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“If the Bread Goes Stale, it’s My Dad’s Fault”
The Parental Alienation Syndrome

Cynthia Raso

A Thesis
in
The Department
of
Sociology

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts (Sociology) at
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ABSTRACT

“If the Bread Goes Stale, it’s My Dad’s Fault” The Parental Alienation Syndrome

Cynthia Raso

Studies on divorce have been well researched, the problem is that the Parental Alienation Syndrome often and perhaps usually accompanies divorce; therefore, the much-discussed negative consequences of divorce on children may well be in fact the consequences of PAS.

PAS is identified when a parent (usually the custodial parent) behaves in such a way to alienate his/her child against the other parent (usually the non-custodial parent). These behaviours include brainwashing, manipulation, and control. With successful programming, the child will inevitably be alienated from the other parent.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to gain a better understanding of PAS, to explain the mechanisms, and discuss consequences that occur in childhood and adulthood. Narrative stories were collected to illustrate PAS and the consequences.

The sample is comprised of eleven participants; four men, and seven women who were self-identified as victims of PAS. The data were collected by semi-structured, open-ended interviews which were conducted face to face or via the telephone.

The findings indicate that the greater the severity of PAS, the more serious the external and internal problems of the individual, and that damage to the child can last for decades. Those affected seemed likely to perpetuate the problem onto their own children. An additional serendipitous discovery was the paradox of the participant’s recognition of alienation but also the denial of some, and inability to reconcile. The thesis concludes with several recommendations.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past 30 years, the rate of divorce in Canada has soared, and consequently family life has radically been altered. Recent research has shown that “a total of 71,144 couples had a divorce finalized in 2000, up a marginal 0.3% from 1999, and up 3.0% from 1998”. (Divorces, 1999 and 2000 Shelf Tables (Catalogue no.84F0213XPB).

The effects of divorce on a family have become subject to a heightened level of research and considerable concern. Psychological and economic well-being has been scrutinized, as well as the breakdown of family dynamics. Changes in family structure have been analyzed to interpret and investigate the sequences of family transitions, especially with respect to custody. In the report “For the Sake of the Children” that was written in December of 1998, it was stated more than 47,000 children were the subjects of custody orders under the Divorce Act in 1994 and 1995. Furthermore, the magnitude of these custody orders is even greater, as these divorce figures do not include legally separated couples, or couples with no change to their legal status. Although a divorce affects all members within a family unit, the children are usually the most victimized and scarred. They feel rejected, they blame themselves for the breakdown of the family, they are often in the center of their parents’ battle and, due to the tension, they are placed in a position where they feel they must pick sides. In addition, they are sometimes used in a conspiracy to seek revenge on the parent who left the family unit or was perceived to cause the family breakdown. This manipulation and scheming is referred to as the *Parental Alienation Syndrome*, or hereafter referred to as PAS.

The Parental Alienation Syndrome is identified when one parent (typically the custodial parent) behaves in such a way through manipulation, control and distinctive brainwashing techniques to alienate a child from the other parent (hence, the non-custodial parent).

This is done as the alienating parent engages the child in a series of conscious and subconscious processes to denigrate the other parent. With successful encoding, the child will ultimately contribute to the denigration of the other parent (Cartwright, 1993; Gardner, 1992).

Brainwashing is one of the 'Techniques of Persuasion'. Brainwashing referred originally to the techniques of persuasion adopted by the Chinese on American POWS during the Korean War. These often involved constant repetition, rewards or positive reinforcement and other such possibilities. The following are classic examples from Gardner of such manipulation and brainwashing techniques used by the alienating parent:

"There are things that I could say about your dad, but I'm not that kind of person"

"Call me as soon as you get there to let me know if you are okay. If you get scared, you call me right away? I'll come get you if you want to come home."

"How can you go see your father when you know I am sick?"

"Your mother doesn't love us (or you). If she did, she wouldn't have left"

"I'm the one who really loves you, not him. What has he done for you that is so great? I am the one who raised you."

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Although there has been research on the Parental Alienation Syndrome in terms of its development, its definition, and the negative consequences of the syndrome in relation to the alienated parent, there has been very little research on the medium and long term effects of PAS on the children in alienated relationships. The purpose of this study then is

two-fold; one is to gain a better understanding of the Parental Alienation Syndrome, both the mechanisms and the consequences in adulthood. Following are such consequences; what happens when the alienated child begins to comprehend what had really happened and is faced with the realization that he/she was used by the alienating parent as a plot to get back at or get even with the non-custodial parent for whatever reasons, and therefore, wrongly rejected the non-custodial parent? This awareness can produce powerful feelings of guilt, and at the same time constitute an onset of a backlash effect against the alienating parent. With this occurrence, the relationship with the non-custodial parent will become more developed as the relationship with the custodial parent begins to deteriorate. However, that being said, serious emotional problems may ensue as making up for lost time with the alienated parent is not as easy as it sounds. In addition, there may be internalization problems (such as trust issues with the opposite sex, relationships difficulties), and externalization problems (such as alcoholism, and drug addiction) that prevail throughout adulthood. Secondly, the negative effects of divorce have been well researched. The problem is that PAS usually accompanies divorce, therefore, the much-discussed consequences of divorce may well be in fact the consequences of the Parental Alienation Syndrome.

There are several important scholars who have contributed to the research of the Parental Alienation Syndrome, and their research will be referred to throughout this study. Richard Gardner observed many commonalties amongst the divorce cases under his supervision. After careful investigation, he detected that many custodial parents were engaging their children in a series of manipulation and brainwashing techniques to denigrate the children against the non-custodial parent. In 1985, Gardner coined this

phenomenon the Parental Alienation Syndrome. Dr. Glenn Cartwright contributed other factors associated with PAS, as he believed PAS was more prevalent than it was perceived to be. He argued that PAS is not restricted to matters strictly relating to child custody, but can be provoked on matters such as financial matters, child support, and property division. Cartwright held the court system fairly responsible for the occurrences of PAS, because it was slow to render judgments. He argues that the courts are allowing the alienating parent more time to alienate his/her child against the other parent due to these slow decision-makings in the court. In addition, he believed the courts should be trained to detect such cases of PAS, and punish those parents who induce the denigration.

Under Cartwright's supervision, Despina Vassiliou conducted her thesis research on PAS in 1998, while focusing her attention on non-custodial parents who were victims of PAS. She had found that after the participants' divorce was finalized, the non-custodial parents' visitations with their children dramatically reduced with the onset of alienation. Consequently, the alienated parents exemplified a limited relationship with their children.

The data for this research were conducted through semi-structured, open-ended telephone and face to face interviews. The sample is comprised of eleven participants who had to meet a number of criteria; they had to be formerly part of a family unit, their parents had divorced or separated when they were a child, they self-identified being victims of PAS, and they had to be between the ages of 20-30.

In Chapter Four, narrative stories of the participants will be presented so the readers can obtain a general overview of their stories. The actual findings of this research will be illustrated in Chapter Five, and are broken down into four core themes. The first theme is entitled Family Breakdown, and the section concentrates on the various aspects

pertaining to the breakdown of the family unit; internalizing problems such as trust, emotional, insecurity issues are explored in the second theme; and externalizing problems such as alcohol and drug abuse, early sexual intercourse, disobedience in school are discussed in the third theme. The last theme focuses on the parent-child relationships before and after the divorce.

The last chapter encompasses a list of recommendations that can be used to help reduce or even eliminate the occurrences of PAS.

CHAPTER 1 DEFINITIONS OF PARENTAL ALIENATION SYNDROME

RICHARD GARDNER

Richard Gardner was a Clinical Professor of Child Psychiatry at Columbia University in New York City, as well as a faculty member of the William A. White Psychoanalytical Institute. Dr. Gardner practiced in Cresskill, New Jersey where he worked with divorced families, and where he first observed PAS (1985) while working on the cases of these divorces. Throughout his casework, he observed eight general characteristics that were present amongst particular types of cases; alienated children. According to Gardner, these manifestations or characteristics occurred in 90% of children who had been involved in custody conflicts, and these children were alienated by the custodial parent. These characteristics have been used today as a scale to determine the severity of the alienation. They are:

1. Campaign of denigration:

The alienated child denigrates the non-custodial parent, particularly in front of the alienating parent, and is obsessed in doing so. The severity of the denigration becomes stronger as the child learns that the expressed hatred is beneficial with respect to the custodial parent. For example, a daughter will call her dad a jerk in front of her mother, and the mother encourages her to do so, and rewards the child for such name calling. Other comments would include; "I hate him and I never want to see him again", and "He's mean, and I don't care if I ever see him again".

2. The children's untold rationalizations:

The alienated child will base his/her defaming on absurd and weak rationalizations to depreciate the non-custodial parent. Examples of such rationalizations are: "I can't believe he/she took me to Disneyworld when I made it clear I didn't want to go"; "He doesn't make the decisions where we go, and he's always asking me where we should go"; and "He used to say to me 'Don't Interrupt'". Gardner also realized that the absurd rationalizations were not simply the result of parent programming, but the child also had his/her own contributions that were ridiculous and illogical. Take the following two examples:

"Gardner: I'm very sorry to hear that your grandfather died.

Patient: You know, he just didn't die. My father murdered him.

Gardner: Your father murdered your grandfather, his own father?

Patient: Yes. I know he did it.

Gardner: I thought he was in the hospital? I understand that he was about 85 years old and that he was dying of old age diseases.

Patient: Yeah, that's what my father says.

Gardner: What do you say?

Patient: I say he murdered him in the hospital.

Gardner: How did he do that?

Patient: He sneaked into the hospital, at night, and did it while no one was looking. He did it while the nurses and the doctors were asleep.

Gardner: How do you know that?

Patient: I just know it.

Gardner: Did anyone tell you such a thing?

Patient: No, but I just know it.

Gardner (now looking to the mother who is witness to this conversation): What do you think about what he said?

Mother: Well, I don't really think that he did it, but I wouldn't put it past him.
(Gardner 1992, p. 69).

"Gardner: I would like to know *exactly* how your mother embarrasses you?.

Patient: Well, she once embarrassed me at Little League practice.

Gardner: Tell me exactly what happened there.

Patient: Well, she sprayed us all with bug stuff, stuff that kills bugs.

Gardner: Were there bugs around?

Patient: Yes.

Gardner: Were the bugs bothering everybody?

Patient: Yes

Gardner: It would seem to me that everybody would have been happy that she sprayed the bug stuff. Were the other boys happy about it? Did the other boys complain?

Patient: No

Gardner: Were the other boys happy to be sprayed?

Patient: I think so. But she still embarrasses me. She just should have stayed by the side with the other parents and watched.”

(Gardner 1992, p. 70).

3. Dichotomy of the parents:

The alienated child wishes to have no contact whatsoever with the non-custodial parent while expressing merely negative feelings towards that parent. At the same time, the child expresses only positive feelings for the custodial parent while imitating and modeling their behavior.

4. The independent thinker phenomenon:

The alienated child states that the rejection of the non-custodial parent was his/her choice, and the alienating parent is only respecting his/her wish for this rejection. The following will exemplify Gardner’s point:

“Mother: Now Billy, I want you to tell me *the truth*. Do you *really* want to see your father?

Billy: (child remains silent)

Mother: (voice now getting louder): Billy, you can tell me the truth. What is it?

Billy: (still silent)

Mother: (voice now getting even higher): You don’t have to be afraid of me, Billy. All I want you to do is tell me *the truth*. Do you or do you *not* want to see your father? You don’t have to be afraid to say you don’t want to see your father. Do tell me now, what’s the truth, what do you really want? You can say it.

Billy: I don’t want to see my father.

Mother (turning to Gardner): You see, doctor, it’s like I said. He really doesn’t want to see his father and that’s his *own* opinion. I haven’t talked him into it.

(Mother now turning to Billy.) Isn’t that right? Isn’t that your *own* opinion?

Billy: Yes, that’s my *own* opinion.” (Gardner 1992, p. 74).

5. Automatic love of the alienating parent:

There is an automatic love and support for the alienating parent and that parent is never wrong. In fact, the child believes that in comparison between the two parents, it is the alienating parent who needs the defending and the extra love.

6. Absence of guilt:

The alienated child expresses no feelings of guilt about the lost relationship with the non-custodial parent. Favors and gifts from the non-custodial parent are not appreciated by the child, and are devalued. In fact, even where the child knows that the alienated parent provides child support payments, he/she will still refuse to see the parent. "He doesn't deserve to see me, and paying all that money is a good punishment for him" is a common phrase that a child will say. Therefore, even though the father is paying for the child's food, clothing, education, the child still argues that he/she doesn't want to see his/her father, and experiences no guilty feelings.

7. Borrowed scenarios:

When the alienated child uses language that is clearly not their own, it is apparent that this language is environmentally induced and coached by the alienating parent. Such an example would be having a seven year old saying that her "dad's new girlfriend is a slut". Other examples would involve a four year old telling her father over the phone to stop 'harassing us', before hanging up on him; having a four year old saying that he does not want to see his mother, 'because his mother lacks discipline, and she's a cheat'; or an eight year old boy commenting that he doesn't want to visit his father because 'he keeps harassing us with lawsuits'.

8. Generalization of animosity:

The hatred of the alienated parent often extends to include that parent's extended family (cousins, grandmother, uncles, etc...). Presents and cards are usually not appreciated. A common reason for this animosity of the extended family is because of the attempt to influence the child to mend the relationship with the alienated parent. For example, 'I don't want to see my Uncle Harry because he makes me feel bad about not seeing my dad'.

Although Gardner was able to divide the manifestations of the child's contributions of denigration into categories, he was unable to compose pure categories for the programming parents' contributions to PAS apart from conscious and unconscious categories because there was too much overlapping. Gardner did however show that there were common basic factors among the alienating parents. These included the denigration of the hated spouse, the utilization of him/her as a target for hostility, and exclusionary maneuvers. Such maneuvers include comments on how little money the non-custodial parent is giving. This constant complaining about money can lead a child to believe that they may go without food, shelter, and clothing and consequently, may contribute to the child's denigration of the non-custodial parent. Another example is having a custodial parent talking to his/her child about the non-custodial parent leaving home. Many will make such comments such as 'Your father/mother abandoned us'. In most cases, the non-custodial parent left his/her spouse, but has not lost any affection for his/her child, but the custodial parent lumps the child together with her/himself to manipulate the child into believing he/she was also left behind. Another maneuver is to exaggerate the non-custodian's parent psychological problems. For example, "the parent

who may have drunk a little extra alcohol on occasion will gradually become spoken of as ‘an alcoholic’” (Gardner 1992, p. 86). Another common maneuver according to Gardner is the requirement for the non-custodial parent to honk the horn of the car when he/she arrives because he/she is not permitted to go to the door. Although many people will ring the doorbell, the non-custodial parent is singled out and must keep his/her distance. Gardner also mentions that custodial parents become creative with his/her maneuvers. For example, “a father calls the home to speak to his son. The mother answers the telephone and happens to be in the son’s room at the time. The father simply asks if he can speak with his son. The mother (with the boy right next to her) says nothing. Again, the father asks to speak with his son. There is more silence (during which the son is unable to hear his father’s pleas for a response). Finally the mother responds: ‘I’m glad he can’t hear what you’re saying right now’ or ‘If he heard what you just said, I’m sure he would never speak with you again.’” (Gardner 1992, p. 87). When the father finally speaks to his son, he spends the time on the phone trying to convince the son that he never said anything bad. Consequently, the son becomes judgmental and the father becomes fearful of calling the house. These are only a few conscious brainwashing maneuvers that Gardner refers to. Unfortunately, there are many more examples.

Unconscious techniques include having the custodial parent stating that ‘there are things I could say about your mother that would make your hair stand on end, but I’m not that kind of person who criticizes a parent to his children’ (Gardner 1992, p. 100). These comments create fear and curiosity for the child towards the non-custodial parent.

According to Gardner, there is a continuum in the severity of the Parental Alienation Syndrome, which may range from mild, moderate, to severe. Gardner however, is aware of the fact that there are cases that do not fit neatly into any one of the three categories. As describing these characterizations in full detail goes beyond the scope of this paper, only a brief summary of the most important issues will be presented. Please refer to Table 1.

TABLE 1: Differential Diagnosis of the Three Types of Parental Alienation Syndrome.

PRIMARY SYMPTOMATIC MANIFESTATIONS	MILD	MODERATE	SEVERE
Campaign of Denigration	Minimal	Moderate	Formidable
Weak and Absurd Rationalization for the Depreciation	Minimal	Moderate	Multiple Absurd Rationalizations
Dichotomy of Parents	Normal Ambivalence	No Ambivalence	No Ambivalence
The Independent-Thinker Phenomenon	Absent	Present	Present
Reflexive Support of the Alienating Parent in the Parental Conflict	Minimal	Present	Present
Absence of Guilt	Normal guilt	Minimal to no guilt	No Guilt
Borrowed Scenarios	Minimal	Present	Present
Spread of Animosity to the Extended Family of the Alienated Parent	Minimal	Present	Formidable, often fanatic

Alienated children in the mild category exhibit relatively superficial manifestations of Gardner's eight symptoms. Only a few of the symptoms are present, and when they are, the effects are minimal. The children still co-operate with visitations from the non-custodial parent, but are intermittently disgruntled. As well, the alienating parent recognizes that alienation against the other parent is not in the best interests of the child, but the parent is nonetheless vengeful.

The moderate cases are where the alienation is the most common. It is in this category that the custodial parent's programming, manipulation and brainwashing of the child is formidable. In these cases, the alienation is caused by the rage of rejection. All eight of the characteristics are likely to be present, and each is more advanced than the ones present in the mild cases. In the mild category there may still be a loving relationship between the child and the non-custodial parent, but in the moderate cases, the relationship begins to deteriorate as denigration intensifies, and visitations are somewhat interfered with. Oddly, the child's campaign of denigration is reneged when he/she is in the presence of the alienated parent, only to be picked up again when he/she returns to the custodial parent.

Children in the severe category are usually extreme in their hatred for the non-custodial parent as they collaborate with the custodial parent. All eight of the manifestations are present to a significant degree. Alienation of the non-custodial parent is at its full force as visitation with the non-custodial parent is impossible. Unlike in the moderate cases where the alienating parent is driven by rejection and rage, in many of these severe cases, the alienating parent is fanatical and experience paranoia. Consequently, the child becomes fanatical as well, as both the child and the alienating

parent form a folie-à-deux relationship where they share their paranoia about the alienated parent.

GLENN CARTWRIGHT

Although Gardner displays the indicators and the continuum of PAS, Glenn Cartwright presents recent contributors to PAS. Dr. Glenn Cartwright is a Professor in the Faculty of Education at McGill University in Montreal and has been working with a study group on PAS, and has supervised students conducting research on PAS. In 1993, Cartwright contributed significantly to the study of PAS when he wrote an article entitled 'Expanding the Parameters of Parental Alienation Syndrome' suggesting that PAS must be redefined, as the phenomenon is more extensive than Gardner had imagined.

Cartwright argued that PAS can be provoked on matters other than child custody, such as child support, financial matters, and property division. According to Glenn Cartwright, "the newly recognized nature of the syndrome compels its definitional refinement and enlargement as new parameters are discovered" (Cartwright 1993, p. 207). He suggests that PAS is more prevalent than it was previously believed.

1. Parental Alienation Syndrome may be precipitated by parental disagreements on matters other than custody:

While custody disputes remain the chief cause of the Parental Alienation Syndrome, other non-custodial disagreements may trigger the syndrome, such as child support, finance, and property division. "This suggests that the etiology of PAS may be much broader than previously believed" (Cartwright, 1993).

2. Allegations of fabricated abuse may be virtual:

Virtual allegations refer to those cases where the custodial parent casts aspersions on the character of the non-custodial parent by hinting at abuse, such as the custodial parent commenting that the non-custodial parent had a bottle of wine in their fridge, hinting at alcoholism. Cartwright illustrates another perfect example in his article: a mother hints sexual abuse because the father rented a videotape containing pornography and showed it to the child; she hinted sexual abuse because the child apparently stated that he didn't like the movie because it was suggestive, erotic, and pornographic. This movie was in fact a family comedy; a Chevy Chase movie, and while it was true that the child disliked the movie, it was due to the fact that it was not funny.

3. Time heals all wounds, except alienation:

As time progresses, so does the growth of severity of the alienation. To heal a damaged relationship requires quality time to revitalize it and to help counter the negative effects from the alienation. But to prevent such revitalization, the alienating parent will do everything they can to occupy the child's time. "Time away from the lost parent furthers the goals of alienation" (Cartwright, 1993).

4. The degree of alienation in the child is directly proportional to the time spent alienating:

The truth of the matter is that alienation is a gradual and consistent process.

Due to the fact that the alienator has custody of the child, they will spend longer periods of time with the child, allowing the impact of the alienation to become more severe.

5. Courts slow to render judgments may unwittingly further the alienation:

The courts need time to assess each case and to make sure they are taking the best interests of the child into account. However, in the process, they are allowing the

alienating parent more time to brainwash and manipulate the child to hate the non-custodial parent. Thus at the time where the child must state how he/she feels, his/her stated wishes become more biased.

6. Forceful judgment is required to counter the force of alienation:

The role of the courts should go beyond deciding custody issues and financial issues. Courts should evaluate each case to determine if parental alienation has been demonstrated, if visiting rights have been denied or curtailed, and if it has, sanctions should be applied against that parent. If the parents are not reprimanded for deliberately brainwashing and manipulating their child to hate the other parent, then they will continue scheming to make sure they get what they want. Without the help from the courts, PAS will never be appreciated nor reduced.

7. Excessive alienation may trigger mental illness in the child:

Past researchers have found that children who are exposed to parental conflict at a young age demonstrate anxiety, tension, depression, and psychosomatic illness. But the question lies, are these illnesses constant, will they ever heal, or will the child have to struggle with these imbalances as adults? These questions are tied into the eighth category of Cartwright's parameters.

8. Little is known about the medium and long terms effects of parental alienation syndrome on its victims:

The short term consequences of PAS are obvious and they are known. However, once again, we come across the uncertainty of what happens in the long run to these children who were exposed to parental alienation. For example, what are the negative implications of having a deceased father-child relationship? At the beginning of the alienation, the child experiences not only loss of a parent, but the continual bombardment

of denigration of this 'other' parent. As the denigration continues, even the good memories shared with the alienated parent will be destroyed. Will these consequences tarnish the child forever and affect the way he/she will handle their personal relationships as adults? Will there be a backlash effect on the alienating parent? It is the purpose of this thesis to shed light upon the detrimental effects of the Parental Alienation Syndrome, and how they can be carried through to adulthood.

DESPINA VASSILIOU

Despina Vassiliou (1998), an MA student at McGill University under the supervision of Dr. Glenn Cartwright, wrote her thesis on the Parental Alienation Syndrome. However, the purpose of her study was to gain a better understanding "of factors that result in an intact family becoming an alienated one" (Vassiliou 1998, p. 18). She conducted six semi-structured open-ended interview questionnaires (five fathers, and one mother) who had identified themselves as being victims of the Parental Alienation Syndrome as a parent. The fact that the majority of the participants were male is consistent with Gardner's (1992) initial findings suggesting that the alienators are more frequently mothers. (However, the more Gardner worked with PAS cases, he concluded that the actual incidence of engaging in parental alienation was equal among mothers and fathers). The following are the results of her research:

Current Relationship with Ex-Spouse:

The findings suggest that the relationship between the alienator and the respondent was "strained or non-existent" (Vassiliou, 1998). Half of the respondents stated that they had had no contact with their ex for one to three years. Two of the remaining three respondents stated that there was some communication with their ex, but it was very

limited. For example, communication would occur only when the respondent was trying to contact the child. Nonetheless, these relationships were described as tense.

Frequency of Contact with Their Child(Ren):

All of the participants in the study reported that their exes had primary custody of the child after divorce, and five of the six reported that their visitations with the children were on every second weekend. Although, following the finalizing of the divorce, the respondents' visitations with their children drastically reduced. "For instance, one father described his reduction in visitations as follows: 'about one year ago... it {visitation} was once or twice a week, and since then...I see him about once a month'" (Vassiliou, 1998). For the majority of the participants, with the onset of alienation, the respondents exemplified a limited relationship with their children. Therefore, "a change in the frequency of visitation and custody arrangement occurs with these PAS families" (Vassiliou, 1998).

Current Relationship with PAS Children:

Only two of the respondents reported having a close relationship with their children, but they were alienated in the past. They claim that their relationship with their children is existent today only because they experienced a milder case of PAS. The remaining participants claim that they have little or no relationship with their children, although one parent reported that she still feels connected to her children because she attempts to be present for events that are important to them. The remaining respondents reported that they attempt to maintain contact with their children by writing letters and sending gifts. They hope that these gestures will demonstrate their affection towards the children.

Alienator's Attitude and Behaviors:

The respondents reported that the alienation was present because the alienator brainwashed or manipulated the children to think that the other parent were not good people. "For instance, one father accidentally overheard the alienator inform the children that she had hired an attorney to prevent them from having to visit their father" (Vassiliou, 1998). In addition, "another parent reported that whenever his child went back to the alienator's home after a visit with him, the child would be questioned or 'debriefed' about everything that happened there" (Vassiliou, 1998). It is clear that the relationship with their children was deliberately sabotaged.

Other Contributions:

In five of the six cases, the respondents declared that their children were spies for the custodial parent, the alienating parent. This means that the child reported everything to the alienating parent, especially the matters that the child did not like about the visit, such as arguments that had occurred between the child and the alienated parent. In addition, gifts that were given to the child by the alienated parent would spontaneously disappear.

In one specific case, the extended family of the alienating parent also became secondary alienators. The maternal grandparents became the alienators when they were looking after the children. In another case, the respondents' ex-in laws also contributed to the alienation during visits by denigrating the non-custodial parent. Such denigration included "I am really sorry you have a father like that" (Vassiliou, 1998).

All of the respondents believed that hate, anger and revenge was the motivation behind the denigration. "One father reported his belief that the cause of alienation was

‘Hate...Hate towards me’ and another participant perceived ‘she hates my guts and she says it...And she’s trying to get back at me as well’” (Vassiliou, 1998).

Legal Services:

The participants reported that they had negative experiences with the legal system and they were discontented with the way their cases were handled. The respondents stated that the judges made quick, uninformed decisions, and were clearly ignorant. “For instance, one father reported that his ex-wife - who was preventing him from having visits with his child - ignored court orders of his visitation rights. The judge did not impose any consequences on her; she received only a warning after ignoring more than one court order” (Vassiliou, 1998). It is apparent the courts are oblivious to the Parental Alienation Syndrome and its negative effects.

Summary

While working with divorce cases, Richard Gardner observed many commonalities that the divorcing families shared. After scrutinizing these observations carefully, Gardner discovered that many of the custodial parents were poisoning their children by engaging them in a series of techniques to denigrate the other parent. In 1985, he labeled this process the Parental Alienation Syndrome.

Since then, Glenn Cartwright was convinced that the etiology of PAS was more serious and broader than how it was initially perceived to be. In 1993, Cartwright wrote an article entitled ‘Expanding the Parameters of Parental Alienation Syndrome’, and he illustrated just why. He argued that the PAS can be provoked on matters other than child custody, such as finances, child support, and property division. In addition, he elaborated on how alleged sexual abuse may be virtual and not real, and that the more time the

alienating parent spent with the child, the more denigrated the child will be from the non-custodial parent. Cartwright held the court system fairly responsible for the occurrences of PAS, because it was slow to render judgments. In addition, he believed the courts should be trained to detect such cases of PAS, and punish those parents who induce the denigration. Cartwright also suggested that further research was needed to fully understand the significance of PAS, especially with reference to the medium and long terms effects on its victims.

Despina Vassiliou in 1998 wrote her thesis on the Parental Alienation Syndrome, focusing her attention on the non-custodial parents, and how they have become victimized. She had found that after the divorce was finalized, the visitations with their children dramatically reduced for the majority of her participants with the onset of alienation. Consequently, the alienated parents exemplified a limited relationship with their children. As well, the participants stated that the custodial parents' extended family also participated in the alienation.

CHAPTER 2

DIVORCE AND CUSTODY ISSUES

This chapter will focus on the impact of divorce on children, because the common factors that are involved in divorce are also included in the creation and development of the Parental Alienation Syndrome. These factors include: (a) impact of divorce; (b) custody; (c) parental conflict; and (d) generalizing the conflict with the paternal grandparents.

IMPACT OF DIVORCE

Divorce is a life-altering experience for children, regardless of their age; even with the absence of PAS, children of divorced parents often undergo severe trauma. They experience more adjustment, psychological, and emotional problems than children from intact families.

Past research has shown that parental divorce increases the chances that a child will have difficulty with school, engage in early sexual activity, suffer depression, and commit delinquent acts, to name a few. Also, it has been found that “children living in a single-parent divorced family were associated with a greater degree of alcohol consumption” (Jeynes 2001, p. 312). Other researchers such as Wolfinger found similar conclusions with respect to cigarette smoking, where “parental divorce increases the likelihood that adult offspring’s will be smokers” (Wolfinger 1998, p. 261). Research has also found that parental divorce influences a child’s attitude and behavior on sex. The results from Jeynes (2001) indicate that “children living in single parent divorced families were associated with a greater likelihood of having more permissive attitudes and behaviors regarding premarital intercourse” (Jeynes 2001, p. 127).

Another consequential effect of divorce lies in the breakdown of a two parent family structure to a single parent family structure. From the beginning of life, a child has become used to having two parents actively involved in his/her life. They are accustomed to living with both parents, eating dinner with both parents, having his/her two parents nearby at all times in the same house, and sharing family outings and vacations together. After a divorce, this habitual family environment for the child crumbles down, and the child must get accustomed to living with only one parent, as the other parent becomes a visiting parent. It takes a while for a child to become adjusted to this way of living.

The non-custodian parent's level of involvement is contingent and a determinant in the child's adjustment and psychological development after his/her parent's divorce. Many of the behavioral, adjustment, and psychological problems that arise after a divorce stem from the condensed involvement of the non-custodial parent. To elaborate, Simons et al found that boys, who were at risk for externalizing problems (aggressive and delinquent behaviors) after their parents divorce, were the boys whose fathers' (non-custodial parent) involvement in their lives had been reduced. Therefore, just like intact families, "it is argued that children show better adjustment when both the custodial and non-custodial parent are actively involved in childrearing" (Simons et al 1999, p. 1022).

Valerie King in her study 'Parental Divorce and Interpersonal Trust in Adult Offspring' reported that many children of divorced families develop trust issues with others as well as with their parents. King states that due to the fact that the parents are the first and primary caregivers in a child's life, the trust that the child holds for his/her parents is paramount. If this trust is questioned or broken, it is very detrimental for a

child, regardless of age. One can argue that it is for this reason that divorce compromises father-child relationships, as it has been shown in the past and reducibly in the present that mothers usually gain sole custody of the child, and therefore, more likely to become the alienating parent. Conceivably then, this can help explain why “divorce has a strong adverse effect on offspring’s trust in fathers regardless of the child’s age at which it occurs” (King, 2002). King interviewed a sample of offspring whose parents were involved in a 17-year longitudinal study. Overall, 471 offspring in 1992 and an addition 220 offspring in 1997 were interviewed. Reinterviews were conducted in 1997 with the 426 of the offspring interviewed in 1992. King’s analysis relied on the combined sample of 646 offspring interviewed in 1997. King found that more than half (56%) of the offspring in her study reported becoming less close to their fathers after divorce. In addition, “only 18% of offspring from divorced families had an exceptionally strong relationship with their fathers after the divorce (compared to 46% of offspring from two-parent families)” (King 2002, p. 650).

Research from Laumann-Billings and Emery is consistent with King’s research as they argue that fathers are to blame for post-divorce problems in the child as well as responsible for the divorce itself. After interviewing 99 students from divorced families in a Midatlantic University, they found that 60% of their respondents blamed their father for the trouble in their family, and for the break-up of their family. In these cases, the majority of the respondents lived with their mothers after the divorce. Laumann-Billings and Emery also interviewed 93 students from the same University whose biological parents were still married. After making comparisons between the two groups, they found that “almost 1 in 3 young adults whose parents were divorced wondered if ‘my

father really loves me'. Three times the rate found in the married group" (Laumann-Billings and Emery 2000 p. 677).

Other researchers have also reported that "between 25-30% of children lose all contact with their fathers by the end of the first year after divorce" (Kruk (1995), p. 135.

CUSTODY

Research shows that there are two explanations as to why fathers are predominately the victims of the Parental Alienation Syndrome.

According to Gardner, there are two important reasons for the recent dramatic increase in the prevalence of Parental Alienation Syndrome, and both explanations stem from the changes in the legal system. In the 1970's, the courts replaced the 'tender years' presumption with that of 'the best interests of the child' presumption. This change was required because custody of the child was usually granted to the mother with respect to the 'tender years' presumption for it was presumed that it was psychologically beneficial for children to stay with their mothers after divorce. It assumed that mothers were better parents than fathers. Therefore, 'the best interests of the child' presumption held a less sexist, stereotypical position, as custody of a child was awarded to the parent who was considered the best custodian of the child; let it be the mother or father. At this point in time, "fathers who had previously thought that they had no chance of gaining custody found out that they had" (Gardner, 1992). This change in the legal system cast fears for mothers because the customary child custody that they once had was jeopardized, and they panicked about the fact that they would lose custody to the fathers. It is possible then, that mothers had to think imaginatively and creatively for ways to fortify their cases for child custody, and the children became 'open-territory' in custody

conflicts. Such imagination went as far as casting false accusations of child abuse, or sexual abuse against the father, hence setting the initial stages the Parental Alienation Syndrome.

Canadian and American legislation with respect to child custody incorporated other changes in the late 1970's and 1980's that impacted the beginning of the Parental Alienation Syndrome; it was the change of the jurisdiction of the notion of joint custody. The courts argued that the notion of one parent designated with sole custody, and the other a "visiting" parent was considered inequitarian, where joint custody stipulated that both parents participate equally in the upbringing of the child. Conceivably then, for several reasons (lack of control, lack of power, lack of understanding, inability to co-operate, inability to communicate, a clean break from the past), mothers may have resorted to manipulation, brainwashing, and fabrications to abolish the likelihood of joint custody. On the other hand, there is a drawback when joint custody is granted, as it may do more harm than good for the child. "For example, it increases the chances that they will be used as weapons or spies in parental conflicts. Because no restraints are placed on non-cooperating parents, such use of the children is likely" (Gardner, 1992).

Consequently, both of these new developments in the legal system had the effect of making child custodial arrangements more unpredictable, which led mothers to panic because of their loss for the automatic win of the child.

However, although there have been changes in the legal system with respect to terminologies ('best interests of the child' vs. 'tender years' presumption'), many judges believed that the mothers are intrinsically superior to the fathers when it comes to raising the children and being a parent. This means, mothers were still granted sole custody of

the child in the majority of the cases, hence, making mothers more likely to induce PAS. In actual fact, in 1994 and 1995, there were 47,667 children in which custody was disputed, 33,164 of whom were placed in sole custody arrangements with their mother. Accordingly, mothers were awarded sole custody of the children in 86% of the cases. Furthermore, 16,582 of these children would eventually lose all contact with their fathers” (Gallaway, 1998). Therefore, in 1/3 of all cases at the time, some type of parental alienation had occurred, the root of which has not been researched.

Although there has been a steady decline in mother’s being awarded sole custody of the child, mothers are still awarded custody of the children in the majority of the cases. In fact, “of the 37,000 dependents for whom custody was determined through divorce proceedings in 2000, the custody of a slim majority (53.5% was awarded to the wife. In contrast, custody of 37.2% of dependents was awarded to the husband and wife jointly in 2000, continuing a 14 year trend of steady increases in joint custody arrangements..... Custody was awarded to the husband for only 9.1% of dependents in 2000, down from a high of 15% in 1986)” (Divorces, 1999 and 2000 Shelf Tables (Catalogue no.84F0213XPB). These findings however, are not reflective of all divorce or separation cases.

"Data relating to child custody and dependent children, are not complete, however, because court offices do not always provide the required data elements; furthermore, child custody arrangements are not always recorded on the divorce registration form if custodial arrangements were not pursuant to a court order (e.g. where the parties reached a custody decision beforehand and the court did not have to adjudicate). Consequently, divorce registration data underestimate the total number of custody orders as well as the total number of dependent children affected by divorce" (Divorces, 1999 and 2000 Shelf Tables (Catalogue no.84F0213XPB).

MOTHER'S SATISFACTION WITH THE NON-CUSTODIAL PARENT: PARENTAL-CONFLICT:

Given that in some cases conflict initiated the steps of divorce, it is safe to assume that parental conflict will persist or increase between the couple post-divorce. This conflict propels the initiation of the Parental Alienation Syndrome, as a child's relationship with his/her father is contingent upon the relationship that his/her mother has with the father, and her satisfaction or dissatisfaction with him.

In fact, King and Heard (1999) explored mother's satisfaction with visitation of the non-custodial parent, and the conflict with that parent over such visitation. They reported that many children have little contact with their fathers after divorce, and this contact was found to decline over time.

Mothers could be the sole reason why there is a lack of contact between the child and the father, as they try to prevent or interfere with the visitation because of their level of dissatisfaction with the father. The following statistics from Gallaway and Vassiliou's research illustrates the degree of prevention or interference that occurred between the visitations of the non-custodial parents (father) and the child by the custodial parent.

- "The Children's Rights Council in 1994 reported an estimated six million children in the United States were victims of interfered visitation by their custodial parents (mothers)" (Gallaway, 1998).
- "It has been researched that as high as 50% of fathers (non-custodial parents) reported that their ex-wives had interfered with their visitation with their children" (Vassiliou, 1998).

- “Research has also showed that as many as 40% of custodial mothers admitted denying their ex-husbands their right to visit his children as a means of punishing” (Vassiliou, 1998).

According to Braver, “a custodial parent who does not support the noncustodial parent’s visits can find any number of ways of hindering them, from outright refusal to insisting on unacceptable conditions or unreasonable financial demands” (Braver, 1998 p. 51).

For example, the custodial parent could insist on ridiculous conditions attached to the noncustodial’s parent with the child (such as “You can see your child only if you don’t bring the child to see your parents”). Additionally, the custodial parent could demand that in order for the non-custodial parent to see the child, they have to pick the child up at an inappropriate place or an inconvenient time.

The interference by the custodial parent becomes apparent to the child, and he/she begin to feel a sense of divided loyalty to both parents. However, due to the fact that the mother has custody over the child and they will spend longer periods with the child than the father, the mother has more time with the child to manipulate and scheme (Cartwright, 1993). In time, the child will ultimately side with the mother and against the father, as the child will begin to reject visitations from the father on his/her own.

Although King and Heard do not go into detail about why or how these visitations are obstructed, they focus on the mother’s satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the visitations of the non-custodial parent. They differentiated families into patterns that exhibit father visitation, mother satisfaction with visitation, and parental conflict over visitation. They reported that the most common family pattern (33%) occurs when mothers were most satisfied when the fathers had little contact with the child, and there is no conflict.

Fathers who have a lot of contact with their children, and the mothers are satisfied with this involvement is the second common family pattern (25%). The third group of the family patterns (15%) involve fathers who have infrequent visitations with their children, and the mother reports being dissatisfied with its occurrence, but there is no conflict. The remaining family patterns (there are four) involve a mixture of the level of the father's visitation, the mother's level of satisfaction, and if conflict exists. However, the percentage of each one is quite low. It is conceivable then, that mothers are satisfied when fathers do not interfere in the child's life because they need and want all the love from the child, they are dissatisfied when the child is close to the father, and they are threatened if the father plays an active role in the family.

However, contrary to past studies, King et al were inconsistent with respect to the levels of adjustment, global well-being, and behavioral problems in the child after divorce. In fact, they reported "children are doing worst of all in families in which fathers visit frequently but mothers are dissatisfied" (King et al 1999, p. 393).

Consequently then, this finding can be explained with the Parental Alienation Syndrome as well. As the child tries to remain loyal to his/her custodial parent, he/she will not be happy when he/she is in the presence of the non-custodial parent because the child will feel guilty about spending time with the person who has hurt his/her custodial parent. The child prefers not to be there, and wishes to go back home to the custodial parent. This loyalty can cause strain to the well-being of the child, as the child is torn apart.

GENERALIZING THE CONFLICT WITH THE PATERNAL GRANDPARENTS:

As we have seen in the previous section, mothers are victorious when it comes to restricting contact between the non-custodial parent and the child by denying or

interfering with the visitations. In consequence, the custodial parent can also facilitate or prevent contact between the child and his/her paternal grandparents, as the contact with their grandchild is contingent and dependent on the father's contact with his children. "With 50% of non-custodial fathers in the United States gradually losing all contact with their children, paternal grandparents are at a higher risk of losing contact with their grandchildren than are maternal grandparents" (Drew and Smith 1999, p. 194).

Hence, because mothers are awarded custody of the children in the majority of the cases, maternal grandparents are more likely to be active in the lives of their grandchildren than paternal grandparents. This supports Gardner's notion that relationships with paternal grandparents are jeopardized and deteriorate because of the diminished relationship between the child and the non-custodial parent.

Although research has revealed that this lost relationship between a grandchild and his/her paternal grandparents after divorce promotes negative child adjustment in children, grandparents also suffer severely from the lost contact with their grandchildren. In the study conducted by Drew and Smith (52 grandparents), 78.6% of the grandparents reported that their overall health had been detrimentally affected by the lost relationship their grandchildren after divorce.

Summary

The articles that were examined in Chapter Two did not analyze any research that was related to the Parental Alienation Syndrome, instead the literature focused on the consequences of divorce. It was necessary to explore these issues because many of the consequences of divorce may well in fact be the consequences of PAS as well.

Divorce is a difficult time for all members in a family unit; however, it is known that the child suffers the most. For example, research has found that children whose parents divorced were likely to have permissive sexual attitudes and behaviors Jeynes (2001), more likely to consume larger amounts of alcohol Jeynes (2001) and smoke cigarettes Wolfinger (1998). In addition, children from divorced families are more prone to experience more adjustment and psychological problems than those children from intact families. In fact Simons et al (1999) found when the non-custodial parent was inactive in the child's life, the child showed lower levels of adjustment in terms of externalizing problems, than when both parents were actively involved. However, King and Heard (1999) differed from Simons et al (1999) with respect to children's adjustment levels after divorce. King and Heard found those levels of adjustment and global well being were weak when the children visited their fathers frequently.

After a divorce, mothers usually have custody of the child, and because of this, the mothers spend a more significant amount of time with their child than do the fathers. It is for this reason that the research from King (1999) and Laumann-Billings et al (2000) can help illustrate why fathers are usually the alienated parents. They found that children blamed their father for the family breakdown, and this can be due to the possibility or probability of the children echoing their mothers. Consequently, the father-child relationship was shown to deteriorate.

Parental conflict appeared to propel the initiation of PAS as well. This is because the relationship between a father and his child is dependent upon the relationship that the child's mother has with the father. King and Heard (1999) found that the most common

family pattern consisted of mothers who are dissatisfied when the father visits the children. Vassiliou (1998) had shown similar conclusions in her research.

This parental conflict can expand to include the child's extended family, or more specifically, the paternal grandparents. Gardner (1993), Drew and Smith (1999) and Lussier et al (2002) found that paternal grandparents were less likely to be active in the lives of their grandchildren after divorce.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD AND PROCEDURES OF RESEARCH

There are four hypotheses to investigate in this study. Following each hypothesis is the researcher's rationale behind the expectation that the research will provide these conclusions.

- 1) The more severe the PAS, the more likely the child will develop externalizing problems.

Explanation:

Out of anger, hostility, attention, a child affected by PAS may look towards deviance or mischievous acts to make her/himself feel better. Such acts include drinking alcohol, doing drugs, smoking cigarettes, behaving badly in school, and experiencing early sexual relationships.

- 2) The more severe the PAS, the more likely the child will develop internalizing problems.

Explanation:

The more a child was exposed to the Parental Alienation Syndrome, the more likely the child felt neglected, unloved, and unwanted (especially if this was being affirmed by the alienating parent about the alienated parent). These feelings are carried throughout life, as he/she copes with insecurity, confidence, and emotional problems.. In addition, due to the fact that a child places all his/her trust in his/her parents' relationship, when this trust is broken, it has detrimental effects for the child. The child will have trust issues because he/she will feel that if they can not trust his/her parents, then who can he/she trust? Friendships will be jeopardized, as well as personal relationships.

- 3) The more severe the PAS, the more likely the child, if she/he becomes a parent and goes through a divorce, will handle his/her divorce differently from the way his/her parents did.

Explanation:

Due to the fact the child had experienced the Parental Alienation Syndrome, he/she would not want his/her own children to experience PAS. Therefore, he/she would do anything possible to make sure his/her children have the best life, with their best interests at paramount. Parents, who have been victims of PAS, will more likely have a joint custody arrangement if their marriage ends in divorce.

- 4) The more severe the PAS, the more likely the non-custodial parent-child relationship will be damaged for life.

Explanation:

The more a child was exposed to the Parental Alienation Syndrome, the more likely the child will become angry and hateful towards the non-custodial parent. This anger, if not resolved when the individual was younger, will only intensify as the years pass by. This anger can interfere in their personal adult life; (as daughters will not trust men, as their own children will be victimized, etc). Also, this hatred will only be destructive, as it will consume his/her life, as PAS can carry on down the generations if it is not understood and addressed, and according to Vassiliou, PAS is neither at present.

This chapter contains a discussion of the description and methods that were used to gather data. The sampling procedure, sampling frame, the instrumentation for the data will all be scrutinized.

PARTICIPANTS

The *sampling procedure* for the research was criterion-based, meaning the participants in the sampling frame had to meet a number of criteria.

- Subjects had to be formerly part of a family unit;
- The subjects' parents had divorced/separated when the subjects were children;
- Subjects were self-identified as victims of the Parental Alienation Syndrome as a child.
- The subjects must have been between the ages of 20-30, but were a victim of PAS when they were a child and/or adolescent. The age is limited between 20-30 because those over the age of 30 will possibly have less accurate memories of their childhood and the alienation; therefore their effects would likely have less value for this research.

There were eleven participants in total for this research: four men and seven women. It is expected that one reason for this gender discrepancy falls back to the gender stereotypes where women are more likely to open up and discuss their problems than men. All but one of the participants resided in Montreal or areas close to Montreal. The exception was a resident of Toronto.

The leading problem with this research was capturing subjects to interview. Although the purpose of this research was purely exploratory, it was important to solicit participants by random measures. Therefore, ads were posted in the two English Universities in Montreal: Concordia University and McGill University. At Concordia University, ads were posted in the Sociology labs and in The Thursday Report, a University paper. At McGill University, numerous ads were posted on the classifieds

page on their web site. (Please see Appendix A for a sample of the ad). In addition, a few presentations in Sociology classes that focused on the family were conducted. Posters were given to the professors afterwards for students who expressed interest in the study. Although, only one participant was selected by this method, the researcher had numerous phone calls and emails from students who expressed interest in participating in the study; after conversing via email to ensure they met the criteria and to arrange a meeting for the interview, the 'interested' participants became unresponsive, and the researcher lost them as potential participants. Many of the respondents who expressed interest asked if there was compensation for the interview. Due to the fact that there was no compensation, this could be one of the reasons why they no longer wanted to participate. It was explained to them that there was no monetary value for participating, but the importance and need for their participation and how vital their input would be was stressed. However, that being said, maybe it was best that they no longer agreed to the interview for they could have been phony candidates who were deliberately trying to fit the description for the compensation. Those students who left messages on the researchers' answering machine expressing interest for the research also failed as a method, because the researcher was never able to reach them. Various messages were left on their answering machines, but to no avail. The remaining participants were recruited through the snowball effect and through word of mouth (e.g. friends of friends). The arrangements for the interview were made over the phone and by email.

A consent form was signed by all of the participants prior to the interview. In the cases where the interview was conducted face to face, the consent form was signed before the interview was conducted. In the cases where the interview was conducted via

the telephone, the consent form was sent by fax or was sent by mail (please see Appendix B for a sample of the form). One reason why interviews were conducted via the phone was that the participants were relatively busy and did not really have time for a face to face interview; another reason was the difficulty of capturing participants, therefore, the researcher felt pressured into doing the interview as quickly as possible, because of the risk of losing them as participants.

The *sampling frame* was conducted through a broad-based sample:

- Ads were posted in the Concordia University newspaper: The Thursday Report.

The Thursday Report was the only newspaper that had no charge for posting ads.

The other papers at Concordia University and McGill University charged a minimum of \$100;

- Ads were posted around Concordia and McGill, in the Departments of Sociology;

- Ads were posted on the McGill's Classified web site;

*These ads solicited victims of divorce to participate in a study. They included an email address and phone number where the researcher could be contacted. The ads did not include a definition of PAS because of the general lack of knowledge of PAS;

- Professors at Concordia and McGill were asked to distribute the research ads to their students. (The researcher's home university (i.e. Concordia) was less receptive than McGill University). Emails were sent out asking for help in distributing my call for participants, however, only one professor at Concordia

responded and had agreed to help the researcher. After several emails, the other professors at Concordia ignored the researcher.

- A brief presentation in some of the Sociology classes was conducted. These students were given the email address and phone number where the researcher could be contacted; (Targeted classes were associated with the study of the family).

- The snowball sampling effect was also applied. This sampling technique is a form of accidental sampling. It is accidental in the sense that you ask your initial contacts to find others to provide information needed to locate others whom they know were also affected by PAS. This allows the researcher to rely on the chains of communication; (friend of a friend, and so on). This form of sampling is performed when members of the population are difficult to locate, as they are in my case because it is extremely hard to find participants on such a sensitive topic.

DATA-COLLECTION METHODS

The data were collected through semi-structured, open-ended telephone or face to face interviews. Some of the interviews were tape-recorded. The interviews that were conducted over the phone were not tape-recorded, for the researcher did not have the devices. The researcher did rent the equipment to record conversations over the phone from the Instructional and Information Technology Services (IITS) Department at Concordia University, but the timing was never appropriate. Times when an interview was arranged and the researcher had the device to record, the participant was not home. When the interviewee called to apologize and was ready to be interviewed, the researcher

was not prepared with the device, but the interview was conducted anyhow, just in case the participant was not able to be reached again.

The interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 1 ½ hours, depending on the interviewee, and his/her responsiveness. Some were very open with their stories, but some were very shy and therefore less responsive. The researcher ensured that the environment where the interview took place was safe. This way the researcher was able to develop a more holistic understanding of the alienation.

Prior to conducting these interviews, a pre-test of the questionnaire was conducted on 4 subjects in the summer of 2002. The questionnaire was examined, analyzed, and was edited for an improved questionnaire guide. The interview questionnaire was broken down into six segments, all that was related to the Parental Alienation Syndrome (see Appendix C). The question ordering was strategic. The first section consisted of general questions about their parents' divorce. It was designed to ensure that the interviewee met the sampling procedure, and to get a brief idea as to where the interview was heading. Following were questions that focused on their parents' relationship with each other following the divorce. This was used to judge if parental alienation had actually occurred, and the severity. Questions relating to the interviewee's relationship patterns with friends, boy/girlfriends, and parents followed. Succeeding were questions about the subjects' past and present behavioral patterns. These results were scrutinized to determine if PAS had affected the participants' behavior. Questions asking about the present relationship with their parents were asked, along with their views on joint custody. Demographic questions were asked at the end of the interview.

These questions were designed to determine if a child who was a victim of the Parental Alienation Syndrome was affected so much that the effects were felt through adulthood. It was hoped that the results would raise interest and increase the public's awareness of the PAS and its destructive effects and, at the same time, develop processes to decrease or eliminate the occurrence of PAS.

INTERVIEW APPROACH

Each participant was interviewed separately, and the data was collected according to the participant's preference. Although the researcher preferred conducting the interview face to face, there were times when the participant had a very busy schedule, and therefore, preferred a telephone interview. There was one participant who wanted complete anonymity, therefore, the only option was to conduct a telephone interview. Before each interview, the participants were informed of several ethical concerns. They were guaranteed that all their responses would remain strictly confidential and used only for the purposes of this research. They were also assured that the researcher would preserve their anonymity by changing their names in the thesis. The researcher reminded the participants that the interview was strictly voluntary, and that because of the sensitivity of the topic, they had the right to withdraw from the interview at any time. In addition, they were informed that if they felt uncomfortable with answering any of the questions, they had the right not to answer them. For those respondents who were tape-recorded, they were informed and agreed to such recording.

Regardless of the method for data collection, the researcher took concentrated notes during the course of the interview. These notes were an addition to the recording of the face to face interviews. The notes were also used to draw down facial expressions,

tones, and silences. All the interviews were conducted in the months of September 2003 through November 2003. Rapport was established with the initial contact with the participant when the researcher was describing the research and making the meeting arrangements, and again prior to the beginning of the actual interview. The tape recorded data were transcribed.

The main advantage in conducting face-to-face interviews for this research was the in-depth information that was obtained because of the direct interaction. This is important because the researcher was able to extract more complete responses, therefore collecting richer data. By interacting face to face, the researcher was able to probe for clarification and was able to let the interviewees have control for the majority of the interview. The interviews were conducted in comfortable and secure atmospheres, chosen by the participant.

METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS

Although obtaining data from random resources was the researcher's intention, it was not attained. With the help from the research ads in the Thursday Report, the ads posted on McGill's web site under the classified section, and the presentations that the researcher conducted in several classes, the researcher was successful in attracting many subjects. The researcher engaged in several email conversations with these interested participants to ensure that they fit the criteria. When this criterion was established and the researcher tried to arrange a time to conduct the interview, there were no replies back from the potential respondents. The email exchanges were brought to a halt. There are probably several reasons for this incidence. The interest was no longer there, they wanted compensation, or their lives became really busy due to school and midterms.

Also the sensitivity of the topic may have made the subjects anxious, leading them to change their minds. Therefore, the researcher had to rely on the snowball effect and through the chains of relations and communications through friends and so on.

The data that were collected over the phone lost the face to face, personalized contact, so the researcher was unable to observe the facial expressions, and interpret the different tones used by the respondent, and the silences.

Nonetheless, due to the fact that this study is based upon exploratory research, these findings can be used to generate ideas for other scholars to research and hypothesize.

CHAPTER 4

NARRATIVES AND ANALYSIS

The findings of this research are presented in this chapter, and the next one.

However, this chapter comprises of ten narrative stories about the participants interviewed for this study, and they are intended to prepare the reader for the next chapter. (Although my sample consisted of eleven participants, one participant spoke on behalf of her husband, and shared his experience with parental alienation. Although the researcher tried to convince the victim to participate in the study, the subject was too emotional and the experience was perceived to be too painful. The researcher is aware of the problems involved with this interview as it may be biased and reflecting the views of the wife and not of the actual victim. However, the researcher did not want to dismiss the story and his experiences. George's story is Appendix D).

The goal and purpose of this narrative story strategy is to provide the reader with an overview of the participants, and give them an outline of the participants' victimization. These stories allow the participants to speak while sharing their experiences. After each narrative story, an analysis will be conducted to reflect upon the issues related to PAS. Additionally, the participants will be situated accordingly to Gardner's three types of PAS (Table 1).

The participants' stories are real, and hopefully by sharing them, they will increase awareness of the Parental Alienation Syndrome and its destructive effects.

Jason:

Jason was twelve when his parents divorced. After the divorce, Jason and his younger brother lived with his father, for his mother at that time was unable to look after her children. While Jason was living with his dad, his father never manipulated Jason to hate his mother. Jason saw his mother every second weekend, and his father encouraged Jason to call his mother. However, he soon realized that Jason and his brother were being used as little spies to report back on how the mother was doing.

After about 1 ½ to 2 years, Jason's parents had joint custody. He would go back and forth from one parent's house to another, every month. When Jason was with his mother, his mother would talk badly of the father. While continually speaking badly of the father, she would say "he was a cheap bastard", and that he "never put his children first". Eventually, Jason began to see his father in a different light. When Jason was 16, his father who was unable to recuperate after the separation, lost his right to the joint custody agreements. His father became very depressed, and consequently, he gambled and drank away all of his money. As a result, he was not able to pay for the rent, the bills, and groceries, and hence the reason why Jason and his brother moved in with their mother permanently.

Jason began not seeing his father and really wanted nothing to do with him. Instead of trying to help his father during his difficult time, Jason also turned his back away from his dad because he started believing and listening to his mother.

At the time of adolescence, Jason experienced both externalizing and internalizing problems. He experimented with drugs, and had become dependent on drugs and alcohol. He felt alone, so he resorted to his dependencies to help make him feel better. In school, he got many detentions, and was confrontational. He engaged in sexual activities at an early age. He stated that he was very insecure, he was afraid of death, and he hated being alone.

Today at the age of 23, he still hates to be alone, and he is still living with his mother. Even though one day he would like to get married, he still is skeptical of matrimony.

Analysis:

Although there was always denigration by the mother of the father, it was not until Jason lived with his mother permanently when the denigration became influential. Throughout the joint custody period, Jason never took sides with respect to the battles between his parents.

While living with his mother permanently, Jason began to denigrate his father, and this denigration intensified with time. Jason in fact did regurgitate what was being said by his mother, and he contributed to the denigration. He would say that his father “is a cheap bastard”. Jason refused to see his father, and this decision was declared his own. He reported having no guilty feelings about turning his back on his dad.

This refusal will categorize Jason under the severe type of PAS.

Mandy

Mandy's parents divorced when she was only two years old. Her parents did go to court for custody matters, but Mandy's mom was granted sole custody. The agreements like many others, were that Mandy's father had the right to see his daughter every second weekend. Mandy said she recalls hating going to see her father. She would cry, yell, and held temper tantrums. She didn't like to be away from her mother. Her dad paid child support and he still does today in addition to paying her university tuition. However, when Mandy was 16, she willingly saw her father more; as she popped into see him on her own terms. She didn't like the fact that there were 'rules' for when she can and cannot see her father. Although not always, there was always a reason why she went to visit her father; she needed help or she wanted money.

Mandy stated in the interview that her mother never spoke negatively about her ex-husband, but afterwards, Mandy stated that according to her mother, the reason for the divorce was due to a lack of communication between the couple, and that the father was very grumpy; that she could not stand to be with someone like that; he never wanted to do anything; and he never wanted to do anything as a family. Mandy agreed that her father is grumpy and commented that she wouldn't be able to handle being with someone like that either, and doesn't blame her mother for ended her marriage

She said her relationship with the mother is great, and that the mother spoiled her, and gave her everything and anything she wanted. On the other hand, the relationship with her dad was described as 'pessimistic'. She hated being with him when she was younger, and today, Mandy stated that she only calls her father really when she needs help from him, in terms of computer-related issues or if she needs money.

As an adolescent, Mandy broke curfews, but she didn't experience many external-related problems. She never got detentions, she drank at parties, but it never was abused. She had no desire to try marijuana or other drugs. She did have problems trusting others, and currently has relationship issues. When she was in a relationship, there was always conflict, and she stated that it was usually her who used to start the arguments. She feels alone, and speaks to a counselor. She is single and has issues with men.

Mandy reported her mom as being her hero.

Analysis:

Mandy hated visiting her father when she was a child, even though her father did nothing to cause such fear or resentment. In fact, unlike many fathers, Mandy's father was very supportive of her. He gave money for child support, paid her tuition for

University, and he always seemed to be there whenever Mandy was in need. Mandy still saw her father, even though at times she didn't want to.

Mandy denigrated her father, especially when she was in the presence of her mother. Her mother spoiled and gave Mandy everything she wanted, and consequentially, created a dichotomy. Even though her father paid child support, to help pay for her clothing, food, rent, and her education, Mandy reported being spoiled by her mother; undermining the reality that the money being used to spoil Mandy was probably coming from her father. Mandy reported that her mother is her hero and she would always be there for her. This shows Mandy's reflexive support towards the alienating parent. Mandy also regurgitated what was said by her mother: how else would a two year old remember that her father was non-communicative and was grumpy? Although Mandy reported that her mother didn't speak negatively of her father, she still self-identified herself as a victim of PAS. Perhaps her denial is reflective on her loyalty to her mother. In addition, reporting that you don't want to visit your father because he is grumpy is a weak rationalization.

Mandy is a classic example of the moderate type of Gardners' typology of PAS.

Anne:

Anne was 14 years old when her parents divorced. She lived with her mother after the divorce and saw her father every second week-end. Her father did provide child support, but according to her mother, it was as a struggle to obtain the money because the father held it off for a long time. In addition, Anne was told that the money the father was providing at that time was in fact the minimum, and the father still had the nerve to complain about it. As a result, Anne began believing her mother, and referred to her father as being really cheap. Additionally, she still feels this way today.

Infidelity on the father's part was one of the reasons for the divorce, and Anne was aware of this all along because she was old enough to understand, and she knew because her mother constantly reminded her. Anne's mother continually spoke badly of Anne's father. She would comment that he "was not a good father", "he didn't want to financially support his children", and "he is a cheat". Even today, these expressions are still filtering out of Anne's mother's mouth. In fact, after all these years, the mother is still coping with the divorce and what the father did to her. Anne's mother use to encourage her not to speak to her father, and sometimes, Anne listened. She said there were times when she went months without speaking to him or seeing him. She would reach the point where the thought of her father made her sick to her stomach.

During Anne's adolescent years she was taught by her mother not to trust men, because "men will only cheat on you, and leave you stranded". Today, Anne still has difficulties trusting men, because what her mother had said to her is cemented in her mind.

In high school, Anne desperately craved attention, and consequently was very mischievous. She would pull down her pants and expose herself to teachers, talk out of turn, disrespect her teachers, set the soccer field on fire, etc. She was constantly getting detentions. However, because Anne's mother worked the night shift, Anne had to baby-sit her brother after school, and could not stay for her detentions. Consequently, Anne got suspended from school. In fact, due to her consecutive suspensions, she had to go to a detention-like school for one year. After that one year, she went back to her regular school.

Even though she had to baby-sit her brother after school, all her friends came over, and they would drink and use marijuana all the time. From the age range of 14-16, Anne drank alcohol every second day, and smoked marijuana 2-3 times a week. She would even do it alone to help her relax. It became a dependency for her. She lost her virginity at the age of 14, she has had a few relationships, but now she has been married for the last 1 ½ years and she and her husband have a son who is 3 years old. However, they are experiencing marital problems, and now are engaging in an open-relationship agreement.

Today, Anne still doesn't really trust anyone. She said that she is too independent to ask others for advice and she hardly shares her feelings with anyone. She does blame her mother for her lack of trust in others. She still seeks attention, and is selfish.

As for her dad and their relationship, Anne reveals they speak because he is her father, and because they are related.

Analysis:

With repeated manipulation and brainwashing, there was no surprise that Anne began to denigrate her father. To elaborate, her mother told Anne that her father had given her a sexually transmitted disease that could cause infertility. It is obvious that Anne's mom was very upset after the divorce, and was seeking revenge.

Although it was encouraged by Anne's mother not to visit her father, Anne eventually independently refused to see her father, and experienced no guilty feelings. Although Anne is not relatively close to her father and they have their differences, she understands that her mother was trying to put her children against her ex-husband deliberately. She says that not everyone is perfect, and even though her father has his faults, her mother should have respected the fact that he was her father, and shouldn't have said and did the things she did.

This classic pathology that Anne experiences, places her within the moderate to severe type of PAS.

Tammy:

Tammy was a victim at an early age of the Parental Alienation Syndrome as she was exposed and introduced to PAS at the age of 3 1/2. Her mom told her that she was very angry when her father left, and afterwards. Apparently Tammy used to draw in black.

The reason for the divorce was adultery on the father's part. The father had the right to see his children every second-week-end and the father did provide child support. Tammy's mother never restricted or denied visitations by the father, but if there was a time when the father wanted to see his children outside the scheduled visits, Tammy's mother refused. She remembers once when her family was in from Norway and everyone was going to a baseball game. All her cousins were there, her aunts and uncles, but Tammy's mom would not let her go because it was not the scheduled week-end for the visitations. With respect to telephone calls, Tammy's dad did call, but the mother did all the communicating. She would tell the father how the kids were doing and what was new in their lives. He hardly ever spoke to them directly. Everything had to be controlled by the mother.

In terms of child support, the money was labeled as 'guilt money', and that was how the child support money was referred to. To add insult to injury, this strategy was successful because Tammy believed that her father was only giving that money because of guilt, and she also referred to this child support as guilt money.

Tammy explained that because she was living with her mom and was always around her, she did believe what the mother was saying about her father. She agreed that her father was unreliable, and immature as a father. Tammy felt that she had to be fitted in to his schedule; but that was because her mother use to say that.

At the age of 15, Tammy was forced to get a part time job, for her mother said she was too expensive to provide for and it was about time she started making her own money. The weekly allowance that came from the father's child support was reduced (although the "guilt" money that was coming from the father did not). University came three years later, and Tammy had to take on two jobs and sometimes three to pay for her education. Then, Tammy's eyes were opened to her mother's schemes. As her father continued paying \$500 per month for her and her brother, and Tammy was paying for her own expenses, she started questioning and demanding how the money her father was openhandedly giving was going, and more importantly, how it was benefiting the children. This was a great concern for Tammy, especially in the time of new changes. A new house, then came a hot tub, then came air conditioners, and then came new furniture including a 51-inch screen TV. Tammy was well aware of the fact that the mother kept the money for herself and used it on herself, instead of the children. When Tammy built up the courage to question her mother about the money, Tammy was told the money that was given to her mother by her father belonged to her mother. She deserved it, she raised two children by herself and that money belonged to her and no one else.

As an adolescent, Tammy never experienced any internalizing or externalizing problems. She always maintained average grades, and it was very easy for her to formulate and maintain friendships.

It took Tammy awhile to confront her dad about her mother's schemes because she was in the web of her mother's control and was manipulated to feel sorry for her. It was only when she left her mother's household and had her own control when the discussions with her father commenced. Tammy increasingly came to realize that her mother had deliberately tried, and succeeded, in alienating her from her father, had misrepresented the legal and financial reality, and had done all this out of greed.

As a result of her mother's manipulation, Tammy is experiencing another sort of syndrome, the backfire syndrome against her mom. As the relationship with her father has improved, with a bond stronger than ever between the two, the relationship with her mother has deteriorated. Her father never spoke badly of the mother, until recently. When he found out all the manipulative ways of the mother, as told to him from Tammy.

Today, she has commitment and trust issues because her mother has successfully taught Tammy not to trust men. She has intimacy issues, and is very insecure at the moment. She is single, and has only had one boyfriend. Tammy is aware and understands these issues.

Analysis:

Tammy believed her father was a bad father and that he was only giving child support because he felt guilty for leaving the family unit; Tammy borrowed her mother's expression and referred to the child support as "guilt money". Tammy as well always defended her mother; she felt sorry for her because she was left by herself with two young children to raise herself. In addition, Tammy was reminded by her mother that her father was too busy for her, and that visitations had to be revolved around his very busy schedule. Eventually Tammy refused to see her father for these reasons alone. She never felt guilty because she believed he deserved it. When Tammy became independent of her mother, she realized the PAS on her own, and consequently, a backlash effect had occurred against her mother.

Tammy has experienced the symptoms related to the moderate classifications of PAS.

Penelope:

Penelope was only 7 when her parents divorced, and she had to grow up and mature really fast as there was no responsible parent taking care of her. As her mother faced alcoholism and her father drug addiction, Penelope and her older brother were left fending for themselves. Her mother moved to British Columbia to pursue her career in exotic dancing, and left her two children with an alcoholic and drug addicted man: their father.

After Penelope's mother moved to British Columbia, Penelope and her father moved around a lot. This movement was extremely difficult for Penelope as she was making and leaving friends all the time, changing schools, and even changing cities. Penelope never had the opportunity for stability.

Meanwhile, Penelope unconsciously became an active player in one of her father's games: to manipulate his children to hate their mother and only love him. He persuaded Penelope into thinking that her mother did not love or care for her. With constant brainwashing, Penelope had only resentment towards her mother.

At fifteen years old, Penelope who was obviously still a minor, moved out of her father's home, rented an apartment and lived with her twenty-three year old boyfriend. Penelope at this time became very popular as she finally experienced a sense of stability (two years in the same high school). With a pretty face, a nice figure, living on her own, having no rules or restrictions, her new found popularity swept away all the pain, hurt, and rejection she felt from her mother. This attention, however, was exclusively from boys. Penelope still wasn't able to establish female relationships.

Penelope eventually followed her mother's footsteps and became an exotic dancer herself. Dancing made her feel powerful, worthy of something; it gave her confidence and self-esteem.

At the age of 20, Penelope had a daughter of her own, although she admits that she was too young to have a daughter and it probably was not the best decision for her to have it because she was not mentally prepared to be a mom. Penelope still worked as an exotic dancer until the break-up between her and her then boyfriend. Penelope was taken to court and lost custody of her daughter because of her occupation. However, she was entitled to see her child every second week-end.

The loss of the child custody case changed Penelope's life. When Melissa visited every second weekend, she noticed that Melissa was beginning to act differently around her and had become very hostile towards her. In addition, Melissa would say things that were not proper in a child's vocabulary. It was then when Penelope realized that her ex-boyfriend was alienating her daughter against her. This situation instantaneously gave Penelope's flashbacks of her childhood when she was saying bad things about her mother. Immediately Penelope called her mother.

Penelope is now twenty-four years old, and has matured a lot. She confronted her father about his alienation and explained to him how much he hurt her and how much it affected her life, but he excused his behavior. He stated that Penelope's mother hurt him by leaving because she was all he had, so he tried to take away all she had. Although she was upset for what her father did, she forgave him and still has a healthy relationship with him today.

The relationship with her mother was taken one step at a time as they started to get to know each other and catch-up, but today, they have a vibrant and happy relationship.

Analysis:

Penelope began to denigrate her mother because she was hurt. She was hurt because her mother left on Christmas Eve, and never tried to contact her again. Penelope believed that her mother did not love her and her father constantly re-confirmed her beliefs. Consequently, Penelope began hating her mother.

Penelope wished to have no contact with her mother, and only expressed positive feelings towards her father. There was that automatic love for her dad, as she felt sorry for him because his wife had left him broken-hearted.

Penelopes' experience fits the description of the severe cases of PAS.

Chad:

When Chad was born in 1978, his parents moved to Vancouver to find new and enhanced careers. However, at the age of seven, Chad was relocated back to his native city (Montreal) because of a separation between his parents, and was told the reason why the move to Montreal occurred was because his father was mean and an alcoholic.

Chad has little recollection of this occurrence. He does not entirely remember the separation or the events leading up to it, and he barely remembered the move to Montreal. In fact, Chad has little memory of his childhood altogether.

After a lengthy and intricate divorce, Chad's mother instantaneously remarried. Not only did Chad's mother return to Montreal because it was her hometown, she came back because a boyfriend was also waiting for her there. Chad respected his mom's boyfriend, but he was just another person to Chad; no one really special.

Chad was nine (two years after the move from Vancouver to Montreal) the next time he saw his father. Sadly enough, it was also his last.

As Chad became older, the questions about his father heightened, especially during his adolescence/maturing era, when he wanted a father to lean on and ask advice to. He never thought of his step-dad as an authority figure, and would never go to him for help or advice.

Chad's mom felt sorry for Chad's father. When he was a child, he was a victim of child abuse and had an abusive and alcoholic father. In addition, his father's father was also a victim of an abusive, alcoholic father. The disease was transmitted down through the generations, and even though Chad's father was never physically abusive, he was mentally and emotionally, and alcoholism was all he knew. However, that aside, Chad's mother knew that was not the kind of life she wanted for her, or for her children.

When Chad thinks of his father, he solely makes reference to his alcoholism, which is very ironic, since Chad does not remember his father being an alcoholic. This supports the hypothesis that Chad has been persuaded by his mother's manipulations and control. He said he does not blame his mother for what she did, but he sometimes wishes that she would have let him have the right to know his father.

Analysis:

Chad claims that he has no memories of his dad, he does not remember what he looks like, and he doesn't remember him as a dad at all. However, what Chad does remember is that his father was an alcoholic, and that his mother needed a clean break.

Chad has not seen his father in fifteen years, and states he has no desire to either. In fact, a few years ago he went B.C with some friends, and the thought of his father never crossed his mind.

Chad never really denigrated his father per se, but he did say that he was an alcoholic, and that he supported his mother's rationale for leaving. He shows no resentment towards his mother for deliberately taking him away from his father, and for not encouraging him to maintain a relationship with his father. This reflexive support for the mother, and he never had imagined that the mother had vested issues. Instead, Chad was encouraged to refer to his mother's boyfriend as the male authority figure.

Chad believes that his mother had good motives for leaving his father, and he doesn't judge her for it, but respects it. In addition, he seems to be oblivious to the fact that his mother left his father for another man, and this may have been the reason for the divorce.

Chad is a victim of severe alienation. Not only does he not realize the alienation, but he denies it.

Sheldon:

Sheldon was 12 years old when his parents divorced, and the divorce came as a shock. When he was told about the divorce, he thought he was getting in trouble for his report card. Initially, he lived with his mom after the divorce. When he was living with her, he experienced terrible stomach pains. He had severe diarrhea, was constantly nauseated and always in excruciating pain. Every time he saw his father, the pains magically disappeared. For these reasons, along with the recommendation from his pediatrician, Sheldon went to live with his dad. He was very spoiled by his father. His dad gave him everything and had no rules for him. He loved living there.

Before the divorce, his dad was not around. He worked a lot, and he was viewed as the 'authority figure'. Whenever he or his siblings got in trouble, it was the father who scolded them. In fact, Sheldon said that the only time his dad really spoke, was to punish and scold him and/or his siblings. After the divorce, his dad became super-cool, and was very understanding. He let them live, to make mistakes, and to learn from them.

While he was living with his dad, he found out more information about his mom, and realized why the parents divorced. She was with another man, a man who was a friend of the family. From that point onward, Sheldon blamed his mother for everything. With respect to telephone conversations with his mother, he never really called, and his dad never told him to call, but also didn't tell him not to. With respect to family emergencies, the dad never called the mother. The mother only found out afterwards. The father wanted to be the hero, and the hero is how he was perceived. He could never do wrong in the eyes of Sheldon. In fact, when Sheldon argued with his mother, it was because he was defending his dad to what the mother was saying. Visitations were interfered with respect to vacations. At times when the children were to see their mother, the father would book a trip for them in Florida. Obviously, the kids preferred to go to Disney World and Florida than spend time with their mother who they do not get along with. Both parents spoke badly of each other, but the father was always defended by Sheldon. The father would not really denigrate the mother, but Sheldon commented that his father had a gift with words. His father was very careful with his words, and used 'different' a lot; meaning that the mother was 'different'.

During high school, Sheldon had a few failing classes, and had a few detentions for not respecting the school uniform (his shirt was not tucked into his pants, or he wore hats, etc.). He drank and smoked marijuana in high school. He still drinks on the week-ends now, and uses marijuana. He has no respect for women and he does not trust them. All the girlfriends that he has had, there was a desire to be 'better' than them. To clarify, the women whom he dates are in the service industry. He has met the girlfriends at restaurants, in school, and in stores. This is what his friends had discovered about him. From speaking to Sheldon's sibling, it was brought to my attention that Sheldon presently has psychological problems, as he has been diagnosed with severe depression.

In addition, although Sheldon's mother did commit adultery when she was married to Sheldon's father, the father also committed adultery, and did so before his wife. Sheldon refuses to believe such allegations against his father.

Analysis:

There was a time when Sheldon didn't speak to his mother, and he wanted nothing to do with her. He blamed her for everything. She was the reason why the family broke up, and his attitude was that she was going to pay for it.

He spoke badly of her at all times, and never felt guilty for doing it because she deserved it. This behaviour was encouraged by his father. In fact, Sheldon's father was rich, and he was spoiled excessively, especially if he denigrated the mother.

Sheldon blamed his mother for the family breakdown because he was told by his father that she was unfaithful during their marriage. Sheldon after many years has recently been informed that it was his father who initiated the infidelity. His father however, is still his hero.

Sheldon experienced a severe level of PAS as a child and early adolescent.

Kathy:

Kathy was 16 at the time when her parents divorced. She was not utterly surprised that this had happened, nor was she sad. Her parents were always fighting, and deep down inside, she had always wanted her parents to divorce, because she could not take the yelling all the time. The only sad element for Kathy about the divorce of her parents was the fact that she had to move from the house that her parents owned because her parents put the house up for sale. She loved that house.

Immediately after the break-up of her parents, she went to live with her mom, and that decision was solely Kathy's. Her siblings were older than Kathy, so her sister was already on her own, and her brother, because of the military, was situated in Germany. Soon thereafter, due to the divorce and other things, Kathy was doing poorly in school, and her grades had dropped drastically. Therefore, after much consideration, she moved to Germany to live with her brother. This event occurred only three months of living with her mother; and three months after the initial separation of her parents. She lived in Germany for two years, and came back to Montreal when she was 18.

While she was in Germany, she maintained contact with both her parents; however, every time she spoke to them, it was the constant bad-mouthing of the other parent. When she spoke to her dad, he would talk badly of her mother, and vice versa. This continued the two years she was living in Germany. Because she was living far away from them, she never really let the divorce bother her, or what they were saying about each other bother her.

Upon return to Montreal, she went to live with her mother. While she was living with her mother, there were many arguments between the two of them. Her mother was having difficulties in coping with the divorce, and would blame her father for everything. She would say ridiculous things to Kathy, and eventually, Kathy began to believe what was being said. Consequently, Kathy did not really talk to her father.... Until one day, the day her father invited Kathy to go on vacation with him in Europe. She agreed, and it was not long until she discovered that her father was not as bad as her mother claimed him to be. She came to the conclusion that it was actually her mother who made him miserable, mean and bitter. She realized how much she missed her dad, and how much pleasure he brought into her life. As a matter of fact, when Kathy's mother moved to Ontario because she met someone new, Kathy moved in with her dad. However, due to 'differences', Kathy moved out of her father's place, because she could not stand being treated as a child. At the age of 18, she was still given curfews and she didn't like to be treated as a child. Therefore, she moved out on her own.

Today, her parents still speak badly of each other, but her mother, she claims is ridiculous and has become irrational about it. Her sister had recently got married, and the mother caused a huge commotion. She refused to sit at the same table as her ex-husband, and her children had to sit at the table where she was sitting. The mother's behavior made the wedding arrangements really difficult for the bride. In addition, at the wedding, the

mother would constantly make Kathy do things to avoid her speaking to her father, and speaking to his side of the family.

Kathy's adolescent years were somewhat wild. When Kathy was 14, she looked old for her age, and therefore discovered the bars at an early age, and reported drinking excessively frequently. She described herself as having attitude when she was an adolescent. She never abided by her curfews, and would constantly sneak out of her bedroom window. Kathy lost her virginity at the age of 14, and as far as boyfriends go, she never was able to trust them. She has dated various men, but after 2 years, the relationship ended.

Today, Kathy still has insecurity issues with men, and will always lack trust when it comes to relationships. Her previous job was bartending, and she was in that service industry for 6 years. She described that being a bartender meant that you had to drink with your customers, therefore she was drunk constantly. Today, she drinks on weekends.

Analysis

Kathy was sixteen when her parents divorced, so she was mature enough to understand the divorce. Nevertheless, upon Kathy's return from Germany, she did become a victim of PAS. Luckily, she had the opportunity to reconcile with her father.

Today her mother still continues to denigrate her father, Kathy has managed to ignore it and not pay it much attention.

Only a few of the symptoms of Gardner's characteristics of PAS were present in Kathy's case, therefore, the alienation she experienced was mild.

Laurie:

Laurie was eight when her parents divorced. Apparently her father used to beat her mom, therefore she was trying to get protective support from the Canadian Government. When that failed, Laurie moved to the States. She went 16 years without seeing or speaking to her father. He never gave her support, 'even with all the millions he has'. He never gave Christmas gifts, or birthday gifts.

Laurie's mom constantly spoke negatively about the dad, to the point where any curiosity that Laurie had about her father, she had to keep to herself, for her mom would be upset and mad at Laurie if she knew that she was thinking of her dad.

The mother always said that her father was very unhappy, was very miserable, and not a pleasant person. She was told that her father was a cheater, and not a good father. After building up enough bravery, Laurie told her mother she was going to see her father. Her mother said she understood, and did not interfere.

Last April, Laurie saw her father for the first time in 16 years, and Laurie commented that she agreed. He is very unhappy. (Laurie's dad has liver cancer and is dying, so do you blame him for being unhappy)? But she did say that he was not as bad as her mother put him out to be. When she saw her father, she felt very uncomfortable, and she says that she can not be herself around him. She said she has a lot of questions to ask him, but could never come around to ask him. She believes it is because God who gave her the strength to forgive him.

Her half brother (same mother, different father) encouraged her to speak to her father, because of his sickness. The half brother stayed in touch with his step-dad after his mom moved to the States.

During high school, Laurie went through a life altering experience. She found God! She use to drink, and do drugs, but she found God, and her life has changed ever since. She said she is very happy, and out of everything that she has been through, she is an example that the Lord exists. She has now married someone who she met in her 'community'. Since then, she claims to have no problems in her life.

As for her father, she is sad that this illness has struck him, but she isn't sad. To elaborate, she said that she would be sad if his situation happened to anyone. As a daughter, when he dies, she will not be losing a father. She considers her mom's husband her dad.

She is coming down for Christmas to spend it with her biological father. Laurie lives in Toronto.

Analysis:

Laurie's father is dying of cancer, and only after sixteen years of no contact between Laurie and her father, they finally reconciled.

Laurie was told that her father was very abusive, was an alcoholic, and was basically a terrible person. Laurie was encouraged not to speak to him, and she did exactly that. In fact, Laurie despised her father for everything that he did to her and her mother, even though she doesn't remember the abuse.

Although she seemed to be adamant about not having a relationship with her father, Laurie did manage to maintain a relationship with the highest Father of all. It seems that she replaced her father with God at the time of need.

Oddly enough, it was her stepbrother who has eventually convinced Laurie to see her father, because her stepbrother (same mother) managed to stay in touch with Laurie's father throughout these years. Therefore, I can't help but to ponder, isn't it weird that they maintained a relationship, when he supposedly was very abusive to his mother? It leads one to wonder, if this abusive relationship was real, would the son continue a long lasting relationship with him?

Laurie claims that she will not miss her father when he dies, nor will she be sad.

Laurie has experienced a case of severe alienation throughout these years.

Amanda

Amanda was four when her parents separated, they were never married. After the separation, Amanda's mother was granted sole custody of her. She claims that her father wanted custody as well. That day in court, was the last time she saw her dad. Amanda was four. Although Amanda was four when her parents separated, and claims that she does not remember anything about her father. She accuses her father of being violent with her mother. When she was asked why her mother left her father, she responded that her father used to beat her mother, and her mother wanted to protect Amanda, so she left to get Amanda out of that environment. According to Amanda, the mother was very strong to leave, and a good mother because she put her daughter first.

When Amanda was asked if her parents speak badly of each other, she responded stating that they hate each other, and her mom speaks badly of her father constantly. Her mother consoled Amanda that they are better off without her father, since he was never there to begin with. Her mother said he was not a good father, and questioned if he even loved Amanda at all. He never gave money, so that was enough proof for Amanda. All the anger that Amanda has built up against her father was learned by her teacher, her mother. On the other hand, the relationship between Amanda and her mother is perfect. They are very close and her mom is her best friend. Her mom is her hero.

Growing up was difficult for Amanda. She hated school, she constantly got detentions, she was frequently absent from school, and she did anything to be accepted by the popular kids. She skipped school a lot, and never abided by her curfew times. At the age of 16, Amanda's mom had lost all control over her. Everyday, after school, she would do drugs. In fact, Amanda revealed that she smoked marijuana every single day, even though she hated the taste, and how the buzz made her feel. She just did it to fit in. She also tried cocaine, and this also was an attempt to fit in and feel cool. She drank with her friends at parties and would get drunk. She also lost her virginity at an early age (15), and again that was to fit in. Everyone else was doing it, so she felt the pressure to do it as well.

In high school, Amanda got into many arguments with her friends. She said looking back, she was to blame. She was jealous. Many of the fights were about boys. At the same time, she was shy. She was not outspoken, and hardly defended herself. She said she listened more and spoke less.

She revealed that she had a hard time trusting others, and that her friends didn't really know who she was. In fact, this trend is currently continuing, as she has problems trusting others. She has been with the same boyfriend for 2 ½ years now, and this is her first relationship that has lasted longer than 6 months. They have broken up a few times, and he has been with other girls, but she has only been with him. He breaks up with her to sleep with other girls, so that he doesn't cheat on her. But they get back together soon after.

Today, Amanda's relationship with her mom is perfect, and they understand each other very well. She lives with her mother. She is still shy, still is not outspoken, and still has a low self-perception.

Analysis:

Amanda never questioned anything that was said to her by her mother about her father, and believed everything. Consequentially, she has not seen her father in eighteen years, but she commented that her two parents speak badly of each other. How would she know if her father spoke badly of her mother if she hasn't seen or spoken to him in eighteen years?

Amanda has also commented that she would never want to see her father, but mentioned she had enough of him taking advantage of her and her mom, so she is taking him to court for child support.

All eight of Gardner's manifestations are present in this case, and are present to a significant degree. Amanda speaks negatively about her father, there is an obvious dichotomy of the parents as Amanda's mother is her best friend, and there is reflexive support of her mother. Amanda has no desire to have a relationship with her father, and wishes never to. The only reason why she wants to take him to court is to get the money her mother deserves. Amanda also extends her hatred of her father to his whole family.

Summary:

Although all cases are primary examples of the Parental Alienation Syndrome, there are some cases that are more severe than others. In the majority of the cases (6 Cases), a severe type of alienation was present. Only one participant fit the description for the mild type, two participants suffered from moderate alienation, and one participant fell in between the moderate and severe categories.

In many of these cases, the participants' custodial parent brainwashed and manipulated the participants to hate their non-custodial parent, and led the participants in believing that the non-custodial parents were unfit parents. However, should not the custodial parents' parenting be questioned? Not only did they deliberately sabotage the relationships with the non-custodial parent and the child, they obviously showed bad judgment, acted selfishly, and jeopardized their child's happiness. These occurrences are consistent with Gardner's initial research when he first detected PAS. He stated that programming by the alienating parent involved a variety of maneuvers to manipulate and brainwash the child to denigrate the non-custodial parent. As we saw in these narrative stories, the alienating parent was successful in turning the child against the other parent by using such maneuvers.

Only three of the participants reported self-identifying PAS by their custodial parent prior to the interview.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter will give the participants an opportunity to speak for themselves as much as possible, and to share their stories and experiences. The quotes culled from the participants are numerous and lengthy, but will clarify the anguish and disturbance to lives damaged by parental alienation, the many dimensions of this damage, the problems of the recognition of PAS, and the backlash effect.

For the sake of clarity and organization, the results will be constructed by dividing the findings into four core themes that arose from the interviews. These themes are dependent on the short term and long term effects of PAS, and they are: family breakdown; alienation; externalizing (drug and alcohol problems, early sexual activity, disciplinary problems at school); internalizing problems (trust difficulties, intimacy and commitment issues); and the sub-variables as described in more detail within each core theme. The participants' opinions on joint custody are analyzed towards the end of this chapter.

Due to the fact that George's wife conducted the interview on George's behalf, she was not capable of commenting on issues regarding George's internalizing and externalizing problems. Therefore, George will be omitted from these sections.

FAMILY BREAKDOWN

Nine of the eleven participants were children when their parents divorced or separated. Five of those nine were infants, and consequently, too young to remember or understand the process leading up to the family breakdown. The remaining two participants were teenagers when their parents divorced or separated, and were able to understand and be aware of the reasons as to why their family unit collapsed.

Contrary to the conventional wisdom where it is believed that the man always or almost always leaves and divorces the woman, nine of these eleven cases involved the mother leaving the family unit. The participants reported various reasons for the dissolution of their parents' marriage: three of those cases were due to infidelity on the husband's part; in six cases, the mother was unhappy with the relationship and she ended it; the two remaining cases consisted of one mutual divorce, and the other, the father ended the marriage because he fell out of love.

"I knew my dad had an affair. I know he left us for another woman. I knew it all along. My mom told me also, but she didn't have to."

- *Tammy, who was 3 ½ when her parents divorced.*

"My mom left my dad because he was an alcoholic, and he didn't put us first."

- *Chad, who was 6 when his parents divorced, and states elsewhere in the interview that he remembers nothing about his father*

"My mom left my dad because he was grumpy, and there was no communication. He never wanted to do anything."

- *Mandy, who was 2 when her parents divorced.*

"George was told that his father left his mother because he didn't want his family anymore, that he didn't love them anymore."

- *George, however Sharon states that the father fell out of love with the mother because she became too controlling and demanding.*

"My mom left my dad because he used to beat her, and she wanted me out of that environment."

- *Amanda, who was 4 when her parents separated.*

Amanda's quote can lead one to assume that her father was and is a dead-beat dad, and her mother was protecting her from him. However, Amanda was only four when her parents separated, and therefore too young to remember the events. She has lived all

these years relying on her mother's version of the story without questions. In any case, this factor should be taken cautiously.

Findings & Analysis: Those participants who were only infants when their parents divorced or separated were remarkably able to discuss the foundation of their parents divorce or separation. The researcher had assumed that they would be too young to remember in detail the breakdown, but the researcher interpreted this as a sign of successful brainwashing and manipulation by the custodial parent, because although the participants were too young to realize or understand divorce and separation, they were immediate with their responses and very compelling. It is obvious that the custodial parents expressed the reasons for divorce or separation to the participant.

What is also interesting about these individuals and worth noting is that in each case, the participants are in total identification with the mother. There was no recognition that the mother might have vested interests in this issue or developed emotional insecurities, or that she might not be telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Certainly, there was no recognition of PAS in these cases among the participants, nor was there any recognition of the destructive ways and maneuvers by the custodial parent.

In response to the participants negative responses of their parents' marriage and divorce/separation, a good follow up question to ask would have been 'So why did your parents get married?' This question should have been probed in order to provide the participants' knowledge about their parents.

ALIENATION

The findings from this research support Richard Gardner, Glenn Cartwright, and Despina Vassiliou claims that The Parental Alienation Syndrome exists. This section will illustrate the vital signs and indicators of such PAS by analyzing the behavior of the participants' custodial parent.

George's experiences will be included and analyzed in the subsequent sections.

Frequency of Contact/Visitation

Examining the frequency of contact between the participants and their non-custodial parents will indicate the existence and severity of the Parental Alienation Syndrome. Exploring the existence of the relationships between the child and the non-custodial parents is an important component when studying PAS.

Initially after the family breakup, the mother had possession of the child in all but two of the cases. Penelope and Sheldon lived with their father. Sheldon initially lived with his mother after the divorce, but he hated living there. He was very unhappy and developed nervousness. It was not long until he lived with his dad.

"I didn't want to live with my mom, so it was my idea not to live with her, and my dad pushed it further. I used to get pains, stomach pains, I always felt nauseated, and I had physical problems like diarrhea. All these symptoms arose when I lived with my mother. When I went to my dad's, it all went away. I went to go see a doctor, my pediatrician, and he recommended that I live with my dad, for my health I guess."

- Sheldon

With the onset of the divorce or separation, half of the participants saw their non-custodial parent every second week-end. This arrangement was usually made between the parents. Ultimately, with the exception of one participant, the remaining participants reported that the visitations with their non-custodial parent decreased.

"When I was a teenager, I saw my father a lot less. I would see him on occasions, like Christmas, or someone's birthday."

- Tammy

"When I was 15-16, I saw my dad a lot less, but at the time it didn't bother me. I didn't want to spend my week-ends with my dad anyway; I wanted to spend time with my friends."

- Anne

"Going to my mother's house made me sick, and she annoyed me constantly. I didn't want to see her at all. For a long time, I stopped going to her house altogether."

- Sheldon

"When my dad lost all rights to the joint custody arrangement, I hardly saw him. I had better things to do".

- Jason

Five of the participants reported that they did not see their non-custodial parent at all after the divorce or separation, and three of those participants have not seen their non-custodial parent since. The remaining two participants have just recently been in contact with their non-custodial parent after many years.

"After the separation, we moved from B.C. to Montreal instantly. My mom moved here because she had a boyfriend waiting for her. We left B.C. when I was six. I wanted to call my dad, but I wasn't allowed. I hated the man who she was with. I saw my dad three years later when he came to Montreal. I know now, that he came to Montreal to finalize the divorce. We saw each other then, he bought me a skateboard and a bike, but that was the last time I saw him or spoke to him."

- Chad

"My mom left on Christmas Eve, when I was 7. I didn't see my mom until I was 20. But I was smart at a young age. I had no choice but to be. I basically raised myself and there isn't any lie in the matter. My father was depressed and miserable without my mother. He was drunk all the time and really couldn't take care of himself, never mind his children. He didn't even realize if I was there or not, if I ate, or if I did my homework. There were times when he didn't even come home some nights".

- Penelope

"My mom was afraid of my dad. He used to hit my mom. My dad wanted some sort of custody or visitation so I was told, but my mom refused. My mom was trying to get protection against my father in Canada, but it wasn't granted, so we moved to the States. I was 8 at the time, and not until this May, I haven't seen my father in 16 years."

- Laurie

I haven't seen my dad since I was 4. I really have no intention to ever seeing him again."

- Amanda

George hasn't seen his father in a very long. I mean, his father doesn't even know that we are expecting a child, and he is going to be a grandfather, and he has no idea that we are even married. I truly think that George wants to see his father, but is really afraid of his mother."

- George

Interference of Visitation

Although the participants saw the non-custodial parent during the scheduled visitations, they reported that their custodial parent was sometimes very controlling with respect to visitations, and they had deliberately interfered with visitations and restricted any extended visitations.

"For vacations, yes, they were interfered... It would be like do you want to stay with your mother whom you don't get along with, or do you want to come to Florida?.... so we went to Florida. My dad was good at that. So he did interfere with them, more or less. "

- Sheldon

George never visited his father. His father wanted to see him, and asked to see him, but George wouldn't go without his mother's permission. I saw the letters from his father, and there was ample proof that he wanted to see George."

- George

"Visitations were never restricted, but they were interfered. My dad cancelled a lot. He found that every other weekend was a bit too much, and he used to cancel a lot. But when he did that, my mom would threaten to take away all the visitation rights, because within a three month period, he would cancel 3-4 times. She would tell us too; she would encourage us not to talk to him anymore, by telling us he wants nothing to do with us. I believed her to some extent..... I later found out that it was because of work why he couldn't make it, but my mom neglected to tell us that."

- Anne

"Visitations were not restricted or interfered, but I would not be allowed to see my father outside the scheduled visitations. If we had seen each other more than just every second weekend, for sure the visitations would have been restricted or interfered. I remember once, my family from Norway came down, and they all went to the Expos's baseball game. Everyone was there, my aunts, cousins, uncles. I haven't seen them in years. I wasn't allowed to go, because it wasn't the right week-end that my dad had me".

- Tammy

Overall, the results support that the visitations with the non-custodial parent were not only drastically reduced over time, but the custodial parent also interfered them with. In some cases, this interference was deliberate due to materialism and power. Tammy stated that her mother deliberately refused her attending the baseball game, because she did not want Tammy to have a good time with her father and his family.

In the cases where the visitations between the child and the non-custodial parent had diminished over time, the participants stated that the rejection of the non-custodial parent was their choice. This observation is consistent with one of Gardner's characteristics of PAS (Gardner, 1992). These findings suggest that the participants were successfully alienated with brainwashing and manipulation techniques to reject the non-custodial parent. Furthermore, these findings coincide with those of Cartwright who suggested that the degree of alienation in the child is proportional to the time spent alienating. The less time the participants spent with their non-custodial parents, the more time the custodial parent was able to alienate (Cartwright, 1993).

Telephone Calls

Apart from the scheduled visitations, it was important to analyze if the participants had other means of contact with their non-custodial parent, and if so, were these methods also interfered with by the custodial parent.

"No, telephone calls were not denied, but my parents had more conversations among themselves. My mom would talk to my dad on behalf, and inform him as to what was going on. I hardly spoke to my dad on the phone. It didn't bother me when I was younger, but when I got older it did. You shouldn't have to get second-hand information, when you can get it first-hand. I blamed my dad for this, but later realized it was my mom's doing. She liked to control everything, and she wanted my dad to go through her to get information about us. So I guess, yeah they were denied."

- Tammy

"No, not necessarily, but he wouldn't say 'go call your mother'. Within the family, and if there is a family emergency, my father wouldn't call my mom. For example, my older brother is sick with schizophrenia and was admitted in the hospital; he didn't call her that he was sick. My mother found out from my sister many days later. In general, he didn't tell me not to call her, but he didn't tell to call her."

- Sheldon

"When my father had custody, he made me call my mother all the time. He never restricted phone calls, he encouraged them. But he wanted me to call to keep track of my mother's life, where she was, what she was up to, etc... to act like spies. When I was with my mom, my mother didn't answer the phone when my dad called or tell me that he called. I would only find out when I saw the number on the phone."

- Jason

"My dad never felt comfortable calling my mom's house, so I did all the calling."

- Anne

"My mom probably did restrict phone calls, because she was trying to protect me from him. So I wouldn't be surprised if she did that."

- Amanda

"I always thought that my mom never called. I was never allowed to call her. I was told by my dad that he had no idea where she was. I was mad at my mom for that. But I later found out by my mom, and confirmed by my dad, that she did call occasionally, but my dad refused to let her talk to me."

- Penelope

"As far as George knows, he believes his father never called him. But I am so sure that he did. I mean after seeing those letters that his father wrote him, it was apparent he wanted to see and talk to George. Those letters were probably his last resort."

- George

Examples of Alienation

Past research has demonstrated that the relationship between a child and the non-custodial parent gradually deteriorates after divorce or separation (King (2002), Seltzer (1998), Vassiliou (1998), and Braver (1998). However, what is not well documented are the reasons for this occurrence. Perhaps this section may help highlight the scarcity of such information.

This component of the chapter will examine the phrases that were said to the participants by the alienating parent regarding the non-custodial parent. The participants stated that these phrases were constantly etched in their minds, and in some instances, are still said today. In some of the cases, the participants reported that they were highly influenced by the alienating parents' remarks, because they also denigrated the non-custodial parent. At times, this denigration was considered to be the participants' rationalizations. This collection of quotes supports Gardner's discussion about the alienating parents' conscious and unconscious techniques of programming that was discussed in Chapter One.

"My mom spoke badly of my father all the time, but never my father about my mother. She would call him a two-timer, a tutti-frutti, flake, flimsy, not responsible, he comes and goes as he likes. Some of these names were also said about the girlfriends. She still says it today.... My mom has not called him a bad father per se, only in terms of him being not responsible, or mature enough. She repeatedly said that if we lived with him, he wouldn't be able to handle it. She also said that it was my dad who wanted children. My mom said she never wanted any children, but he convinced her. She would say that after giving him two kids, and giving him what he wanted, he left her stranded with two kids.

I was more on my mom's side obviously. If you hear all these things about your father, and you live with your mother, you will take your mother's side. So I thought, yeah, we are on his schedule, and that he was irresponsible, and he doesn't put me first."

- Tammy

"My mom spoke badly of my father up until 3 years ago. Saying he was a bum, not a good father, etc.... She said that we were never first on his list, and that he didn't even want children. She wanted a divorce, but he never co-operated. He refused to give her one. And she didn't have the money to fight for one, and to bring him to court, or to pay for it. Basically, she blamed my father for everything that bad that happened in our lives after the separation. If I was sick, if we couldn't afford to go on vacation, it was my dad's fault somehow."

- Jason

"My mom had no respect for my dad, and only spoke negatively of him. All I know about my dad is what she told me. My step dad had more negative feelings for my dad than my mom actually. He really hated him, and my step-dad influenced me more than my mom."

- Chad

"I don't remember if my mom deliberately spoke negatively about my father. I knew that they didn't get along. She would say that he was grumpy and that, but nothing really bad, and she was only saying the truth"

- Mandy

"No respect, not really, especially with my mother. She didn't say very good things about my father. She would say that he was very selfish and things like that. She would bring up situations where we can't believe him. He was very unreliable, and she would bring that up. He wasn't a very careful father, and she would bring up how he would have affairs on her, and that he gave her a STD, the one where one day could be fatal. She would say, "you see what kind of father you have". I tried not letting it affect me, because he was my father. But in circumstances when he was unreliable, there would be months where I didn't talk to him, and I listened to my mother. I felt that he was making me sick basically."

- Anne

"No, they didn't respect each other. My mom was always talking bad about my dad, which was probably one of the reasons we didn't get along? I defended my dad all the time. My dad spoke negative about my mom, but not in so many words. He was manipulative with his words. He wouldn't say your mother is a bad person, but he would say your mother is different, and we are nothing alike. For example, I would say mommy doesn't allow us to do anything, he would say, well she is different. She doesn't understand things or you. She isn't like me."

- Sheldon

"They both spoke badly of each other, and they still do. But my mom did it more than my father, and what she said was more harsh. All my dad really said was that my mom is crazy. But more bad words and phrases would come from my mom about my dad. But I was more persuaded by my mom. She seemed so lost after the separation, that I pitied her."

- Kathy

"I can't answer for my dad, but my mom did all the time. She would say everything and anything. He isn't a happy person, he's not happy about life. She said that he was an alcoholic, and he was abusive. She told me that he was even abusive with me. I vaguely remember. When I saw him in April, she was right, he isn't happy, but he is not as bad as she made him out to be."

She did influence me I guess, but not as much anymore. I mean she use to say if you ever try to call him or see him, it would break me, it would break my heart. So I never even thought of him, because I didn't want to make my mom mad. But when I told her I was coming to Montreal to see him this last May, surprisingly, she didn't say anything. She told me she understood".

- Laurie

"My mom would repeatedly say that my dad didn't care, he never gave money, and he was never there. She told me that he wasn't even there when she gave birth to me. My mom really hates him, and she talks bad about him all the time. He never gave child support, and we are actually in the process of trying to take him to court for it."

- Amanda

"My dad always reminded me about my mom's departure. He always said, 'How could a mother leave her children on Christmas Eve. It is obvious she doesn't love you. But I love you, and that's all that matters'. I asked him if my mom ever called me, or if he knew where she was so I could call her, but he always said no. I was told she never loved us, she only married my father because she got pregnant, and even when she was pregnant, and she wanted to abort me. I believed everything he told me. I resented my mother for a long time."

- Penelope

Sharon stated that George's mother would speak of George's father as if he was the worst person in the world. She would say things like he never loved George; he never did and never will. Not like she loves him. She would worry that George would turn out like his father, and if he did, she would turn her back on him".

- George

The definition of the Parental Alienation Syndrome is articulated as follows:

Constant programming in terms of brainwashing and manipulation of the child by one parent to denigrate the other parent. The child eventually supports the preferred parents' campaign of denigration against the non-preferred parent with their self-created contributions. (Gardner, 1992).

Findings & Analysis: All of the participants have been victims of such deliberate exploitation and encoding by the custodial parent. For reasons of jealousy, control, revenge, and anger, the custodial parent successfully alienated his/her child against the other parent. In time, the alienation created a dichotomy of the parents, where the participants expressed negative feelings for their non-custodial parent, and strictly positive feelings for the custodial parent. The subsequent stages of the alienation process have the participants thinking that the denigration of their non-custodial parent was their decision, and no guilt is expressed. These findings duplicate the typical manifestations of Richard Gardner's research, when he initially discovered the Parental Alienation Syndrome.

Participant's Relationship with the Alienating Parent, Before and Following the Divorce

According to Richard Gardner, there is an automatic love and support of the alienating parent, and the findings from this research suggest just that. The participants defended their alienating parent at all costs, and believed that they were the victims of the divorce and separation and needed the extra love and attention, while the non-custodial parent was at fault for everything.

Positive: Both Before and After:

"My mom was my best friend. We spoke about everything, from guys to school. She spoiled me like crazy. I got everything I wanted from my mom. We are still that close today.

- Mandy

"Our relationship was amazing. She is a very strong person, and I think this whole experience made me a strong person also. I remember she was very confused after the divorce, and she has come a long way since. We all have really. I remember us going to see a psychiatrist. I mean, imagine getting beat by your husband. She was and always be my hero.

She is wonderful today and our relationship is wonderful. She guarded me my whole life, and I will always look up to her".

- Laurie

"Our relationship was perfect. We were really close, like best friends. I also had a soft spot for my mom, after everything she went through. She amazes me.

Today, our relationship hasn't changed at all. It is perfect. We really understand each other, and get along so well".

- Amanda

"My dad was really cool. When I moved in with my boyfriend at 15 years old, my father was happy for me. Although he never met my boyfriend, he said he was happy and envious of me cause I found true love and he gave me his blessing. And being young, immature and stupid, I saw nothing wrong with my dad's reaction."

Recently, I confronted my father about his alienation and explained to him how much he hurt me and how much it affected my life, but he excused his behavior. He stated that my mother hurt him by leaving because she was all he had, so he tried to take away all she had. Although I was upset for what he did, I forgave him and I still have a healthy relationship with him today."

- Penelope

Sharon really couldn't explain in detail how the relationship was between her husband and his mother when he was younger, but she gathers that it was very strong. "He respects her, and they are pretty close. He always spoke to her when he had problems. She was the only one there, so for him, she was everything.

"Today, he defends her all the time, and that interferes in our relationship. I mean she doesn't like me. She calls me trailer trash, and obvious that gets me mad. He doesn't get mad at her for saying nasty things about me. He expects me to understand, and to just let it go. He doesn't want to get her upset. She is the world to him."

- George

Negative: Before and After:

"My mom was insane. But she got a new boyfriend after 5 months of being apart from my dad, and then she was ok. I felt bad for her after the divorce and I felt that me doing poorly in school was making her problems worse, so I moved to Germany, and tried to give her some space.

Today, she is very negative, always bringing people down, and very insulting. She is always right. I can't talk to people like that; they just bring you down with them. So I prefer not to talk to her. I mean for Christmas and that, we see each other. It's not like we are not on speaking terms, but if I don't have to talk to her, I won't. I realize now why my dad was a different person when he was with her."

- Kathy

"Umm, when my parents divorced, my mom and I were actually going through a very hard time. We had to go to counseling, I gave her a lot of trouble, and I wasn't very respectful with her. I knew she was vulnerable at the time too, and I took advantage of that. However, I defended her to everyone else. No one was allowed to speak badly of my mother. Today, I care about her, but she needs help. She can't get past the anger she has with my dad, and the divorce, and it's been 10 years now. It is consuming her, and she has to stop and get on with her life."

- Anne

Changed: Was Positive and Changed to Negative:

"Our relationship was good, I clung to her. I didn't accept my step-dad though. I blamed myself for the divorce, I thought I did something wrong, so I was trying to make things better for my mom. No one could say anything bad about my mom. However, our relationship really changed as I got older. My relationship with my step dad got better and my relationship with my mom deteriorated. We have a distant relationship now, and basically speak about the weather when we do talk. She has no interest in my life, and vice versa. Conversations are meaningless".

- Chad

"I guess we had a good relationship, I mean I was living with her. She was the only one there. I was thankful that she was there. Today, our relationship is ok, but it's not the best. It's not like how daughter-mother relationships should be like. We are very different people. She is very controlling, and I really see her ways now that I am older, and I want to be nothing like her.

- Tammy

Changed: Was Negative and Changed to Positive:

"My mom was really hard to live with. She was very moody, and mad all the time. She was mad at the world. We didn't get along at all when I was a teenager, because she was very irrational. I remember going to a dance at Dawson and she was suppose to pick me up at 11. Instead she came in at 9, and pulled me out by my hair when I refused to go. She had no reason for doing this, but I guess she was lonely. So eventually I understood why she did what she did, and I felt really bad for her. She was doing the best she could."

- Jason

"Our relationship was great. Because my brother and I went to live with him, he was home more, not so much at work. He was fun, and it was fun living with him. He had a new apartment, so everything was new, new is interesting and new is fun. He bought us all kinds of games, we bonded more. Before the divorce, my dad was an authority figure, he was very strict. After the divorce, he became super-fun dad. There was this drastic change where I thought, wow, my dad is really cool. As before the only time I saw him, was when he was coming to yell at me. After, he just really wanted us to like him.

Today, it still goes... Everything is still the same with dad since after the divorce. I look up to him actually, and I go to see him for all my problems. We really understand each other".

- Sheldon

Findings &Analysis: All the participants had an automatic love for their custodial parent after the divorce or separation. This false consciousness supports one of Gardner's manifestations of PAS: the automatic love of the alienating parent by the alienated child. Some of the participants have been affected so much by the brainwashing and manipulation of the alienating parent, because how else can you love someone so intensely who has caused you so much harm, and harm that can not even be recognized? Some of the responses dictate that "she did the best she could", "She is very strong, she has come a long way since", and "I have a soft spot for my mom, after everything she went through". The participants were defensive about their custodial parents' actions, and supported them. In most cases, the custodial parent was a hero.

However, the relationship with the alienating parent did change for some of the participants over time. As Tammy became more mature and independent, she realized the manipulation of her mother. This caused tension in their relationship. Chad's relationship with his mother has deteriorated over time. Although, not because of the discovery of PAS, but because they grew apart. Kathy's and Anne's relationship with their mother were somewhat jeopardized: before and after the divorce. This could be due to the fact the Kathy and Anne were teenagers at the time her parents divorced, and were going through the typical strain of child-parent relationships.

Participant's Relationship with Alienated Parent, Before and Following the Divorce/Separation

After successful alienation by the custodial parent, the alienated child gradually generates their own denigration of the non-custodial parent. In time, they discover that such denigration is beneficial with respect to the custodial parent, and the denigration becomes more severe. All of the participants in this research have experienced this pattern.

Changed: Was Positive and Changed to Negative:

"I saw him every second week-end; from Friday to Sunday. I hated going. I remember I would scream and cry because I didn't want to go. The relationship we had was very pessimistic. But when I was 16, things changed. I saw my father on my own terms; I felt I was old enough to make my own choices.

Today, he pays my tuition, pays my computer, and helps me out with my computer problems. But there wouldn't be a relationship, if it wasn't for that. He is still really grumpy"

- Mandy

"Our relationship was mixed. I was happy that he was out of the house, but at the same time, I felt he was going through a very selfish period. He kinda forgot he had kids, and he felt that oh... my kids had grown up, so it's my time to have fun you know. But when it came down to it, I was just fine that he was out of the house.

Today, I would never say he was a good father. I see him once in a while; I wouldn't say I am close to him. I keep in contact with him because he is my dad. The reason I am not close to him, is because he did it to himself."

- Anne

"After the divorce my relationship with my mom became a bit rocky. After the divorce I spent more time with my dad, and I found out more things about my mom. I wasn't running to her to tell her things that happened in my life, I wasn't writing notes in my cards like I use to. I kept it at "Happy Birthday, nothing more, I didn't go the extra mile for example. I had resentment towards her because of the divorce.

I found out that she had a relationship with this man, and we knew this man. He was a family friend, and we were friends with his kids. I found out about the affair, and everything started to fall into place. That was when I really started to hate her, because that was the reason why my father left."

During the last 4 years, I actually started talking to her as my mother. It has gotten better. I will never go to her with my problems, and when we fight, it is always her fault."

- Sheldon

"It was non-existent. I didn't see my real dad for 16 years after the divorce. He has cancer, and last May was the first time I saw him in 16 years. My brother convinced me to go see him. I am not very close to my father, and I don't see him as a dad. My step-dad is my dad. I was very careful when I was with him, and when I spoke to him. I don't know what to say, or how to act. My biological father is dying; I say I give him one year. I am going there for Christmas. But that is as far as it goes. I am sad that this is happening to him, but I would be sad to see that happen to anyone. As a daughter, I don't think it will affect me if he dies".

- Laurie

Laurie has been brainwashed so severely, that she has no genuine feelings for her dying father.

"We have a non-existent relationship. He was still in B.C, when we moved to Montreal. I still haven't seen him at all. I went to B.C when I was 18, and the thought of my father never crossed my mind."

- Chad

"We have no relationship; I haven't seen him since I was 4. I have no desire to see him either."

- Amanda

Upon reading the quotes from Chad and Amada, one may assume or think about the possibility of Chad's and Amanda's father as a dead-beat dad. This presumption should be reconsidered. Chad's mother left B.C to move to Montreal and never told her ex-husband of her whereabouts. If she wanted her ex-husband to participate actively in Chad's life, she would have told him how he could contact Chad. In addition, Chad's mother never encouraged Chad to contact his father while being in Montreal. She wanted to start anew and start a new life and family elsewhere, while leaving behind her past.

Amanda's situation is quite different, as both her parents live in Montreal. Although there could be the possibility that her father is currently a dead-beat dad due to its definition, what is unknown is the likelihood that her father tried several times to have a relationship with his daughter during the initial stages of the separation, but consistently was denied. After many attempts and many rejections, for the self-esteem of the father, there is the possibility that he gave up trying.

Instead of always labeling the fathers as dead-beat dads for the lack of participation in the lives of their children and the reasons for the estrangement of a child-father relationship, maybe the above excerpts will shine some light upon a new idea: dead-beat moms!!

Changed: Was Positive and Changed to Negative then Changed back to Positive:

"I don't think I talked to him for a very very long time after he left my mom. I was really mad. We would see each other every second week-end, but I was always happy to go back home.

Today, we have a good relationship. When I feel down, I go see my dad. He makes me feel better. I realized he is nothing like how my mom made him out to be."

- Tammy

“Our relationship was ok. But when I came back from Germany, I went to live with him, and that’s when it got bad, because he couldn’t handle me. I was too wild. I knew it wasn’t my dad’s fault really about the divorce, she just made him insane, and he was insane whenever he was around her. When he was around others, he was normal. Today, we can talk about anything”

- Kathy

“I learned the reason why my mom left us on that Christmas Eve was because my dad used to physically abuse her, and on that particular day, she had had enough, she couldn’t take the abuse any longer. She left without saying good-bye because she didn’t want me to see how badly she looked..... I found out that my mom did come to Montreal to see me and called me frequently, but my father failed to inform me about it. He kept it from me intentionally. Instead, my dad use to tell me that my mom was in Montreal, but didn’t want to see me.

- Penelope

“When my parents had joint custody, my relationship with my dad was ok. I did my own thing, and my dad did his own thing. He was never there anyway, so I was able to do anything I wanted. He really didn’t know what was going on in my life. He was a compulsive gambler and had 2-3 jobs. We were home all alone, but it was cool because I had my friends over all the time. After my dad lost his right to shared custody, I rarely spoke to him. My mom use to say things about him, and she really got me thinking. He made me sick, and I didn’t really want to be part of his life.

Our relationship is ok today. I mean we speak, and we see each other, but I am grown up now, and I have my own life, so I don’t have time to talk to him.”

- Jason

Findings & Analysis: In all cases, alienation did occur, to the point that the participants experienced negative feelings towards their non-custodial parent. Although in some cases, the denigration was only temporarily, in others, the denigration continues to exist today.

In one case, the backlash effect had occurred. Tammy has been under the influence and control of her mother for many years, but when she was old enough to understand her mother’s conniving and manipulation, Tammy approached her mother about her scheming ways. At the same time, she informed her father about everything. Today, Tammy has a better relationship with her father than she does with her mother.

Current Relations Between the Parents

The participants reported that their parents engaged in little or no communication with each other. Three of the eleven participants stated that there is a little communication between their parents, but not much; they communicate for the sake of the participants, in terms of planning a wedding, sickness, school, etc... Nonetheless, these relationships were explained as being tense and uncomfortable.

"They can tolerate each other now. My mom still really wants nothing to do with him, but my dad would like to keep in contact with my mom. In fact he still hangs out with my mom's side of the family."

- Jason

"They are becoming more civil, but that's it. They will talk to each other when they have to, as the last option. But as I explained before, there are no courtesy calls. They speak only as a last resort."

- Sheldon

"My parents always spoke, and they always got along from my perspective. But my mom always had problems with my dad. Only now, is my dad becoming aware of everything my mom did, so he has become angrier with her, and doesn't give in to her schemes."

- Tammy

The remaining seven cases have reported that there is neither a relationship nor communication between their parents.

"My parents don't talk at all."

- Amanda

"My parents hate each other, and want to know nothing about each other."

- Laurie

"There is no communication whatsoever between my parents. He could be dead for all we know."

- Chad

"They don't get along at all. It is very disappointing because they were married for 20 years."

- Anne

"No, my mom lives in Ontario, and my dad here. They don't talk or see each other ever. I don't think they ever will. Maybe if I get married!"

- Penelope

"If my dad has to bring something to my mom, it will be done through a third party. They communicate through other people."

- Mandy

"George's mom hates George's dad. She will never speak to him. In fact, even if George speaks to him, she has threatened to disown him."

- George

"They don't talk at all. She blames him for everything. If the bread goes stale, it's my dad's fault."

- Kathy

EXTERNALIZING PROBLEMS

We all agree that adolescence is really difficult. Adolescents face peer pressure, they want to fit in, and they want to be popular. In addition, adolescence is also a time for experimentation and curiosity. Many adolescents will experiment with drugs, alcohol, and sex due to curiosity and experimentation, and this behavior is considered somewhat normal. However, a line is drawn between innocent curiosity, and experimentation and exploitation. On one side there is experimentation with alcohol, drugs, sexual activity, and misconduct in school, but on the other, there is abuse, addiction and dependency.

There are debates regarding how broad the effects of divorce are on children and adolescents (Jeynes 2001, King 2002, Laumann-Billings 2000, Simons (1999), Wolfinger 1998)). Does parental divorce, or more so parental alienation, increase the likelihood that

adolescents will exhibit more acts of mischievousness, be more likely to engage in promiscuous behavior, and be more likely to take illegal drugs and to drink alcohol?

Drugs and Alcohol

Six of the eleven participants reported experimenting with marijuana or hash, and alcohol during their adolescent years, however, four of them surpassed experimentation. The other participants tried it a few times, but it never evolved into a problem. Those participants who reported not smoking marijuana claimed that it never was an interest, and they had no desire.

"When I was fifteen, I moved in with my boyfriend at the time. We would always have parties, and we were always high and drunk."

- Penelope

"I smoked marijuana from the ages of 14-17 on a daily basis. It started with doing it at parties, dances, hanging out in the parks, but eventually I was doing it at school; at recess and lunchtime. Because I was home alone a lot, I smoked at home by myself before going to bed because it made me feel relaxed and calm. I hated being alone."

- Jason

"From the ages of 14-16, I would do it at least 2-3 times per week. I would do it with friends and when I was alone. I did it alone because it relaxed me."

- Anne

"I used to do it all the time when I was in high school. I did it everyday almost. I did it to fit in, and to be liked. I honestly didn't like the taste, and I hated how the buzz made me feel. I did it to be cool."

- Amanda

Four of the participants who had problems with marijuana also reported experimenting with harder drugs. Three of the four stated they only tried cocaine once, but one participant reported experimenting with cocaine and other drugs on more than one occasion.

"I tried everything and anything. I did it a couple if times, every few months"

- Jason

All of the participants reported that they would drink excessively at parties and dances.

However, five of the eleven participants reported abusing alcohol often.

"I was drunk every second day in high school. I would drink at parties, but I would also skip school and get drunk. We would even get drunk while we were in school, and still go to classes."

- Jason

"I would get drunk every second week-end, but never during the week."

- Sheldon

"About 2-3 times a week I would get drunk. Even when I was home babysitting my little brother, my friends would come over and we would get high and get drunk."

- Anne

"When I was 14, I looked a lot older than what I really was, so I would sneak into bars with my older sister and her friends. I would get drunk all the time."

- Kathy

Early Sexual Activity

Although it has been reported today that adolescents are engaging in sexual intercourse at earlier ages, and this behavior is not considered strange, ten years ago this was not the case, Cooksey (1996). This present research shows that almost half of the respondents reported engaging in early sexual activity. The ages ranged from 13 to 15. They reported it was a reaction to peer pressure.

Detentions & School

The amount of detentions the participants reported having in high school, and how often they were in trouble at school measured mischievousness. Seven of the eleven

participants reported having detentions in high school, but four of the cases were problematic.

"I got detentions a lot. One year, my mom received a letter from the principal saying that I had 168 detentions in one year. I kept that letter to show my kids one day. I got detentions because I challenged the system. I would break the dress code, I smoked on school property, I got drunk at school, and I skipped classes a lot."

- Jason

"Once or twice a week I would get detentions. I didn't respect the uniform, I skipped classes and I rarely did homework".

- Sheldon

"I got many detentions, but I couldn't stay for my detentions because I had to watch my brother after school. Because I couldn't do my detentions and my mom complained about it because I had to watch my brother, I use to get suspended. At the end of 9th grade, I was kicked out of school. I had to go to an alternative school for one year, something like a detention high school. After that year, I was allowed back into my old school.

When I think about it, I was craving attention. I gave the teachers a really hard time, I set the soccer field on fire during a soccer game, I mooned the teachers, interrupted a lot, I got drunk at school, and I showed no respect."

- Anne

"I would get detentions 3-4 times a week. I was late a lot, never did my homework, and I was absent a lot. Actually my absences became more of a problem than my detentions. I hated school."

- Amanda

Overall Experience of School

High school was a painful experience for almost half of the participants, and most of them did not take high school seriously.

"High school was a bad experience. There were a lot of bad people there. There was a lot of discrimination and racism at my school. In terms of grades, I just made it through. I never tried."

- Tammy

"I hated high school. Everyone was stylish and was looking to be perfect. There was so much pressure to fit in, and to get into the popular crowd. Grades were really important, because I had to work really hard just to get passing grades. I didn't want to fail, because all my friends were in my grade."

- Amanda

"High school wasn't challenging enough and I got bored because of it. I looked for ways to make up for my boredom, which is probably why I became rebellious. Academically, I did well; I was always on the honor roll."

-Anne

"School sucked!!! I didn't want to be there at all. I entered high school just as my parents separated. I did poorly in school and I failed grade 9."

- Sheldon

"I hated high school. I was always changing schools because we moved around a lot, so I was unable to keep friends. Girls hated me, but I always got along with boys. I only have bad memories of high school."

- Penelope

In summary, half of the participants reported school as being negative and dreadful, as they referred to it as 'being a bad experience', 'hating it', 'being boring and leaving room for rebellion', and 'sucked'. Laurie initially hated school and reported having had a hard time. However, her perspective on school changed when she discovered the Lord. When she found the Lord, she was able to look at school and life in general in a more positive light.

"High school was a very hard time for me. I didn't know who I was until I discovered the Lord. I made a radical change in my life when I became a Christian. Before I would drink with my friends, smoke pot, but I was never happy. In grade 10, my whole belief system changed, and my relationship with God changed. I am the person I am today, and I am well today because of the Lord. I really have to believe that, because of where I was after the divorce to where I am now."

In grade 11, I went on mission trips. For example, I went to India. In India, we had to go in the middle of the desert with no food, no map, and no guidance. Carrying a cross was our mission. The concept was to let God lead us. I made it out safe, and God led us all. With all my life experiences, it is because of God why I am still here today, healthy and happy. I am living proof that God exists. We had it so bad, and we suffered so bad, and look at me now. I am so happy."

Just to let you know that from Elementary School and High School, I went to 9 different schools in total. Does that seem and sound like a good experience to you?"

- Laurie

Many of the participants experienced a variety of externalizing problems when they were adolescents. Not only did the participants have problems with disobedience in school, but it appears that consuming large quantities of alcohol, becoming dependent on marijuana, and engaging in promiscuous and early sexual intercourse are ways that these participants dealt with the stress of divorce and parental alienation.

INTERNALIZING PROBLEMS

A variety of studies suggest that children of divorced parents experience more adjustment problems than children from intact families (Jeynes 2001, King 2002, Laumann-Billings 2000, Simons (1999), Wolfinger 1998)). These findings have been well documented, but what is needed to be scrutinized, are the consequences of PAS that escort the internalizing problems of divorce, such as trust, insecurity, depression, intimacy and commitment. Do victims of PAS feel lonely? Do they have a negative self-concept? Are they isolated and unhappy? But more importantly, are these internalizing problems consistent throughout adulthood?

Trust

Parental alienation inhibits the child's or adolescent's development of trust for various reasons. Children who believe in their parents' love and have trust in their relationship, feel disappointed when that unity is torn. They trust that their parents would provide for them, care for them, put the child's interests first, and be available to them continually. When families crumble, that trust is shattered. In addition, when a child

constantly hears negativity about a parent, especially in regards to the dissolution of the family unit, the child's level of trust towards that parent who is perceived to be at fault will gradually lessen. In time, all associations related to that mistrust will become generalized.

"I never had a hard time trusting people when I was in high school, but today I do. I prefer talking to a counselor about my problems than to my friends. When it comes to men, the trust level is minimal, and that is the biggest reason why I am single today."

- *Mandy, whose father was perceived to be the parent at fault for the breakdown of the family.*

"I never trusted women. I think it started when my mom left me. I was always hoping she would come back, but my dad constantly reminded me that she was gone and she was never coming back because she didn't want me. I never liked the girls in high school either. And they didn't like me. My friends were guys."

- *Penelope, whose mother was perceived to be the parent at fault for the breakdown of the family.*

"Yes, I have problems trusting people. I have had the same friends now for at least 10 years, and I don't let new people in. With women, they are the devil. I do not trust them, they are so manipulative."

- *Sheldon, whose mother was perceived to be the parent at fault for the breakdown of the family.*

"Yes, I did and still have trust issues. I think a major part of it is because of my mother after the divorce. She made such a point to not trust men, and that was the best advice she said that will ever be said to me."

- *Anne, whose father was perceived to be the parent at fault for the breakdown of the family.*

"For a long time, I hated men. A lot had to do with my mom, and how she described my dad. I hated to see her sad, and I knew it was my dad's fault. I was never nice to my mom's boyfriends.... Today, my boyfriend and I break up a lot, but I guess I do trust him when we are together."

- *Amanda, whose father was perceived to be the parent at fault for the breakdown of the family.*

"My mom always told me not to trust boys when I was in high school, and as a result, I didn't. She still tells me that today. My mom told me when I was younger, I hated men, especially my stepfather, and that I would do mean things to him. In high school I was

never allowed to have a boyfriend, because I was told that they would hurt me. I will always have that reminder in the back of my head when I meet men."

- *Tammy, whose father was perceived to be the parent at fault for the breakdown of the family.*

"I am very apprehensive. I don't tell everybody everything about myself. It takes a lot for me to trust. My first boyfriend was when I was 16, and I lost my virginity to him on our wedding day."

- *Laurie, whose father was perceived to be the parent at fault for the breakdown of the family.*

Laurie reported having problems trusting others, but these trust issues were not gender specific. Penelope and Sheldon, whose mother left the family unit, do not trust women. Mandy, Anne, Amanda, and Tammy, whose father was perceived to leave the family unit, all reported that they have trust issues with men. These issues strongly relate to PAS because it was the custodial parents' intent for their child not to trust the other parent; i.e., the opposite sex, and manipulated the participants to join a bond of love with them. These effects have the unintended consequences of causing terrible problems at school, with drugs and alcohol, and with trust in relationships.

The following sections entitled Insecurity, Depression, and Intimacy and Depression embody very subjective concerns, and are very difficult to test and research. Therefore the participants were not posed direct questions concerning their level of insecurity, depression, intimacy and commitment. Instead, the data gathered for these areas of research were obtained by probes and on comments the participants made throughout the interview. This will explain the reasoning for the lack of quotes within these sections.

Insecurity

Anne stated that she craved attention while she was in high school. She would excessively try to amuse others, even if it was putting herself in trouble. She got herself into so much trouble that she was expelled from her high school. Her actions demonstrate that Anne was insecure, and was not confident with who she was, and there was a dire and constant need to feel important and noticed. This need of approval is still present today. Although she is currently involved in a serious relationship, and has a child with this man, she feels that their relationship requires some promiscuity, to allow the opportunity to allow intimate relationships with others. She therefore, still desires and requires the need to feel wanted.

Chad as a teenager was very shy and extremely reserved. He constantly felt self-conscious, and his actions supported that. He felt no one liked him, and they viewed him as being different. He hardly had friends, he never went to dances, and he was afraid of girls. His virginity was lost at the age of 20, and although not married at the time, his virginity was lost to his current wife. Today, he still does not have many friends. He keeps in touch with a childhood friend via email. In opposition to Chad's previous behavior, Chad also has an open marriage arrangement with his wife (i.e. they both have other parents), because it is what she desires.

Tammy is currently insecure, although she never seemed to have insecurity issues in the past. She views herself in a negative way, and is always critiquing herself. For example, she weighs approximately 120 pounds, but feels fat. Nevertheless, this current feeling of insecurity is associated with men. Although she wants a relationship, she is unable to trust men.

Amanda did anything possible in high school to fit in. She drank, used marijuana, and had promiscuous sex just to seek approval. She did not even like the taste of the marijuana or how it made her feel, but she still felt the need to seek acceptance from her peers. Today, she still considers herself a crowd pleaser. She says she speaks less, and listens more. Although one may view this trait as positive, Amanda saw it as a fault. She is currently in a relationship, however is not treated appropriately. He breaks up with her constantly, but she comments that she takes him back, because she loves him.

Kathy was promiscuous when she was younger, and still is today. Although she might not realize, there is a dire desire for her to feel wanted and yearned.

Penelope had a difficult upbringing, and was never given the opportunity to develop friendships. She moved around a lot, leaving one school to join another. In this process, the friends she met were lost, as she had to build new ones. However, her friends were generally male. With a pretty face, it was not hard to be popular with the guys, but Penelope said that the females were resentful and felt threatened by her. She found herself getting into many arguments with the other girls, and sometimes even fist fights. Penelope liked the attention from the males, it boosted her self esteem, and eventually, Penelope worked as an exotic dancer. A few years later when Penelope was a mother, she quit the field she was working in. She lost custody because of her job, and has been struggling everyday to regain her parental rights. Today, she has given up; she did not have the strength to continue the fight for her daughter. She eventually let herself believe that she was not a good enough mother.

When in high school, Laurie was extremely insecure, before she “found God”. She yearned to be popular and liked, and therefore followed the crowd. She attempting

using marijuana and drank alcohol, even though she hated it. *"I hate the taste of alcohol, especially beer."* She skipped school, and because she had earlier curfews than her peers, she never abided by her mother's curfew, and would get in trouble. Since she found the Lord, Laurie perceives her life to be problem free. Whenever Laurie is faced with an obstacle, she asked God for guidance, and her problems are solved. She is exceptionally reliant on God.

Depression

Although the participants reported feeling down occasionally, depression was not a major factor. While it is not uncommon for an occasional sad day, there were no strong connections to suggest that PAS causes depression, or if divorce does. Two of the participants (Mandy and Tammy) reported that when they were children, they used to draw in black. After visiting with counselors and psychologists, it was suggested that drawing in black was a sign of depression. These participants do not suffer from depression today. However, another participant (Sheldon) has been diagnosed with deep depression, and is medicated. It is questionable if it is linked to PAS, because the participant reported never feeling depressed as a child or adolescent. The depression has only been diagnosed recently, within the last six months. If this depression has been suppressed remains unknown.

Intimacy and Commitment

Intimacy was measured by scrutinizing the participants' responses to relationships, with special attention given to romantic relationships.

In the past, Chad was very shy in approaching women, and typically shied away from them. He reported that he followed a girl to British Columbia once, because he was

infatuated by her. Nonetheless, he was afraid of the possibility of a relationship. Today, Chad's actions and behaviors are on the opposite end of the continuum. Although married, the couple agrees to have sexual relations with others.

Anne has had various relationships in the past, but was not always entirely committed to them. She reported being dishonest with her partners. Today, Anne is currently married, but regrets getting married for it was a consequence of becoming pregnant. *"At the time marriage seemed to be the next step and it made sense, but now I wish we never got married."* Although the subject of divorce has been discussed, she believes that the only option other than divorce is to have an open relationship.

Tammy has not been engaged in many romantic relationships. To date, she has had only one boyfriend. She finds it difficult to meet men, and is very fearful of relationships. She doesn't believe she will ever get married.

Mandy also has not engaged in many romantic relationships. The relationships she has encountered involved long-distance relationships, all in which were not promising. She believes she experiences intimacy difficulties, because at the age of 26, she has not yet experienced it.

Sheldon has no respect for women, and he does not desire relationships. Due to past experiences, including the one with his mother, he associates all women with being manipulative and deceitful. According to his friends, Sheldon needs to feel superior to the women he dates, when he does date. One example he used for purposes of elaboration was that his friends noticed that he seems to be attracted to women from lower economic classes. Additionally, when he is dating women, he does not respect them nor is sensitive to their needs.

Kathy is promiscuous, and feels that there are too many men out there to be committed and tied down to just one of them. She said eventually she will want a family and have children, but presently, she wants to have fun.

Many of the participants also experienced a variety of internalizing problems as adolescents, and are still suffering with them today. Half of the participants who experienced parental alienation as children or adolescents have poor psychological adjustments. They report low self-perception, they contain intimacy and trust complexities, and one participant is clinically depressed. Therefore, the negative effects of parental alienation continue to be evident in adulthood, even though the alienation occurred in childhood.

Findings and Analysis: Table 2 displays the categorizations between PAS, external, and internal problems. To determine the variables for the level of PAS, the researcher grouped together the participants who were identified as experiencing mild and moderate levels of PAS, into a Low category. Those who were determined to experience a severe level of PAS were categorized as High. The level of PAS was determined by the analysis of the narrative stories of each participant in Chapter Four.

As for allocating the external and internal problems, the researcher decided that those participants, who experienced three or more of the external and internal problems analyzed in this research, were to be categorized as High levels. Therefore, for those participants who experienced two or less of the external and internal problems were categorized as Low.

TABLE 2: Levels of Parental Alienation Syndrome and Levels of Externalizing Problems and Internalizing Problems

NAMES	PAS	EXTERNALIZING PROBLEMS	INTERNALIZING PROBLEMS
Jason	Severe (high)	Alcohol, Drugs, Sex, Detentions (high)	(low)
Tammy	Moderate (low)	School (low)	Trust, Intimacy, Insecurity, Intimacy (high)
Amanda	Severe (high)	Sex, Drugs, Detentions, Schools (high)	Trust, Insecurity (low)
Sheldon	Severe (high)	Alcohol, Detentions, School (high)	Trust, Depression, Intimacy, Commitment (high)
Mandy	Moderate (low)	(low)	Trust, Depression, Intimacy (high)
Kathy	Mild (low)	Alcohol, Sex (low)	Insecurity, Intimacy (low)
Penelope	Severe (high)	Drugs, Alcohol, Sex, School (high)	Trust, Insecurity (low)
Chad	Severe (high)	(low)	Insecurity, Intimacy, Commitment (high)
Laurie	Severe (high)	(low)	Trust, Insecurity (low)
Anne	Severe (high)	Drugs, Alcohol, Sex, Detentions, School (high)	Trust, Insecurity, Intimacy, Commitment (high)

Table 3: The Relationship Between PAS, Externalizing Problems, and Internalizing Problems

PAS	EXTERNALIZING PROBLEMS		INTERNALIZING PROBLEMS		TOTAL
	HIGH	LOW	HIGH	LOW	
HIGH	5 (71%)	2 (29%)	3 (43%)	4 (57%)	7
LOW	0	3	2	1	3
TOTAL	5	5	5	5	10

Although the sample for this research is quite small, the relationships between PAS and external and internal problems are indicative, rather than conclusive. The findings indicate, that there is a strong relationship between PAS and externalizing problems (71% v 29%); as, the higher the PAS, the greater the external problems in adolescence. Due to the fact that many of the participants experienced externalizing problems when they were adolescents, there have been ongoing consequences to these problems that have followed them into adulthood. Examples include early drop-out rates (slim chances of obtaining better occupations) and early pregnancies.

As for the association between PAS and internal problems, the findings do not indicate that there is such a strong relationship between the two variables (43% v 57%), and therefore, higher levels of PAS does not seem to cause higher internal problems. Although there was not a strong relationship, the findings do support that even low levels of PAS causes long-term problems, as all but one participant experienced at least two of the internalizing problems.

Overall, the findings support that both levels of PAS (high and low), continues to cause internal and external problems into adulthood.

Joint Custody

The participants were asked their opinion on joint custody, while being posed a hypothetical question. This question asked the participants, “if you were married, and had children, but unfortunately the marriage was unsuccessful and divorce was your only option, how would custody be decided”?

Here were their responses:

Against Joint Custody:

"Joint custody isn't good. Living in different homes, it just messes you up. I have friends who do it, and they are always forgetting things. It messes the children up more."

"I would want sole custody. I would let the father see the child, if he was a good father."

- Amanda

"I went through it and I hated it. I found it hard, because I would forget things at the other house, etc.. It was a hassle, I was never stable. If I got a divorce, I would let my wife have the kids, but be very active in their lives."

- Jason

"I think the parent who is better with the child should have custody. I don't think there should be an automatic law. I would have liked to have my father in my life, and I would do the best I can for the child if I didn't have custody."

- Chad

"I disagree with joint custody. It is too confusing for the child. The child is coming and going from different places. It isn't right. If I get divorced, I would want sole custody of the children."

- Tammy

"It's an ideal situation, but if the father wasn't a good father, I would not let him see the child."

- Kathy

*"The child should stay in one place. I am not in favor for joint custody. If it's the father or the mother, I really don't care. **But we all know that mothers are better parents**, so I guess I would say that I would want custody".*

- Mandy

She has been brainwashed into believing that fathers can not even make good fathers.

This is very problematic. This statement is a classic portrayal of PAS.

For Joint Custody:

"I don't know how I would react before having experienced living without my daughter, but I think a child should have both parents in their lives. I use to see Melissa every second week-end, and it killed me. I starting the fighting for shared custody, but currently gave up. I lost the confidence."

- Penelope

"It has its pros and cons. It's tough for a child to go back and forth, but at the same time, it's good for the child to see both of their parents, and to see them act in a civilized manner. I am currently having marital problems, and we have discussed this issue. I would want full custody of the child, but I would want the father to come over every night during the week for dinner, and eat together as a family. I would want the father to have the child every second weekend, but I wouldn't have everything set in stone. I would be very flexible in when the father wanted the child (in terms of the week, instead of the weekends). The arrangements would be very open. On special occasions, we would go out as a family to show our son, that we really do love each other, but that Mommy and Daddy just can't live with each other."

- Anne

"I agree with it, if the circumstance allows it. It is great to have both parents in your life, if they are loving, caring, and understanding. The ideal situation is great".

- Sheldon

"Yes, I agree that a child should have a mother and father in their life. I wish I had the liberty to know my father, and not have the fear of wanting to talk to him. As for my husband and I to get a divorce, it won't happen with us because we don't believe in divorces, but I will answer your hypothetical question. I would want my child to see both parents and we would work something out to arrange it."

- Laurie

"I can't speak for George, but I would hope he would put his children first. Especially after what he went through."

- George

Sharon is assuming that George would be in favor of joint custody, therefore, the researcher must politely and respectfully disregard the response.

Findings & Analysis: The researcher's hypothesis for child custody was slightly supported. The researcher presumed that the participants would have been in favor of

joint custody and would prefer having both parents active in their lives of their children, because they were deprived of this opportunity. Nevertheless, more than half of the participants were raised in a two parent household as their mother or father remarried, and that could be a reason why the participants did not feel as strongly about joint custody, because in their eyes, they had two parents.

More importantly, the researcher hypothesized that having experienced parental alienation, the participants would not want their children to endure what they did. The researcher expected the participants to realize that the interests of their children should be paramount, and that means having both biological parents active in their child's life.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We have seen eleven different narratives and a series of different responses from real people who have been victims of the Parental Alienation Syndrome when they were children and/or adolescents. In fact some are still victims today. Although the purpose of this research is to explore the long term effects of PAS, it is necessary to report the immediate effects that were found in this research as well.

The initial onset of parental alienation was due to the strained relationship between the estranged couple. As one parent is left with feelings of rejection, anger, and resentment, he/she resorts to alienation for personal revenge and to punish the other parent for leaving, and therefore, the child becomes his/her only possible resource.

The custodial parent therefore begins the process of brainwashing the child against the other parent. This brainwashing means that the custodial parent systematically and consciously programs the child to denigrate the other parent. Techniques that were used include the occurrences of engaging in negative discourses

about the non-custodial parent, false allegations, purposely decreasing the frequency of visitations between the child and the non-custodial parent, interfering with the scheduled visitation arrangements, and in some cases restricting spontaneous visitations. As a result of the changes in visitations, the relationship becomes limited between the non-custodial parent and the child. In addition, the participants reported that phone calls by the non-custodial parent were usually monitored, and not encouraged.

In due course, the child plays a role in the development of the alienation, as he/she become independent to the custodial parent's denigration, and independently, contributes to such denigration, while at the same time, maintains a close relationship with the custodial parent. When the responses for the reasons why the participants' parents divorced/separated were examined, we were able to see that the participants are in total identification with the custodial parent. There was no recognition of PAS in these cases amongst the participants, nor was there any recognition of the destructive ways and maneuvers of the custodial parent.

As some of the participants looked back, it was reported that they believed their custodial parent deliberately tried sabotaging the relationship with their non-custodial parent. Others denied such allegation, and continued to defend their custodial parent for their actions. However, that being said, the participants reported having a strong relationship with their custodial parent, even knowing of such alienation. They believe that their custodial parent was doing what they were doing out of love and protection, and their behavior was deeply appreciated. Only one participant experienced the backlash effect, when the manipulation and brainwashing of the custodial parent was detected. Currently, the relationship with that non-custodial parent has become more developed

and esteemed, as the one with the custodial parent became weakened. Another participant also realized the alienation by the custodial parent, and contacted the non-custodial parent after many years of no contact. This participant currently has a strong relationship with both parents. One participant, after 16 years of no contact has recently visited their non-custodial parent. The reason is due to illness, as the non-custodial parent has been diagnosed with cancer. Three of the participants still have no contact with their non-custodial parent since the divorce or separation. The remaining participants still have a stronger relationship with their custodial parent than their non-custodial parent.

More than half of the participants engaged in mischievous behavior when they were adolescents. They were consistently given detentions, they abused alcohol and marijuana, they engaged in immature sexual activity, they were disrespectful to their peers, family, and teachers, and they did not abide by the curfews that were given to them. Although some may say these are typical patterns of adolescent behavior, some of the participants took it to a more profound level. Guiding these behaviors was their craving for attention, approval, and acceptance. The majority of the participants, who behaved mischievously, also reported having internalizing problems. They were more likely to have self-esteem and insecurity issues, commitment difficulties, a distorted sense of intimacy, and a lack of trust, especially with the gender of their non-custodial parent.

Not only were these problems existent in early childhood and adolescence, but the internalizing problems were transmitted through adulthood as well. Many of the participants currently have commitment concerns, due to trust and insecurity difficulties.

Their apprehension with the opposite sex stemmed from the dissolution of their parents' relationship, but more importantly, from the custodial parent who taught and encouraged the participants not to trust the opposite sex, while referring to the non-custodial parent as the prime example. In turn, the participants become resentful towards their non-custodial parent, and tend to generalize these feelings to all members of that sex.

It is probable that it is not so much divorce that is problematic for the children of divorce, as the alienating behaviors of the custodial parent. The effects of both external and internal problems are often subconscious for the adolescents growing into adults; and they can lapse into adulthood in the case of internal problems. In addition, the external problems can also continue into adulthood, due to the low school achievement, and in two cases, early pregnancy.

The consequences of PAS are difficult to deal with since the cause-effect relation is so obscure and because PAS is not a well known phenomenon. As its etiology and long term and short term consequences become better known to the general public, we might begin to see changes along the lines of the recommendations that are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Although there has been considerable research pertaining to divorce and the consequences of divorce, this present study explores an area of divorce that is isn't so renowned and examines the issue of divorce from an unique perspective. This thesis examines the phenomenon of the Parental Alienation Syndrome, and more importantly, the medium and long terms effects of such a syndrome. Since divorce is antecedent to the PAS, it is important to bear in mind the relevance of divorce and the research conducted on it when studying PAS.

Seven women and four men who perceived themselves as having been victims of the Parental Alienation Syndrome participated in this study. They were interviewed by a semi-structure open-ended interview questionnaire that was either conducted via the telephone or in person. These participants provided vivid details on their lives and their experiences with parental alienation. They spoke openly and they were able to capture their audience and tell compelling stories.

The Parental Alienation Syndrome is a form of psychological kidnapping because it involves a parent deliberately poisoning his/her innocent child against the other parent. This process is possible as the custodial parent engages the child in a series of conscious and subconscious techniques such as brainwashing and manipulation to denigrate the other parent. Consequently, these processes have devastating effects on a child-parent relationship, or more specifically in the cases here, a child-father relationship. The relationships become estranged, and the child is left with feelings of rejection and detestation, as they believe the other parent does not love or want them.

Although the phenomenon of the Parental Alienation Syndrome is a serious one, there are many questions that continue to be unanswered when it comes to PAS, especially with respect to the medium and long terms effects of the syndrome. For example, what happens when a victim of PAS becomes conscious of his/her custodial parent's alienation? Are there any consequences thereafter? Are the effects of PAS as a child transmitted to adulthood, or even parenthood?

The following section presents a summary and a discussion of the findings. An analysis of the original hypotheses of this research will be addressed. To recapitulate, the four hypotheses are:

- 1) The more severe the PAS, the more likely the child will develop externalizing problems (drugs and alcohol, early sexual and promiscuous sexual activity, disciplinary problems at school).
- 2) The more severe the PAS, the more likely the child will develop internalizing problems (issues with trust, intimacy, and commitment).
- 3) The more severe the PAS, the more likely the child, if she/he becomes a parent and goes through a divorce, will handle his/her divorce differently from the way his/her parents did.
- 4) The more severe the PAS, the more likely the non-custodial parent-child relationship will be damaged for life.

The stories and experiences of the participants reveal that the effects of parental alienation are serious and can interfere in a child's development and adjustment levels. The findings of this research suggests that alienated children develop behavioral problems, have difficulties in school, drink excessively and smoke marijuana habitually,

were sexually active at young ages, and at the same time, very promiscuous. Apart from the externalizing problems, many of the participants experienced internalizing difficulties. Such problems include a development of low self-perceptions, distrust and suspiciousness, a lack of security, and intimacy and commitment issues. More significantly, these internal consequences persevered, and are current problems amongst the participants. Those who are married hold a distorted definition of marriage, as they desire the openness of a marriage (to hold multiple sexual partners). Two of the three marriages in this research seem likely to end in divorce. Those participants who are not married are fearful of commitment. Trust is a main concern for the participants, especially with respect to the opposite sex, or more notably, the sex of the alienated parent.

The findings also indicate that there were commonalities in the participants' experiences of parental alienation. For instance, the participants had become secondary alienators towards their non-custodial parent. This finding is consistent with Gardner's characteristics of PAS. Gardner also observed that the alienating parent is the custodial parent (usually the mother) and the non-custodial parent (usually the father), and this research reflects these observation because in nine of the eleven cases in this research, the mother initially had sole custody. The change in the frequency of visitation was reported, and these occurrences had a tremendous impact on the relationship between the non-custodial parent and their child. In half of the cases, the relationship with the non-custodial parent and the child was lost upon the dissolution of the family unit. Since then, only one participant has reconciled with their non-custodial parent, and another participant is currently, but slowly re-entering the life of their non-custodial parent.

(However that being said, this participant's non-custodial parent is dying, and is the reason for the contact). Another commonality were the telephone calls by the non-custodial parent that were either controlled, monitored, interfered, or denied by the custodial parent. Overall, it is suggested that these above mentioned factors are precursors to the Parental Alienation Syndrome.

All of the researcher's hypotheses have been supported, however the shared parenting hypothesis was only slightly supported. The researcher hypothesized that victims of PAS would have different opinions on custody matters than their parents. The majority of the participants said they would recommend sole custody, and the non-custodial parent would visit the children every second week-end. This finding was surprising because considering all the literature suggesting that children in one-parent households have been reported showing low adjustment levels, behavioral problems, and psychological problems, and in addition to the participants' own experiences, the researcher would have expected that the option for shared parenting would be more favorable. Conceivably then, this realization implies that alienation is more severe than previously imagined. The participants are in denial as they do not appreciate the importance of having two active parents in the child's life. This pattern of behavior seems likely to persist down the generations, as the participants teach their offspring what was taught to them.

Although this research demonstrates that the Parental Alienation Syndrome has detrimental effects to the alienated child, and that these effects continue into adulthood, further research is needed to fully understand the implications of PAS. Only eleven individuals shared their experience, and although there is no question that they were

victims, this sample can not make claims and generalize the findings in relation to the general population. Since this sample is not a representative one and further interviews must be conducted, this initial research does clarify the severity of the problem.

Conducting further research on PAS is vital, because understanding the syndrome and the effects will help shine light upon recommendations and solutions on how to reduce the incidences of PAS or even eliminate them. As for now, PAS remains undocumented as the theory and its implications are considered insignificant by the courts and unknown to the general population.

Recommendations for Further Research

Prospective researchers should consider an inclusion of a comparison group, to allow an appropriate evaluation of the two sample groups; those who are victims of PAS, and those whose parents divorced, but did not engage in PAS. Furthermore, adolescents in general should be compared with alienated adolescents.

Accordingly, with a larger sample, a random sample, and the inclusion of a comparison group, we will be able to obtain a greater wealth of knowledge about the Parental Alienation Syndrome, and its damaging effects.

RECOMMENDATIONS

When families break down and marriages fall apart, the children still remain, and their needs and best interests should be engaged and at its highest priority. Parents should understand that although they were once a couple, they will be parents forever. However, parents get caught up in the moment of the divorce where they want to seek revenge, they want a clean break from their past, or they want to see the other parent suffer, so they sometimes use the children as bait, and put the children in the middle of

their battles. Parents who engage in parental alienation are psychologically damaging their children in various ways, and children already have enough to cope with, as they are already confused about the divorce. They need not any further trauma.

This section of the chapter will concentrate on four main recommendation themes with sub-themes within on how to reduce the trauma and stress of divorce, especially for children. These recommendations will draw upon several themes and strategies that were addressed by Cartwright, Braver, and in the 'Report of the Special Joint Committee on Child Custody and Access: For the Sake of the Children'. The Report of the Special Joint Committee on Child Custody and Access: For the Sake of the Children represents an important step towards addressing the problems children face after their parents divorce with special reference to shared parenting, and provides valuable insights into the family law system with a list of their 48 recommendations to keep the child's best interests up hand. Although all 48 recommendations are necessary for the development of shared parenting, only the recommendations that are affiliated with the Parental Alienation Syndrome will be referred to throughout this chapter. (See Appendix E for a list of the relevant recommendations for the purposes of this research).

1) SHARED PARENTING

"My wife, Myra, and I have worked two different shifts for a while. Because she wasn't home in the morning and I was, I've always taken care of Jenny then, giving her breakfast, dressing her, getting her ready for kindergarten at noon. We'd watch kid shows together on TV, read books, color, and play together. Now Myra and I are getting a divorce and the courts are telling me I can't see Jenny more than once every other week-end. It doesn't make sense that some baby-sitter will take care of Jenny in the morning now, and Myra will have to pay for it. I'm ready to do it for free, and it will be great for Jenny, for me, and for Myra, too. But the courts say 'no'" (Braver, p. 87).

1.1) One of the strongest recommendations to help minimize the existence of PAS, and to keep the interests of the child paramount, is to implement joint custody or shared

parenting for all custody arrangements after a divorce, with the exceptions of obvious cases such as child abuse, alcoholism, etc... “In bestowing joint legal custody, society tells the father in an official way that he is still his child’s parent. He gets to participate in the same kind of decision making concerning the child that fathers from intact families must deal with. He gets the right to continue to look out for his child’s interests” (Braver 1998, p. 181). An active father, as well as an active mother, in a child’s life are beneficial for a child, for the child will feel love and in addition, feel important because both parents are continuing to be supportive of his/her needs.

Past research has also supported the claim that joint custody can reduce the frequency of PAS. According to Arditti (1992), joint custody fathers see their children more often and feel closer to their children after the divorce than non-custodian fathers. In addition, Seltzer (1998) found that “compared with those without joint legal custody, fathers with joint custody are more likely to have seen their child at least weekly, more likely to have had overnight visits, and to have had more overnights during the course of the year” (Seltzer 1998, p. 141).

Furthermore, a great deal of research has supported the notion that a child’s well being and development is positively affected when two parents are present in their child’s life after divorce. Therefore, if both parents share custody of the child or engage in shared parenting, the occurrence of PAS will noticeably decrease for the following reasons: the child will have contact with both parents and this will allow the child to have a healthy and close relationship with both parents, and the child will less likely harbor negative feelings towards a particular parent (non-custodial parent); and the child will have an increased level of trust for their fathers.

1.2) Therefore, another suggested recommendation involves that both parents should be entitled to a close and continuous relationship with their children, and this right should be monitored and regulated.

Joint custody not only reduces the incidences of parental alienation, but the philosophy of shared parenting is also beneficial for the child's development, level of adjustment, academic performance, and overall well-being. For example, joint custody allows the child to lead a life resembling lives they had before the divorce, and studies comparing sole custody arrangements to joint custody arrangements have shown that shared parenting decreases the chance that the child will develop conduct problems, and improves the child's welfare after divorce. When Bauserman (2002) conducted a meta-analyzed study comparing child adjustment in joint physical or joint legal custody with sole custody settings, he found that "children in joint custody are better adjusted... than children in sole (primarily maternal) custody" (Bauserman 2002, p 97). Braver et al (1985), also found that compared with children in sole maternal custody "children in joint custody were significantly better adjusted in that they exhibited less behavior problems, impulsive behaviors, depression, and anti-social tendencies" (Braver 1998, p. 186). In summation, these are key ingredients for a child to lead a successful and fulfilling life.

1.3) The language of divorce should be revised and changed. Terms such as "custody" and "access" should no longer be used, and should be replaced by shared parenting. The current language of custody, custodial, non-custodian, and access promotes a continuum of winners and losers that is problematic because it connotes the ownership of the child. Shared parenting can reduce parental conflict (particularly in the current adversarial divorce system) by defusing the winner and at the same time, giving

the child the privilege of having two active parents in his/her lives; instead of a custodial parent and a visiting parent. Consequently, both parents and the children are considered winners.

2) CHANGING POLICIES IN THE COURTS

According to the Gardner, custodial parents can become very inventive when it comes to retaining their sole-custody rights of the children. Casting aspersions and making false allegations have become familiar in the courts when dealing with custody, to prevent the other parent from spending time with the child. A parent does this in hopes that the child will distrust the other parent, or view that parent as dangerous. With successful encoding, the child will ask that the time spent with the other parent be restricted.

Ralph Underwager, who is a clinical psychologist in private practice in Minnesota, has counseled many sexually-abused children for more than forty years. He has acted as a witness for the defense for fathers and mothers who have been falsely accused of sexually abusing their children, and he has conducted research based on these cases. Citing Underwager's work, Braver declares that the system is at fault for the occurrences of false accusations, specifically the laws, the judges and the attorneys. He provides proof of his declaration by illustrating the procedures following an accusation. "When a parent accuses an ex-spouse of sexually abusing their child, what happens immediately, without adjudication, is that the child is withdrawn from the accused and, in most cases, is forbidden to have to have any contact with that parent. The separation can go on for years while the child is subjected to continuous interviews and therapy. And

what happens during that time? The child learns to hate the accused parent - even if he or she is innocent” (Braver 1998, p. 210).

From his experience, Underwager claims that at least 65% of the reports of abuse are in fact declared unfounded. Furthermore, with respect to the other 35% of the reports, half are inaccurate or require further investigation. Of those 17% that remain, only half actually go to trial, and of that half, 60 % are declared to be abused. However, according to Underwager, of that 5%, half are falsely convicted. Therefore, “roughly 2.5 % of parents who are accused of sexual abuse are likely to be guilty” (Braver 1998, p. 210)

2.1) Accordingly, there is a dire need to modify our system to provide sanctions against making false accusations and the parents who do so, should be harshly punished. In cases when mischief, obstruction of justice, or perjury is clearly committed, the perpetrator should be punished.

2.2) Cartwright also holds the court system responsible for the occurrences of PAS due to the slow judgments that are rendered, and suggests that the courts should expedite the process. The slower the judgment, the longer the custodial parent has to alienate the child, and the deeper the PAS in the child.

2.3) Cartwright also recommends that the courts should be trained to detect cases of PAS, “and once the determination of PAS has been made, speedy judgements must be rendered to stop the alienation process immediately” (Cartwright 1993). Cartwright suggests that a precedent must be established in the penalization of parents who engage their children in PAS.

3) INCLUSION OF EXTENDED FAMILY MEMBERS IN PARENTING

3.1) Relationships with grandparents and other members of the child's extended family should not end when the marriage ends, however paternal grandparents are the highest at risk for losing contact with their grandchildren when their ex daughter in law has primary custody of the children. That being said, "professionals providing counseling services within an intergenerational perspective need to expand their definition of the post divorce family system. They can no longer focus exclusively on the nuclear family but must account for the fact that the grandparent generation is often highly involved both before and after divorce" (Kruk 1995, p. 142). Therefore, post-divorce relationships should resemble those relationships prior to divorce, and it is the parent's obligation to preserve these relationships. In addition, fostering such relationships between grandparents and grandchildren is in the best interests of the child.

4) MEDIATION

Therapeutic Approaches

4.1) Although the recommendations for joint custody and visitation enforcement ease the burden of divorce on all members in the family, there should be measures to reduce the conflict level prior to divorce. Parents from high conflict divorces are more likely to engage in parental alienation; therefore services to reduce the tensions between the two parents must be implemented. Cooperating families will only have positive outcomes for the children, because they will be able to realize that their parents are resolving their issues, and this will make them feel loved, wanted, because the parents are taking their interests as first priority.

According to Braver, what are needed are “more approaches that take place before the animosities build up and positions get entrenched and intransigent” (Braver 1998, p. 231). One way of targeting this approach is to treat divorce as a social service matter; a more therapeutic approach. Parents can be assigned a social worker, where they have to talk about their issues and fears about the divorce. At the same time, the social worker can help the parent with communications skills and help desensitize the trauma of divorce. After the parents have been educated about the benefits of cooperation and the disadvantages of conflict, the parents can continue with mediation. In mediation, parents decide for themselves how to resolve their disputes about the issues of their divorce.

Compulsory Counseling

4.2) Compulsory counseling should occur prior to marriage, and preceding a divorce. In fact, research has shown that “couples who have undergone premarital training programs have been shown to have a greatly reduced chance of becoming divorced years later” (Braver 1998, p. 245).

Summary

Attorneys and judges can choose between two major approaches to custody wars. They can stress one-parent superiority, or they can emphasize the children’s need for ongoing loving relationships with both parents to serve the best interests of the children. Children should be entitled to live in a nurturing environment, and be given opportunities to reach their full potential as adults. In keeping with this vision, these recommendations to help reduce the impact of high conflict post-divorce cases can improve the well-being of all children.

As a means of reaching this goal, the Parental Alienation Syndrome and the effects on the child must be more widely studied.. In addition, consequences of divorce and single parent custody must be re-evaluated, and the assumption that children are automatically better off with the mother should be re-examined.

All Professionals who are involved with divorce cases; courts, judges, lawyers, therapists, and social workers, must be made more aware of the PAS and its symptoms, and the negative consequential effects to the children. Policies should be implemented and executed to incorporate the significance of PAS when deciding custody cases. The legal system must find a way of publicizing PAS, and ensure that children likely to be victims are pre identified so that appropriate intervention can occur.

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APPENDIX A:

STUDY

ARE YOU OR WERE YOU A VICTIM OF YOUR PARENTS' DIVORCE/SEPARATION AND WOULD
LIKE TO BE PART OF A STUDY, THEN CONTACT ME AT OR BY
PHONE AT

(M.A. SOCIOLOGY)

APPENDIX B:

CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

This is to state that I agree to participate in a program of research being conducted by **Cynthia Raso**, who is in the department of Sociology at Concordia University.

A. PURPOSE

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is as follows ...

B. PROCEDURES

The interview will be conducted in a secure private space so the discussion taken place will be serious, have no interruptions, and provides a safe and comfortable atmosphere. You as the interviewee will be required to engage in discourse about your experiences with the Parental Alienation Syndrome and how it affected you as a child, as well as today. I acknowledge the fact that this is a sensitive topic which may lead to emotional distress and discomfort, therefore you have the right to discontinue with the participation of the interview at any time. In addition, anything that was said during the interview at any time will be kept in confidence. I will also preserve anonymity by changing your name in the thesis.

C. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

- I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences.
- I understand that my participation in this study is CONFIDENTIAL (i.e., the researcher will know, but will not disclose my identity)
- I understand that the data from this study may be published, but no individual names will be identified.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (please print) _____

SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

APPENDIX C:

The first section included general questions.....

1. Have your parents divorced/separated?
2. How old were you when your parents divorce/separate?
3. Do you have any siblings?
IF YES
- Probes: Are they younger/older?
4. Whom did you live with after the divorce/separation?
- Probe: Did you also live with your siblings?
5. Whose decision was it for you to live with that parent?
- Probe: Was it a courts decision?
- Probe: Do you remember the scenario?
- Probe: How did that make you feel?
6. To the best of your knowledge, did your non-custodial parent provide child support?
-Probe: By any chance, do you know how much?
7. There are many reasons why parents divorce, sometimes people change, sometimes there are money issues, and did you know the reasons why your parents divorced?
- Probe (If knows): How do you know that?
- Probe: How did that make you feel?
- Probe: Would you like to share why?

- Probe (If doesn't know): (check to see if he/she was too young)
- Probe: When did you know?
8. How would you describe your relationship with your non-custodial parent after the divorce/separation?
- Probe: Can you elaborate for me?
9. How well did your non-custodial parent understand you when you were a teenager?
- Probes: Can you elaborate?
10. How would you describe your relationship with your custodial parent after the divorce/separation?
- Probe: Can you give me some examples?
11. How well did your custodial parent understand you when you were a teenager?
-Probe: Can you elaborate?

12. Has either parent been involved in another serious committed relationship since the divorce/separation of your parents?

- Probe: Do/Did you like that person?
- Probe: How did that make you feel?
- Probe: Is he/she still with that person today?

This section focused on issues related to their parents' relationship with other after the divorce/separation....

13. To the best of your knowledge, were telephone calls from your non-custodial parent denied by your custodial parent?

- Probes: IF YES: How often did this occur?
- Probes: Can you give me an example?
- Probes: How did this make you feel?
- Probes: Why didn't you call?

- Probes: IF NO: How often did you talk on the phone with your non-custodial parent?
- Probes: Who initiated the phone calls (meaning who called who)?

14. How often did you see your non-custodial parent (during a month)?

- Probes: IF OFTEN: Was that because of visitation rights?
- Probes: Did you ever see your non-custodial parent during times that were not within the scheduled visitations?
- Probes: Were the visitations ever interrupted? Can you give me an example.....? (NOTE: I KNOW THIS IS DIFFICULT FOR YOU, PLEASE TAKE YOUR TIME.....)

- Probes: IF NOT OFTEN: Can you tell me why not?
- Probes: Was this your decision not to see each other?
- Probes: How did that make you feel?

15. Was there mutual respect between your parents after the divorce/separation?
(Meaning, how did your parents speak about each other after the divorce)

- Probes: IF NO: What makes you think this?
- Probes: Just what do you mean?
- Probes: How did that make you feel?

- Probes: IF YES: Check for inconsistencies with the responses from the previous questions.....

This section focused on issues that were related to the personal relationships with the participants and others in terms of friends, and lovers....

16. Did you have many close friends when you were in elementary/high school?

IF YES:

-Probes: Are you still in contact with any of them?

- Probes: Why or why not

17. How many days did you see your friends outside school per week?

-Probes: What did you do when you hung out?

18. How many close friends do you have today??

- Probes: How often are you in contact with them (in terms of hours per week)?

19. When you think of your friends, would you think that you have more male or female friends?

- Probes: If more of the opposite sex, why do you think that is the case?

20. Do you feel that your friends really know who you are?

IF YES

-Probes: Do you share your dark secrets with your friends?

IF NO:

Probes: Why Not?

21. Did you have problems trusting others?

IF YES

-Probes: Why not?

-Probes: Can you elaborate for me please?

22. Do you have problems trusting your friends now?

- IF YES

-Probes: Why not?

-Probes: Can you elaborate for me please?

23. Other than your friends, do you have anyone else in particular you can talk to about yourself or your problems?

24. Have you ever had a boy/girlfriend?

- Probes: How old were you when you had your first boy/girlfriend?

- Probes: How old were you when you lost your virginity?

25. Have you ever been in a romantic committed relationship for longer than 6 months?

26. Are you still in that relationship today?

IF YES

-Probes: How long have you been dating?

-Probes: Do you live together?

IF NO

- Probes: Why did that relationship end?

- Probes: Have you been in other romantic relationships for longer than 6 months since?

This section concentrated on the participants' behaviors, and again I stressed the fact if there were any questions that made them feel uncomfortable, they had the right not to answer ok

27. How did you feel about high school?

-Probes: Were grades important to you?

-Probes: Were making friends important to you?

-Probes: Was high school a good experience?

28. How do you feel about school now?

-Probes: Are grades important to you now?

29. Were you ever bullied in school?

-Probes: What did you do about it?

30. Were you a bully in school?

IF YES:

-Probes: Why were you a bully?

31. How many days per week did you engage in school based activities in high school?

-Probes: In terms of school sports?

-Probes: School Committees

-Probes: Did you like doing it, what made you join?

32. How many days a week did you engage in extra-curricular activities outside school?

-Probes: Hobbies, Volunteering

-Probes: Did you like doing it, what made you join?

33. Did you have a part time job when you were in high school?

-Probes: Where?

-Probes: How often did you work?

34. When you were in high school, how often did you get detentions?
- Probes IF YES: If response is often, determine what often means to them
- Probes: Why did you get these detentions?
- Probes: IF NO: So would you consider yourself an obedient student?
35. Would you have considered yourself a rebellious teen?
-Probes IF YES: Can you explain or give me some examples?
- Probes: Were your peers with you when you did these activities?
36. Did you get into many arguments with people who were close to you (parents/friends)?
IF YES
-Probes: Who started the arguments?
- Probes: Who tried to stop the arguments?
37. Do you get into many arguments with people who are close to you (parents/friends) today?
IF YES
-Probes: Who started the arguments?
- Probes: Who tried to stop the arguments?
38. Did you experience nervousness when you were younger?
IF YES
-Examples: afraid people were mad at you, talking about you, didn't accept you?
- Probes: Can you elaborate for me?
- Probes: Can you give me an example?
39. Do you experience nervousness now?
IF YES
- Probes: Can you elaborate for me?
- Probes: Can you give me an example?
40. Did your custodial parent let you go out any evening you wanted to?
-Probes: Curfews?
41. When you were a teenager, did you have many chores?
-Probes: What were they?
42. When you were an adolescent, did you ever try marijuana/hash?
-Probes: IF YES: Why did you try it?
-Probes: Who did you try it with?
- Probes: How often?

-Probes: IF NO: Why not?

43. Do you use marijuana/ hash today?

- Probes: IF YES: Why do you use it?
- Probes: How often do you use it?
- Probes: Who do you do it with?

-Probes: IF No: I AM HAPPY YOU'VE OVERCOME THAT! ONLY IF THERE WAS A PROBLEM...

44. When you were an adolescent, did you ever try any of hard drugs such as cocaine, heroine?

- Probes: IF YES: Why did you try it?
- Probes: Who did you try it with?
- Probes: How often?

-Probes: IF NO: Why not?

45. Do you use any hard drugs today?

- Probes: IF YES: Why do you use it?
- Probes: How often do you use it?
- Probes: Who do you do it with?

-Probes: IF No: I AM HAPPY YOU'VE OVERCOME THAT! ONLY IF THERE WAS A PROBLEM.

46. As an adolescent, have you ever been drunk?

- Probes: IF YES: Why did you get drunk?
- Probes: Who did you get drunk with?
- Probes: How often?

-Probes: IF NO: Why not?

47. How often do you get drunk today?

- Probes: IF YES: Why do you get drunk?
- Probes: How often do you get drunk?
- Probes: Who do you do get drunk with?

I commented that I only had a few more questions to ask, but that the interview was almost over.....

48. How would you describe your relationship today with both your parents?

-Probes: How does that make you feel?

49. How well do your parents get along with each other today?

-Probes: How does that make you feel (good or bad responses)?

50. Are you familiar with the term joint custody?

IF NO, Explain

-Probes: What are your views on it and tied in to #51.

51. Hypothetical question:

After getting married and having children, what would you do with respect to your children if your marriage doesn't work out for whatever reason and you divorce?

DEMOGRAPHICS

52. What is your age?

53. What is your Religion?

54. What is your occupation?

55. Where do you live?

56. What is your highest level of education?

APPENDIX D:

George's Interview

George

Although George did not speak to the researcher directly, he agreed to have his wife speak on his behalf and to share his story with me. It is too difficult for George to talk about, for he is extremely sensitive on this issue, and would be unable to speak about it. He has been with his wife for many years, and has shared all the stories with her. In addition, she has witnessed many events between George and his parents.

George's parents divorced when he was three. He had an older brother who was six at the time. Since, his mother has been very manipulative and has successfully alienated George from his father. George's mom has always been very controlling, and George always felt he had to please his mom, even if he was displeasing himself. At 30, George still strives to please his mother.

George's mother does not like Sharon (his wife), for she interferes too much in George's life. She recalls once when George was working at Burger King. Sharon was convincing George to get a better job, a job that respects him more. But his mother told Sharon to mind her own business, for working at Burger King was the best job that George was going to get because he does not speak French. George, at the time, listened to his mother.

George and Sharon have been married for 5 years now, and the wedding was located in Mexico, on an all-inclusive resort. George's mother did not attend the wedding because she said she could not afford it, but Sharon believes that she did not go because she does not approve of her. However, to add insult to injury, George's mother said if you invite your dad, I will disown you, even though she herself was not going. Consequently, George did not invite his dad, even though according to Sharon, his dad would have loved to go. Today, George's dad has no idea that his son is married, and is about to be a father.

Sharon has witnessed many of the letters that the father has written George, where he poured his heart out. Some of these letters have dated back to when George was a little boy. Ironically George has kept them all, but has done nothing about them. George never wrote back. Christmas and Birthday gifts were returned to the father, and George was aware of this occurring.

Sharon has stated that the mother is evil. She had remarried, and managed to turn her husband against his own children. She had to control everything and didn't like to be shared. Eventually George's mother left this man who gave everything up for her. He later reconciled his relationship with his children.

Sharon states that this alienation has affected George in many, many ways. He was very depressed, and had gambling problems and has lost large sums of money in the past. Every time he felt down, he gambled, and it became an obsession. He has not gambled in two years.

Two years ago, George and Sharon went to seek counseling. George was becoming very distant, and the only person who he protected was his mother. His mother does not like Sharon, and that has caused a lot of problems in their relationship and their marriage. Sharon told me that the psychologist told them that George's mother was the problem, and George has to confront her. After that day, George refused to go back. I guess he did not like the fact that the psychologist was criticizing his mother.

Analysis:

George can be classified as a severe type of alienation. Although his wife and a psychiatrist has repeatedly told George that his mother is the root to many of his problems, George continues to defend and supports his mother. He has no desire to see his father, although deep down inside, his wife believes he does, but he cares too much about his mother's feelings.

Instead, George continues to denigrate his father, but only does so in the company of his mother. He does not do it with anyone else.

APPENDIX E:

List of Recommendations from the Report of the Special Joint Committee on Child Custody and Access: 'For the Sake of the Children'

Child's Rights

1. The Committee recommends that the *Divorce Act* be amended to include a Preamble alluding to the relevant principles of the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.
2. The Committee recognizes that parents' relationships with their children do not end upon separation or divorce and therefore recommends that the *Divorce Act* be amended to add a Preamble containing the principle that divorced parents and their children are entitled to a close and continuous relationship with one another.
3. The Committee recommends that where, in the opinion of the court, the proper protection of the best interests of the child requires it, judges have the power to appoint legal counsel for the child. Where such counsel is appointed, it must be provided to the child.

Language of Divorce

4. The Committee recommends that the terms "custody and access" no longer be used in the *Divorce Act* and instead that the meaning of both terms be incorporated and received in the new term "shared parenting", which shall be taken to include all the meanings, rights, obligations, and common-law and statutory interpretations embodied previously in the terms "custody and access".
5. The Committee recommends that the *Divorce Act* be amended to repeal the definition of "custody" and to add a definition of "shared parenting" that reflects the meaning ascribed to that term by this Committee.
6. The Committee recommends that the common law "tender years doctrine" be rejected as a guide to decision making about parenting.
7. The Committee recommends that both parents of a child receive information and records in respect of the child's development and social activities, such as school records, medical records and other relevant information. The obligation to provide such information should extend to schools, doctors, hospitals and others generating such information or records, as well as to both parents, unless ordered otherwise by a court.

Parenting Education

8. The Committee Recommends that all parents seeking parenting orders, unless there is agreement between them on terms of such an order, be required to participate in an education program to help them become aware of the post-separation reaction of parents and children, children's developmental needs at different ages, the benefits of co-operating parenting after divorce, parental rights and responsibilities, and the availability and benefits of mediation and other forms of dispute resolution, provided such programs are available. A certificate of attendance at such a post-separation education program would be required before the parents would be able to proceed with their application for a parenting order. Parents should not be required to attend sessions together.

Shared Parenting and Parenting Plans

9. The Committee recommends that divorcing parents be encouraged to develop, on their own or with the help of a trained mediator or through some form of alternative dispute resolution, a parenting plan setting out details about each parent's responsibilities for residence, care, decision making and financial security for the children, together with the dispute resolution process to be used by the parties. Parenting plans must also require the sharing between parents of health, educational and other information related to the child's development and social activities. All parenting orders should be in the form of parenting plans.
10. The Committee recommends that the relationships of grandparents, siblings and other extended family members with children be recognized as significant and that provisions for maintaining and fostering such relationships, where they are in the best interests of those children, be included in parenting plans.
11. The Committee recommends that the Minister of Justice seek to and the *Divorce Act* to require that parties applying to a court for a parenting order must file a proposed parenting plan with the court.

Grandparent's Application for Parenting Orders

12. The Committee recommends that the provincial and territorial governments consider amending their family law to provide that maintaining and fostering relationships with grandparents and other extended family members is in the best interests of children and that such relationships should not be disrupted without a significant reason related to the well-being of the child.

Complications of High-Conflict Divorces

13. The Committee recommends that federal, provincial and territorial governments work together to encourage the development of effective models for the early identification of high-conflict families seeking divorce. Such families should be streamed into a specialized, expedited process and offered services designed to improve outcomes for their children.

Supervised Parenting Program

14. The Committee recommends that the federal, provincial and territorial governments work together to ensure the availability of supervised parenting programs to serve Canadians in every part of Canada.
15. The Committee recommends that the *Divorce Act* be amended to make explicit provision for the granting of supervised parenting orders where necessary to ensure continuing contact between a parent and a child in situations of transitions, or where there is clear evidence that the child requires protection.

Action on Perjury in Civil Courts

16. The Committee recommends that, to deal with intentional false accusations of abuse or neglect, the federal government assess the adequacy of the *Criminal Code* in dealing with false statements in family law matters and develop policies to promote action on clear cases of mischief, obstruction of justice or perjury.

Parental Estrangement and Parental Alienation

17. The Committee recommends that the federal government work with the provinces and territories to encourage child welfare agencies to track investigations of allegations of abuse made in the context of parenting disputes, in order to provide a statistical basis for a better understanding of this problem.