

**SHARED PARENTING AGREEMENTS AFTER MARITAL SEPARATION:
THE ROLE OF NARCISSISM AND CHILD-CENTEREDNESS**

by

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The Role of Narcissism and Child-Centeredness

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ABSTRACT

Although marital separation usually involves the ending of an intimate relationship between two adults, most separated parents continue to share mutual concerns about the upbringing of their children after the marriage is over. This study examined the characteristics of 16 parent pairs who were able to come to mutual agreement about their parenting plans after separation, in comparison to 16 parent pairs who disagreed about parenting arrangements. The focus of this comparison was the parents' self- versus child-centeredness. It was expected that disagreed parents would be more narcissistic and self-centered than agreed parents, less able to separate their own needs from those of their children, and less able to empathize with children's concerns. The sample of 64 separated parents completed individual interviews and a battery of self-report measures designed to evaluate the "child-centeredness" dimension of parenting. The test battery included the Narcissistic Personality Inventory, the Selfism Scale, the Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory, and the Interpersonal Reactivity Index.

The data were reduced to a set of eight variables to reflect the hypothesized child-centeredness dimension: narcissism, self-centeredness, perspective-taking ability, empathic concern, personal distress, empathic parenting attitudes, narcissistic parenting beliefs, and relationship satisfaction. A correlational and principal components analysis indicated that parents' scores on these eight variables were interrelated in theory-consistent directions. As expected, the results of a multiple regression analysis revealed that the agreed parent pairs were more child-centered than the disagreed parent pairs ($p < .01$), and that ex-spouses' averaged scores on the set of eight child-centeredness variables accounted for 43% of the variance in predicting shared parenting agreement.

The results are discussed with reference to theories of narcissism and object relations psychology. It is concluded that child-centeredness may be an important dimension in understanding the process of shared parenting. In the context of custody and access

determinations, the concept of child-centered parenting may be useful to clinicians assisting the courts in the interpretation of the "Best Interests of the Child" criterion. Finally, the limitations of the current study are outlined, and future research directions are suggested.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Overview.....	1
Divorce and Custody in Historical Context.....	1
The Psychological Sequelae of Marital Transitions	19
Custody and Shared Parenting.....	28
Child-Centeredness, Empathy and Parenting.....	37
Narcissism as a Failure of Empathy	50
Hypotheses	64
Method.....	67
Research Participants	67
Measures.....	68
Procedure.....	73
Missing Data	76
Results	77
Overview.....	77
Description of Research Participants.....	77
Tests of Hypotheses.....	90
Discussion	111
Overview.....	111
Shared Parenting After Divorce: Describing the Context.....	111
Child-Centeredness as a Psychological Dimension.....	127
Child-Centeredness and Shared Parenting Agreement	133

Limitations of the Present Study.....	138
Conclusions and Implications for Research and Practice.....	140
Final Note.....	142
Appendices	144
List of Appendices.....	144
Appendix A.....	145
Appendix B.....	146
Appendix C.....	147
Appendix D.....	154
Appendix E.....	164
Appendix F.....	165
Appendix G.....	169
Appendix H.....	170
References.....	171

LIST OF TABLES

(1) Number of Children Per Family and Sex Distribution of Total Number of Children for Agreed and Disagreed Groups	78
(2) Summary Table for Length of Relationship, Initiation of Separation and Time Since Separation for Agreed and Disagreed Groups.....	80
(3) Percentages of Parent Pairs with Type of Custody Arrangements	83
(4) Percentages of Children's Time Spent with Mother and Father for Agreed and Disagreed Groups.....	84
(5) Highest Level of Education Completed by Mothers and Fathers in Agreed and Disagreed Groups.....	86
(6) Percentages of Parents Reporting History of Abuse in Relationship with Ex-Partner for Agreed and Disagreed Mothers and Fathers.....	87
(7) Current Relational Status of Mothers and Fathers.....	89
(8) Reported Satisfaction Within Five Domains of Life Functioning for Agreed and Disagreed Mothers and Fathers.....	90
(9) Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) and Selfism Scale (NS) Scores for Mothers, Fathers and Ex-couples in Agreed and Disagreed Groups.....	92
(10) Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) and Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI) for Mothers, Fathers and Ex-Couples in Agreed and Disagreed Groups.....	93
(11) Experimental Narcissistic Parenting Item and Total Scores for Mothers, Fathers and Ex-Couples in Agreed and Disagreed Groups.....	94
(12) Correlational Matrix for Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) Subscale and Total Scores.....	96
(13) Summary Table for Three Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI) Scales.....	98

(14) Correlational Matrix for Nine Experimental Narcissistic Parenting (ENP) Item Scores and ENP Total Scores.....	99
(15) Summary Table for Multivariate Analysis of Variance on Eight Child-Centeredness Variables for Agreedness (Between) and Sex of Parent (Within)	102
(16) Correlational Matrix for Ex-Couples' Averaged Scores on Eight Child-Centeredness Variables.....	103
(17) Unrotated Factor Loadings for Principal Components Analysis for Eight Child- Centeredness Variables.....	105
(18) Summary Table for Multiple Regression Analysis on Agreedness with Set of Eight Child-Centeredness Variables.....	106
(19) Discriminant Function Analysis - Classification of Agreed and Disagreed Parents with Set of Eight Child-Centeredness Variables.....	108
(20) Discriminant Function Analysis - Classification of Agreed and Disagreed Parents with Set of Three Child-Centeredness Variables.....	110

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview

The purpose of this dissertation is to contribute to our understanding of how mothers and fathers share the parenting of their children after a separation or divorce. In particular, this study examines the characteristics of parents and families that are associated with the arrangement of mutually agreeable shared parenting plans after a marriage break-up. Such "agreed" parents are compared with "disagreed" parents (i.e., ex-spouses who do not successfully negotiate and maintain a shared parenting plan). The focus of this comparison is the parents' capacity to take the child's perspective, to separate their adult needs from those of their children, and to respond empathically to the child's concerns. It is expected that this "child-centering" capacity will differentiate agreed and disagreed parents in theoretically and practically meaningful terms.

Divorce and Custody in Historical Context

The legal statutes that govern divorce and custody provide a necessary context for understanding how separated and divorced parents try to share the parenting of their children. Current family law provides a snapshot of society's contemporary view of marriage, divorce and custody, as well as acting as a rich repository of how our roles and rights as men and women, fathers and mothers, and sons and daughters have evolved over the course of history.

Marriage and Divorce: Past and Present. From a legal perspective marriage is a contract between two parties which specifies their respective rights, privileges and obligations (Irving & Benjamin, 1987). Historically, this contract granted most rights and privileges to husbands, while assigning most of the obligations to wives. For example, until recently marriages could be terminated by men, in some cases through the mutual consent of both spouses, but never on women's initiative alone. The male prerogative in matters of divorce was the rule in Ancient Rome and continues to be a reality in various cultural and religious groups today. In some African tribal groups divorce is effected when the husband returns his wife to her shamed family, together with

the dowry received at the time of the marriage. Similarly, for most peoples of the Muslim faith, a husband may repudiate a wife at will (Irving & Benjamin, 1987).

As late as the eighth century all that was required to secure a divorce was that a clerk or notary certify that the couple was no longer married. The rise to power of the Church of Rome in the tenth century brought drastic change to the practice of marriage and divorce. Marriage was declared a sacrament and church authorities claimed the exclusive right to regulate matrimonial matters. As extensions of the power and authority of the church, ecclesiastic courts promoted a moralistic conception of marriage and divorce that continues to colour legal practices today. Within the confines of the ecclesiastical courts a physical separation "à mensâ et thoro" (without freedom to remarry) was permitted only under extraordinary circumstances (e.g., extreme physical cruelty), and a divorce "à vinculo" (absolute dissolution of marriage) was unattainable. The church reserved the right to retroactively declare a marital union as invalid, however; these annulments were rare, expensive, and time-consuming (Irving & Benjamin, 1987).

When the ecclesiastical courts became overburdened with divorce petitions during the sixteenth century, the right to authenticate divorces on grounds set out by the church was delegated to secular courts. By the seventeenth century it was possible, albeit difficult, for a man to obtain a divorce "à vinculo". The cumbersome and expensive procedure for the husband was to first obtain an ecclesiastical order of separation based on adultery, then to successfully prosecute his wife's lover in civil court, and finally to be granted divorce decree by Parliament. By the early 1800s the key elements of legal divorce practices as they operate in North America today were well in place: civil court jurisdiction as opposed to church authority over divorce was established, the principle of marital offences or "fault" derived from ecclesiastic conceptions was maintained as the legal basis of divorce, and the adversarial nature of divorce proceedings was emerging by virtue of the need to establish fault in divorce proceedings.

The transition from ecclesiastical to secular processing of divorce cases was reenacted in North America among early British, French and Spanish settlers. Statutory complications arose in Canada through the British North America Act in 1867. Provinces with divorce laws prior to joining

dominion were permitted to establish their own civil courts for divorce proceedings, whereas provinces without such laws (Ontario, Quebec, Prince Edward Island) were forced to process divorce cases through Parliament in Ottawa. Similarly in the United States individual state legislatures decided on grounds for divorce based on their unique cultures and histories (Irving & Benjamin, 1987).

While the notion of fault continued to play an integral role in divorce proceedings in all jurisdictions within North America, there were different standards of fault for men and women. In Canada the Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 proclaimed that men could petition for divorce on the grounds of adultery alone, but that women had to demonstrate at least one other ground in addition to adultery (McKie, Prentice & Reed, 1983). It was not until 1925 that adultery by itself became sufficient grounds for both sexes to initiate divorce action. Until the 1930s women first had to find their estranged husbands and then were obliged to initiate divorce proceedings in the province where they found them. Child support from estranged husbands became mandatory in 1922, and desertion was added as grounds for divorce in 1943 (Irving & Benjamin, 1987). Today divorce statutes officially and explicitly recognize women as equal partners with men in divorce. To this day some Canadian statutes include clauses to "abolish the unity of legal personality" (e.g., Ontario Family Law Act, 1986). This means that spouses are no longer legally responsible to each other.

By the 1960s and 1970s there was a great deal of dissatisfaction in the English-speaking world with the notion of "fault" as the basis for divorce. In 1986 Canadian divorce legislation (Divorce Act, 1986) was revised to broaden the grounds for divorce to include a no-fault provision and to reduce the three-year separation period to one year. The province of Ontario abolished a previous distinction between marital and nonmarital property in divorce-related division of property and assets to recognize the contribution of the homemaker (Ontario Family Law Act, 1986).

Thus history documents a gradual and reluctant return to the earliest basis for divorce, the desire of one (now without gender bias) or both parties to dissolve the relationship irrespective of the reason. While there is widespread support for no-fault notions of divorce in most English-

speaking countries in the world, divorce statutes in both Canada and the United States retain the notion of fault by including grounds for divorce alongside no-fault clauses. Irving and Benjamin (1987) argue that the desire to divorce after commitment to marriage for life is still seen by many legislative and judicial actors as sinful and deserving of punishment:

"...Thus the adversarial system by its statutes and proceedings casts marital dissolution, at least some of the time, as a morality play in which there are innocent and guilty, winners and losers ..." (p. 24)

Prior to 1960 divorce was a relatively rare event in North America (Bloom, Asher & White, 1978; McKie et al. 1983). However, the rate of divorce, particularly divorce involving families with children, rose drastically between 1965 and 1979 (Hetherington, Stanley-Hagan & Anderson, 1989). Since 1979 in the United States (Hernandez, 1988), and 1983 in Canada (Irving & Benjamin, 1987), the divorce rate has slowly started to decline. Despite the fact that the divorce rate in North America appears to be leveling off, over an average couple's lifetime there is nevertheless a 35% chance of divorce in Canada, and a 49% chance of divorce in the United States (Irving & Benjamin, 1987). In 1989 alone, the most recent year for which population statistics are available, 80,716 divorces were granted in Canada, up 1.1% from 1988 (Statistics Canada, 1990). Further it is estimated that between 35 and 45 percent of North American children born in the late 1970s to early 1980s will experience their parents' divorce and their custodial parents' remarriage within an average of five years (Glick & Lin, 1986; Wallerstein, 1985). Thus because 64% of divorced mothers and 76% of divorced fathers remarry (Statistics Canada, 1989), and the divorce rate in second marriages is higher than in first marriages, many children live through a series of marital transitions and household rearrangements after their parents' initial separation and divorce (Hetherington et al., 1989).

Child Custody Determinations: Past and Present. Historians, such as Aries (1962), have suggested that the recognition of childhood as a distinct phase of life is a relatively recent event in Western history. A sensitivity to the needs of children has increasingly influenced our conception of family life and, more recently, our thinking about divorce and child custody determinations.

Under Roman and English law mothers and children were viewed as property over which the father had complete control (Gardner, 1986; Roman & Haddad, 1978). After a divorce fathers retained custody of the children without question and with rare exception (Ricks, 1984; Weithorn, 1987). Paternal dominance in child custody continued to be the "natural" rule until the rise of feudalism in the Middle Ages nearly 14 centuries later. In service of enriching his holdings, the feudal lord chose husbands for his female vassals; the children resulting from these marriages then belonged to him, and not to the biological father. Through the influence of the feudal lords and the church, fathers were accorded the legal status of "paterfamilias"; while this indisputably helped the noble class to extend their power through multiplying households, it meant very little in the life of a poor man. Children of commoners were sent away from their homes to pursue apprenticeships by the age of six or seven. Learning was seen as secondary to labor and, like their mothers, children had duties and obligations, but no rights.

As families became more differentiated from the larger community during the Elizabethan period, the family came to be recognized not only for its economic significance, but also for its social value (Irving & Benjamin, 1987). Children's needs for care and education began to be appreciated, and mothers gained recognition for their importance to child care and development. However, the fathers' position of dominance and control remained unchallenged. Under both English common law and the French civil code mothers were not permitted to own property, and thus had no basis on which to argue for the custody of their children. Further, if mothers left the matrimonial home with their children, they had no legal grounds for claiming child support; fathers were absolved of all responsibilities toward their wayward wives and children. Yet under the umbrella of "parens patriae" the Chancellor's court became responsible for the unprotected. For this reason "poor laws" permitted the parish to be reimbursed for the expense of taking care of fatherless families. Thus the legal notion of "parens patriae" constituted the basis upon which the courts acquired the authority to intervene in the relationship between parents and their children (Irving & Benjamin, 1987).

In the 1800s the industrial revolution brought massive and rapid changes to the structure of society . Increasing gender role segregation within the family typically forced fathers out to work while leaving mothers at home with the children. This family arrangement encouraged the view that a "natural" bond existed between mothers and children. The mother's position, however, remained weak during this time, and even in the rare case where she was awarded custody, the father was absolved of all financial responsibility for the children (Ricks, 1984).

After children became economic liabilities with the development of child labour laws in the early 1900s, fathers appeared to become somewhat less resistant to mothers' custody petitions (Ramos, 1979). The psychoanalytic movement further stressed the importance of the early experiences in the context of the mother-child relationship. Eventually mothers came to be viewed as the natural custodians as exemplified in a landmark court decision in 1925, "The Tender Years Presumption" ["a mother is the natural custodian of a child of tender years (less than seven years old)"]. This swung the pendulum in favour of maternal claims (Gardner, 1987).

Since the 1960s the changing roles of men and women have been mirrored in custody and visitation laws (Wallerstein, 1985). Concerns about sex discrimination, the movement of mothers into the workforce, and the emergence of no-fault divorce have influenced courts to shift gradually from the presumption of maternal custody toward greater equality in the claims of mothers and fathers (Landau, Bartoletti & Mesbur, 1987; Ricks, 1984). Today custody decisions tend to be based more on the needs of the child - "the Best Interests of the Child Criterion" -, than the rights of the parents:

"Generally, neither parent is now presumed to have a superior right to the child.

Rather the prevalent standard requires a determination of what will most effectively enhance the growth and development of the child from a physical, emotional, and moral standpoint" (Wyer, Gaylor & Grove, 1987; p.7).

This situation has set the stage for a proliferation of custody disputes (Gardner, 1986; Zarski, Knight & Zarski, 1985) and a concomitant search for standards and guidelines to govern the "Best Interests of the Child Criterion" (Hauser, 1985). Although the intention of this new criterion is to

address the sexist implications of previous custody statutes, the "Tender Years Presumption" continues to exert its forces, and mothers are still awarded custody in 90% of the cases (Hetherington et al., 1989). Nevertheless, fathers are becoming increasingly successful in challenging existing custody arrangements. For example in 1985, 32% of Canadian fathers who petitioned for custody had their requests granted by the courts (Statistics Canada, 1989).

The gradual shift from an emphasis on parents' rights to an emphasis on the children's best interests over this past century marks a radical change in the history of child custody adjudication and in our thinking about families - even if this principle is not always enacted by judicial forces.

"Throughout much of the last two millenia children existed in law merely as reflections of their parents' concerns - as demands on their resources, as workers, and of course as assets or property ... what was best for the child was simply not seen as especially relevant ... "

(Irving & Benjamin, 1987, pp.35-36).

For the first time in history children are being seen as having rights and privileges separate and distinct from those of their parents.

While history demonstrates a gradual shift from paternal to maternal dominance in child custody claims, the presumption that custody is an "either-or" decision (i.e., custody to either parent, but not to both parents) has persisted throughout (Irving & Benjamin, 1987). However, in keeping with the North American movement toward greater sharing of parental rights and responsibilities during marriage, there has recently been an increased interest in sharing the parental role even after a marriage breakdown (Landau et al., 1987). Developmental research affirming that adequate parenting may be provided by either or both spouses (e.g., Wallerstein, 1985), and that children generally benefit from ongoing relationships with both their parents after a divorce (e.g., Hetherington et al., 1989), has challenged the universal propriety of sole custody (Irving & Benjamin, 1987; Schulman & Pitt, 1984). While the proportion of divorced couples opting for some form of shared parenting arrangement is relatively small -- three to ten percent of

divorced couples (Weitzman, 1985) --, the numbers are growing (Irving & Benjamin, 1987). A sense that a shared parenting arrangement may be viewed as being in the best interests of children is reflected in the fact that 32 American states have enacted joint custody statutes (Folberg, 1984). Canada's Divorce Act (1986) similarly recognizes that child custody may be awarded to one or more persons, but is less explicit than its American counterparts in admitting shared parenting alternatives.

Family Law and Custody Determinations. Historically a primary objective of family law was to preserve marriage and to obstruct the divorce process for those individuals who chose to terminate their marriage in spite of the social repercussions. Until recently divorce was only granted on fault-oriented grounds; custody of the children was usually denied to the "guilty" party. In the 1970s adultery was the main contentious issue used to draw attention to a parent's moral fitness (Murray, 1987). Prior to 1974 an adulterous parent was presumed to have forfeited custody and, in some cases, even visitation rights (McCahey, 1987).

Within the past 15 years, both social mores and custody laws regarding the sexual conduct of parents have changed dramatically (Brinkley vs Brinkley, 1985; Dykes vs. Dykes, 1986). As a general rule, evidence of a parent's sexual conduct standing by itself will no longer support a denial of custody to that parent (McCahey, 1987). Today family laws reflect a change in social attitudes to marriage breakdown. The law is less likely than before to protect the institution of marriage, and instead mirrors the societal notion that adults should be free to choose whether or not to remain in a marital relationship.

Progressive family lawyers have noted a shift from a moralistic, fault-finding approach to a less judgemental legal framework (e.g., Landau et al., 1987). These writers promote an emphasis on negotiation, pretrial conferences, mediation of matrimonial disputes, use of expert assessment reports and other techniques designed to assist couples in reaching an early resolution of the issues in dispute. Other writers, while noting the constructive changes in the legal system, are less optimistic about the extent to which these reforms have had an impact (e.g., Irving & Benjamin, 1987).

In Canada divorces are a federal matter, but custody decisions can be made on the basis of both federal and provincial legislation. Most permanent custody decisions made prior to divorce are pursuant to a provincial statute; interim orders can be made under Canada's Divorce Act (1986). Custody decisions determined at the time of a divorce are generally considered under Canada's Divorce Act (1986), but it is also possible to apply for a custody order under a provincial act at the time of divorce. Competing custody claims under federal and provincial acts may not proceed at the same time (Landau et al., 1987).

Specific provincial statutes and Canada's Divorce Act (1986) vary in their descriptions of custody and in the criteria specified for determining custody. Some statutes restrict their discussion to the best interests of the child criterion (e.g., Canada's Divorce Act, 1986), whereas other statutes delineate specific criteria for the judges to consider in making a custody award. In British Columbia the child's best interests are defined as follows:

" ... A court shall give paramount consideration to the best interests of the child and, in assessing these interests, shall consider these factors: (a) the health and emotional well being of the child including any special needs for care and treatment; (b) where appropriate, the views of the child; (c) the love, affection and similar ties that exist between the child and other persons; (d) education and training for the child; and (e) the capacity of each person to whom guardianship, custody or access rights and duties may be granted to exercise these rights and duties adequately; and (the court shall) give emphasis to each factor according to the child's needs and circumstances ... "

Family Relations Act of British Columbia (1979, c.121, §24).

It is of particular interest that British Columbia's statute explicitly recognizes that the various factors assessed in considering the child's best interests will be weighted on an individual basis. In Ontario, the Children's Law Reform Act (1980) specifies the criteria for custody determination in more detail than in British Columbia. Ontario's statute places greater emphasis on the stability and

permanence of the child's living arrangements, planfulness on the part of a potential custodian, and on blood or adopted relationships between the child and the potential guardian:

" ... In determining the best interests of the child for the purposes of an application under this Part in respect of custody of or access to a child, a court shall consider all the needs and circumstances of the child including, (a) the love, affection and emotional ties between the child and, (i) each person entitled to or claiming custody of or access to the child, (ii) other members of the child's family who reside with the child, and (iii) persons involved in the care and upbringing of the child; (b) the views and preferences of the child, where such views and preferences can reasonably be ascertained; (c) the length of time the child has lived in a stable home environment; (d) the ability and willingness of each person applying for custody of the child to provide the child with guidance and education, the necessities of life and any special needs of the child; (e) any plans proposed for the care and upbringing of the child; (f) permanence and stability of the family unit with which it is proposed that the child will live; and (g) the relationship by blood or through an adoption order between the child and each person who is a party to the application ..."

(Children's Law Reform Act, 1980, c.20, § 1)

Matrimonial misconduct is specifically excluded from determination of custody, access and support in all provinces. The only exception to this rule involves domestic violence. For example, a recent amendment of Ontario's Children's Law Reform Act (1989) details that previous violence on the part of one parent against the other parent must be considered in evaluating the parenting capacity of the violent party. A previous modification of this act (Act to Amend the Children's Law Reform Act, 1986) clarifies the conditions for an order restraining the harassment of a custodial parent by the non-custodial parent. These amendments affirm the interpersonal realities of family violence and attempt to protect the victimized parties from further intimidation by their ex-

spouses. This is especially important if fear and threats are impediments to asserting one's point of view in a custody and access hearing.

In Canada neither federal nor provincial legislation spell out specific types of custody options. However, four types of custody arrangements are determined in practice: sole custody, split custody, alternating custody, and joint custody. Custody and access orders can be arbitrated by the courts, or they can be negotiated by the parents with or without professional assistance.

"Sole custody" refers to an order whereby one custodial parent is awarded all rights and duties in relation to the child (Landau et al., 1987). "Access" concerns the right of the non-custodial parent to visit with the child. The non-custodial parent with access rights does not have the legal right to participate as a parent in making decisions about many significant areas of the child's life (education, religion). Under the federal Divorce Act (1986) and in some provinces the non-custodial parent has a legal right to make inquiries and to receive information about the health, education and welfare of the child. The Divorce Act (1986) makes explicit the principle that contact between the child and both parents should be encouraged insofar that this is in the child's best interests. According to this federal statute the judge must consider the degree to which one parent will encourage the child's contact with the other parent. A custody order may include a clause restricting geographic relocation of the custodial parent. Specific access provisions (amount of time, visitation schedule, holiday sharing, transportation) may be included in a custody order, but often they are only loosely defined or based on informal agreements between the parents. Sole custody is by far the most common custody arrangement in Canada, with the mother being the custodial parent in almost 90% of these cases (Irving and Benjamin, 1987). However, it should be noted that these figures are based on legally documented custody orders; very little is known about how these proportions compare with custody and access arrangements based on informal agreements.

The concept of "split custody" is derived from a dated English precedent where physical custody was granted to one parent (usually the mother), and legal custody to the other parent (usually the father). In Canada "split custody" refers to one parent having sole custody of one or

more of the children, and the other parent having sole custody of the remaining children (Irving & Benjamin, 1987). This type of custody arrangement is rare, likely because the courts prefer to preserve the stability of the family as much as possible. However, in some situations where there appears to be a benefit to splitting up the children (often to reside with same-sexed parents) split custody may be ordered or chosen.

"Alternating custody" means that full legal and physical custody is rotated between the two parents over specified time periods. This custody arrangement divides rather than shares the custodial responsibilities between the parents, and can be confusing and disruptive for children (Landau et al., 1987). This custody option is very infrequently ordered or selected, but accurately describes the living arrangements of some children whose divorced parents are involved in protracted custody disputes and relitigation.

In contrast to split or alternating custody, joint custody involves sharing of the parenting responsibilities and duties between ex-spouses. Legal joint custody refers to parents making joint decisions about their children with one of the parent's home being designated as the primary residence. Physical joint custody refers to the parents making joint decisions about their children with neither parent's home being designated as the primary residence; usually the child alternates between the parents' residences, but in some cases the parents alternate living in the "children's home." In the United States joint custody has been available as an option for almost 20 years, whereas in Canada this type of custody arrangement is a more recent, but growing phenomenon (Irving & Benjamin, 1987). American studies indicate that three percent of divorced families had physical joint custody arrangements (Furstenburg, Peterson, Nord & Zill, 1983) and other research demonstrates that five to 15 percent of divorced parents in various Californian communities are physical joint custodians (Weitzbaum, 1985).

Research attempting to determine the prevalence of various types of custody options is confused by varying definitions of joint custody (often physical and legal joint custody are collapsed into one group), and by ignoring separated parents who were never legally married and/or who have not documented their specific custody and access arrangements in legal format.

What is relatively clear is that a marked preference for maternal sole custody persists in spite of the universal acceptance of the best interests of the child criterion. Studies of judicial behaviour in custody cases indicate that bases for such decision-making are typically vague, discretionary, speculative and laden with commonsense and personal values; little attention is paid to current knowledge about child development (Fineberg, 1979; Pearson, Thoennes & Vanderkooi, 1982).

The Adversarial System in Family Law. Until the 1970s the adversarial system was the main route to obtaining a divorce. In the context of fault-oriented family law a divorce was granted only when the complainant or petitioner proved that he or she had been wronged or injured by the defendant or respondent. The law would then punish the offending party by granting the divorce to the successful complainant. If the court found that both husband and wife were guilty of marital wrongs, a divorce was not granted. In light of this legal constraint separated spouses often agreed to coordinate their stories for an appearance of unilateral blame so that a divorce would be granted (Gardner, 1986).

In recent years legislatures have recognized that both husbands and wives likely contribute to marital breakdowns and have translated this notion into no-fault divorce statutes. This realization was accompanied by an appreciation that adversary proceedings are ill-suited to deal with family conflicts. Of late the liberalization of family law has enabled individuals residing in some jurisdictions to divorce entirely without legal assistance. For example, in California a divorce can be obtained by mail if there are no children involved and if there is no conflict about property division (Irving & Benjamin, 1987).

Although no-fault divorce statutes have helped to reduce the frequency of courtroom conflicts over divorce, there are still large numbers of divorce disputes that find their way into the adversarial arena. This is especially true of divorce disputes involving custody and access issues. At least 10% of child custody cases are seen in court one or more times (Jackson & Donovan, 1990). In 1989 alone, separated parents disputed the custody of more than 48,000 Canadian children (Statistics Canada, 1990). Custody-related court battles are time-consuming (Pearson & Thoennes, 1984) and financially devastating (Kressel, 1985). Even once the courts have come

to a decision - often after years of litigation and with exorbitant court costs left to be paid (Folberg & Taylor, 1984) - noncompliance with court-ordered arrangements is frequent, and relitigation is more common than not (Gold, 1984). The consensus is that adversarial proceedings often exacerbate marital conflict, acrimony and bitterness (Gardner, 1986; Johnston & Campbell, 1988; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). While the intent of the adversarial system is to resolve divorce and custody disputes in a manner that is fair, equitable and expeditious (and relative to the ecclesiastic courts of the past, the current adversarial system is a step in the right direction), it appears that emotionally charged family problems seldom lend themselves to the rational, analytic and impersonal procedures of the courts (Irving & Benjamin, 1987). In the forum of the adversarial system it is the lawyer's duty and responsibility to represent, defend and advocate the best interests of one spouse in the face of the competing interests of the other spouse. To this end a "cycle of negative reciprocity" between the distressed ex-couple is perpetuated (Holmes & Boon, 1990) in that common interests and feelings between the spouses are deemphasized and the need for an ongoing relationship as parents of their children is minimized. Lande (1984) has described the tendency for adversaries to promote increased conflict between spouses as the "tyranny of advocacy," for once caught up in the court system it is difficult to stop the process and impossible for spouses to regain control over "their" case. While it is tempting to blame this loss of control over an escalating conflict entirely on the lawyers, spouses have also been known to push lawyers into conflict out of anger and resentment at a loved one who has betrayed their trust (Kressel, 1985). Nevertheless, the lawyer is a critical participant. In many cases lawyers with little training in collaboration or in dealing with the feelings aspect of relations between divorcing spouses may counsel clients to adopt unnecessarily divisive positions (Irving, Benjamin, Bohm & MacDonald, 1981).

Although adversarial proceedings can provide moments of vindication for angry and hurt spouses, the eventual impact of court involvement is traumatizing and alienating for the participants (Gold, 1981). Feelings of sadness, guilt, embarrassment, powerlessness and emotional exhaustion are commonly reported by divorcing partners following a court dispute

(Bisset-Johnson, 1984). The spouses are left not only to grieve the loss of their marriage, but to mourn its undignified death as it was publicly dragged through court. Unfortunately, the greatest loss in an adversarial divorce and custody proceeding is suffered by the children, especially if they become pawns or bargaining chips in the struggle between their parents (Hetherington et al., 1989; Wallerstein, 1985).

Non-Adversarial Alternatives to the Resolution of Divorce and Custody Disputes. While sound independent legal advice and access to the courts play an important role in settling divorce and custody issues, they are often not sufficient to find a sensitive and meaningful resolution to many emotionally intense and complex disputes (Mohr, 1986). Lawyers and judges are skilled at interpreting and understanding legislation, but there is nothing in their training that prepares them for dealing with the complexities of child development, marital, parental and extended family relationships. An increasing number of lawyers and judges, aware of the limits of their training and expertise, are seeking the advice and consultation of mental health professionals in dealing with divorce and custody disputes (Felner, Gillespie & Smith, 1985; Jaffe, Austin, Leschied & Sas, 1987). This insight has permeated recent legislation which explicitly requires lawyers to advise their clients to consider mediating any issues in dispute prior to litigating these issues (Divorce Act, 1986). The Family Relations Act of British Columbia (1979) permits the court to appoint a family court counsellor to assist in the resolution of family law matters and defines the court's right to seek the assistance of any professional they see fit to provide information about "family matters." Similarly Ontario's Children's Law Reform Act (1980) details that the court can order mediation with respect to custody and access or appoint mental health professionals to conduct assessments. The Ontario Family Law Act (1986) specifies that the judge can also order mediation with respect to child and spousal support issues. Efforts to minimize the intensity of parents' legal battles over custody and visitation schedules have been further fueled by a consensus in the empirical literature that children's vulnerability to parental separation is strongly tied to the amount of parental conflict to which they are exposed (Hetherington et al., 1989; Johnston, Gonzales, & Campbell, 1987; Tschann, Johnston, Kline, & Wallerstein, 1989).

There are three types of services that can be offered to disputing families: mediation, assessment and arbitration (Jaffe et al., 1987). Family mediation refers to a process where, with the help of a neutral third party, parents are empowered to resolve their differences on their own so that they can jointly decide their post-separation parenting relationship. The mediator acts as an educator and as a facilitator for balancing sensitive feelings, raising issues, and finding areas of compromise. The mediation process tends to be time-limited and cost-effective compared to the traditional adversarial system (Irving & Benjamin, 1987; Landau et al., 1987).

Mediation is a relatively recent phenomenon. The first court-based mediation services to be opened in North America were the Conciliation Courts in Los Angeles in 1961. In Canada the first Family Court Conciliation Services were developed by Judge M. Bowker in 1972 in Edmonton (Landau et al., 1987). Since this time court-based and private mediation services have been established in most provinces (Folberg & Taylor, 1984). While family mediation services have been useful to many divorcing families as they attempt to resolve their differences (Jaffe et al., 1987), there is a lack of consensus about the amount and type of training necessary for practicing family mediation responsibly (Milne, 1985). As the field has developed multiple models of mediation have emerged. Some mediators emphasize the therapeutic nature of mediation (Grebe, 1986; Irving & Benjamin, 1987), whereas others focus on the resolution of specific contentious issues (Landau et al., 1987). Others still have modified their mediation techniques to suit specific types of families (Campbell & Johnston, 1987).

Assessment refers to a process whereby both spouses' lawyers and/or the court request a comprehensive psychological investigation of the children and their parents. The information obtained by a psychiatrist, clinical psychologist or other mental health professional through the completion of a requested psychological evaluation may be used by the fact finders in their final determination. Concern about correct procedure and ethical conduct on the part of these evaluators has been expressed in the literature (Karras & Berry, 1985) and has been addressed through the development of custody/access assessment guidelines to ensure professional standards. For example, the Ontario Psychological Foundation recently published procedural

guidelines to be followed by psychologists involved in this type of work (Kaplan, Landau, & McWhinney, 1988).

There is considerable agreement among professionals about the basic procedures involved in a model custody assessment (Melton, Petrila, Poythress, & Slobogin, 1987; Weithorn & Grisso, 1987). The custody evaluation should include direct assessment of all parties whose psychological functioning is relevant to the case. Typically, this includes all potential custodians, the children whose custody is in question (and in some cases siblings whose custody is not in dispute), and any other individuals whose relationships with the prospective custodians may influence the child's well-being, such as the intended spouse of a parent. Psychological testing, psychiatric consultation, home studies, consultation with other professionals (family physician, teachers) may enrich the assessor's data base. The final product of an assessment is an expert opinion of the children's needs, parents' abilities to meet these needs, and alternative plans that may assist the courts in resolving the dispute. In some cases the assessors may not be able to convince all relevant persons to participate. The contributions of a report to the court proceedings, based on incomplete data, will be more limited and these limitations should be clearly articulated in the assessment report. Some (e.g., Weithorn & Grisso, 1987) have argued that in these cases the mental health professional should refuse to conduct the assessment. Based on a recent survey of 190 mental health professionals experienced in custody/access assessments (Keilin & Bloom, 1986) consensual guidelines are not consistently translated into practice. While 90% of the respondents agreed that impartiality on the part of the professional is crucial to the evaluation process, over 50% continue to be retained by one parent only.

Simons, Grossman, and Weiner (1990) followed 22 divorcing families for 18 months after they had been assessed for a custody dispute hearing. Most subjects had favourable regard for the evaluation process and were beginning to recover psychologically. In comparison to men, women were more dissatisfied when their ex-spouses were awarded sole custody, and even when joint custody was ordered. The courts were influenced by the assessment

recommendations regarding custody and visitation matters, but not regarding treatment suggestions.

Arbitration involves a combination of mediation and assessment. In contrast to the mediator, the arbitrator readily offers opinions and plays a more active role in advising clients on the most advantageous plans for their children. In contrast to assessment, the process is brief and there is prior agreement by both parents and their lawyers to abide by the arbitrator's recommendations. There is considerable controversy about whether arbitration is a method that gives "experts" too much power (Shipley, 1986).

While considerable literature describes how to provide different interventions to divorcing parents and their children (e.g., Campbell, & Johnston, 1987; Gardner, 1986), research attempting to identify which clients are most likely to benefit from which intervention strategy is virtually absent (Jaffe et al., 1987). As is always the case when psychology interfaces with the law, questions have been raised about how much of a role mental health professionals should, and can, play in the arena of family law (Karras & Berry, 1985; Melton et al., 1987).

Discussion. In matters of marriage, divorce and child custody, history tells us of much that has changed and of much that has resisted change. While marriage is seen today more as a relational commitment between two adults than as an institution controlled by the church, the notion of "fault" and "sin" as it applies to breaking this commitment has remained with us throughout the evolution of family law. Although "finding fault" plays the most central and obvious role in divorces that are disputed in the adversarial arena, this process may often be a part of what happens as relationships are ended outside of this context. While family mediators emphasize mutual concerns - often to do with the ex-spouses' continuing roles as parents of their children -, an important part of the process is to help the couple work through their feelings of "having been wronged by the other" and "of having done wrong to the other." Some writers (e.g., Mnookin & Kornhauser, 1979) have argued that divorce is always a legal event in which the state has an interest. Even in instances when divorcing families do not come into direct contact with the

adversarial system, the private ordering of their affairs nevertheless occurs within "the shadow of the law." The shadow of the law may in fact be a reflection of relationship psychology.

The Psychological Sequelae of Marital Transitions

Contemporary researchers have shifted away from the earlier perspective that single-parent and remarried families are atypical or pathogenic families (e.g., Good, 1949). Researchers today are focusing on the diversity of children's and parents' responses to marital transitions and the factors that facilitate or disrupt adjustment in these families. Divorce and remarriage are no longer viewed as single static events, but as part of a series of transitions modifying the lives and development of children and their families (Hetherington et al., 1989).

Diversity and Extent of Psychological Responses. A growing research literature attests to the diverse and far-reaching psychological sequelae of marital separation for immediate and extended family members (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). While the psychological adjustment of children is inevitably related to the adaptation and behaviour of parents, a divorce that is seen as a positive life transition for one parent may be interpreted very differently by other family members. Based on their study of 60 families over a ten year post-separation period, Wallerstein and her colleagues (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980) concluded that divorce often benefitted one of the adults much more than the other. Further, while the decision to divorce or remarry may be made on the basis of possible benefit to one of the parents, children seldom wish for their parents' divorce and many children in fact resent their parents' remarriages (Hetherington et al., 1989, Wallerstein, 1985).

Marital transitions involve the restructuring of the household and changes in family roles and relationships. Divorce usually involves high levels of family conflict and a decrease of contact between the children and one of the parents, whereas remarriage involves the addition of and adjustment to one or more new family members. A child whose parent remarries has already experienced life in his or her family of origin, divorce, and a period of time in a single-parent household before the remarriage introduces additional changes. Developmentalists agree that

children's experiences in earlier family situations will modify responses to new situations (Rutter, 1987). Longitudinal research suggests that behaviour problems exhibited by children in remarried families may be less attributable to difficulties in adapting to remarriage, than to earlier stresses associated with divorce and life in a single-parent household (Furstenberg, 1988; Zill, 1988).

Children's Responses to Divorce and Remarriage. While there is great diversity in children's responses to their parents' marital transitions, most children manifest some behavioural disruptions and emotional upheaval immediately following their parents' divorce and remarriage (Wallerstein, 1985; 1987). Anger, resentment, anxiety, guilt, and depression are commonly experienced by children at this time (Hetherington, Cox & Cox, 1985). In the period immediately after a marital separation children may grieve for the absent parent and worry about the welfare of the parent who is no longer living at home (Wallerstein, 1985). Many children at one time or another blame themselves for their parents' breakup and imagine that, if they had been "good" or better, the divorce could have been prevented. Eventually children must give up their fantasies of parental reconciliation, but sometimes this does not occur until they are faced with the remarriage of one or both parents (Brand, Clingempeel & Bowen-Woodward, 1988; Bray, 1988).

Some children display striking resilience following the initial crisis period in their parents' separation, whereas others suffer noticeable developmental regressions, delays or disruptions. Other children still appear to adapt well in the early stages, but show "sleeper" effects that are manifested at a later time, especially during adolescence (Hetherington, 1989; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). The most commonly reported problem behaviours in children from divorced and remarried families are aggressive, noncompliant, and acting out behaviours; losses in prosocial behaviour; academic underachievement and poor school adjustment; and disruptions in peer and heterosexual relations (Camara & Resnick, 1988; 1989; Hetherington et al., 1985; Wallerstein, 1985; Zill, 1988). Reports of greater risk for depression or internalizing disorders in these children when they reach adolescence are similarly documented in the literature, but are less well substantiated and less consistently noted than externalizing problems (Hetherington et

al., 1989). Of contextual importance in interpreting these findings is that children adapt better in a well-functioning single-parent or step-parent family than in a conflict-ridden family of origin (Long & Forehand, 1987; Melton et al., 1987). Thus being removed from a chaotic and conflictual family situation through divorce or the introduction of a nurturing step-parent may in fact benefit a child's psychological adjustment (Hetherington et al., 1989).

Long term adaptation to marital transitions is less related to divorce and remarriage per se than to cumulative stresses experienced by the child, individual characteristics of the child, features of the home environment, and resources and support systems available to the child. While a single stressor generally bears no discernible psychiatric risk for children, the introduction of multiple and persistent stressors increases the likelihood of adverse effects (Rutter, 1980). Multiple marital transitions, in conjunction with depressed economic resources, relocation and school changes, exposure to parents' conflict before and after marital separation, and increasingly complicated step- and blended family situations, may seriously jeopardize the child's adjustment (Hetherington et al., 1989).

Temperamentally difficult children are less able to cope with change and adversity than are temperamentally easy children (Rutter, 1980). In the context of divorce, temperamentally easy children are far less likely than difficult children to be the recipients of their parents' criticism and displaced anger; are better able to cope with the behaviour of stressed parents; and may permanently enhance their coping abilities through exposure to moderate levels of stress (Hetherington, 1989). Intelligence, independence, an internal locus of control, and good self-esteem are individual attributes that appear to contribute to children's coping strengths (Rutter, 1987). Recent research (Block, Block, & Morrison, 1981) suggests that temperamentally difficult children may not only be more vulnerable to the effects of their parents' divorce, but are also more likely to have parents who later divorce. These authors raised the hypothesis that children's behaviour problems may exacerbate marital difficulties and contribute to divorce.

The types of behaviour problems and coping mechanisms associated with family transition differ for children of different ages (Hetherington et al., 1989). Young children - limited

by their cognitive and social competencies, their dependency on their parents, and their restriction to the home - are more likely than older children to blame themselves for the divorce, to fear abandonment by the custodial parent, to misperceive parents' emotions and behaviours, and to channel their mental energies into fantasies of reconciliation (Wallerstein, Corbin, & Lewis, 1988). The cognitive immaturity that contributes to separation anxiety in the child who is young at the time of their parents' divorce may prove an asset over time. Ten years post-divorce these children have fewer memories of either parental conflict or their own earlier fears, than children who were relatively older at the time of the marital separation. Approximately one third of these younger children continue to experience anger and depression at the unavailability of the noncustodial parent ten years post-divorce, whereas the other two thirds are adapting reasonably well (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989).

Children who were adolescents at the time of marital separation retain more negative and vivid memories of the family breakdown and are more consciously troubled than their younger counterparts (Wallerstein et al., 1988). However, they are also better able to accurately assign responsibility for the divorce, to resolve loyalty conflicts, to assess and cope with additional stress related to the family transition, and to take advantage of extrafamilial support systems (Armistead, McCombs, Forehand, & Wierson, 1990). Many adolescents "grow up faster" in the face of familial stresses and transitions (Weiss, 1979). While premature disengagement can lead to greater involvement in constructive relationships outside of the home, participation in antisocial groups and activities may also ensue (Hetherington, 1987).

Problem behaviours associated with divorce may reemerge in children following a remarriage. Whereas the younger child is more likely to form an attachment with a nurturing stepparent, early adolescents may confront or question some aspect of new family roles and functioning. Adolescents are more likely to resent physical affection in the new marital relationship than younger children, who are generally less preoccupied with issues of sexuality (Hetherington, 1989). Some studies have indicated that for late adolescents, who are anticipating their departure from the home, remarriage may be a welcomed release from their assumed roles as

emotional and economic allies for their divorced parents (Hetherington et al., 1989). Cooney, Smyer, Hagestad and Klock (1986) found that, in absence of a remarriage, 77% of adolescents affected by divorce were worried about one or both of their parents' futures.

In contrast to girls who live with single mothers following a divorce and to children who live with their nondivorced parents, boys living with single mothers show a higher rate of behaviour disorders, across a wider range of situations, and for longer periods of time (Wallerstein, 1985). Problems in girls' socioemotional adjustment are likely to disappear in the two years following the divorce, but may reemerge at adolescence in the form of precocious sexual behaviour and disruptions in heterosexual relations (Newcomer & Udry, 1987).

The research findings on the role of noncustodial parents in the development of the child must be understood in the context of the courts' propensity, until very recently, to award sole custody to the mother and to grant sole custody to the father in exceptional cases only (for example, when the mother is seen as "unfit"). The research on the role of noncustodial parents suggests that under conditions of low interparental conflict, continued involvement of a competent, supportive, well-adjusted noncustodial father can have positive effects on the adjustment of children, especially boys (Hetherington et al., 1985), without interfering with close family relations in a new stepfamily (Hetherington, 1989). In contrast, continued involvement of the noncustodial mothers seems to precipitate loyalty conflicts that are manifested in greater conflict between children and their stepmothers (Camara & Resnick, 1988). These effects are modified by the quality of the relationship between the divorced parents and the attributes and behaviour of the noncustodial parent (Hetherington et al., 1989).

Parents' Responses and the Parent-Child Relationship. Recently research on the impact of divorce on adults has moved from an emphasis on psychological correlates and descriptions of stages through which individuals come to terms with the divorce (e.g., Bohannon, 1973), to analytic models that aim to predict adults' personal and parenting adjustment through common pathways. Tschann, Johnston and Wallerstein (1989) investigated the postdivorce adjustment of 290 adults over a two year period. They found that men and women show similar patterns of

adaptation. Greater resources before separation, including higher socioeconomic status for men and better psychological functioning for women, positively influence later adjustment. Conflict with ex-spouses during the separation period increases negative attachment to the former spouse and interferes with positive adjustment after divorce. Development of a social life and new intimate relations improve adjustment by diminishing feelings of positive attachment to the ex-spouse. A reduction of both positive and negative attachment to the ex-partner is essential to healthy adjustment after a divorce.

Of the factors that contribute to a marital breakdown some may continue to exacerbate post-divorce adjustment. Parents experiencing financial strain are more likely to divorce than economically secure couples, and divorce is often associated with further loss in income and assets. This is especially true of mothers who retain custody (Hernandez, 1988). If a mother must return to work after her divorce, the preschool child may feel he or she has been abandoned by both parents. Further, if a mother feels unhappy about her employment, the child may be negatively affected by interactions with an anxious, dissatisfied mother. Anxious and dissatisfied mothers are more likely to displace anger and resentment about their lot toward their children. On the other hand, if a mother's reemployment contributes to her social and psychological well-being in addition to reestablishing financial security, the child may benefit from the more positive family atmosphere (Hetherington et al., 1989).

In contrast to custodial mothers, both noncustodial and custodial fathers typically maintain or improve their standard of living following the marital separation, largely because they are no longer the primary source of financial support to their ex-spouses and children (Clarke-Stewart & Bailey, 1989; Guttman, 1989). Based on the reports of 56 fathers, divorced an average of five years, these men were likely to be better adjusted if they were older and had completed college, if they had older children and saw them frequently, and if they were dating (Facchino & Aron, 1990). Children who reside with their fathers following a divorce seldom encounter the stresses associated with limited financial resources that are often experienced by children who live with their mothers (Irving & Benjamin, 1987). For a large proportion of single mothers economic

stresses diminish significantly with remarriage (Hernandez, 1988). However, when noncustodial parents remarry, decisions regarding the division of resources among residential family members and nonresidential ex-spouses may introduce jealousy and dissatisfaction (Hetherington et al., 1989).

The parenting relationship continues to be a critical factor in the child's adjustment well beyond the termination of the marriage (Stolberg & Bush, 1985). When children are exposed to interparental conflict and to denigration of one parent by the other after the marriage breakdown, these experiences will likely interfere with their post-divorce adjustment. Moreover, the greater the degree of marital conflict, the greater the extent of post-separation parental conflict, and the more likely the children are to be drawn into the parents' conflict (Tschann et al. 1989). Children who experience high levels of interparental conflict often feel conflicting loyalties and, especially boys, are likely to exhibit disturbed behaviour (Johnston, Campbell, & Mayes, 1985; Rutter, 1987). A longitudinal study of 56 children from divorced families suggested that involvement in the parents' dispute and parent-child role reversal predicted the number and severity of these children's behaviour problems (Johnston et al., 1987). High rates of continued conflict between the divorced parents are also associated with an eventual loss of contact between the child and the noncustodial parent (Hetherington et al., 1989). This loss of contact with noncustodial parent has been found to jeopardize the child's psychological adjustment (Tschann et al., 1989). The current consensus emerging from the psychological literature is that the most stressed children of divorce are those who are objects of continuing acrimonious legal battles between their divorcing parents (Bresee, Stearns, Bess, & Parker, 1986; Gardner, 1986; 1987; Johnston et al., 1987; Wallerstein, 1987).

The parents' abilities to cope with their divorce are critical to the child's adjustment (Camara & Resnick, 1988). If parents are able to control their anger and resentment toward their ex-spouses, cooperate in parenting, negotiate differences, and settle their quarrels in privacy, children show fewer emotional and social problems (Tschann et al., 1989; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). The results of a recent study of 94 separated parent pairs indicated that the

level of conflict in the "spouse" role was less predictive of children's adjustment, than were degree of cooperation and style of conflict resolution in the coparental role (Camara & Resnick, 1989). Most children wish to have relationships with both parents after the marriage break-up; continued, positive and reliable contact with both parents is an important factor in children's successful adjustment (Santrock & Sitterle, 1987). Even after the custodial mother's remarriage, an ongoing relationship with noncustodial fathers benefits the child's, especially boys, psychological adjustment (Zill, 1988). While continued contact with the noncustodial parent may complicate the acceptance of stepparents (Santrock & Sitterle, 1987), children are with time able to sustain and benefit from relationships with a number of nurturing and supportive adults.

The psychological well-being of the custodial parent may impact directly on the parent-child relationship and indirectly on the child's subsequent adjustment (Tschann et al., 1989). The stress of marital separation places men and women at risk for psychological and physical dysfunction (Guidubaldi & Cleminshaw, 1985). Alcoholism, drug abuse, depression, psychosomatic problems, and accidents are more common among divorced than nondivorced adults. Marital disruption depresses the immune system and increases vulnerability to acute and chronic medical problems (Kiecolt-Glaser, Fisher, Ogrocki, Stout, Speicher, & Glaser, 1987). Adults undergoing divorce often feel highly optimistic and euphoric at one moment, and lonely, anxious and depressed the next. Shifts and changes in self-concept and self-esteem are common as ex-spouses try to make sense of what happened in their marriage and to reevaluate who they are outside of this relational context. The significance of these psychological, emotional and physical changes for children is that they may encounter altered parents at a time when they need stability in a rapidly changing life situation. At the most difficult of these time, parents and children may exacerbate each other's problems: A physically ill, emotionally labile, or preoccupied parent may be faced with a distressed, demanding, and noncompliant child (Hetherington et al., 1989). While a period of diminished parenting is often reported following divorce (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980), by two years after the marital separation most parent-child relationships have returned to the previous level of functioning (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). Custodial mothers

and daughters in particular report a positive or exceptionally close relationship two years after the marital separation (Hetherington et al., 1989).

Immediately post-divorce custodial fathers tend to experience resentment, confusion, and apprehension about their parenting abilities. In some cases these parenting insecurities are exacerbated by the social isolation associated with their relatively unique status as "single fathers." However, two years post-divorce custodial fathers report better family adjustment and fewer problems with their children than do custodial mothers (Furstenberg, 1988). Hetherington et al. (1989) suggest that this may be because custodial fathers have fewer financial worries and are more likely to be awarded custody of school-aged children and adolescents.

Children of all ages require structured, stable and supportive environments. This is especially true for young children who are less able to select and shape their environments and to exert self-control. In most single-parent households parents require older children and adolescents to assume greater household and child-care responsibilities more than do parents in two parent households. If these demands are within reason children may accelerate in the development of self-sufficiency and maturity. However, if these demands are developmentally inappropriate and excessive, the child is likely to feel incompetent and resentful (Hetherington et al., 1989). Moreover, some parents may make inappropriate emotional demands on their children by confiding in them as if they were adult friends.

Support systems may bring practical and emotional support to both parents and children of divorce (Sandler, 1989). Day care centers and schools that provide a warm, structured, and predictable environment offer stability to children experiencing family transitions. Responsive peers and school personnel can be important sources of support for older children and adolescents (Rutter, 1987). Children of divorce with supportive grandparents show fewer behaviour problems than children who lack these supports. For parents, family and friends can provide much needed emotional and parenting support (Hetherington et al., 1989), although the extent of reliance on extended kin varies cross-culturally (Bilge & Kaufman, 1983). However, if extended family and friends become overinvolved and are encouraged to take sides in struggles

between the ex-spouses, they may in fact prolong the parents' conflict and exacerbate the parents' and children's adjustment difficulties (Johnston & Campbell, 1988). In Johnston and Campbell's view (1986; 1987; 1989) extended kin and new partners may emerge as "participants in tribal warfare" to whom parents must justify their position and compromises.

Custody and Shared Parenting

The last two decades have seen the development of a sophisticated literature that speaks to the psychological responses of adults and children to marital transitions. Yet relatively little is known about how divorcing families negotiate and adjust to variant custody and access arrangements. North American family law uniformly states that custody and access arrangements must always reflect the best interests of the child, but there is little agreement about how shared parenting plans that achieve this end might be developed. With virtually nothing in the empirical literature to provide guidance, it is surprising to note how enthusiastically some writers defend the merits of sole custody, while other authors swear by joint custody as the best solution for divorcing families. More perplexing still is that anyone would expect a single broad category of custody to fulfill the best interests of the child criterion in all cases. Virtually all interpretations of this legal standard suggest that children's needs - and the parents' abilities and resources to meet these needs - should be considered in each individual situation. As has been true throughout the history of divorce and custody adjudication, ideology and tradition often speak louder than fact and reason.

Sole Versus Joint Custody: A Battle of Ideologies. The controversy regarding sole versus joint custody is ongoing in the literature. Some oppose joint custody in favour of sole custody (Levy & Chambers, 1981; Walsh & Kalter, 1986). Goldstein, Freud, and Solnit (1973) are the strongest proponents of sole custody. They see divorce as a unilaterally negative event and argue that sole custody is the "least detrimental alternative" for the child. In their highly influential book, Beyond the Best Interests of the Child (Goldstein et al., 1973), they draw from psychoanalytic theory to explain that children of divorce need one omnipotent, omnipresent

attachment figure. Sole custody should be awarded to the "psychological parent" to whom the child is most attached. In their opinion this parent should have total legal authority for the child, physical custody, and control over the child's contact with the noncustodial parent. In the rare case that both parents appear to be "psychological parents", they suggest that straws should be drawn for custody!

Goldstein et al.'s position (1973) has been disputed by proponents of joint custody (D'Andrea, 1983; Irving & Benjamin, 1987; Roman, 1977) and others (Melton et al., 1987; Steinman, 19484; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). These critics argue that attempts to determine "the" psychological parent creates an adversarial "win-lose" situation which can only serve to fuel custody disputes. Moreover, not only is there an absence of scientific evidence to support the psychological parent concept, but this extreme version of sole custody flies in the face of a body of empirical literature demonstrating children's capacities to form multiple attachments and affirming to their needs for ongoing contact with both parents after a divorce (Hetherington et al., 1989; Pesikoff & Pesikoff, 1985). Nevertheless, the "psychological parent" notion continues to exert considerable influence in legal practice (Radin, 1983; Reppucci, 1984), perhaps because it restates and rationalizes the historical preference for sole custody as an arrangement that reflects the child's needs and interests. However, what many children fear most at the time of their parents' separation is that they will lose one of their parents to the divorce. If Goldstein et al.'s (1973) advice were followed, the child's fear of abandonment would be realized through the loss of the "nonpsychological parent," which could hardly be argued to be in their best interests.

While the majority of all custody awards in the United States and Canada still involve a maternal sole custody arrangement (Hetherington et al., 1989), joint custody is emerging as the new panacea for divorcing families. Explicit joint custody laws exist in at least 30 American states, whereas implicit provisions for joint custody are contained in most Canadian statutes¹ (Benjamin & Irving, 1989). Excitement about joint custody - as an inherently egalitarian solution for divorcing

¹The Yukon Territory is the only Canadian jurisdiction that explicitly recognizes joint custody.

families that upholds the child's best interests by promoting ongoing contact with both parents - has pushed this movement far beyond what the existent empirical literature would permit. As Ingram (1989) has observed, the courts have ordered or allowed joint custody with increasing frequency in the past decade, even against joint parental opposition. Some proponents (Roman & Haddad, 1978) argue that joint custody itself promotes cooperation and reduces conflict between the ex-spouses, but outcome studies have not supported this contention (Hetherington et al., 1989). Children in joint custody families appear to benefit from ongoing contact with both their parents, but only in the absence of significant interparental conflict (Hetherington et al., 1989; Johnston & Campbell, 1988).

It is suggested by this writer that arguments for sole custody are strongly tied to historically-rooted beliefs about divorce and custody, whereas assertions in favour of joint custody reflect a reaction against this tradition. What has emerged is a dichotomy of beliefs about post-divorce parenting arrangements that have very little connection with what is known empirically (Fidler, Saunders, Freedman, & Hood, 1989) and that cannot hope to capture the diversity and complexity of what shared parenting likely means in practice (Melton et al., 1987).

Shared Parenting: Methodological Issues. Benjamin and Irving (1985; 1989) have identified a total of 21 studies that currently constitute the shared parenting research literature. They, and others (e.g., Hetherington et al. 1989; Melton et al., 1987), raise concerns about the methodological quality of these studies. Several other relevant studies have been published since this time (e.g., Glover & Steele, 1989; Pearson & Thoennes, 1990).

Sample sizes in these studies tend to be small, ranging from 5 to 50 research participants. With one exception (Irving & Benjamin, 1989), studies employing large samples are drawn exclusively from court or clinic records, thus introducing a variety of unspecified biases (Benjamin & Irving, 1989). Very little is known about how separated parents negotiate and maintain shared parenting plans independently of involvement in the court or mental health system (Jaffe et al., 1987).

In some of these studies only one of the parents has been interviewed (D'Andrea, 1983; Richards & Goldenberg, 1986; White & Bloom, 1981). As it is conceivable that ex-spouses may see the "same" parenting arrangement in an entirely different light, not including both parents in the study compromises the correct and reliable definition of groups on the basis of custody arrangements. Moreover, one-sided accounts of coparental cooperation and mutual satisfaction may be inaccurate and misleading.

Even in studies including data obtained from both parents, the groups are often poorly defined. Some studies rely exclusively on how the courts have defined the custody arrangement (Nehls, 1979; Watson, 1981), without attention to how the ex-spouses in fact share the parenting of their children in their everyday lives. Other studies have collapsed physical joint custody with legal joint custody (e.g., Keshel & Rosenthal, 1978), even though these two categories have very different practical implications (Irving & Benjamin, 1989). In some cases ideology appears to creep into the definition of groups. While Irving and Benjamin's (1989) study is methodologically sound in many respects, they include only physical joint custodians in their "shared parenting group", without considering that alternative strategies might constitute shared parenting. Twelve of the 21 studies do not include any comparison groups at all. For example, in some of these cases joint custodians are the focus of the investigation without reference to sole custodians (Keshel & Rosenthal, 1978; Rothberg, 1983; Steinman, Zimmelman, & Knoblauch, 1985). Only nine of the 21 studies compare joint and sole custody families.

Depending on the question of interest, studies differ in the extent to which children are included as research participants. A caution in interpreting these research findings is that some authors do not clearly differentiate data obtained through direct contact with children from information collected from parents about their children's adjustment.

In only nine of the 21 studies, interviews were supplemented with data from standardized instruments (Benjamin & Irving, 1989). The need for diverse data collection methods to counteract interview bias is especially relevant to the ideology-laden shared parenting literature. Data analyses in the shared parenting research tend to be weak. Only seven of the 21 studies

(D'Andrea, 1983; Gersick, 1979; Grief, 1979; Irving & Benjamin; 1989; Luepnitz, 1986; Steinman et al., 1985; Shiller, 1986;) employ any inferential statistical techniques at all.

In addition to the methodological concerns outlined above, the shared parenting literature is markedly atheoretical. Based on their review of the literature, Benjamin and Irving (1989) suggest that the most significant deficiency in the shared-parenting research literature at this time is the absence of explicit efforts at theory building. While literature in the area of adult adjustment to divorce has moved beyond descriptive and exploratory studies to analytic models (e.g., Tschann, Johnston, & Wallerstein, 1989), the shared parenting literature has not yet made this transition.

Research Findings from the Shared Parenting Literature. In spite of the methodological concerns associated with the shared parenting literature, some findings emerge consistently and can be converged with conclusions from the more substantive general divorce literature.

The findings that speak most clearly and strongly to what is in the best interests of children after their parents' separation are derived from longitudinal divorce research. Children's psychological adjustments to marital transitions depends on their opportunity for ongoing relationships with both parents and minimal exposure to interparental conflict; children suffer the most when they are drawn into the adults' conflicts and become a part of bitter, acrimonious, and protracted custody disputes (e.g., reviews by Benjamin & Irving, 1989; Gardner, 1986; Hetherington et al., 1989).

The shared parenting literature to date has not demonstrated that any specific custody/access arrangement is reliably superior in benefiting the child's adjustment or in providing the child ongoing contact with two parents who are able to cooperate with each other (Glover & Steele, 1989; Kline, Tschann, & Johnston, 1989; Pearson & Thoennes, 1990; Wolchik, Braver, & Sandler, 1985). Instead this literature indicates that a minority of children show adjustment difficulties regardless of whether they are living in sole, split, or joint custody households (Benjamin & Irving, 1989). For example, Walsh and Kalter (1986) studied 30 ex-couples with legal joint custody of their children and 30 ex-couples with maternal sole custody. Based on interviews

with 18 boys and 12 girls between the ages of seven and 12, they found no differences in psychological adjustment between children associated with custody type. Similarly Luepnitz (1986) ascertained that child adjustment was better predicted by the quality of post-divorce coparental and parent-child relationships than by custody type (physical joint custody, legal joint custody, mother sole custody). Insofar as custody litigation may be detrimental to children's mental health, it is of interest to note that a follow-up study of 138 court cases (Ilfeld, Ilfeld, & Alexander, 1982) demonstrated a 33% relitigation rate for parents with both sole and joint custody of their children. A one year follow-up study of 35 parents who had been assessed in a family court clinic suggested that joint custody arrangements were least likely to be maintained (Austin & Jaffe, 1990). However, it is difficult to interpret this finding, because there is a great deal of question about whether joint legal custody, joint physical custody, and sole custody with liberal custody are necessarily different in terms of the proportion of the child's time spent with each parent and the amount of contact between the parents.

Interparental cooperation is not only an important predictor of healthy adjustment in the child, but is also associated with positive parental adjustment after the marriage is over. Cordial relations between ex-spouses promote parental adjustment regardless of legal custody status, and are related to satisfaction with shared parenting arrangements (Irving & Benjamin, 1989). Separated spouses who are able to negotiate child care issues cooperatively report feeling supported by their ex-partners in their roles as parents (Fishel & Scanzoni, 1989).

Satisfied physical joint custodians are tolerant of differences and respectful of their ex-spouse's parenting skills (Steinman et al., 1985). Conversely, the more parents are preoccupied with feelings of betrayal by their ex-spouses, the more dissatisfied they will feel about how parenting responsibilities are being shared, and the more likely they will seek exclusive custody for reasons of anger and revenge (Gersick, 1979). Ongoing mutual dissatisfaction may undermine the ability to cooperate with respect to child care.

The Toronto Shared Parenting Project constitutes the largest study of separated parents (Irving & Benjamin, 1989). The sample consisted of 201 parents with physical joint custody (75

ex-couples and 51 individuals) and 194 parents with sole custody of their children (47 couples and 112 individuals). The strengths of this study include its large sample size and its exclusive reliance on non-clinic and non-court referred research participants. Unfortunately, the inclusion as research participants of individuals without their ex-spouses raises some questions about correct group classification. Data collection was restricted to the interview method, with no use of standardized assessment instruments or direct behavioural observation. Nevertheless, in contrast to studies relying exclusively on court or clinic referrals (e.g., McKinnon & Wallerstein, 1987), the results of Irving and Benjamin (1989) suggest that many divorced parents are able to cooperate with each other in matters of child care and are satisfied with their shared parenting arrangements. The majority of satisfied parents reported that they had negotiated their shared parenting arrangement without the assistance of legal professionals. In fact, many of the parents with physical joint custody reported that they had selected this option in spite of their lawyers' opposition. On the other hand, parents who were dissatisfied with their parenting plan were more likely than satisfied parents to report having been "pushed into" a custody decision they did not want (Irving & Benjamin, 1989). Similarly it is not surprising that in studies of parents with court-ordered joint custody arrangements reports of dissatisfaction are high (Frankel, 1985; McKinnon & Wallerstein, 1987).

An additional finding from the literature concerning the arrangement of child-focused shared parenting plans is that regularity and predictability of the child movement schedule contributes significantly to children's adjustment (e.g., Steinman et al., 1985). Contrary to earlier reports based on clinical populations (e.g., Wallerstein, 1985), Irving and Benjamin's (1989) non-clinical sample indicated no relationship between level of income and satisfaction with physical joint custody. Nevertheless, physical joint custody is a logistically complex custody arrangement. Scheduling is the most contentious issue among physical joint custodians (Rothberg, 1983; Irving & Benjamin, 1989), although seldom to the extent of involving litigation (Steinman et al., 1985). Not surprisingly, parents who are able to negotiate and accommodate complex shared parenting schedules are characterized by flexible thinking and good problem solving skills (Irving

& Benjamin, 1989). Residential proximity facilitates physical joint custody and other complex shared parenting schedules (McKinnon & Wallerstein, 1987). However, Ingram (1989) notes two Canadian cases in which physical joint custody was awarded despite the fact that the parents lived on two different continents.

The success of a shared parenting plan that is in the best interests of children and liveable from the point of view of both parents will inevitably require that it is flexible and responsive to the changing developmental needs and resources of the family system. The divorce literature² illustrates the varying and far-reaching psychological responses of children to marital transitions, and the extent to which temperament, sex, age, and other individual characteristics mediate these responses. A shared parenting plan that is in the best interests of the child will require that parents are sensitive to the changing needs of their children and willing to modify the plan to meet these needs. For example, boys and girls may benefit from more or less time with their same- and opposite-sexed parents during different developmental periods. Zill (1988) found school-aged boys in the custody of their fathers to be more mature, social, and independent; to be less demanding; and to have higher self-esteem than school-aged girls in their father's custody. Sons in the custody of their fathers, however, are also less communicative and less overtly affectionate. Girls in the custody of their fathers show higher levels of aggression and behaviour problems than girls in the custody of their mothers (Hetherington et al., 1989). While these studies are based on grossly categorized "sole custody" families, their findings suggest the possibility that developing boys and girls may benefit from changing relationships with their divorced mothers and fathers. Thus what would truly be in the best interests of these children is that their mothers and fathers are able to understand, reevaluate, and respond to their changing needs. From this point of view, shared parenting, like divorce, is not an event or one specific arrangement, but a process that unfolds and changes over time (Huntington, 1985). This process will require not only ongoing responsiveness of each parent to each child, but ongoing cooperation between the parents. A

²For a review of the relevant divorce literature see earlier section entitled "The Psychological Sequelae of Marital Transitions."

court order for custody and access at the time of divorce may serve as an estimate of the extent to which the parents will be able to respond to the children's changing needs.

In contrast to earlier shared parenting studies comparing two or more groups defined by broad custody types, the present research will compare ex-spouses who are able to negotiate and maintain a shared parenting plan with ex-spouses who are unable to arrive at a mutually agreeable arrangement. The research to date has not generated any convincing evidence to support group definition based on legal custody categories. In fact, because children's adjustments appear to depend most strongly on parent-child and interparental relations, the custody categories may disguise findings relevant to understanding the psychology of shared parenting. Moreover, in practice, there may be simply too many specific shared parenting arrangements to compare in a meaningful way. It may make more sense to think about shared parenting in the best interests of children as a process that involves both ongoing coparental cooperation and agreement, and continuing positive relationships between parents and children. Specific arrangements (or possibly specific custody types) associated with these basic conditions may then emerge.

The Role of Child-Centeredness in Shared Parenting Agreements. A promising approach to predicting divorced parents' success in negotiating and maintaining a shared parenting plan is the extent to which they are able to take the child's perspective, to separate their adult needs from those of their children, and to respond empathically to the child's concerns. This is referred to as child-centeredness. Recent research supports the hypothesis that the development of a successful shared parenting plan hinges on the ex-spouses' capacities to put their marital differences aside and to focus on the needs of the child. Based on ten years of contact with 60 divorced families, Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) noted that ex-spouses who had avoided custody disputes tended to attribute their shared parenting success to the ability to separate appraisals of their ex-spouses as partners from perceptions of them as parents. Irving and Benjamin (1987) report that satisfied joint custodians were more likely than dissatisfied joint and sole custodians to have a strong orientation toward children and an intense commitment to

child-rearing. Jaffe and Cameron (1984), who studied 40 couples presenting to a family court clinic, found that parents who became involved in legal custody disputes are less child-focused than parents who resolve custody issues through mediation.

In a sample of 56 children of court-referred families, Johnston et al. (1987) found that the extent to which parents involve their children in their dispute, and the degree of role reversal between parent and child, predicted behaviour problems and aggression in the child over a two-year period. Tschann et al. (1989) found that children's emotional adjustment was negatively correlated with the extent to which parents used the child for emotional support, and positively correlated with the parents' capacity to empathize with the child. Others (e.g., Irving & Benjamin, 1987) have underlined the importance of ongoing coparental cooperation to the maintenance of a shared parenting plan and positive adjustment of the child. In a study of 51 families, parents who were able to empathize with the child's wish to maintain a relationship with the other parent were most successful in carrying out provisions of joint custody agreements, whereas parents who were relatively less able to separate their own feelings and needs from those of the child had difficulty maintaining the custody arrangement (Steinman et al., 1985).

In addition to intuitive appeal and limited empirical support, the concept of child-centeredness may serve as a psychological bridge from the best interests of the child criterion in the legal arena to practical recommendations for shared parenting. The focus of this dissertation is to describe child-centered parenting as a psychological construct and to investigate its utility in differentiating a group of ex-spouses who are able to cooperate as parents from a group of ex-spouses that are in disagreement about their shared parenting arrangement.

Child-Centeredness, Empathy and Parenting

A critical aspect of child-centeredness, as it is conceptualized in this study, is the parents' capacities to take the children's perspective, to appreciate the children's emotional experience, and to respond empathically to their needs and concerns. The relevance of parental empathy as an important facet of positive parenting has been advanced in the clinical and developmental

psychology literature (Feshbach, 1987). For divorcing parents, the challenge of putting aside feelings about the loss of the marital relationship to focus on the needs of the child may strain their empathic capacities.

Empathy as a Construct. Empathy, defined broadly and consensually, refers to the reactions of one individual to the observed experiences of another. As there are a number of reactions possible in such situations, specific definitions of empathy have been less clear and concordant. Historically, writers (Smith, 1759 cited in Davis, 1983a; Spencer, 1870 cited in Davis, 1983a; Deutsch, & Madle, 1975) identified two broad classes of empathic responses that still hold in the literature today. From their perspective, empathic reactions refer either to the cognitive process of understanding the other person's perspective (Deutsch & Madle, 1975; Kerr & Speroff, 1954), or to the vicarious sharing of affect primarily through visceral and emotional channels (Feshbach, 1987; Hoffman, 1977, Stotland, 1969). Following from this view, empathy has been empirically examined by some investigators as a cognitive phenomenon with studies focusing on "intellectual" processes, such as the accurate perception of others (Dymond, 1949). Other researchers have weighted the emotional facets of empathy more heavily and have studied helping behaviour in which emotional reactivity appears to play a critical role (Stotland, Mathews, Sherman, Hanson, & Richardson, 1978).

Recently there have been attempts to integrate these previously separate research traditions (Davis, 1983a). Empathy theorists are leaning toward the view that progress in understanding empathy depends on the explicit recognition of both the affective and cognitive components (Eisenberg & Strayer, 1987; Strayer, 1987b). Consequently empathy research has taken a turn toward exploring the ways in which both facets of empathy affect behaviour. A multidimensional approach to empathy has been supported by studies demonstrating different influences of the cognitive and emotional facets of dispositional empathy on emotional reactions (e.g., Davis, Hull, Young, & Warren, 1987).

Research has revealed a number of cognitive processes of varying sophistication that appear to play a role in empathy. The complexity of the cognitive skills involved depends largely

on age and level of intellectual development. At a rudimentary level, the ability to differentiate between self and other and between one's own and another's affective responding is necessary for empathizing (Eisenberg & Strayer, 1987). Another basic cognitive mechanism is that involved in the direct association between another's visual cues of distress and memories of one's own discomfort (Hoffman, 1982). Feshbach (1987) sees the ability to discriminate and label affective states in others and the capacity for assuming the perspective and role of another as important to the empathic process. There is some disagreement among empathy theorists about the extent to which any or all of these cognitive processes are necessary for empathy to occur (Strayer & Eisenberg, 1987). What has been established is that role-taking capabilities increase with age, and that it is likely that a child's store of information relevant to the interpretation of distress cues will increase as a function of experience and cognitive development (Karniol, 1982). Thus most empathy theorists agree that developmental changes in cognitive processing capabilities are directly or indirectly related to the development of empathy (Eisenberg & Strayer, 1987).

The role of empathy in the development of prosocial behaviour has received considerable attention in the empirical literature (Eisenberg & Miller, 1987). Current evidence suggests that while empathy and sympathy are positively related to prosocial behaviour, empathy does not necessarily motivate voluntary behaviour intended to benefit others. For example, empathic arousal may diminish before action can be taken, or empathic feelings may be outweighed by other more pressing considerations (e.g., risk to self). In the context of divorcing parents, the wish to punish one's ex-spouse for ending the marital relationship may outweigh an appreciation of the child's need to maintain contact with the other parent. A visit with the other parent may be cancelled against the best interests of the child.

Empathic feelings do not always lead to specific behavioural responses. In the context of psychotherapy, for instance, the most empathic response in appreciating the client's situation may be to say or do nothing at all (Marcia, 1987). Furthermore, "prosocial" behaviour may occur in the absence of empathic motives; for example, to gain social acceptance or to manipulate an interpersonal situation according to one's own interests. Disputing parents may superficially

encourage children's visits with the noncustodial parent and document these efforts for the purposes of court hearings, while at the same time undermining the child's relationship with the other parent at a more subtle level.

Another critical issue in the empathy literature is the differentiation of empathy from related concepts, such as sympathy and personal distress. Eisenberg and Strayer (1987) identify sympathy as "feeling for" someone, and more specifically, feeling sorry for another. In contrast, empathy means "feeling with" another person's broad range of affective states. Empathy theorists agree that sympathy may be a consequence of empathy, but the way in which empathy mediates sympathy remains to be explored.

By drawing on their experiences as therapists, clinicians have contributed a unique perspective on the concepts of empathy, sympathy and personal distress (Goldstein & Michaels, 1985; Marcia, 1987). Theodore Reik's model of the empathic process in psychotherapy is especially noteworthy. Reik (1949) delineates four aspects of the empathic process that rely with varying degrees on the affective and cognitive components of empathy. The affective component plays a primary role in the process of "incorporation", where the client's emotional state is internalized and experienced by the therapist; and in "reverberation", which refers to experiencing the client's experience while simultaneously attending to one's own cognitive and affective associations to that experience. In the empathic processes of "identification" and "detachment" the cognitive aspects of empathy are central and affect is neutralized. Identification involves therapists absorbing themselves in paying attention to their clients. In the course of detachment the therapist moves back from the merged inner relationship to a position of separate identity, which permits a response to be made that reflects both understanding of others as well as separateness from them. From the clinician's perspective, sympathy involves heightened attention to one's own feelings as they are assumed to be similar to the other's emotional experience. In contrast, empathy involves taking the perspective of the other and being sensitive to the full range and depth of the other's affective state, regardless of correspondence to one's own situation (Marcia, 1987).

Personal distress refers to responding to another's distress by experiencing an aversive state (anxiety, worry) that is incongruent with the other's affective state and leads to a self-oriented reaction or concern (Eisenberg & Strayer, 1987). The experience of personal distress is likely to motivate attempts to alleviate one's own aversive state rather than to assist the other (Batson & Coke, 1981). Davis (1983b) found that individuals who tend to respond to another's predicament with personal distress have more difficulty establishing and maintaining rewarding social relationships than persons not characterized by such feelings.

Some authors (Eisenberg & Strayer, 1987) have attempted to differentiate personal distress from projection. Projection refers to ascribing one's own feelings, attitudes and thoughts to another. The direction of the process of projection is from self to other, whereas the empathic course proceeds from other to self. While there is no empirical evidence to this effect, it can be argued from a clinical perspective that an individual, who becomes overwhelmed or "flooded" by the personal distress aroused in observing the emotional situation of another (especially if the other's situation reminds them of a painful instance in their own lives), may project their own distress onto the other in order to alleviate their own discomfort. Thus personal distress may in some instances precipitate psychological defense through projection. It is not unusual for children to "remind" one parent of their ex-spouse in ways that are painful or distressing. It is also not uncommon for disputing parents to attribute adult intentions to the behaviour of their children; e.g., "hurry up and get your coat on ... you're just like your father/mother trying to undermine me in my new job ..."

While some empathy theorists have argued that empathy and personal distress are conceptually unrelated, others believe that personal distress is a primitive form of empathy (e.g., Hoffman, 1982). From this perspective "global distress" or "emotional contagion", which is characterized in young children by confusion of their own feelings with those of others, is an early stage in the development of empathy (Hoffman, 1976). Under normal circumstances, as the child learns to differentiate self from other, empathy should emerge with progressive maturity.

Personality theorists have further contributed to our understanding of the role of empathy in personality development (Marcia, 1987). The object relations and self psychology theorists, in particular (e.g., Bowlby, Fairbairn, Klein, Kohut, Mahler, Winnocott as reviewed in Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983; and Marcia, 1987), stress the primary importance of an empathic mother³-child relationship to healthy child development. These theorists are unified in their belief that the child develops an autonomous self through empathic interactions with the mothering one (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983). In contrast to Freudian notions of intrapsychic drives, Melanie Klein essentially sees children as driven toward relationships. She perceives drives as feelings directed toward others that are expressed through bodily channels in early stages of development. Fairbairn believes that personality development proceeds through progressively maturing modes of relating to others. Margaret Mahler, strongly influenced by Bowlby's work on attachment, delineates how the child achieves individuation through encouragement from an empathic mother to pass through the symbiosis, differentiation, practicing, and rapprochement subphases of development (Marcia, 1987).

Winnicott (1965) and Kohut (1971) perceive the "good enough mother" as being able to resonate with the infant's needs and feelings. From their perspective, the mother acts as a "mirror that serves both to reflect and to organize the infant's initially scattered, but gradually integrating, sense of self" (Marcia, 1987; p. 87). The mother's empathic "mirroring" helps the child to become connected with his or her own bodily experience. The child's increasing harmony with his or her bodily functioning then becomes the foundation for the evolving sense of self. Kohut's concept of mirroring refers to the ongoing positive reflection of the infant's growing self by both parents and is markedly similar to Carl Roger's notion of "unconditional positive regard" (Marcia, 1987).

The Measurement of Empathy. Investigators interested in operationalizing empathy have employed various methods. Each of these methods is associated with distinct advantages and

³"Mother" in this context refers more broadly to the "mothering one." While these theorists primarily make reference to mothers as the infant's primary caregiver, there is no suggestion in their writings that this role could not also be taken by the father or shared between the parents and/or other significant adults.

disadvantages, and the appropriate choice of method depends on the type of subject population and the context in which the measure will be used. These methods include picture-story procedures typically used with children (Strayer, 1987b); self-report of affective state (Batson, 1987), facial/gestural measures (Marcus, 1987), and physiological measures (Eisenberg, Fabes, Bustamente, & Mathy, 1987) most often employed in experimental studies; and self-report questionnaires designed to measure dispositional empathy (Bryant, 1987). Only self-report questionnaires will be discussed here, because they are the most suitable and practical of the available methods for the purposes of the current study.

Paper-and-pencil measures have generally focused on empathy as a vicarious emotional response to the perceived emotional experience of others. In keeping with the view that how an individual experiences the world is more relevant than someone else's interpretation of that person's experiences (Kagan, 1984), the individual's conscious experience of perceived sharing of affect is seen as paramount. In contrast to nonverbal and physiological indices of emotional arousal, paper-and-pencil measures of empathy highlight the metaexperience and reporting of vicarious emotional response to the perceived emotional experiences. Moreover, self-report questionnaires of empathy emphasize emotional responsiveness rather than accuracy of role-taking and cognitive insight *per se* (Bryant, 1987).

Paper-and-pencil measures of empathy are based, more or less explicitly, on the assumption that there are dispositional differences among individuals that affect both the quantity and quality of emotional reaction to others' distress (Batson, Fultz, & Schoenrade, 1987). Some researchers suggest that the nature of these dispositional differences lies in the ability to take the other's perspective (Krebs & Russell, 1981) and willingness to do so (Marcia, 1987); others focus on individual differences in general emotionality (Matthews, Batson, Horn, & Rosenhan, 1981) or a readiness to empathize (Davis, 1983a; 1983b); and others still point to genetic factors with a possible sex linkage (Hoffman, 1981).

The two most established measures of dispositional differences in adults' emotional reactions to the distress of others are the Empathy Scale (Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972) and the

Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Davis, 1983a). The Empathy Scale (Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972) has acceptable psychometric properties, but has recently been criticized for its lack of specificity (Batson et al., 1987). This inventory appears to measure a tendency toward general emotional arousability in a variety of situations without including explicit subscales to reflect the multidimensional picture of empathy that is emerging from the literature.

Davis' Interpersonal Reactivity Index⁴ (1983) has been welcomed as an improvement over the Empathy Scale (Batson et al., 1987). The Interpersonal Reactivity Index is a more differentiated measure including four subscales designed to measure specific aspects of empathy. The Perspective Taking Scale (PT) captures the cognitive component of empathy, in that it measures the respondent's perceived tendency to adopt spontaneously the other's point of view. Individuals who score high on PT are more responsive than low scorers to explicit instructions to take another's perspective (Davis et al., 1987), and are more accurate in perceiving others (Bernstein & Davis, 1982). Validation studies demonstrated that PT is linked to a constellation of personal characteristics indicative of social competence and satisfaction. No correlations between this subscale and general intelligence have been revealed (Davis et al., 1987).

In contrast to the Perspective Taking Scale, Empathic Concern (EC) is most closely aligned with descriptions of the affective component of empathy. It assesses an individual's tendency to experience feelings of warmth, compassion, and concern for others. Davis' (1983a) Empathic Concern subscale has received support as a measure of individual differences in emotionality. For example, high EC scorers tend to have stronger emotional reactions and to experience more anxiety following exposure to an appeal for help from a needy student (Davis, 1983b). Moreover, high EC scorers tend to be perceived as unselfish by their peers. Like the Perspective Taking Scale, individual scores on the Empathic Concern are not correlated with measures of general intelligence (Davis et. al, 1987).

⁴Scoring details and psychometric information for Davis' (1983) Interpersonal Reactivity Index are included in the "Method" section.

The Personal Distress Scale (PD) measures self-reported feelings of unease, distress and discomfort in tense interpersonal settings. The IRI (Davis, 1983a) is the only self-report measure that has attempted to differentiate between empathy and its apparent developmental antecedent, personal distress (Eisenberg & Miller, 1987). Validation research has suggested that high scorers on the PD scale tend to have low self-esteem and poor interpersonal skills, and are characterized by feelings of vulnerability, uncertainty and fearfulness.

The Fantasy Scale (FS) evaluates a reported tendency to transpose oneself imaginatively into the feelings and actions of fictitious characters in books, movies, and plays. Of the four subscales, FS has least connection with the empathy literature and, not surprisingly, it has been the most difficult to interpret. Davis et al. (1987) report that individuals, and especially men, who score high on this subscale tend to be intelligent, socially withdrawn, and ill at ease in social settings. Thus these individuals are likely to escape anxiety-evoking interpersonal situations by retreating to fantasy and fiction.

The Davis (1983a) scales have demonstrated reliable individual differences in self-reports of a disposition to identify with fictional characters, to take the perspective of others, and to report feeling empathy or distress in response to witnessing another's predicament. However, there has been some question about what these dispositional differences actually mean. Some (e.g., Batson et al., 1987) have argued that what is measured by self-report questionnaire measures of perspective taking and dispositional empathy is, in part, individual differences in self-presentation. They interpret sex differences in Empathic Concern scores to reflect the fact that women are more encouraged than men to present themselves as emotionally responsive and caring individuals. Thus these writers caution against assuming that the tendency to report a disposition to respond empathically, and to actually react emotionally when confronted with someone in distress, are necessarily the same. While this argument will always present a conceptual concern for empathy researchers, there is a growing empirical literature to counteract this argument. This research suggests that there is a positive relation between empathic disposition and prosocial behaviour, especially among adults (for review of this literature see Eisenberg & Miller, 1987).

Parental Empathy and Parenting Beliefs. Object relations theorists (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983) and other developmentalists (e.g., Feshbach, 1987) emphasize the importance of parental empathy and related parental attributes, such as sympathy, understanding, caring, acceptance, and sensitive parenting, to the child's psychological development. Conversely, lack of parental empathy is theorized to be in part responsible for a fragmented self and other forms of psychopathology in the child (Kohut, 1971). While empirical efforts directed toward establishing links between specific parental antecedents and specific developmental outcomes have yielded ambiguous findings, research approaches relating broader parenting styles, associated with parents' empathic capacity, to child indices have been more promising (Feshbach, 1987).

Becker's (1964) factor analyses of data generated by a number of different studies revealed warmth-hostility and restrictiveness-permissiveness as principal dimensions of empathy-related parenting behaviour. He concluded that hostility and restrictiveness in mothers is related to aggressiveness in children. Subsequent research indicating that permissive parenting may have negative consequences for children (Baumrind, 1971; Patterson, 1982) warranted a revised conclusion that parental warmth mediates the effects of restrictiveness and permissiveness (Feshbach, 1987).

Based on their longitudinal study of high-risk mothers in Minnesota, Egeland and Sroufe (1981) found that children of mothers identified as "unavailable" or "uninvolved" parents became increasingly dysfunctional with age. Pulkkinen's (1982) longitudinal research in Finland similarly suggested that during their adolescence, children of involved and child-centered parents were socially competent, close to their parents, acted responsibly, and achieved more in line with their potentials. In contrast, the children of parent-centered parents were impulsive, had poor emotional control, showed difficulties in interacting with peers, and were less achieving than children in the high parental involvement group. When these children reached adulthood the contrasting pattern had become more exaggerated.

An additional component of empathy-related parenting behaviour is sensitivity to the child's feelings and needs (Feshbach, 1987). Studies of mother-infant interactions have

repeatedly indicated that maternal sensitivity is related to the quality of infant attachment. Mothers of anxiously attached children are less sensitive and are more likely to misidentify infant cues than mothers of securely attached infants (Ainsworth, Bell, & Stayton, 1974). Moreover, the quality of early attachment is predictive of infants' subsequent behavioural and relational adjustment (Matas, Arend, & Sroufe, 1978). This suggests that maternal sensitivity to the child's feelings and needs, as one aspect of parental empathy, is positively related to the child's adjustment (Feshbach, 1987).

The child abuse literature is relevant to our understanding of parental empathy. There is substantial evidence that repeated physical punishment by parents is associated with a wide range of dysfunctional behaviours in children, including anxious attachment, excessive aggression, conduct problems, social withdrawal, and low self-esteem (Feshbach, 1987). Research has consistently demonstrated that physically abusive adults are less empathic than nonabusive parents. For example, Wiehe (1986) found that abusing mothers scored significantly lower than nonabusing mothers on a self-report measure of cognitive empathy (Hogan Empathy Scale; Hogan, 1969). Frodi and Lamb (1980) demonstrated that abusive parents have more difficulty discriminating crying from smiling infants than nonabusive parents. Moreover, the abusive group showed more anger and fewer empathic responses than control parents when observing videotapes of crying infants. Self-reports of empathic disposition are better predictors of physical abuse by mothers than life-stress indices (Letourneau, 1981), although lack of social support and high levels of stress may precipitate an abusive episode in a nonempathic parent (Feshbach, 1987). Research examining the characteristics of incest offenders may also shed light on the role of empathy in parenting. While no single profile of the incest offender has been identified, empathy-related characteristics noted in sexually abusing parents include excessive self-centeredness; developmentally unrealistic expectations for children; parent-child role reversal and relationship difficulties; and a tendency to regress when faced with stressful life circumstances (Efterman & Ehrenberg, 1991).

Based on a review of the parenting and child abuse literatures, Bavolek (1984) constructed a self-report inventory designed to assess empathy-related parenting and child-rearing attitudes⁵. The Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI; Bavolek, 1984) consists of four scales designed to assess parenting beliefs in the areas of developmentally appropriate expectations of children, empathic concern for children's needs, resistance to reversal of parent and child roles, and use of nonphysical methods of discipline. Current empirical findings demonstrate the utility of the AAPI in discriminating abusive and nonabusive parents of different ages, educational and ethnic backgrounds (Bavolek, 1989; Bavolek, Kline & McLaughlin, 1979; Murphy, 1980; Price, 1985; Stone, 1980)

Insofar as nonempathic parenting attitudes contribute to parents' physically and sexually abusive behaviour, increasing evidence that abusive child-rearing patterns run in families may have implications for empathy as a mechanism of transmission (Browne & Finkelhor, 1986). Nonempathic parents are likely to have nonempathic children (Feshbach, 1987). In addition to modeling empathy for the child, the empathic parent is likely to be more accepting of the child's feelings and to reinforce prosocial behaviour. Children of empathic parents tend to be more sensitive to the other child's perspective in conflict situations than children of nonempathic parents (Goldstein & Michaels, 1985). As adults, individuals who were abused during their childhood, tend to hold nonempathic and maladaptive parenting beliefs similar to those held by their own abusive parents (Bavolek, 1989). Based on their contact with 75 mother-child dyads over 26 years, Koestner, Franz and Weinberger (1990) found that level of empathic concern at age 31 could be predicted from empathy-related parenting dimensions derived from interviews with the mother when the children were five years old. Paternal involvement in child care, maternal tolerance of dependent behaviour, and maternal satisfaction with the role of mother were among the best predictors.

⁵Scoring details and psychometric information for Bavolek's Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (1984) are included in the "Method" section.

Discussion. Parental empathy has been linked to major dimensions of parental attributes and practices such as parental warmth, parental involvement in the child, and parental sensitivity to the child. Current research suggests that these empathic parenting characteristics are critical elements of the attachment relationship between parent and child, and facilitate the development of adaptive behaviour in children. As is true of the general empathy literature, empathic parenting appears to entail both affective and cognitive elements. Parental warmth and sensitivity may require affective correspondence on the part of the parent with the emotional experience of the child. Understanding the child's perspective, and being realistic about the child's developmental capabilities, are more likely to be mediated by cognitive processes.

Congruent with Becker's (1964) finding that permissive parenting can have negative consequences for the child, some writers have asserted that excessive empathy sometimes can be damaging to the child (Feshbach, 1987). Yet the instances they cite suggest self-oriented or narcissistically-based responses rather than mature empathy. For example, they argue that immoderate empathy may foster intrusiveness into the child's experiences and activities, when the operant emotional process is more consistent with pathological symbiosis. It is also suggested that "excessive empathy" may block parents from engaging in appropriate child-training behaviours, because they are overwhelmed by the child's distressed response. Again the emotional process on the part of the parent appears more self-oriented (personal distress) than other-oriented (empathy). Kaplan (1983; cited in Feshbach, 1987, pp. 276-277) holds that parental empathy should reflect maturity and competence in differentiation from the child, rather than psychological regression, projection, and dependency. However, this may not always be the case. Some object relations theorists (e.g., Winnicott, 1965) have noted that parents may rely regressively on their own childhood experiences as a basis for "empathy" with the child. In the face of the relational stresses of a marital separation or divorce, parents who lack empathy (empathic concern, perspective taking, empathy-related parenting attitudes) may regress in their relationship with the children to an earlier stage of development when feelings of loss were predominant and when their needs were not being met. Under these conditions the parent may

feel more like the child, and may expect the child to respond to them like adults or parents. In these instances, a regressed parent's perception of the child's best interests may in fact be a more accurate reflection of what the parent feels (personal distress), than what the child needs.

The last section of this introduction will identify personality characteristics hypothesized to be associated with self- versus child-centeredness. The question to be addressed in this last section is what types of divorcing parents are likely to lack empathy and experience personal distress in the face of their children's demands? What types of parents are less likely than others to hold constructive empathy-related parenting beliefs? And most importantly, what type of personality structure characterizes individuals who regress in the face of a marriage break-up? What kinds of ex-couples will have difficulties separating their own needs from those of their children in order to arrive at a child-centered shared parenting plan?

Narcissism as a Failure of Empathy

Individuals with narcissistic personalities are characterized by self-centeredness, a lack of empathy, and hypersensitivity to rejection and relational loss. In the present study, a divorced parent's level of narcissistic functioning is viewed as an integral aspect of self- versus child-centeredness. Narcissistic ex-spouses may have difficulty empathizing with their children's needs and may, therefore, lack a shared focus on which to base their parenting efforts and decisions. In contrast, less narcissistic parents are expected to be more capable of separating their own feelings from those of their children, and less likely to draw the child into a custody dispute.

Narcissism in Historical Context. The concept of narcissism originates in the Greek myth of Narcissus (Savitz, 1986). According to this ancient myth, Narcissus was a handsome young Thespian with whom the nymph, Echo, fell in love. Echo had been deprived of speech by Hera, the wife of Zeus, and could only repeat words spoken to her⁶. When the shy and self-conscious Echo finally gathered the courage to approach the "fiercely proud" Narcissus, he was at first

⁶Apparently Hera had inflicted this condition on Echo, because the young nymph had colluded with Zeus in keeping his sexual adventures secret.

intrigued to hear his own words spoken from Echo's lips. Yet frustrated by her inability to express her love in words, Echo flung her arms around Narcissus and he rejected her ruthlessly. Ashamed and hurt, Echo retreated to a cave where she died of a broken heart. All that was left of her as her body disintegrated was a voice that echos when called. The god, Nemesis, punished Narcissus for his cruelty by causing him to fall in love with his own image. Narcissus indeed became passionately enamored with his image, which he mistook for another. The seer, Tiresias, had predicted that Narcissus would live until he saw himself. True to prophesy, Narcissus caught sight of his own reflection in the water one day while leaning over a fountain. While he was gazing at his reflection in the pool, he realized his predicament and, like Echo, pined for what he could not have. Unable to tear himself away from the reflection of his image, he died of languor. Upon his death he was turned into a flower, the narcissus that grows at the edge of springs (Lowen, 1985; Savitz, 1986). The myth of Narcissus has stayed with us as a recurring theme in poetry (e.g., the work of Sylvia Plath discussed in Kavalier, 1986), and other writings (e.g., the work of Anais Nin also discussed in Kavalier, 1986).

Narcissism was first advanced in the psychological literature in 1898 when Havelock Ellis used the term "Narcissus-like" to refer to "tendency for the sexual emotions to be lost and almost entirely absorbed in self-admiration" (Ellis, 1898; cited in Raskin & Terry, 1988). A summary of Ellis' paper appeared in the German psychiatric literature, in which "Narcismus" was defined as a sexual perversion where one's own body is treated as a sexual object (Nacke, 1899; cited in Raskin & Terry, 1988). According to contemporary psychoanalytic writers, the concept of narcissism profoundly influenced Freud's metapsychological and clinical thinking (Fine, 1986; Sacksteder, 1990; Tiecholz, 1978). Today psychoanalysts believe that Freud's thinking about narcissism eventually paved the way for a shift from id psychology to object relations theory (Moore, 1975).

Freud's conceptualization of narcissism followed two interdependent lines of development (Raskin & Terry, 1988). First, as an aid to his metapsychological thinking, Freud used the term narcissism to describe the stage of development between autoerotic sexuality and

object love; as a type of object choice in which the self plays a more important part in the relationship than the actual characteristics of the object; and as a mechanism for establishing ego ideals and for developing and maintaining self-esteem. Second, as a clinical and diagnostic construct, Freud described narcissism as attitudes toward oneself, including self-love, self-admiration, self-aggrandizement; vulnerabilities of self-esteem, including the fear of losing love and of failure; and a defensive orientation characterized by idealization, denial, projection, and exaggerated displays of self-sufficiency (Raskin & Terry, 1988; Tiecholz, 1978). Based on his clinical work, Freud noted a collection of attitudes that he viewed as characteristic of the narcissist's interpersonal functioning. These attitudes include exhibitionism; feelings of entitlement involving the expectation of special privileges and exemptions over others; envy and jealousy; a tendency to see others as extensions of oneself; feelings and thought of omnipotence; and an intolerance for criticism while being excessively critical of others (Levine, 1985; Moore 1975; Raskin & Terry, 1988).

Freud's clinical conceptualizations of narcissism stimulated important advances in understanding the etiology of narcissistic disturbance. Influenced by Freud's thinking and Bowlby's (1969; 1973) findings on infant's attachment relationships, object relations theorists came to believe that narcissistic disturbance is rooted in difficulties in the separation-individuation phase of infant development (Kernberg, 1975; Kohut, 1971; Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1975). According to these theorists, nonempathic parents, who themselves suffered a narcissistic injury during their childhood years, use the child to fulfill their own unsatisfied needs for admiration, praise, recognition, and achievement. As a consequence, the child lacks the empathic parenting environment necessary for the development of a self differentiated from others. Thus from the point of view of object relations theorists, narcissism results from a failure of empathy on the part of parents (Miller, 1981).

In addition to contributions in the area of etiology, object relations theorists have focused on the psychological defenses associated with narcissistic disturbance of self. For example, Kernberg (1975) has suggested that narcissistic devaluation of others is a defense against the

fear of loss of love, and to ward off the depression that typically occurs when this fear materializes. Another central aspect of narcissistic disturbance is the defensive process of splitting (Kernberg, 1975). Splitting refers to the absolute separation of positive ("the good") and negative ("the bad") affectively laden images of oneself for lack of being able to integrate these diverse aspects in a unified sense of self. Moreover, Kohut (1971) argues that narcissistic individuals rely excessively on external sources of gratification, because they cannot depend on internalized sources of self-esteem. According to Kernberg (1975), the disturbance in the regulation of self-esteem is related to a lack of differentiation among an individual's self-representations, ideal self-representations, and ideal object representations. The unconscious and excessive dependency on external sources of love is a tremendous source of vulnerability for the narcissistic individual. This vulnerability is typically defended against by displays of grandiosity and superiority aimed at creating an illusion of self-sufficiency (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983).

In response to clinical psychology's interest and theoretical advances in narcissistic disturbance, the American Psychiatric Association added Narcissistic Personality Disorder as a diagnostic category in its two most recent versions of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III; American Psychiatric Association, 1980; DSM-III-R; American Psychiatric Association, 1987). Based on over 90 years of clinical observations on narcissistic phenomena, a relatively clear and consensual definition of Narcissistic Personality Disorder has emerged:

"A pervasive pattern of grandiosity (in fantasy or behaviour), lack of empathy, and hypersensitivity to the evaluation of others, beginning by early adulthood and present in a variety of contexts, as indicated by at least five of the following: (1) reacts to criticism with feelings of rage, shame, or humiliation (even if not expressed); (2) is interpersonally exploitative (takes advantage of others to achieve his or her own ends); (3) has a grandiose sense of self-importance, e.g., exaggerates achievements and talents, expects to be noticed as "special" without appropriate achievement; (4) believes that his or her problems are unique

and can be understood only by other special people; (5) is preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love; (6) has a sense of entitlement, unreasonable expectation of especially favorable treatment, e.g., assumes that he or she does not have to wait in line when others must do so; (7) requires constant attention and admiration, e.g., keeps fishing for compliments; (8) lack of empathy, inability to recognize and experience how others feel, e.g., annoyance and surprise when a friend who is seriously ill cancels a date; (9) is preoccupied with feelings of envy⁷" (American Psychiatric Association, 1987, p. 351).

The Measurement of Narcissism. Whereas clinical interest in narcissism has been plentiful since the concept was introduced into the psychological literature in 1898, efforts to quantify this construct have been relatively sparse (Raskin & Terry, 1988). Some researchers have attempted to measure narcissism as one variable in a taxonomy of several other variables. For example, Murray (1938) developed a scale of narcissism as a part of his general taxonomy of manifest needs, latent needs, inner states, and general states. Others developed projective measures in which narcissism is included as one of several stages of psychosexual development (Blum, 1950; Grygier, 1961; Krout & Tabin, 1954). Leary (1956) included narcissism in his taxonomy of 16 interpersonal behavioural descriptors, and Cattell, Horne, Sweney, and Radcliffe (1964) included narcissism in their motivational taxonomy of ergs and sentiments. The most recent efforts to quantify narcissism have been aimed at measuring the narcissistic personality as part of the taxonomy of DSM-III personality disorders (Hyler, Reider, & Spitzer, 1982; Millon, 1982; Morey, Waugh, & Blashfield, 1985). To date there has been little validation evidence for any of these measures, in part because the construct of narcissism often gets lost in the complex of other taxonomic variables measured by these indices (Raskin & Terry, 1988). Moreover, these

⁷The inclusion of a preoccupation with feelings of envy were added in DSM-III-R (American Psychiatric Association, 1987) as a modification to the previous version DSM-III (American Psychiatric Association, 1980).

measures tend to conceptualize narcissism in idiosyncratic terms with little regard for the more consensual definition of the term that has emerged from the literature (see DSM-III-R criteria listed above).

In contrast to measures that include narcissism as one of several variables, some investigators have attempted to construct scales for clinical populations where narcissism is the principal variable of interest. These attempts include behaviour rating scales to measure narcissistic psychopathology (Goldman, 1977; Patton, Connor, & Scott, 1982; Windholz, 1979) and borderline-narcissistic functioning (Carillio, 1981). Projective measures of narcissism include Grayden's (1958) Q-sort for use with the Thematic Apperception Test; sentence completion formats (Douval & Edelson, 1966; Watson, 1965 cited in Terry & Raskin, 1988) Wolman's (1967) word definition task; and the development of additional response categories on the Rorschach Inkblot Test (Exner, 1969; Harder, 1979; Urquist, 1977). Other researchers have developed indices for measuring narcissism by drawing on Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory items (Ashby, Lee, & Duke, 1979 cited in Raskin & Terry, 1988; Serkownek, 1975 cited in Raskin & Terry, 1988). While these measures were constructed specifically to evaluate narcissistic pathology, they are either not well validated (e.g., Grayden, 1958) or they have not been extended for use with nonclinical populations (e.g., Carillio, 1981)

Raskin and Hall (1979) developed the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) to assess individual differences in narcissism in nonclinical populations. Using DSM-III criteria for narcissism as a conceptual framework, these researchers generated 220 forced-choice items which were eventually reduced to 80 (Raskin & Hall, 1981) and then 40 items (Raskin & Terry, 1988). Empirical efforts have affirmed the internal consistency (coefficient alphas ranging from .80 to .86) and construct validity of the NPI in both nonclinical and clinical samples (Auerbach, 1984; Biscardi & Schill, 1985; Emmons, 1984; 1987; Joubert, 1986; Prifitera & Ryan, 1984; Raskin, 1980; Raskin & Novacek, 1989; Raskin & Hall, 1981; Raskin & Shaw, 1988; Raskin & Terry, 1988; Watson, Hood, & Morris, 1984).

Consistent with its development in the clinical literature, Raskin and his team (Raskin & Hall, 1981; Raskin & Terry, 1988) conceptualize narcissism as a higher order construct that describes diverse but interrelated psychological and behavioural dimensions. The results of factor analytic studies suggest that the NPI reflects the multidimensionality inherent in the construct itself (Emmons, 1984; 1987; Raskin & Terry, 1988; Watson, Grisham, Trotter, & Biderman, 1984). These studies taken together provide evidence for a general construct of narcissism comprised of seven components that reflect variant aspects of narcissistic functioning described in the clinical literature and reflected in the DSM-III-R criteria for Narcissistic Personality Disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 1987). These components include Authority, Exhibitionism, Self-Sufficiency, Entitlement, Exploitativeness, Superiority, and Vanity⁸.

The NPI recommends itself as a theory-based and parsimonious measure of narcissism with strong psychometric properties and substantial empirical support for its use with diverse samples. Moreover, research using NPI has helped to clarify conceptual issues relevant to our understanding of narcissism. For example, the results of one study employing both NPI and MMPI profiles supported the psychodynamic hypothesis that narcissistic individuals rely on the use of grandiose fantasies and self-conceptualizations in order to defend against underlying feelings of inadequacy and depression (Raskin & Novacek, 1989). Furthermore, high scorers on the NPI tend to report a higher need for power in their relationships and a lower need for intimacy in their interactions with others (Carroll, 1987). In a study of 64 undergraduates, narcissism was correlated with susceptibility to boredom in male subjects, and a tendency to seek out experience in female respondents (Emmons, 1984).

The NPI has also provided a context for understanding the range and diversity in narcissistic functioning. While the inventory is based on the DSM-III criteria, only extreme manifestations of these behavioural criteria appear to constitute pathological narcissism (e.g., Prifitera & Ryan, 1984). Less extreme forms of narcissism are thought to be reflective of

⁸The seven NPI components or subscales are described in the "Method" section.

narcissism as a personality trait and are correlated with some interpersonal difficulties (Carroll, 1987; Joubert, 1986). A modicum of narcissism, as measured by the NPI, appears to be associated with healthy self-esteem and positive social adjustment (Emmons, 1984; Watson, McKinney, Hawkins, & Morris, 1988). Raskin and Novacek's (1989) most recent findings using the NPI component subscales suggest that narcissistic Entitlement and Exploitativeness reflect the most maladjustment in interpersonal functioning, whereas narcissistic Authority reflects the least dysfunction in this domain. These results are consistent with theoretical discussions of narcissism as a multidimensional continuum ranging from healthy to pathological functioning (Lowen, 1985; Sohn, 1985).

Phares and Erskine (1984) recently constructed the Selfism Scale to measure the tendency of individuals to view a large number of situations from a self-serving as opposed to an other-oriented perspective. The Selfism Scale (Phares & Erskine, 1984) was not designed to capture the complexity of narcissistic functioning as it has been conceptualized in the clinical literature, but instead attempts to quantify the cognitive attitude or world view that is associated with narcissistic personality functioning. Although the Selfism Scale is not as widely used and well validated as the NPI, this measure has demonstrated adequate psychometric properties and is positively correlated with the NPI (Phares & Erskine, 1984).⁹

Object relations theory appears to imply a negative relationship between narcissism and empathy, and a positive relationship between narcissism and personal distress. However, empirical investigations of these associations have been curiously absent. While no studies comparing Narcissistic Personality Inventory and Interpersonal Reactivity Index scores could be found, a study of 97 undergraduate males indicated a moderate negative correlation between NPI total score and Hogan's Empathy Scale (1969; Watson et al., 1984). Hogan's scale (1969) was constructed to measure the cognitive aspects of empathy (Feshbach, 1987).

⁹Psychometric information and scoring details for the Selfism Scale (Phares & Erskine, 1984) are included in the "Method" section.

The Narcissistic Spectrum. Alexander Lowen (1985) views narcissism as a spectrum of psychological conditions characterized by an inability to accept one's true, inner self. He believes that individuals who cannot accept their true selves construct a fixed mask or "image" that hides their emotional numbness from others. For Lowen (1985), the "true self" is not a mental construct, but a "physical attunement" with one's feelings. He recognizes that mental representations of self (ego) are developed from the "true self", but his point is that at a rudimentary level the self is a bodily, sensing-focused phenomenon.

Consistent with the object relations perspective (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983), Lowen (1985) argues that narcissistic individuals have typically suffered two types of trauma during their childhood years. The first type of trauma is related to "what the parents didn't do" and results in a lack of development in the child (Lowen, 1985, p. 12). In accordance with object relations theory, this lack of maturation in the child is thought to be caused by the parents' failure to provide sufficient respect, recognition, nurturance, and empathy for the child's individuality. As a consequence of this lack of support, the child is unable to develop an identity separate from the primary love object (the parent). Thus the child fails to move from the stage of self-love (primary narcissism) to true object (other-directed) love.

The second type of childhood trauma suffered by the narcissistic individual is discussed by Lowen (1985) in his extension and clarification of object relations theory. According to Lowen, this second type of trauma results in a distortion of the child's development and is related to "what the parents did do" (1985, p. 12). He believes that narcissistic parents seductively try to mold their children according to an image of how they should be. The parents' narcissistic projection of their own wishes and ideals onto the child effects a distortion of natural development. In the service of winning the parents' regard and affection the child attempts to become what the parents wish they were. As a result of the primary "narcissistic injury" or lack of acceptance by their parents, such children grow up to become narcissistic adults who focus on their image rather than their feelings.

Narcissism covers a broad spectrum of behaviours reflecting various degrees of disturbance or "loss of self" (Lowen, 1985). The degree to which a person identifies with his or

her feelings is inversely proportionate to the degree of narcissism. The more narcissistic, the less one is identified with one's feelings. Moreover, the more narcissistic, the greater the identification with one's image (as opposed to self) along with a proportionate degree of grandiosity or self-inflation.

Lowen (1985) conceptualizes narcissistic, borderline, and antisocial personalities as manifesting variant degrees of narcissism, from least to most severe. Of the three personality syndromes, the antisocial personality is viewed as having the most severely disturbed sense of self. For antisocial personalities the denial of feelings and lack of empathy for others is complete. Their feelings of grandiosity and superiority are so extreme that they "verge on contempt for common humanity" (Lowen, 1985, p. 22). Antisocial personalities appear self-justified in their antisocial acts and feel no remorse. While narcissistic and borderline individuals will also act out, the acting out of the antisocial personality is more commonly antisocial and of longer duration (Masterson, 1981)¹⁰. In contrast to the narcissistic and borderline personalities, antisocial personalities are so disconnected from their feelings that they cannot experience "real" depression¹¹.

Lowen (1985) argues that both borderline and narcissistic personalities have grandiose self-images. However, because narcissistic personalities have greater ego-strength than borderlines, their facade is less likely to crumble under relational stresses. In contrast, borderline personalities find themselves caught between two contradictory self-images; they are either totally great or totally worthless. According to Lowen (1985), this is because borderline personalities were likely to have been exposed to rapidly and drastically changing expectations on the part of their parents (as their feelings about themselves fluctuated). Narcissistic personalities, on the other hand, were more likely to have grown up as "princes" and "princesses" in their

¹⁰The term "acting out" describes an impulsive type of behaviour that ignores the feelings of other persons and is ultimately destructive to the best interests of the self (Lowen, 1985, p. 22).

¹¹Depressive-like behaviours are seen in individuals with antisocial personality disorder when they are blocked in their actions (e.g., incarceration). However, these behaviours do not appear to be associated with affectively-based symptom pictures normally seen in depression.

parents' eyes. Therefore, for narcissistic personalities, the grandiosity is expressed as a need to be perfect and to have others see them as perfect all of the time (Masterson, 1981).

There is both clinical and empirical evidence to support Lowen's (1985) view that narcissistic (NPD), borderline (BPD) and antisocial personality disorder (APD) share common features. Evidence suggesting overlap among these three personality disorders has been incorporated in an explicit DSM-III-R recommendation that NPD and BPD, or BPD and APD, are likely to occur together and that clients should be given both diagnoses in these instances (American Psychiatric Association, 1987). Similarly, clinicians have noted that the same client's symptoms may become both more and less consistent with diagnoses of NPD, BPD or APD at different times depending on their relationship status and other situational factors; fluctuations between NPD and BPD are noted most frequently (e.g., Masterson, 1981). Based on findings from his studies of patients hospitalized for personality disorders, Plakun (1990) suggested that at the pathological extreme, males with narcissistic features are more likely to meet the criteria for NPD, whereas females are more likely to meet the criteria for BPD. In contrast, Raskin and Terry (1988) found no sex differences in studies employing the NPI with nonclinical samples.

Narcissistic Relationships. Individuals with narcissistic characteristics appear to seek out therapy, most often because they feel lonely and are dissatisfied with their relationships (Masterson, 1961; Cashdan, 1988). This is not at all surprising given their lack of empathy for others and the unusual degree of self-reference present in their interactions¹². Kernberg (1975) has noted that narcissistic individuals present the curious contradiction of exaggerated self-sufficiency and grandiosity, while at the same time displaying an inordinate need for recognition and tribute from others. They tend to idealize those from whom they hope to secure narcissistic tributes, and to depreciate and envy those from whom they do not expect anything or who have "disappointed" them (Kernberg, 1975). This often earns them a reputation for

¹²While researchers studying close relationships in have found that individuals' private agendas generally serve as interpretive filters for relationship behaviours (e.g., Holmes & Boon, 1990), the importance of these personal agendas may be exaggerated in narcissistic relationships.

interpersonal exploitativeness and manipulativeness. When confronted or rejected because of their self-centered interpersonal style, narcissistic individuals may respond with rage, humiliation, and ultimately, with shame (Masterson, 1981). Thus narcissistic individuals often seek out therapy after a long history of "narcissistic injuries", when their grandiose self-concepts have finally been knocked down and their fragile sense of self is exposed.

Family therapists (Berkman, 1984; Lachkar, 1984) suggest that narcissistic individuals often develop relationships with others who have similar narcissistic injuries and needs. Lachkar (1984) has noted that "when these individuals are together they form a shared couple myth which gives rise to many collective fantasies ... but the very thing that binds them ... also perpetuates conflict" (pp. 169-170). The problem in these narcissistic relationships is that there is never any real interest in or empathy for the other. Instead one partner recognizes the other only insofar as s/he reflects the other's needs, but never for who s/he is as an individual. In Kohut's (1971) language, for narcissistic individuals others are "self-objects" or "objects which are not experienced as separate and independent from the self" (p. 3). Thus narcissistic personalities generally cannot establish intimate love relationships that combine at the same time mutuality and an appreciation of the other's autonomy (Bader & Philipson, 1980).

Object relations therapists (e.g., Cashdan, 1988) have tried to understand how, in the absence of capacity for real intimacy, narcissistic individuals manage to ensure that some significant figures in their lives remain bound to them, even if for a relatively short period of time. In the language of object relations, this pattern of relations is called projective identification. "Projective identifications" refer to "patterns of interpersonal behaviour in which a person induces (or seduces) another to behave or respond in a circumscribed fashion" (Cashdan, 1988, p. 55). This differs from ordinary projection, in that the latter is a mental act that need not involve any overt responses. The concept of projective identification lifts projection out of the intrapsychic world and extends it to the realm of interpersonal relationships (Sandler, 1987). While persons who are the focus of another person's projections may never realize it, those targeted with projective identifications will likely feel vaguely manipulated and "pressured to think, feel, and behave in a

manner congruent with the ejected feelings and the self- and object-representations embodied in the projective fantasy" (Ogden, 1982, p. 2). Cashdan (1988) believes that a key dynamic in projective identification is the induction that underlies it. It is as if one individual forces another to play a role in the enactment of that person's internal drama. For the narcissistic individual, the drama is one of a child's enactment of their parents' unmet needs at the expense of developing the true self (Lowen, 1985; Miller, 1981).

In the realm of parenting, narcissistic individuals are likely to seduce¹³ their children to meet their needs (Lowen, 1985). Buchholz and Haynes (1983) describe narcissistic parents as "those whose reactions (to their children) appear to be primarily dependent on their own needs and moods rather than on the needs of the child" (p. 100). Narcissistic parents may rely on their children to assure them of their "specialness" as parents (e.g, "Tell your mother/father how special s/he is to you"). Often these parents pride themselves in being especially close to their children, when their behaviour actually suggests aloofness, self-involvement and a perception of the child as being merely an extension of the parental self. From a narcissistic couple's point of view, children may be expected to play their role in the collective fantasy of the "perfect family."

Under relational stress, when narcissistic parents are likely to feel particularly needful of affirmation from others, they may turn to their children as "little adults" to help them through the crisis. Parent-child role reversal may be more dramatic at this time, than when the parent's narcissistic needs are being met in part by the relationship with the other parent (Bacciagaluppi, 1985). Moreover, as the collective family fantasy is shattered, the parents may compete with each other for the child's recognition and affirmation. Gardner (1986; 1987) has coined the term "parental alienation syndrome (PAS)" to describe the reactions of children caught between their parents' needs in custody disputes. According to Gardner (1987), children manifesting this syndrome have been encouraged by the custodial parent to bury their tender and loving feelings

¹³Object relations theorists differentiate "seduction" in the parent-child relationship from "induction" in adult relationships. This is to underline that seduction takes place in the context of the child's dependence on and trust in the mothering one.

for the noncustodial parent. Instead these children are subtly coached to join the custodial parent in the obsessional denigration and hatred of the other parent. Motivated by an intense fear of "losing" the only parent they have¹⁴, these children are thought to be especially vulnerable to the demands of their custodial parents.

Narcissism, Divorce and Child Custody. Lowen (1985) suggests that individuals with narcissistic disturbance are especially vulnerable to relational stresses, because their self-concepts are poorly defined or absent outside of the relational context. The loss of a relationship in adulthood is likely to be experienced as a narcissistic injury akin to that originally experienced in childhood. While most individuals suffer when a marital relationship is terminated (e.g., Hetherington et al., 1989), narcissistic individuals are likely to experience the relational loss as a rejection of their entire person (Johnston & Campbell, 1988). Lowen (1985) suggests that narcissistic individuals may show more severe disturbance under interpersonal stress, than when they are in a stable and supportive relationship. Based on his extensive experience with custody evaluations, Levy (1986) has noted dramatic regressions on the part of narcissistic parents when faced with the possibility of losing any part of their caretaking role.

Johnston and her colleagues (Johnston et al., 1988; Johnston & Campbell, 1988) studied 80 divorcing families who had not responded to family mediation and were entrenched in protracted custody disputes up to ten years after the marriage break-up. These researchers did not employ any objective measures, but instead relied on clinical interviews and impressions. They concluded that the greater the narcissistic vulnerability of the parents, the more likely they were to have experienced the divorce as a humiliating assault on the self. These authors suggest that for the narcissistically vulnerable, the initiation and continuation of custody disputes may serve as a psychological defense against the sense of failure, rejection, and humiliation engendered by the divorce (Johnston & Campbell, 1988).

¹⁴The divorce literature suggests that many children initially experience the departure of the noncustodial parent from the home as a personal abandonment. For children with narcissistic parents the fear of being abandoned by the other parent is less likely to be transcended, because it may serve the custodial parents' needs to reinforce these fears.

The adversarial arena, with its focus on "fault" and retribution to the "wronged" party, may provide an outlet for the narcissistic injury suffered by the divorcing parent. Legal action may ward off the feelings of desperation and helplessness, and help the narcissistic parent to establish a (false) sense of control and power over the lost relationship. In contrast to persons with a healthy self-concept, narcissistic individuals are not able to come to terms with the ending of a relationship. They may be incapable of examining their role in the marriage breakdown and to evolve a differentiated view of the other, seeing both their strengths and their weaknesses as a partner and as a parent. Consistent with the spirit of the adversarial system, narcissistic individuals may attempt to salvage their self-esteem by negatively reconstructing their perceptions of the ex-spouse. They may become filled with the battle of righteously fighting to "protect" the child from the "bad", "immoral", or "neglectful" caretaking of the other parent (Johnston et al., 1988).

Unfortunately children may become pawns or weapons in the narcissistic parent's battle for custody and against loss of self-esteem. Some children may become prizes or trophies in the fight, and others may be made responsible for determining which parent was right (Johnston & Campbell, 1988). More than ever, the narcissistic parent may look to the child for reassurance. Consistent with the literature suggesting that empathic responsiveness may serve to inhibit abusive behaviour on the part of the parent (Feshbach, 1987), it is expected in this study that narcissistic parents will lack empathy for the children's needs and will have difficulty negotiating a shared parenting plan that is in the child's best interests.

Hypotheses

This study investigates the characteristics of 16 parent pairs who were able to come to and maintain a mutual agreement about their parenting plans after separation, compared to 16 parent pairs who disagree about parenting arrangements. The focus of this comparison is the ex-spouses' shared child-centeredness. Child-centeredness is conceptualized here as a constellation of interrelated personality characteristics and parenting attitudes.

Hypothesis 1. The reasoning outlined in this chapter lead to the following research hypotheses about the pattern of relations among parents' narcissism, empathy, and relational satisfaction.

(a) It is expected that there will be positive correlations among measures of narcissism, self-centeredness, and narcissistic parenting beliefs;

(b) It is expected that there will be positive correlations among measures of dispositional empathy and empathic parenting attitudes.

(c) It is expected that ex-spouses' levels of narcissism will be positively related to a tendency to construe a variety of situations in self-serving terms; negatively related to dispositional empathy; positively related to a tendency to experience personal distress in response to observing others in distress; negatively correlated with empathic parenting attitudes; and positively related to narcissistic parenting attitudes;

(d) It is expected that ex-spouses' degree of satisfaction with current relationship functioning will be positively correlated with dispositional empathy; negatively related to self-centeredness; negatively related to a tendency toward experiencing personal distress; positively correlated with empathic parenting attitudes; and negatively related to narcissistic parenting attitudes.

Hypothesis 2. A second group of hypotheses involve how this constellation of theoretically interrelated personality characteristics and parenting beliefs, named child-centeredness for the purposes of this study, may distinguish ex-couples who are able to reach satisfactory parenting agreements from those who do not.

(a) It is hypothesized that ex-couples' scores on measures of child-centeredness will predict shared parenting agreement, and;

(b) It is expected that agreed parents will be less narcissistic than disagreed parents; more likely to construe a variety of situations in self-serving terms; more likely to report a disposition toward empathic responsiveness; less likely to report a tendency to experience personal distress in response to observing others' distress; more likely to

have empathic parenting attitudes; less likely to report narcissistic parenting attitudes; and, more likely to report feeling satisfied with their current relationships than disagreed parents.

CHAPTER II

METHOD

Research Participants

Separated and divorced parents were invited to participate in a study of shared parenting through newspaper advertisements (see Appendix A), information letters distributed by family lawyers (see Appendix B), and collaboration with a clinical psychologist specializing in custody and access assessments. Thirty-two sets of separated or divorced parents (N=64) volunteered to take part in the research project¹⁵.

Parent pairs were assigned to the "agreed" group if they met the following criteria: (1) both parents indicated that they had negotiated a mutually agreeable shared parenting plan at the time of their separation; (2) both parents reported during the initial interview that since their separation they have always been, and still were, in general agreement with how they share the parenting of their children; and, (3) both parents indicated that they continue to be in agreement with their shared parenting arrangement four months after the initial interview. Half of the ex-couples (16 parent pairs) who volunteered to participate in this study met all three criteria, in that they had maintained a mutually agreeable shared parenting arrangement since the marriage break-up and throughout this study's follow-up period.

A follow-up period was seen as essential for the assignment of parent pairs to the agreed group. Especially for parents who had been separated for a short period of time, it was necessary to establish whether they could maintain shared parenting agreements. A period of four months was viewed as a reasonable time period to maintain contact with the research participants without losing them to attrition. For all of the agreed ex-couples participating in this study, a four month period involved a substantial number of transitions for the children between times spent with their mothers and times spent with their fathers.

¹⁵An additional 18 parents volunteered to participate in the study, but their ex-spouses did not. The responses of these 18 parents collected during the first interview contributed to the qualitative data base of this study, but were not quantified for data analysis. As explained in the "Introduction", including one parent without corroborating shared parenting details with the other parent could lead to incorrect group classification (agreed/disagreed).

In contrast to the "agreed" parent pairs, the "disagreed" group was comprised of 16 ex-couples who were in disagreement about how the parenting of their children should be shared. Parent pairs were assigned to the disagreed group if they met the following criteria: (1) one or both parents indicated that they had not been successful in negotiating a mutually agreeable shared parenting plan at the time of their separation or that they had never tried; (2) one or both parents reported that since the time of their separation they have been in general disagreement with how the parenting of their children is shared, and still were. The disagreed parents who participated in this study were either actively disputing their custody and access arrangements or had litigated in the past without arriving at mutually satisfactory outcome. It was not necessary to follow the disagreed parents for a four month period for the purposes of group assignment, because a history of disagreement had already been established.

Measures.

All research participants completed a test battery consisting of the four self-report questionnaires and nine additional items developed for the purpose of this study. The four self-report measures were the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (Raskin & Hall, 1979; 1981), the Selfism Scale (Phares & Erskine, 1984), the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Davis, 1983b), and the Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (Bavolek, 1984). The nine additional items will be referred to as the Experimental Narcissistic Parenting Items (Ehrenberg & Elterman, 1991). A copy of the test battery and a description of subscales are included in Appendices C and D.

1. Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Hall, 1979; 1981). The NPI is a 40-item forced choice inventory developed to measure individual differences in narcissism. Research participants were instructed to select which one of a pair of statements is closer to their personal feelings about themselves. Response options carry a score of 0 and 1. A total score reflecting the level of narcissism is calculated by summation of individual item scores. The range of possible summated scores extends from 0 to 40.

A decade of research validates the use of the NPI as a reliable measure of narcissism in both nonclinical and clinical populations (Auerbach, 1984; Biscardi & Schill 1985; Emmons, 1984; 1987; Joubert, 1986; Kelly & Shile, 1991; Prifitera & Ryan, 1984; Raskin, 1980; Raskin & Hall, 1981; Raskin & Novacek, 1989; Raskin & Shaw, 1988; Raskin & Terry 1988; Watson, Hood & Morris, 1984). Overall these studies suggest that high scorers on the NPI are extroverted, experience-seeking individuals who appear to have a grandiose conception of themselves. Moreover, they are self-focused individuals who tend to be manipulative, insincere and self-seeking in their interpersonal relationships. Not surprisingly, others typically see individuals who score high on the NPI as being egotistical and conceited (Raskin & Terry, 1988).

A principal components analysis of 1018 NPI protocols (Raskin & Terry, 1988) revealed evidence for a general construct of narcissism comprised of seven components: Authority, Exhibitionism, Self-Sufficiency, Entitlement, Exploitativeness, Superiority, and Vanity. The correlational patterns of these seven components suggested both overlapping and differential correlation among the components, and the component scores were positively correlated with the total score. Raskin and Terry (1988) contend that this correlational pattern is consistent with their view of narcissism as a higher order construct that describes diverse yet interdependent mental and behavioural phenomena.

Research participants in the present study received scores on each of the seven NPI subscales in addition to the NPI total score. The ranges of possible scores on each of the NPI subscales extend from 0 to the total number of items for that subscale (3 to 8). High scorers on the NPI Authority (8 items) subscale are dominant, assertive, critical, and self-confident individuals. Persons with high scores on the NPI Exhibitionism subscale (7 items) tend to be exhibitionistic, sensation seeking, extroverted and lacking in impulse control. The NPI Exploitativeness subscale (5 items) is associated with characteristics such as hostility, insincerity, interpersonal manipulativeness, and lack of consideration and tolerance for others. The NPI Entitlement subscale (6 items) captures the narcissistic expectation of special favors without assuming reciprocal responsibilities. NPI Self-Sufficiency in the upper ranges of the subscale (6

items) appears to be related to inflated feelings of independence and a denial of reliance of any kind on others. The NPI Vanity subscale (3 items) refers to concern about one's physical attractiveness, and the NPI Superiority subscale (5 items) at its narcissistic extreme indicates a grandiose and inflated sense of self-importance and uniqueness

2. Selfism Scale (NS¹⁶; Phares & Erskine, 1984). The NS is a 40 item scale designed to measure a general orientation toward satisfying various personal needs (e.g., achievement, dependency, love and affection). Twelve filler items, included to disguise the purpose of the scale, are not scored. The authors of this self-report inventory conceptualize narcissism as a cognitive variable, which they have named "selfism" to avoid psychoanalytic implications. Consistent with their social learning theory perspective, selfism is viewed as a generalized problem-solving expectancy (Phares, 1978; Rotter, Chance & Phares, 1972). While construed in cognitive terms, Phares and Erskine (1984) hold that selfism is likely to have need-like properties or correlates.

An individual's score on the NS is calculated by summing the individual item scores, each of which is presented on a 5-point Likert scale (5 = strongly agree, 4= mildly agree, 3 = agree and disagree equally, 2= mildly disagree, 1= strongly disagree), to produce a range falling between 28 and 140. A person who scores high on the NS views a large number of situations in a selfish, self-serving, or egocentric fashion. At the opposite end of the scale are individuals who submerge their own satisfaction in favor of others.

In a review of the Selfism Scale's psychometric properties, Corcoran and Fischer (1987) conclude that this measure has good internal consistency and excellent test-retest stability over a four week period. Consistent with their conceptualization of selfism outlined above, Phares and Erskine (1984) found that the NS correlates positively with the NPI (Raskin & Hall, 1979) and negatively with the Religious Attitude Scale¹⁷ (RAS; Poppleton & Pilkington, 1963). Compared

¹⁶Although Phares and Erskine (1984) have named their measure the "Selfism Scale", they abbreviate the name of the scale as "NS" (Narcissism Scale?) rather than "SS."

¹⁷The RAS (Poppleton & Pilkington, 1963) is a measure designed to assess individual differences in reporting a Christian and humanistically-oriented world view .

to individuals who score low on the NS, high scorers are likely to report cynical attitudes regarding the motives of individuals helping someone in need (Erskine, 1981).

3. Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI; Davis, 1983a). The IRI is a 28-item self-report questionnaire that consists of four 7-item scales (Perspective-Taking Scale, Fantasy Scale, Empathic Concern Scale, Personal Distress Scale), each of which assesses a specific aspect of empathy. Respondents are requested to indicate on a 5-point Likert scale (5= very much like me; 4= pretty much like Me; 3 = sort of like me; 2 = not really like me; 1 = not at all like me) how they personally feel about each of the 28 statements (e.g., "I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me."). A total score on each of the four scales is calculated by summation of individual items scores; the range of possible total scores extends from 7 to 35.

The Perspective Taking Scale (PT) measures the respondent's spontaneous tendency in everyday life to adopt the point of view of others. The Fantasy Scale (FS) assesses a tendency to transpose oneself imaginatively into the feelings and actions of fictitious characters in books, movies and plays¹⁸. The Empathic Concern Scale (EC) is an explicit measure of emotional reactivity in that it evaluates an individual's tendency to experience feelings of warmth, compassion and concern for others¹⁹. The Personal Distress Scale (PD) measures feelings of unease, distress and discomfort in tense interpersonal settings. In contrast to the Empathic Concern Scale which focuses on other-oriented feelings of sympathy and concern, the Personal Distress Scale is concerned with self-oriented feelings of personal anxiety and unease.

The rationale underlying the IRI is that empathy can best be understood as a set of constructs, related in that they all concern responsiveness to others, but are also clearly discriminable from each other (Davis, 1980). A series of three validity studies with a sample of 1,344 undergraduate students (Davis, 1983a) supports this proposition. The intercorrelations between

¹⁸ Respondents' scores on the FS subscale will be computed for descriptive purposes only, because an individual's tendency to imagine him/herself as fictitious characters is not relevant to the focus of this study.

¹⁹ In accordance with similar findings in the empathy literature, female respondents consistently score higher than male respondents on the IRI's Empathic Concern Scale (Davis, 1983b).

IRI scales were moderate and in theory-consistent directions. For example, individual scores on Perspective Taking and Empathic Concern were positively correlated, whereas individual scores on Perspective Taking and Personal Distress were consistently related in a negative direction. Hypothesized relationships between subscales and other psychological measures were confirmed, and associations between IRI scales and extant empathy measures were identified. Other research employing the IRI has identified relationships between dispositional empathy, as measured by this scale, and prosocial behaviour (Davis 1983b)²⁰. On the basis of research findings to date, the authors (Davis et al., 1987) conclude that the IRI measures a variety of individual predispositions and cognitive sets that are relevant to the multidimensional understanding of empathy emerging from the literature.

4. Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI; Bavolek, 1984). The AAPI is a 32-item self-report scale designed to assess empathy-related parenting strengths and weaknesses in four areas: (1) developmentally inappropriate expectations of children; (2) lack of empathy for children's needs; (3) belief in the use of corporal punishment²¹; and (4) reversal of the parent and child roles. The internal consistency of the AAPI, measured with the alpha coefficient, ranges from .70 for the construct of inappropriate expectations of children to .86 for the family role-reversal subscale (Bavolek, 1989). A total test-retest correlation of .76 indicates adequate stability (Corcoran & Fisher, 1987).

Parents' responses to the items of the inventory on a five-point Likert scale (5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = uncertain, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree) provide an index of risk for practicing abusive and neglecting parenting and child-rearing behaviours. A respondent's attitudes in each of the four subscale areas is compared with normative parenting and child-rearing attitudes to obtain a standard score (ranging between 0 and 10) reflecting the degree of agreement and disagreement with maladaptive parenting beliefs. The AAPI norms were derived

²⁰For a review of the research findings relevant to the IRI and its subscales see "The Measurement of Empathy" section in the introduction.

²¹Respondents' scores on this subscale will be calculated for descriptive purposes only, because this aspect of parenting is not germane to the central hypotheses of this study.

from samples consisting of 8,806 abusive and nonabusive parents drawn from diverse geographic regions, ethnic groups, socioeconomic status, sex and age categories. The data which demonstrates the construct and discriminant validities of this measure are presented in Bavolek 1980a, 1980b, 1984a, 1984b, and 1989; Bavolek et al., 1979; Price, 1980; and Stone, 1980. A study of 239 first- and fourth-year undergraduate students (Murphy, 1980) suggests that the AAPI is able to distinguish between parents with adaptive and maladaptive parenting attitudes in a sample that included parents with a wide range of education.

5. Experimental "Narcissistic Parenting" Items (Ehrenberg & Elterman, 1991). In addition to the measures of narcissism, selfism, empathy and parenting described above, nine items designed specifically to measure narcissistic parenting attitudes were developed and included in the test battery (e.g. "I sometimes feel like asking my child if they really love me."). Respondents were instructed to indicate how much they identified with each individual item on a 5-point Likert scale (5= very much like me; 4 = pretty much like me; 3 = sort of like me; 2 = not really like me; 1 = not at all like me). If psychometric properties permit, a total score ranging from 5 to 45 will be calculated by adding individual item scores.

Procedure

Parents responding by telephone to the newspaper advertisement and information letters were provided with details about the research project and were screened for appropriateness for the agreed or disagreed group. Parents wishing further information in writing about the study and the experimenter prior to making a decision about their participation were provided with these materials by mail. Parents who indicated their willingness to participate in the study by telephone were scheduled for a face-to-face interview.

At the first of two interviews parents willing to participate in the study gave their informed consent in writing (see Appendix E). During this first interview the researcher completed the "Family Structure and Shared Parenting Arrangement" and "Parents' Relationship History" sections of the Research Interview Form (see Appendix F). These parents, if willing, were

subsequently provided with a letter explaining the nature of the study to send to their ex-partners without revealing the ex-partners' identities to the experimenter (see Appendix G). A copy of the consent form was attached to this letter (see Appendix E). In some instances, parents preferred to contact their ex-partners in person or by telephone. In these cases the parent who had already volunteered to participate would ask their ex-spouses to telephone the experimenter, if they too wished to participate in the study.

Research participants were included in the study if both the initially volunteering parents and their ex-partners independently indicated a willingness to participate. Parents who had volunteered to participate in the study, but whose ex-spouses did not contact the experimenter to offer their assistance within a two month period, were invited to meet with the experimenter for a feedback interview. These parents were thanked for their participation and informed that their interview responses would contribute to the qualitative (but not the quantitative) data base of this study. These parents were then provided with further information about the purpose of the study and were promised a written summary of the research results as soon as these were available.

Ex-spouses of volunteers who contacted the experimenter to indicate that they too were willing to participate in the research project were scheduled for individual face-to-face interviews. Five of these ex-spouses had relocated since the marriage break-up such that distance prohibited a personal interview. These ex-spouses agreed to be interviewed by long distance telephone calls and returned their completed consent forms and questionnaires by mail. During the interviews, these research participants were asked about the shared parenting arrangements and the parents' relationship history in exactly the same manner as had been asked of their ex-partners when they were interviewed previously (see the "Family Structure and Shared Parenting Arrangement" and "Parents' Relationship History" sections of the Research Interview Form included in Appendix F). Any disagreements between the parents' reports were clarified. Such disagreements were most common in reports of what proportions of the children's time was spent with each parent (see item "c" in the "Family Structure and Shared Parenting Arrangement" section of the Research Interview Form). In these cases the children's schedule was discussed in

detail with each parent independently. Absolutely no personal information was shared between parents through the experimenter.

The second of the two interviews completed by parents who had initially volunteered to participate in the study and the second half of the interview with their ex-partners was conducted by following the same procedure. Research respondents were asked to provide basic information about themselves, including their age, nationality, ethnicity, level of education, and current relationship status. Parents were requested to indicate how satisfied they were with five central aspects of their lives (occupational functioning, financial status, housing conditions, social life, intimate relationship functioning) on a five-point Likert scale (1 = extreme dissatisfaction, 2 = mild dissatisfaction, 3 = "o.k." or equally satisfied and dissatisfied, 4 = very satisfied, 5 = extremely satisfied). Research respondents were asked to identify what they perceived as their ex-partners' strengths and weaknesses as parents. All parents were asked to report whether their ex-spouses had ever been physically violent, verbally abusive, or emotionally abusive toward them. They were requested to indicate whether they were currently frightened of their ex-spouses, and if so, if they felt adequately protected. Parents were then invited to share their personal impressions of the shared parenting process and to alert the experimenter to any important questions she forgot to ask them. Information obtained from each parent during this part of the interview was recorded in the "General Information About Father" and "General Information About Mother" sections of the Research Interview Form (see Appendix F). After the interviews parents were requested to complete the questionnaires and to return them to the experimenter.

At the end of the interview participants were invited to ask questions and were provided with information and support as needed. Some parents wished advice about books on divorce and were provided with this information. Others were interested to learn about local resources for divorced families (support groups for single parents, groups for children of divorce, counselling and psychotherapy services). As indicated on the consent forms (see Appendix E) research participants were reminded that they would be telephoned in four months to assess the status of their shared parenting arrangements and to note any changes. The results of the follow-up

telephone interview were recorded in the "Four Month Follow-Up" section of the Research Interview Form (see Appendix F). All research participants will receive a written summary of the research results.

The psychologist collaborating with the experimenter invited separated and divorced parents being seen for a custody/access assessment to participate in the study. The psychologist informed parents about the nature of the study and assured them that their willingness to participate in the study would have no impact on the outcome of the assessment. Eleven pairs of parents (15% response rate) agreed to participate in the research study and gave their informed consent in writing (see Appendix H). Consistent with the procedure followed by the experimenter, the collaborating psychologist recorded the interview with each parent on the Research Interview Form, and all research participants were requested to complete the questionnaire after their appointments (see Appendix C). The collaborating psychologist will be provided with written summaries of the research results to mail to clients who participated in the research project. The psychologist will also receive a detailed report of the research findings.

Missing Data

Research participants were requested to answer all questions and were reminded to check for missing responses. Additional consent for follow-up interviews provided the opportunity to ask missed questions and eliminate any missing data. The collaborating psychologist checked all questionnaires supplied by his clients for missing responses and helped clarify any outstanding questions on the part of the research participants.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Overview

This study examines how agreed and disagreed parents differ in their child-centering capacity as measured by their responses to the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Hall, 1979; 1981), the Selfism Scale (NS; Phares & Erskine, 1984), the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI; Davis, 1983a), the Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI; Bavolek, 1984), and the Experimental Narcissistic Parenting Items (ENP; Ehrenberg & Elterman, 1991).

The results are reported in the following two sections. The first of these two sections provides descriptive accounts of the families who participated in this study. The results of inferential statistical analyses relevant to the two central hypotheses are reported in the second section.

Description of Research Participants

The sample consists of 32 separated or divorced couples; 16 agreed and 16 disagreed parent pairs. Of the total sample, 62.5% of the families resided in Ontario and 37.5% were residents of British Columbia. Mothers' ages ranged from 22 to 53 with a mean of 34.6 years ($SD=7.8$); fathers' ages ranged from 20 to 53 with a mean of 38.1 years ($SD=8.0$).

Family Structure. The mean number of children per family was 2.10 ($SD=0.92$) for the total sample, 2.50 ($SD=0.80$) for agreed families, and 1.69 ($SD=0.86$) for disagreed families. The percentages of families with one, two, three or four children are reported in Table 1. Table 1 also summarizes the percentages of boys and girls in families with agreed and disagreed parents. The children ranged in age from one to 26 years. At the time of their parents' separations, the

Table 1
Number of Children Per Family and Sex Distribution of Total Number of Children
for Agreed and Disagreed Groups

	Agreed (n=16)	Disagreed (n=16)	Agreed & Disagreed (N=32)
One Child Only	6.3% (n=1)	50.0% (n=8)	28.1% (n=9)
Two Children	56.3% (n=9)	37.5% (n=6)	46.9% (n=15)
Three Children	25.0% (n=4)	6.3% (n=1)	15.6% (n=5)
Four Children	12.5% (n=2)	6.3% (n=1)	9.4% (n=3)
Total Number of Girls	48.7% (n=19)	44.4% (n=12)	47.0% (n=31)
Total Number of Boys	51.3% (n=20)	55.5% (n=15)	53.0% (n=35)

youngest or only child in the agreed group was between 0 (in utero) and 14 years of age (Mean age=5.5; SD=3.39). The youngest or only children in the disagreed group ranged between 0 and 11 years of age (Mean=3.9; SD=3.45) when their parents were breaking up.

Relationship History. The lengths of relationships between the participating parent pairs, from the beginning of the dating relationship to the date of separation, are documented in Table 2. Table 2 also summarizes the percentages of separations initiated by mothers and fathers, and the length of time passed since the date of separation.

Negotiation of Shared Parenting Arrangements. Parents in the agreed families negotiated their shared parenting arrangements without any form of professional intervention (family mediation, custody/access assessment) or litigation. Of these 16 agreed families, two parent pairs (12.5%) consulted a family mediator at the time of their separation (for a total of one to four one-hour sessions per family) to assist them in working out the details of their financial settlement. In both of these cases the parents indicated that they were satisfied with the service received. These two families also claimed that they would have seen a family mediator to help them settle custody and access issues, if they had not been able to develop a mutually agreeable shared parenting plan on their own.

Four months after the initial interview, nine of the 16 agreed parent pairs (56.2%) reported no changes in their shared parenting arrangement and continued to feel satisfied with their plans. Five of the agreed families (31.2%) indicated that their shared parenting arrangements were unchanged, but that their plans were operating more smoothly and that they were more satisfied with them now than four months prior. The remaining two agreed families (12.6%) reported that while the structure of their shared parenting plan had not changed, they were finding the process of shared parenting more stressful now than four months ago. For both of these stressed ex-couples, the mothers and fathers indicated independently that they continued to be in agreement with how the parenting of their children was being shared. Thus none of the 16 ex-couples originally classified into the agreed group were excluded from this category after the four

Table 2

Summary Table for Length of Relationship, Initiation of Separation, and Time Since Separation
for Agreed and Disagreed Groups

	Agreed (n=16)	Disagreed (n=16)	Agreed & Disagreed (N=32)
Length of Relationship ¹ (in years)	Mean = 14.12 SD = 5.59 Range = 3.0-26.0	Mean = 8.31 SD = 7.52 Range = 0.50-23.0	Mean = 11.21 SD = 7.20 Range = 0.50-26.0
Time Since Separation (in years)	Mean = 3.55 SD = 2.50 Range = 0.10-8.83	Mean = 2.72 SD = 1.67 Range = 0.33-5.83	Mean = 3.14 SD = 2.15 Range = 0.10-8.83
Separations Initiated by Mothers	Percentage = 81.2 Number = 13	Percentage = 75.0 Number = 12	Percentage = 78.1 Number = 25
Separations Initiated by Fathers	Percentage = 18.8 Number = 3	Percentage = 25.0 Number = 4	Percentage = 21.9 Number = 7

¹ Length of Relationship extends from beginning of dating relationship to date of separation.

month follow-up period.²² These ex-couples met the additional criterion of having maintained their shared parenting plan over a four month period.

Of the 16 pairs of disagreed parents, 14 were litigating their custody and access arrangements at the time of the study. The remaining two pairs had recently finished a period of litigation. One of the parents in each of these two families had subsequently decided to give up on their custody suits, for the time being, in spite of their disagreements with the outcomes. Twelve of the disagreed families (75%) were simultaneously being assessed by a psychologist for the purpose of generating custody and access recommendations. One of the disagreed couples (6.3%) had previously participated in family mediation (five one-hour sessions) without being able to resolve their custody/access dispute, and one other disagreed family (6.3%) was unable to benefit from either family mediation (seven one-hour sessions) or the recommendations of a previous custody/access assessment. The remaining two families in the disagreed group (12.4%) reported no previous or current involvement with family mediation or assessment services.

As explained in the "Method" section, disagreed parents interviewed by the experimenter (n=5) were followed for four months to add to the qualitative data set.²³ All of these parents reported ongoing disagreement during the follow-up interview. However, depending on how their litigation efforts were proceeding, mothers and fathers reported varying degrees of satisfaction with their current situation. The 11 disagreed ex-couples interviewed by the collaborating psychologist were not contacted for a follow-up interview. However, the collaborating psychologist indicated that, as a general rule, disagreed ex-couples were still actively involved in litigation four months after their custody/access assessments had been completed.

²²As indicated in more detail in the "Method" section, ex-couples were initially categorized into the agreed group: (1) if both parents indicated that they had negotiated a shared parenting arrangement at the time of their separation, and (2) if both parents indicated that they were, and always have been, in general agreement with how the parenting was being shared, and; (3) if both parents indicated that they had maintained their shared parenting arrangements over the additional four month follow-up period of this study.

²³As described in the "Method" section, the classification of ex-couples into the disagreed group did not require follow-up.

Custody and Access Arrangements. Of the total sample, 26 of the families (81.3%) had formalized their custody and access arrangements in legal terms, while six (18.7%) had no legal documentation of their current shared parenting plans. Twelve (75%) agreed and 14 disagreed ex-couples had documented their shared parenting arrangements in legal terms. The percentages of families with sole, split and joint custody arrangements for the two groups and total sample are reported in Table 3. The mother was the sole custodian of the children in all 11 of the disagreed families included in the "sole custody" category presented in this table. In two of these 11 situations the noncustodial father was permitted no physical access to his children. The father in one other of these 11 cases was allowed to see his children in the presence of a supervisor; unsupervised access and overnight visits were permitted to the non-custodial fathers in the remaining eight cases. Four of the disagreed families had a legal joint custody arrangement with the mother's home designated as the primary residence. One of the disagreed parent pairs were legal joint custodians with the children residing primarily with the father.

In four of the five agreed families with a sole custody arrangement, the mother was the sole custodian of the children and the noncustodial father was permitted unsupervised and overnight visits with his children. In one additional case the father was the sole custodian and the noncustodial mother was seeing her children without any restrictions. Of the five agreed families with a legal joint custody arrangement, the mother's home was the children's primary residence in four of these cases, and the father's house was the primary residence in only one of these situations. In one of the agreed families with physical joint custody, the arrangement involved a joint residence where the children live permanently and the parents reside on an alternating basis. In the other three agreed families with physical joint custody, the children were making transitions between their parents' homes; neither of these homes was designated as the primary residence.

The percentages of the children's time spent with each parent in the agreed families, disagreed families and total sample are reported in Table 4. Of the 23 ex-couples with more than one child, the children of three of these families usually saw their father in the company of their siblings, but were typically alone when they spent time with their mothers. In three other cases

Table 3
 Percentages of Parent Pairs with Type of Custody Arrangements
 for Agreed and Disagreed Groups

	Agreed (n=16)	Disagreed (n=16)	Agreed & Disagreed (N=32)
Sole Custody	31.3% (n=5)	68.8% (n=11)	50.0% (n=16)
Split Custody	12.5% (n=2)		6.3% (n=2)
Legal Joint Custody ¹	31.3% (n=5)	31.3% (n=5)	31.3% (n=10)
Physical Joint Custody ²	25.0% (n=4)		12.5% (n=4)

¹Legal Joint Custody refers to the parents making joint decisions about their children with one of the parent's homes being designated as the primary residence.

²Physical Joint Custody refers to the parents making joint decisions about their children with neither parent's home being designated as the primary residence.

Table 4

Percentages of Children's Time Spent with Mother and Father
for Agreed and Disagreed Groups

	Agreed (n=16)	Disagreed (n=16)	Agreed & Disagreed (N=32)
Percentage of Time Spent With Mother	Mean = 60.6 SD = 17.9 Range = 25-85	Mean = 83.1 SD = 14.6 Range = 50-100	Mean = 71.8 SD = 19.7 Range = 25-100
Percentage of Time Spent With Father	Mean = 39.4 SD = 17.9 Range = 15-75	Mean = 16.9 SD = 14.6 Range = 0-50	Mean = 28.2 SD = 19.7 Range = 0-75

the situation was reversed. In the remaining 17 families with more than one child, siblings were usually together when they spent time with either their mothers or their fathers.

Nationality and Ethnicity. Sixty-two (96.9%) of the parents participating in this study were Canadian citizens and two (3.1%) were Americans with landed immigrant status. Of the total sample, 42 (70.3%) did not indicate membership in any particular ethnic or cultural group. The remaining 17 (29.7%) research participants identified themselves as either Jews, Native Indians, Europeans (Dutch, German, French, British, Irish, Scottish, Portugese, Spanish), Chinese-Canadians, or "WASPS."

Education. The highest level of education achieved by the participating parents ranged from completing Grade 7 to obtaining a doctoral degree. Of the total sample 25% (n=16) completed elementary school only, 26.6% (n=17) earned a high school leaving certificate, 18.8% (n=12) studied for one to three years after high school, and 29.6% (n=19) extended their education four to six years post-secondary. The educational statuses achieved by mothers and fathers in the agreed and disagreed groups are summarized in Table 5.

History of Abuse in Relationship with Ex-Partner. Of the total sample, 10.9% (n=7) parents reported having been physically abused by their ex-partners, 31.3% (n=20) indicated that they experienced verbal abuse, and 28.2% (n=18) complained of having been emotionally abused by their ex-spouses. The percentages of mothers and fathers reporting a history of abuse in their previous relationships with the other parent are reported in Table 6. Of the 5 mothers reporting that they had been physically abused by their ex-husbands, two indicated that this had occurred post-separation. One of the two fathers who reported having been physically abused by his ex-wife indicated that this first happened at the time of the marital separation. Of the 13 parents who were fearful of their ex-partners, 61.5% (8 of the 13) now felt adequately protected and safe from their ex-spouses. The percentages of mothers and fathers who were frightened of their ex-partners, and the percentages of these fearful parents who felt sufficiently protected at the time of the interview, are also reported in Table 6.

Table 5
Highest Level of Education Completed by Mothers and Fathers
in Agreed and Disagreed Groups

	Agreed Mothers (n=16)	Agreed Fathers (n=16)	Disagreed Mothers (n=16)	Disagreed Fathers (n=16)
Elementary School	6.3% (n=1)	18.8% (n=3)	37.5% (n=6)	31.3% (n=5)
High School	18.8% (n=3)	25.0% (n=4)	25.0% (n=4)	43.8% (n=7)
Post-Secondary (1-3 years)	25.0% (n=4)	18.8% (n=3)	25.0% (n=4)	6.3% (n=1)
Post Secondary (4-6 years)	50.0% (n=8)	37.5% (n=6)	12.5% (n=2)	18.8% (n=3)

Table 6

Percentages of Parents Reporting History of Abuse in Relationship with Ex-Partner
for Agreed and Disagreed Mothers and Fathers

	Agreed Mothers (n=16)	Agreed Fathers (n=16)	Disagreed Mothers (n=16)	Disagreed Fathers (n=16)
History of Physical Violence			31.3% (n=5)	12.5% (n=2)
History of Verbal Abuse	31.3% (n=5)	6.3% (n=1)	62.5% (n=10)	25.0% (n=4)
History of Emotional Abuse	31.3% (n=5)		50.0% (n=8)	31.3% (n=5)
Currently Fears Ex-Partner	12.25% (n=2)	6.25% (n=1)	68.75% (n=11)	
Percentage of Fearful Parents Feeling Protected ¹	100% (n=2)	100% (n=1)	36.36% (n=4)	

¹Percentage of parents who fear their ex-partners and felt adequately protected from them at the time of interview.

Current Relational Status and Life Satisfaction. Of the total sample, 10.9% (n=7) of the parents who participated in this study had remarried, 23.4% (n=15) were living with a new partner, 23.4% (n=15) were dating, and 42.3% (n=27) were not involved in any new relationships. Table 7 summarizes the percentages of agreed and disagreed mothers and fathers who were remarried, living with new partners, dating, or not involved in intimate relationships. Based on their ratings on a 5-point Likert scale obtained during the interviews (1 = extremely dissatisfied, 2 = very dissatisfied, 3 = "o.k." or equally satisfied and dissatisfied, 4 = very satisfied, 5 = extremely satisfied), research respondents reported a mean rating of 3.58 (SD=1.22). Table 8 includes mean relationship satisfaction ratings for mothers and fathers in the agreed and disagreed groups.

Parents also rated how satisfied they were with their occupational functioning, financial status, housing conditions and social life (friendships and family) on 5-point Likert scales (1 = extremely dissatisfied, 2 = very dissatisfied, 3 = "o.k." or equally satisfied and dissatisfied, 4 = very satisfied, 5 = extremely satisfied). Respondents' ratings on these scales ranged from 1 through 5. Mean ratings in the four domains for agreed and disagreed mothers and fathers are reported in Table 8.

Perceptions of Ex-Partners as Parents. Of the total sample, 81.3% (n=52) of research participants were able to identify at least one positive parenting characteristic when describing their ex-partner "as a parent." Sixty parents (93.8%) were able to list one or more areas of weakness in their ex-partner's parenting styles. All of the agreed mothers (n=16) and agreed fathers (n=16) believed that their ex-partners had some positive parenting characteristics; 87.5% (n=14) agreed mothers and 87.5% (n=14) agreed fathers described characteristics of their ex-partners that detracted from their parenting ability. All of the mothers and fathers in the disagreed group (n=32) identified negative parenting characteristics in their ex-partners. Fifty percent of disagreed mothers (n=8), and 18.8% (n=3) of disagreed fathers, were unable to generate any characteristics that they thought redeemed their ex-husbands or ex-wives as parents. One other disagreed mother indicated that her ex-husband had some positive parenting qualities, however, she was unable to specify these qualities.

Table 7

Current Relational Status of Mothers and Fathers
in Agreed and Disagreed Groups

	Agreed Mothers (n=16)	Agreed Fathers (n=16)	Disagreed Mothers (n=16)	Disagreed Fathers (n=16)
No Relationship	37.5% (n=6)	37.5% (n=6)	43.8% (n=7)	50.0% (n=8)
Dating	6.3% (n=1)	37.5% (n=6)	25.0% (n=4)	25.0% (n=4)
Living With New Partner	37.5% (n=6)	12.5% (n=2)	25.0% (n=4)	18.8% (n=3)
Remarried	18.8% (n=3)	12.5% (n=2)	6.3% (n=1)	6.3% (n=1)

Table 8
Reported Satisfaction Within Five Domains of Life Functioning
for Agreed and Disagreed Mothers and Fathers

	Agreed Mothers (n=16)	Agreed Fathers (n=16)	Disagreed Mothers (n=16)	Disagreed Fathers (n=16)
Satisfaction with Occupational Functioning	4.00 ¹ (0.89) ²	3.88 (1.97)	2.56 (0.89)	3.63 (1.20)
Satisfaction with Financial Situation	3.06 (1.18)	3.13 (0.81)	2.31 (0.95)	3.19 (1.36)
Satisfaction with Living /Housing Arrangement	4.13 (1.01)	3.88 (0.80)	3.13 1.31)	3.31 (1.35)
Satisfaction with Social Functioning	3.69 (1.01)	3.56 (0.81)	3.38 (1.03)	3.19 (1.17)
Satisfaction with Relationship Functioning	4.25 (1.06)	3.75 (0.86)	3.38 (1.15)	2.94 (1.44)

¹Mean Score

²Standard Deviation

Tests of Hypotheses

The results of statistical analyses relevant to the tests of hypotheses are presented in the following three sections. The first section describes how the data were reduced to a smaller number of variables representative of the hypothesized child-centeredness dimension. The second section reports the results of statistical analyses relevant to the prediction that these child-centeredness variables are interrelated in theory-consistent directions (Hypothesis 1). The third section includes the results of statistical analyses relevant to the second hypothesis that ex-couples' scores on these child-centeredness variables discriminate agreed and disagreed parent pairs (Hypothesis 2).

Data Reduction. All research respondents completed the Narcissistic Parenting Inventory (NPI), the Selfism Scale (NS), the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI), the Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI), and the Experimental Narcissistic Parenting Items (ENP). Mothers', fathers', and ex-couples' scores²⁴ were calculated for the following 25 variables: (1) NPI Total score, (2) NPI Authority Subscale score, (3) NPI Exhibitionism Subscale score, (4) NPI Superiority Subscale score, (5) NPI Entitlement Subscale score, (6) NPI Exploitativeness Subscale score, (7) NPI Self-Sufficiency Subscale score, (8) NPI Vanity Subscale score, (9) Selfism Total score, (10) IRI Perspective-Taking Subscale score, (11) IRI Personal Distress Subscale score, (12) AAPI Inappropriate Expectations Subscale score, (13) AAPI Empathy for Children's Needs Subscale score, (14) AAPI Role Reversal Subscale score, (15-23) individual scores on the nine ENP items, (24) ENP total score, and (25) ratings of relationship satisfaction. Mean scores and standard deviations for mothers, fathers, and ex-couples in the agreed and disagreed groups for each of the 25 variables are presented in Table 9 (NPI and Selfism variables), Table 10 (IRI and AAPI), and Table 11 (ENP).

²⁴Consistent with the dyadic nature of the hypotheses, ex-couples' scores were calculated by averaging the mother's and father's individual scores within each parent pair. A more detailed rationale and statistical support for the use of ex-couple's averaged scores will be provided at the end of the "Data Reduction" section.

Table 9

Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) and Selfism Scale (NS) Scores
for Mothers, Fathers and Ex-Couples in Agreed and Disagreed Groups

	Agreed Mothers	Agreed Fathers	Agreed Ex-Couples	Disagreed Mothers	Disagreed Fathers	Disagreed Ex-Couples
NPI	4.06 ¹	3.44	3.75	3.81	4.31	4.06
Authority	[2.62] ²	[1.99]	[1.59]	[1.91]	[1.82]	[1.40]
NPI Exhib- tionism	1.75	1.50	1.63	2.75	2.44	2.59
	[1.88]	[1.67]	[1.04]	[1.92]	[1.97]	[1.31]
NPI Superiority	2.06	1.75	1.91	2.13	2.31	2.22
	[1.39]	[1.18]	[0.78]	[1.50]	[1.14]	[0.88]
NPI Entitle- ment	1.50	1.06	1.28	2.06	2.00	2.03
	[1.46]	[0.85]	[0.73]	[1.48]	[1.97]	[1.42]
NPI Exploi- tiveness	1.00	1.33	1.19	1.63	1.69	1.66
	[1.15]	[1.32]	[0.70]	[1.15]	[1.20]	[1.01]
NPI Self- Sufficiency	1.94	1.63	1.78	2.69	2.81	2.75
	[1.34]	[1.09]	[0.71]	[1.74]	[1.22]	[1.08]
NPI Vanity	0.94	1.00	0.97	1.18	1.25	1.22
	[1.12]	[1.32]	[0.97]	[1.05]	[1.00]	[0.71]
NPI Total Score	13.25	11.75	12.50	16.31	16.81	16.56
	[7.64]	[5.60]	[3.62]	[7.65]	[7.04]	[5.29]
NS Selfism Total	74.81	69.75	72.28	83.75	79.44	81.59
	[16.14]	[14.67]	[9.74]	[15.00]	[10.92]	[9.70]

¹Mean score

²[Standard deviation]

Table 10

Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) and Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI)
for Mothers, Fathers and Ex-Couples in Agreed and Disagreed Groups

	Agreed Mothers	Agreed Fathers	Agreed Ex-Couples	Disagreed Mothers	Disagreed Fathers	Disagreed Ex-Couples
IRI Perspec- tive Taking	24.50 ¹ [3.39] ²	22.63 [3.65]	23.56 [2.18]	21.88 [3.52]	22.33 [2.77]	22.09 [2.09]
IRI Empathic Concern	26.31 [2.60]	24.56 [2.34]	25.44 [1.64]	24.25 [2.18]	23.00 [3.69]	23.63 [2.57]
IRI Personal Distress	17.44 [2.76]	17.44 [3.83]	17.44 [2.32]	20.94 [3.53]	19.44 [2.63]	20.19 [2.32]
AAPI Ex- pectations	7.56 [1.50]	8.06 [1.81]	7.81 [1.17]	6.69 [2.21]	7.00 [1.97]	6.84 [1.67]
AAPI Empathy	6.50 [1.41]	7.19 [1.72]	6.84 [1.22]	5.06 [2.56]	5.31 [2.77]	5.19 [1.68]
AAPI Role Reversal	7.19 [1.83]	7.69 [1.99]	7.44 [1.58]	5.63 [2.70]	7.31 [2.21]	6.47 [1.35]

¹Mean score

²[Standard deviation]

Table 11

Experimental Narcissistic Parenting Item and Total Scores
for Mothers, Fathers and Ex-Couples in Agreed and Disagreed Groups

	Agreed Mothers	Agreed Fathers	Agreed Ex-Couples	Disagreed Mothers	Disagreed Fathers	Disagreed Ex-Couples
ENP	3.94 ¹	3.19	3.56	3.63	3.44	3.53
Item 1	[1.00] ²	[0.98]	[0.70]	[1.41]	[1.21]	[0.97]
ENP	4.19	3.56	3.88	4.00	3.31	3.66
Item 2	[1.28]	[1.41]	[1.06]	[1.15]	[1.25]	[0.89]
ENP	2.25	2.00	2.13	3.56	2.88	3.22
Item 3	[1.06]	[0.82]	[0.76]	[1.09]	[1.26]	[0.93]
ENP	2.75	2.88	2.81	3.00	2.94	2.97
Item 4	[1.13]	[1.36]	[0.68]	[1.55]	[1.29]	[1.13]
ENP	3.50	3.81	3.66	3.88	3.75	3.81
Item 5	[1.37]	[1.22]	[0.77]	[1.31]	[0.93]	[0.95]
ENP	1.69	2.00	1.84	3.13	2.94	3.03
Item 6	[0.79]	[1.21]	[0.65]	[1.50]	[1.48]	[1.30]
ENP	2.63	2.50	2.56	2.81	3.75	3.28
Item 7	[1.31]	[1.32]	[0.96]	[1.80]	[1.57]	[1.55]
ENP	3.44	3.31	3.38	3.56	3.19	3.38
Item 8	[1.32]	[1.30]	[1.23]	[1.41]	[1.38]	[1.10]
ENP	2.88	3.13	3.00	3.75	3.25	3.50
Item 9	[1.32]	[0.88]	[0.89]	[1.06]	[1.06]	[0.68]
ENP	27.25	26.38	26.81	31.31	29.13	30.22
Total Score	[6.12]	[4.64]	[4.57]	[9.13]	[7.40]	[7.13]

¹Mean score

²[Standard deviation]

A combination of a priori and statistical techniques were employed to reduce the ex-couples' scores on these 25 variables to a set of eight variables. The purposes of the data reduction were (1) to ease the ratio of number of variables to sample size, and (2) to evaluate the theorized child-centeredness dimension parsimoniously.

Narcissism: Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were computed for ex-couples' NPI subscale and total scores. The resulting 8 x 8 correlational matrix is presented in Table 12. The pattern of correlations resulting from this sample's responses to the NPI is similar to the correlational pattern reported by the authors of this scale, with the exception that the Vanity Subscale does not show a moderate positive correlation with the NPI Total (Raskin & Terry, 1988; Raskin & Novacek, 1989). The similarity between these correlational patterns provides support for the use of the NPI with this sample, and more specifically, the ex-couples' total scores on the NPI appear to reflect the multidimensionality of narcissism intended by the authors of this scale (Raskin & Terry, 1988). Furthermore, coefficient alpha (Cronbach, 1951) was calculated to assess inter-item reliability. The result of this computation ($\alpha = 0.76$) indicates acceptable internal consistency. Therefore, ex-couples' NPI total scores were used as global estimates of "narcissism" in the tests of hypotheses.

Self-Centeredness: Based on their conceptualization of self-centeredness as a cognitive-behaviour orientation, Phares and Erskine (1984) did not specify subscales for the Selfism Scale (NS). Moreover, research employing this scale has not indicated the presence of a factor structure that would suggest the development of such subscales (e.g., Poppleton & Pilkington, 1983). Thus ex-couples' total scores on the Selfism Scale are included as estimates of "self-centeredness" to reflect one aspect of the theorized child-centeredness dimension to be considered in the tests of hypotheses.

Table 12

Correlational Matrix

for Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) Subscale and Total Scores

	NPI Autho- rity	NPI Exhibi- tionism	NPI SelfSuf- ficiency	NPI Entitle- ment	NPI Exploita- tiveness	NPI Superi- ority	NPI Vani- ty	NPI Total Score
NPI Autho- rity								
NPI Exhibi- tionism	+.41**							
NPI SelfSuf- ficiency	+.46**	+.61***						
NPI Entitle- ment	+.51***	+.75***	+.60***					
NPI Exploita- tiveness	+.56***	+.60***	+.59***	+.69***				
NPI Superi- ority	+.26	+.07	+.36*	+.05	-.03			
NPI Vani- ty	-.16	+.22	+.05	+.19	-.04	-.05		
NPI Total Score	+.70***	+.85***	+.82***	+.81***	+.77***	+.27	+.13	

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$

Empathy: Ex-couples' scores on the Perspective Taking, Empathic Concern, and Personal Distress Scales (IRI) were included in the final set of child-centeredness variables. The three IRI scales were not combined for the purposes of this study, because previous research employing the IRI suggests that these three scales assess diverse aspects of responsivity to others (Davis et al., 1987). All three aspects are viewed as important components of the hypothesized child-centeredness dimension.

Empathic Parenting Attitudes: Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were computed for ex-couples' scores on the Developmental Expectations, Empathy for Children's Needs, and Role Reversal Scales of the AAPI. The resulting 3 by 3 correlational matrix is reported in Table 13. The correlational pattern is consistent with that published by Bavolek (1984). A principal components analysis of the three AAPI scales indicated a single factor accounting for 77.4% of the variance (see Table 13).²⁵ A coefficient alpha (Cronbach, 1951) was calculated to assess inter-scale reliability. The result of this computation (alpha = 0.85) indicates that these three AAPI scales are related to a single dimension. Ex-couples' AAPI factor scores were used as a measure of empathic parenting attitudes to be included as one aspect of the child-centeredness dimension to be considered in the tests of hypotheses.

Narcissistic Parenting Beliefs: Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were computed for ex-couples' scores on the nine Experimental Narcissistic Parenting items and total ENP scores (ENP). Total ENP scores were calculated by summing the ex-couple's averaged scores on the nine individual ENP items. The resulting 10 by 10 correlational matrix is reported in Table 14. The results of the correlational analysis indicate low to moderate positive correlations between most individual ENP items, and a high, positive correlation between individual ENP items and the ENP total score. Coefficient alpha (Cronbach, 1951) was computed to assess the internal consistency of the ENP items. The resulting reliability estimate (alpha=0.85) suggests that the individual ENP items are tapping a single dimension. Thus only ex-couples' ENP total scores

²⁵The eigenvalues (e) associated with each of the three principal components decreased substantially after the first factor (e1 = 2.32, e2 = 0.39, e3 = 0.28).

Table 13
 Summary Table
 for Three Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI) Scales

Correlational Matrix for Three AAPI Scales

	Developmental Expectations	Empathy for Children's Needs	Parent-Child Role Reversal
Developmental Expectations			
Empathy for Children's Needs	.70*** ¹		
Parent-Child Role Reversal	.68***	.60***	

Factor Loadings for Three AAPI Scales

AAPI Scale	Factor 1
Developmental Expectations	.82
Empathy for Children's Needs	.76
Parent-Child Role Reversal	.75

¹ * $p \leq 0.5$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$

Table 14

Correlational Matrix

for Nine Experimental Narcissistic Parenting (ENP) Item Scores and ENP Total Scores

	ENP Item 1	ENP Item 2	ENP Item 3	ENP Item 4	ENP Item 5	ENP Item 6	ENP Item 7	ENP Item 8	ENP Item 9	ENP Total
ENP Item 1										
ENP Item 2	+.28									
ENP Item 3	+.30 *	+.45 **								
ENP Item 4	+.23	+.12	+.41 **							
ENP Item 5	+.37 *	+.36 *	+.37 *	+.15						
ENP Item 6	+.21	+.25	+.67 ***	+.36 *	+.33 *					
ENP Item 7	+.34 *	+.26	+.61 ***	+.40 **	+.33 *	+.51 **				
ENP Item 8	+.34 *	+.68 ***	+.69 ***	+.32 *	+.43 **	+.42 **	+.47 **			
ENP Item 9	+.35 *	+.46 **	+.65 ***	+.11	+.48 **	+.47 **	+.21	+.54 ***		
ENP Total	+.54 ***	+.63 ***	+.85 ***	+.51 **	+.61 ***	+.72 ***	+.69 ***	+.81 ***	+.68 ***	

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

were used in the tests of hypotheses.

Relationship Satisfaction: Ex-couples' ratings of how satisfied they were with their current relationships were included as a central aspect of the hypothesized child-centeredness dimension. This variable was included to reflect the hypothesized importance of the relationship between narcissistic functioning and satisfaction of relational needs. Ex-couples' ratings of their relationship satisfaction range from 1 through 5 with a mean rating of 3.58 ($SD=0.82$).

Corresponding mean ratings for parent pairs in the agreed and disagreed group are 4.00 ($SD=0.63$) and 3.16 ($SD=0.79$), respectively.

Summary of Data Reduction Procedures: Based on the results of the data reduction techniques described above, a final set of eight variables was identified to represent the hypothesized child-centeredness dimension: (1) Narcissism (NPI total score), (2) Self-Centeredness (Selfism Scale total score), (3) Perspective-Taking ability (IRI Perspective Taking Scale score), (4) Empathic Concern (IRI Empathic Concern Scale score), (5) Personal Distress (IRI Personal Distress score), (6) Empathic Parenting Attitudes (AAPI factor score), (7) Narcissistic Parenting Beliefs (ENP total score), and (8) Relationship Satisfaction (Likert rating of satisfaction with current relationship).

Ex-couples' scores on each of the eight child-centeredness variables were calculated by averaging the mother's and father's individual scores within each parent pair. This procedure was followed, because the unit of analysis in this study was the ex-couple rather than the individual parent. That is, the parents' joint child-centering capacity as it predicts shared parent arrangements was seen as central. Moreover, the mothers' and fathers' individual scores are statistically dependent. If parents' mean scores had been calculated by summing over individual parents and dividing by their total number ($N=64$), the conceptual framework of parent pairs would have been lost and the statistical assumption of independence would have been violated. Before proceeding with the tests of hypotheses, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was

performed to assess whether mothers and fathers responded differently to the set of eight child-centeredness variables, and if so, whether these sex differences interacted with shared parenting agreement. The results of the one-between (Agreedness) one-within (Sex of Parent) MANOVA on the eight dependent variables are summarized in Table 15. The analysis shows a main effect for Agreedness, $F(8,23) = 3.88$ ($p < .01$), but no main effect for Sex of Parent, $F(8,23) = 1.24$ ($p > .05$), and no interaction, $F(8,23) = 0.50$ ($p > .05$). These results support the procedure, detailed above, for calculating ex-couples' dyadic scores.

Hypothesis 1. It was hypothesized that ex-couples' scores on the eight child-centeredness variables would be interrelated in theory-consistent directions and pattern. The 8 x 8 correlational matrix²⁶ of the eight averaged variables is presented in Table 16.

As predicted, narcissism is related directly to self-centeredness and narcissistic parenting beliefs, and inversely to perspective-taking and empathic concern. The correlation between narcissism and empathic parenting attitudes is in the predicted direction, but is not statistically significant. Contrary to expectation, narcissism is not negatively related to personal distress. However, self-centeredness, which is positively related to narcissism, is highly associated with personal distress. Consistent with theory, ex-couples who score high on self-centeredness tend to report narcissistic parenting beliefs and tend not to report empathic parenting attitudes. As expected, all three measures of empathy (perspective-taking, empathic concern, and empathic parenting attitudes) are positively correlated with each other. Although empathic concern is negatively correlated with personal distress, the negative association between perspective taking and personal distress does not reach statistical significance. ($r = -.22$, $p = .11$). Consistent with expectations, ex-couples who score high on perspective taking and empathic concern and low on personal distress tend to report relationship satisfaction. Current relationship satisfaction is positively correlated with self-report of empathic parenting attitudes and negatively correlated with the endorsement of narcissistic parenting beliefs. While narcissism is not related to relationship

²⁶Correlations are Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients.

Table 15

Summary Table for Multivariate Analysis of Variance

on Eight Child Centeredness Variables for Agreedness (Between) and Sex of Parent (Within)

Source of Variance	Hypoth df	Error df	F
Agreedness	8	23	3.90**
Narcissism	1	30	6.44**
Self-Centeredness	1	30	7.34**
Perspective Taking	1	30	3.79
Empathic Concern	1	30	5.66*
Personal Distress	1	30	11.25**
Empathic Parenting Attitudes	1	30	6.77**
Narcissistic Parenting Beliefs	1	30	2.59
Relationship Satisfaction	1	30	11.12**
Sex of Parent	8	23	0.32
Narcissism	1	30	0.07
Self-Centeredness	1	30	1.59
Perspective Taking	1	30	0.62
Empathic Concern	1	30	6.00*
Personal Distress	1	30	0.89
Empathic Parenting Attitudes	1	30	0.00
Narcissistic Parenting Beliefs	1	30	1.42
Relationship Satisfaction	1	30	2.20
Agreedness by Sex-of-Parent Interaction	8	23	0.50
Narcissism	1	30	0.28
Self-Centeredness	1	30	0.01
Perspective Taking	1	30	1.60
Empathic Concern	1	30	0.17
Personal Distress	1	30	0.89
Empathic Parenting Attitudes	1	30	0.26
Narcissistic Parenting Beliefs	1	30	0.05
Relationship Satisfaction	1	30	0.01

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

Table 16
Correlational Matrix
for Ex-Couples' Averaged Scores on Eight Child-Centeredness Variables

	Narcis- sism	Self- Center- edness	Pers- pective Taking	Empa- thic Concern	Perso- nal Dis- tress	Empa- thic Pa- renting	Narcis- sistic Pa- renting	Relation- ship Sa- tisfaction
Narcis- sism								
Self- Center- edness	+.30*							
Pers- pective Taking	-.31*	-.20						
Empa- thic Concern	-.65***	-.25	+.31*					
Perso- nal Dis- tress	+.02	+.59***	-.22	-.32*				
Empa- thic Pa- renting	-.23	-.39**	+.35*	+.54***	-.36*			
Narcis- sistic Pa- renting	+.28	+.52***	-.01	-.12	+.31*	-.33*		
Relation- ship Sa- tisfaction	-.05	-.37**	+.35*	+.26	-.45**	+.48**	-.34*	

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

*** Corrected for experiment-wise error rate ($p < .002$)

satisfaction, relationship satisfaction is negatively correlated with self-centeredness. In summary, the pattern of correlations among the eight variables is consistent with a psychological dimension of child-centeredness as it is conceptualized in this dissertation.

To evaluate the dimensionality of the child-centeredness construct, the data were reduced by a principal components analysis using all eight child-centeredness variables. Three factors were retained²⁷, accounting for 71.5% of the variance (see Table 17). The first factor accounts for 40.9% of the total variance, the second factor for an additional 17.3% of the total variance, and the third factor for an additional 13.3% of the variance. The unrotated factor loadings²⁸ for the first three factors are presented in Table 17. Interestingly, although there appear to be three dimensions underlying these eight variables, only the first and largest was related to agreedness. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients between agreedness and the three factor scores indicated that Factor 1 was negatively correlated with agreedness ($r = -0.65, p < .001$), whereas neither Factor 2 ($r = .00, p > .05$) nor Factor 3 ($r = -.06, p > .05$) were related to agreedness. The relationship between agreedness and child-centeredness is evaluated more directly in the next section.

Hypothesis 2. To test the hypothesis that ex-couples' scores on the eight child-centeredness variables differentiate agreedness, a standard multiple regression was performed with agreedness as the dependent variable, and narcissism, self-centeredness, perspective taking, empathic concern, personal distress, empathic parenting attitudes, narcissistic parenting beliefs, and relationship satisfaction as the set of independent variables. As expected, ex-couples' scores on this set of eight variables reliably differentiated agreed from disagreed couples, ($F(8,23) = 3.90, p < .01$; Adjusted $R^2 = .43$). These results are detailed in Table 18, where

²⁷The eigenvalues (e) associated with each of the eight principal components decreased substantially after the first and third factor s ($e_1 = 3.27, e_2 = 1.38, e_3 = 1.06, e_4 = 0.68, e_5 = 0.68, e_6 = 0.45, e_7 = 0.33, e_8 = 0.13$).

²⁸Unrotated rather than rotated factor loadings are reported, because the interest was in isolating the single largest dimension and not in isolating simple structure.

Table 17
 Unrotated Factor Loadings
 for Principal Components Analysis for Eight Child-Centeredness Variables

Variable	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Narcissism	- .53	- .67	.42
Self-Centeredness	- .73	.33	.29
Perspective Taking	.51	.32	.54
Empathic Concern	.58	.57	- .02
Personal Distress	- .66	.43	- .13
Empathic Parenting Attitudes	.74	.04	.20
Narcissistic Parenting Beliefs	- .57	.35	.58
Relationship Satisfaction	.74	.04	.20
Variance Accounted For:	41%	17%	13%

Table 18

Summary Table for Multiple Regression Analysis
on Agreedness with Set of Eight Child-Centeredness Variables

Standardized Regression Weights

Variable	Standardized Regression Coefficient
Narcissism	.65**
Self-Centeredness	- .09
Perspective Taking	.05
Empathic Concern	- .34
Personal Distress	.49*
Empathic Parenting Attitudes	- .23
Narcissistic Parenting Beliefs	- .16
Relationship Satisfaction	- .35*
Adjusted Square Multiple Correlation	.43
Standard Error of Estimate	.38

One-Way Analysis of Variance

Source	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-Value	Significance Level (p-value)
Regression	4.60	8	0.58	3.90	.005**
Residual	3.40	23	0.15		

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

it can be seen that narcissism, personal distress, and relationship satisfaction make the greatest unique contribution to predicting agreedness. That is, compared to agreed ex-spouses, disagreed ex-couples indicate more narcissistic disturbance, tend to respond to others' distress with self-oriented feelings, and report dissatisfaction with their current relationships.

To assess how accurately ex-couples can be classified into the agreed and disagreed groups on the basis of their child-centeredness scores, a direct discriminant function analysis was performed using the eight variables to predict group membership. Jackknifed classifications were used to protect against the bias that enters classification if the coefficients used to assign a case to a group are in part derived from the case. In jackknifed classification the data from the case are left out when the coefficients used to assign it to a group are computed. Thus each case has a set of coefficients that is developed from all other cases. Consistent with the outcome of the multiple regression analysis, the results of the discriminant function analysis confirmed that the agreed and disagreed groups could be discriminated on the basis of these eight variables [Canonical R=.76; Wilkes Lambda=.43; $F(8,23)=3.90$, $p<.01$]. Seventy-five percent of the parent pairs could be correctly classified as agreed or disagreed on the basis of their scores on the set of eight child-centeredness variables. As can be seen in Table 19, all eight variables load on the discriminant function²⁹. This structure matrix supports a unidimensional interpretation of the child-centeredness construct, as it relates to agreedness.

To address the practical question of how these child-centeredness variables may be useful in discriminating agreed and disagreed parent pairs with minimal assessment expenditure, an additional direct discriminant analysis was performed using only narcissism, personal distress, and relationship satisfaction to predict group membership. These three variables were selected from the set of eight child-centeredness variables on the basis of their salience in the results of

²⁹If the rule-of-thumb of a .30 loading is applied, the "narcissistic parenting beliefs" variable only approaches significance.

Table 19

Discriminant Function Analysis:

Classification of Agreed and Disagreed Parents with Set of Eight Child-Centeredness Variables

Structure Coefficients (Correlations Between Predictors and Discriminant Functions)

Variables	Pooled Within-Groups Correlations
Personal Distress	.53
Relationship Satisfaction	- .52
Self-Centeredness	.43
Empathic Parenting Attitudes	- .42
Narcissism	.40
Empathic Concern	- .37
Perspective Taking	- .31
Narcissistic Parenting Beliefs	.25

*Classification Summary Table*¹

Actual Group	n	Predicted Group	
		Agreed Ex-Couples	Disagreed Ex-Couples
Agreed Ex-Couples	16	12	4
Disagreed Ex-Couples	16	4	12

¹Using jackknifed classifications.

both the multiple regression and discriminant function analyses reported above³⁰. Moreover, from a theoretical perspective, these three variables capture the essence of the hypothesized child-centeredness dimension. A direct discriminant function analysis was performed using these three variables as predictors of membership in the agreed and disagreed groups. The results of this analysis indicated that ex-couples' scores on these three variables discriminated the agreed and disagreed groups [Canonical $\eta^2=.73$; Wilkes Lambda=.47; $F(3,30)=10.60$, $p<.001$] with a correct classification occurring in 81.3% of the cases. The results of this analysis are detailed in Table 20.

³⁰The same three variables were also selected when a stepwise discriminant function analysis using the set of eight child-centeredness variables to predict agreedness was conducted.

Table 20

Discriminant Function Analysis:

Classification of Agreed and Disagreed Parents with Set of Three Child-Centeredness Variables

Structure Coefficients (Correlations Between Predictors and Discriminant Functions)

Variables	Pooled Within-Groups Correlations
Narcissism	.44
Personal Distress	.58
Relationship Satisfaction	- .57

*Classification Summary Table*¹

Actual Group	n	Predicted Group	
		Agreed Ex-Couples	Disagreed Ex-Couples
Agreed Ex-Couples	16	14	2
Disagreed Ex-Couples	16	4	12

¹Using jackknifed classifications.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

Overview

This chapter is divided into five main sections. In the first section descriptive data are discussed with a view toward developing a context for understanding the shared parenting process. The second section considers the interrelatedness of the child-centeredness variables and the dimensionality of this construct. In the third section the relationship between child-centeredness and shared parenting is deliberated from theoretical and practical viewpoints. The fourth section outlines the limitations of this study. The fifth section discusses the implications of the present findings for future research and practice.

Shared Parenting After Divorce: Describing the Context

A review of the literature³¹ reveals only a few studies focusing on divorced families with a wide range of shared parenting arrangements. Even fewer studies include ex-couples who have negotiated their own shared parenting plans without court and/or family clinic involvement (exception: Irving & Benjamin, 1987). Moreover, descriptive accounts of the families who participated in these studies and details of their shared parenting plans are notably absent in this literature.

In addition to its conceptual focus on the role of child-centeredness in negotiating parenting decisions, the present study provides descriptions of the ex-couples' relationship histories, their satisfaction with various facets of their present lives, and the nature of their shared parenting efforts. These descriptive data is discussed in the following sections. The purpose of including considerable descriptive data is not only to create as vivid a picture as possible of these parents and their lives, but also to help generate hypotheses for future research on shared parenting agreements and disagreements. While it may be tempting to infer differences between

³¹For a review of this literature see "Custody and Shared Parenting" section in the Introduction .

the agreed and disagreed ex-couples on the basis of these descriptive data, the reader is reminded that tests of significance were not performed for these descriptive statistics. As the ratio of number of variables to sample size limited the extent to which inferences could be drawn from the results of this study, degrees of freedom were retained to test the central hypotheses. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the descriptive data will provide clues about how the relationship between child-centeredness and shared parenting agreement may eventually be understood in its proper context.

Family Structure. There were an average of two children per family in this sample, which is in accordance with national statistics on family size (Statistics Canada, 1990). In 1986, the last year for which this particular statistic is available, 48.5% of Canadian divorces involved no dependent children, 44% of divorces concerned one or two children, and the remaining 7.5% of divorces affected three or more dependent children (Statistics Canada, 1989). Most ex-spouses in this study had two children, a substantial number had only one child, and the remaining ex-couples had three or four children. In this sample, some of the children were not yet born at the time of their parents' separations, whereas others were as old as fourteen years. Most of the children were between six months and eight and one-half years old when their parents' marriage ended. Approximately one half of these children are girls and one half are boys.

One question that arises from these descriptive statistics is whether there is a relationship between the size of divorcing families and risk for involvement in custody disputes. Answering this question in future research will require examining the influence of other factors, such as the parents' ages and the length of the relationship between the parents. From the theoretical perspective developed in the present study, this question may be of particular interest. The needs of narcissistic parents at the time of a divorce may be so great that children - and what they can offer their parents in terms of affirmation and support - may become scarce and valuable resources in their parents' eyes. It could be that an only child is at greater risk for becoming entangled in a battle of ownership between disputing parents, than a sibship of two, three or four

children. On the other hand, being confronted with the diverse characteristics and needs of a number of children may foster the development of parents' child-centering capacities.

Relationship History. Ex-couples were asked to indicate how long they had been in an intimate relationship with each other, from beginning dating to marital separation. This contrasts with earlier studies that inquired about the lengths of marriages and may not have taken into account time spent living together or the situations of parents who were never legally married. In this sample of ex-spouses, the majority of ex-partners had been married to each other (90.4%), and only a minority had cohabitated but never wedded (9.6%).

Records of national divorce statistics (Statistics Canada, 1990) and writers describing international trends (e.g., McGoldrick, 1988; Peck & Manocherian, 1988) suggest that frequency of divorce is relatively low in the first two years of marriage, increases between the third and eighth years of marriage, and gradually decreases from the ninth year forward. The relationships between the ex-spouses who participated in this study lasted between six months and 26 years. Agreed parents reported having been together for an average of 14 years before separation, and disagreed parents had been involved with each other for an average of eight and one-half years.

A question that may be raised based on these descriptive statistics is whether there is an association between ex-spouses' child-centeredness, the duration of their relationships, and their abilities to negotiate shared parenting agreements. The clinical literature suggests that narcissistic individuals experience relationship difficulties, because they lack empathy and are self-centered (Masterson, 1981). It may be that the presence of these narcissistic features stresses the relationships of such individuals and places them at greater and earlier risk for marital breakdown. When considering marriage dating couples generally rely on the positive and self-gratifying aspects of their relationships, while giving relatively little consideration to the negative features (Holmes & Boon, 1990). However, for narcissistic couples excessively positive illusions about their partners may be especially difficult to accommodate when faced with everyday interactions and child-rearing stresses. Furthermore, the narcissistic tendency to respond to relational stress by rapidly shifting from a position of idealizing the partner, to devaluing and

rejecting him or her absolutely, may both accelerate the termination of a relationship and diminish the ex-couples' willingness to share parenting responsibilities with each other.

At the time of their first interviews, the ex-couples who participated in this study had been separated for a period of time ranging from one month to almost nine years. Most of these ex-spouses had stopped living together one to five years ago. Consistent with the findings from the divorce literature (Tschann et al., 1989; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989), the parents interviewed in this study conveyed a wide range of emotional responses when they discussed their marriage break-ups; anger, hatred, bitterness, sadness, relief, guilt, and concern for the other parent and children were common. The passage of time since the separation appeared to play less of a role in the resolution of these feelings than might be expected³². For example, one father communicated a sense of sadness and disappointment about the ending of his first marriage approximately 18 months ago, but appeared to have worked through these feelings and moved forward in his life, " ... she was the first girl I ever loved ... it's almost like we grew up together ... for a while I kind of wished I'd never even met her ... but now I'm glad we had what we had ..." In contrast, one mother who had been divorced for almost five years said that the first thing she experienced each morning when she woke up was an acute sense of grief about the loss of her ex-husband, " ... it punches me in the stomach every day ..."

A gradual increase over the past two decades in the proportion of divorces initiated by women, with and without children, has been noted in the literature (Irving & Benjamin, 1987; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). In this study 78% of marital separations were initiated by the mothers and 22% were launched by the fathers. It should be noted that the spouse who initiated the marital separation did not necessarily want to end the relationship more than the other parent. For example, some ex-spouses recalled that the desire to separate was mutual, but that one of the partners finally took the first step. Other parents admitted that they had goaded their ex-partners into initiating a separation, by flaunting their affairs or by treating their ex-spouses poorly

³²This is an impression of the writer based on qualitative data collected during the personal interviews with the parents.

(e.g., "I was just waiting for her to get rid of me"). Apparently these parents resorted to such behaviour, because they felt too guilty to address the subject directly. Others still had initiated a marital separation "to make a point" about their dissatisfactions with the marriage. However, they were bitterly disappointed when their ex-spouses made no efforts to reconcile. Thus, for some ex-spouses initiating a separation was a direct expression of their desire to end the marriage, but for many the meaning was entirely different.

History of Abuse in Relationship with Ex-Partner. One-fifth of the disagreed parents reported that their ex-spouses had been physically abusive toward them. In almost one-half of these cases the physical abuse had occurred at the time of, or after, the marital separation. None of the agreed parents had been physically abused by their ex-partners. While divorce researchers have noted that physical violence often occurs between disputing parents and/or played a role in their marriages (Johnston & Campbell, 1988; Johnston et al., 1989; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989), the descriptive findings in this study do not reflect the extent to which other writers have found this to be true. For example, Johnston and Campbell (1988) found that physical aggression had occurred between three-fourths of the disputing ex-couples in their sample. However, their sample consisted exclusively of families who had been referred by the courts to a dispute resolution center, perhaps indicating the severity of these cases. Furthermore, these authors used a lengthy questionnaire to assess the nature and extent of the physical violence that had occurred. This questionnaire format may have assisted respondents in recalling specific instances of physical abuse that would have remained unreported, if a more general and open-ended questioning format had been used (as was the case in this study).

Almost one-third of the research respondents reported a history of verbal abuse, and one-quarter of the parents felt that they had been emotionally abused by their ex-partners during the course of their marriages. This is not surprising given that the study, by definition, focused on ex-couples who were dissatisfied enough with their marriages and common-law relationships to end them. If anything, it is curious that these percentages were not higher. Statistics Canada

(1989) recently reported that for divorces granted between 1981 and 1985³³, physical and mental cruelty were cited as grounds in 33.2% and 21.9% of divorce cases, compared to adultery, which was cited in 44.9% of the cases.

One-fifth of the parents who participated in this study were fearful of their ex-spouses at the time of the initial interview. All three agreed parents who reported feeling afraid of their ex-partners indicated that at present they felt adequately protected from them. Four of the eleven disagreed mothers³⁴ who were fearful of their ex-husbands did not feel safe, even though, in two of these four cases, the fathers were denied access to their children by court order.

These descriptive data raise difficult questions about the relationships between family violence, power imbalances between ex-spouses, child-centeredness, and shared parenting agreements. While these questions cannot be answered in this study, they also cannot be ignored. Certainly a power imbalance between spouses may preclude the "negotiation" of a shared parenting agreement, unless steps have been taken to protect the disempowered party. While there is a body of research to suggest that parents who abuse their spouses do not necessarily abuse their children³⁵ (e.g., Johnson & Campbell, 1989), a parent's potential risk to the child is difficult to assess. This would be especially true if the assessment relies on information provided by a narcissistically injured parent who may feel entitled to cutting the other parent out of the child's life.

Negotiation of Shared Parenting Arrangements. The agreed ex-couples negotiated their shared parenting arrangements without any form of professional intervention. However, two of the 16 parent pairs were able to benefit from brief periods of family mediation to work out the details of their financial settlements. These two ex-couples communicated their willingness to see a family mediator to work through shared parenting issues should the need arise.

³³These statistics were compiled prior to the institution of Canada's Divorce Act (1986), and overlapped with the divorce dates of some of the ex-spouses who participated in the present study.

³⁴No disagreed fathers reported feeling fearful of their ex-wives.

³⁵Exposing the child to violence between the parents is considered a form of abuse by this and other writers.

In accordance with Irving and Benjamin's (1987) portrayal of satisfied joint physical custodians, the agreed parents in this sample expressed flexibility, openness and optimism in their approaches to shared parenting. However, they were virtually unanimous in their opinion that shared parenting was also a very difficult and trying process. One of the agreed fathers commented that holding up his end of the shared parenting arrangement took a lot of hard work, "but it showed me what it really meant to be a father in a way that I never knew while I was married." While all agreed ex-couples reported that their shared parenting arrangements had been maintained over the course of the four-month follow-up period, two of the ex-couples felt that the process had become more stressful³⁶ and five ex-couples indicated that the plan was working better since they had last spoken with the interviewer. The remaining nine ex-couples reported no changes. Thus, it may be that the course of shared parenting is one in which highs and lows should be expected. This is a question that longitudinal studies of shared parenting will need to address.

Contrary to the claims of some writers that shared parenting arrangements are only possible in the most amicable of divorces (e.g., Walsh & Kalter, 1986), many of these agreed parents still harboured a great deal of resentment toward their ex-spouses (e.g., " ... put it this way ... if it weren't for the kids, I wouldn't care if I ever saw her again ..."). Interestingly, many agreed parents admitted moments when they wanted to punish their ex-spouses through their children; however, for the most part they were able to stop themselves from acting on these wishes. For example, one mother recalled her reaction when she first heard that her ex-husband was dating a mutual friend, "I was so mad ... I just felt like calling him up and saying ... o.k., that's it, you've seen your son for the last time ... but somehow I didn't do it ... and I'm glad I didn't ..." One father in the agreed group remembers feeling bitterly disappointed in his ex-wife's decision to end their marriage of 20 years. At first, he wished she would disappear out of his and their children's lives:

³⁶It may be that the ex-couples who were finding their shared parenting efforts more stressful at the four-month follow-up point were moving toward a breakdown of their arrangements. However, this is relatively unlikely because both ex-couples had already been separated for over one year prior to their first contacts with the experimenter.

"... I did a lot of soul-searching ... and then I realized we had to do something to help the kids ... it doesn't mean I ever have to forgive her though ..."

Many of the agreed ex-spouses worked out a shared parenting plan together before approaching their lawyers to formalize these arrangements. These ex-couples had a wide range of experiences with their lawyers. Some parents perceived their lawyers to have been their greatest allies at a time of emotional upheaval. Other agreed parents worked their way through a number of lawyers before they found "the right one" for them. Many parents indicated that their lawyers had actively opposed their shared parenting plans and had encouraged them to take more divisive positions vis-a-vis their ex-spouses. One ex-couple worked out a plan which involved having the parents alternate in two-week periods between living with their children in the "matrimonial home" while the other parent lived in an apartment they had rented for this purpose³⁷. They recalled arriving together at their lawyer's office to present their plan: "... our poor lawyer just about fainted ... he told us we couldn't be there together and that one of us had to leave immediately ... finally we calmed him down ... he even got used to our plan after a while ... but he still thinks we were nuts ...". Some of the agreed ex-spouses met with each other against their lawyers' advice during the course of the divorce proceedings to discuss parenting issues, because they felt that the "whole process was getting way out of control ... there was just too many impersonal letters flying back and forth ... "

Agreed parents varied in the degree of structure characterizing their shared parenting plans. Some of these ex-couples viewed their plans as "general outlines" that would require modification as the children grew older and their needs had changed. One ex-spouse was unable to recall ever having developed a formal plan with the other parent: "... the way we ended up doing things with the kids just seemed to evolve over time ...". Other parents in the agreed group developed a highly structured shared parenting plan when they first separated, which then became more flexible with time.

³⁷The ex-couple maintained this arrangement for almost two years at which time the mother remarried and the father returned to living permanently with his children in the "matrimonial home."

When asked what they thought children needed most at the time of their parents' divorce, the agreed parents provided a great deal of constructive advice: " ... they need to know it (the divorce) has nothing to do with them; they are not the ones being left ... tell them both of you will always love them, every night if you must ... tell the teachers what's going on so they can help out ... they need as much stability as possible ... encourage them to spend time with both of you ... whatever you do, don't fight in front of them ... if you slip up and say something negative about each other (the other parent) to the kids, admit that you shouldn't have said it ... at some point the children will need to know that their parents really loved each other when they had them ... lots and lots of hugs ..."

The majority of disagreed ex-couples were in the process of litigating their custody and access arrangements. Two disagreed parents had recently emerged from lengthy periods of litigation and, although dissatisfied with the outcome, had decided to "give up" on their litigation efforts for the time being. A minority of the disagreed ex-couples had been seen by family mediators, but were unable to resolve their parenting disputes. Two disagreed ex-couples had been litigating for a number of years, but had never participated in family mediation or been referred for a psychological assessment.

Some of the disagreed parents commented that they did not believe in shared parenting. Others indicated that they liked the idea of shared parenting, but believed that their ex-partners had nothing to offer to their children. Others still were clearly disappointed that they were unable to work out a mutually agreeable plan. Many of the disagreed parents believed that their children should have been allowed to decide where they wanted to live. For example, one mother tried to hire an additional lawyer to represent her two children, then eight and ten years old: "... I wanted a lawyer just for the kids but they wouldn't do that ... how could he (her ex-husband) even think that the kids wouldn't choose me ... I have nine months over every man ..." Some parents shared stories with the interviewer in which they appeared to have been using their children to punish their ex-spouses without indicating any insight into their behaviour. Other disagreed parents were experiencing feelings of regret, sadness and shame about how their custody disputes had

proceeded and impacted on their children. One of the disagreed fathers who had lost access to his son after a lengthy custody battle said: "... I feel like I've orphaned somebody ... or that I've orphaned myself ...". Many felt that it was not within their power to stop the litigation process. For example, one father commented: "... I guess all I can do now is to fight it out to the end and hope it's over soon ..."38

While these qualitative data may provide some tentative insights into the process of negotiating shared parenting arrangement, these impressions may be coloured by the interviewer's knowledge of each parent's membership in the agreed or disagreed group. Furthermore, in many of these cases, parents were recalling events that occurred several years before their interviews. A clearer understanding of the negotiation process will require that ex-couples are followed closely from the time of separation as they attempt to arrive at a mutually agreeable shared parenting plan.

Perceptions of Ex-Partners as Parents. Consistent with the finding that satisfied physical joint custodians tend to respect and trust their ex-partners' parenting abilities (e.g., Steinman et al., 1985), all of the agreed parents were able to identify at least one of their ex-partners' parenting strengths (e.g., dependable, affectionate, helpful, creative). All of the agreed parents were also able to report one or more areas of weakness in their ex-partners' parenting style (e.g., bad temper, unreliable, impatient, judgemental).

Not surprisingly, all of the disagreed parents were able to identify at least one parenting weakness applying to their ex-spouses. The finding that three-fifths of the disagreed parents were able to identify positive parenting characteristics is more curious. That is, the majority of these parents were able to see that their ex-spouses had something positive to contribute to their children's upbringing. Nevertheless, they were unable to work out an arrangement that would include the other parent in the children's upbringing. When asked to identify their ex-spouses' negative parenting characteristics, many of these disagreed parents appeared to have difficulty

³⁸The impressions and parents' comments included in this paragraph are limited to the interviews with the five ex-couples seen by the experimenter.

separating their responses to this question from their own feelings toward their ex-partners. These parents required a considerable amount of structure to arrive at an answer. For example, when asked this question one mother responded as follows: " ... as a parent ? ... I get upset when I just think about him ... he was very cruel to me ... *(Yes, but what about his behaviour as a parent, can you think of anything that gets in the way of his parenting?)* ... he harasses us constantly ...*(Repeat question)* ... he's always late when he picks up the children ... "

Custody and Access Arrangements. The majority of ex-couples had formalized their shared parenting agreements in legal terms. The divorce literature suggests that the majority of children lived with their mothers after their parents' separation (e.g., Hetherington et al., 1989). Similarly, almost one-half of the mothers who participated in this study had sole custody of their children; an additional one-quarter of the ex-couples were legal joint custodians with the mothers' homes designated as the primary residences. Furthermore, ex-couples reported that their children spent more of their time with their mothers than with their fathers.

Ex-couples in the disagreed group had either sole custody or legal joint custody arrangements. None of these ex-couples were physical joint custodians. While divorce researchers in the U.S. have included parents with court-ordered physical joint custody in their samples (e.g., Johnston et al., 1989), the Canadian legislation affecting this sample does not explicitly encourage or enforce this custody arrangement (Irving & Benjamin, 1987). Children of disagreed parents were spending an average of four-fifths of their time with their mothers and one-fifth with their fathers. However, it should be noted that in the case of two disagreed ex-couples, the fathers were restricted from any access to the children.

One question that can be raised on the basis of these descriptive statistics is whether there is a relationship between the structure of custody arrangements, child-centeredness, and shared parenting agreement. From the conceptual perspective of this study, it may be that narcissistic parents see their ex-spouses' wishes to spend any time with their children as unreasonable. It may also be that a child-centered parent's wish to protect a child from an abusive parent is entirely reasonable. On the other hand, the narcissistic tendency to devalue an ex-

partner who has fallen from "perfect" to "worthless" may cloud a parent's judgement about the other parent's abusiveness. The relatively high incidence of improbable³⁹ sexual abuse allegations that occur in the context of custody disputes may be examples of this process (for a review see, Elterman & Ehrenberg, 1991).

Agreed ex-couples reported a wide range of shared parenting arrangements falling within four different legally-defined categories: sole custody, split custody, legal joint custody, and physical joint custody. Interestingly, only one-quarter of agreed ex-couples were physical joint custodians. Previous research, most notably the Toronto Shared Parenting Project (Irving & Benjamin, 1989), included only satisfied joint custodians in their shared parenting group. However, the results of this study suggest that three-quarters of ex-couples who were in agreement about how they shared the parenting of their children could not be categorized into the physical joint custody category. Given that ex-spousal cooperation in their roles as parents has repeatedly been shown to predict positive adjustment in children of divorce (Camara & Resnick, 1988; Johnston et. al, 1989; Tschann et al., 1989; Wallerstein & Balkelee, 1989), these findings provide preliminary evidence for the position that a wide range of shared parenting agreements may serve children's best interests.

Close to one-third of the agreed ex-couples viewed sole custody arrangements as the best solution for their children. Most of the agreed ex-couples with this arrangement believed that, if possible, it was best not to move the children out of their homes and neighbourhoods. In four of these five cases the mother was the sole custodian and the father saw the children on a regular basis. Children of agreed parents spent an average of two-fifths of their time with their fathers. Interestingly, many of the agreed parents indicated that they did not object to a fifty-fifty time split between the parents, but that this arrangement simply did not fit into the children's and parents' lives. For example, one father who had sole custody of his three children had worked out an arrangement where his ex-wife saw the children two nights a week for dinner and every other

³⁹The term "improbable" (as opposed to "false") is used to avoid misrepresentation of the level of confidence with which an allegation of child sexual abuse can be substantiated.

weekend. The father was at a stage in his life where his business was well established and he had a great deal of time to spend with the children. The mother welcomed the opportunity to put time into a career she had been neglecting for years. A fifty-fifty time split would have felt unnatural to this ex-couple and would have unnecessarily removed the children from their activities in and around the home.

An additional five ex-couples in the agreed group had chosen a legal joint custody arrangement. The mother's home was the children's primary residence in the majority of these cases. There appeared to be few practical differences between the shared parenting arrangements of agreed parents in the legal joint custody and sole custody categories. Some of the agreed ex-couples with sole custody had not been aware of the legal joint custody option at the time of the marital separations. In one such case the ex-couples wished to change their sole custody to a legal joint custody arrangement. However, when their lawyers instructed them about the procedure and expense required to make this change, the parents decided to leave things as they were. In the cases of two agreed ex-couples with sole custody, the fathers had decided to respect their ex-wives' wish for sole custody. One of these fathers commented, that " she always made the day-to-day decisions about the kids when we were married ...I trust her judgement ... if there is something really important, I know she will talk to me about it ..." Thus, for some ex-spouses an arrangement of sole custody to the mother may have reflected an agreement that was in place long before the marital separation was initiated.

Two agreed ex-couples had negotiated a shared parenting agreement that took into account potential parenting liabilities. In one case the parent had an alcohol problem, and in the other case the parent in question had a drug problem. In both of these instances the substance using parents were aware of their potential risk to the children and had agreed to be alcohol/drug-free during visits with their children. Apparently, these two agreements had been maintained for a considerable period of time. One of the parents commented: " ... I lost my marriage to alcohol ... I don't want to lose my kids too ..."

Three of the four ex-couples with physical joint custody arrangements had developed a shared parenting plan involving the children moving between their parents' homes. Consistent with other studies of physical joint custodians (Steinman et al., 1985; Benjamin & Irving, 1989), these parents appeared to be dedicated to logistically complex plans. One of the four ex-couples with physical joint custody arrangements moved in and out of their "children's homes."⁴⁰

Both of the agreed ex-couples with split custody⁴¹ had been separated for more than three years. When the children of these two ex-couples reached adolescence, they moved in with their same-sexed parents. This decision was based on the parents' perceptions that the adolescents' needs were better served by spending more time with the same-sexed parents. In one of these two cases, the parents felt that the excessive sibling rivalry that had developed between their two children might be eased by giving each of them the full attention of one parent, as opposed to the divided attention of one parent.

The nature of sibling relationships in divorced families has received virtually no attention in the divorce and shared parenting literature. The descriptive data collected in this study suggest that in the majority of divorced families with more than one child, the siblings are usually together when they spend time with their mothers and fathers. In the case of the two split custody families the children had a great deal of individual time with each of their custodial parents, a reasonable amount of time with the non-custodial parents, but very little time with their siblings. The relationship between sibling bonds and shared parenting agreements should be considered in future research. It may be that ex-spouses negotiating child-centered shared parenting arrangements will need to think about their children's needs for individual relationships with their parents in balance with their need to maintain relationships with their siblings.

Culture and Ethnicity. The majority of ex-couples who participated in this study are Canadian citizens who do not identify with any particular ethnic or cultural group. A minority of

⁴⁰This ex-couples' situation was detailed previously in the "Negotiations of Shared Parenting Arrangements" section.

⁴¹Neither of these ex-couples referred to their shared parenting arrangement as "split custody", however, they met the criteria for this legally defined category.

parents identified with a wide range of ethnic and cultural groups. A question for future research is whether there are any relationships between ethnic or cultural beliefs, child-centeredness, and shared parenting arrangements. Some divorce researchers have identified differences in how divorce is received and handled in different cultures (e.g., McGoldrick, 1988). It is not difficult to imagine that children's needs may be viewed very differently by diverse cultures.

Education. The ex-spouses who participated in this study presented with educational backgrounds that ranged from completing elementary school to obtaining a doctoral degree. The majority of research respondents had finished high school, and approximately one-quarter of these parents had pursued post-secondary educations.

This writer is not aware of any studies that investigate the relationship between parents' educational level and shared parenting capacity. Irving and Benjamin (1989) found no relationship between parents' socioeconomic status and satisfaction with physical joint custody arrangements. The divorce literature suggests that women with higher levels of education are more likely to initiate marital separations (e.g., Peck & Manocherian, 1988). Furthermore, education may be a resource for parents coping with the stresses of a divorce, especially if the mother's level of education contributes to securing employment she finds satisfying (Tschann et al., 1989).

In this study, the majority of agreed parents had completed some post-secondary education. Most of disagreed parents had not pursued their educations beyond the end of high school. The relationship between level of parents' education, child-centeredness, and shared parenting arrangements may be a promising area for future research. It may be that parents' levels of education contribute to their child-centering capacities and/or encourage the development of negotiation skills directly necessary for the development of shared parenting arrangements. It may also be that mothers with higher levels of education may welcome the opportunity to share the parenting of their children and to devote more time to their careers.

From the conceptual perspective developed in this study, it may be that higher levels of education are associated with the receipt of external sources of gratification (financial and career-

related privileges) that might sustain the narcissistically vulnerable parent during a period of relational stress. Alternatively, the intellectual skills and financial privileges associated with higher levels of education may equip the narcissistically injured parent with the resources necessary for a protracted custody dispute.

Parents' Relational Status and Life Satisfaction. Approximately two-fifths of the parents who participated in this study were living with new partners or had remarried; one-fifth of the parents were dating; and two-fifths were not involved in new relationships. Ex-spouses expressed varying degrees of satisfaction with their current relationships. Based on their longitudinal study of divorcing families, Wallerstein et al. (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980) observed that for some a divorce created an opportunity, a "second chance" for securing the relationship happiness for which they had always hoped. However, for others it meant never being able to recover the relational closeness they felt they once had. Similarly, some of the parents who participated in the study were filled with enthusiasm about their new relationships, that was bridled only by leftover feelings of guilt for having hurt their ex-spouses. On the other hand, some of these parents believed that their divorces were mistakes that could never be fixed.

In this study parents were asked to indicate how satisfied they were with several other aspects of their lives: social functioning, financial status, occupational functioning, and housing/living conditions. While these questions were included in the present study solely to generate descriptive data, it is hoped that parents' responses to these kinds of questions in future research will provide the context necessary for understanding the relationship between child-centeredness and shared parenting agreement. It may be that life satisfaction is related to shared parenting agreement through the parents' child-centering capacity. For example, narcissistic parents who lack external sources of gratification may turn to their children to meet their emotional needs and may have difficulty arriving at a child-centered shared parenting arrangement. Alternatively, it may be that life satisfaction impacts directly on shared parenting agreement. That is, it may be that ex-couples need work, money, friendships and reasonable

housing arrangements to sustain a shared parenting agreement. Another possibility still is that the importance of ex-couples' child-centeredness in predicting shared parenting agreement may vary depending on the nature of the parents' occupational, social, and financial context.

Child-Centeredness as a Psychological Dimension.

A priori and statistical data reduction techniques were combined to identify a set of eight variables representative of the hypothesized child-centeredness dimension: narcissism, self-centeredness, perspective taking ability, empathic concern, personal distress, empathic parenting attitudes, narcissistic parenting beliefs, and relationship satisfaction. Ex-couples' scores on these eight variables served as a basis for testing the hypotheses.⁴²

The Interrelatedness of Child-Centeredness Variables. The results of the correlational analysis supported the hypothesis that ex-couples' scores on these eight variables are interrelated in theory-consistent directions. As expected, there are positive correlations among ex-couples' scores on narcissism, self-centeredness, and narcissistic parenting beliefs. While there is a slight tendency for parents with narcissistic features to view a wide range of situations from a self-serving perspective and to endorse narcissistic parenting beliefs, neither of these correlations are statistically significant when experiment-wise error is taken into account. Interestingly, the most substantial relationship is evident between self-centeredness and narcissistic parenting beliefs. This may mean that ex-couples who have adopted a self-centered world view, which is consistent with their narcissistic tendencies, are also very likely to hold narcissistic parenting beliefs. Based on this interpretation, narcissism may be understood as a personality organization that is expressed as a bias to view a wide range of situations in self-serving as opposed to other-oriented terms. That is, if an ex-couples' narcissistic tendencies are in fact expressed in the form of a self-centered attitude, then this self-oriented attitude is also likely to colour their parenting beliefs. Thus, parents who are inclined to put their interests before

⁴²In this section the terms "ex-couples", "ex-spouses", "parents" and "ex-partners" will be used interchangeably to reflect the dyadic nature of the hypotheses.

those of others in a number of different situations are also likely to think about their children in these terms. From this perspective, children may be seen as a means of serving their parents' narcissistic needs (e.g., "I believe I deserve my child's love and respect, because I am a good parent").⁴³

If it is true that narcissistic personality tendencies may be expressed as an attitude of self-centeredness in general and in the form of narcissistic parenting beliefs in particular, then it makes sense to ask under what conditions this is most likely to occur. Object relations theorists have argued that because narcissistic individuals are especially vulnerable to relational losses, their narcissistic tendencies and defenses will be most evident under conditions of relational stress (Lowen, 1975). Similarly, based on their sample of eighty ex-couples involved in longstanding custody battles, Johnston and Campbell (1988) observed that parents with narcissistic features tend to regress to positions of extreme self-centeredness when faced with divorce and custody issues. Interestingly, in this sample ex-couples' ratings of relationship satisfaction are inversely related to self-centeredness; yet there is no evidence for a correlation between relationship satisfaction and narcissism. This pattern of correlations between narcissism, self-centeredness and relationship satisfaction might suggest that ex-couples with narcissistic personality features are especially likely to express self-centered attitudes when they are dissatisfied with their relationships. Furthermore, based on the slight tendency on the part of ex-spouses who report relational dissatisfaction to also express narcissistic parenting beliefs, it could be hypothesized that parenting attitudes will come to reflect that parents' needs during periods of relational discontent. This hypothesis could be tested in a longitudinal study of shared parenting.

As expected, ex-couples who are content in their new relationships are likely to endorse empathic parenting attitudes. This may be because empathic parents are likely to be empathic partners who will benefit from the reciprocity of a mature relationship. It is also possible that satisfaction and support derived from new relationships help divorced parents to maintain an

⁴³This example is the first item on the Experimental Narcissistic Parenting Scale.

empathic stance toward their children. However, ongoing dissatisfaction with relationships and lack of support from significant others may leave ex-spouses with little energy to worry about their children's needs.

Interestingly, there is a slight negative correlation between empathic parenting attitudes and narcissistic parenting beliefs, but this correlation does not reach significance when experiment-wise error is taken into consideration. Similarly, the inverse relationship between empathic parenting attitudes and narcissism is not significant. However, the negative correlation between self-centeredness and empathic parenting approaches significance, and the inverse relationship between self-centeredness and narcissistic parenting beliefs is highly significant. One hypothesis to explain this pattern of correlations among narcissism, self-centeredness, empathic and narcissistic parenting attitudes is that the negative relationship between empathic parenting attitudes and narcissistic parenting is mediated by self-centeredness. That is, ex-spouses who lack in their empathic parenting views may not necessarily hold narcissistic parenting beliefs. However, it may be that narcissistic parents who have adopted a position of self-centeredness may not only lack empathy for their children, but may also look to their children to meet their narcissistic needs. For these parents, a lack of empathic parenting attitudes and the endorsement of narcissistic parenting beliefs may go hand in hand.

As predicted, there are positive correlations between empathic parenting attitudes and measures of dispositional empathy. While there is a small positive correlation between perspective taking and empathic parenting attitudes, the relationship between empathic concern and empathic parenting is highly significant. Consistent with studies that underline the importance of parental warmth and responsiveness to the establishment of empathic parent-child relationships (Feshbach, 1987), this correlational pattern suggests that the affective aspect of the empathic disposition may be more strongly associated with an empathic parenting position than the cognitive aspects of empathy. Parents' empathic responsiveness to their children may lay the foundation on which empathic parenting attitudes can then build.

As was intended by Davis in his development of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI; 1983), there is a positive relationship between the two scales of dispositional empathy (empathic concern and perspective taking), a negative correlation between empathic concern and personal distress, and an inverse relationship between perspective taking and personal distress. However, in this sample these correlations do not reach significance when experiment-wise error rates are taken into account.

As expected, there is a significant inverse relationship between empathic concern and narcissism. This suggests that narcissistic ex-spouses tend not to experience feelings of warmth, compassion, and concern for others. While the inverse relationship between narcissism and perspective-taking is in the expected direction, this correlation is not statistically significant when the experiment-wise error rate is considered. This correlational pattern may indicate that the emotional aspects of empathy are more directly tied to narcissistic disturbance than the cognitively-based ability to adopt the perspective of others. This understanding of narcissism is closely aligned with Alexander Lowen's (1985) position that an inability to accept one's true, inner self is at the core of narcissistic disturbance. Although Lowen recognizes that cognitive representations of self are developed from the "true self", he believes that at its most basic level the self is a bodily, sensing- and feelings-focussed phenomenon. It is of interest to note that while empathic concern is negatively correlated with narcissism, its correlation with self-centeredness (a cognitive attitude that may be associated with narcissistic tendencies) is not significant. This inverse relationship between narcissism and empathic concern fits the view of most object relations theorists that narcissism involves a failure of empathy (e.g., Miller, 1981).

Contrary to expectation, narcissism is not related to personal distress. That is, ex-couples with narcissistic tendencies do not necessarily experience self-oriented concern when faced with another's distress. However, there is a significant relationship between self-centeredness and personal distress. One way to understand this finding is that adopting a self-centered perspective may be a narcissistic defense against experiencing anxiety and unease in interpersonal situations. It may be that narcissistic parents adopt an excessively self-oriented point of view precisely

because they tend to be overcome with uncomfortable feelings when faced with another's distress. In line with object relations theory (e.g., Winnicott, 1965), narcissistic parents who lack mature forms of empathy may regress in their relationship with the child when faced with relational stress. Under these conditions such parents may feel more like the child, and may expect the child to respond to them like adults or parents. In these instances, a regressed parent's perception of the child's best interests may in fact be a more accurate reflection of what the parent feels (personal distress), than what the child needs. It is of interest to note, that although the correlations are not significant when experiment-wise error rates are taken into account, ex-couples' scores on personal distress show a trend toward a positive relationship with narcissistic parenting beliefs, and toward a negative relationship with the endorsement of empathic parenting attitudes.

As predicted, personal distress is inversely related to relationship satisfaction. That is, ex-spouses who tend to feel uneasy in tense interpersonal situations are likely to report dissatisfaction with their relationships. Relationship satisfaction is also positively correlated with perspective taking capacity. While these correlations are not significant when experiment-wise error rates are taken into account, the pattern of these relationships is nevertheless suggestive when combined with some of the other findings detailed above. While narcissistic parents may adopt an excessively self-centered position to protect themselves from the personal distress they experience in interpersonal situations, this self-centered attitude is not likely to benefit them in the long term. For example, Davis (1983b) found that individuals who tend to respond to another's predicament with personal distress have more difficulty establishing and maintaining rewarding social relationships than persons not characterized by such feelings. Paradoxically, it may be precisely this tendency to put their own needs before those of others that ultimately keeps ex-spouses from getting the relational support and satisfaction they so desperately need. When they are unable to derive satisfaction from their relationships with a significant other, the narcissistically vulnerable parent may then turn to their children to meet their needs for affirmation and support.

The Dimensionality of the Child-Centeredness Construct. It was expected that there would be a single dimension underlying the eight child-centeredness variables. However, contrary to expectation, the results of the principal components analysis using all eight child-centeredness variables revealed three factors. Interestingly, although these results would suggest that there are three dimensions underlying these eight variables, only the first and largest factor was related to agreedness. This may suggest that child-centeredness *as it is related to shared parenting agreement* can be understood as a unidimensional construct.

The pattern of loadings on the first factor are consistent with the child-centeredness dimension as it has been conceptualized in this study. Ex-couples who are high on "child-centeredness" have empathic dispositions, hold empathic parenting attitudes, are characterized by an other- rather than a self-centered world view, and report satisfaction with their new relationships. They lack narcissistic personality qualities, do not tend to endorse narcissistic parenting beliefs, and do not tend to respond to the predicament of others with self-oriented feelings of distress.

Summary. The results of the correlational analysis supported the general hypothesis that ex-couples' scores on these eight variables are interrelated in theory-predicted directions. The pattern of correlations was consistent with the construct of child-centeredness as it is being developed in this study. While this pattern of correlations provides tentative support for the construct of child-centeredness and suggests some intriguing hypotheses for further theory development, the interpretation of specific correlations must take into account the experiment-wise error rate. The specific relationships between child-centeredness variables that emerge from the present findings are summarized as follows: (1) Ex-couples with narcissistic personality organizations tend to lack in empathic concern for others; (2) Empathic concern is, in turn, positively related to the endorsement of empathic parenting beliefs; (3) Conversely, ex-couples who score high on self-centeredness tend to endorse narcissistic parenting beliefs, and; (4) Self-centeredness is associated with the tendency to report personal distress when faced with the distress of others. In the language of Paul Meehl (1973), these specific relationships represent a

starting point in the development of a "nomological network" for the construct of child-centeredness.

The present findings suggest that child-centeredness is a unidimensional construct insofar as it is associated with shared parenting agreement. Consistent with theory, child-centered ex-couples express relational content, lack narcissistic personality features, are generally oriented toward the concerns of others, and hold parenting attitudes that are in harmony with this empathic stance. At the opposite end of this dimension, self-centered ex-couples are narcissistic and dissatisfied in their relationships, tend to respond to the distress of others with personal anxiety rather than empathy, and hold narcissistic parenting beliefs that are in line with their generally nonempathic attitudes.

Child-Centeredness and Shared Parenting Agreement

The first hypothesis involved the interrelatedness and dimensionality of the eight variables thought to represent the child-centeredness construct. The second hypothesis concerns the relationship between this construct of child-centeredness and shared parenting agreement.

Child-Centeredness as a Predictor of Shared Parenting Agreement. As expected, the results of the regression analysis indicated that ex-couples' scores on the set of eight child-centeredness variables reliably differentiate agreed from disagreed parents. That is, the assessment of ex-spouses' mean scores on narcissism, self-centeredness, perspective-taking, empathic concern, personal distress, empathic parenting attitudes, narcissistic parenting beliefs, and relationship satisfaction will dependably predict shared parenting agreement. A closer look at the results of this analysis suggest that narcissism, personal distress, and relationship satisfaction make the greatest *unique* contributions to predicting agreedness. That is, compared to agreed ex-spouses, disagreed ex-spouses indicate more narcissistic disturbance, tend to respond to other's distress with self-oriented feelings, and report greater dissatisfaction with their current relationships. The results of the discriminant function analysis indicated that 75% of the ex-

couples could be correctly classified into the agreed and disagreed groups on the basis of their scores on the eight child-centeredness variables. Interestingly, the discriminant function structure matrix supports a unidimensional interpretation of the child-centeredness construct as it relates to shared parenting agreement.

To address the practical question of how these child-centeredness variables may be useful in discriminating agreed and disagreed parent pairs with minimal assessment expenditure, an additional direct discriminant analysis was performed using only narcissism, personal distress, and relationship satisfaction to predict group membership⁴⁴. The results of this analysis indicated that ex-couples' scores on these three variables discriminated the agreed and disagreed groups with correct classifications occurring in 81.3% of the cases. Thus, compared to using all eight child-centeredness variables, the use of only three variables results in an overall improvement in correct classifications (from 75% to 81.3%) with a considerable savings in degrees of freedom. Moreover, the prediction of shared parenting agreement on the basis of ex-couples' scores on narcissism, personal distress, and relationship satisfaction results in the correct classification of 87.5% of the cases. The prediction of shared parenting disagreement using these three variables results in correct classifications in 75% of the cases.

From a purely practical perspective, these results suggest that narcissism, personal distress and relationship satisfaction are the most useful subset of child-centeredness variables for predicting shared parenting agreement. Moreover, these three variables capture the essence of the hypothesized child-centeredness dimension from a theoretical standpoint. Narcissism may be viewed as a spectrum of personality organization characterized by a poorly defined sense of self and a concomitant lack of empathy. Narcissism's close ties with empathic concern, suggested by object relations theory and evidenced in the present findings⁴⁵, may mean that in practice

⁴⁴As explained in the "Results" chapter, these three variables were selected for further examination on the basis of their salience in the results of both the multiple regression and stepwise discriminant function analyses.

⁴⁵Note inverse correlation between narcissism and empathic concern reported in Table 16 ($r = -.65, p < .001$).

empathic concern need not be added to the prediction equation. Further, the significant relationship between empathic concern and empathic parenting attitudes suggests that narcissism may represent the aspects of empathic concern and empathic parenting attitudes that are important to the prediction of shared parenting. Thus narcissistic ex-couples generally lack empathic concern and, more specifically, they may lack empathy for their children's needs and best interests after divorce. In Lowen's (1985) language, this aspect of the child-centeredness dimension has to do with "what the parents don't do."

Insofar as narcissism is viewed as a *spectrum* of psychological conditions, relational stress has been implicated as a factor that may exacerbate narcissistic disturbance and, conversely, relational support may help the narcissistically vulnerable to achieve a higher level of functioning (e.g., Masterson, 1981). The consideration of relationship satisfaction, while not directly related to narcissism, may represent the interpersonal realm of narcissistic functioning. Thus, the inclusion of relationship satisfaction may be viewed as a necessary aspect of the child-centeredness dimension from a theoretical standpoint, and as a significant contribution from a more practical perspective. Because of their inordinate need for recognition from others, narcissistic parents may respond to a divorce by regressing to a more narcissistic level of functioning. If they are not able to derive satisfaction and support from new relationships, they are likely to look to their children to fulfill their narcissistic needs. Again, in Lowen's (1985) language, this aspect of the child-centeredness dimension has to do with "what the parents do" to the child.

Personal distress is the third variable in the practically and theoretically parsimonious child-centeredness equation. By virtue of its relationship with self-centeredness, and the relationship between self-centeredness and narcissistic parenting beliefs⁴⁶, personal distress may capture what is essential of these two other variables in the prediction of shared parenting agreement. While empathic concern is closely tied to narcissism, personal distress may add a more primitive

⁴⁶Note that correlations between self-centeredness and personal distress ($r=.59$, $p<.001$) and between self-centeredness and narcissistic parenting beliefs ($r=.52$, $p<.001$) are reported in Table 16.

form of "empathy" when one's own feelings become confused with those of others (Hoffman, 1982). Under normal circumstances, as the developing child learns to differentiate self from other, empathy should emerge with progressive maturity. However, for individuals with narcissistic disturbances mature empathy may never develop or, depending on the extent of narcissistic vulnerability, they may regress to this more primitive form under relational stress. Ex-couples who tend to experience personal distress may become overwhelmed by the anxiety their children evoke in them. That is, rather than responding empathically to their children's needs (e.g., their needs to be reassured that both parents love them, or their needs to have relationships with both parents), these parents may become overwhelmed with personal anxiety aroused when observing their children's emotional reactions. These narcissistically vulnerable parents may then project their own distress, vulnerability and fears onto the child to alleviate their own discomfort. For example, when faced with an upset child after a visit with the noncustodial parent, a custodial parent may "explain" to the youngster that, "you're just sad, because mommy/daddy left you."

The following incident reported by a disagreed ex-couple illustrates how children may become victims of their divorced parents' lack of child-centeredness. In this particular case⁴⁷, a young mother left her ex-husband with their then three-year-old son to live with another man. The father renewed a relationship with an old girlfriend shortly after the marital separation. Neither of the parents reported being satisfied with their new partners at the time of the study. The son's visits with the father were stressful from the beginning and often ended in altercations at the front door of the mother's new home when the boy was returned. During these arguments the mother, based on his accounts, would refer to her ex-husband as a "slob" and would berate him for being a poor role model for his son. The father, based on her accounts, would graphically describe what he thought of a woman who left her husband for another man. A full-fledged custody battle ensued over the boy who was five years old at the time of the study. One day the father picked up

⁴⁷Some of the details of this case study have been altered to preserve the research respondents' anonymities.

his son for a visit. He took him for a haircut which left one thin strand of hair curling down the nape of the boy's back an otherwise short head of hair, "I got him a haircut just like his dad's ..." The father then proceeded to buy his son a "miniature" black leather jacket that apparently resembled that worn by the father. When the mother caught sight of her son at the front door she was enraged. In tears, she grabbed a pair of scissors and snipped "that stupid ponytail." Apparently the leather jacket was burned in the fireplace that night.

Learning from Misclassifications. The cases of agreed ex-couples who were misclassified into the disagreed group, and disagreed ex-couples who were misclassified into the agreed group, were reviewed⁴⁸. The purpose of this review was to investigate whether there were any apparent differences between the correctly and incorrectly classified cases. Two trends emerged from the examination of these misclassified cases. First, in many of these misclassified cases the mother's and father's narcissism scores were very discrepant. That is, one of the parents was highly narcissistic and the other parent did not appear narcissistic at all. Thus, for these ex-couples the averaged narcissism score was a poor estimate of their individual narcissism scores. If this trend is investigated and replicated in future empirical studies, it may have important theoretical and practical implications.

Some writers have argued that narcissistic individuals tend to develop relationships with others who have similar narcissistic injuries and needs (e.g., Berkman, 1984; Lachkar, 1984). In such situations the ex-couples' average scores on the child-centeredness variables predict shared parenting agreement. There may be exceptional cases when the parents differ significantly on the relevant variables, and a model using difference scores between the parents may be more appropriate.

Second, there was a higher percentage of physical violence reported by the ex-couples in the misclassified disagreed ex-couples (3 of 4 = 75%), than in the correctly classified disagreed

⁴⁸Misclassifications resulting from the discriminant function analyses with jackknifed classifications, using the set of three (resulting in a total of six misclassified cases) and eight child-centeredness variables (resulting in the same six, plus two additional, misclassified cases), were reviewed.

cases (4 of 14 = 29%). This suggests that a history of family violence may influence or alter the relationship between child-centeredness and shared parenting agreement. Clearly, this is not always so, because half of the cases in which a history of relationship violence was reported were correctly classified. In fact, some writers have argued that, by virtue of their need to be in charge of their close relationships, narcissistic individuals may physically abuse their partners to regain control over an unstable interpersonal situation (e.g., Loeb, 1989)

Summary. As expected, ex-couples' scores on the eight child-centeredness variables predicted membership in the agreed and disagreed groups. A set of three child-centeredness variables - narcissism, personal distress, and relationship satisfaction - resulted in the most parsimonious prediction of shared parenting agreement, from both theoretical and practical perspectives. An examination of the misclassified cases suggested that ex-spouses with widely discrepant narcissism scores and/or histories of physical violence may not fit the prediction model as it was developed in this study.

Limitations of the Present Study

The present research findings must be interpreted in the context of the following limitations.

1. This study drew on a number of referral sources for research respondents: Newspaper advertisements (one-half of sample), family lawyers (one-sixth of sample), and a collaborating psychologist (one-third of sample). Each of these referral sources may have involved a set of biases that must be considered in the interpretation of the findings. In comparison to parents who chose not to reply to the newspaper advertisements, parents who volunteered by responding to these advertisements may have been better educated, more willing to take risks, more interested and better informed about research, or hopeful that they would receive counselling and/or pay. The three family lawyers who were willing to collaborate with the researcher tended to be oriented toward social science research, were generous in providing their time without remuneration, and may have referred clients on the basis of unspecified biases (e.g., especially interesting case).

While efforts were made to assure that the collaborating psychologist and researcher would collect data following identical procedures, there may have been some differences that are not apparent. There is no reason to believe that there were any systematic differences, however, between the research respondents interviewed by the researcher and collaborating psychologist. However, it may be that research respondents who were willing to participate when asked directly may not have taken the extra step to answer a newspaper advertisement. Furthermore, there may be unknown differences between the psychologists who did and did not volunteer their assistance. In spite of these limitations, the use of three referral sources may have contributed to a wider data base.

2. The sample size is reasonable compared to the number of research respondents included in other shared parenting studies, but relatively small by more general standards. The sample size was restricted largely by the difficulty in finding ex-couples who were willing to participate. In contrast, recruiting divorced parents without involving their ex-spouses is easier, but may compromise correct group classifications.

3. Although research respondents in the agreed group were followed for a four month period, it is not known whether any of these ex-couples will become involved in custody disputes in the future. Furthermore, it could be argued that participation in this study may have emphasized the agreed ex-couples' mutuality in matters of shared parenting and, therefore, could have facilitated ex-couples' continued agreement. On the other hand, explicit discussions of their shared parenting arrangements may also have brought ex-couples' dissatisfactions to the surface. Continued cooperation between the parents could have been undermined in such cases.

4. The definition of physical abuse was globally defined without using a specific and detailed measure. The use of a more specific measure may have assisted research respondents in remembering violent incidents. Thus the incidence of domestic violence in these families may have been underestimated.

5. This study is based on a *theory* of child-centeredness. There is no way of knowing whether ex-couples who endorsed questionnaire/interview items in child-centered directions in

fact behaved in child-centered ways. In the present study, child- and self-centeredness were investigated only in relation to reports of shared parenting behaviours.

6. Cohen (1990) cautions against overemphasizing statistically significant findings while ignoring substantial unexplained variance. In this study, child-centeredness accounted for 43% of the variance in predicting shared parenting agreement ($p < .01$), which leaves 57% of the variance unexplained! It is hoped that future research using the child-centeredness model will help explain a greater proportion of the variance by taking into account contextual factors.

Conclusions and Implications for Research and Practice

It is concluded that the child-centeredness dimension, as it has been developed in this study, has an important relationship with shared parenting agreement. Child-centered ex-couples tend to negotiate and maintain mutually agreeable shared parenting arrangements after their divorces. In contrast, ex-couples who orient toward the self-centeredness end of this dimension tend to disagree about parenting arrangements and to litigate the custody of their children. Child-centered ex-couples are characterized by empathic dispositions, empathic parenting attitudes, world views that take into consideration the needs of others, and relational content. Conversely, self-centered ex-couples are characterized by narcissistic personality features, narcissistic parenting beliefs, self-oriented world views, relational dissatisfaction, and tendencies to respond to the predicaments of others with self-oriented feelings of distress. Child-centeredness was originally conceptualized as a constellation of the eight interrelated variables: narcissism, self-centeredness, perspective taking, empathic concern, personal distress, empathic parenting, narcissistic parenting, and relationship satisfaction. However, a set of three child-centeredness variables - narcissism, personal distress, and relationship satisfaction - resulted in a more parsimonious prediction of shared parenting agreement, while meeting both scientist and practitioner needs. Insofar as "realistic research" must take into account both "average" and "specific" cases, the examination of misclassifications may provide insights into which situations will or will not merit departures from the general prediction model.

Future research may proceed in several different directions. The child-centeredness construct should be validated in non-divorcing parent populations to clarify and elaborate the network of associations between the variables thought to represent this construct. The consideration of normal populations should eventually result in the development of child-centeredness norms. The Experimental Narcissistic Parenting scale needs to be elaborated and modified as it is clearly only in its earliest stage of development. The relationships between child-centeredness and specific parenting behaviours will need to be established. Specific tasks may be developed for this purpose. For example, a parent's child centering capacity may be assessed by observing and rating their ability to tell a "story" from his or her child's point of view.

A longitudinal study of shared parenting will be required to develop a better understanding of how child-centeredness "waxes and wanes" with the stresses of the post-separation adjustment period. The role of child-centeredness in the shared parenting process could be investigated by following a group of parent pairs during the post-separation period and examining situational and relational factors which appear to strengthen and weaken specific child-centering skills. The prediction of shared parenting agreement and disagreement on the basis of child-centeredness, established on a cross-sectional/correlational basis in this first study, could be put to the test for this longitudinal sample.

The impact of parents' self- versus child-centeredness on the adjustment of children is of considerable interest. While there is good reason to believe that an ex-couples' child-centeredness will benefit their children's post-divorce adjustment, this assumption should be tested empirically. The children's adjustment in relation to the parents' level of child-centeredness might be investigated in a longitudinal study, such as the one detailed above.

The child-centeredness model may be useful in developing a better understanding of how improbable sex abuse allegations arise during custody disputes. It may be that narcissistic parents are more likely to allege falsely the sexual abuse of their children against their ex-partners. However, it may also be that parents, with more extreme narcissistic disturbances, will turn to their children to meet their adult sexual needs at a time of relational stress. From a child-centeredness

perspective, the psychology of parents who falsely allege sexual abuse during a custody dispute may be similar to that of parents who will initiate a sexually abusive relationship with their child during this time.

The construct of child-centeredness, as it was developed in this study, may have important practical implications. The child-centeredness dimension may serve as a psychological bridge from the best interests of the child criterion in the legal arena to practical recommendations for shared parenting. That is, an ex-couples' degree of child-centeredness may serve as an assessment of their ability to sustain a shared parenting arrangement. Certainly, for a child's best interests to be served after a divorce, the ex-spouses will need to understand and respond to their children's needs. Eventually, the assessment of an ex-couple's child-centeredness at the time of marital separation may serve as an estimate of the extent to which the parents will be able to respond, together, to their children's changing needs.

As our understanding of the shared parenting process becomes more sophisticated, we may be in a better position to support the efforts of divorcing parents. It may be that certain aspects of child-centeredness can be supported through specific interventions or strategies. For example, practitioners may help divorcing clients to direct their energies toward finding new sources of relational support. Mental health professionals may also educate divorcing parents about what their children are likely to need during this stressful period, while at the same time helping them to generate options for getting their children's needs met. If the parents are too (narcissistically) vulnerable to support the child directly during the post-separation period, the practitioner might help the parents to secure what their children need indirectly. For example, parents could be encouraged to facilitate their children's contact with nurturant others (grandparents, teachers). It may also be that child-centered ex-spouses can model their shared parenting strategies for more recently separated or less child-centered ex-couples. The possibilities are endless and hopeful.

Final Note

In their discussion of the usefulness of psychological research to understanding social problems, Caplan and Nelson (1973) caution that "person-blame interpretations are in everyone's interests except those subjected to analysis" (p. 210). As has been emphasized in many places throughout this dissertation, the relationship between child-centeredness and shared parenting agreement cannot be separated from its context. While it may be that narcissistic parents are at greater risk for becoming involved in a long and bitter custody disputes, we must take responsibility for a legal system that encourages such battles. If future research in this area identifies aspects of living that may strengthen ex-couples' child-centering efforts, these findings can then be translated into supportive and educative efforts.

Perhaps the most important lesson learned by this writer through her contact with these divorcing families is that shared parenting is an enormously difficult task, even for those couples who are equipped with psychological and other resources. For the narcissistically vulnerable, the notion of separating their own needs from those of their children may be unimaginably difficult. As we direct our attention to the needs and best interests of children affected by their parents' divorces, we cannot turn away from the vulnerabilities of their parents.

CHAPTER V

APPENDICES

List of Appendices

- Appendix A: Invitation to Participate in Research Study Via Newspaper Advertisement
- Appendix B: Invitation to Participate in Research Study Via Information Letters Distributed by Family Lawyers
- Appendix C: Questionnaire Completed by Research Participants
- Appendix D: Description of Scales and Scoring Information for Questionnaire Measures
- Appendix E: Consent Form Completed by All Self-Selected Research Participants
- Appendix F: Research Interview Form
- Appendix G: Invitation to Participate in Research Study Via Information Letters Sent to Other Parent
- Appendix H: Consent Form Completed by All Research Participants Interviewed by the Collaborating Psychologist

Appendix A:

Invitation to Participate in Research Study Via Newspaper Advertisement

DIVORCED PARENTS

University researcher looking for parents who are willing to complete a short questionnaire/interview dealing with custody and shared parenting issues.

Parents who wish to participate or want further information are asked to leave their names and phone numbers with

Marion Ehrenberg 745-0831 - Anytime

Please help us learn more about this difficult time in a parents lives.

This advertisement appeared in the Saturday editions of The Kitchener-Waterloo Record (Kitchener, Ontario) on January 13, February 24, and April 7, 1990; and in the Saturday edition of The Daily Mercury (Guelph, Ontario) on June 23, 1990.

Appendix B:

Invitation to Participate in Research Study Via Information Letters Distributed by Family Lawyers

Dear Parent:

I have approached your lawyer and a number of other family lawyers in the Kitchener-Waterloo community with the hope that they can put me in touch with parents who may be willing to help me with my research. I am a doctoral student in the area of clinical psychology at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver. I am currently completing a full-year clinical internship at Kitchener-Waterloo Hospital. The research I am conducting has been approved by the Simon Fraser University Ethics Committee. This study is supported by a research fellowship awarded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

For my doctoral research I am interviewing mothers and fathers who have come to -- or are trying to come to -- an agreement about parenting after their separation or divorce. Participation in my research project involves an individual interview and the completion of a short paper-and-pencil questionnaire. It would take a total of 45 minutes to one hour of your time. The information will be recorded without any reference to your name and will be used for research purposes only. If you are interested, I will provide you with feedback about the results of this study as soon as it is finished. I would be more than happy to discuss with you any questions or comments you may have about the experience of divorce.

If you are interested in participating in this study, or would simply like to hear more about it before you decide, please contact me at 745-0831. I would very much appreciate your time and help. I am hopeful that this research will benefit divorcing parents in the future, by providing us with some important information about this difficult period in people's lives.

Sincerely,

Marion Ehrenberg, M.A.
Telephone: (519) 745-0831

Appendix C:

Questionnaire Completed by Research Participants

QUESTIONNAIRE

ID CODE NUMBER: _____

PART I

This inventory consists of a number of pairs of statements with which you may or may not identify.

Consider
this example:

- A** "I like having authority over people".
B "I don't mind following orders".

Which of these two statements is closer to your own feelings about yourself? If you identify more with "liking to have authority over people", than with "not minding following orders", then you would choose option "A."

You may identify with both "A" and "B." In this case you should choose the statement which seems closer to yourself. Or, if you do not identify with either statement, select the one which is least objectionable or remote. In other words, read each pair of statements and then choose the one that is closer to your own feelings. Indicate your answer by writing the letter ("A" or "B") in the space provided to the right of each item. Please do not skip any items.

- | | | |
|-----|--|-----------|
| 1. | A I have a natural talent for influencing people. | |
| | B I am not good at influencing people. | 1. _____ |
| 2. | A Modesty doesn't become me. | |
| | B I am essentially a modest person. | 2. _____ |
| 3. | A I would do almost anything on a dare. | |
| | B I tend to be a fairly cautious person. | 3. _____ |
| 4. | A When people compliment me I sometimes get embarrassed. | |
| | B I know that I am good because everybody keeps telling me so. | 4. _____ |
| 5. | A The thought of ruling the world frightens the hell out of me. | |
| | B If I ruled the world it would be a much better place. | 5. _____ |
| 6. | A I can usually talk my way out of anything. | |
| | B I try to accept the consequences of my behaviour. | 6. _____ |
| 7. | A I prefer to blend in with the crowd. | |
| | B I like to be the center of attention. | 7. _____ |
| 8. | A I will be a success. | |
| | B I am not too concerned about success. | 8. _____ |
| 9. | A I am no better or no worse than most people. | |
| | B I think I am a special person. | 9. _____ |
| 10. | A I am not sure if I would make a good leader. | |
| | B I see myself as a good leader. | 10. _____ |
| 11. | A I am assertive. | |
| | B I wish I were more assertive. | 11. _____ |
| 12. | A I like having authority over other people. | |
| | B I don't mind following orders. | 12. _____ |

13. **A** I find it easy to manipulate people. 13. ____
B I don't like it when I find myself manipulating people.
14. **A** I insist upon getting the respect that is due me. 14. ____
B I usually get the respect that I deserve.
15. **A** I don't particularly like to show off my body. 15. ____
B I like to display my body.
16. **A** I can read people like a book. 16. ____
B People are sometimes hard to understand.
17. **A** If I feel competent I am willing to take responsibility 17. ____
for making decisions.
B I like to take responsibility for making decisions.
18. **A** I just want to be reasonably happy. 18. ____
B I want to amount to something in the eyes of the world.
19. **A** My body is nothing special. 19. ____
B I like to look at my body.
20. **A** I try not to be a show off. 20. ____
B I am apt to show off if I get the chance.
21. **A** I always know what I am doing. 21. ____
B Sometimes I'm not sure of what I am doing.
22. **A** I sometimes depend on people to get things done. 22. ____
B I rarely depend on anyone else to get things done.
23. **A** Sometimes I tell good stories. 23. ____
B Everybody likes to hear my stories.
24. **A** I expect a great deal from other people. 24. ____
B I like to do things for other people.
25. **A** I will never be satisfied until I get all that I deserve. 25. ____
B I take my satisfactions as they come.
26. **A** Compliments embarrass me. 26. ____
B I like to be complimented.
27. **A** I have a strong will to power. 27. ____
B Power for its own sake doesn't interest me.
28. **A** I don't very much care about new fads and fashions. 28. ____
B I like to start new fads and fashions.
29. **A** I like to look at myself in the mirror. 29. ____
B I am not particularly interested in looking at myself in
the mirror.
30. **A** I really like to be the center of attention. 30. ____
B It makes me uncomfortable to be the center of attention.
31. **A** I can live my life in any way I want to. 31. ____
B People can't always live their lives in terms of what
they want.
32. **A** Being an authority doesn't mean that much to me. 32. ____
B People always seem to recognize my authority.
33. **A** I would prefer to be a leader. 33. ____
B It makes little difference to me whether I am a leader or not.

34. **A** I am going to be a great person. 34. ____
B I hope I am going to be successful.
35. **A** People sometimes believe what I tell them. 35. ____
B I can make anybody believe anything I want them to.
36. **A** I am a born leader. 36. ____
B Leadership is a quality that takes a long time to develop.
37. **A** I wish someone would someday write my biography. 37. ____
B I don't like people to pry into my life for any reason.
38. **A** I get upset when people don't notice how I look when I go 38. ____
out in public.
B I don't mind blending into the crowd when I go out in public.
39. **A** I am more capable than other people. 39. ____
B There is a lot that I can learn from other people.
40. **A** I am much like everybody else. 40. ____
B I am an extraordinary person.

PART II

Listed below are 40 statements that deal with personal attitudes and feelings about a variety of things. Obviously, there are no right or wrong answers--only opinions. Please read each item and then decide how you personally feel. Mark your answers according to the following scheme.

- 5 = Strongly Agree
4 = Mildly Agree
3 = Agree and Disagree Equally
2 = Mildly Disagree
1 = Strongly Disagree

1. The widespread interest in professional sports is just another example 1. ____
of escapism.
2. In times of shortages it is sometimes necessary to engage in a little hoarding. 2. ____
3. Thinking of yourself first is no sin in this world today. 3. ____
4. The prospect of becoming very close to another person worries me a good bit. 4. ____
5. The really significant contributions in the world have very frequently been 5. ____
made by people who were preoccupied with themselves.
6. Every older North American deserves a guaranteed income to live in dignity. 6. ____
7. It is more important to live for yourself rather than for other people, parents, 7. ____
or for posterity.
8. Organized religious groups are too concerned with raising funds these days. 8. ____
9. I regard myself as someone who looks after his/her personal interests. 9. ____
10. The trouble with getting too close to people is that they start making emotional 10. ____
demands on you.
11. Having children keeps you from engaging in a lot of self-fulfilling activities. 11. ____
12. Many of our production problems in this country are due to the fact that 12. ____
workers no longer take pride in their jobs.

5=Strongly Agree/4=Mildly Agree/3=Dis&Agree Equally/2=Mildly Disagree/1=Strongly Disagree

13. It's best to live for the present and not to worry about tomorrow. 13. ____
14. Call it selfishness if you will, but in this world today we all have to look out for ourselves first. 14. ____
15. Education is too job oriented these days; there is not enough emphasis on basic education. 15. ____
16. It seems impossible to imagine the world without me in it. 16. ____
17. You can hardly overestimate the importance of selling yourself in getting ahead. 17. ____
18. The difficulty with marriage is that it locks you into a relationship. 18. ____
19. Movies emphasize sex and violence too much. 19. ____
20. If it feels right, it is right. 20. ____
21. Breaks in life are nonsense. The real story is pursuing your self-interests aggressively. 21. ____
22. An individual's worth will often pass unrecognized unless that person thinks of himself or herself first. 22. ____
23. Consumers need a stronger voice in governmental affairs. 23. ____
24. Getting ahead in life depends mainly on thinking of yourself first. 24. ____
25. In general, couples should seek a divorce when they find the marriage is not a fulfilling one. 25. ____
26. Too often, voting means choosing between the lesser of two evils. 26. ____
27. Striving to reach one's true potential, it is sometimes necessary to worry less about other people. 27. ____
28. When choosing clothes I generally consider style before matters such as comfort or durability. 28. ____
29. I believe people have the right to live any damn way they please. 29. ____
30. Too many people have given up reading to passively watch TV. 30. ____
31. Owing money is not so bad if it's the only way one can live without depriving oneself of the good life. 31. ____
32. Not enough people live for the present. 32. ____
33. I don't see anything wrong with people spending a lot of time and effort on their personal appearance. 33. ____
34. Physical punishment is necessary to raise children properly. 34. ____
35. The Peace Corps would be a good idea if it did not delay one's getting started along the road to a personal career. 35. ____
36. It simply does not pay to become sad or upset about friends, loved ones, or events that don't turn out well. 36. ____
37. A definite advantage of birth control devices is that they permit sexual pleasure without the emotional responsibility that might otherwise result. 37. ____
38. Doctors seem to have forgotten that medicine involves human relations and not just prescriptions. 38. ____

5=Strongly Agree/4=Mildly Agree/3=Dis&Agree Equally/2=Mildly Disagree/1=Strongly Disagree

39. I believe that some unidentified flying objects have actually been sent from outer space to observe our culture here on earth. 39. _____
40. In this world one has to look out for oneself first because nobody else will look out for you. 40. _____

PART III

Read each of the following 37 items and then indicate how you personally feel about each of these statements by marking your answer according to the following scheme:

- 5 = Very Much Like Me
- 4 = Pretty Much Like Me
- 3 = Sort Of Like Me
- 2 = Not Really Like Me
- 1 = Not At All Like Me

1. I daydream pretty often about things that might happen to me. 1. _____
2. I believe I deserve my child's love and respect, because I am a good parent. 2. _____
3. I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me. 3. _____
4. I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the other person's point of view. 4. _____
5. It is impossible to imagine life without my child and I being together. 5. _____
6. Sometimes I don't feel very sorry for other people when they are having problems. 6. _____
7. I really get involved with the feelings of characters in a story. 7. _____
8. I am the only one who can truly understand my child's thoughts and feelings. 8. _____
9. In emergency situations, I feel worried and ill-at-ease. 9. _____
10. When I watch a movie I don't feel completely caught up or involved in it. 10. _____
11. When my child misbehaves I feel it reflects on me as a parent and as a person. 11. _____
12. I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision. 12. _____
13. When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective toward them. 13. _____
14. I sometimes feel helpless when I am in the middle of a very emotional situation. 14. _____
15. I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their point of view. 15. _____
16. Sometimes when I look at my child I can see myself as a child. 16. _____
17. Becoming really very involved in a good book or movie is rare for me. 17. _____
18. When I see someone get hurt, I tend to stay calm. 18. _____
19. Other people's misfortunes do not usually bother me a lot. 19. _____
20. If I'm sure I'm right about something, I don't waste much time listening to other people's arguments. 20. _____
21. After seeing a play or movie, I have felt as if I were one of the characters. 21. _____
22. There are times when it feels like I am the child and my child is the parent. 22. _____

5=VeryMuchLikeMe4=PrettyMuchLikeMe3=SortOfLikeMe2=NotReallyLike1=NotAtAllLikeMe

23. Being in a tense emotional situation scares me. 23. _____
24. When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel much pity for them. 24. _____
25. I am usually pretty effective in dealing with emergencies. 25. _____
26. I am often very touched by things that I see happen. 26. _____
27. I sometimes feel like asking my child if they really love me. 27. _____
28. I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both. 28. _____
29. I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person. 29. _____
30. When I watch a good movie, I can very easily put myself in the place of the leading character. 30. _____
31. I can't imagine my child's life without me in it. 31. _____
32. I tend to lose control in emergencies. 32. _____
33. When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to "put myself in his or her shoes" for a while. 33. _____
34. When I'm reading a good story or book I imagine how I would feel if the events in the story were happening to me. 34. _____
35. When I see someone who badly needs help in an emergency, I go to pieces. 35. _____
36. It is easy for me to understand my child, because s/he is an extension of me. 36. _____
37. Before criticising somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place. 37. _____

PART IV

There are 32 statements in this part of the questionnaire. They are statements about parenting and raising children. You decide the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement by indicating the appropriate number at the right. Mark your answers according to the following scheme.

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1 = Strongly Agree | (If you feel the statement is true most or all of the time) |
| 2 = Agree | (If you feel the statement is true some of the time) |
| 3 = Uncertain | (If it is absolutely impossible to decide on any of the choices) |
| 4 = Disagree | (If you feel the statement is not true some of the time) |
| 5 = Strongly Disagree | (If you feel the statement is not true most or all of the time) |

1. Young children should be expected to comfort their mother when she is feeling blue. 1. _____
2. Parents should never use physical punishment to teach their children right from wrong. 2. _____
3. Children should not be the main source of comfort and care for their parents. 3. _____
4. Young children should be expected to hug their mother when she is sad. 4. _____
5. Parents will spoil their children by picking them up and comforting them when they cry. 5. _____
6. Children should not be expected to talk before the age of one year. 6. _____

1=Strongly Agree / 2=Agree / 3=Uncertain / 4=Disagree / 5=Strongly Disagree

7. A good child will comfort both of his/her parents after the parents have argued. 7. ____
 8. Children seldom learn good behaviour through the use of physical punishment. 8. ____
 9. Children develop good, strong characters through very strict discipline. 9. ____
 10. Children under three years should not be expected to take care of themselves. 10. ____
 11. Young children should be aware of ways to comfort their parents after a hard day's work. 11. ____
 12. Parents should never slap their child when s/he has done something wrong. 12. ____
 13. Children should always be spanked when they misbehave. 13. ____
 14. Young children should not be responsible for the happiness of their parents. 14. ____
 15. Parents have a responsibility to spank their children when they misbehave. 15. ____
 16. Parents should expect their children to feed themselves by twelve months. 16. ____
 17. Parents should expect their children to grow physically at about the same rate. 17. ____
 18. Young children who feel secure often grow up expecting too much. 18. ____
 19. Children should always "pay the price" for misbehaving. 19. ____
 20. Children under three years should not be expected to feed, bathe, and clothe themselves. 20. ____
 21. Parents who are sensitive to their children's feelings and moods often spoil their children. 21. ____
 22. Children often deserve more discipline than they get. 22. ____
 23. Children whose needs are left unattended will often grow up to be more independent. 23. ____
 24. Parents who encourage communication with their children only end up listening to complaints. 24. ____
 25. Children are more likely to learn appropriate behaviour when they are spanked for misbehaving. 25. ____
 26. Children will quit crying faster if they are ignored. 26. ____
 27. Children five months of age are seldom capable of sensing what their parents expect. 27. ____
 28. Children who are given too much love by their parents often grow up to be stubborn and spoiled. 28. ____
 29. Children should never be forced to respect parental authority. 29. ____
 30. Young children should try to make their parent's life more pleasurable. 30. ____
 31. Young children who are hugged and kissed usually grow up to be "sissies." 31. ____
 32. Young children should not be expected to comfort their father when he is upset. 32. ____
-

Appendix D:

Description of Scales and Scoring Information for Questionnaire Measures

**Questionnaire Part I: Narcissistic Personality Inventory
(NPI; Raskin & Hall, 1979;1981)**

Authority Subscale

- | | | | |
|-----|----------|--|-----------|
| 1. | A | I have a natural talent for influencing people. | 1. _____ |
| | B | I am not good at influencing people. | |
| 8. | A | I will be a success. | 8. _____ |
| | B | I am not too concerned about success. | |
| 10. | A | I am not sure if I would make a good leader. | 10. _____ |
| | B | I see myself as a good leader. | |
| 11. | A | I am assertive. | 11. _____ |
| | B | I wish I were more assertive. | |
| 12. | A | I like having authority over other people. | 12. _____ |
| | B | I don't mind following orders. | |
| 32. | A | Being an authority doesn't mean that much to me. | 32. _____ |
| | B | People always seem to recognize my authority. | |
| 33. | A | I would prefer to be a leader. | 33. _____ |
| | B | It makes little difference to me whether I am a leader or not. | |
| 36. | A | I am a born leader. | 36. _____ |
| | B | Leadership is a quality that takes a long time to develop. | |

Exhibitionism Subscale

- | | | | |
|-----|----------|--|-----------|
| 2. | A | Modesty doesn't become me. | 2. _____ |
| | B | I am essentially a modest person. | |
| 3. | A | I would do almost anything on a dare. | 3. _____ |
| | B | I tend to be a fairly cautious person. | |
| 7. | A | I prefer to blend in with the crowd. | 7. _____ |
| | B | I like to be the center of attention. | |
| 20. | A | I try not to be a show off. | 20. _____ |
| | B | I am apt to show off if I get the chance. | |
| 28. | A | I don't very much care about new fads and fashions. | 28. _____ |
| | B | I like to start new fads and fashions. | |
| 30. | A | I really like to be the center of attention. | 30. _____ |
| | B | It makes me uncomfortable to be the center of attention. | |
| 38. | A | I get upset when people don't notice how I look when I go out in public. | 38. _____ |
| | B | I don't mind blending into the crowd when I go out in public. | |

Superiority Subscale

- | | | | |
|----|----------|--|----------|
| 4. | A | When people compliment me I sometimes get embarrassed. | 4. _____ |
| | B | I know that I am good because everybody keeps telling me so. | |

Questionnaire Part II: Selfism Scale (NS; Phares & Erskine, 1984)

Selfism Items

2. In times of shortages it is sometimes necessary to engage in a little hoarding. 2. ____
3. Thinking of yourself first is no sin in this world today. 3. ____
4. The prospect of becoming very close to another person worries me a good bit. 4. ____
5. The really significant contributions in the world have very frequently been made by people who were preoccupied with themselves. 5. ____
7. It is more important to live for yourself rather than for other people, parents, or for posterity. 7. ____
9. I regard myself as someone who looks after his/her personal interests. 9. ____
10. The trouble with getting too close to people is that they start making emotional demands on you. 10. ____
11. Having children keeps you from engaging in a lot of self-fulfilling activities. 11. ____
13. It's best to live for the present and not to worry about tomorrow. 13. ____
14. Call it selfishness if you will, but in this world today we all have to look out for ourselves first. 14. ____
16. It seems impossible to imagine the world without me in it. 16. ____
17. You can hardly overestimate the importance of selling yourself in getting ahead. 17. ____
18. The difficulty with marriage is that it locks you into a relationship. 18. ____
20. If it feels right, it is right. 20. ____
21. Breaks in life are nonsense. The real story is pursuing your self-interests aggressively. 21. ____
22. An individual's worth will often pass unrecognized unless that person thinks of himself or herself first. 22. ____
24. Getting ahead in life depends mainly on thinking of yourself first. 24. ____
25. In general, couples should seek a divorce when they find the marriage is not a fulfilling one. 25. ____
27. Striving to reach one's true potential, it is sometimes necessary to worry less about other people. 27. ____
28. When choosing clothes I generally consider style before matters such as comfort or durability. 28. ____
29. I believe people have the right to live any damn way they please. 29. ____
31. Owing money is not so bad if it's the only way one can live without depriving oneself of the good life. 31. ____
32. Not enough people live for the present. 32. ____
33. I don't see anything wrong with people spending a lot of time and effort on their personal appearance. 33. ____
35. The Peace Corps would be a good idea if it did not delay one's getting started along the road to a personal career. 35. ____

- 36. It simply does not pay to become sad or upset about friends, loved ones, or events that don't turn out well. 36. _____
- 37. A definite advantage of birth control devices is that they permit sexual pleasure without the emotional responsibility that might otherwise result. 37. _____
- 40. In this world one has to look out for oneself first because nobody else will look out for you. 40. _____

Filler Items

- 1. The widespread interest in professional sports is just another example of escapism. 1. _____
- 6. Every older North American deserves a guaranteed income to live in dignity. 6. _____
- 8. Organized religious groups are too concerned with raising funds these days. 8. _____
- 12. Many of our production problems in this country are due to the fact that workers no longer take pride in their jobs. 12. _____
- 15. Education is too job oriented these days; there is not enough emphasis on basic education. 15. _____
- 19. Movies emphasize sex and violence too much. 19. _____
- 23. Consumers need a stronger voice in governmental affairs. 23. _____
- 26. Too often, voting means choosing between the lesser of two evils. 26. _____
- 30. Too many people have given up reading to passively watch TV. 30. _____
- 34. Physical punishment is necessary to raise children properly. 34. _____
- 38. Doctors seem to have forgotten that medicine involves human relations and not just prescriptions. 38. _____
- 39. I believe that some unidentified flying objects have actually been sent from outer space to observe our culture here on earth. 39. _____

Questionnaire Part IIIa: Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI: Davis, 1983a)

Empathy-Fantasy Subscale

1. I daydream pretty often about things that might happen to me. 1. ____
7. I really get involved with the feelings of characters in a story. 7. ____
10. When I watch a movie I don't feel completely caught up or involved in it.* 10. ____
17. Becoming really very involved in a good book or movie is rare for me.* 17. ____
21. After seeing a play or movie, I have felt as if I were one of the characters. 21. ____
30. When I watch a good movie, I can very easily put myself in the place of the leading character. 30. ____
34. When I'm reading a good story or book I imagine how I would feel if the events in the story were happening to me. 34. ____

Perspective-Taking Subscale

4. I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the other person's point of view.* 4. ____
12. I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision. 12. ____
15. I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their point of view. 15. ____
20. If I'm sure I'm right about something, I don't waste much time listening to other people's arguments.* 20. ____
28. I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both. 28. ____
33. When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to "put myself in his or her shoes" for a while. 33. ____
37. Before criticising somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place. 37. ____

Empathic Concern Subscale

3. I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me. 3. ____
9. In emergency situations, I feel worried and ill-at-ease.* 9. ____
13. When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective toward them.* 13. ____
19. Other people's misfortunes do not usually bother me a lot.* 19. ____
24. When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel much pity for them.* 24. ____
26. I am often very touched by things that I see happen. 26. ____
29. I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person. 29. ____

*Reverse scoring for this item: 1=5, 2=4, 3=3, 4=2, 5=1

Personal Distress Subscale

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| 6. Sometimes I don't feel very sorry for other people when they are having problems.* | 6. _____ |
| 14. I sometimes feel helpless when I am in the middle of a very emotional situation. | 14. _____ |
| 18. When I see someone get hurt, I tend to stay calm.* | 18. _____ |
| 23. Being in a tense emotional situation scares me. | 23. _____ |
| 25. I am usually pretty effective in dealing with emergencies.* | 25. _____ |
| 32. I tend to lose control in emergencies. | 32. _____ |
| 35. When I see someone who badly needs help in an emergency, I go to pieces. | 35. _____ |

*Reverse scoring for this item: 1=5, 2=4, 3=3, 4=2, 5=1

**Questionnaire Part IIIb: Experimental Narcissistic Parenting Items
(Ehrenberg & Elterman, 1991)**

2. I believe I deserve my child's love and respect, because I am a good parent. 2. _____
5. It is impossible to imagine life without my child and I being together. 5. _____
8. I am the only one who can truly understand my child's thoughts and feelings. 8. _____
11. When my child misbehaves I feel it reflects on me as a parent and as a person. 11. _____
16. Sometimes when I look at my child I can see myself as a child. 16. _____
22. There are times when it feels like I am the child and my child is the parent. 22. _____
27. I sometimes feel like asking my child if they really love me. 27. _____
31. I can't imagine my child's life without me in it. 31. _____
36. It is easy for me to understand my child, because s/he is an extension of me. 36. _____

**Questionnaire Part IV: Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory
(AAPI; Bavolek, 1984)**

Inappropriate Expectations Subscale

6. Children should not be expected to talk before the age of one year.* 6. ____
10. Children under three years should not be expected to take care of themselves.* 10. ____
16. Parents should expect their children to feed themselves by twelve months. 16. ____
17. Parents should expect their children to grow physically at about the same rate. 17. ____
20. Children under three years should not be expected to feed, bathe, and clothe themselves.* 20. ____
27. Children five months of age are seldom capable of sensing what their parents expect.* 27. ____

Empathy Subscale

5. Parents will spoil their children by picking them up and comforting them when they cry. 5. ____
18. Young children who feel secure often grow up expecting too much. 18. ____
21. Parents who are sensitive to their children's feelings and moods often spoil their children. 21. ____
23. Children whose needs are left unattended will often grow up to be more independent. 23. ____
24. Parents who encourage communication with their children only end up listening to complaints. 24. ____
26. Children will quit crying faster if they are ignored. 26. ____
28. Children who are given too much love by their parents often grow up to be stubborn and spoiled. 28. ____
31. Young children who are hugged and kissed usually grow up to be "sissies." 31. ____

Corporal Punishment Subscale

2. Parents should never use physical punishment to teach their children right from wrong.* 2. ____
8. Children seldom learn good behaviour through the use of physical punishment.* 8. ____
9. Children develop good, strong characters through very strict discipline. 9. ____
12. Parents should never slap their child when s/he has done something wrong.* 12. ____
13. Children should always be spanked when they misbehave. 13. ____
15. Children should always be spanked when they misbehave. 15. ____
19. Children should always "pay the price" for misbehaving. 19. ____

*Reverse scoring for this item: 1=5, 2=4, 3=3, 4=2, 5=1

22. Children often deserve more discipline than they get. 22. _____
25. Children are more likely to learn appropriate behaviour when they are spanked for misbehaving. 25. _____
29. Children should never be forced to respect parental authority.* 29. _____

Role Reversal Subscale

1. Young children should be expected to comfort their mother when she is feeling blue. 1. _____
3. Children should not be the main source of comfort and care for their parents.* 3. _____
4. Young children should be expected to hug their mother when she is sad. 4. _____
7. A good child will comfort both of his/her parents after the parents have argued. 7. _____
11. Young children should be aware of ways to comfort their parents after a hard day's work. 11. _____
14. Young children should not be responsible for the happiness of their parents.* 14. _____
30. Young children should try to make their parent's life more pleasurable. 30. _____
32. Young children should not be expected to comfort their father when he is upset.* 32. _____

*Reverse scoring for this item: 1=5, 2=4, 3=3, 4=2, 5=1

Appendix E:

Consent Form Completed by All Self-Selected Research Participants

S I M O N F R A S E R U N I V E R S I T Y

INFORMED CONSENT BY SUBJECTS TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

Note: The University and those conducting this project subscribe to the ethical conduct of research and to the protection at all times of the interests, comfort, and safety of subjects. This form and the information it contains are given to you for your own protection and full understanding of the procedures, risks and benefits involved. Your signature on this form will signify that you have received this document describing the project, that you have received an adequate opportunity to consider the information in the document, and that you voluntarily agree to participate in the project.

You have been invited to participate in a research project investigating the psychological dynamics involved in the process of shared parenting after a separation or divorce. Of particular interest are the personality characteristics and parenting attitudes of separated and divorced mothers and fathers.

Participation in this project involves a short individual interview and your written responses to a questionnaire. This information will be recorded anonymously (without any reference to your name) to be used for research purposes only.

You will be contacted by telephone for a follow-up interview in approximately four months after the interview. The purpose of this follow-up telephone call is to check whether there have been any changes in your custody, access, or shared parenting arrangements.

I understand the procedures to be used in this research project. I understand that I may withdraw my participation in this project at any time.

I also understand that I may register any complaint of my participation in this research project in writing with:

or Marion Ehrenberg, Chief Investigator
Dr. R. Blackman, Chairperson,
Department of Psychology
Simon Fraser University
Burnaby, British Columbia V5A 1S6

Copies of the results of this study will be mailed to all research participants upon its completion. Further information may be obtained by contacting Marion Ehrenberg at the above address.

NAME: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

WITNESS: _____ DATE: _____

Appendix F:

Research Interview Form

RESEARCH INTERVIEW FORM - MOTHER

ID Code Number: _____
Ontario _____ B.C. _____

Family Structure and Shared Parenting Arrangement

1. List the sex(es) and age(s) of the child(ren) whose custody, access, or living arrangements are being questioned or disputed:

Sex (Male or Female): (1) _____ (2) _____ (3) _____ (4) _____ (5) _____ (6) _____
Age (Years): _____
Natural/Adopted/Step. _____

2. (a) Describe the child(ren)'s current living (custody/access) arrangements. How do you share the parenting of your child(ren)?

(b) Are siblings usually together _____ or apart _____ when with their mother? (check one)
Are siblings usually together _____ or apart _____ when with their father? (check one)
Not applicable, because only child _____ (if so, check here)

(c) What percentage of his/her/their time do(es) the child(ren) spend with the mother per year (or thus far) _____ % with the father per year (or thus far) _____ %
(Help calculate via child(ren)'s schedule if necessary)

(d) How did you arrive at current shared parenting agreement or how did you go about trying to arrive at one?

(e) Is there a legal custody/access agreement in effect? Yes _____ No _____ (check one)

(f) Is there an interim or a permanent agreement? Yes _____ No _____ (check one)

3. Are you generally in agreement with how you are currently sharing the parenting of your children? Yes _____ No _____

Parents' Relationship History

1. How long (in years) were the parents together, and how old were they at significant stages of their relationship:

<u>Stages of Relationship</u>	<u>Length (Years, Months)</u>	<u>Age of Mother*</u>	<u>Age of Father*</u>
Dating	_____	_____	_____
Living Together	_____	_____	_____
Married	_____	_____	_____

*(Age at time when entered this stage)

2. How long have the parents been separated (Years, Months)? _____

Four-Month Follow-Up (Agreed Parents Only)

How are things going in terms of the shared parenting arrangements?
Has anything changed?

Better ___ Same ___ Worse ___ Breakdown ___ (Check one)

General Information About Mother

1. (a) What is your age (years)? _____ (b) What is your nationality? _____
(c) Do you identify with any particular ethnic group or background? (if yes, specify)

2. What is the highest level of education you have completed? _____
3. What is your current relationship status? (Circle appropriate choice)
(1) No Relationship (2) Dating (3) Living with new partner (4) Remarried
4. How satisfied are you (on a scale of "1 to 5", where "1" is "extremely dissatisfied" and "5"* is "extremely satisfied") with your current: (circle appropriate number)
(a) Occupational Functioning: 1 2 3 4 5 Occupation: _____
(b) Financial Status: 1 2 3 4 5
(c) Housing Conditions: 1 2 3 4 5
(d) Social Functioning: 1 2 3 4 5
(e) Intimate Relationships: 1 2 3 4 5
5. What are your ex-husband's strengths as a parent?

6. What are the major complaints you have about your ex-husband, in terms of his parenting skills or attitudes?

7. With respect to your ex-husband, has he ever been: (Check all relevant responses)
(a) Physically violent toward you? Yes _____ No _____ Unclear _____
If so, when? Pre-Separation _____ Post-Separation _____
(b) Verbally abusive toward you? Yes _____ No _____ Unclear _____
(c) Emotionally abusive toward you? Yes _____ No _____ Unclear _____
(d) Are you afraid of him? Yes _____ No _____ Unclear _____
If yes, do you feel adequately protected from him at this time? Yes _____ No _____
8. Other Comments:

(Continue on additional page, if necessary)

***Scoring Key:** 1 = Extremely Dissatisfied; 2 = Mildly Dissatisfied; 3 = "o.k.", i.e., Equally Satisfied and Dissatisfied; 4 = Very Satisfied; 5 = Extremely Satisfied.

Family Structure and Shared Parenting Arrangement

1. List the sex(es) and age(s) of the child(ren) whose custody, access, or living arrangements are being questioned or disputed:

Sex (Male or Female): (1) _____ (2) _____ (3) _____ (4) _____ (5) _____ (6) _____

Age (Years): _____

Natural/Adopted/Step. _____

2. (a) Describe the child(ren)'s current living (custody/access) arrangements. How do you share the parenting of your child(ren)?

(b) Are siblings usually together ___ or apart ___ when with their mother ? (check one)
 Are siblings usually together ___ or apart ___ when with their father? (check one)
 Not applicable, because only child ___ (if so, check here)

(c) What percentage of his/her/their time do(es) the child(ren) spend with the mother per year (or thus far) ___ % with the father per year (or thus far) ___ %
 (Help calculate via child(ren)'s schedule if necessary)

(d) How did you arrive at current shared parenting agreement or how did you go about trying to arrive at one?

(e) Is there a legal custody/access agreement in effect? Yes ___ No ___ (check one)

(f) Is there an interim or a permanent agreement? Yes ___ No ___ (check one)

3. Are you generally in agreement with how you are currently sharing the parenting of your children? Yes ___ No ___

Parents' Relationship History

1. How long (in years) were the parents together, and how old were they at significant stages of their relationship:

<u>Stages of Relationship</u>	<u>Length (Years, Months)</u>	<u>Age of Mother*</u>	<u>Age of Father*</u>
Dating	_____	_____	_____
Living Together	_____	_____	_____
Married	_____	_____	_____

*(Age at time when entered this stage)

2. How long have the parents been separated (Years, Months)? _____

Four-Month Follow-Up (Agreed Parents Only)

How are things going in terms of the shared parenting arrangements?
Has anything changed?

Better ___ Same ___ Worse ___ Breakdown ___ (Check one)

General Information About Father

1. (a) What is your age (years)? _____ (b) What is your nationality? _____
(c) Do you identify with any particular ethnic group or background? (if yes, specify) _____

2. What is the highest level of education you have completed? _____

3. What is your current relationship status? (Circle appropriate choice)
(1) No Relationship (2) Dating (3) Living with new partner (4) Remarried

4. How satisfied are you (on a scale of "1 to 5", where "1" is "extremely dissatisfied" and "5"* is "extremely satisfied") with your current: (circle appropriate number)

- (a) Occupational Functioning: 1 2 3 4 5 Occupation: _____
(b) Financial Status: 1 2 3 4 5
(c) Housing Conditions: 1 2 3 4 5
(d) Social Functioning: 1 2 3 4 5
(e) Intimate Relationships: 1 2 3 4 5

5. What are your ex-wife's strengths as a parent?

6. What are the major complaints you have about your ex-wife, in terms of her parenting skills or attitudes?

7. With respect to your ex-wife, has she ever been: (Check all relevant responses)

- (a) Physically violent toward you? Yes _____ No _____ Unclear _____
If so, when? Pre-Separation _____ Post-Separation _____
(b) Verbally abusive toward you? Yes _____ No _____ Unclear _____
(c) Emotionally abusive toward you? Yes _____ No _____ Unclear _____
(d) Are you afraid of her? Yes _____ No _____ Unclear _____
If yes, do you feel adequately protected from her at this time? Yes _____ No _____

8. Other Comments:

(Continue on additional page, if necessary)

*Scoring Key: 1 = Extremely Dissatisfied; 2 = Mildly Dissatisfied; 3 = "o.k.", i.e., Equally Satisfied and Dissatisfied; 4 = Very Satisfied; 5 = Extremely Satisfied.

Appendix G:

Invitation to Participate in Research Study Via Information Letters Sent to Other Parent

Dear Parent:

I recently asked parents to volunteer for my research study through (information letters distributed by local family lawyers / an ad in the K-W Record / an ad in the Guelph Record). Your (ex-wife / ex-husband / ex-partner), _____, called me to participate in the study. My feeling is that I will develop the most complete understanding of the process by which parents try to come to an agreement about sharing the parenting after a divorce, if I am able to speak with both the mother and the father. This letter is to tell you a little more about myself and the study I am conducting.

I am a doctoral student at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver and am currently completing a full-year clinical internship at Kitchener-Waterloo Hospital. The research I am conducting has been approved by the Simon Fraser University Ethics Committee. This study is supported by a research fellowship awarded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

For my doctoral research I am interviewing mothers and fathers who have come to - or are trying to come to - an agreement about parenting after their separation or divorce. Participation in this research project involves an individual interview and the completion of a short paper-and-pencil questionnaire. It would take a total of 45 minutes to one hour of your time. The information will be recorded without any reference to your name and will be used for research purposes only. If you are interested, I will provide you with feedback about the results of this study as soon as it is finished. I would be more than happy to discuss with you any questions or comments you may have about the experience of divorce and parenting afterwards.

If you are interested in participating in this study or would simply like to hear more about it before you decide, please contact me at (519) 745-0831*. I would very much appreciate your time and help. I am hopeful that this research will benefit divorcing parents in the future, by providing us with some important information about this difficult period in people's lives. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Marion Ehrenberg
Telephone: (519) 745-0831

*If you live outside the Kitchener-Waterloo area, please feel free to call collect.

Appendix H:

Consent Form Completed by All Research Participants Interviewed by the Collaborating Psychologist

S I M O N F R A S E R U N I V E R S I T Y

INFORMED CONSENT BY SUBJECTS TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

Note: The University and those conducting this project subscribe to the ethical conduct of research and to the protection at all times of the interests, comfort, and safety of subjects. This form and the information it contains are given to you for your own protection and full understanding of the procedures, risks and benefits involved. Your signature on this form will signify that you have received this document describing the project, that you have received an adequate opportunity to consider the information in the document, and that you voluntarily agree to participate in the project.

You have been invited to participate in a research project investigating the psychological dynamics involved in child custody and access disputes. Of particular interest are the personality characteristics and parenting attitudes of separated and divorced mothers and fathers.

Participation in this project involves your permission that information routinely obtained during custody/access assessments as well as some additional questions be recorded anonymously (without any reference to your name) to be used for research purposes only. Your participation in this research project will in no way influence the process or outcome of Dr. _____'s assessments. You will not be contacted at a later time.

I understand the procedures to be used in this research project. I understand that I may withdraw my participation in this project at any time.

I also understand that I may register any complaint I might have about the research component of my involvement in this assessment in writing with:

Marion Ehrenberg, Chief Investigator
Dr. R. Blackman, Chairperson,
Department of Psychology
Simon Fraser University
Burnaby, British Columbia V5A 1S6

Copies of the results of this study, upon its completion, may be obtained by contacting Marion Ehrenberg at the above address.

NAME: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

WITNESS: _____ DATE: _____

CHAPTER VI

REFERENCES

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