

The Influence of Parental Separation and Divorce on Father-Child Relationships

by

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Using a risk and resilience theoretical framework, the present study examined the influence of parental divorce during childhood on father-child relationship quality in young adulthood. This relationship quality was measured using nurturant fathering and modified father involvement scales, and self-reports of current amount of face-to-face and verbal father-child contacts. Comparisons on these measures were made between 107 young adults from intact and 96 from divorced family backgrounds. The divorce group was also examined in isolation to explore how divorce-related factors, including structural, early contact, and interparental relationship factors, predict young adults' perceptions of their father-child relationship. Results show young adults from intact family backgrounds to report a comparatively stronger father-child relationship. Among divorce group participants, structural factors (higher father SES and joint custody) and early contact (greater percentage of time spent with father post-divorce) were predictors of higher scores on combined nurturant fathering and involvement measures. Greater early contact and stronger interparental relationship factors (low conflict and high contact and cooperativeness) similarly predicted current contact.

KEY WORDS

Divorce
Father-Child Relationship

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Introduction

Overview

Forty percent of Canadian marriages end in divorce by the 30th wedding anniversary (Statistics Canada, 2003). As a result, nearly half of all children will spend some portion of their childhood years residing in single-parent households, usually with their mothers (Pasley & Braver, 2004). These high rates of divorce and increasing numbers of single parent families foster an ever expanding literature documenting the effects of family transitions.

Though there are exceptions, in many cases children are the greatest victims of parental divorce with research uncovering negative consequences that can long outlast their childhood (e.g., Amato, 2000; Amato & Sobolewski, 2001). Parental separation and divorce means a disruption of the family unit and often a process of redefining parental roles. Perhaps one of the most salient risks of parental divorce is the deteriorating father-child relationship (e.g., Ahrons & Tanner, 2003; Dunlop, Burns & Bermingham, 2001; Shapiro & Lambert, 1999). Some researchers have suggested that losses in the father-child bond are at least in part responsible for the well-recognized relation between divorce and negative child outcomes (Richardson & McCabe, 2001). Similarly, close father-child bonds are thought to protect against the ill effects of divorce on fathers' well-being (Smyth, 2004; Stone, 2002).

Fathers were once seen as exclusively economic providers for their families. Today researchers, policy makers and society as a whole are recognizing the changing roles of fathers, who have multiple roles in the family, including contributions to the development and emotional well-being of their children (e.g., Lamb & Tamis-Lemonda,

2004; Richardson & McCabe, 2001). Research demonstrates that children who enjoy consistently positive relationships with *both* of their divorced parents tend to have the most favourable health outcomes (e.g., Bauserman, 2002; Richardson & McCabe, 2001). This evidence points to the need to investigate not just the amount of father-child contact following divorce, but also the dynamic qualities of these father-child relationships as they unfold in the context of family changes. However, in comparison to the well-researched influence of the mother-child relationship following divorce, father-child relationship dynamics have been understudied.

This study will investigate the nature of the father-child relationship and how it changes following divorce. The goal is to identify factors that contribute to losses in father-child bonds, or conversely, may promote healthful father-child relations. Rather than considering only a single factor, such as time spent together, I take a *Risk and Resilience* approach and suggest that multiple processes are involved and contribute to the quality of this relationship in both intact and divorced families.

The inclusion of a group of young adults raised in intact families allowed for the differentiation of normal developmental changes in the father-child relationship from divorce-related influences. I used perceptions of father involvement and nurturance while growing up, in addition to current level of father contact, as a measure of the quality of father-child relationship. I expected to find the quality of the father-child relationship, as defined above, to significantly differ between intact and divorced groups. Among those participants whose parents divorced during childhood, I hypothesized various factors while growing up -- including father socio-economic status (SES), custody arrangements,

early contact and interparental relationship quality -- to predict the quality of the father-child relationship during young adulthood.

The Role of the Father

Dramatic shifts in social climate have occurred during the last half-century as the most prominent family form shifted from father-breadwinner families to dual-earner families. At the same time, social-cultural beliefs in North America have come to encourage fathers to share in the child rearing responsibilities once left to women (Amato & Sobolewski, 2004).

In contrast to earlier conceptualizations of fathers' roles within the family, researchers have begun to recognize that fathers play a number of significant roles in their families: companions, care providers, spouses, protectors, models, moral guides, teachers, and breadwinners (Lamb & Tamis-LeMonda, 2004). Fathers are perhaps now more than ever seen as important figures contributing to the well-being and development of their children. However, just as social changes have moved to incorporate a more involved father into the lives of his children, shifts in family structure, such as the growing numbers of mother-headed families due to rising divorce rates and non-marital births, have undermined such involvement.

Fathers' Contributions to their Children's Well-Being: Why are Fathers Important?

Fathers can exert direct influences on their children through their behavior, their attitudes, and the messages they convey. Fathers also affect children indirectly through their effects on other people and social circumstances that impact their children's development (Lamb & Tamis-LeMonda, 2004). Some researchers claim, for example,

that fathers' interactions with their children cannot be fully understood outside of the changing network of family relationships following divorce (Lamb & Lewis, 2004).

Amato and Sobolewski (2004) consider two categories of parental resources: financial and social capital. Financial capital refers to income provided by parents, in a variety of ways, to their children. Social capital refers broadly to children's family, parental, and community relationships that facilitate their cognitive and social development. In addition to financial and social capital, parents may also influence their child through support and monitoring.

When Amato and Sobolewski's (2004) view of parental resources is applied to divorcing families, fathers typically provide financial capital through their payment of child support. Interestingly, fathers' financial contributions are one of the most researched and strongest predictors of positive outcomes among children with divorced parents (King, 1994). Fathers' economic support may improve children's health and nutrition, increase the amount of stimulation in the home environment, improve children's access to educational resources (Amato & Sobolewski, 2004), and increase scholastic competence and achievement (King, 1994). Fathers' economic contributions may also indirectly affect their children by lowering the level of stress experienced by mothers.

Although the benefit of having an engaged father in a child's life may seem obvious, many studies fail to find significant associations between frequency of post-divorce father contact and measures of children's adjustment and well being. For example, King (1994) concluded in her study that "there is limited evidence to support the hypothesis that nonresident father involvement has positive benefits for children" (p.

78). However, such studies often neglect the interactional nature of father involvement, do not consider confounds such as the age of the child, and include only a few dependent variables or aspects of children's 'well-being.' Amato and Sobolewski (2004) suggest that father contact provides additional opportunities for divorced parents to quarrel and, therefore, emphasize the importance of measuring interparental conflict. These authors support their hypothesis with findings that father-child post-divorce contact tends to be associated with lower behavior problems among sons when conflict between parents is low and to be associated with higher behavior problems among sons when conflict is high.

It is clear then, that contact alone does not guarantee the constructive transfer of paternal resources; the *quality* of fathering and the *quality* of the father-child relationship must also be considered. Amato and Sobolewski's analysis -- based on a 17-year longitudinal study -- found the father-child relationship quality (measured by five items dealing with trust, fairness, understanding, respect, and overall closeness, as viewed by both parent and child) to be positively related to psychological well-being in post-divorce young adult offspring. Similarly, Lamb and Tamis-Lamonda (2004) conclude that "sensitive fathering: responding to, talking to, scaffolding, and teaching and encouraging their children to learn, predicts children's cognitive and linguistic achievements just as sensitive mothering does" (p. 4). Young adults who perceive their fathers' parenting styles as highly caring and not overcontrolling, were also found to have more positive self-images (Dunlop, Burns & Bermingham, 2001). Authoritative parenting styles among noncustodial fathers have similarly been associated with children having higher academic

achievement, fewer externalizing problems, and fewer internalizing problems (Amato & Sobolewski, 2004).

In studying intact families, Lamb and Lewis (2004) found that intact fathers' involvement in routine child care is associated with children's higher academic performance and with less stereotypical views about sex-roles on the part of daughters. Physically playful, affectionate, and socially engaging father-son interactions during childhood were also found to predict sons' popularity with peers during adolescence.

Researchers commonly conclude that closeness with both mothers and fathers is one of the most important predictors of psychosocial adjustment among post-divorce young adult offspring (Gunnoe, & Hetherington, 2004; Richardson & McCabe, 2001). Gutmann and Rosenberg (2003), for example, including a sample of children from divorced and intact families, found that those children with closer ties to their fathers (greater intimacy and less emotional distance) showed better emotional functioning, social adjustment, and school performance.

In a recent review of the literature, Lamb and Lewis (2004) conclude that as adolescents, most children in both intact and divorced families believe that their mothers know them better than their fathers. While sons generally report feeling equally close to their mothers and fathers, daughters report having comparatively distanced relationships with their fathers. This suggests that sons may have a relatively easier time maintaining a close father-child relationship.

Adolescence is recognized as a time of increasing independence and of exploring close peer relationships. Researchers have found adolescents in both intact and divorced families more likely to be involved in early intimate relationships when they report

emotionally distant relationships with their fathers (Tasker, 1996). Young adults have been found to experience greater anxiety in these intimate relationships when they report poor relationships with their fathers, regardless of the mother-child relationship quality (Riggio, 2004). These findings suggest that non-custodial fathers too may play an important role in adolescents' involvements in romantic relationships.

Despite the negative outcomes seen among some children with divorced parents who lack father involvement in their lives, many develop normally following their parents' divorces. Similarly, not all children of divorce will have poor relationships with their fathers. Research must therefore attempt to determine why some children appear to suffer more long-term negative consequences as a result of parental separation, while others do not. The current study will focus on qualities of the father-child relationship that may contribute to positive and negative outcomes.

Risk and Resilience Theory

Resilience refers broadly to a process of positive adaptation within a context of significant adversity. Although many early researchers focused on internal attributes of the child as the primary sources of such resilience, others have begun to acknowledge factors external to the child such as family influences and characteristics of their wider social environments (Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000).

For the purpose of the current discussion, divorce is viewed as a significant risk to the maintenance of positive father-child relationships. However, despite this risk, many children maintain strong father-child bonds following parental separation and divorce, indicating that there are potentially protective processes at work. Such protective factors may include custody and living arrangements that encourage more contact, a father's

socioeconomic status, a cooperative interparental relationship, and high quality father-child contact. The opposites of such processes may conversely be seen as risk factors to maintaining close father-child relationships.

Rutter (1987) suggests that protective processes may act to reduce the risk impact, or reduce the negative chain reactions to risk. Research has indeed shown this to be the case in the context of the father-child relationship in divorcing families; the father-child bond may, for example, moderate the relation between parental divorce and child outcomes. Another important consideration is the *interaction* of protective and risk processes, where certain processes can moderate the associations between divorce influences and the father-child relationship. For example, a high amount of post-divorce financial contribution by the father may be seen favorably by the mother, who may be more permissive of the father's involvement, leading to a higher quality of father-child relationship.

Previous investigations of the post-divorce father-child relationship have demonstrated that the simple measurement of contact is insufficient in predicting father-child relationship quality; it does little to explain why some children have good relationships with highly involved fathers and why others do not. I believe that a risk and resilience approach to explaining the father-child relationship after divorce will help to address this important question.

Factors Thought to Influence Post-Divorce Father-Child Relationship Quality

There are a number of factors children 'experience' while growing up that impact whether they will have positive relationships with their fathers as young adults. Children whose parents divorce will have exceptional challenges to maintaining a strong father-

child bond. It is therefore important to highlight factors that contribute to the likelihood that fathers will play meaningful roles in the lives of their children.

Fathers may be involved in their children's lives by providing financial support, emotional support, guidance and mentoring, and by maintaining frequent and high quality communication with their children. Among other factors, father involvement may be affected by psychological characteristics of parent and child, custody and living arrangements, interparental conflict, financial and social support, and father's socioeconomic status. In addition to their singular effects on the father-child relationship, these variables may act indirectly by influencing or interacting with other variables. For example, fathers' socioeconomic status may not only affect their child support contributions, but also fathers' contacts with their children by having the time and means to travel and visit children who do not live nearby. The amount of father-child contact might in turn affect child support contributions, interparental conflict, and the quality of the father-child relationship. Father involvement and the father-child bond are therefore affected by multiple interacting systems operating at different levels over the life course. These interacting levels must be considered in any explanation of paternal influence (Lamb & Tamis-LeMonda, 2004).

Custody and living arrangements

Custody and living arrangements provide a context in which father-child contact can occur. Schwartz and Finley (2005) found that young adults who had resided with their fathers at some point following divorce to rate the father-child relationship significantly more favorably than those who did not reside with fathers following divorce. Overall, joint legal or physical custody arrangements, where both parents have

the ability to be with the child and participate in making important childrearing decisions, tend to promote more father-contact than mother sole custody (Amato & Sobolewski, 2004). Interestingly, joint custodian fathers often report similar or better relationships with their children than residential fathers in intact families (Shapiro & Lambert, 1999). In most divorced families, however, children reside with their mothers and fathers are often relegated to a restricted visitation/access schedule (Pasley & Braver, 2004).

Most custody arrangements are negotiated between parents outside of the courtroom. Although some might view the greater number of maternal custody arrangements as parents' consensual decision, Thompson (1994) suggests that fathers may agree to these arrangements because "they believe they could achieve no better than a visiting relationship with offspring even if they fought for a more generous arrangement" (p. 216). Supporting this idea is the finding that mothers are more likely to act on their stated desires for custody compared to fathers. That is, if mothers and fathers both desire full custody of their children, mothers are more likely to fight for it. Mothers are also twice as likely to have custody requests granted when they conflict with fathers' desires (Maccoby & Mnookin 1992).

When custody and visitation arrangements are contested in court, judges are expected to make gender neutral decisions based on the best interests of the child (Stamps, 2002). Despite supposedly unbiased custody decisions, maternal preference still appears obvious (Stamps, 2002; Thompson, 1994). About 50% of the time mothers are awarded sole custody of the children, with only 10% having sole father custody. Although the remaining 40% of decisions comprise joint arrangements, this seldom means that parents spend equal amounts of time with the dependent child (Statistics

Canada, 2000). Most divorce statistics, for example, provide an indication of *legal* custody rather than actual living arrangements. In Canada, only one-third of children with a shared custody agreement actually shared living arrangements between parents at separation (Department of Justice Canada, 2004).

Although maternal custody is undoubtedly given in many cases where it is clearly in the best interests of the children, in other cases, this preference may be due to residing social beliefs that mothers have an instinctual or “natural ability” to nurture their children. Long ago, this was known as the “tender years doctrine,” where young children were thought best off with their mothers in all but rare circumstances (Stamps, 2002). Another “rule of thumb” in custody decisions is the idea of the “primary caretaker,” where the parent who has spent the most time raising the child is given preference. Thompson (1994) argues in a well written review of the literature, that this standard puts men at a disadvantage. He suggests that “the same sexist society that denigrates the earning potential of women makes it harder for men to make career sacrifices in favor of enhanced caregiving involvement with offspring when they are primarily responsible for supporting the family” (p. 218). For many men, taking a job with more flexible hours or a ‘leave of absence’ to assist in caregiving is not an option without undermining the family’s standard of living. “Just as the postdivorce earning potential of mothers is hampered by their predivorce caregiving commitment, the capacity of fathers for a meaningful postdivorce caregiving role is undermined by their predivorce economic support responsibility under the ‘primary caretaker’ standard” (p. 228).

In terms of custody decisions, a study by Stamps (2002) suggests that although judges do not explicitly select mothers as the preferred parents, they definitely favor

mothers to a greater extent than fathers, and specifically favor mothers when young children are involved. Many societal beliefs may therefore still convey the message that fathers should play a secondary role in raising children. This is despite evidence from a growing literature indicating that children's overall adjustment following divorce is not different between those living with custodial mothers versus custodial fathers (Stamps, 2002).

A literature review by Hetherington, Bridges, and Insabella (1998) concludes that there are different strengths and weaknesses in the parenting of both custodial mothers *and* fathers, with little evidence to suggest that one type of residency is any better than the other in terms of child outcomes. A more recent study by Pike (2003) compared primary aged children's residential arrangements in terms of adjustment measures (perceived competence and self-esteem, social support, achievement and everyday life skills). While it is a correlational study, and therefore unable to determine cause and effect, the results would suggest that the overall adjustment is similar between children residing with mothers and those living with their fathers. However, it may be important to consider that while father custody is often granted only when the mother is incapable or unfit to parent, in many other cases the father also has above average resources and parenting skills. Therefore, some may argue that children do comparatively well in a sample of these cases due to the above average parenting abilities in the father custody group. Although the literature is at times mixed on the issue of child outcomes and residential status, it does not necessarily support the idea that maternal preference is in the best interests of the child.

In a review of Australian literature relevant to post-separation fatherhood, Smyth (2004) concluded that 41% of non-residential fathers, compared to 3% of resident mothers, were unhappy with post-divorce living arrangements, where many fathers wanted children to reside with them and many others simply wanted equal care. When questioned, three quarters of nonresident fathers, compared with only one-quarter of resident mothers, agreed with the idea that children should spend equal amounts of time with each parent following divorce. Many fathers may therefore long for more time with their children and some mothers are perhaps reluctant to give any of “their” time with their children to the fathers. Interestingly, both mothers and fathers overestimate their ex-spouse’s satisfaction with the post-divorce arrangements; this perception that the ex-spouse ‘has it better’ can serve as a major source of post-divorce conflict (Spillman, Deschamps & Crews, 2004).

Child support payment

Despite the importance of economic contributions to children’s well-being, only 60% of custodial mothers have child support awards and between one-fifth to one-third of those fathers obligated to pay fail to do so (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2001). Although in some cases this may be due to a legitimate inability to pay child support, in other cases fathers fail to provide support even though they can afford to do so. Men may be angry at their ex-spouses and wish to avoid them, are dissatisfied with the property division, or think that their child support orders are unfair (Amato & Sobolewski, 2004). Hostile feelings following divorce may therefore undermine many fathers’ motivations to provide financial support to their children. In support, those mothers reporting less pre-separation conflict with their children’s fathers also report receiving more regular child

support payments. The payment of child support has also been related to father-child contact, where paying child support and maintaining frequent contact with the children may reinforce each other (Amato & Sobolewski, 2004; Seltzer, 1991).

Father's socioeconomic status

The socioeconomic status of the father, particularly high levels of education and income, is also associated with more contact (Amato & Sobolewski, 2004). Financially well off fathers are more likely to pay child support and perhaps may want to see their children more often to ensure that their contributions are being used. Highly educated fathers may be more likely to realize the importance of father figures for their children and, therefore, have stronger emotional commitments to them. Greater financial resources also make it easier for men to take time off work and travel to see their children.

Amount and quality of father-child contact

Most studies conclude that many divorced fathers have little or no contact with their children (Amato & Sobolewski, 2004; Spillman, Deschamps & Crews, 2004). The literature suggests that about one-third of children with divorced parents do not see their fathers in a given year, another third will see their fathers anywhere from bi-weekly to bi-monthly, and another third see their fathers at least once a week (King, 1994; Seltzer, 1991). Importantly, this lack of physical contact is often not compensated by phone calls, letters or emails (Gunnore & Hetherington, 2004; Seltzer, 1991), as is the case with nonresident mothers. Geographical distance between father and child is an important obstacle to maintaining contact and should be considered when measuring father-child contact. It appears that at least some of the decreased father-child contact mentioned above can be attributed to fathers' socioeconomic status and distance from child (Seltzer,

1991). Similarly, geographical distance can prevent contact with other support systems such as extended family units. While research has shown grandparents to have a positive influence on children's adjustment, geographical distance sometimes remains a barrier to grandparent-child contact. This geographical obstacle can make maintaining positive grandparent-child relationships difficult, which are especially dependent on face-to-face contact (Ehrenberg & Smith, 2003).

Contrary to what one might think, Hetherington and Kelly (2002) found pre-divorce father involvement alone to be a poor predictor of post-divorce involvement with children, indicating that the divorce process may have a negative effect on father-child relationships regardless of prior relationship quality. Amato and Sobolewski (2004) found that "divorced fathers frequently complained about the emotional difficulties associated with maintaining contact (the pain of returning children after visits, feeling irrelevant because they have little influence in their children's lives, and frustration when ex-spouses deliberately create barriers to visitation)" (p. 348). Even among those fathers who remain involved, many do not spend much high-quality time with their children (Amato & Sobolewski, 2004). Post-divorce visitation arrangements often give nonresidential parents insufficient time to sustain close and psychologically meaningful relationships with their children (Amato & Sobolewski, 2004).

Whiteside and Becker (2000) conducted a meta-analytic review including 17 independent samples (reported in 12 studies) investigating relationships critical to understanding young children's post-divorce adjustment. The authors reviewed studies that characterized the father-child relationship using measures of enjoyment, affection, closeness, and perceived quality of the relationship between father and the child.

Interestingly, of these four measures of father-child contacts, only father-child relationship quality showed a significant association with child outcome variables. Although father-child relationship quality was significantly affected both by the pre-separation level of involvement and by frequency of father visits, frequency and length of contacts alone did not predict relationship quality. Similarly, in a pilot study for the current paper involving ten participants, almost half reported having "good relationships" with their fathers, despite rating their relationships as "not very close." This suggests that a direct measure of "closeness" does not necessarily reflect what is viewed as a "good" father-child relationship.

Feelings of "closeness" might have been anticipated to play a greater role in the perceived quality of the father-child relationship than research thus far has shown. However, it is important to consider that these earlier studies used measures of closeness developed to characterize the mother-child relationship and have applied them to assess the father-child relationship. Therefore, qualities or dimensions specific to the father-child relationship may not have been tapped. Similarly, a direct measure of closeness (i.e., 'how close do you feel to your father?') may overlook other aspects of the father-child relationship which could collectively and perhaps objectively be observed as a close relationship. A more thorough measure was designed by Finley (1998) specifically for use with fathers and contains a greater span of nurturant/emotional aspects of the father-child relationship. Items on this Nurturant Fathering Scale include those such as: "When you needed your father's support, was he there for you?" and "As you go through your day, how much of a psychological presence does your father have in your daily thoughts and feelings?" It is possible that adolescents may report high levels of father-child

closeness on such a measure, while reporting relatively lower scores on 'direct,' perhaps mother-oriented measures of closeness.

Parenting style also plays a role in children's well-being. If non-custodial fathers are failing to be authoritative parents, then the contact they have may not contribute positively to their children's development (Weiss & Schwarz, 1996). In general, fathers adopt a more playful interaction style than do mothers, especially in cultures or subcultures with more traditional divisions of labor (Lamb & Lewis, 2004). Father visitation is frequently designated as weekends or every other weekend, a schedule which likely reinforces a more recreational or playmate-like relationship. Even for fathers who do maintain an authoritative parenting approach, many may not see their children enough to have a significant impact. Compared with fathers in intact families, nonresident fathers frequently miss daily living routines during the week, provide less help with homework, are less likely to set and enforce rules, and provide less monitoring and supervision of their children (Amato & Sobolewski, 2004).

Although parental divorce can affect children's relationships with both parents, the points already mentioned suggest that there are particular challenges for fathers in maintaining a quality relationship with their children. Gutmann and Rosenberg (2003) found that in divorced families, children's ratings of closeness with their mothers differed from their ratings of closeness with their fathers, while this was not the case for intact families. While children from intact families reported feeling almost equally close to both mothers and fathers, those in the divorced group felt much closer to their mothers than fathers, suggesting that the father-child relationship is more likely to be impaired following divorce.

Fathers' feelings

Fathers experience numerous challenges following divorce, including having to cope with the loss of their roles within the family unit and of their ready and frequent access to their children (Seltzer, 1991; Spillman, Deschamps & Crews, 2004). Following divorce, fathers' identities, which are typically tied to a 'breadwinning' role, become more ambiguous (Shapiro & Lambert, 1999) and can lead to confusion and distress. With regard to visitation, Thompson (1994) describes the visiting father as "a parent without a portfolio; he lacks a clear definition of his responsibility or authority. He often feels unneeded, cut off from the day-to-day issues in the child's life that provide the continuing agenda of the parent-child relationship" (p. 222).

It has been suggested that less involvement with their children following divorce may be associated with fathers' attempts to "shield themselves from reexperiencing the 'loss' associated with the end of each visitation" (e.g., Seltzer, 1991; Spillman, Deschamps & Crews, 2004; Thompson, 1994). Due to gender expectations, lack of support, and an inability to express emotions, many of these feelings may remain unacknowledged. This grief can lead to an increased likelihood of mental illness and/or maladaptive coping methods which may additionally affect the father-child relationship (Spillman, Deschamps & Crews, 2004).

The father's feelings of closeness to the child, satisfaction with parenting, parental competence, and perceptions of having influence over their children are associated with more father-child contact and involvement (Amato & Sobolewski, 2004; Lamb & Lewis, 2004). Unfortunately, after separation, many fathers appear to have little influence in childrearing decisions. Seltzer (1991) investigated noncustodial fathers' involvement

following divorce and found that over a third of parents had not discussed their children with one another during the previous year.

Mothers' feelings

The attitudes of custodial mothers can play a pivotal role in how much fathers will be involved with their children following divorce. It is interesting to note that while fathers typically experience a deteriorating relationship with their children following divorce, mothers often describe a closer relationship (Riggio, 2004). Furthermore, a meta-analytic review by Whiteside and Becker (2000) found that mothers reported a warmer relationship with their children when fathers visited infrequently and were less collaborative, regardless of the level of conflict between the parents. Mothers may therefore be reluctant to encourage father involvement when such involvement may take away from the mother-child relationship. In hopes of maintaining a strong mother-child bond, some mothers may hesitate to give up time with their children to satisfy fathers who would otherwise like to play a larger role in their children's lives.

Using data from a national longitudinal study, Harris and Ryan (2004) examined variations in father involvement in the context of differing family structures. After analyzing the interdependence of father and mother involvement in their study, Harris and Ryan suggest that men may relate to their children in large part through their wives or partners, highlighting the importance of the interparental relationship. They further conclude that some resident mothers are less willing to identify and to support the roles of fathers when he lives outside the children's home. As previously discussed, this loss of role validation marginalizes the father from the family system and may further contribute to his disengagement from children's lives.

Many fathers identify their former spouses as primary obstacles to increased involvement with their children (Dudley, 1991). In a study by Ahrons and Miller (1993), one-third of divorced fathers claimed that their ex-wives had denied visitation privileges at least once, while about one-fourth of custodial mothers admitted that they had denied visitation on at least one occasion. Additionally, mothers' but not fathers' perceptions of the mother-father relationship were related to the amount of contact fathers had with their children. This suggests that mothers encourage or discourage father involvement based on how they feel about their former spouses. Research suggests that when fathers and their young adult children were interviewed, both wanted more contact than either the mothers or the custody arrangements allowed (Pasley & Braver, 2004). Mothers' attitudes may impact not only the child, but also the fathers, whose psychological well-being is shown to be positively related to the ongoing support and cooperation from their former spouses (Stone, 2002).

Despite these findings, King and Heard (1999) point out in their study that while some mothers create obstacles for father visitation, most want their former husbands to stay involved with the children. Most of the mothers in their study were satisfied with high levels of father-child contact, particularly when interparental conflict was minimal.

Interparental contact, conflict, and cooperativeness

"Following divorce, parents face the complex and paradoxical task of dissolving their roles as spouses while maintaining their independent roles as parents. Each needs to establish an independent relationship with dependent children, which requires continued interaction with the other parent" (Ahrons & Tanner, 2003, p. 341). Interparental conflict seems to play an important role, where fathers tend to have more frequent contact and a

better relationship with children when they have a cooperative, rather than a conflicted relationship with their ex-spouses (e.g., Ahrons & Tanner, 2003; Amato & Sobolewski, 2004; Riggio, 2004). The quality of the father-child and mother-child relationships are also found to be correlated in divorced families, indicating that when one parent has a good relationship with the child, the other tends to have a good relationship as well (Whiteside & Becker, 2000). Importantly, good parental relationships with their children predict better post-divorce child adjustment (Richardson & McCabe, 2001). Many researchers are now suggesting that the father-child relationship must also be seen in the context of the interparental relationship.

Child characteristics

In terms of children's characteristics that might influence father involvement, research indicates that in intact families, fathers have more contact with sons than daughters (Amato & Sobolewski, 2004). Although there appears to be a similar trend among divorced families (Lamb & Lewis, 2004), the literature is mixed. Nevertheless, the father-daughter relationship is often found to be vulnerable to losses in feelings of closeness, especially as viewed by college-aged daughters (Ahrons & Tanner, 2003). Based on young adults' reports of contact with their divorced parents, our own research would seem to support this idea (Ehrenberg et al., 2005).

In a recent review of the literature, Amato and Sobolewski (2004) find great inconsistencies with some studies suggesting that contact between fathers and their children is more likely when children are younger, while other studies find the opposite. Overall, the available research indicates that the amount of time divorced fathers spend interacting with their children lessens as children grow older (King, 1994; Lamb &

Lewis, 2004). Schwartz and Finley (2005), using similar measures of father child-relationship quality as the present study, found that divorces occurring earlier in the child's life were more detrimental to the father-child bond as perceived by young adults. It should be noted that in some studies this finding may represent a developmental factor attributable to the age of the child (i.e., adolescents typically spend less time with parents) rather than family structure (Marsiglio, 1991).

Remarriage

Remarriage is another family transition which may influence the post-divorce father-child relationship. Fathers who remarry after divorce report less contact with the children of their previous marriages (Seltzer, 1991, in Amato and Sobolewski, 2004). Mothers' feelings about the remarriage are important, as mothers who disapprove are less likely to permit their children to have overnight visits at the remarried father's home (Amato & Sobolewski, 2004). Likewise, maternal remarriage is associated with losses in father-child contact, perhaps due to there being another 'father-figure' in the home who may take on additional caregiving roles as the new stepfamily re-stabilizes. As a result, the biological father may feel more ambiguous about his own role in his children's lives.

Time since divorce

There is some indication that the longer fathers and their children have been living apart, the less frequently they visit one another and the less likely they are to exchange telephone calls and letters (Seltzer, 1991). The Gutmann and Rosenberg (2003) study suggests that the greater the time since divorce, the more distant and disconnected the father-child relationship becomes. Importantly, the effects of increased interparental conflict, father remarriage, and lower father involvement appear to be cumulative and

most detrimental to the father child relationship when they are experienced in the early years following divorce (Ahrns & Tanner, 2003).

Measuring Factors thought to Influence the Post-Divorce Father-Child Relationship

Early measures of father involvement contained a substantial amount of gender bias, measuring mostly financial contributions, with the assumption being that this is the primary way that fathers contribute to children's well being. Although a father's financial contributions, including child support payments, are important, a father's financial situation impacts his probability of involvement in many other ways. As already mentioned, a father's financial status can impact the father-child relationship by allowing him to travel further and more frequently to see his child, to have more free time to spend with his child and, perhaps indirectly, to influence how the father is perceived by his ex-spouse. As such, the father's socio-economic status (SES) is relevant and important to consider in how it impacts father involvement and the father-child relationship.

Most of the common measures of father involvement were "derived from measures developed and used primarily with mothers as respondents, implicitly suggesting that fathers should do what mothers do" (Pasley & Braver, 2004, p. 224). As a result, most measures have assessed mother-oriented engagement activities; "this kind of face-to-face contact, especially that which is instrumental in nature, is more characteristic of the types of behaviours mothers engage in than that of fathers, who are more likely to be accessible and engage in recreational activities" (p. 224), especially due to the minimal weekend visitation patterns seen among many divorced fathers. In other words, measures of involvement that include items such as 'help with homework,' or 'participates in after-school activities,' may be less likely to be endorsed in the father-

child relationship. Measurement of involvement should, therefore, consider broader and not just 'activity-focused' approaches to measuring the ways in which fathers are engaged in their children's lives.

Although the transfer of social capital is more difficult to measure, the amount of father-child contact is often used as an estimate in many studies. Father-child contact may be measured by visitation alone, or may include communication by phone, letters, or email. The inclusion of variables that measure more than just face-to-face contact is important in the context of post-divorce relationships. One might guess, for example, that fathers who maintain a strong bond with their children, despite joint or mother custody, will be more likely to supplement face-to-face visits with telephone conversations. With regard to custody, it is important to consider that compared to non-divorced fathers, divorced fathers will often appear less involved on most behavioral measures as a result of the structural barriers of limited custody (Pasley & Braver, 2004).

Previous measures of father involvement have given little regard to what it was the father was doing or in what ways they were contributing to the child's development during times spent together (Finley & Schwartz, 2004). Newer assessment tools such as the Father Involvement Scale (Finley & Schwartz, 2004) have been developed with the aim of measuring the level of father involvement across many different areas of a child's life and many areas of his/her development. The Nurturant Fathering Scale (Finley, 1998) is also a relatively new measure that assesses the father's perceived emotional and nurturant involvement in his child's life. Most of the early studies used measures of father involvement applied to the perspective of the father and occasionally the mother;

both of which contain parental bias and exclude the child's perspective. These newer studies were designed to tap the perspective of the young adult.

Pasley and Braver (2004) suggest that young adults can provide valuable and perhaps less biased insights into father involvement and interparental relationship variables, as they should "contain neither self-serving nor other-bashing biases. Not only is such a child old enough to be credible, but also she or he should not be as biased as the parents are to either over report or underreport involvement" (p. 229). The father's impact on his child in this way is a "consequence of the child's perception independent of the veridicality of that perception" (Finley & Schwartz, 2004, p. 143).

The young adult also has the developmental ability to reflect on past *and* present feelings, opinions, and perceptions of their relationships with their fathers. In the pilot project for this study, a few participants indicated that when they were children their mothers had influenced their views of their fathers. With greater autonomy, young adults are more likely to develop autonomous views of their fathers and their relationships with them.

Measuring Father-Child Relationship Quality

The quality of the father-child relationship represented the overarching dependent variable in this study. What does it mean for a young adult to have a strong relationship with his or her father? What qualities would the relationship have? Intuitively, when we think about a father as having a good relationship with his child, we think about a father who spends time with his son or daughter and who is involved in many aspects of his children's lives. We might think of a father who is affectionate and caring, though he might express this affection differently than do mothers. In this study, these three

questions informed the measurement of young adults' perceptions of their relationships with their fathers. Therefore, the dependent variables reflecting the father-child relationship were comprised of: 1) the current amount of father-child contact, 2) varying domains of perceived satisfaction with father's involvement during childhood, and 3) the affective component of the father-child relationship. Using a modified Satisfaction with Father Involvement Scale and the Nurturant Fathering Scale developed specifically with reference to fathers, this study asks young adults:

- 1) How much do I *talk to* or *see* my father currently?
- 2) How invested has my father been in my development and in the various domains of my life that have contributed to the person I am today?
- 3) How close has my relationship been between my father and me growing up?

Considered together, these three questions are seen as broadly capturing the quality of this father-child relationship from the perspective of the young adult.

Current Study and Hypotheses

The purpose of this study was to investigate the quality of the father-child relationship following divorce. The quality of the father-child relationship was considered from the perspectives of young adults who experienced their parents' divorces during childhood, compared with the perspectives of young adults whose parents have remained together. A risk and resilience framework was used to determine what processes are important in maintaining a close father-child bond. Drawing on the previous empirical and theoretical literature, the following hypotheses were proposed:

First set of hypotheses concerning comparisons of the divorced and intact groups:

Hypothesis 1: Consistent with the research literature highlighting the impact of divorce on father-child relationships, and framed from a risk and resilience perspective, it was expected that young adults with divorced parents would report a lower quality of father-child relationship than those whose parents remained married. That is, young adults growing up in intact families were expected to have relatively higher scores across the dependent variables assessing father-child relationship qualities, indicating overall more healthful father-child relationships than the relatively lower scores expected of young adults with divorced parents.

Hypothesis 2: Based on previous research regarding sex differences in father-child relationships, it was expected that young adult men will report more frequent contact with their fathers than young adult women regardless of histories of parental divorce or continuing marriages. Furthermore, it was anticipated that this sex difference would be more pronounced among young adults in divorced families than would be seen in intact families.

Second set of hypotheses concerning the divorced group only:

Divorce-related characteristics and factors were expected to contribute to, or uniquely explain, the current father-child bond. These factors included: structural factors (father's SES and custody access), early father-child contact (percentage of time spent with father after separation and divorce), and interparental relationship factors (early parent contact, conflict, and co-operation on matters concerning their child). Although still exploratory, the current literature would suggest that the structural factor of father SES and custody arrangement to be large contributing variables; additional factors would

therefore be examined relative to the contributions of these “structural” variables, which were expected to be significant.

Method

Sample and Participants

Study participants were recruited through two sources: 1) the University of Victoria’s Psychology Research Participant System (PRPS), and 2) online recruitment through two large psychological research websites³. These websites are university-based, with a procedure in place for screening research studies before they can be posted. Potential participants are typically Canadian and U.S. students who are informed about these websites by their university or college professors.

Young adult participants with divorced parents were required to have been exposed to pre-divorce (living with both parents) and post-divorce (living with a single parent) conditions thought to affect reported relationship quality. As such, included in the divorced group were those participants who had experienced a parental divorce between the ages of eight and fifteen. Participants between the ages of 18 and 30 who fit this description were invited to participate. Young adults were chosen for this study based on their ability to reflect and report on their past and present relationships with both their mothers and fathers. Those individuals who had parents that are no longer living were excluded from the study, as loss of a parent by death is qualitatively different than disruptions in parent-child relations introduced by parental divorce.

Participants completed an Informed Consent Form describing the study and its aim of investigating father-child relationships (see Appendix A). Participants were given a brief demographic form and a questionnaire set that measured satisfaction with father

involvement and relationship quality (see Appendix B, C & D). A debriefing form was given following participation (see Appendix F).

The university undergraduate sub-sample recruited through the PRPS consisted of 83 young women (23 divorced/60 intact) and 59 young men (12 divorced/47 intact). These young adults were mostly first year students who were 19 years old or otherwise in their early twenties. The majority were Caucasian (79%) and described growing up in an “upper middle class” home (70%). Sixty-one participants were recruited online, including 28 young men and 33 young women, all from a divorced background. The majority of these participants were in their early twenties and geographically represented many states and provinces (34 U.S. and 27 Canadian citizens). Most identified themselves as Caucasian (90%) and to have grown up in a “lower” (35%) to “upper middle class family” (40%).

The divorce group for this study consisted of participants recruited online combined with those recruited through the university. In comparing these two recruitment groups, no demographic differences were found for participant sex, $F(1,94) = 11.20, p < .01$, living arrangements, $F(1,94) = 1.05, p > .05$, or education, $F(1,94) = .92, p > .05$. There were, however, observed differences in age, $F(1,94) = 11.20, p < .01$, and time since parental divorce, $F(1,94) = 19.55, p < .01$. Participants recruited online had a mean age of 23 ($SD = 3.89$) compared to the younger 21 year old average age of university group participants ($SD = 1.93$). Internet participants were reporting on their father-child relationship, on average, 12 years ($SD = 4.08$) after their parents’ divorce, compared to 8 years ($SD = 2.89$) among lab group participants. As differences

between age and time since parental divorce were thought relatively small, the two subsamples were combined.

The combined samples used in this study consisted of 107 young adults raised in intact families (47 males, 60 females), and 96 who had experienced their parents' separation and divorce during childhood (40 males, 56 females).¹ Though there were no group differences in terms of participant sex or education ($ps = ns$), there were significant differences in age of the participants, $F(1,201) = 18.35, p < .01$, and social class, $F(1,201) = 16.09, p < .01$. Intact group participants had an average age of 20 ($SD = 2.18$), while divorced group participants were on average 22 years old ($SD = 3.49$). While divorced group participants, on average, reported growing up in a lower middle class family home ($M = 2.36, SD = .82$), intact group participants reported growing up in more upper middle class families ($M = 2.78, SD = .63$). In terms of current living arrangements, 36% of the intact sample reported living with parents, versus 30% of the divorced sample.

The combined divorce group reported a mean age of 11 years old at the time of parental separation and were participating in this study, on average, 10 years following their parent's initial separation. Sixty-one percent of participants whose parents had divorced reported one or both parents remarrying and 49% percent reported having lived with a parent and step-parent at some time while growing up. Twenty-six percent of the young adults with divorced parents had stepsiblings join their family. In terms of custody distributions, half of divorced participants (48) indicated mother custody, while the other half (48) indicated a joint custody arrangement.

Measures

Recognizing that fathers can be present in their children's lives in a variety of ways, this research study took advantage of binary methods (where responses of father-absent children are compared with those of children in a comparison group), in addition to a more detailed approach considering the factors that have been hypothesized to influence the father-child relationship in the divorced sample (Day & Lamb, 2004).

Background Information (Independent Variables)

The *Young Adult Interview* (Ehrenberg & Walker, 1996) is a structured interview that provides information about basic demographics (i.e., sex, age, level of education, and level of income), as well as information about participants' family backgrounds. The Young Adult Interview: Self Report Form has been modified from the original measure to fit a self-administered questionnaire format and to include only those variables of interest to this study (see Appendix B).

Divorce group participants reported on father occupation and education levels that were later combined using the Hollingshead method (Hollingshead, 1975) to obtain a father Socio-Economic Status (SES) variable. Father SES scores ranged from 22 to 66, with an average score of 46.41 ($SD = 12.37$), corresponding to the Level IV Social Strata within the Hollingshead classification: *Medium business, minor professional, technical*.

Participants also reported on the percentage of post-divorce father contact growing up. Respondents reported spending between 0 and 90% of their post-divorce time with fathers (relative to mothers), with an average of 22% of time spent with fathers following their parents' divorce ($SD = 21.78$).

Reflecting on their parents' post-divorce relationship, participants were asked: "How would you generally describe your parents relationship with one another following

their separation/divorce?" Participants reported on a 5-point scale with 1 = avoided each other, 2 = talked/interacted when necessary, 3 = interacted frequently, 4 = interacted more than necessary. Participant scores provided a measure of interparental Contact and ranged from 1 to 3, with an average of 1.74 ($SD = 0.67$). Participants also responded to a question about Interparental Cooperation: "How able were your parents to get along with each other when it came to matters concerning you? For example, did they agree when you asked permission to do something or on how to raise you?" Participants reported on a 5-point scale, with 1 = not at all able, and 5 = very able; scores ranged from 1 to 5, with an average of 3.35 ($SD = 1.26$). Finally, participants reported on perceptions of their parents' levels of post-divorce conflict: Similarly, participants were asked to provide a measure of interparental conflict: "How much conflict was there in your parents' relationship after they separated/divorced?" Participants chose from: 1 = no conflict, 2 = between no and some conflict, 3 = some conflict, 4 = between some and lots of conflict, or 5 = lots of conflict. These scores ranged from 1 to 5, with an average rating of 3.42 ($SD = 1.27$).

Father-Child Relationship (Dependent Variables)

The *Nurturant Fathering Scale* (NFS; Finley, 1998) consists of nine items that participants could select to characterize their relationships with their fathers. The NFS was intended to measure the affective quality of fathering often missed by other questionnaires. The scale consists of items such as: "How much do you think your father enjoyed being a father?" and "When you needed your father's support, was he there for you?" Participants provide their answers by choosing on a five point Likert scale with a "5" denoting the most positive value (e.g. "always there for me" or "extremely close,"

depending on the wording of the item) and “1” indicating the lowest value (e.g. “never there for me” or “not at all close”). Possible total scores on this measure range from 9 to 45 (Appendix D). Williams and Finley (as cited in Finley, 1998) conducted initial studies using the Nurturant Fathering Scale. Considering two large and ethnically diverse samples of adolescents and young adults, the Nurturant Fathering Scale produced high internal consistency estimates, with Cronbach’s alpha coefficients ranging between .88 and .90. The scale has since been used in several studies investigating father-child relationships (e.g. Schwartz & Finley, 2006), but reliability and validity information is still limited in its availability.

The *Satisfaction with Father Involvement Scale* (SFIS) was modified from the original *Father Involvement Scale* developed by Finley and Schwartz (2004) specifically for use in this study. It was originally created to assess adolescents’ and adult children’s retrospective perceptions of their fathers’ involvement in 20 different domains of their lives. In each domain, participants are asked to indicate on a scale of one to five: a) how involved their fathers were growing up and b) how involved they wished their fathers to have been. Note that the original scale does not specify whether participants should rate their relationships with their fathers, before, during, or after their parent’s divorce. The scale has been modified for use in this study by asking participants to indicate: “How *satisfied* are you with the level of involvement of your father?” This was felt necessary to get a measure of *current* satisfaction with how involved the father had been while they were growing up. Total scores for satisfaction with father involvement can be created by summing each domain. Possible scores for these totals range from 19 to 95 (Appendix E).

Recent research on the original scale was conducted by Finley and Schwartz (2004). Using factor analytic approaches, they were able to identify three subscales of reported father involvement: Expressive Involvement, Instrumental Involvement, and a Mentoring/Advising Involvement Subscale. Cronbach's alphas for scores on the three subscales and for the total reported father involvement score document good internal consistency: Expressive Involvement = .93, Instrumental Involvement = .91, Mentoring/Advising Involvement = .90; and Total Involvement = .97 (Finley & Schwartz, 2004). Although a relatively new scale, this measure has been used in several studies (e.g. Schwartz & Finley, 2005) and appears thus far to be a reliable indicator of both reported and desired father involvement.

As a measure of current father-child contact, participants were asked how many days a year they currently see or speak to their father. It was felt important to distinguish between father-child physical proximity, and the number of verbal contacts made in a given year, with the latter being considered indicative of a stronger relationship. For example, many young adults no longer living at home will see their fathers only on weekends or holidays as part of a regular visit. Stronger relationships, however, might involve more frequent phone calls to supplement occasional face-to-face contacts.

Planned Analyses

Prior to conducting the analyses, dependent variables were combined to create two separate variables. This decision was guided by high zero-order correlations among dependent variables, construct similarity, and internal consistency. The number of days per year that a youth currently sees his/her father was significantly correlated with the number of days he/she talks to their father, $r(201) = .83, p < .01$. The two variables were

combined and averaged to create a single “contact” dependent variable ($M = 133.81$, $SD = 125.16$). Similarly, average scores on the Nurturant Fathering and Satisfaction with Father Involvement were significantly correlated, $r(201) = .78$, $p < .01$, and scale items had high internal consistency, Cronbach’s Alpha = 0.97. These scales averaged and combined to create an “affective fathering” dependent variable ($M = 3.44$, $SD = .94$).

Analysis 1 to Test Hypothesized Differences Between Intact and Divorced Groups:

A Factorial MANOVA was planned to determine whether the two family groups (intact vs. divorced) significantly differ in terms of the father-child bond as measured by the newly created “affective fathering” variable and the amount of current father-child contact. Sex of the participant was considered in this analysis, based on research findings suggesting that fathers may be more involved in their relationships with sons than daughters. As differences in current father-child contact may vary as a result of the participant’s current living arrangement (i.e. intact family participants living at home would naturally have greater father contact), this factor was also added to the analysis. As an aside, it should be noted that within the divorced group, the living arrangement variable only differentiates those participants living at ‘home’ or independently; those participants who reported living at home and whose parents had divorced may therefore be living with their mothers (62%), fathers (5%) or alternating between mother and father residences (33%). Subsequent findings and interpretations should therefore be considered in this light.

Independent Variables

- Family Group (intact / divorce)
- Sex (male / female)
- Current Living Arrangement (with parents / other)

Dependent Variables

- Affective Fathering
- Current Father-Child Contact

Analysis 2 to Explore Divorced Group:

Using the 96 divorced group participants, two separate Hierarchical Multiple Regressions were planned, which corresponded to the two newly created dependent variables. Dependent variables of affective fathering ($M = 2.98$, $SD = .96$) and current father-child contact ($M = 67.10$, $SD = 72.17$) were regressed on childhood factors thought to influence this perceived father-child bond among families where parents had separated.

The order of entry was determined by the theoretical strengths of these contributions. As already discussed, research investigating father-child relationships after parents' divorce, has shown father SES and custody arrangements to be consistent and significant contributors to the father-child bond (i.e. Amato & Sobolewski, 2004; Schwartz & Finley, 2005). Therefore, the "structural factors," including custody (48 mother custody and 48 joint custody) and SES were entered first in the model. While some studies have been able to partially predict the later quality of the father-child relationship from frequency of contact during early childhood (Whiteside & Becker, 2000), others have found the frequency of early contact on its own to be a poor predictor of frequency of contact with fathers later in childhood (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). As such, measures of early contact using frequency of contact have shown some predictive value but appear less dependable than predictions based on father's SES and type of custody arrangement. Therefore, early "father-child contact," in this study, measuring the percentage of their time spent with fathers after the parent's divorce, was added second in the model. Notably, custody arrangement does not entirely encompass the amount of contact a child has with each parent, and a more direct assessment of early contact appears to be of additional importance. The "interparental relationship" factors including

interparental contact, conflict and co-operation, were entered last, given they have been less well researched in relation to the father-child relationship, but have also been identified as important factors to consider (i.e. Lamb & Lewis, 2004; Amato & Sobolewski).

Independent Variables:

“Structural Factors”

- Custody arrangements
- Father SES

“Father-Child Contact”

- Percentage of time spent with father post-divorce

“Interparental Relationship Factors”

- Cooperative parenting
- Interparental contact
- Interparental conflict

Dependent Variables:

Father-Child Bond

- 1) Affective Fathering
- 2) Current Father-Child Contact

Results

The results chapter is organized into two main sections: the first, reflecting the initial hypotheses comparing intact and divorced samples, and the second, involving divorce-related variables as hypothesized predictors of the father-child relationship.

The First Set of Hypotheses: Comparing Intact and Divorced Samples

Dependent variable means and standard deviations by family group and participant sex are reported in Table 1. Looking at the Pearson correlations, the family group variable (intact vs. divorced) was found significantly related to dependent variables in the hypothesized directions. That is, intact group participants had higher ratings of affective fathering, $r(201) = .46, p < .01$, and current contact, $r(201) = .51, p < .01$, compared to young adult participants whose parents had divorced. Correlations between

participant sex and dependent variables measuring affective fathering, $r(201) = .108$, $p = .13$, and father contact, $r(201) = .07$, $p = .33$, were non-significant, suggesting that both males and females report similarly in terms of the father-child relationship.

The Factorial MANOVA exploring the father contact and affective fathering variables used a 2 (sex) by 2 (family group) by 2 (living arrangement) design. First, the results showed a significant multivariate relation between the father-child relationship variables and the family group variable assessing whether participants' parents had divorced or remained married, $F(2,194) = 102.67$, $p < .01$. Univariate results (reported in Table 2) were consistent with the correlations described above. That is, participants in the intact group reported higher scores on measures of father contact and affective fathering than divorce group participants. The father-child relationship variables were also multivariately related to the current living arrangements of participants, $F(2,194) = 90.13$, $p < .01$; however, univariate results suggested that this finding is relevant to current contact only and likely reflects greater levels of father-child contact that one would expect to find among intact group participants still living at home.

Table 1

Dependent Variable Means and Standard Deviations by Family Group and Participant Sex

Variable	Intact				Divorced			
	Males ($n = 47$)		Females ($n = 60$)		Males ($n = 40$)		Females ($n = 56$)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Affective fathering	3.91	.68	3.81	.73	3.14	1.00	2.86	.923
Current father contact	201.57	137.70	187.46	128.97	75.50	79.87	61.11	66.21

Table 2

Factorial MANOVA Table: Univariate Results for Family Group, Current Living Arrangements, and Dependent Variables Measuring the Current Father-Child Relationship

Source	F(1, 195)	Partial eta squared	<i>p</i>
<u>Family group</u>			
Affective fathering	46.71	.19	.00
Current contact	206.38	.51	.00
<u>Living arrangements</u>			
Affective fathering	.00	.00	.96
Current contact	142.28	.42	.00
<u>Sex</u>			
Affective fathering	6.02	.03	.01
Current contact	.06	.00	.81
<u>Family group x Liv. arrang.</u>			
Affective fathering	3.11	.02	.08
Current contact	109.29	.36	.00
<u>Sex x Liv. arrang.</u>			
Affective fathering	9.03	.04	.00
Current contact	2.27	.01	.13

Participant sex was also found to be multivariately related to the dependent variables, $F(2,194) = 3.52, p = .03$, with only the affective fathering variable showing univariate significance. Contrary to the hypothesis, current contact was not found univariately related to participant sex. However, males did report significantly higher affective fathering scores than females. Since correlations between sex and dependent variables were not significant, it would appear that participant sex is sharing some variance with family group and/or current living arrangement variables. In support, a

significant multivariate interaction was found between participant sex and current living arrangements, $F(2,194) = 4.50, p < .01$, with univariate results indicating significance for the affective fathering variable. To explore the above interaction, a follow-up one-way ANOVA was conducted using the 2 dependent variables measuring the father-child relationship and a newly created factor consisting of 4 levels: males living at home (with one or more parent), males living away (from parents), females at home, and females away. Table 3 shows means and standard deviations. Though the contact variable was not univariately significant in the initial interaction, it was included in these post-hoc analyses for exploratory purposes and due to construct similarity between dependent variables; as already mentioned, previous research findings suggest that fathers may have more contact with sons following divorce (Lamb & Lewis, 2004). The follow-up ANOVA confirmed significant group differences for affective fathering, $F(3,199) = 5.72, p < .01$, and also for father contact, $F(3,199) = 30.72, p < .01$. Tukey HSD post-hoc comparisons were used to interpret the group interactions (Table 4). As might be expected, males and females both perceived lower levels of father contact ($p < .01$) when living away from home, compared to their respective sex when living with one or more parent. While males living independently reported lower levels of affective fathering compared to males living at home ($p = .04$), females unexpectedly showed the opposite pattern, where females living independently reported *higher* levels of affective fathering than those living at home ($p = .04$). This finding is interesting, as it does not appear supported by the current literature on father-child relationship dynamics. Though males and females living away from home looked similar in terms of their reported father-child contact ($p = .74$) and perceived affective fathering ($p = .84$), young adult men living at

home reported significantly higher levels of both contact ($p < .01$) and affective fathering ($p < .01$) compared to those females still living with one or both parents. These findings are consistent with the literature suggesting that males have an easier time maintaining father-child relationships, though it would seem that this sex difference is only present when participants are living at home, in the context of greater father contact.

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations for One-Way ANOVA Investigating Living Arrangement x Participant Sex Interaction

	Males				Females			
	Home (n = 28)		Away (n = 59)		Home (n = 36)		Away (n = 80)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Affective fathering	3.94	.75	3.37	.95	3.00	1.04	3.51	.87
Current contact	279.69	129.87	79.02	64.92	191.71	162.27	97.10	82.76

Table 4

Tukey HSD Results for One-Way ANOVA Investigating Living Arrangement x Participant Sex Interaction

	Affective Fathering			Contact with Father		
	Females Home	Males Away	Females Away	Females Home	Males Away	Females Away
Males Home	.00	.04	.14	.01	.00	.00
Females Home	-	.23	.04	-	.00	.00
Males Away	-	-	.84	-	-	.74

Note: Cells contain Tukey HSD significance levels for group comparisons

The initial Factorial MANOVA also yielded a significant interaction between family group (intact vs. divorce) and current living arrangements in their relation to the

dependent measures. At the univariate level, only father contact was significant, $F(1,195) = 109.29, p < .01$. The above interaction was explored by conducting a follow-up one-way ANOVA using the dependent variables measuring the father-child relationship and a newly created factor consisting of 4 levels: intact group participants living at home, intact group participants living away, divorced group participants living at home, and divorced group participants living away. Table 5 shows means and standard deviations. Though only the contact variable was significant in this interaction, perception of affective fathering was considered for exploratory purposes and due to construct similarity between dependent variables. Results from the follow-up ANOVA showed the divorce group differed on measures of contact $F(3,199) = 152.26, p < .01$ and affective fathering $F(3,199) = 27.71, p < .01$, relative to the intact group.

Tukey HSD post-hoc comparisons were again used to interpret the group interactions (Table 6). While intact group father-child contact was significantly less when participants lived away from home ($p < .01$), this difference was not found among participants whose parents had divorced ($p = .98$). This is to be expected given most divorce group participants "living at home" will be living with residential mothers or alternating between mother and father residences. Current father contact among divorced group participants may therefore differ relatively little as a function of whether they live at home or away. Interestingly, intact group participants living away from home saw their fathers with similar frequency as those divorced group participants living at home with one or more parent ($p = .06$), but not those divorced group participants living away from home ($p < .01$). This finding suggests that living with one or more parents for divorced group participants may be associated with more father-child contact.

Table 5

Means and Standard Deviations for One-Way ANOVA Investigating Living Arrangement x Family Group (Intact vs. Divorced) Interaction

	Intact				Divorced			
	Home (n = 36)		Away (n = 71)		Home (n = 28)		Away (n = 68)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Affective fathering	4.01	.64	3.77	.73	2.64	.92	3.11	.95
Current contact	353.88	29.85	112.41	78.82	71.18	87.96	65.42	65.24

Table 6

Tukey HSD Results for One-Way ANOVA Investigating Family Group x Living Arrangement Interaction

	Affective Fathering			Contact with Father		
	Divorced Home	Intact Away	Divorced Away	Divorced Home	Intact Away	Divorced Away
Intact Home	.00	.48	.00	.00	.00	.00
Divorced Home	-	.00	.06	-	.04	.98
Intact Away	-	-	.00	-	-	.00

Note: Cells contain Tukey HSD significance levels for group comparisons

In summary, the results from the first set of analyses supported the initial hypothesis that the strength of the father-child relationship (as defined in this study) differed between intact and divorced groups. Young adults growing up in intact families perceived greater levels of affective fathering and reported more frequent contact with their fathers, than did young adults whose parents divorced. Interestingly, father-child relationships were found to differ as a function of participant sex and based on their

current living arrangements. While males living away from home reported lower levels of affective fathering compared to males living at home, females living independently reported higher levels of affective fathering compared to those females living at home. Importantly, while young adult men living at home reported significantly more contact with their fathers and higher levels of affective fathering compared to females living *at* home, this difference was not observed between young men and women living *away* from home. Father-child relationships were also found to differ as a function of family group (intact vs. divorced) and current living arrangements. In terms of contact, the intact group participants living away from home differed only in comparison to those divorced group participants living away from home, suggesting that living with one or more parents for divorced group participants may be associated with greater levels of father-child contact.

The Second Set of Hypotheses: Divorce-Related Variables as Predictors of the Father-Child Relationship

Correlations among independent and dependent variables

The second component of this study considered the divorced group in isolation, to explore factors that might be important in maintaining a strong father-child bond in the face of the disruption or adversity caused by parental separation and divorce. Before conducting the main regression analyses, zero order correlations were observed among independent and dependent variables (see Table 7 below).

A number of interpretations can be made from the inter-correlations reported in Table 7. First, it should be noted that there was a significant correlation between participant sex and time since divorce ($M = 10.34$, $SD = 4.04$), indicating that the males in this sample experienced their parents' divorce earlier in their lives than female participants. This finding may be specious, but is worth noting. Males in the divorced

sample also reported having greater post-divorce contact with their fathers than females. Looking at the correlations, there were no sex differences in ratings of current father-child contacts or in reports of affective fathering.

With regard to custody status reported by young adults, the correlational analyses revealed that the greater the father's SES, the more likely he was to have had a joint custody arrangement. Joint custody, compared with mother custody, was also significantly related to more father-child contact post-divorce.

In terms of the perceived interparental relationship following divorce, lower levels of conflict were related to young adults' reports of more mother-father contacts and more interparental co-operation when making joint decisions regarding their children.

Joint custody, higher father SES, greater father-child contact, and more mother-father contact growing up, were all associated with higher ratings of affective fathering. The above variables, with the exception of father SES, are similarly related in the same direction to current father-child contact. Correlations between parental remarriage and other study variables were all non-significant (not-shown). It was therefore decided to exclude the parental remarriage variable from further analyses.

Table 7

Intercorrelations among Independent and Dependent Variables (Divorced Sample)

	Sex of Participant	Time since divorce	Parent custody	Father SES	% father contact post-div	Parent contact post-div	Parent conflict post-div	Parent co-op post-div	Affective fathering
Sex of participant	-								
Time since divorce	-.24*	-							
Parent custody	0	-.15	-						
Father SES	-.06	-.02	.27**	-					
% father contact post-div	-.31**	-.03	.47**	.19	-				
Parent contact post-div	-.08	.02	.14	.04	.05	-			
Parent conflict post-div	.19	-.08	-.02	-.12	.05	-.50**	-		
Parent co-op post-div	-.05	.04	-.02	.12	.01	.16	-.21*	-	
Affective fathering	-.14	-.05	.36**	.34**	.60**	.22*	-.09	.16	-
Current contact	-.09	-.08	.23*	.12	.43**	.31**	-.03	.12	.54**

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. Sex is coded as: Male = 1, Female = 2. Parent custody is coded as: Mother = 1, Joint = 2

Factors contributing to current perceptions of affective fathering

A Hierarchical Multiple Regression was conducted to determine relative contributions of childhood factors to current perceptions of affective fathering. The relative contributions of these sets of factors are presented in Table 8 for the affective fathering variable and Table 9 for current contact. Beta weights are shown for each step at time of entry and for the entire regression equation. Preliminary Hierarchical Multivariate Regressions included participant sex and time since divorce as Step 1 control variables, however, these variables were found to be unrelated to the dependent measures and were excluded from further analyses.

Structural factors and early father-child contact, when considered as sets of variables, were both found to have incremental and significant contributions to the prediction of young adult perceptions of affective fathering (Table 8). Greater father SES and joint custody showed a significant relation with higher levels of affective fathering. When father-child post-divorce contact (percentage of father contact) entered the model, custody lost its significance, whereas father-child contact post-divorce shows a positive relation with ratings of affective fathering. There appears to be some variance shared between custody arrangement (mother versus joint) and father-child post-divorce contact. The greatest relative contributions in this model predicting "affective fathering" are made by father SES and post-divorce contact, maintaining their significant contributions to the model even after interparental post-divorce relationship factors were entered. These parental relationship factors, as a group and univariately, were insignificant in their relative contributions.

Factors contributing to current father-child contact

Table 9 shows set and variable contributions as they enter the model to predict the current level of father-child contact. As a set, the structural factors did not contribute significantly to the prediction of current contact. The early father-child contact variable and interparental relationship factors, when considered as a set, showed unique relations with the dependent measure of current father-child contact. The father-child contact variable also showed a significant relative contribution at both levels of entry. Though the interparental relationship variables as a set made a significant contribution to the prediction, only the post-divorce contact variable had a unique relation with the current level of father-child contact. The other interparental relationship variables may still be important, as they are for the most part, correlated with one another, however, post-divorce mother-father contact seems to account for the most variance.

Table 8

Hierarchical Regression Predicting Perceptions of Affective Fathering

Variable	R^2	ΔR^2	Beta at entry			Beta at last step			r
			B	$SE B$	β	B	$SE B$	β	
Step 1	.20**								
Father SES			.02	.01	.26**	.02	.01	.22*	.34**
Custody			.56	.19	.29**	.06	.18	.03	.36**
Step 2	.41**	.22**							
% father contact			.02	.00	.53**	.02	.00	.53**	.60**
Step 3	.46**	.05							
Parent Contact			.26	.13	.18	.26	.13	.18	.22*
Parent Co-op			.08	.06	.11	.08	.06	.11	.16
Parent Conflict			.02	.07	.03	.02	.07	.03	-.09

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 9

Hierarchical Regression Predicting Current Father-Child Contact

Variable	R^2	ΔR^2	Beta at entry			Beta at last step			r
			B	$SE B$	β	B	$SE B$	β	
Step 1	.05								
Father SES			.34	.61	.06	.24	.55	.04	.12
Custody			30.02	16.05	.21*	-3.7	15.09	-.03	.23*
Step 2	.19**	.13**							
% father contact			1.37	.35	.41**	1.36	.34	.41**	.43**
Step 3	.29**	.10**							
Parent Contact			38.10	11.36	.35**	38.10	11.36	.35**	.31**
Parent Co-op			4.84	5.30	.08	4.84	5.30	.08	.12
Parent Conflict			8.71	6.02	.15	8.71	6.02	.15	-.03

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Discussion

A vast literature has identified parental divorce as a major process of family change that brings with it many risks to child health outcomes (e.g., Amato, 2000; Amato & Sobolewski, 2001). One of the most significant losses a child may experience during this time is a deteriorating bond with his or her father. The current research agenda set forth to investigate young adult's perceptions of their relationships with their fathers and to explore how they may have been influenced by parental divorce. Previous measures of father-child relationship quality have focused almost entirely on single item questions such as "how close are you to your father?" or have otherwise used the current level of father-child contact as a proxy for this relationship. Departing from these trends, this study took a multifactor approach to conceptualizing the father-child relationship quality; one that considers not only the current level of father-child verbal and physical contact, but also young adults' perceptions of father involvement and nurturance. Using a risk and resilience framework, comparisons were made between the reports of young adults raised in intact families and those whose parents had divorced. In this view, divorce was seen as

a risk to maintaining a strong father-child bond in young adulthood. Comparisons between young adults raised in divorced and intact families allowed for the differentiation of normal developmental changes from divorce-related influences in relation to the father-child relationship. A second component of this study involved examination of the divorce group in isolation to explore how divorce-related factors including early structural, contact, and interparental relationship factors, might predict current young adult perceptions of their father-child relationship. Early divorce-related influences were therefore hypothesized to be potential risks or protective factors in maintaining strong-father child bonds.

Young adults were chosen for this study based upon their ability to describe their current father-child relationship satisfaction and their capacity to reflect on their personal histories, including how their father has been involved in their lives. Through a combination of online and university based recruitment methods, a relatively large sample was obtained, including 107 young adults raised in intact families (47 males, 60 females), and 96 who had experienced their parents' separation and divorce during childhood (40 males, 56 females). On face value, participants' past reflections appeared reliable. They seemed to engage in the topic and give useful information, as judged by variability on the self-report questionnaires and on all of the scales administered.

The discussion of this study's findings has been organized to first focus on father-child relationship comparisons between young adults raised in intact families and those who experienced their parents' divorces during childhood. Second, the predictors of the perceived father-child relationship quality among participants whose parents had divorced will be considered. Third, strengths and limitations of the current study will be

discussed. Finally, the future research directions, policy, and clinical implications will be explored.

The Current Father-Child Relationship: Comparing Intact and Divorced Samples

When using a measure of father-child relationship quality that considers perceived affective fathering (father involvement and nurturance) and current contact (verbal and physical), significant differences were found between young adults raised in intact families and those whose parents had divorced. As hypothesized, young adults from divorced backgrounds perceived lower levels of affective fathering and reported less frequent contact with their fathers compared to young adults raised in intact families. These findings are consistent with the previous literature suggesting parental divorce to present a risk to the father-child bond (e.g., Shapiro & Lambert, 1999). The groups were also found to differ on perceived social class, with divorced group participants growing up in a mostly lower middle class family compared to intact group participants who had been generally raised in an upper middle class family. These differences are consistent with economic hardships following divorce and may provide an additional source of stress.

Although the overall group of young adult men and women (involving the combined intact and divorced samples) were found to differ on current father-child relationship quality, they did so in some unexpected ways. There was an interesting sex by living arrangement interaction, where males from both intact and divorced groups reported higher levels of affective fathering and more father interactions when they still live at home (compared to those females still living at home). Importantly, these differences were not present in comparisons of males and females living *away* from

home. With an average age of 20 years old, the young adults living at home with parents look similar in age to those living independently, with an average age of 21. Influences of living arrangements are therefore likely to reflect the present living circumstances of these young adults and not developmental differences. In sum, this finding supports, as the literature suggests, the idea that males (compared to females) have an easier time maintaining a strong-father child bond during young adulthood, though it would appear the differences are only seen when young adults are living at home. One might guess the preferential father-son relationship to reflect common interests difficult to find in relationships between fathers and their young adult daughters. Additionally, a father is perhaps more likely to engage in recreational activities compared to mothers, which may be more appealing for sons. The greater face-to-face contact that males experience also implies more opportunities for nurturance and involvement in various domains of the young adult's life. Increased contact may therefore be a partial link to the higher ratings of perceived nurturance and involvement by young adult men (compared to young adult women) living at home.

A surprising finding was uncovered within the participant sex and living arrangement interaction as it relates to perceptions of affective fathering. While young men living independently perceived lower levels of affective fathering compared to those young men living at home, females showed a significant pattern in the opposite direction. That is, young women living away from home perceived *higher* levels of affective fathering compared to young women living at home. The finding seems counter-intuitive, as females living at home clearly report more contact with their fathers than those living away from home. One would think that greater contact, if anything, would provide more

opportunities for the kinds of interactions that would generally be perceived by the young adult as affective fathering. Although not a focus of this study, the current findings regarding living arrangements may reflect young adult's patterns of decision-making about leaving their parents' home, in which parental divorce is only one of many factors. The above finding, for example, might reflect young women's confidence to live on their own when they have close and affectionate bonds with their fathers.

Not surprisingly, young adults living at home with parents who had remained married reported significantly more contact with their fathers than young adults living away from home. In contrast, young adults whose parents had divorced did not show this difference. This is again unsurprising, as the majority of divorced background participants currently living at 'home' reported living with their mothers (62%) or in alternating parent living arrangements (33%). In both of these situations, one would expect father-child contact to be less frequent in comparison to young adults from an intact family background currently living at home. Interestingly, young adults raised in intact families and who currently live away from home differed only from those divorce group participants living *away* from home, suggesting that living with one or more parents for divorced participants may encourage father-child contact. For example, the literature suggests that a father may maintain his relationship with his child in part through the mother (Harris & Ryan, 2004). Also recall that for divorce group participants, living at 'home' can mean either a mother residential home, or a joint custody arrangement with an alternating parent residential home. This increased level of contact may therefore represent more equal custody/living arrangements. An alternative explanation is that young adults from divorced backgrounds living away from home have

poor relationships with both parents and may possibly be “escaping” overall conflictual dynamics. Children who maintain a close relationship with one parent are more likely to have a close relationship with the other (Whiteside & Becker, 2000).

The Current Father-Child Relationship: Contributing Post-divorce Factors

A second goal of this study was to differentiate those young adults from divorced backgrounds who *were able* to maintain a relatively strong relationship with their fathers. What factors are important in maintaining a high quality father-relationship?

Participant sex and time since divorce

The current findings suggest that among young adults whose parents had divorced, males, compared to females, generally report greater contact with their fathers following parental divorce. As mentioned, the literature supports these findings, suggesting that as children enter adolescence, fathers tend to spend more time with sons due to common interests (i.e. cars, sports, etc.). Young boys may be eager to maintain father-child ties through these common interests, while adolescent girls may struggle to find common ground with their fathers. Given these earlier findings, one might predict current father-child contact to be more frequent among young men than women. Contrary to the initial hypothesis, as young adults, men and women reported overall similar levels of contact. Here one might take into account the specious finding that males in the divorce sample experienced a longer time since parental divorce (as indicated by correlations). The literature would suggest that as more time passes following parental divorce, this weakens the ties between father and child. There may also be a natural or developmental effect of lessening father-child contact as children get older and become more autonomous. This specious sex difference in time since divorce may be masking or

lessening the impact of real gender differences in the current father-child relationship measures. It may also be that by young adulthood, daughters and fathers are generally able to advance their relationships from what was seen during adolescence, such that young adult women's relationships with their fathers begin to look more similar to those of young adult men.

In summary, based on the current findings, neither the sex of the young adult nor how many years had passed since their parents divorced could reliably predict how much time young adults were currently spending with their fathers or how they perceived the emotional qualities of their fathers' roles in their lives.

Affective fathering

In a pilot project for the current study,² a small group of young adults were asked: "What qualities are present in a good father-child relationship?" Although a few young adults mentioned the importance of contact, shared activities and experiences, most talked about the importance of their father's ability to teach through examples, to express love and affection openly, and to be encouraging and supportive. It was expressed that contact alone was a poor measure of these additionally important relationship qualities; qualities that were then conceptualized in the current study as the more "affective" components of father involvement.

In the present study, "affective fathering" reflects young adults' combined reports on the Nurturant Fathering Scale (NFS) and the modified Father Involvement Scale (FIS). The NFS included more affective-experiential items such as: "When you needed your father's support, was he there for you?" whereas the FIS involved reporting about satisfaction with how involved fathers had been in aspects of the young adults' lives and

their development, including: “developing responsibility” and “emotional development.” Based on the current findings, these scales were thought best combined due to high correlations between the two scales and their construct similarity. Considered together, the two scales were thought to tap into affective components of the father-child relationship and ways in which fathers share resources with their children. This affective component of the father-child relationship adds significantly to the assessment of father-child contact, and in this study both were considered as indicators of the father-child relationship quality.

Affective fathering: SES and custody arrangements

As the literature would suggest, young adult participants whose parents had divorced tended to perceive a closer, more meaningful bond with their fathers under conditions of joint custody and when there was access to reasonable socioeconomic resources. Schwartz and Finley (2006), using the original NFS and FIS, similarly obtained higher scores when young adults resided with their fathers at some point following the parental divorce. Greater financial resources can impact the father-child relationship directly and indirectly through many routes; fathers’ financial contributions have been heavily researched and are one of the strongest predictors of positive outcomes among children with divorced parents (King, 1994).

In the current study, fathers’ greater socioeconomic resources were related to joint child custody arrangements following divorce. At the most basic level, high father SES means more potential resources for the child, which is likely to be perceived favorably by ex-spouses (and judges) and may thereby increase the chance of a joint custody arrangement. Overall, a higher level of father SES is also likely to mean a father who is

more able and willing to pay child support. Financially well-off fathers who pay child support may also want to maintain involvement with their children to ensure their contributions are being used effectively. In addition, fathers who remain financially committed to their children are likely to be perceived by spouses in a more favorable light; one might guess that mothers would, in turn, be more permissive of the father's involvement. Finally, and as previously mentioned, highly educated fathers may be more likely to realize the importance of a father figure in their child's life and, therefore, have stronger emotional commitments to them.

Affective fathering: contact post-divorce

As anticipated, frequency of father-child contact following parental divorce was found to be an important factor in predicting young adults' current perceptions of affective fathering. Young adults from divorced backgrounds who reported spending a greater percentage of time with fathers following divorce, perceived greater levels of affective fathering. Post-divorce father-child contact seemingly provides the context for the possible exchange of resources, guidance, and affection in ways that young adults see as beneficial to the relationship.

Affective fathering: interparental relationship

The interparental relationship factor was intended to measure qualities perceived in the parents' post-divorce relationship. These included young adults' perceptions of contact between their parents, their conflicts, and ability to cooperate when it came to matters concerning the children. Correlational analyses indicate a significant relationship between parent contact post-divorce and young adults' perceptions of affective fathering. That is, retrospective reports of higher levels of post-divorce parent contact are related to

greater ratings of affective fathering during young adulthood. There is likely some variance overlap among the interparental variables, with interparental contact partly necessitating the other two (conflict and co-operation). For example, if there are higher levels of contact between parents, then conflict is likely to be lower and co-operation higher. Intercorrelations between these variables support this idea, with post-divorce parent contact indeed appearing in the context of low parental conflict and higher levels of co-operation. Young adults' perceptions might therefore be quite different if they had experienced high levels of parent conflict after their parent's divorce. For example, Ahrons and Tanner (2003) found that interparental conflict following divorce had a negative effect on the father-child relationship.

Contrary to the hypothesis, the interparental relationship factors did not show unique contributions, either as a set, or independently, in predicting young adult perceptions of affective fathering relative to the other variables.

Current father-child contact

The current level of father-child contact was measured in this study by asking young adults how many days a year they *talk to* and *see* their fathers. Due to high correlations and construct similarity, measures of face-to-face and verbal contact were combined and averaged to create the single contact variable used to further explore father-child relationships among these young adults whose parents had divorced.

Current father-child contact: SES and custody arrangements

Somewhat surprisingly, the structural factors as a group, including father SES and custody, failed to predict current levels of father-child contact in the present study. Even so, early joint custody (versus mother custody) arrangements were significantly

correlated with higher levels of current father-child contact during young adulthood. As previously discussed, a father with a joint custody arrangement is more likely to be present and involved in a number of ways that are likely to carry over throughout childhood and into young adulthood.

The fact that the father's SES did not even correlate with current father-child contact makes an important point. Although father SES may be beneficial to maintaining father-child contact (i.e. the father has more time and financial means to travel to see his child), simply having a higher education and financial means does not guarantee that a father will have high levels of contact with his child. Furthermore, SES is notoriously difficult to assess in divorcing families with reliance in this study solely on young adults' reports; interpretations should therefore be made cautiously.

Current father-child contact: contact post-divorce

In this study, post-divorce father-child contact made significant relative contributions to the prediction of current father-child contact. That is, young adults who reported spending a greater percentage of their time with fathers following divorce, also reported enjoying continuing levels of contact during young adulthood. It would appear that this early contact provided the setting for the type of father-child relationship that has the potential to endure. During childhood, it is largely the father, not the child, who determines the frequency of contact that will be present in their relationship. Later in life, the young adult can, to a greater extent, determine whether they want their fathers to remain a part of their lives. Fathers who maintain close contact, immediately following divorce, are therefore likely to provide the kind of fathering and relationship that children will want to maintain in young adulthood. Since this early contact factor is also

significant for the affective fathering component already described, one might assume this link between early contact, affective fathering, and current levels of contact.

Current father-child contact: interparental relationship

As expected, the interparental relationship qualities of contact, conflict and cooperation appeared important in predicting how much time young adults currently spent with their fathers. Though as a group statistically significant, only interparental post-divorce contact had a unique relation with the current level of father-child contact, with young adults reporting more current contacts with their fathers when they perceived high levels of contact between their parents after the divorce. It would seem that the post-divorce interparental relationship, and in particular the level of contact between parents, is important to achieving and maintaining higher levels of father-child contact into young adulthood.

The majority of young adults in the present study with divorced parents grew up in a mother residential home. Since current contact with fathers and perceptions of affective fathering are greater when there is low conflict and a cooperative parent relationship following divorce, it is not unreasonable to hypothesize that mothers' feelings are particularly relevant to the father-child relationship. Young adults' comments during the pilot study seemed to support this idea, for example: "Mom discouraged me from talking to him." Previous studies have also suggested that the residential mother can at times act as a "gatekeeper" to the child. For example, DeLuccie (1994) found that mothers' attitudes and satisfaction with father's involvement served as reliably direct and indirect predictors of father involvement. For a number of reasons -- both good and bad -- mothers may discourage or fail to support father contact after parental separation (Pasley

& Braver, 2004). Similarly, it has been suggested that the father relates to his child in part 'through' the residential mother (Harris & Ryan, 2004). A lack of role validation on the part of the mother can marginalize the father from the family system and may contribute to his disengagement from his child's life. Conversely, if the relationship between the divorced parents is collaborative and supportive of each parent's role, then the times spent with fathers are likely to remain frequent and satisfying throughout childhood, adolescence, and into young adulthood.

Summary and Conclusion

The divorce literature has highlighted many negative outcomes that children may experience as a result of their parent's separation and divorce. A growing body of research suggests that these negative child outcomes can be minimized through maintaining good parent-child relationships and through the equal involvement of both parents after divorce. Unfortunately, father-child relationships often suffer as a result of parental divorce. Using a *risk and resilience* theoretical approach and considering young adults, the present study confirmed previous research findings that show weaker father-child bonds among divorced families relative to those whose parents are together. This provides further evidence that divorce is indeed a risk to maintaining a strong father-child bond.

Most studies measuring the father-child relationship do so by examining father-child physical contact alone, or otherwise use simple probes to gauge the more affective component, such as: "how close are you to your father?" The current study departed from these common measures in favor of a multifactor approach to measuring the father-child relationship. This approach incorporated verbal and physical contact, in addition to using

modified Nurturant Fathering and Father Involvement rating scales, which appeared to measure the affective component of the father-child bond.

A key rationale for this study was to explore divorce-related factors that might serve as potential protective factors in maintaining a good father-child relationship. Several factors were identified among those divorce group young adults who appeared resilient to this deteriorating father-child relationship. The multifactor conceptualization of this relationship also led to differing predictors for the current frequency of father-child contacts and for perceptions of affective fathering. Of the variables measured in this study, the current level of father-child contact appeared most influenced by early-father-child contact and the perceived interparental relationship following parental divorce. This highlights the importance of a co-operative and supportive co-parenting alliance post-divorce, and at the very least, the need to assess this interparental relationship in any conceptualization of the father-child relationship. In contrast to father-child contact, current perceptions of affective fathering were influenced by structural factors (father SES and custody) and childhood contact (percentage of time spent with father following divorce). Higher father SES and joint custody arrangements appear to set the stage for both direct and indirect links to greater levels of post-divorce involvement.

Strengths and Limitations

The strengths and limitations of the current study should be considered when interpreting the findings.

Strengths

- 1) The current study included a relatively large sample of 203 individuals. This allowed for the simultaneous statistical examination of the many predictors of

young adults' current reports regarding their father-child relationships. This sample also had a near equal in distribution of participant sex and family group (intact versus divorced).

- 2) The entire divorce sample experienced parental divorce between ages 8 and 15, partly controlling for the age of the child at the time of divorce, and ensuring that children had experienced both pre-divorce and post-divorce relationships with their fathers.
- 3) The sample was comprised of young adults, which is an important age group to examine in order to gain insight into factors predictive of the father-child relationship beyond childhood and into young adulthood.
- 4) Finally, the multifactor conceptualization of the father-child relationship quality, as already mentioned, allowed for a more rich understanding of how childhood processes might maintain different aspects of this relationship. For example, if the father-child relationship quality had been measured by only current contact, it would miss the importance of early structural factors on later perceptions of the affective component of this relationship.

Limitations

- 1) One study limitation is that participants are university students largely from a higher family SES background, which is not representative of the overall population of young adults who experienced their parents' divorce during childhood. Some of these findings therefore, may not generalize to community samples. The current study, for example, found the post-divorce interparental relationship to be an important factor in predicting the father-child

relationship in young adulthood. In our sample, however, greater mother-father contact following divorce generally occurred in the context of low interparental conflict (as perceived by the young adult). The findings, therefore, may not generalize in situations where conflict is high. Previous research suggests that interparental contact is only beneficial to child outcomes if it occurs within the context of low conflict.

- 2) The Nurturant Fathering and Father Involvement Scales used in this study are relatively new. Although these measures have good internal consistency, reliability and validity have yet to be fully established. In addition, these scales have been modified from their initial form. Caution should be taken in comparing these findings to those studies using the original scales.
- 3) A final concern is that the measures used in this study required participants to reflect on some of their childhood experiences and answer questions from a retrospective point of view. There is a good possibility that participants cannot accurately remember how often they saw their father following divorce, that they even knew what kind of custody arrangement their parents had, or had any firm understanding of their fathers' SES. On the other hand, it is important to assess young adults' current perceptions of their relationships with their fathers, even if they are unable to recall the details of divorce-related events as they unfolded during childhood.

Future Research, Policy Implications, and Clinical Practice Implications

The current study has identified divergent predictors for different aspects of the father-child relationship. Future research should continue to incorporate more complex

measures of father-child relationship quality and avoid using measures of contact alone, which risk missing parts of the father-child relationship picture. Additional research should also attempt to generalize these findings to more diverse samples, including individuals raised in lower SES families and who have a wider array of ethnic backgrounds. Since the post-divorce interparental relationship played an important role in these findings, it would also be interesting to explore situations where there had been a high level of conflict between parents.

As previously discussed, and in light of a risk and resilience theory, a strong father-child bond can be seen as a potential protective factor for children experiencing parental divorce. The implications of this study are perhaps most strengthened by the fact that these findings are based on the perceptions of young adults who have gone through parental divorce. The current findings suggest that several converging factors conjointly influence the father-child bond following divorce. Although factors such as father SES cannot be changed, it may draw attention to those children who are at greatest risk for not having an active father in their lives. The current study also suggests that children are most likely to maintain a strong father-child bond in light of a joint custody arrangement and when there is a good interparental relationship where parents have a low level of conflict and have both higher levels of contact and co-operation on matters concerning their child. Policy changes that favor a more non-adversarial or collaborative approach following divorce, while maintaining low levels of conflict and frustration will likely benefit the father-child relationship.

Although these findings should be taken as tentative, some implications can be proposed for psychological practitioners working with divorcing families. Following

divorce, for example, fathers might be informed of the importance of maintaining high-quality contact with children and of how these early father-child bonds can influence relationships with their children later in life. Practitioners might similarly help mothers understand how encouraging children's relationships with their fathers is important, and help mothers become aware of the aforementioned factors that may put a child at risk for poorer quality father-child relationships. Both mothers and fathers might be helped to understand the importance of their own ongoing relationship, and how the quality of their relationship might affect fathers' involvement with their children. Again, interventions that promote open communication between divorced parents, while minimizing conflict and frustration, will likely benefit the father-child relationship. While the literature suggests that overall, children have better outcomes following a parental divorce when ongoing relations with both parents are encouraged, it should be noted that there are a minority of cases in which father-child contact is not desirable, and where a positive, healthy father-child relationship cannot be developed.

Concluding Comments

This study demonstrated that young adults raised in divorced families overall report lower quality relations with their fathers than those whose parents remained married. It is worth noting, however, that these differences are relative. The findings may therefore represent differences between *excellent* ratings of father-child relationships and those that are more *neutral*. Comparisons of mean differences suggest that for young adults' perceptions of affective fathering, this is indeed the case. Young adults' perceptions of their relationships with their fathers were generally neutral to positive, with the perceptions of those with continuously married parents being most positive and

those with divorced parents being neutral to mildly positive. Though the differences in this case may not be clinically significant, larger differences would be expected in samples derived from lower socioeconomic groups with more limited resources. Future research may determine if this is, in fact, the case. Even so, young adults from this study raised in intact families generally see and talk to their fathers twice as much as those young adults whose parents had divorced. This finding is not only statistically significant, but also appears clinically meaningful.

Among those participants who experienced parental divorce, young adults most at risk for lower levels of *father contact*, were those who reported low father contact immediately following divorce and who perceived a poor post-divorce relationship between their parents, characterized by low contact and co-operation, and higher levels of conflict. Young adults from divorced backgrounds at most risk to lower levels of *effective fathering* are those who did not grow up in a joint custody arrangement, where fathers' resources were limited, and who experienced low levels of early contact. The best situation in terms of nurturing a high quality, enduring relationship with fathers following divorce, appears to be one where there is a joint custody arrangement, fathers have sufficient socioeconomic means, early contact is available, and where mothers and fathers support each others role by maintaining lines of communication, being co-operative, and keeping conflict to a minimum. This knowledge, and future research that builds on the current findings, will help us to appreciate and hopefully prevent losses in the vulnerable post-divorce father-child relationship.

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Footnotes

¹Eight young adults who were recruited for this study reported growing up in a father-custody home. Although this number approximates the 10% of children from divorced families in father-custody (Statistics Canada, 2000), these participants were excluded from the present study based on this small number, which would otherwise lead to unequal cell sizes within the custody arrangement factor and cause difficulty with subsequent statistical interpretation. In addition, the aim of the present study focuses on the majority of children who are at *risk* for losses in the father-child relationship. Participants who were raised in a father-custody home look quite different from those raised in mother or joint custody environments. Overall, these participants reported seeing their fathers with similar frequency as intact group participants. Mean ratings of affective fathering fell between those reported by the overall divorced and intact groups.

²Prior to the current study, a small pilot study was conducted involving 10 undergraduate university students who had experienced a parental divorce. Using qualitative measures, the young adults were asked broad questions about their relationships with their fathers and how they thought these relationships were impacted by parental divorce.

³The following websites were used to recruit participants for this study:

- 1) <http://www.socialpsychology.org/expts.html>
- 2) <http://psych.hanover.edu/research/exponnet.html>

Appendix A
Participant Consent Form

The Influence of Parental Separation and Divorce on Father-Child Relationships

You are being invited to participate in this study conducted by Brad Peters.

I am a graduate student in the department of Psychology at the University of Victoria and you may contact me if you have further questions at (250) 721-8589 or by email at bpeters@uvic.ca. As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a Masters degree in Clinical Psychology. This research is being supervised Dr. Marion Ehrenberg. You may contact her at (250) 721-8771 or by email at ehrm@uvic.ca. This research is being funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).

The purpose of this research project is to study how parental separation and divorce affects father-child relationships. A secondary goal is to shed light on which factors and processes are most influential in promoting or maintaining close father-child bonds.

Research of this type is important because it will help us to continue to add to the knowledge of the psychological risks and opportunities arising from the experience of parental divorce during childhood, particularly as it relates to the father-child relationship.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include being asked about your family background, family relationships, and your relationship with your father. You will be asked about these topics in an online questionnaire, which will take approximately 1 hour to complete.

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you in terms of the time it will take to complete the forms. Other than the time commitment, no other inconveniences are expected. Some participants find that revisiting potentially sensitive memories concerning family experiences may evoke some emotional discomfort or unpleasant feelings. If such emotionally disturbing memories cause you to feel uncomfortable, you may choose to discontinue your participation or opt not to answer a particular question. Whether or not you decide to continue to participate in the study, if you wish to access additional support, you can do so on campus at UVic Counselling Services. Counselling Services is centrally located in the Campus Services Building, on the Ring Road side of the Bookstore, across from University Centre and between the McKinnon Gym and the Student Union Building. You can make an appointment with a counsellor by calling (250) 721-8341, or drop by the Counselling Services office and talk to the receptionist. The fax number for Counselling Services is (250) 472-4443. Further information about Counselling Services can be found at <http://www.coun.uvic.ca/>.

If you prefer to access psychological services off-campus, a listing of psychologists across Canada can be found at the website of the Canadian Register of Health Service Providers in Psychology, <http://www.crhspp.ca/findlist.htm>. This website will allow you

to search for psychologists practicing in your area and provide you with their contact information. A listing of psychologists for the province of British Columbia can be found on the website of the British Columbia Psychological Association <http://www.psychologists.bc.ca/referral.html>. In addition, your family physician or a physician at a walk-in medical clinic can provide you with a referral to a psychologist.

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research, other than potentially minimal discomfort described above.

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include adding to the literature on the effects of divorce on families. Most participants who have completed studies in the Families in Motion Research Lab in the past have reported positive, insight-building experiences.

As a way to compensate you for any inconvenience related to your participation, you will be given 2 bonus marks in psychology 100. *It is important for you to know that it is unethical to provide undue compensation or inducements to research participants and, if you agree to be a participant in this study, this form of compensation to you must not be coercive. If you would not otherwise choose to participate if the compensation was not offered, then you should decline.*

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you withdraw from the study your data will be destroyed and will not be included in the study. If you withdraw from the study, you will be given bonus points based on the proportion of the study that you completed.

In terms of protecting your anonymity, your name will not be attached to any published results and code numbers will be the only form of identification that will be used to identify results obtained from individual participants. However, complete anonymity may be compromised for two reasons: one, the person administering the questionnaires will potentially know your name and face and two, your name will be needed in order to record the bonus points you will receive. I and any other individual who might be administering the self-report interview or lab based online version for this study have had experience in similar research settings and will respect your anonymity to the best of our ability.

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by storing all responses that you provide in a password-protected computer file without names or other identifying information. The printed informed consent emails will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. The American and Canadian Psychological Associations require me to keep data for 7 years after the research findings are published, at which time electronic data will be deleted and printed consent emails will be shredded. Furthermore, only members of Dr. Ehrenberg's research team will be allowed access to the data.

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others, in summarized form without any reference to your identity, in the following ways: professional

publications, presentations, and the FMRIG website www.uvic.ca/psyc/fmrig for the purposes of sharing my research findings with the participants and others.

In addition to being able to contact Dr. Marion Ehrenberg, at the above phone number and email address, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice-President, Research at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545).

If you have understood the above conditions of participation in this study, have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher, and wish to volunteer to participate in this study, please return this email to bpeters@uvic.ca.

Thank you in advance for volunteering to participate in this study. Your assistance is greatly appreciated.

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Appendix B
 Modified Young Adult Interview: Self-Report Questionnaire Format (Part 1)

ID Code Number: _____
 Date of Administration: _____

Please fill out this section as best you can by either circling one of the options provided, or by marking in the appropriate spaces.

Demographics and Basic Background Information

1. **Indicate gender:** Female Male (check one)

2. What is your date of birth? ____ / ____ / ____
 (month) (day) (year)

3. Are both of your biological parents alive?

Yes No

4. If you answered "Yes" to Question #3 above, are your biological parents currently together? -

If Yes → Are they married? Yes No (check one)

If No

Is your mother now (check all that apply):
 single _____ separated/divorced _____ remarried _____
 married _____ living common-law _____ widowed _____

Is your father now (check all that apply):
 single _____ separated/divorced _____ remarried _____
 married _____ living common-law _____ widowed _____

5. How many brothers and/or sisters do you have? **Indicate number for each.**

full brothers _____ half-brothers _____ stepbrothers _____
 full sisters _____ half-sisters _____ stepsisters _____

Where do you fit in among the children in your family?

the only child _____ the oldest child _____ the youngest child _____
 somewhere in the middle _____ a twin _____

6. Are you Canadian?

Yes No → What is your nationality? _____

7. Do you identify with any particular ethnic or cultural group or background?

No Yes (specify) _____

8. Do you identify with any particular religion?

No Yes (specify) _____

9. What are your current living arrangements?

with parents _____ alone _____ with roommates _____
 with spouse/partner _____ other (specify) _____

Question 10 for participants not living with their parents only.

10. How old were you when you moved away from home? _____ years

11. What year of university are you in? _____

12. How far did your Mother and Father go in school?
(place a 'check-mark' by the highest level of education completed)

(a) Mother some high school ___ high school diploma ___
 some university/college ___ university/college undergraduate degree ___
 university/college graduate degree ___

(b) Father some high school ___ high school diploma ___
 some university/college ___ university/college undergraduate degree ___
 university/college graduate degree ___

13. What did your father do for a living while you were growing up?
Specify: _____

14. What did your mother do for a living while you were growing up?
Specify: _____

15. What would you *estimate* your current household income to be? (***This may include:*** your individual income if you are single and living on your own or with roommates, the income of you and your parents if you live with them, or the income of you and your partner if you are married or living common-law. ***Indicate if appropriate*** before tax, including all sources).

less than \$10,000 _____	\$20,000 - \$24,999 _____	\$40,000 - \$49,000 _____
\$10,000 - \$14,999 _____	\$25,000 - \$29,999 _____	\$50,000 - \$59,999 _____
\$15,000 - \$19,999 _____	\$30,000 - \$39,999 _____	\$60,000 or more _____

16. People often think of themselves and their family as belonging to one social class or another. Think about your childhood and your time growing up in your family. If you had to make a choice, which of the following classes would you consider your family as belonging to during this time?

working class _____	upper middle class _____
lower middle class _____	upper class _____

Modified Young Adult Interview: Self-Report Questionnaire Format (Part 2: Divorced)

Please fill out this section as best you can by either circling one of the options provided, or by marking in the appropriate spaces.

Early Family Functioning

1. Did your parents ever separate? No Yes (If Yes) How old were you at the time? _____ years

↓

Did you spend any time in a single parent family?
 No Yes Which parent? Mother ___ Father ___ Both ___
 Length of time: _____

Did your parents get back together? No Yes (If Yes) How old were you at the time? _____ years

Did your parents get a divorce? No Yes (If Yes) How old were you at the time? _____ years

Did either of your parents get remarried? No Yes (If Yes) How old were you at the time? _____ years

↓

Which parent? Mother ___ Father ___ Both ___
 Did you spend any time living with your parent and stepparent?
 No Yes → Length of time: _____ Who with? Mother & StepFather ___
 Father & StepMother ___
 Both ___

Did a stepsibling join your family? No Yes (If Yes) How old were you at the time? _____ years

Did your remarried parents break up? No Yes (If Yes) How old were you at the time? _____ years

2. How long had your parents been married when they separated? _____

3. How would you generally describe your parents relationship with one another following their separation/divorce?

avoided each other _____ interacted frequently _____
 talked/interacted when necessary _____ interacted more than necessary _____

4. How much conflict was there in your parents' relationship?

(a) While they were married:

1 2 3 4 5
 no conflict some conflict lots of conflict

(b) While they were separating / divorcing:

1 2 3 4 5
 no conflict some conflict lots of conflict

(c) After they were separated / divorced:

1 2 3 4 5
 no conflict some conflict lots of conflict

(d) Currently:

1 2 3 4 5
 no conflict some conflict lots of conflict

12. How much do you feel your non-residential or non-custodial parent was involved in decisions concerning you?

(a) While you were growing up:

1 2 3 4 5
 not at involved somewhat involved very involved

(b) Currently:

1 2 3 4 5
 not at involved somewhat involved very involved

13. How did you perceive your custodial or residential parent to have reacted to you spending time with your non-custodial or non-residential parent?

- Would allow contact, and encouraged the other parent's involvement _____
- Would allow contact, but did not particularly like it _____
- Did not approve of contact _____
- Did not approve and would create obstacles to prevent contact _____
- Other _____

14. How far away from you did your non-residential parent live while you were growing up? (measure in hours taken to travel to non-residential parents house)

__ hours away by car by train by ferry by plane other _____

Currently, how far away do you live from your father?

__ hours away by car by train by ferry by plane other _____

Currently, how far away do you live from your mother?

__ hours away by car by train by ferry by plane other _____

15. How much do you feel your non-custodial or non-residential parent has helped (helps) you financially (i.e. either through child support or by other means such as helping with tuition)?

(a) While you were growing up:

1 2 3 4 5
 very little somewhat substantially

(b) Currently:

1 2 3 4 5
 very little somewhat substantially

16. How did you/do you perceive your non-custodial or non-residential parent's financial situation?

1 2 3 4 5
 poor average exceptionally well off

17. Would you agree that your non-custodial or non-residential parent's financial contributions while you were growing up were appropriate considering what you felt he/she was capable of providing?

1 2 3 4 5
 not at all somewhat very appropriate

7. Would you agree that your father's financial contributions while you were growing up, were appropriate considering what you felt he was capable of providing?

1 2 3 4 5
 not at all somewhat very appropriate

8. While you were growing up, what percentage of all the time spent with your parents did you spend with your mother and father? (percentages should add up to 100, and only include the amount of time spent with your parents)

_____ % time with mother _____ % time with father _____ % time with both

If participant is still living with parents:

These days, what percentage of all the time spent with your parents do you spend with your mother and father?

_____ % time with mother _____ % time with father _____ % time with both

If participant is not living with parents:

9. Currently, how many days a year would you estimate you see:

your mother _____ your father _____

10. Currently, how many days a year would you estimate you talk to:

your mother _____ your father _____

Appendix C
Independent Variable Measures

Structural Factors

Custody arrangements

Q: Which parent had custody of you while you were growing up?
(choose from: mother, father or joint)

Father SES

Q: How far did your Mother and Father go in school?
(choose from: some high school, high school diploma, some university/college, university/college undergraduate degree, university/college degree)

Q: What did your father do for a living while you were growing up?

Using the Hollingshead system, an SES score is computed: An education score (1 through 7, with 1 equal to less than a seventh-grade education and 7 equal to graduate training) and an occupation score (1 through 9, with 1 equal to farm/labourers/menial service workers and 9 equal to higher executives, proprietors of large businesses, and major professionals) is assigned. Education and occupation scores are then weighted to obtain a single score (range 8 to 66) that reflects one of five social strata:

- I: Unskilled laborers, menial service workers (8-19)
- II: Machine operators, semiskilled workers (20-29)
- III: Skilled craftsmen, clerical, sales workers (30-39)
- IV: Medium business, minor professional, technical (40-54)
- V: Major business and professional (55-66)

Father-Child Contact

Percentage of time spent with father

Q: After your parents separated, what percentage of all the time spent with your parents did you spend with your mother and father? (percentages should add up to 100, and only include the amount of time spent with your parents)

Interparental Relationship Factors

Cooperative parenting

Q: After they separated/divorced, how able were your parents to get along with each other when it came to matters concerning you? For example, did they agree when you asked permission to do something or on how to raise you?
(choose from: 1-not at all able, 3-somewhat able, 5-very able)

Interparental contact

Q: How would you generally describe your parents relationship with one another following their separation/divorce?

(choose from: avoided each other, interacted frequently, talked/interacted when necessary, interacted more than necessary)

Interparental conflict

Q: How much conflict was there in your parents' relationship (after they separated/divorced)?

(choose from: 1-no conflict, 3-some conflict, 5-lots of conflict)

Appendix D
Nurturant Fathering Scale

1. How much do you think your father *enjoyed* being a father?

- A great deal
- Very much
- Somewhat
- A little
- Not at all

2. When you needed your father's *support*, was he there for you?

- Always there for me
- Often there for me
- Sometimes there for me
- Rarely there for me
- Never there for me

3. Did your father have enough *energy* to meet your needs?

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

4. Did you feel that you could *confide* in (talk about important personal things with) your father?

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

5. Was your father available to spend *time* with you in activities?

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

6. How emotionally *close* were you to your father?

- Extremely close
- Very close
- Somewhat close
- A little close
- Not at all close

7. When you were an *adolescent* (teenager), how well did you get along with your father?

- Very well
- Well
- Ok
- Poorly

___ Very poorly

8. Overall, how would you *rate* your father?

___ Outstanding

___ Very good

___ Good

___ Fair

___ Poor

9. As you go through your day, how much of a *psychological presence* does your father have in your daily thoughts and feelings?

___ Always there

___ Often there

___ Sometimes there

___ Rarely there

___ Never there

Appendix E
Satisfaction with Father Involvement Scale (modified)

How satisfied are you with the level of *involvement* of your father in the following aspects of your life and development while you were growing up?

Please place the appropriate number on the line *before* each of the following items.

5. *Very satisfied* with level of involvement
4. *Somewhat satisfied* with level of involvement
3. *Impartial* to level of involvement
2. *Somewhat dissatisfied* with level of involvement
1. *Very dissatisfied* with level of involvement

- _____ Emotional development ^a
- _____ Social development ^a
- _____ Spiritual development ^a
- _____ Physical development ^a
- _____ Leisure, fun, play ^a
- _____ Sharing activities/interests ^a
- _____ Caregiving ^a
- _____ Companionship ^a
-
- _____ Ethical/moral development ^b
- _____ Career development ^b
- _____ Developing responsibility ^b
- _____ Developing independence ^b
- _____ Being protective ^b
- _____ School/homework ^b
- _____ Discipline ^b
- _____ Providing income ^{b*}
-
- _____ Intellectual development ^c
- _____ Developing competence ^c
- _____ Mentoring/teaching ^c
- _____ Advising ^c

* This item was removed due to overlap with the independent variable 'father SES.'

Subscale item contributions identified in the original scale involving reported father-involvement:
 a Contributes to the Expressive Involvement Subscale
 b Contributes to the Instrumental Involvement Subscale
 c Contributes to the Mentoring/Advising Subscale

Appendix F
Participant Debriefing Form

High rates of divorce and an increasing number of children experiencing parental separation and growing up in single parent families speaks to the need for research to examine how these family changes affect children. Research demonstrates that children who enjoy consistently positive relationships with both of their divorced parents tend to have the most favorable health outcomes. Some researchers have suggested that losses in the father-child bond may be in part responsible for the well-recognized relationship between divorce and negative child outcomes. However, in comparison to the well-researched influence of the mother-child relationship following divorce, father-child relationship dynamics have been understudied. All evidence suggests a need to investigate the dynamic qualities of father-child relationships as they unfold in the context of these family changes.

The current research project will contribute to this important area of study by shedding light on factors that encourage healthful father-child relations following parental divorce and separation in addition to those that are risks or challenges to maintaining positive father-child bonds. This study is investigating the nature of father-child relationships in traditional families and how this relationship may change following parental divorce. I hypothesize that compared to individuals growing up in intact families, those whose parents divorced will have comparatively weaker father-child bonds. That said, many individuals whose parents' divorced will have relatively positive relationships with their fathers; it is important to understand what factors contribute to this strong father-child bond in the face of adversity. The research suggests that multiple processes are involved and contribute to the quality of this relationship, in both intact and divorced families. The goal then, is to identify factors that contribute to losses in father-child bonds, or conversely, may promote healthier father-child relationships.

Through your participation you will be contributing to what we already know about father-child relationships and how these bonds are influenced by divorce and separation. This knowledge may contribute to a growing understanding of post-divorce father-child relations, which could be used in clinical applications to encourage the presence of factors found to maintain healthy father-child relations following parental divorce.

Thanks again for your time and participation.