parental role as largely one of protection, mothers were more likely to emphasize inter-parental cooperation and shielding children from parental conflict.

Table 2
Needs of Children After Parental Divorce

	Total %: _____	
	Mothers Identifying	Fathers Identifying
▪ Shared parenting	86(12)	80(66)
▪ Stable relationship with both parents		
▪ Love	71(10)	59(48)
▪ Reassurance that children are not to blame		
▪ Parental cooperation	43(6)	30(25)
▪ Mutual respect		
▪ Stability, Consistency	36(5)	30(25)
▪ Safety; Security	29(4)	72(59)
▪ Physical needs: food, shelter, clothing	29(4)	89(73)
▪ Financial provision		
▪ Roots	7(1)	49(40)

Table 3
Parental Responsibilities

	Total %	
	Mothers identifying	Fathers Identifying
▪ Active love, care	100(14)	100(82)
▪ Being there		
▪ Access; spending time, engagement (fathers)		
▪ Continuity (mothers)		
▪ Respect for co-parent	43(6)	9(7)
▪ Mutual respect (fathers)		
▪ Respect for/sensitivity to children's needs	21(3)	49(40)
▪ Roles: teacher, guide, role model (fathers)		
▪ Emotional development	7(1)	16(13)
▪ Food, shelter, clothing	7(1)	34(28)
▪ Financial provision		
▪ Safety; Security; Protection	---	29(24)

Parents were also asked about their views on the responsibilities of social institutions to support parents in the fulfillment of their parental responsibilities (Table 4). Mothers and fathers concurred in regard to the responsibilities of social institutions to support both parents as responsible and active parents after divorce, and to recognize mothers and fathers as having equal value, status, and involvement in children's lives. Whereas fathers emphasized the provision of legal rights and services, and social support services for parents, mothers highlighted the provision of mediation and counselling services. Whereas fathers spoke more about access enforcement, mothers emphasized access facilitation (as well as legal rights and services).

Table 4
Social Institutional Responsibilities

	Total %	
	Mothers Identifying	Fathers Identifying
▪ Legal rights and services	29(4)	62(51)
▪ Shared parenting (fathers)		
▪ Recognition of mother/father as parent	7 (1)	40(33)
▪ Respect, validation		
▪ Support of mother/father as parent	29(4)	---
▪ Court/legislative reform	29(4)	37(30)
▪ Civilian oversight (mothers)		
▪ Dealing with gender bias (fathers)		
▪ Dealing with parental alienation (fathers)		
▪ Dealing with false allegations (fathers)		
▪ Mediation, counselling	43(6)	24(20)
▪ Remove adversarial system/court		
▪ Mediation as an alternative		
▪ Support services	36 (5)	40(33)
▪ BIOC=attending to children's needs	---	21(17)
▪ Counselling for children	21(3)	---
▪ Access enforcement	7(1)	15(12)
▪ Access facilitation	29 (4)	---
▪ Legal rights and services	29 (4)	---

A striking finding was the degree to which parents indicated a preference for an equal or shared parenting arrangement after divorce, as opposed to sole custody or other arrangement. When asked, "When parents are in dispute about parenting arrangements, what position do you think the law should take which would best meet children's core needs?," 12 of the 14 mothers (86%) indicated equal or shared parenting (defined as children spending either equal or at least 40% of their residential time with each parent after divorce), compared to 64 of 82 fathers (78%). This is consistent with a recent Canadian government survey (N=1,002) which found 78.3% of women and 77.7% of men in support of federal and provincial legislation to create a presumption of equal parenting in child custody cases (Nanos Research, 2009). Non-custodial parents' primary issue of concern was the lack of such a presumption, which would have allowed them to preserve their relationship with their children; in its absence, both non-custodial fathers and mothers felt powerless to deal with access denial and parental alienation.

Although mothers and fathers reported the presence of abuse and family violence in their former relationships, with most accounts describing reciprocal violence, and more emotional than physical violence, the severity of some mothers' accounts of fleeing situations of violence, in which they were left unprotected by the legal system, and in some cases endangered by legal processes, was striking. It was these mothers, however, who were the strongest proponents of both a shared parenting presumption and the use of mediation in high conflict cases. Their viewpoint is supported by data which identifies 50% of first-time interparental violence as taking place in the post-divorce period, in the context of an adversarial child custody contest, when parent-child attachments are at

stake and only a "win-lose" outcome possible (Corcoran & Melamed, 1990). Shared parenting, on the other hand, is associated with reduction of inter-parental conflict (Bauserman, 2002).

Implications

When mothers and fathers are both situated as non-custodial parents, there are virtually no differences between the genders with respect to their views on child custody; although there exists a gender gap between divorced custodial mothers and non-custodial fathers on the issue, there is no such gap between non-custodial mothers and fathers. Both want equal shared parenting responsibility presumption in law.

The views of non-custodial mothers and fathers with respect to current proposals for law reform in child custody outcomes, and the child custody process, moving away from adversarial resolution toward the use of non-adversarial processes such as mediation, warrant consideration by policymakers. A policy forum on child custody and family violence, bringing together child custody experts and woman-serving organizations specializing in policy in the field of family violence, is urgently needed.

The implications for direct practice with non-custodial mothers and fathers suggest that the two groups have distinct needs. The barriers to engagement of non-custodial parents by professional service providers were emphasized by both mothers and fathers, but were more pronounced for mothers. Non-custodial mothers are subjected to severe stigmatization and marginalization, assumed to be bad mothers and deserving of their fate, and left largely without support from women-serving and other organizations. Similarly, fathers indicated that support services were largely absent, and although most were subjected to a mean-spirited cultural response when talking about their grief related to the absence of their children in their lives, few experienced the intense stigmatization reported by mothers.

The majority of mothers and many fathers in our study provided primary caregiving for their children before divorce but this was not seen as a sufficiently compelling factor in judicial decision-making. Although they did not regard themselves as "perfect" parents, none of the parents interviewed had been found to be abusive or neglectful of their children. These parents were no different from other parents, but through the play of circumstances over which they had relatively little control, found themselves on the periphery of their children's lives subsequent to a legal determination of sole custody. Mothers in particular were treated harshly when seen as not conforming to a standard of motherhood established by the court.

Our study found that support systems to promote the responsible participation of non-custodial parents in their children's lives are sorely lacking. In the realm of direct practice with non-custodial parents, it is critical that service providers recognize that fathers and mothers without shared custody of their children are in need of advocacy support in regard to child custody and parental alienation in particular. Connecting non-custodial fathers and mothers politically and facilitating mutual aid and cause advocacy groups are essential. Where estrangement between parents and children has taken place, reunification services are desperately needed.

The responsibilities of social institutions to support both parents in the fulfillment of their parenting responsibilities after divorce, the overlooked issue in current child custody debates, was emphasized by both mothers and fathers. The lack of such support is an issue of social justice, too long neglected in policy and practice. Both mothers and fathers who were responsibly involved with and attached to their children and suddenly found themselves removed from their children's lives via sole custody orders experienced trauma writ large. Above all else, the need to engage these parents is urgent, and to do so we must validate their parenting identity and support their ongoing parenting role.

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Post-Divorced Transitions: Mental Health and Suicide Ideation Among Canadian Fathers

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Abstract. Do fathers matter after separation or divorce? The data based on this Canadian study of 208 fathers, mothers, grandparents, and adult children indicates that children, mothers, and especially fathers seem unimportant after separation and divorce. The initial purpose of this study was to examine the connection between the family law system and the impact this system and the court have on separated and divorced parents as well as their reasons for activism. One of the unexpected findings that emerged was how frequently separated and divorced fathers reported personal mental health issues and suicide ideation. These issues were often associated with being dismissed by the courts as disposable "social" post-separation/divorced parents. The main problem is that these parents and activists are disregarded due to the negative perceptions by the family law courts of both the shared parenting movement and fathers. This perceived negation has impacted fathers' mental health issues and suicide ideation as well as their activism in the shared parenting movement.

The Fathers' Rights Movement has become more organized over the past 20 years, and is now part of a global trend that includes close networking, both virtually and during conferences in North America, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and parts of Europe. The most well-known and popularly recognized global Fathers' Rights organization is "Fathers 4 Justice". Using Internet sites, listservs, and other media, this movement has promoted shared parenting issues, gaining global media coverage through their "superhero" displays. These were first seen in the United Kingdom and Canada, and have since been seen globally in other Western countries (Dominus, 2005). There seems to be a shift in the collective identity of this movement, which promotes the idea of fathers being essential in the parenting partnership. While this emphasis is not a new aspect of the Fathers' Rights Movement's collective identity (Kenedy, 2004/5, 2006), it is a strategic shift in terms of presenting social movement activism that is more globally coordinated.

This research is part of a larger project focusing on the overall global shift in the collective identity of the Fathers' Rights Movement as a "new social movement". Through my preliminary analysis of interview data with 208 Canadian Fathers' Rights Activists and others, I have found that many of these advocates have emphasized the notion of shared and equal parenting, as well as a desire to be identified as part of the Canadian "Shared Parenting Movement". These activists have noted that all capable parents should be recognized, irrespective of gender, as equal parents and not denied shared parenting or equal access time with their children.

One of the main goals of this research is to investigate the theoretical connection between identity and activism. I have been developing the notion of situational identity (Kenedy, 2004/5, 2006) and its relation to activism in the Fathers' Rights Movement in Canada, and, more specifically, investigating how situational identity is a conduit that

bridges the link between personal identity, collective identity, and activism. Another goal of this project is to examine how personal identities become transformed into political ones in terms of what motivates parents to join the Fathers' Rights Movement, as opposed to those parents who do not join this movement.

This research is based on qualitative semi-structured individual interviews, couples interviews, and focus groups with 208 activists and others across Canada. Based on past research and preliminary findings from this research project, this work began with the hypothesis that situational identity is linked to both personal identity and collective identity in terms of activism related to shared parenting. Parents involved in problematic separations and/or divorces form a situational identity that bridges public and political issues, which leads to the construction of a collective identity that focuses primarily around shared parenting issues (Kenedy, 2004/5, 2006). In short, situational identity is a transitional link connecting a person's identity as a parent to social movement activism.

Literature Review

The Fathers' Rights Movement is often viewed as a right-wing "backlash" against feminism, in terms of an attempt to re-affirm patriarchal rights in post-separation/divorced families (Bertoia, 1998; Boyd, 1989; Crean, 1988; Crowley, 2008; Faludi, 1991; Flood, 1998, 2001, 2013; French, 1992; Smart, 2004) and issues related to family violence (Dragiewicz, 2008, 2011; Mann, 2008). Fathers' Rights Activists in North America are criticized for creating a "fathers' rights discourse" based on the "rhetoric of equality" (Arendell, 1992a, 1992b; Bertoia, 1998; Bertoia & Drakich, 1993; Coltrane & Hickman, 1992; Drakich, 1989; Flood, 2013). Recent literature about the Fathers' Rights Movement and the Men's Rights Movement offers a similar analysis, suggesting that the movement is a "backlash" against feminism to differing extents (Crowley, 2008; Dragiewicz, 2008). Other research on Fathers' Rights Activists varies, offering interesting perspectives on fragmented fatherhood (Collier & Sheldon, 2006, 2008).

The literature on the Fathers' Rights Movement focuses on rhetoric and discourse, thus portraying activists as having a self-serving bias that favours fathers over mothers and challenges aspects of the feminist movement (Arendell, 1992a, 1992b; Bertoia, 1998; Bertoia & Drakich, 1993; Coltrane & Hickman, 1992; Crowley, 2008; Dragiewicz, 2008, 2011; Drakich, 1989) They discount these fathers as being angry and seemingly do not thoroughly consider their reasons for activism (Boyd, 1989; Crean, 1988). They also view fathers' rights and men's rights activists as being similar and present these activists' concerns about custodial issues and violence against fathers as rhetoric and baseless discourse (Dragiewicz, 2008, 2011; Mann, 2008). Many of those who have researched the movement focus more on the backlash against feminism without considering the underlying reasons concerning why these fathers are active or if they suffered as a result of custodial issues, such as having little or no access to their children after separation or divorce. These researchers also discount domestic violence against fathers and view it as more mythical, as well as being part of the backlash against feminism (Dragiewicz, 2008, 2011; Mann, 2008).

My research suggests that the Fathers' Rights Movement is neither a countermovement (Mottl, 1980; Pichardo, 1997; Zald & Unseem, 1987) nor a right-wing

social movement (Kenedy, 2004/5, 2006). My past research indicates that Fathers For Justice (FFJ) activists present a very specific view of shared parenting that includes both a mother and father being involved in their children's lives after separation and divorce (Kenedy, 2004/5, 2006). Focusing more on the name of "Fathers For Justice", critics such as Crean (1988) argue that FFJ Activists excluded ex-spouses of various male members. Primarily, it was this implication of (fathers') "rights" that suggested a conservative movement which seemed to be about re-asserting the dominant position of fathers in the family. My early research suggested that FFJ members focused more on the failing family law system as promoting an adversarial legal system that often did not encourage both parents having equal contact with their children after separation and divorce. Overall, FFJ members' grievance was not with feminism, but the family law system as it relates to custodial and parenting issues.

The literature about Fathers' Rights Activists also suggests that these Activists focus primarily on rights and not enough on responsibilities (Boyd, 1989; Smart, 2004). The claim of a self-serving bias also needs to be considered during research on the Fathers' Rights Movements. In order to assess the claims made in the above literature, Melucci's (1989, 1995, 1996) and Touraine's (1981, 1988) understandings of collective identity were used as the basis for analyzing how Fathers' Rights Activists define their collective perspectives on issues central to them as Activists. The literature on the Fathers' Rights Movement provides a guideline for exploring Activists' collective perceptions regarding the notions of equality, a fathers' rights discourse, and claims about the political and social backlash of this movement.

Theoretical Framework

This research focuses mainly on the process of how collective identity formation is negotiated among Activists. Touraine's (1981, 1988) work was also used in this analysis of collective identity, as he focuses on the symbolic challenges in the cultural realm relating to the struggles pertinent to the "production of culture". He points out that the central struggle over who controls the production of culture often includes collective actors rejecting, challenging, and creating new meanings and practices within dominant cultures. These challenges and constructions become associated with the collective identity of (collective) actors or social movements (Kenedy, 2004/5, 2006). This research concentrates on Activists' shared "meanings" and "practices". Escobar (1992) loosely defines meanings as a set of beliefs. These beliefs are embedded in practices, and practices are linked to behaviours in everyday life. These behaviours may be present in symbolic creativity involving language, the body, performative rituals, work, and both individual and collective identities. Meanings are articulated through practices. Shibutani (1987:98) concurs with Escobar's work, stating, "…we learn meanings through actions, but also *meanings are primarily a property of behaviour and only secondarily a property of objects* [his emphasis in original]". Both Escobar and Shibutani emphasize that meanings can be articulated through behaviours. These theorists believe that collectivities are constantly expounding meanings and practices. For the purpose of this analysis, meanings can be understood as emerging through peoples' interpretations of perceptions, attitudes and ideas about the world. Practices are behaviours, modes of conduct, procedures, and actions.

In the context of this research, situational identity is applied to Fathers' Rights

Activists based on its role of mediating between personal identity and collective identity. I have investigated how situational identity actually fosters a shared collective predicament or commonality; a shared circumstance, condition, or position/status that a person occupies in a society (e.g., being stigmatized). I hypothesize that situational identity is based on the Goffmanian notion of multiple identities that are socially created (Goffman, 1963) and "situationally" based – for example, being Fathers' Rights Activists who are non-custodial parents with limited or no access to their children and paying support that they cannot afford. In short, I investigate the possibility that these Activists feel as though they are "secondary parents" (Kenedy, 2004/5, 2006). These "situational identities" are based on contestation, or creating social change through challenging a specific identity. One goal was to find out if situational identity is about controlling or managing an identity that is "situationally" based, such as being post-separation/divorced fathers who may or may not have access to their children, and are often not the custodial parent (Kenedy, 2004/5, 2006).

Finally, I am exploring the possibility of situational identity being based on a shared understanding of similar social concerns. Through this research, I am examining how Mills' (1959) notions of personal "troubles" and public "issues" fit into situational identity. I have reexamined Bertoia's (1998) application of Mills, and hypothesized that the personal troubles relating to post-separation/divorced fatherhood may be connected to public issues through situational identity. In short, situational identity may also be useful for understanding public displays of activism. The preliminary findings from my research on the Canadian and the UK Fathers' Rights Movements suggest that situational identity is transitional or liminal, in terms of being a stage in between personal life crisis and activism (Turner, 1979; van Gennep, 1909). In the context of a support group, which both the Canadian and UK Fathers' Rights Movements provide, situational identity may also be seen as providing a "safe place" to work through the identity of being a separated or divorced parent. My preliminary Canadian findings also suggest that situational identity is connected to having this in-between "safe place" that may also provide the impetus to become an Activist. Further analysis is still necessary in order to fully conceptualize situational identity and understand how it is related to the transformation of personal identities into political ones in terms of motivating parents to join the Fathers' Rights Movement.

Furthermore, using Gonos' (1977) ideas about the theoretical connection between the Symbolic Interactionist construct of the "situation" and the Goffmanian construct of the "frame", I am trying to theoretically connect social structure and action (Bertoia, 1998; Mills, 1959). I additionally want to investigate how a situational identity may be connected to Fathers' Rights Activists who have a shared or common predicament (i.e., being separated/divorced parents) and how this may help "frame" their issues as Activists. Most importantly, I want to explore how these frames are associated with creating organizational structures that lead to taking collective action.

Shared Parenting Movement

There has been a trend toward a shared parenting movement that is moving away

from solely focusing on fathers' rights to highlighting children having continued relationships after separation and divorce with parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and family members. The shared parenting movement emphasizes a non-zero sum game of children getting what they need from parents and family members. There is a movement away from sole custody to a more symmetrical understanding of the "children's best interests", away from adversarial approaches. This movement advocates a more family-oriented approach that emphasizes parents and family members not separating or divorcing their children, but instead recognizing that it is spouses who are separating or divorcing. This movement also advocates resolving issues outside the family law system (e.g., mediation and discussions between parents), as the legal system is viewed by many of these activists as being inequitable and causing further grief for separating and divorcing parents. They often comment that court battles create distress and grief for children and parents, without emphasizing parenting plans or agreements, mediation, and other balanced approaches that maintain safe and stable child-oriented arrangements (Kenedy, 2004/5, 2006).

Research Purpose and Hypotheses

The overall purpose of the larger research project was to better understand the collective identity and situational identity of Fathers' Rights Activists as they relate to social movement activism, fatherhood/parenting, and related issues. The initial hypothesis guiding the research was that situational identity will influence the collective identity of these activists. More particularly, that individuals' situational identity of parents not having contact with their children will influence their collective identity as activists wanting to change custody laws after separation and divorce to include shared parenting. However, once unexpected data began to emerge throughout the interviews, one of the main hypotheses that became a focal point for this chapter was that the increased negation of divorced fathers in family law court has increased the likelihood of mental health issues and suicide ideation amongst them. This hypothesis stems from the main research question: Do fathers matter after separation and divorce? This chapter will focus primarily on the unexpected findings regarding self-reported of mental illness and suicide ideation, and if these issues are linked to fathers feeling as though they do not matter after separation and divorce.

Methodology

This research is based on the preliminary findings from a larger, exploratory, qualitative research project. The data that was gathered and analyzed examines the claims made in literature and explores theories related to collective identity, situational identity, and social movements. This chapter focuses on interview data from 164 custodial and non-custodial fathers that were part of a larger study of 208 participants across Canada from April 2006 to October 2011. In future work, data from custodial and non-custodial mothers, grandparents, adult children, and second spouses will be examined (see table 1).

The research design has been guided by an ethnographic approach (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Esterberg, 2002) that stresses the subjective understanding of the participant's experiences using Weber's notion of *Verstehen* (Freund, 1968). The data was collected using semi-structured individual interviews, couples interviews, and focus

groups. While the individual interviews were based on a more structured interview schedule, a less structured focus group interview schedule was employed in order to facilitate more dynamic focus groups. Before starting the interviews and focus groups, all participants were informed that their names and personal data would be kept confidential. Morgan's (1996) recommendations for focus groups were applied; that is, focus groups were often done with members from the same group to promote higher levels of comfort and encourage participants to openly discuss the issues regarding parents, as well as their situation. The individual interviews lasted about 30 to 75 minutes, while focus groups, which included 4 to 8 participants, were from 70 to 120 minutes. The individual interviews were conducted in offices, university rooms, restaurants, and respondents' homes. Focus groups were held in church basements, community centres, library meeting rooms, and classrooms at universities, as well as other locations.

Purposive sampling techniques were used concurrently to select participants. A combination of such non-random sampling techniques aided with interviewing a diverse sample of activists in various Canadian provinces. I also used snowball sampling, judgmental-purposive sampling, availability sampling, and quota sampling (Babbie & Benaquisto, 2002). Participants were identified based on contacts through organizations and activists. Snowball sampling was especially helpful following interview and focus groups, when asking recent participants in order to recruit other participants. Convenience sampling was also used in cases where additional subjects, who were readily available and willing to participate in the study, were sometimes unexpectedly brought by participants to focus groups.

Table 1

Overall Study Sample

Parental / Family Status	Number
Non-Custodial Father	155
Custodial Father	9
Non-Custodial Mother	9
Custodial Mother	19
Non-Custodial Grandmother	9
Adult Child (AC)	5
Second Spouse (SS)	2
Total	208
Sex	Number
Male	164
Female	44

All interviews and focus groups were fully transcribed and the transcripts of the interviews were coded utilizing a thematic analysis and a two-rater process (Seidman, 1991). Common themes were agreed upon and then coded separately by two independent raters (myself and my research assistants). Themes common to both raters were validated and accepted using a grounded theory approach loosely based on the work of Corbin and Strauss (1990), as well as a qualitative methodological analysis used by me for an earlier study (Kenedy, 2004/5, 2006). This was done to identify participants' perceptions and to reveal possible themes and sub-themes using Eyerman and Jamison's (1991) techniques. This process involved sifting out important ideas, concepts, and themes pertaining to shared parenting, health, suicide, and related concepts. An open and axial coding form was used with conceptual labels to create categories and subcategories regarding identity and activism (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). These conceptual categories and the related quotes from the transcriptions were then transferred into a table and organized under various headings and subheadings, such as collective identity, situational identity, activism, custody, support, access, courts, and other issues. Other unexpected categories that emerged included mental and physical health, suicide and suicide ideation, and the role of the legal system. This technique of using a table to sift out (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991) themes allowed for a clear and visually distinct schema that helped organize categories and the connections between them (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Kenedy, 2004/5, 2006).

Analysis

A Microsoft Excel® spreadsheet was used in assisting with the process of analysis. This software was chosen for reasons similarly outlined in Swallow, Newton, and Van Lottum (2003): usability and how well it displayed the data. Excel® provided a means to chart identity in relation to how various members articulated meanings and practices, along with an overall identity. On the whole, there were three apparent benefits of utilizing a spreadsheet:

1) It visually displayed and clearly organized variables related to an
overall Fathers' Rights Movement collective identity.
2) It enabled the examination of Fathers' Rights Movement members'
re-articulation of dominant meanings and practices.
3) Finally, variations of the re-articulated meanings and practices
among the membership could be compared.

The construction of a Fathers' Rights Movement collective identity came about as a result of selecting themes that pertained to the Fathers' Rights Movement members' collective reality, and how they viewed themselves. Results from the participant observation work and relevant Fathers' Rights Movement documents were also considered as an independent source (from the interview data) in selecting what issues were important to Fathers' Rights Movement members. Themes from the interview data, based both on the quantity and quality of Fathers' Rights Movement members' responses during the interview, were also selected. Quantity was measured in terms of frequency (i.e., what issues arose most often during the interviews) and volume (i.e., how much time members spent discussing an issue and the thoroughness of their answers). Indicators of frequency included how often issues were brought up by the respondent as major or minor points; for example, if issues were discussed as major points frequently or only occasionally. Volume was measured in terms of respondents making specific or general statements about an issue; for example, if a lot was said about an issue and specifics were mentioned, or alternatively if only general statements were made.

To assess quality of the members' responses, I used more subjective indicators such as insightfulness and depth, in terms of the thought and emotion evident in the interview responses. Insightfulness was measured relative to how much contemplation, reflection, and articulation was evident in the interviewees' responses. Indicators of depth included the level of emotion, such as the respondent's voice cracking (with feeling), whether they cried, if they sounded upset, or if they gave answers with passion.

Findings

The initial focus of this research was to examine issues related to collective identity, situational identity, and parenting. However, throughout the interviews, many of the fathers began to discuss mental health issues and issues related to suicide and suicide ideation. This often occurred when they were asked about their personal situation, related to situational identity, at which point they began to discuss the problems of coping with the separation and divorce process. It was also related to going through the family law system and their experiences with various judges and lawyers. Many of the fathers recounted how their court proceedings and related aspects resulted in mental health problems and other repercussions. The findings discussed below are based on the data

analysis and include specific quotes from the interview data of 164 custodial and non-custodial fathers that highlight self-reported mental health issues, suicide ideation, and other issues related to suicide of separated and divorced fathers and their experiences in the family law system. The findings also point to fathers self-reporting that not feeling as though they matter is linked to mental health issues and suicide ideation.

One of the most unexpected findings in the study was the self-reported mental health issues and suicide ideation amongst non-custodial fathers. This emerged throughout many of the interviews, especially when fathers were asked about the general history of their relationship with their spouse as well as their separation and divorce. Since a semi-structured interview schedule was used, follow-up questions were asked and the results were alarming, especially amongst non-custodial fathers; these ranged from self-described long-term depression to other mental health issues as well as suicide ideation, which were usually connected to the loss of contact with their children and their being mired in the legal system. Furthermore, health issues and suicide ideation were often exacerbated by having to contend with drawn-out court proceedings related to legal access, access enforcement, and other custodial issues. Most of the fathers who reported mental health issues and suicide ideation had custodial issues ranging from limited access to not seeing their children. Generally, some mothers, grandmothers, second spouses, and others did discuss their mental health issues, but none of them discussed their own issues related to suicide. These women talked mainly about fathers they knew who had mental health issues, experienced suicide ideation, attempted suicide, or committed suicide.

During many of the interviews with fathers who discussed mental health issues and suicide ideation, these issues were linked with the stress related to going to court, custodial issues, and difficulties coping with the legal system. Many of the fathers felt that there was a bias against them as fathers in court cases pertaining to custodial and related issues. There was also the theme of the overall accumulative effect of going through the separation, divorce, or family law courts, along with their despondency, which manifested itself in terms of mental health issues and suicide ideation. First, the self-reported mental health issues will be discussed and then the related suicide ideation will be considered.

Mental Health Issues

Throughout the interviews, many fathers discussed mental health issues that were linked to custodial issues and the legal system. Some fathers discussed their self-reported bouts with depression, anxiety and other related mental health issues openly, regardless if they were being interviewed individually or in focus groups. However, there were other fathers who told me after the interviews or focus groups that they experienced various mental health issues. They sometimes would ask me to turn off the recorder, especially if they were in tears while describing their anxieties or if they were being treated for depression. They usually began by discussing their own personal situation with separation, divorce, access, custody or related issues. These were the main topics mentioned when they contextualized mental health concerns and how they were connected to custodial issues.

This father from Alberta describes what he went through after going in and out of family court regarding his custody issues. He recounts his experience of emerging from a depression and the "downward spiral," noting:

> … I mean I was just going nowhere and then finally when I came out of my depression I started trying to make changes and that was probably the one that sparked the whole downward spiral into the legal system. (CM4SAB)

He found that this "downward spiral" was not only related to the legal system but also the negative effect it had on his mental health and continuing depression. This father noted that he was already struggling with depression and found that that family law system not only did not help his situation, but actually made it worse. So, there was a dual effect of the family law system not helping him and his mental health deteriorating further.

Similarly, another father reported a "spiral of depression" related to the legal system and what he had been coping with during family court trials and related custodial outcomes. Many fathers note how they often do not get awarded custody and focus on how this influences their mental health. A father from Québec states:

> … I went into a spiral of depression, and a lot of people I hated, or when I had people come up to me… [who said] … "But you won Jim [pseudonym], you don't have to pay these people"… I lost a girl that I was protecting for years, I was protecting her against an abusive mother and grandmother, and now she's living with them… (CM43QC)

It is often the loss of custody as well as having limited or no access to their children that was linked to self-reports of depression from the fathers interviewed. In the above case, this father did have custody and the loss of custody coupled with limited access created numerous problems for him in terms of feeling as though he was failing to help his daughter, as well as not being able to help her. The theme of not only losing custody but having limited to no access to their children was an issue for many fathers and was reported as increasing mental health issues. A father from Nova Scotia describes his how he felt when he saw children with their parents and how it reminded him of not seeing his children, explaining:

> I had to go to work, go home, not bother going out to a restaurant, to a store to get what I need. If I went to the store and as soon as I went and I heard the words daddy, for most people it cause[d] warmth and joy in their hearts, for me it caused an icicle going right up my spine and I had to get up and leave. (CM21NS)

Losing his children left this father with emotional issues that he said later in the interview persisted for at least a year or more.

Throughout the interviews, it was very common for fathers to discuss reduced access to their children or having no contact with them as having a very negative emotional impact on both them and their children. Another father from British Columbia noted that he went from a very involved parent to seeing his children on a weekly basis, lamenting:

> … I was a dad that was home every night, involved, heavily involved in their sports, … all of sudden I'm told that I'm going to see them, ya know, 4 times a

month…I couldn't live with that, right, I just couldn't live with that, right, so I kind of got off the canvas. (CM9BC)

This father had a very difficult time coping and, when asked about getting "off the canvas", he talked about how he coped with depression. There was a description provided by this father of feeling helpless and finding it so difficult to accept this that he "got off the canvas" and slipped into a depression.

Many fathers reported similar issues, such as a father from Ontario, who says: "I'm concerned that I might be slipping into depression at times and not keeping as focused as what I should be on, on whatever the priorities are" (CM33ON). This father expressed what many interviewed said with regard to keeping focused on their children and other matters so they do not become depressed. It was the lack of contact with their children and usually not having any success when going to court over custodial issues that was reported as one of the main reason for mental health issues, such as "slipping into a depression" or related problems.

It was not uncommon during interviews for fathers to cry when discussing their children and related custodial issues. While some fathers held back and did not want to cry during interviews, others would ask me to take a break and then return after crying. Others, like this father from Québec, were very open about coping with the loss of their children through custody issues and described how they coped, saying: "I was crying, I was crying, I had nothing else, it was a drug, you know, I couldn't think of nothing else, just get in the truck and go, and my mind went…" (CM50QC).

The link to the legal system and mental health is evident for many fathers. Some fathers discussed how they felt about the legal system, commenting on how they were treated and the outcome of frustration and anger. Many fathers discussed how to cope with anger and the related emotions. A father from Alberta states:

> I'm just saying that when you'd been pushed into a corner, okay, you're treated like dirt and you want to fight back but you can't fight back with the legal system because the legal system is so unfair, that you're frustrated, you're angry, what are you supposed to do with that anger? (CM4SAB)

Many fathers, mothers, and grandparents commented on the lack of fairness, especially concerning fathers, in the legal system. Taking action was important to some fathers, as they found it therapeutic in order to cope with their situation. Fathers reported a sense of agency, as they found that becoming active, supporting other fathers, and protesting seemed to help them manage emotionally. A father from the Northwest Territories explains:

> It's helped my mental health situation tenfold knowing that I'm taking action against not only what happened to me…the biggest thing is my own mental health. Without this vehicle, I don't know if I could survive the pain of not seeing my children. I don't know if I could go decades of hardship without, ya know, something going wrong for sure. So that's it, it builds my confidence, it builds my confidence... (CM06NWT)

There were fathers who felt that taking action was helpful. This father discussed how he coped with mental health issues partially through activism. While this was not uncommon, many fathers who were interviewed, and were coping with ongoing mental health issues, did not mention activism. Based on conversations after interviews or focus groups when fathers were not being recorded, they were often more forthcoming in terms of quietly discussing their mental health issues. There were many fathers who did not want others to know they were suffering and would not discuss their depression, anxiety, or other mental health issues.

These quotes were only a few examples of fathers trying to cope with mental health issues. Some fathers suffered silently, turning inward, self-isolating, and often not reaching out for help. They said to me after the interviews that they worried that if they discussed their issues with a mental health professional, they would be viewed as "crazy" or an unfit parent. Some fathers also commented on how seeking help may be associated with being "weak" or incapable of being self-reliant. Unfortunately, they often were reticent to share this information while being taped and sometimes during focus groups. Other times they would discuss their depression and other mental health issues with me after the interviews and focus group, while with a spouse, supportive friend, or others. Sometimes there would be angry moments, tears, and wanting to turn off the recorder to resume the interview at a later time or leaving focus groups. Often the grief was focused on loss of custody, contact, or a basic relationship with their children. Anger was expressed regarding spouses, judges, lawyers, and the general family law system.

Many of the fathers discussed issues with depression and anger. Most said that they did self-isolate and tried to cope with not being with their children. Sometimes after interviews, fathers would say they coped through substance use (i.e., mainly alcohol and drugs). This was discussed more privately. Some fathers felt embarrassed or said that they did not want others to feel sorry for them or to look "weak" or unable to cope. Other fathers decided to become more active in order to cope.

Much of what came out after the interviews were fathers who cried, were upset and angry, or were simply frustrated with the family law system and the self-reported biases, many of them saying that they were overlooked as custodial parents and viewed as, at best, visiting parents.

Suicide, Suicide Attempts, and Suicide Ideation

Throughout the interviews, there were instances when fathers recounted the times when they or others were overwhelmed and considered suicide. Fathers would tear up or cry when discussing their own suicide ideation, that of other fathers they knew who discussed their ideations, and those they knew who committed suicide. Some fathers who reported mental health issues also described instances of suicide ideation. Others discussed how often they talked to fathers who contemplated or actually committed suicide.

Emotional and social support is very important, as many fathers are coping with limited or no visitation with their children. This was especially difficult for fathers during holidays, birthdays, or other important occasions. Sometimes the pain was so overwhelming that some fathers were afraid to be alone. Most fathers did not openly discuss suicide ideation, but a few did. A father from Nova Scotia recounts the memories associated with his daughter and describes how he tried to cope with isolation so he

would not think of the pain and hurt himself by committing suicide:

> … you could be driving along, you hear a song [that] reminds you of your daughter, reminds you of your child, you know, reminds you of a certain time, you could be driving by someplace, [it] reminds you of a certain time, you can't be alone, if you're alone you think, and if you start thinking it hurts. (CM21NS)

While some fathers were indirect, others were more direct about their pain. Most fathers would feel more comfortable saying they were depressed and used cues such as not being alone or other terms. This father from Québec is more explicit and attests to his own suicide ideation, saying:

> I was suicidal, and then every time I picked up a gun to blow my own brains out, I said why should I leave my girlfriend to pick up this mess … I didn't want to take pills, I was suicidal, I was homicidal, and I wasn't sleeping, and a couple of people pushed me in the direction of this group called Pères Séparés [Separated Fathers], which was an emotional support group… (CM43QC)

This father was quite open about his suicide ideation. His interviews clearly highlighted the connection between self-reported depression and suicide ideation amongst separated and divorced fathers. Most fathers were not as explicit as this father about depression and suicide. This and other interviews helped to highlight when fathers were being implicit about their suicide ideation, such as the aforementioned father who was worried about being alone and "thinking" or contemplating suicide. When we talked about what he meant after the interview was completed, he confirmed that it was suicide ideation. In short, most of the fathers interviewed were at times cryptic about issues regarding mental health issues and suicidal thoughts. Another father from Québec recounts how he wrote a suicide note to his son in order to explain why he contemplated suicide, saying:

> I've gone through two burn outs [and] three depressions. I was at a point where I even wrote my son a letter at one point, explaining everything, that, I'm sorry, but Daddy just couldn't do it anymore. (CM67QC)

While some fathers discussed their own thoughts about suicide, others discussed the suicide of other fathers they knew who were going through difficult divorces. One of those interviewed in the Northwest Territories talked about two friends he knew who committed suicide as a result of going through separation and divorce. He notes:

> I was drawn into it largely through the suicides of both people I knew of, but some personal friends as well. …Cliff Ives [pseudonym] of Toronto … he was the first person to post [his] suicide note on the internet. Then I lost one of my closest friends, he had been assaulted by his wife, her brother, faced false allegations, with no relief from the courts or the police and then one day he drowned himself … (CM7NWT)

It was mainly fathers who discussed suicide and suicide ideation. A few grandparents

also mentioned it, one relative to a son who committed suicide and another who discussed suicide ideation with his mother. There was also a father who was part of a support group in Québec who recounted hearing about another father going through a difficult divorce and wanting to commit suicide. In the excerpt below, this father provides details of what he heard from a "Mountie" (Royal Canadian Mounted Police Officer) who attends the support group meeting and had told the group about one of his fellow Mounties who almost committed suicide, saying:

> He's a Mountie and his colleague working…at commercial crimes…called him up one day, and he had no money for an apartment or anything. He was sleeping in his car. Undercover car and he called Jack [pseudonym], to say bye, he had his revolver in his mouth…He just called Jack [pseudonym] to say bye, and Jack [pseudonym] talked him down and saved this guy's life. (CM66QC)

As in the above quote, supporting fellow fathers experiencing mental health issues and suicide ideation was mentioned in some interviews. Many of the fathers discussed not seeing their children as an ongoing issue related to suicide ideation. They often suffered in silence, not reaching out; this usually resulted in them internalizing their pain. Fathers met in self-help groups in places like church basements. As a father from Québec notes, both fathers and mothers attended these groups for emotional support:

> …we're not psychologists, you know, the majority of men who came in and women, we had a lot of women came [sic] in to help us as well, about 20% were women, but the vast majority of men who came in to ask for help, needed serious psychological help...The problem is, is, because they're depressed, they're suicidal… (CM43QC)

Some fathers who already worked through most of their own issues related to mental health and suicide ideation talked about their work of supporting fathers on who were on a suicide watch. This father from British Columbia discusses the work he did to support a father on "suicide watch", noting:

> So we spoke for about an hour and I was trying to help him, counsel him to take a positive rather than a destructive approach, he was then on suicide watch living at his friend's place, I made some recommendations, among which was to meet with me the next day, I was just volunteering my time here trying to help out. (CM41BC)

This father was also very forthcoming about his mental health issues and suicide ideation. There were various fathers who also connected their experiences through the family law system and the effect it has on them. Another father from Québec shares his observations about the problems he sees other parents coping with during a separation or divorce, stating:

> … when they realized what the reality is, well, they can understand that men, that go through this system. Suffering great deals [sic], and some people are pushed so

far off the edge, that they're willing to do pretty much anything because they've exhausted all of their resources. (CM64QC)

Fathers being "pushed off the edge", in this interview, refers to how fathers feel as though there are limited options left, and, unfortunately, suicide or other drastic action is considered. This theme of fathers being pushed to the edge is also echoed in what this father notes regarding the family legal system and the possibility of being "picked off" or eliminated. A father from Nova Scotia pointed out the hopelessness of his situation in the family law system and how it makes him feel. "You're left with a sense of hopelessness and you feel like a pen of livestock waiting to see, you know, which one's gonna get picked off, is it gonna be me today?" (CM21NS). Some fathers were clear about their dissonance and feeling as though they may be the next person to be "picked off", or as this person later clarified in the interview, succumb to their depression and suicide ideation. His main issue, like many fathers, was being seen as a disposable social parent after divorce and not seeing his children. Another father from British Columbia highlights the point of remaining an involved parent after divorce related issues, noting that it is "…the lack of equality in the [family law] system that prevents children from getting the best of both parents, that's just what it is…" (CM10BC). This was a consistent theme throughout most interviews with fathers who often feel the family law system, specifically the courts, are neither balanced nor inclusive in terms of promoting both parents in their children's lives.

As noted, there were fathers who reported mental health issues as well as describing instances of suicide ideation. Others discussed other fathers who contemplated or actually committed suicide. Overall, the interview schedule did not include questions about suicide ideation and mental health issues. These were unexpected findings that reveal how these fathers feel about their precarious current situations, their lack of importance as parents after separation and divorce, and their vulnerability as a result of mental health issues or suicide ideation.

Discussion

The purpose of this research was initially to investigate if situational identity influences collective identity related to activism in the Fathers' Rights and Shared Parenting social movements. The results of the interviews suggest a situational identity of "social" fathers not mattering after separation and divorce. Many of these fathers reported having mental health and suicide ideation issues usually as a result of their post-separation or divorced parental role as social fathers being diminished, often as an outcome of going through the family law system. This has added an unexpected dimension to understanding how their situational identity as separated or divorced fathers who have been demeaned, demoralized, and disenfranchised (Nielsen, 1999). Fathers' Rights and Shared Parenting activists primarily focus on changing divorce laws and advocating for shared parenting, as well as fair custodial arrangements, support, and access laws so that they can remain in their children's lives (Kenedy, 2004/5, 2006). In terms of their situational identity, they often see themselves as being viewed as disposable parents after separation and divorce; they are seen as not mattering as social parents, even though they are committed to their children.

Many of the fathers interviewed in this study noted that they were seen as secondary in their children's lives and that, after divorce, court-mandated custody decisions left them at the periphery of their children's lives. One of the main themes in many of the interviews is that the decisions made in family courts regarding divorce and custodial issues often left these fathers out of their children's lives socially. Nielsen (1999) points out that "divorce laws still tend to reinforce the idea that what children need from their divorced father is his money, not his involvement in their daily lives" (p. 150). It seems that one of the main questions this research seeks to address is if fathers matter, which is, in many ways, a core issue related to these activists' collective identity and, on a personal level, their situational identity – that post-divorce social fathers do not matter.

Interestingly, the unexpected findings pertaining to mental health and suicide did, however, highlight the initial research question of asking if fathers matter in the family law system. There does seem to be awareness, especially amongst the fathers, that they are expendable as social fathers and are not really necessary in terms of spending time with their children and nurturing them. Generally, after separation or divorce, social fathers do not seem to matter as parents substantially contributing to their children's lives emotionally and psychologically. This seems to have a very negative effect on fathers. Parke and Brott (1999) discuss the notion of "throwaway dads" and point out the various myths connected to fatherhood. They note how society sees fathers as disposable, lazy, useless, and deadbeats, especially after separation and divorce. They also ask the question: "Do fathers really matter?" Parke and Brott (1999) further point out the importance of fathers and the need for fathers before and after separation or divorce.

The situational identity, for many of those interviewed, was that of a "secondary parent", a father who does not matter (Kenedy, 2004/5, 2006). This was connected to their personal identity as fathers, who, they believe, are not seen as necessary. Their "situational identities" challenge this notion of not mattering, and contest this negative perception of fathers after separation and divorce in order to rethink this stigmatized identity and put forth the idea that fathers are vital social and emotional parents who are necessary in their children's lives (Goffman, 1963). They want to manage their identity "situationally" as post-separation/divorced fathers who may or may not have access to their children and are often not the custodial parent (Kenedy, 2004/5, 2006). In this case, their situational identity is based on being an activist who is a non-custodial parent with limited or no access to their children and wants some sort of shared parenting arrangement.

The data highlighted the issues mental health, suicide ideation, and suicide among fathers. There were cases of fathers who reported being both depressed as well as coping with suicide ideation. Kposowa (2000:259) notes that clinical depression is often a prelude to suicide and accounts for the high rate of suicide amongst those who are divorced. Others studies have also linked depression, suicide ideation and suicide (Braswell & Kushner, 2012; Oliffe, Ogrodniczuk, Bottorff, Johnson, & Hoyak, 2012; Sareen, Cox, Afifi, De Graaf, Asmundson, Have, Stein, 2005; Wasserman, 1984). In some literature, fathers' rights activists are viewed as angry and their rhetoric is discounted as anti-feminist backlash, dismissing them and the reasons for their activism (Arendell, 1992a, 1992b; Bertoia, 1998; Bertoia & Drakich, 1993; Coltrane & Hickman, 1992; Crowley, 2008; Dragiewicz, 2008, 2011; Drakich, 1989) without considering their

personal reasons, which may focus more on their children and problems they have encountered regarding mental health issues or other problems as a result of family law system (Kenedy, 2004/5, 2006).

Interestingly, almost all fathers interviewed highlighted missing or being away from their children (Hughes, 1989). Umberson and Williams (1993) pointed out that men's grieving process is less direct. Studies found that the loss of contact with their children is often far more significant for fathers than the loss of the marital role (Baum, 2003; Hilton & Kopera-Frye, 2006; Hughes, 1989; Kendler, Thornton, & Prescott, 2001). Umberson and Williams (1993) note that the effects of mortality and mental health related to divorce are often associated with fathers' loss of "…their parental role" (p. 379). Many fathers in the current study did experience notable mental health issues as a result of the distress of being away from their children, as well as their experiences in family court. The fathers also reported similar mental health issues as Liazos (1997) found in his study on divorced fathers who felt lonely, rootless, and depressed.

Few fathers directly reported mental health or suicide ideation issues. As noted, sometimes they were very direct about reporting depression or contemplating suicide, but for some fathers, they would only discuss these issues after the interview. Some did say that they did not want to appear weak when in focus group interviews or if they were being recorded during individual interviews. Some also said after focus groups or interviews that they did not want to visit doctors or mental health professionals. These fathers also noted that they worried about anyone publicly knowing about their mental health issues and this negatively impacting their custodial cases before the courts. Many of these fathers were like other "Men [who] tend not to seek out care because social norms promote the idea that it is more masculine to not been seen as weak and 'tough it out'" (Health Canada, 2012: 42). Similarly, Spector (2006) notes that fathers experiencing martial conflicts and divorce often masked or denied suffering from depression. As a result, they often did not seek treatment. Other literature confirmed the finding in the current study of many non-custodial fathers who had limited contact with their children reporting incidences of depression and feeling "…demeaned, demoralized, lost, and unsupported" (Nielsen, 1999; Spector, 2006). Conversely, the presence of children in the lives of post-divorced fathers was noted as being facilitative and stabilizing (Stewart, Schwebel, & Fine, 2008). Many of the fathers interviewed who had limited or no contact after separation and divorce were more likely to report incidences of depression and suicide ideation.

The literature suggests that separated and divorced fathers suffer from more mental health issues and have a higher risk of suicide than married fathers. Various studies have suggested an association between divorce and suicide (Bartlett, 2004; Health Canada, 2012; Kposowa, 2000; Trovato, 1987). In his analysis of the literature on fathers' health, Bartlett (2004) discusses how divorced fathers who have lost custody of their children had notable chronic health problems, psychological issues, and a greater risk of suicide. Bartlett (2004) also cites many divorced fathers' lack of social integration and cohesion as a possible reason for suicide. Sbarra and Emery (2005) also note that men who divorce have increased rates of poor health and suicide, as well as not faring well socially and struggling more than women. Kposowa (2000) found that "divorced men were 2.5 times more likely die to from suicide than married men" (p. 258). Moreover, divorced men are ten times more likely to commit suicide than divorced

women (Kposowa, 2000). In the case of suicide, men account for 4 out of 5 deaths by suicides in Canada. "Most individuals who attempt or complete suicide, have some form of mental illness – most often depression" (Health Canada, 43). Bartlett (2004) notes that Kposowa (2000) could not directly link fathers' loss of child custody to the risk of suicide, but did suggest that there was an association. This seems evident in the case of the fathers interviewed for the current study, regarding depression and suicide ideation being linked to not seeing children due to custodial problems, in terms of fathers usually being the non-custodial parent with access or visitation and having limited or no contact with their children.

The interview questions for this study highlighted personal situations, legal and custodial issues, general involvement in fathers' rights and shared parenting issues, as well as other issues as part of a larger project. Asking about mental health, suicide, and related issues such as personal well-being was not part of the overall study. It is interesting to note that, even though the fathers interviewed were not asked about their emotional health, mental health, or related reasons, fathers either openly self-reported or hinted at mental health issues and suicide ideation as it related to being removed from their children's lives after separation or divorce. Even more significant is that they often went into detail about mental health issues such as depression and how they begun to think about suicide as a result of not having contact with their children, usually as a result of a challenging separation or divorce.

Throughout the various interviews, it was when many of the parents, grandparents, and others responded to questions about their personal legal situation, the family law system, and their children that mental health and suicide-related issues emerged. It was often in this context that many participants either discussed their own struggles with these issues or secondary accounts based on what other fathers, mothers, and grandparents observed of fathers they knew who experienced mental health issues, suicide ideation or committing suicide. While both mothers and fathers who were interviewed discussed mental health issues, very few mothers talked about any personal thoughts of suicide. Mothers and grandmothers sometimes discussed the suicide ideation, suicide attempts, and suicides of those they knew. It was primarily fathers who discussed their own cases of mental health issues such as depression, as well as suicide and suicide ideation. The essential point is that all fathers contextualized their mental health issues and suicide ideation as being related to custodial issues, the family law system, and associated issues. There were times when I did ask follow-up questions during or after interviews regarding mental health and suicide issues; fathers often said that if they did have pre-existing mental health issues, the issues were often exacerbated by their own legal and personal issues related to separation and divorce. In terms of suicide, of those fathers who discussed their own situation about suicide ideation, when I asked them if they thought about it before getting separated or divorced, most of them said that they never considered suicide (there were no mothers who explicitly talked about it). Generally, the connection to mental health and suicide ideation was connected to their separation, divorce, custodial, or legal issues in the family law system.

Summary and Conclusions

This research began by asking the question: "Do fathers matter after separation and divorce?" The findings suggest that fathers do not seem to matter to the point where, according to those interviewed, they are seen as unnecessary, disposable parents. One of

the possible outcomes of being viewed as expendable parents after separation and divorce is having limited or no contact with their children. These fathers pointed out that the consequence of losing contact with their children resulted in various mental health issues as well as suicide ideation. They also noted that their mental health issues and suicide ideation were related to both their custodial issues as well as their experiences of going through the family law system. Many fathers believed that their concerns were usually dismissed, and they were referred to in the literature as being "angry" and participating in their own demise. The literature portrays these fathers as being anti-feminist and misguided. The problem is that while dismissing their concerns about the family law system, the problematic aspects of the legal system are ignored. The overall findings also suggest that fathers interviewed may be the "canary in the coal mine" and are voicing their concerns about a legal system that is not helping them stay in contact with their children after separation and divorce.

Furthermore, do separated and divorced fathers have enough support from social services? Do they have particular services that are geared toward their particular needs, such as counselling services, legal services, and family shelter space specifically available to them? Having specialized support services for fathers who need shelter space and support seem to be of clear concern across Canada. Usually, these men reported not reaching out for help and, in some cases, contemplating suicide or some type of self-harm. Outreach for this was limited, and many of them reported wanting to seek help for their emotional problems. It was often as a result of contending with their legal issues that they would visit fathers' groups and self-help groups to discuss their mental health issues. They also noted the lack of general resources beyond family doctors and other traditional sources. It would be helpful for healthcare providers or professionals to reach out to separated and divorced fathers, encouraging them to feel comfortable about seeking help or referring them to fathers' support groups when appropriate. Also, having outreach providers or professionals working with various fathers' groups on a regular basis may be helpful for fathers to feel more comfortable asking for support with mental health issues and suicide ideation. This could begin with outreach healthcare providers or professionals giving presentations at fathers' groups and informing fathers of the services they offer in terms of support and counselling. This would be especially helpful for fathers coping with mental health or suicide ideation issues who reported that they were worried about feeling stigmatized or appearing weak. Having an established working relationship between fathers' groups and healthcare providers and professionals may make this group of fathers feel more comfortable seeking the services.

Recommendations for Further Research and Policy Implications

A focus on fathers is especially necessary for further research, since they are often seen as disposable social parents. There also needs to be more focus on the family and non-adversarial services that support children and parents going through separation and divorce. Further research on suicide rates and suicide ideation amongst divorced fathers, mothers, and children of divorce in Canada is also necessary (Fuller-Thomson & Dalton, 2011). This is particularly an issue for fathers and children of divorce.

Though the literature on children of divorce and their mental health as well as suicide issues is robust, more longitudinal research on the outcomes of high-conflict

divorce on (adult) children is necessary, as is more research on non-custodial mothers and the issues of mothers who are paying support. Far more research is necessary regarding the social, mental health and legal challenges that non-custodial and custodial parents encounter, especially for non-custodial mothers and fathers. There needs to be a better understanding of shared parenting and the implications for non-adversarial services that promote it.

Researchers need to examine why this issue exists and why these fathers suffer as a result of separation and divorce, as well as the custodial issues. Too many researchers focus on the outcome of the Fathers' Rights Movement without examining reasons why it exists or why the activists are interested in shared parenting and related issues. They often ignore why fathers are protesting and suffering from the outcomes of rancorous separation and divorces, as well as a family law system that does not believe that fathers, mothers, or children matter. There seems to be a noteworthy ideological slant against fathers and the movement without focusing on reasons why the movement exists. Even worse, when fathers are facing mental health issues and contemplating suicide, they seem to be ignored as not mattering. The existing literature focuses more on the movement as being an anti-feminist backlash, rather than examining why fathers and others are interested in being viewed as equal parents instead of being perceived as expendable and disposable non-custodial parents. In short, the literature seems to be ignoring the obvious reason the shared parenting movement exists: that fathers feel that they do not matter in their children's lives as social parents and often feel as though they are superfluous, especially after experiencing the family law system.

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Fathers and Families: A Cultural Inquiry

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Abstract. Our society has become indifferent to fathers at best, except in connection with money, and hostile to them at worst. It uses law and other cultural mechanisms to promote confused, trivialized and politicized notions of fatherhood. Restricting ourselves for practical purposes to the enduringly massive but increasingly ignored straight segment of society, we argue not only that children need fathers but also that men need fatherhood as the one remaining source of a healthy collective identity. To support our theory, we place fatherhood in the larger cultural context of reproduction by asking what it means to be human, to be a man or a woman, to be part of a family, to be part of a community or nation, and to give or take life. We hope to broaden and deepen discussions of both sex and gender, in short, with resources from the humanities.

Many scholars discuss parenting from the perspective of the social sciences: sociology and psychology. Others do so from that of law, which relies heavily on the social sciences. We do so from that of the *humanities*. Our basic frame of reference is neither society nor the individual, therefore, but *culture*. Of particular interest to us, in other words, is the human ability to create *symbols* and thus to create both meaning in general and *identity* in particular.

Moreover, many scholars discuss parenting in its broadest sense, which includes not only that of straight couples, married or unmarried, but also that of gay parents, married or unmarried, and single parents. Our scope is narrower than theirs, however, in three ways.

First, we focus on the parenting of straight couples. Popular culture and elite culture, legislators and journalists, have tended to ignore the specific needs and problems of straight parents on the assumption that they have no specific needs or problems and thus require no direct attention specifically as straight parents. We argue that they do. Like any other sexual orientation, theirs relies heavily on cultural support. Men and women will always copulate with each other, to be sure, but that is hardly the same thing as doing so in ways that provide the stable environments that their children require.

It would be hard to find evidence, either historical or cross-cultural, of a society that maintained no ideal at all of family life. Although most societies have acknowledged that the family can take several forms, every society has used culture to promote an ideal environment *for children.* Many of the details are variable. Some societies have preferred polygamy, for instance, and others monogamy. Some have preferred patrilocality, others matrilocality. Some have preferred exogamy, others endogamy. But some things do not vary—at least they did not vary until the debate over gay marriage. We refer here in particular to the ideal of providing children with *both mothers and fathers whenever possible.* (In matrilineal societies, the mother's brother functions as a father.). The traditional nuclear family of Western societies, at any rate, was informally *embedded within an extended family.* Not all children actually had nuclear families, whether isolated or embedded, simply because some parents either left or died. Society maintained the ideal, even so, and found ways of caring for children who had no access to it. Related

families took in orphans, for instance, or other families adopted them. But things have changed.

Since the Industrial Revolution, nuclear families have become more and more isolated from extended families (a change that, apart from any other factors, has left society more and more fragmented). More recently, the birth-control pill has made it possible to disconnect sexual intercourse from both reproduction and the family in any form. No-fault divorce has undermined the durability of marriage. Hedonism and extreme individualism have encouraged people to emphasize personal gratification instead of personal responsibilities. Even before the advent of single motherhood by choice (along with single motherhood by default) and gay marriage, these changes and others had undermined the notion that children had rights. Gay marriage, in fact, represents a conflict between *two rights*: that of gay adults to marry each other and that of children to have both mothers and fathers.

Second, we focus specifically on the parenting of straight *men*—that is, on straight *fathers*. That is partly because we have already spent twenty-five years doing research on men, but also because so many more scholars have done research on women over the past few decades than on men. This requires an explanation.

Consider reproductive technologies, which affect the earliest stage of parenting. Over the last thirty years, we have heard a great deal about these, although few debates have included both older *and* newer ones. That is because many people believe, or at least hope, that public debates over older ones—notably over abortion—would re-open conflicts that the courts have already settled. Many other people disagree with them, of course, so the conflicts continue. And that makes sense, because all of these reproductive technologies present similar and often identical *cultural* problems—in other words, symbolic and moral ones. Most people, including politicians and legislators, see reproductive technologies from the perspective of both women and men. This imbalance characterized Canada's Royal Commission on New Reproductive Technologies (Canada, 1993). The commissioners seldom even mentioned fathers.[1] Their mentality has exacerbated the fragmented and often polarized state of public debates about parenting.

Parenting, which includes reproduction, by definition, is part of at least two cultural systems: (marriage and) the family but also gender. (We use that word and several others in a systematic way; more about that in due course.) Even those who want to abolish gender must acknowledge its continuing influence within the family and elsewhere. And yet fathers have received much less attention than mothers in debates over family life—except, of course, in connection with *pathological* fathers who injure, molest or ignore their children. For whatever reason, the prevalent assumption even among academics, let alone journalists and talk-show hosts, is that family life revolves around mothers. Nowadays, in short, every debate over reproduction, and family life—especially over divorce, custody, reproductive technologies, gay marriage or abortion-on-demand—thus becomes primarily a debate over the needs and problems of either women and their children or gay couples and their children.

We suggest that this assumption about the centrality of women is not only false, or at least naïve, but also dangerous. Assuming that fathers are helpful at best and superfluous or even sinister at worst, is dangerous not only because of its implications for children (who might actually need fathers as distinct from mothers) but also because of its implications for men (who might need fatherhood as a healthy source of collective

identity) and thus for society as a whole (which might need men to make heavy investments in its future).

Third, we focus on the culture that has historically supported straight couples in general and straight fathers in particular—especially, but not only, the symbolic thinking that underlies it. Working in the humanities, we find that any careful discussion of straight fathers and their current problems raises several questions that scholars in those fields seldom ask, at least not directly.

After (1) a brief discussion of our vocabulary and therefore of our theoretical premises, we will ask questions about (2) what it means to be human; (3) what it means to be a man or a woman; (4) what it means to be part of a family; (5) what it means to be a part of society; and (6) what it means to give or take life. If we answer these questions expediently or inconsistently, then we can hardly expect to create a worldview that gives meaning and depth to the human experience, let alone one that provides a healthy context for straight parenting and thus helps hold society together.

Vocabulary and Theory

To be *human* is to live within both nature and culture. *Nature* refers to the givens of human existence, whether external (physical geography, say, and climate) or internal (the human genome and whatever that entails for behavior). Unlike most other animals, though, we actively interpret or re-interpret and even modify nature. To do that, we use *culture* (social, economic, political, artistic, religious, linguistic, scientific and other systems). Every culture represents a collective attempt to create order within what would otherwise be the chaos and tyranny of nature. We rely far less on instincts, in other words, than other animals do. This is why humans are so flexible and can adapt to so many natural environments.

To be a *man* or a *woman*, similarly, is to live within both nature and culture. In this context, nature refers to *sex* (genes and hormones that cause the physical expression of either maleness or femaleness) and culture to *gender* (a cultural system that defines both masculinity and femininity).

Of great importance in this essay is *identity*: the sense of being like some people and unlike others. Although identity can be either personal or collective, we focus here on *collective* identity as humans in general and as men or women in particular. But nature (maleness or femaleness) and culture (some notion of masculinity or femininity) are linked in very complex and sometimes ambiguous ways. We see no point in referring either to "male identity" and "masculine identity," therefore, or "female identity" and "feminine identity." Instead, we refer to "collective identity *as men*" and "collective identity *as women*."

Following Shakespeare's analogy, "all the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players," we suggest that *gender*—the culturally created system that promotes various forms of masculinity and femininity—is the *script* (or "role") that players either try to follow or try to escape.

In this context, it is worth noting that we oppose both evolutionary or genetic determinism *and* social constructionism. Even though human evolution can sometimes explain how or why some features of gender originated in the remote past, evolution does

not actually *cause* them. Evolutionary psychology notwithstanding, it is culture and not nature that presents men with masculine scripts and women with feminine scripts—that is, *cultural interpretations* of or *cultural elaborations* on maleness or femaleness. And it is culture that can modify those scripts. On the other hand, *not everything* is possible—at least not without an extremely high cost. Social engineering can be a very dangerous experiment, especially when some participants cannot give their informed consent, due to unintended consequences. It is cynical to argue that nature dooms people to follow the patterns of their remote or even non-human ancestors, in short, but it is naïve to argue that culture should allow people to ignore human experience in its efforts to create utopias.

What Does It Mean To Be Human?

Human identity is partly a given of nature, which is why many societies understand humans in relation to other animals. Myths project human qualities onto animals, for instance, or classify animals as tribal ancestors or allies. To be human, at any rate, is to participate fully in the natural order. But people are different in some ways from other animals, because human identity is also an *artifact of culture*. To be human, for instance, is to participate not only in the natural order but also in a cultural order. The fact of living within both nature and culture is one of the basic ambiguities that people have always tried to resolve through myth (Lévi-Strauss, 1969). In modern societies, though, the primary "others" are machines rather than animals. Although the popularity of movies such as *Jaws* indicates that we still feel the need to establish human identity in relation to the animal world, many other popular movies explore it in relation to machines. Ever since Mary Shelley wrote the story of *Frankenstein,* in fact, this theme has appeared routinely in popular culture and not only in science fiction. It appears in *The Wizard of Oz*, for instance, both the original novel and the famous filmed version. The Tin Man, after all, is a kind of robot (Nathanson, 1991, p. 261). As an extension of his cars, weapons and gadgets, moreover, James Bond is part man and part machine. The same is true of those lovable robots from *Star Wars*, R2D2 and C3P0 (Drummond, 1996). The Trans-humanists, meanwhile, have been developing avant-garde science in the hope of creating a new and better species—an idea that has produced the "cyberpunk" genre of science fiction (Young & Nathanson, A). But whether asked in terms of animals or machines, the question is always the same: Where do we draw the line between what is human and what is non-human?

With that in mind, consider the enduring debate over abortion. Is the fetus human or merely a mass of "tissue"? Or consider the debate over genetic engineering. If we can use technology to produce "designer children," why not do so to produce beings so different that they would constitute a new or superior—and therefore non-human—species? Related questions would include the following: Do reproductive technologies threaten human dignity? If so, precisely how should we define "dignity"? And who gets to define it? Do people have intrinsic worth or merely instrumental value? Do we want to abandon the integral view of human bodies for a modular one in which sperm, eggs or wombs are merely units to be exchanged or even bought and sold?

Of interest here is neither abortion nor genetic engineering per se, which present complex moral and practical problems, but the *definition of human life*. Of interest here, more specifically, is *who* defines it. This is clearly not a matter of concern only to one segment of the population—not unless you believe that some segments are *less* than human. Everyone has to live with the results of defining human life, after all, in connection with collective choices about the humanity of fetuses, the mentally and physically handicapped, the old and any other group that has a questionable "quality of life." Because everyone has a stake in the definition of human life, we should surely think twice before excluding any segment of the population from these debates—including men.

What Does It Mean To Be A Man Or A Woman?

Every gender script is a cultural interpretation of nature. Because the purpose of culture is to create order out of chaos, thus enabling us to adapt and survive in changing environments, you could argue that the function of culture is to do so by enhancing or "correcting" nature. Given the natural asymmetry between males and females, only the latter being able to give birth, it is hardly surprising that every society so far has found it necessary to create a gender system, no matter how minimal (Gilmore, 1990, pp. 201ff). Almost every society has used culture to give men a *distinctive, necessary and publicly valued* contribution to make as fathers. But now that women can protect and provide for themselves, with help from the state if necessary, this is no longer the case.

Long before the rise of a "social constructionist" perspective in the social sciences, historians and anthropologists understood that gender scripts vary considerably from one time or place to another (Hacking, 1999; Malti-Douglas, 2007). What one society admires as manly, for instance, another denounces as effete. Each society would presume, however, that its own notion of manliness or effeteness emerges directly from the natural order. This is why academic and political activists try to "deconstruct" gender. But can they go too far in the opposite direction? Does physiology have nothing at all to do with behavior? Does nature have no part at all to play in the creation of culture? Is it true that anything at all is possible? Is anything at all desirable? Is identity infinitely malleable? So far, these questions have almost always been about the needs of either women or gay people (Vance, 1989, pp. 13-14). If so, then we must ensure that every conceivable variation receives the same legal protection and social approval as all others. That might be a worthy goal on moral grounds, at least in theory, but it presents several problems on practical grounds.

One of these is the ever-increasing *fragmentation* of society, which has led to an ever-increasing number of groups that claim the right to constitutional protections (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2010; Siksay, 2010).[2] Why is that a problem? It is a problem because fragmentation is incompatible by definition with the level of cohesion that every society requires by definition. Worse, fragmentation often leads to polarization: If "we" are different, some argue, it is because "they" have used their cultural resources to make "us" seem different. If "we" need protection, it is because "they" have persecuted "us." If "we" are a minority, it is because "they" have insisted on acting as a majority.[3]

Of course, questions about collective identity as men or women threaten many people. Because gender is a cultural artifact, though, the threat is not ultimate. It is at least possible to consider alternative masculine or feminine scripts without undermining collective identities as men or women. But questions about maleness or femaleness are threatening at a much deeper level, because sex is a *natural* given. Should we assume that only the cowardly or stupid feel threatened by anomalies? What if stripping away all the cultural embroidery (versions of masculinity and femininity) still leaves almost all of us with a residue of *maleness* or *femaleness*? For almost all of us, to be human at the genetic level means to be either male or female. To say that either maleness or femaleness is utterly irrelevant, therefore, is to ignore a very basic component of human identity. And yet that is the assumption of some attitudes toward fatherhood or at least of straight fatherhood, although no one, certainly no one who supports ideological feminism would ever say that about motherhood (Nathanson & Young, 2001, pp. 194-233; Stanworth, 1987; Smart, 1996).[4]

Until recently, the feminine scripts of most societies relied largely on femaleness. By definition, after all, female people are those who can (barring some anomalous condition) become mothers. It is true that women do not want anyone reducing their identity to motherhood. Why should they? In addition, though, they do not necessarily want to share motherhood with men. And that would be the result of men using ex-utero technologies to bypass the womb and thus threaten the collective identity of women— that is, the *need* for some *distinctive* contribution by women.[5] Likewise, until recently, the masculine scripts of most societies relied largely on maleness. Male people are human beings who *cannot* give birth but *can* become fathers who participate actively in family life and communal life.

As we have written elsewhere, though, men already face an unprecedented problem in connection with their collective identity as men. This is due to a very gradual process that began eleven or twelve thousand years ago due to the rise of horticulture and agriculture. The process has speeded up due to more recent cultural revolutions; the male body has become increasingly marginal or vestigial[6] *as a source* of collective identity (Nathanson &Young, B). Men of the highest status are those who do *not* rely on any distinctive feature of the male body; men of the *lowest* status, on the other hand, are those who *do*. Characteristic features of the male body, which once allowed men to make distinctive, necessary and publicly valued contributions to society, have been replaced by machines, for instance, and by the state. Women no longer need men either to protect them or provide for them; they can turn instead, if necessary, to government agencies. Now, moreover, new reproductive technologies could trivialize or even eliminate the one remaining purely natural contribution of men: sperm. We will return to that in due course.

But first, consider surrogate motherhood. This method allows infertile couples to have children who are genetically related to them. Moreover, it allows male couples to have children. Most people today feel the need for genetic ties with their children or parents, but the "Baby M" case revealed a double standard. Women who insist on the primacy of genetic ties (as did Mary Beth Whitehead, the surrogate mother of Baby M) receive praise for that very reason as good mothers; men who do so (as did William Stern, the genetic father of Baby M) receive condemnation as idiosyncratic or even selfish fathers. When this became a cause célèbre, *Newsweek* featured on its cover both the surrogate mother and the adoptive mother *but neither the genetic father nor the*

adoptive father (*Mothers,* 1987). He, apparently, was insignificant. And the implicit message to boys and men was that *fatherhood* is insignificant. Why, then, should they stick around to care for their families?

The popularity of artificial insemination and the resulting proliferation of sperm banks indicate pervasive sympathy for single women who want children desperately but either cannot find or do not want husbands as well. Although some women who resort to sperm banks are married or living with men, others assume that the absence of a father is irrelevant—possibly inconvenient but nonetheless irrelevant. Apart from depriving the child of a father, this sends an implicit message to boys and men: Fatherhood means nothing more than providing sperm. And some sperm banks try to disguise even that connection. This was the explicit message on one episode of *Golden Girls* (Parent, 1989). No one, however, would argue that the absence of a *mother* is irrelevant. At any rate, some single mothers by choice argue that the old ideal family, which included both mothers and fathers,[7] is not merely unrealistic but undesirable. New reproductive technologies such as artificial insemination and in vitro fertilization make it increasingly attractive for them to consider having children either alone or with gay partners—especially now that both gay marriage and gay adoption are legal in some places.

Parthenogenesis, still on the horizon, threatens not merely to marginalize men in reproduction but to eliminate them. After all, this technology would require no sperm and produce no males. Moreover, sex selection—selecting fetuses of one sex or the other for abortion—could threaten men as much as women. At the moment, most people focus attention on the threat to women. Aging parents in many countries must rely on financial help from sons and pay dowries for the daughters, after all, which is why some people abort female fetuses. In other countries, though, it might make more sense to abort male fetuses.[8] This could happen even here, for instance, if we continue to produce an underclass of undereducated and unemployable men—an underclass that would probably produce social and political instability.

What Does It Mean To Be Part Of A Family?

The family is both natural and cultural. No society has tried to socialize children without some version of the family. Like gender scripts, family patterns vary a great deal. Historically and cross-culturally, most societies have preferred some form of extended family.[9] Our own promoted the nuclear family—preferably, until recently, one that was embedded within an extended family. For various economic, legal and other reasons, it no longer functions very effectively. But even before that became obvious, many opposed what was then the ideal family: mother, father and children. For decades, in fact, the family has generated intense debate between feminists (but also gay activists) and their adversaries.

Many feminists and their professional allies—various sociologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, educators, legislators, politicians, divorce lawyers, judges and so on—rely in one way or another on the notion of a "social construction," which claims that the family (and every other institution) is almost infinitely malleable. From this, it follows that there is, or at least should be, *no such thing* as an ideal, or normative, family. Instead, society should embrace the principle of "diversity" or "pluralism" and accept almost any

configuration of the family as neither better nor worse than any other. Feminists per se take several positions on the family, not all of them reconcilable. Some want to abolish it, for instance, as the most deeply rooted and most oppressive institution of "patriarchy." Others want to reform it so that women can control it, especially in connection with divorce and custody (Nathanson & Young, 2006, pp. 125-156 and 415-438). Still others want merely to redistribute household chores. So far, though, almost every political debate has focused heavily on what *mothers*, not fathers (let alone children) need or want.

At first, debate revolved around the "alternative families" of single mothers. More recently, it has revolved around those of gay parents in connection with the debate over gay marriage. Reflecting this debate, like many others, are the many genres of popular culture: movies, sitcoms, talk shows, blogs and so on. One popular movie, *The Kids Are All Right* made headlines, because the kids have two mothers. Viewers get the distinct impression that this is no longer an "alternative family" but an ordinary family. The children decide nonetheless to find their sperm donor. When they do, he proves likeable and even willing to participate somehow as a member of the family. In the end, though, the kids and their mothers classify him as a superfluous intruder. The implicit message is that sperm donors are not really fathers, which is true in one way. One implicit message in popular culture as a whole, moreover, is that *even live-in fathers* are irrelevant at best (as assistant mothers or walking wallets) and sinister at worst (as potential molesters).

But *do* children need fathers? Or do they merely need two parents, in which case two mothers or two fathers would do just as well as one mother and one father? Or do they need two parents at all? As for two parents, the evidence is in. Children do need two parents.[10] It should come as no surprise, however, that researchers have not provided a conclusive answer to the previous questions. One problem is that not every jurisdiction collects evidence systematically. But the real problem is that researchers *have not had time*, since the legalization in some places of gay marriage, to *complete* longitudinal studies of children who grow *from infancy to adulthood* under the care of either two married mothers or two married fathers. So far, they have relied on anecdotal evidence or inadequate opinion polls and surveys that rely on volunteers rather than random samples. Some longitudinal studies might seem to indicate, so far, that mothers and fathers are interchangeable (Lamb, 2010, pp. 10-11). In that case, lacking a father would make no difference to a child with one or more mothers. But showing that children fail to assign distinct functions to mothers and fathers does not necessarily mean the absence of distinct functions; it might mean only that children are unaware of these. Nor does it mean that children will not become aware of them in later life. We suggest that fathers and mothers do have distinct functions.

All children must separate from their mothers, of course, in order to form identities of their own. They need second parents but not necessarily fathers for that process. Boys must not only separate from their mothers, however, but also transfer the focus of their identity from femaleness and some form of femininity to maleness and some form of masculinity (Pollack, 1993). Both fathers and sons have male bodies, so it could be argued that sons need fathers in order to establish and affirm some collective identity as men. But girls, too, need fathers in order to become effective and responsible as women among men. They can benefit just as much as boys do, in short, albeit in somewhat different ways (Ellis *et al*., 2003, pp. 801-821; Metzler *et al*., 1994, pp. 419-438).[11] This is not only about conventional or unconventional notions of masculinity and femininity.

In a world of embodied beings, it is also about maleness and femaleness. Only those who deny any importance at all to the natural order are likely to disagree.

But parenting is more complicated than that, we suggest, because children need not one but two *kinds* of parental love. They need the *unconditional love* that most cultures have associated with mothers. This form of love is direct, emotional and immediately gratifying to both children and their mothers. Children need it in order to feel safe and acceptable. In addition, however, they need the *earned respect* that most cultures have associated with fathers (or, in a few societies, uncles who function as fathers). This form of love—and it *can* be a form of love—is often indirect, cognitive and not always immediately gratifying to either children or their fathers. Although infants might not yet need this paternal form of love, older children and young adults do in order to be competent and feel confident in the world beyond home. Any parent could do either task, in theory, which means that any two parents could satisfy the psychological needs of their children. But we suggest that each parent needs to choose or at least emphasize *one* form of love in order to avoid sending a confusing double message to children: "I love you because of who you *are*" but also "I love you because you *act* in ways that make me proud." For the time being, we suggest, very few women would be prepared to withhold or at least appear to withhold unconditional love from their children (or even from those of their female spouses), although that could change. As for men, we suggest that they are more confused than ever about fatherhood. They often *feel* unconditional love for their children, but they also realize that this is not what their children need most from *them*.

If we are correct, then fatherhood is a much more complicated and even perilous business, psychologically, than motherhood is. It requires a major cultural effort to create fathers who are closely involved with their children but not so closely that they merely duplicate what mothers do (Bly, 1990; Keen, 1991). Bly and Keen became famous for evoking widespread anger toward postwar fathers who had been too busy at work for close relationships with their sons. Nonetheless, our society makes very little effort to help fathers find ways of being not too distant, not too close, but "just right." Worse, it gives them two conflicting messages. It tells them directly to make heavy emotional (and financial) investments in their children but indirectly to *avoid* making heavy emotional investments in children, who would almost certainly be taken or even alienated from them after divorce (except, of course, in connection with the financial burden of supporting them).

What Does It Mean To Be Part Of Society?

Most people have a strong need for affiliation. Society is not a collection of isolated and autonomous individuals, after all, but a union of individuals and communities with at least some common needs and at least some forms of common identity. To form personal or collective identity is partly to discover the ways in which we are *unlike* others (because we all have distinctive characteristics) but also to discover the ways in which we are *like* others (because we all have at least some common characteristics). Taken together, both factors amount to *interdependence*, not personal or collective independence.[12] As social beings, healthy people—whether individuals or communities—not only receive from but also contribute to others and thus build up society as a whole. Now, consider all this in

connection with reproduction and family life. The fact is that our society excludes one segment of the population from debates over both.

By now, for instance, it has become a cliché to discuss abortion-on-demand as "a woman's right to choose" or a matter between "a woman and her doctor." To the extent that many people even think about the rights of men, they believe that fathers should have no legal or moral right even to know that they are fathers, let alone to discuss the ultimate fate of their children. They believe that underage girls should have access to abortion without the consent of their mothers and fathers, moreover, let alone the fathers of their children. Not all women support abortion-on-demand, of course, and not all men oppose it. Some men, those who want no legal responsibility for children but also those who fear losing their children in the event of separation or divorce, collaborate with women who promote abortion-on-demand. But who really *cares* what men think about abortion?

During the 1990s, after legislators decriminalized abortion, many Canadian feminists—ideological feminists as distinct from egalitarian ones (Nathanson & Young, 2001, pp. 199-233)[13]—demanded legislation to regulate or even ban new procedures that might exploit poor women (such as surrogacy[14]) and in vitro that might prove dangerous for infertile women, but they *rejected* legislation to ban those (such as artificial insemination) that might help women to gain independence from men. These feminists tended to approve of technologies that promised women reproductive autonomy (such as abortion), in short, but to disapprove of those (such as ex-utero technologies) that promised men a fundamental role in reproduction.

The Canadian government established a royal commission to study new reproductive technologies (Canada, 1993). After years of ferocious public debate, however, Canadians reached no enduring consensus. The gay factor has modified opinions at one end of the political continuum. Some feminists have found it expedient to switch sides; those who had once denounced any procedure that helped infertile men to reproduce (such as surrogacy or buying sperm), although they seldom referred to couples at all, now demanded access to procedures (such as surrogacy or buying sperm) that allow gay couples to reproduce.

This period saw the rise of ideological feminism, which was very effective in promoting the idea that Canada, like every other country, was a "patriarchy." From this, it followed that Canadian laws oppressed women per se but rewarded men per se. Consequently, there was no point in even asking how reproductive technologies, old or new, affected men in general or fathers in particular. As for children, many assumed that the interests of women and those of children would continue to coincide (as they had through much of history). Even abortion was really in the interest of children, they assumed, because some mothers were either unwilling or unable to care for unwanted children.

Moreover, this period saw some major victories for the gay movement. Gay activists joined forces politically with their feminist counterparts, because all had a common interest in undermining what they called the "traditional family," a bastion of patriarchy, and either supplementing or replacing it with "alternative families." Feminist and gay activists focused on the benefits of new legislation to both single mothers and gay couples. They refrained at first, however, from focusing on the benefits to children; the latter were bystanders to this debate about the rights of adults. When critics insisted on considering the needs and rights of children, activists claimed that the children of gay

couples would be either as well off or better off than those of other parents, even though no one had yet had time to produce a longitudinal study (Bloche & Pecresse *et al*., 2006, pp. 87-88; Rekers & Kilgus, 2002, pp. 343-382; Stevenson, 1991, pp. 3-8).[15] In short, we suggest, advocates of "alternative families" might be making the same mistake that advocates of no-fault divorce had made a generation earlier. Divorce and custody laws changed in ways that have usually helped mothers but penalized fathers—and therefore children as well. Longitudinal studies on the children of divorce have finally made it very clear, after all, that divorce often helps parents *but not children* (Amato, 2000a; Amato, 2000b; Biblarz & Gottainer, 2000). One possible major problem, as we saw, is that the children of both single mothers and gay couples—like the children of divorce in most cases—have no parents of one sex, usually fathers. Some argue that there should be a presumption of joint custody in response to legal measures that leave the children of divorce largely under the control of mothers, even though the legislation on custody is couched in gender-neutral terms (Nathanson & Young, 2006, pp. 314-318).[16] In some places, mothers may either remove or not add the names of fathers on birth certificates.[17]

This is the atmosphere in which popular culture undermines men in general and fathers in particular, often depicting them with overt contempt (Nathanson & Young, 1991). The explicit message is, by and large, that fathers are luxuries at best and liabilities at worst. This is the overwhelming and relentless message from countless movies, sitcoms, talk shows, comic strips, blogs, newspapers, magazines, commercials and print ads (Nathanson & Young, 2001). The implicit message is that men not only have no inherent place in the family but also that men have no inherent stake in the future of society (or possibly even of the species). In that case, though, why would anyone expect fathers to stick around and make heavy emotional investments in family life? No wonder, then, that some schools no longer encourage or even allow children to make cards for Father's Day. The excuse is that children without fathers might feel excluded (Nutt, 2008).

These are not the problems only of men or of children but those of society as a whole. It is true that people tend to take sides in public debates according to their own personal or collective self-interest. And it is true that democracy allows self-interest as a motivation for participation in public life. Otherwise, there would be no need for democracy in the first place. Problems arise only in connection with conflicts of interest. It is hardly self-evident, for instance, that the collective self-interest of either women or gay people (at least insofar as activists represent both) coincides perfectly with that of society as a whole. After all, society includes men, both gay and straight. But no one would ever know that from listening to the speeches in legislatures, much less from reading the reports in newspapers or watching the discussions on talk shows. This is what can happen, when the interest of one group, even an alliance of two or more groups, trumps that of society as a whole. We suggest that participation in public discussions about reproduction and family life—about the future of society and therefore the meaning of human life—is not merely a personal right of all citizens but also a civic *duty* of all citizens by virtue merely of *being* citizens.

What Does It Mean To Give Or Take Life?

At the heart of human experience is giving and taking life. Historically and cross-culturally, people have associated women with giving life, producing new life in connection with childbirth. Some would argue that those who promote abortion-on-demand undermine that association (Nguyen, 2011, p. A-12).[18] On the other hand, people have associated men with taking life: killing game, predatory animals, domestic animals and sometimes human enemies as well. We should avoid the tendency to romanticize either the life-giving function of women or to glorify the heroic life-taking function of men. In the remote past, both sexes had very dangerous tasks. Women often died in childbirth, after all, and men were often killed on the hunt or in battle. Nonetheless, both sexes contributed things of very high value—ultimately, their own lives—to society. And they formed *healthy collective identities as men or women* accordingly—which is to say, identities that relied on the ability to make *at least one distinctive, necessary and publicly valued contribution to society*.

It is worth noting, however, that societies probably found it harder to maintain the collective identity of men than to maintain that of women; it probably took a more massive cultural effort, in other words, to make boys and men affirm their symbolic link with death than to make girls and women affirm their symbolic link with life. This explains at least partially why so many societies have required boys to undergo severe and even dangerous ordeals before coming of age in glamorous ceremonies as men but seldom required girls to undergo any comparable ordeals before coming of age as women. Until recently, our own society has expected boys to become men in order to make similar contributions—fighting on the battlefield, say, or in the boardroom—but has long since failed (except in a few religious communities) to offer them any public rituals that signify coming of age (Nathanson & Young, 2009, pp. 155-177). In any case, we have reason to believe that envy of women has been more common than many people in our society might think. Some societies acknowledge it openly, for instance, by allowing men to experience childbirth symbolically or ritually; this is what anthropologists call *couvade* (Paige & Paige, 1981; Young & Nathanson, 2010, pp. 60-124).[19]

One episode of *I Love Lucy*, in fact, illustrated precisely this phenomenon. When Lucy gets pregnant, Ricky shows all the symptoms of pregnancy (Oppenheimer, Pugh & Carroll, 1953). Men today have many other reasons for envying women, but childbirth probably remains among them—deeply repressed, of course, to avoid the obvious threat to masculine identity. And how could it be otherwise now that many feminists have shifted from ignoring motherhood to glorifying it?

Conclusions

Our goal here is to stimulate more research on fathers in general and on the distinctive functions, if any, of fathers, in particular. As we explain elsewhere (Nathanson & Young, 2010), every human society has, until now, found it necessary to acknowledge some distinctive and necessary function of men, conferring a healthy collective identity on men by honoring those who function effectively as fathers (and usually punishing those who

do not). From the perspectives not only fathers but also of children, it makes no difference whether this function is distinctive due to natural proclivities or to cultural scripts. Given our reading of the historical and cross-cultural evidence, therefore, we consider a warning appropriate here. If social scientists were to decide that fathers can contribute *nothing* to children that is *distinctive* and *necessary* (whether children and even fathers are aware of it or not), then a significant segment of the male population loses its collective identity and therefore withdraws its collective investment in the future of society. To avoid social disintegration, other cultural leaders would have to "invent" something for men to contribute. By this, we do not mean inventing something out of the blue, as it were. Rather, we mean using rituals and other symbolic mechanisms to elaborate on, say, any beneficial differences that persist between fathers and mothers.

Our point in this chapter is to describe problems that few others have even acknowledged, not to re-iterate conventional wisdom. We do not prescribe solutions or even to assert unequivocally that there *are* solutions.

Notes

[1] Neither volume has an index, but each has a table of contents. *Nothing* in either refers to men in general or fathers in particular as segments of society that might have a collective interest in the findings. No group representing men presented a brief to the commissioners.

[2] Gender labels under consideration (in addition to gay, lesbian and bisexual) included the following: "transgender," "trans," "transsexual," "intersex," "androgynous," "agender," "cross dresser," "drag king," "drag queen," "genderfluid," "genderqueer," "intergender," "neutrois," "pansexual," "pan-gendered," "third gender," "third sex," "sister girl" and "brother boy" (see also Siksay, 2010). Critics pointed out that the bill does not define "gender identity" and "gender expression" but Siksay replied as follows: "On the matter of the definition, the Canadian Human Rights Act does not define the prohibited grounds of discrimination that it contains. This is intentional. It encourages living definitions, grounds that are defined by common usage, experience, jurisprudence, tribunal decisions and science. In keeping with that feature of the act, there is [*sic*] no definition of gender identity and gender expression in this bill." But one gay lobby group understood what the bill intended by *reading into* it specific groups to be protected. "This kind of explicit reference within the CRHA [Canadian Human Rights Act] would afford transgender, transsexual, cross-dresser, intersex, gender-queer, gender non-conforming and gender-open individuals clear protection against discrimination and help create a safer Canada for us all" (*EGALE,* 2011).

[3] By definition, democracy mandates rule of the majority. But modern liberal democracies acknowledge limits to the power of any majority and thus protect minorities from persecution.

[4] See Stanworth (1987) and Smart (1996). The point of both authors is to prevent the deconstruction of motherhood; they have no problem with the deconstruction of fatherhood.

[5] One group made this very clear during the 1990s. This was the Feminist International Network of Resistance to Reproductive and Genetic Engineering, better known as FINRRAGE. They opposed many new reproductive technologies on moral grounds: for exposing women to experimental procedures, say, or for exploiting poor women as surrogate mothers for rich couples. But they opposed these technologies also on symbolic grounds: for undermining the essential link between women and nature (at the very least their ability to gestate and lactate) by legitimating the essential link between men and culture (at the very least by using technology to manipulate and harm nature). See Klein (1988).

[6] You could argue that the male body still provides men with identity in connection with athletes and sports heroes. But athletes and sports heroes are *vestigial*. Their strength is symbolic and even ceremonial, not practical. No one relies on them in particular, after all, to support or even protect society. One parallel comes to mind: late medieval jousting tournaments. By this time, rulers no longer relied in wartime on mounted knights who could wield lances; they relied primarily on soldiers who could shoot arrows or fire guns. The tournaments had come to function primarily as ceremonial statements about aristocratic prestige. In short, they were vestigial. Societies still do rely on male bodies to protect the state in wartime, but an increasing number of them rely also on female bodies. Apart from anything else, therefore, the male body's symbolism in combat has been undermined. Some people argue, even now, for reversion to the earlier symbolism by restricting combat to men. But they seldom point out (for political reasons) that this would be extremely costly. The cost would be measured not only in male lives, as usual, but also in social harmony. This is because restricting the duty of combat to men would require, in addition, restricting the *privileges* that once *rewarded* men for engaging (willingly or unwillingly) in combat.

[7] This was the ideal family in patrilineal societies, not in the few matrilineal ones (although the mother's brother functions as the father).

[8] Unlike many countries, neither Japan nor many Western countries, including the United States and the United Kingdom, now show evidence of preferring boys over girls. See Wortz & Fletcher (1998), p. 264.

[9] This has provided an economic safety net for parents. In small-scale societies, the bands have done so.

[10] On the children of divorce and single mothers, see Amato (2000a, 2000b); Amato & Booth (1997); Angel & Worobey (1988); Bennett & Braverman (1994); Biblarz & Gottainer (2000); Chase-Landsdale *et al*. (1995); Cherlin *et al*. (1998); Daly & Wilson (1985); Flewelling & Bauman (1990); Harper & McLanahan (1998); Hetherington &

Kelly (2002); Johnson *et al*. (1996); Marks & Lambert (1998); McLanahan & Sandefur (1994); Sampson & Laub (1987); Simons *et al*. (1999); Thomas & Farrell (1996); Wallerstein *et al*. (2000).

[11] We are not the only ones to say this about adolescent girls. "Clearly, fathers play a central role in civilizing boys. They also play an important role in civilizing girls, as the research on sexual promiscuity and teenage childbearing makes readily apparent. Fathers who are affectionate and firm with their daughters, who love and respect their wives, and who simply stick around can play a crucial role in minimizing the likelihood that their daughters will be sexually active prior to marriage. The affection that fathers bestow on their daughters makes those daughters less likely to seek attention from young men and to get involved sexually with members of the opposite sex. Fathers also protect their daughters from premarital sexual activity by setting clear disciplinary limits for their daughters, monitoring their whereabouts, and by signaling to young men that sexual activity will not be tolerated" (Metzler *et al*., 1994; cited in Wilcox, 2005). Finally, when they are in the home, research by University of Arizona psychology professor Bruce Ellis suggests that fathers send a biological signal through their pheromones ... that slows the sexual development of their daughters; this, in turn, makes daughters less interested in sexual activity and less likely to be seen as sexual objects (Ellis *et al*., 2003; cited in Wilcox, 2005).

[12] Interdependence relies on continual negotiation; otherwise, it degenerates into greater dependence for some and greater independence for others. That is inequality, not interdependence.

[13] By "egalitarian feminists," we referred to those whose rhetoric revolves around equality between men and women. By "ideological feminists," we refer to those whose rhetoric revolves around the moral and sometimes even innate superiority of women over men. We associate this second group with misandry, which includes manifestations such as the notion of collective guilt (that of men) and the conspiracy theory of history (that men have conspired since the remote past to subjugate women).

[14] Surrogacy was an ancient practice, but modern surrogacy involves the use of *in vitro* technologies. This is why we classify it as a new technology.

[15] Explicitly or implicitly, Stevenson (1991) compares the best of one thing ("alternative families") with the worst of another ("the traditional family"); this is not a legitimate form of comparison. Moreover, he suggests that whatever is ("alternative families" as the new statistical norm), should be; this is not a legitimate use of statistics. We discuss Stevenson and his context within "men's studies," an academic discipline that officially promotes the perspective of (ideological) feminism, in *Transcending Misandry*. But we are by no means the only ones to challenge what has become academic orthodoxy. For a critique of many social-scientific studies on the children of same-sex couples, citing their political biases and flawed methods, see the edited and translated version of a report that

was written for French legislators (Bloche *et al*., 2006, pp.87-88; Rekers & Kilgus, 2002, pp. 343-382).

[16] It would be unthinkable now to use gender-specific language in any law or other legal document (one notable exception being American legislation that requires young men but not young women to register with the Selective Service System). How the courts *interpret, implement and enforce* gender-neutral texts, however, is a different matter. Legislators, judges, bureaucrats and even police officers have found ways of doing so that benefit women and penalize men (Nathanson & Young, 2006, pp. 314-318). Although some laws *refer in theory* to both men and women, for instance, they might *apply in fact* primarily to either men or women; in these cases, gender-neutrality is a formality. Even gender-neutral expressions such as "custodial parents," after all, refer primarily to mothers instead of fathers.

[17] Some jurisdictions now encourage parents to ignore the sex of parents. Instead of "mother" and "father," for instance, their birth certificates specify "parent a" and "parent b," "party a" and "party b," "progenitor a" and "progenitor b," and so on. Other jurisdictions distinguish between "natural parent" and "legal parent." Still other jurisdictions retain "mother" and "father" but enter the name of a non-genetic mother under "father."

[18] Given widespread support for abortion-on-demand in Canada, it is not entirely surprising that infanticide is a lesser crime in Canadian law than homicide. Infanticide assumes post-menstrual stress or some other psychological condition and thus mitigates guilt. The implication is that even an infant is somehow less human than an adult (Nguyen, 2011).

[19] *Couvade* allows men to mimic their pregnant wives in connection with food taboos, for instance, and seclusion. Why would men do that? According to M.F. Ashley Montagu (1999), doing so fulfills a deep emotional need: giving indirect expression to the fact that men envy women for being able to give birth (and possibly for additional reasons). According to one study, *couvade* has nothing to do with emotional needs; on the contrary, as they make clear in the title of their book, it has everything to do with political interests: "Ritual behavior is a bargaining strategy employed out of political self-interest when more potent tactics are unavailable" (Paige & Paige, 1981, p. 255). Their cynical approach, we suggest, owes more to ideological feminism than it does to empirical evidence; by explaining couvade as an attempt by men to control the reproductive power of women, they reinforce the unverifiable conspiracy theory of history (Young & Nathanson, 2010, pp. 60-124). Moreover, the authors fail to discuss other expressions of womb envy, such as initiation rites found in which men imitate gestation and menstruation. Finally, the authors discuss circumcision but fail to mention subincision and superincision—both of which function as imitations of menstruation.

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The Bad News about Divorce and Children Is Worse than We Thought, but the Good News Is Better than We Thought

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Abstract. I discuss new findings on the association between parenting time with father and father-child relationships in young adulthood, and on the association between father-child relationships in young adulthood and serious physical health problems in later adulthood. I also discuss new findings on public opinion showing strong support for equal parenting time, but also strong belief that family courts are biased toward awarding parenting to mothers. However, indications are that support for equal parenting time has permeated the courts in at least one state (Arizona) in the US, suggesting that the public belief that family courts are biased toward mothers may be unwarranted elsewhere also. I conclude with an illustration of how custody policy can be reformed to legitimize equal parenting time without sacrificing necessary oversight and individualization.

At the risk of invoking platitudes about changing times, I offer new data indicating that we are on the verge of a shift in child custody policy toward more equal parenting time arrangements, and that it is a good thing and none too soon. The shift might have happened sooner had divorce research not been plagued for years by deficiencies in measures of parenting time, and by limited understanding of how parenting time affects children. The measures are deficient because they are actually measures of frequency of contact rather than amount of parenting time. This has allowed the conclusion to persist that "quality is more important than quantity" of parenting time. Limited understanding of how parenting time affects children perpetuated a near-exclusive focus in the past on protecting children from exposure to parent conflict. This allowed the weakly-supported recommendation to persist that parenting time should be limited in high conflict families. New measures of parenting time establish its importance in fostering strong father-child relationships. New findings in the health literature provide us with an integrated understanding of how both parent conflict and limited parenting time harm children, and provide us with sobering confirmation of how powerful these things can be.

The Bad News: What the Divorce Literature Tells Us About the Long-Term Effects on Father-Child Relationships

In seeking to adjudicate the debate over whether the negative effects of divorce on children are large and pervasive (e.g., Wallerstein, Lewis, & Blakeslee, 2000) or relatively minimal (e.g., Hetherington & Kelly, 2002), Paul Amato (2003) of Pennsylvania State University used a sophisticated technique to match divorced and non-divorced families on a range of background variables. He then examined the effects of

divorce on three aspects of young adults' adjustment: their overall psychological well-being, the marital discord they experienced in their own marriages, and the quality of their relationships with their fathers. He used data from the Marital Instability Over the Life Course (MIOLC) study, a longitudinal study began in 1980 of a random, national sample of married individuals (Amato & Booth, 1997). In the 1997 wave, when the median age of the children was 27 years, there were 671 children, 147 (21%) of whom had divorced parents. Amato found that the strongest negative effect of divorce was on father-child relationships. Quality of children's relationships with fathers was assessed by responses to 6 items dealing with trust, understanding, respect, fairness, affection, and the overall closeness of the relationship. Items included, ''How well do you feel that your father understands you?'' and ''How much do you trust your father?'' Compared to children from the non-divorced families, 35% more children from divorced families reached adulthood with poor relationships with their fathers. Amato (2003, p. 337) concluded, "For this outcome, the estimated effect of marital disruption is pervasive and strong. …[T]o the extent that close father-child relationships represent potentially valuable resources for children across the life course, the findings on father-child relationships are troubling."

Amato (2003) did not find any factors that moderated the effect of divorce on father-child relationships. An obvious possible moderating factor is the amount of parenting time the father had with the child. One would suspect that the greater the parenting time the child had with the father, the less the negative effect of divorce on the father-child relationship, but there was apparently no correlation between parenting time and quality of father-child relationship in this data set. One reason might be that there was little variation in parenting time among the families who divorced many years ago.

A second reason might have to do with how parenting time was measured. Fabricius, Braver Diaz, and Velez (2010) and Fabricius, Sokol, Diaz, and Braver (2012) have discussed why the typical scales used to measure father-child contact in the past (and even often currently) do a poor job of measuring amount of parenting time. They are measures of *frequency of contact*, not *amount of parenting time*. In these older scales, respondents are asked how frequently father–child contact has occurred, and the response categories include "once a year," "one to three times a month," "once a week," etc. For example, two divorced families might have a parenting time schedule of every other weekend at the father's home, but it might be a 2-day weekend for one family and a 3-day weekend for the other. Nevertheless, both families would be constrained to choose the response category, "one to three times a month." Argys, Peters, Cook, Garasky, Nepomnyaschy and Sorensen, (2007) compared several surveys that used measures of *frequency of contact* and concluded, "What is most striking about the reports of father–child contact … and perhaps most alarming to researchers, is the magnitude of the differences in the reported prevalence of father–child contact across the different surveys" (p. 383).

We (Fabricius & Luecken, 2007) have constructed a more direct measure of *amount of parenting time*. It involves asking young adults four retrospective questions about the typical number of days and nights they spent with their fathers during the school year and vacations. The yearly amount of parenting time can be calculated from these questions. An advantage of this retrospective approach is that respondents can focus

on the time period after the divorce that was most typical or representative. Fabricius, Sokol, Diaz, and Braver (2012) reported results from a survey which incorporated this parenting time measure given during the 2005–2006 academic year to 1,030 students who reported their parents had divorced before they were 16 years old. On average their parents had divorced about 10 years earlier. The survey also included a large number of questions about their past and current family relationships and situations which allowed us to capture several aspects of the emotional security of their relationships with their parents with a single score for each relationship. Because these scores represent how the students viewed their relationships at the time of the survey, when they were generally 18 to 20 years of age, they allow us to assess long-term associations between parenting time and the father-child relationship.

Figure 1 (from Fabricius, Sokol, Diaz, and Braver,2012) shows that the father-child relationship improved in a linear, dose-response fashion with each increment of parenting time from 0% time with father to equal (50%) parenting time represented by the vertical line in the center of the figure ($r = .51$, N = 871, $p < .001$). At 50% parenting time with father, the father-child relationship reached its peak and then leveled off and did not show statistically significant change from 50% to 100% parenting time with father ($r = .15$, N = 152). This shows that the effect of divorce on the father-child relationship, established by Amato (2003), depends heavily on the amount of parenting time the child has with the father. At equal parenting time, the quality of the relationship was at its highest; at the lowest levels of parenting time with father (0% to 15%) the quality of the relationship was at its worst. The bad news is that a large percentage – almost 40% -- of the students had these minimal levels (5% to 15%) of parenting time with their fathers when they were growing up. These new data complement Amato's (2003) findings by showing that the impact of divorce on the father-child relationship is felt most at the lower levels of parenting time.

Worse News: What the Health Literature tells us About the Long-Term Consequences of Damaged Parent-Child Relationships

The recent physical health literature that focuses on *risky families* indicates profound effects on children's long-term, stress-related physical health attributable to disrupted parent-child relationships and parent conflict – the same factors that so often accompany divorce. Several of these studies began in the 1950s and 1960s when mothers were almost exclusive caregivers, and they show that a poor relationship with either the mother *or* the father had similar effects; thus, the findings are not limited to just the primary caregiver. The physical health findings have yet to be featured in the divorce literature, and are as yet unknown to courts and policy makers.

Repetti, Taylor, and Seeman (2002) of the University of California, Los Angeles, published the first review of the large physical health literature as it relates to family relationships in 2002 in the prestigious journal, *Psychological Bulletin.* They concluded that dysfunctional family relationships "lead to consequent accumulating risk for *mental health disorders*, *major chronic diseases*, and *early mortality*" (p. 330, emphasis added). They reviewed 15 physical health studies, which included several large, longitudinal studies begun decades ago, and which fortunately often included a few questions about

family relationships in addition to questions about diet, alcohol, exercise, smoking, etc. Findings consistently pointed to adverse health consequences to children of so-called "risky families;" i.e., families characterized not only by high parent conflict, but also by cold, unsupportive parent-child relationships. The findings suggested that conflict between the parents and poor parent-child relationships exert similar effects.

For instance, Russek and Schwartz (1997) examined data from Harvard undergraduate men in the early 1950s who were asked to describe their relationship with each parent. Their descriptions were coded as positive ("very close" "warm and friendly") or negative ("tolerant" "strained and cold"). Twelve percent of relationships with mothers and 20% with fathers were coded negative. Thirty-five years later the researchers obtained health status based on in-person interviews and review of available medical records. Of the men who described a negative relationship with either their mother or their father, 85–91% had developed cardiovascular disease, duodenal ulcer, and/or alcoholism compared to only 45–50% of those who had described positive relationships.

When assessments of parent–child relationships and parent conflict were made in the same study, researchers see similar effects associated with each. For example, Shaffer, Duszynski, & Thomas (1982) examined data from white male physicians who graduated from medical school between 1948 and 1964 and described their family members' attitudes toward each other as either positive (warm, close, understanding, confiding) or negative (detached, dislike, hurt, high tension). Men who described more negative and less positive family relationships were at increased risk of future cancer, even after controlling for health risk factors such as age, alcohol use, cigarette smoking, being overweight, and serum cholesterol levels.

Repetti, et al. (2002) found evidence that risky families affect children's physical health via cumulative disturbances established during infancy and early childhood in physiologic and neuroendocrine system regulation (i.e., disruptions in sympathetic-adrenomedullary (SAM) reactivity, hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenocortical (HPA) reactivity, and serotonergic functioning). Such disruptions can have effects on organs, including the brain, and on systems, including the immune system. The emerging consensus (Repetti, Taylor, and Seeman, 2002; Troxel & Matthews, 2004) is that the social processes of parent conflict and poor parent-child relationships cause constant stress in the home which chronically activates and thereby dysregulates children's biological stress responses, leading to deterioration of cardiovascular system functioning and hypertension (e.g., Ewart, 1991) and coronary heart disease (e.g., Woodall & Matthews, 1989), and possibly hindering children's acquisition of emotional competence and self-regulatory skills (e.g., Camras, Ribordy, Hill, Martino, Spaccarelli, & Stefani, 1988; Dunn & Brown, 1994; Dunn, Brown, Slomkowski, Tesla, & Youngblade, 1991).

Psychological processes of emotional insecurity accompany this physiological dysregulation. Modern attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969; Karen, 1998) explains how poor parent-child relationships lead to feelings of insecurity, anger, distrust in continued parental support, and low self-worth, which can by themselves chronically activate and dysregulate children's biological stress responses. In Davies and Cummings' (1994) attachment-based theory of parent conflict, parent conflict similarly leads to emotional insecurity because the child fears abandonment by one or both fighting parents. It is easy

to appreciate how quickly emotional insecurity can trigger the biological stress response system (or as it is commonly known, the "fight-or-flight" response system). Simply imagine someone pulling a gun on you, or hearing footsteps behind you late at night in an empty parking structure, and you may notice subtle changes in your breathing, a slight tension in your chest, etc. Simply imagining our security threatened in such acute ways can automatically trigger stress responses.

One of the greatest advances in modern psychology has been to understand how this system functions during the child's normal development in the family. The primary threats to the infant and young child's safety and protection are parent absence, parent unresponsiveness, and parent conflict. The child's system is attuned to detect these things. In acute form, they elicit in children the same shortness of breath, increased blood pressure and heart rate, fear, etc. that we all experience when threatened because they are caused by the instantaneous release of the same powerful hormones. Children in families characterized by dysfunctional parent conflict and unsupportive parent-child relationships experience these threats repeatedly and learn to anticipate them when they are absent. This exposes these children to chronic, low-level doses of these hormones, which is what causes the long-term health problems.

We can now see how the bad news about the effects of divorce on children looks worse than we thought. Both Amato (2003) and Fabricius et al. (2012) found that in their 20's, many children of divorce had damaged relationships with their fathers. Amato compared the rate to intact families; Fabricius related it to parenting time. Together their findings indicate that "parental divorce results in poorer father-child relationships [than in intact families] for about one-third of children [of divorce]" (Amato, 2003, p. 336), and similarly that the 40% of children who had minimal parenting time with their fathers had the most damaged relationships with them as young adults. Both of these findings link up with the lifetime health outcomes of young adults who had reported similarly distant relationships with their parents. Repetti et al. (2002, p. 356) point to the effects of parenting on children's underlying biology, whereby repeatedly adapting to threats and stresses contributes to "the premature physiological aging of the organism that enhances vulnerability to chronic disease and to early mortality in adulthood (McEwen & Stellar, 1993; Seeman et al., 1997)." *Minimal parenting time with fathers thus constitutes a major public health issue.* The data in Figure 1 show that with each increase in parenting time up to and including equal (50%) parenting time, the father-child relationship shows improvement. This suggests that there is no "cut-off" point of a lesser amount of parenting time at which the risk to children's relationships with their fathers ceases. Rather, it suggests that some father-child relationships which might be especially susceptible to risk can benefit from increases (e.g., from 40% to 50% parenting time) which might make little difference in less-risky relationships.

The Good News: What the Public Believes About Equal Parenting Time

There is now a strong consensus among the general public that equal parenting time is best for children. Large majorities favor it in all the locales and among all the demographic groups in the United States and Canada in which this question has been asked, and across several variations in question format. For example, a recent poll in

Canada (which has a custody law similar to most US states) conducted by Nanos Research and commissioned by its Parliament asked, "*Do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or oppose federal and provincial legislation to create a presumption of equal parenting in child custody cases?*" The combined "strongly support" and "somewhat support" vote was 78% (http://www.familylawwebguide.com.au/forum/pg/topicview/misc/4171/index.php&keep_session=2049584127).

In Massachusetts, 85% of voters voted "yes" on a nonbinding proposition that appeared on the 2004 ballot asking whether there should be a "*presumption in child custody cases in favor of joint physical and legal custody, so that the court will order that the children have equal access to both parents as much as possible, except where there is clear and convincing evidence that one parent is unfit, or that joint custody is not possible because of the fault of one of the parents.*" (This was the wording in 5 precincts; different language appeared in the rest of the state, but the vote was very similar for the two wordings http://www.boston.com/news/special/politics/2004_results/general_election/questions_all_by_town.htm)

Fabricius et al. (2010) presented the identical MA language above to adults waiting to be called for jury duty in Tucson, AZ, which constituted a representative sample of the county population, asking them to indicate their agreement on a 7-point Likert scale. Fifty-seven percent chose the strongest level of agreement ("7" on the scale), with another 30% just below that (6 on the scale). There were no significant differences by gender, age, education, income, whether the respondents themselves were currently married, had ever divorced, had children, had paid or received child support, or by their political outlook.

Braver, Ellman, Vortuba, and Fabricius (2011) conducted the most sophisticated public opinion study to date. We questioned whether the popular support that prior studies seemed to show for equal parenting time would persist when lay respondents were given case details. Consequently, we presented lay people with the kinds of facts that raise difficulties and concerns for many judges and custody evaluators. The facts were embedded in hypothetical case summaries, like those a custody evaluator might prepare for a judge, albeit in a relatively simplified form that would be accessible to lay respondents in a reasonable time frame (much as in a long line of studies in psychology and law; see Brewer & Williams, 2005, for examples).

The respondents were from the Pima County (Tucson, Arizona) jury panel. Those summoned to serve on a jury panel are citizens chosen from the voter and driver's license records. Using a computer generated random selection process, the jury panel is chosen so as to represent a representative cross-section of the adult citizens in the county. Of those who are summoned by the county jury commissioner, over 90% eventually appear (Ellman, Braver & MacCoun, 2009). Because exemptions from jury service are only rarely granted and because of stringent enforcement and penalties, Pima County jury pools show less self-selection and bias than jury pools in some other jurisdictions. Of the 817 jurors offered the survey, 252 chose not to take a survey form and the remaining 565 surveys were accepted. Of these 565, 367 were completed and 171 were not completed, most often because the respondent was called for jury service.

Past studies (Ellman, Braver & MacCoun, 2009) using this identical method and jury pool and obtaining approximately this response rate found that the sample responding to the survey matched Census data for the national population in age distribution, level of education achieved, and household income.

Because judges (not jurors) make custodial decisions, we asked participants to imagine they were a judge deciding these hypothetical cases. It is important to note that all cases specified that neither parent wanted equal custody, but were instead each requesting "*as much living time with the children*" as possible because "*each now genuinely feels the children would be better off mostly in their care and not so much in the care of the other parent. They disagree strongly about this.*" In each case there were no issues with parental fitness, or ability to care for the children, or domestic violence. In one hypothetical case the couple was described as having divided the pre-divorce child care exactly equally, in a another the mother had provided 75% of the couple's pre-divorce child care-giving duties, and in the third the father had provided 75% of the couple's pre-divorce child care-giving duties. In all three of these cases, the parents were described as having low conflict:

> "*Since the separation, there has been relatively little conflict between the mother and the father. Both try especially hard never to argue in front of the children. Evidence shows that neither says bad things about the other to the children. Also neither tries to gain the loyalty of the children for themselves nor to undermine the other's authority or relationship with the children. They are both trying to make the best of the current situation.*"

The fourth and fifth hypothetical cases were vague about the split of child care duties, but varied in the amount of parent conflict they portrayed. The parents were described as "*reasonably good parents who are involved in their children's lives about like average families in which both parents work full-time (both M-F, 9-to-5).*" In one case the parents were described as having low conflict (as above). The other case depicted high, mutual conflict:

> "*Both parents have become and remain extremely angry at each other. So, at the present time, there is a great deal of conflict between the parents. Evidence shows that the father and the mother initiate this conflict equally often by starting arguments with the other, mostly regarding the children. They pick these fights in front of the children, and end up saying bad things about the other in front of the children. Neither parent really tries to suppress these arguments. It is clear that each also "bad mouths" the other to the children when the other isn't around. Each parent tries to gain the loyalty of the children while trying to undermine the other parent's authority and relationship with the children.*"

The final two cases portrayed either the mother or the father as solely responsible for instigating and perpetuating the conflict, whereas

> "*evidence shows that the* [other parent] *clearly feels it is best not to fight in front of the children and so tries to suppress* [instigating parent's] *attempts at arguing. In addition he [she] is sure to not say bad things about the* [instigating parent] *to the children or to undermine her [him]. He [she] is trying hard to make the best of the current situation.*"

The possible responses formed a nine-point scale. The amount of time allocated to the father increased as one moved from choice 1 to choice 9, while time allocated to the mother decreased equivalently over the same progression. The midpoint, (5), was labeled "Live equal amounts of time with each parent." Points 1 through 4 specified that the children should "live with the mother," with the father's share of the time described as: (1) minimally or not at all; (2) some; (3) a moderate amount; (4) a lot. Points 6 through 9 called for the children to "live with the father" with an equivalent descriptions of the time allocated to the mother that decreased as one moved from choice 6 to choice 9. Our respondents thus told us the amount of time they thought the children should spend with each parent, given the information presented in the case. The response choices were the same as those used in previous studies of living arrangements (Fabricius & Hall, 2000; Fabricius et al., 2010).

In the first three cases that varied amount of pre-divorce child care, 69% of participants awarded equal parenting time when the parents had shared child care equally during the marriage, and the plurality (47% and 46%, respectively) also awarded equal parenting time when the mother or the father had provided most of the pre-divorce child care. In the next two cases which varied parent conflict, and in which pre-divorce child care was only specified as about like average when both parents work full time, 66% of participants awarded equal parenting time when the parents had low conflict, and 64% awarded equal parenting time when the parents had high conflict. Only when one parent was solely responsible for instigating the conflict between the parents and bad-mouthing the other parent to the child did participants most commonly award more time to the other parent. When the mother instigated the conflict, only 21% of participants awarded her equal parenting time while the plurality (36%) awarded her "moderate time." When the father instigated the conflict, only 4% of participants awarded him equal parenting time while the plurality (41%) awarded him "moderate time. Importantly, in no cases did men and women differ in their likelihood of awarding equal parenting time, nor was there evidence of differences due to nine other demographic variables, including age, education, household income, political outlook, and marriage and divorce history.

This public consensus about equal parenting time revealed in all these surveys is probably best characterized as a cultural value rather than mere opinion, given both its connection to the long-term historical trend toward gender equality, and the evidence for its universality and robustness. Regarding norms of practice, there appears to be a slow trend toward equal parenting time (PT). In our data (Fabricius et al., 2012) collected in 2005-06 in which the students' parents had divorced on average 10 years earlier, about 9% of students reported equal PT (50%). In Wisconsin the percentage of divorced parents with equal PT increased from 15% in 1996-99 to 24% in 2003-04 (Brown & Cancian, 2007). In Washington, the percentage of divorced parents with equal PT was approximately 20% in 2008-09 (George, 2009). In Arizona the percentage of case files specifying equal PT tripled from 5% in 2002 (Venohr & Griffith, 2003) to 15% in 2007 (Venohr & Kaunelis, 2008). The Arizona case files included both divorced and never married parents, which might account for the somewhat lower rate.

The above makes it clear that the practice of equal parenting time lags the consensus about its value. Braver et al. (2011) and Fabricius et al. (2010) discuss the possible complex reasons for the lag. One possibility is a self-fulfilling prophesy

stemming from belief that family courts are biased toward mothers. Belief that the courts have a maternal bias could dissuade fathers from pressing for shared parenting or entice mothers to resist. Fabricius et al. (2010) asked respondents from the Pima County (Tucson, Arizona) jury panel about "the slant of the Arizona legal system regarding divorced parents." Response categories included "very slanted in favor of mothers," "somewhat slanted in favor of mothers," "slanted toward neither mothers nor fathers," "somewhat slanted in favor of fathers," and "very slanted in favor of fathers." Only 16% of citizens thought the family court in AZ was "slanted toward neither mothers nor fathers," while 55% thought it was "somewhat slanted in favor of mothers." Almost no one thought it was slanted to any degree in favor of fathers.

In the Braver, et al. (2011) study discussed above, we asked the jury pool participants not only "What would you decide if you were judge?" but also *"What do you think will happen if the description above was a real family in today's courts and legal environment?"* Citizens thought courts would award equal parenting substantially less often than they themselves would. Regarding the first three cases described above, when the couple was described as having divided the pre-divorce child care equally, only 28% of citizens thought today's courts would order equal parenting time. When the mother was portrayed as having performed the majority of child care, only 21% thought courts would order equal parenting time, and when the father had performed the majority, the figure was 27%. To recall, the respective rates of citizens saying they themselves would order equal parenting time were 69%, 47%, and 46%.

Evidence also exists that divorce attorneys in Maryland, Missouri, Texas, and Washington (Dotterweich & McKinney, 2000) and Arizona (Braver, Cookston, & Cohen, 2002) believe the courts in their areas are biased toward mothers in awarding parenting time. Thus the reason that the practice of equal parenting time lags the consensus about its value, despite much evidence that fathers desire more parenting time (see Fabricius et al., 2010), appears to be that fathers do not bargain harder because of the guidance they receive from attorneys, and their own widespread belief, that the system has a maternal bias.

Better News: What the Public Believes About the Family Courts' Likelihood of Ordering Equal Parenting Time Just Might be Wrong

If the belief that the courts have a maternal bias regarding parenting time contributes indirectly to damaged father-child relationships in young adulthood, with their attendant negative health consequences, then it is important for the public to know whether the bias is real. Stamps (2002) found evidence that judges in four Southern states may have a maternal bias. But other evidence exists that this may not always be the case.

Evidence has been available though not widely known for a long time that if divorced fathers persisted in bringing their cases to court they received more parenting time than if they settled early in the process. Maccoby and Mnookin (1992) gathered data from court records in the early 1980's in northern California about when in the legal process parents' cases were finalized. The early waves of their Stanford Child Custody Study are publically available (www.socio.com/srch/summary/afda/fam25–27.htm). I retrieved the legal process data in relation to the four major types of residential custody

parents obtained (sole mother, sole father, joint, and split between siblings) Table 1 shows that among the 471 parents whose court records showed that the agreement was uncontested by either parent, only 79 (17%) obtained joint physical custody. The rate was essentially unchanged (18.2%) when the parents initially contested the agreement but settled without using any court services. However, the rate rose to 25% for those who used mediation, and peaked at 43% among those who obtained a child custody evaluation. The rate remained high (37%) for those who either went to trial but settled, or for whom the judge decided.

Maccoby and Mnookin (1992) also gathered data during individual pre-decree interviews with parents about the residential custody each one wanted ("what he or she would personally like in terms of residential custody, regardless of what in fact had been or would be requested in the legal proceedings," p. 99). I selected only those contested cases where the mother wanted sole residential custody but the father wanted joint residential custody. Table 2 shows those cases divided into those in which the mother got what she wanted (sole maternal residential custody) versus the father got what he wanted (joint residential custody). Similar to the overall findings above, the rate of joint residential custody among this type of contested case was 27% when the parents initially contested the agreement but settled without using any court services and 20% when they used mediation, but rose to 47% among those who obtained a child custody evaluation and 50% for those who either went to trial but settled, or for whom the judge decided.

These findings suggest that it was a mistake in the past for fathers who wanted joint residential custody not to pursue their cases into the later stages of the legal process. Very few fathers did so; for example, Table 1 shows that only 35 out of 933 cases (4%) went to trial. Recent data that I have obtained directly from judges in Arizona suggests that it might be even more of a mistake now for fathers who want equal parenting time not to pursue their cases to trial if necessary. During a Southern Arizona Regional Judicial Family Law Conference in 2010 at which I was a presenter, I polled the family court judges and commissioners in attendance for their anonymous responses to two of the hypothetical cases above that my colleagues and I had previously used with the public (Braver, et al., 2011). I had obtained human subjects Institutional Review Board approval and consent from participants to do this for research purposes. Approximately 90% of the judges hearing child custody cases in Arizona's second largest county (Pima County, which includes Tucson) were in attendance, in addition to judges and commissioners from eight other AZ counties. The cases I used were the fourth (low-conflict) and fifth (high, mutual-conflict) cases described above. In consultation with one of the organizers of the conference I modified these cases slightly by describing them as "temporary orders hearings," in order to make these short, hypothetical cases realistic for family court judges, who are used to having more information when making final decisions. The exact wording of the questions and instructions are in the Appendix.

The participants read the instructions and answered the questions privately before the presentation began. I asked for feedback about the hypothetical cases, and the participants indicated that they felt they were realistic enough to elicit valid responses. Upon public presentation of the compiled responses at the end of the presentation, we learned that about 90% of the judges and commissioners said they would grant equal parenting time in each case (Family A and Family B, see Appendix). The participants

applauded each other upon seeing the results. The difference between what the judges and commissioners said they would award and what the public (i.e., members of the Pima County jury panel) thought the courts would award in the identical cases was striking. Only one-third of the public thought courts would order equal parenting time in the low-conflict case (Family A), and less than one-third thought they would do so in the high, mutual-conflict case (Family B; not reported in Braver, et al., 2011). As noted above, 66% of the public said they would award equal parenting time in the low conflict case, and 64% said they would in the high conflict case. This question format using hypothetical cases representing judges' daily professional experience produced more responses from judges that reflected the cultural value placed on equal parenting time than from members of the lay public. This suggests that public skepticism about courts' willingness to award equal parenting, in Arizona at least, may be unwarranted.

In passing, it might seem surprising that these judges would order equal parenting time in cases of high, mutual-conflict. But when dealing with the question of whether parenting time should be limited in high-conflict families, courts should consider the potential risk of damaging parent-child relationships by reducing parenting time. There is evidence that even in divorced families with frequent and severe parent conflict more parenting time with the father is associated with improvements in the father-child relationship (Fabricius & Luecken, 2007; Fabricius et al., 2012), or at least is not harmful (Buchanan, Maccoby & Dornbush, 1996), and there is evidence that children with equal parenting time in very high-conflict families referred to court services for custody disputes did not have worse adjustment than those in sole custody (Johnston, Kline & Tschann, 1989). Although it is seldom if ever acknowledged, the evidence is weak and contradictory that more parenting time is harmful in high-conflict families (reviewed in Fabricius et al, 2010; Fabricius et al., 2012). Limiting parenting time when there is parent conflict limits the amount of interaction children can have with that parent, which risks undermining the parent-child relationship and risks making those children doubly vulnerable (due to the reduced parenting time and the presence of parent conflict) to long-term damage to their physical health. Courts have better options to deal with children's exposure to parent conflict than reducing parenting time, such as schedules with fewer transitions, or transitions that do not require face-to-face parent interactions. The evidence suggests that parent conflict alone should not be the basis for limiting parenting time; rather, the data indicate that courts should weigh the option of increasing parenting time in high-conflict families. Direct evidence that improved parent-child relationships can counteract some harmful effects of parent conflict is available (Fainsilber-Katz & Gottman, 1997; Sandler, Miles, Cookston, & Braver, 2008; Vandewater & Lansford, 1998).

Conclusions: Translating Cultural Change into Policy

Translating the newly-evolved cultural values and norms regarding equal parenting time into public policy raises concerns among mental health professionals and the legal community about how to accommodate diversity of family circumstances and individual differences. One concern is that "equal parenting time" allows a limited number of weekly or monthly routines, the practicality and feasibility of which may

depend not only on family circumstances but also on children's developmental levels. Another concern involves the credentials of some parents for equal parenting time – parents who, for example, are disinterested, narcissistically absorbed individuals who ignore the children unless it fits with their needs, or who lack adequate parenting skills, are angry, harsh, and rigid, or who suffer from mental illness or depression or alcoholism.

Custody policy reform could both encourage equal parenting time and still direct a court to consider these other important things. To illustrate one approach, I will refer to several relevant sections of the newly-revised custody statute in Arizona. Arizona Senate Bill 1127 effective January 1, 2013 (AZ Revised Statues Title 25-401 to 415 http://www.azleg.state.az.us/ArizonaRevisedStatutes.asp?Title=25) is among the strongest in favor of a rebuttable presumption for shared parenting in the U.S. The Governor's signing statement underscored that the intent of the law "is to limit one-sided custody decisions and to encourage as much shared parent-child time as possible for the positive development of the child." (May 9, 2012). There was wide public announcement of the new law, a necessary condition for an impact on parents who make minimal use of legal and court services and "bargain in the shadow of the law." In cooperation with the Maricopa County (Phoenix) Bar Association, we polled all member family law attorneys who said that before the law change they advised clients that the prospects were 50% that "good fathers" could obtaining equal parenting time, but now most say the prospects are 80% or 90%.

First, the statute begins with a new state public policy, adopted in 2010, that identifies children's best interests with substantial, frequent, meaningful, and continuing parenting time, "absent evidence to the contrary." The current policy reads:

§ 25-103. Purposes of title; application of title

B. It also is the declared public policy of this state and the general purpose of this title that absent evidence to the contrary, it is in a child's best interest:

1. To have substantial, frequent, meaningful and continuing parenting time with both parents.

2. To have both parents participate in decision-making about the child.

Second, the heart of the 2013 reform is the following section that directs parents who are in dispute to each submit a proposed parenting plan, and directs the court, after considering any evidence to the contrary, to adopt a parenting plan that provides for shared legal decision-making and maximized parenting time with each parent:

25-403.02 Parenting plans
A. If the child's parents cannot agree on a plan for legal decision-making or parenting time, each parent shall submit a proposed parenting plan.
B. Consistent with the child's best interests in section 25-403 and sections 25-403.03 [domestic violence], 25-403.04 [drug offensives]and 25-403.05 [sexual

offenses], the court shall adopt a parenting plan that provides for both parents to share legal decision-making regarding their child and that maximizes their respective parenting time. The court shall not prefer a parent's proposed plan because of the parent's or child's sex.

This section (***25-403.02***) also includes instructions about what the proposed parenting plans are to include. Section ***25-403*** includes the best interests factors which are substantially the same ones that have been in custody statutes since the adoption of the Child's Best Interests Standard. They are no longer used, however, to determine which parent will be "the custodial parent," but rather to alert the court to reasons for not maximizing the child's parenting time with each parent.

25-403. Legal decision-making; parenting time; best interests of child
A. The court shall determine legal decision-making and parenting time, either originally or on petition for modification, in accordance with the best interests of the child. The court shall consider all factors relevant to the child's physical and emotional well-being, including:
1. The past, present and potential future relationship between the parent and the child.
2. The interaction and interrelationship of the child with the child's parent or parents, the child's siblings and any other person who may significantly affect the child's best interests.
3. The child's adjustment to home, school and community.
4. If the child is of suitable age and maturity, the wishes of the child as to legal decision-making and parenting time.
5. The mental and physical health of all individuals involved.
6. Which parent is more likely to allow the child substantial, frequent, meaningful and continuing contact with the other parent. This paragraph does not apply if the court determines that a parent is acting in good faith to protect the child from witnessing an act of domestic violence or being a victim of domestic violence or child abuse.
7. Whether one parent intentionally misled the court to cause an unnecessary delay, to increase the cost of litigation or to persuade the court to give a legal decision-making or a parenting time preference to that parent.
8. Whether there has been domestic violence or child abuse pursuant to section 25-403.03.
9. The nature and extent of coercion or duress used by a parent in obtaining an agreement regarding legal decision-making or parenting time.
10. Whether a parent has complied with chapter 3, article 5 of this title.
11. Whether either parent was convicted of an act of false reporting of child abuse or neglect under section 13-2907.02.

Additional factors specific to legal decision-making are specified in the following section (***25-403.01***):

25-403.01. <u>Sole and joint legal decision-making and parenting time</u>
A. In awarding legal decision-making, the court may order sole legal decision-making or joint legal decision-making.
B. In determining the level of decision-making that is in the child's best interests, the court shall consider the factors prescribed in section 25-403.01, subsection a and all of the following:
1. The agreement or lack of an agreement by the parents regarding joint legal decision-making.
2. Whether a parent's lack of an agreement is unreasonable or is influenced by an issue not related to the best interests of the child.
3. The past, present and future abilities of the parents to cooperate in decision-making about the child to the extent required by the order of joint legal decision-making.
4. Whether the joint legal decision-making arrangement is logistically possible.
C. An order for sole legal decision-making does not allow the parent designated as sole legal decision-maker to alter unilaterally a court-ordered parenting time plan.
D. A parent who is not granted sole or joint legal decision-making is entitled to reasonable parenting time to ensure that the minor child has substantial, frequent, meaningful and continuing contact with the parent unless the court finds, after a hearing, that parenting time would seriously endanger the child's physical, mental, moral or emotional health.

To summarize, courts are given direction to consider substantial, frequent, meaningful, and continuing parenting time with both parents to be in children's best interests, absent evidence to the contrary. Such evidence includes exposure to violence and abuse as well as the typical best interests factors that might affect the child's physical and emotional well-being. In the absence of such evidence, courts are directed to maximize the child's parenting time with both parents. For example, the court would consider reduced parenting time for a parent who has had no prior relationship with the child, or has significant health issues, or if maximized parenting time would interfere with the child's school activities, or if it would expose the child to adverse interactions with others, or if the child has reason to not want it, or if that parent is likely to try to undermine the other parent, or if the parent has moved too far away. Safeguards such as these types of procedures should allow communities to reform child custody statutes in order to bring them more in line with the new cultural consensus and the new scientific evidence on equal parenting time, while remaining assured that courts still have discretion in cases where it might not be appropriate. The benefits to children and society of the success of these efforts will be substantial.

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Table 1

Number and Percentage of Families at each Level in the Legal Process before Settling

Who Were Awarded each Final Residential Custody Arrangement in the Stanford Child

Custody Study

|	*Final Residential Custody*				
.Level in the Legal Process before Settling	*Mother*	*Father*	*Joint*	*Split*	*Total*
Uncontested	332 70%	45 10%	79 17%	15 3%	471 50%
Contested but settled	193 71%	20 7%	50 18%	11 4%	274 29%
Mediation needed	66 63%	6 6%	26 25%	6 6%	104 11%
Evaluation needed	22 45%	4 8%	21 43%	2 4%	49 5%
Trial needed or Judge decided	15 43%	5 14%	13 37%	2 6%	35 4%
Total	628 67%	80 9%	189 20%	36 4%	933 100%

Table 2

For Those Contested Cases in Which the Mother Wanted Sole Residential Custody and the Father Wanted Joint Residential Custody, the Number and Percentage of Families at each Level in the Legal Process before Settling Who Were Awarded each Final Residential Custody Arrangement in the Stanford Child Custody Study

	Final Residential Custody		
.Level in Legal Process before Settling	Sole to mother	Joint	*Total*
Contested but settled	54 73%	20 27%	74 60%
Mediation needed	20 80%	5 20%	25 20%
Evaluation needed	8 53%	7 47%	15 12%
Trial needed or Judge decided	5 50%	5 50%	10 8%
Total	87 70%	37 30%	124 100%

Figure Captions

Figure 1. The Relation between the Amounts of Parenting Time per Month (4 Weeks) Students Had with Their Fathers and the Emotional Security of Their Relationships with Their Fathers in Young Adulthood (Reprinted with permission from Oxford University Press from Fabricius, W. V., Sokol, K. R., Diaz, P., & Braver, S. L. (2012). Parenting time, parent conflict, parent-child relationships, and children's physical health. In Kuehnle, K. & Drozd, L. (Eds.) *Parenting Plan Evaluations: Applied Research for the Family Court*. Oxford University Press.)
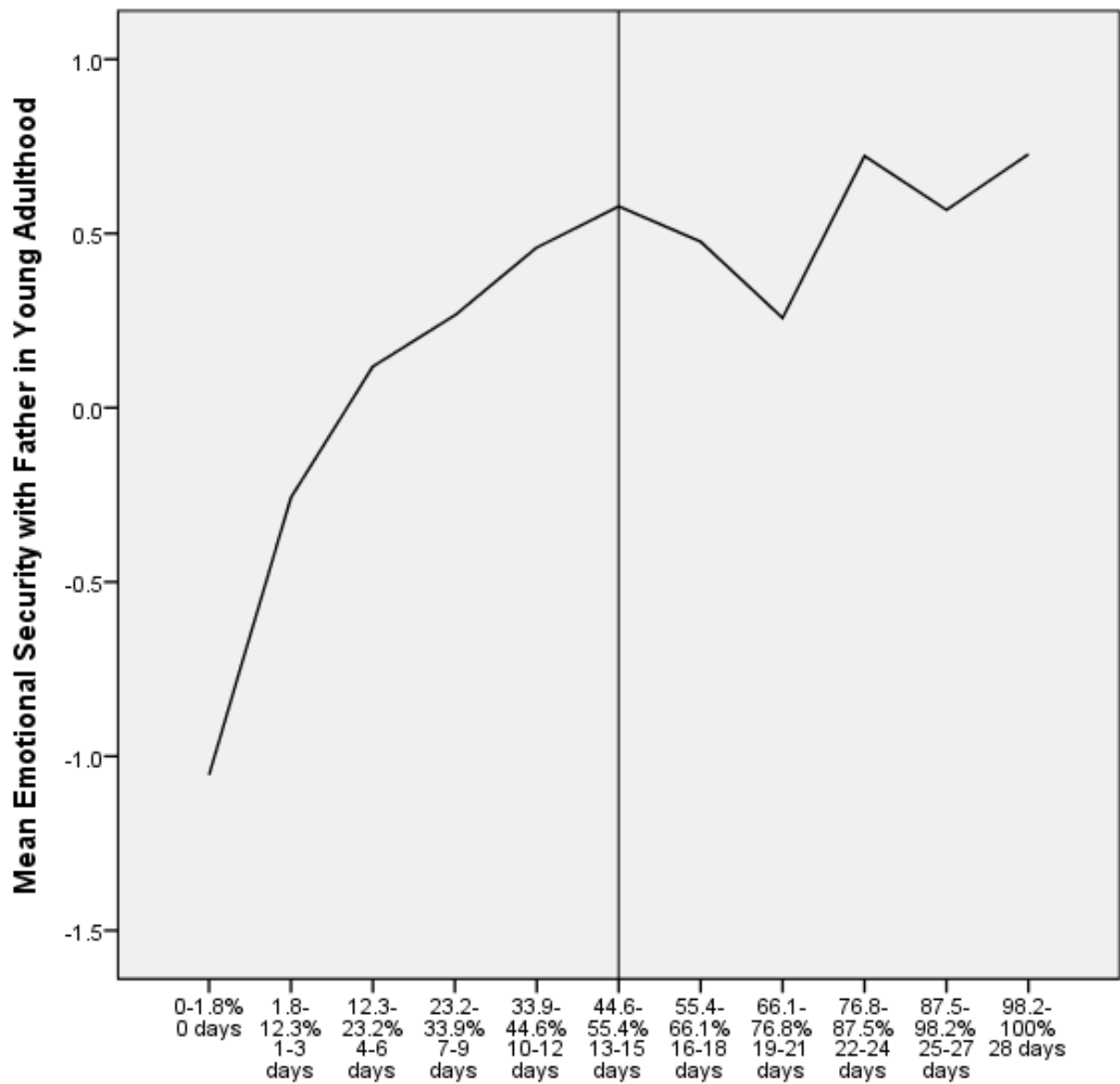
Parenting Time with Father (percent and number of days per 28)

Appendix

We ask you to put yourself into the role of the judge in the following hypothetical divorce cases in which the two parents don't agree about what the living arrangements should be for their two school-aged children. Please read the following cases and indicate what you would most likely decide about the children's living arrangements.

For Families A and B, this is a hearing for temporary orders for parenting time. The hearing has lasted 1 hour and this is all the information that you have available to you at this time. We realize that at the final hearing, you would have a lot more information, and would have to make a detailed ruling (in terms of vacation splits, times of arrival/departure, specific days, etc). For these 2 temporary orders scenarios, we are giving you a simplified, qualitative response scale.

Families A and B have characteristics #1 - #3 in common:

1. In each family, the evidence presented to you shows that in many respects, this appears to be a pretty average, normal family. For example, there are no indications about emotional or mental problems, drug or alcohol problems, domestic violence or physical or sexual abuse on the part of either parent. There is nothing suggesting that either one lacks "fitness" as a parent. Most of the marriage was without unusual conflict and the family life was quite average. The two children both appear to be normally adjusted, doing neither particularly well nor particularly poorly in school and otherwise. Additional evidence shows that both parents deeply love the two kids and are both reasonably good parents who are involved in their children's lives about like average families in which both parents work full-time (both M-F, 9-to-5).

2. In each family, the marriage became lost when both parents began to feel that the other was not living up to expectations as a husband or wife. They decided to seek marriage counseling, but it did not help or change either person's mind about giving up on the marriage. So the divorce is proceeding.

3. Each parent genuinely feels the children would be better off mostly in their care and not so much in the care of the other parent. They really disagree about this, and as a result are asking you, the judge, to decide for them, understanding that each parent now wants as much living time with the children as you see fit to grant. Each one would be able and willing to make whatever adjustments to their work and living situation are necessary to accommodate whatever level of living time with the children you, as judge, see fit to order.

FAMILY A – LOW CONFLICT

This is what is <u>different</u> about Family A:

    4. The parents have recently separated. THERE HAS BEEN RELATIVELY LITTLE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE MOTHER AND THE FATHER. Both try especially hard never to argue in front of the children. Evidence shows that neither says bad things about the other to the children. Also neither tries to gain the loyalty of the children for themselves nor to undermine the other's authority or relationship with the children. They are both trying to make the best of the current situation.

Question 1:

I would most likely order that the children in Family A:

_____*Live with mother, see father minimally or not at all*
_____*Live with mother, see father some*
_____*Live with mother, see father a moderate amount*
_____*Live with mother, see father a lot*
_____*Live equal amounts of time with each parent.*
_____*Live with father, see mother a lot*
_____*Live with father, see mother a moderate amount*
_____*Live with father, see mother some*
_____*Live with father, see mother minimally or not at all*

FAMILY B – HIGH MUTUAL CONFLICT

This is what is <u>different</u> about Family B:

    4. The parents have recently separated. BOTH PARENTS HAVE BECOME AND REMAIN EXTREMELY ANGRY AT EACH OTHER. So, at the present time, there is a great deal of conflict between the parents. Evidence shows that both parents typically initiate this conflict equally, by frequently starting arguments with the each other, mostly regarding the children. They both pick these fights in front of the children, and end up saying bad things about each other in front of the children. It is clear that EACH ONE also "bad mouths" the other to the children when the other parent isn't around. EACH ONE tries to gain the loyalty of the children while trying to undermine the other's authority and relationship with the children.

Question 2:

I would most likely order that the children in Family B:

_____*Live with mother, see father minimally or not at all*
_____*Live with mother, see father some*
_____*Live with mother, see father a moderate amount*
_____*Live with mother, see father a lot*
_____*Live equal amounts of time with each parent.*
_____*Live with father, see mother a lot*
_____*Live with father, see mother a moderate amount*
_____*Live with father, see mother some*
_____*Live with father, see mother minimally or not at all*