DEVELOPING A PARENTAL IDENTITY: EXPECTATIONS ABOUT PARENTHOOD AND DESCRIPTIONS OF SELF AS PARENT

by

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Abstract

The purpose of the two studies described in this thesis was to investigate and develop the notion of a parental identity. During the transition to parenthood, one's identity as a parent is rapidly developing. The initial nature of this identity may be manifested in the kinds of expectations one has about what parenthood may be like. Thus, in study one, the relationship between individuals' prenatal expectations about parenthood and their postnatal experiences was examined. During their third trimester of pregnancy, 73 primiparous couples were interviewed and asked open-ended questions regarding their expectations about becoming parents. A content analysis of their prenatal responses was conducted to examine the nature and style of their expectations. Cluster analysis of women's expectations identified three clusters labelled *Prepared*, *Fearful*, and *Complacent*. Six- and 18-month postnatal comparisons of these clusters indicated that women in the *Prepared* cluster had significantly lower levels of stress and higher levels of self-esteem than women in both the *Fearful* and *Complacent* clusters. Cluster analysis of men's expectations replicated these three clusters and generated a fourth style of conceptualizing parenthood that was labelled *Mixed*. Postnatal comparisons indicated that men in the *Prepared* cluster had significantly lower levels of stress than did men in the *Complacent* cluster. In addition, there was a marginally significant effect of depression with men in the *Prepared* cluster scoring lower than men in the *Complacent* cluster. Gender differences were apparent in two distinct areas: the specific content of their thoughts and the time orientation of their thoughts. Women, more often then men, expressed concern regarding their ability to parent effectively, the lack of sleep they expected to get, and the labour/delivery process. Women were more likely to speak of their

unborn child in terms of it being an infant. Men talked more often about playing with and teaching their child and spoke about their unborn child in terms of it being a child or an adolescent. Results are discussed in terms of the content of expectations about parenthood, gender differences in expectations, and the relationship between individuals' prenatal expectations and their postnatal experiences of parenthood. Results are also interpreted in terms of their contribution to the early development of one's identity as a parent.

Based on the results of study one, study two was designed to further investigate and understand the notion of a more mature stage of parental identity in women. Using the same qualitative methodology as in study one, mothers of children aged three to eight were asked open-ended questions regarding descriptions of themselves as parents, how they felt and thought about being parents, and what they believed was their role as parents. Cluster analysis of their responses resulted in three distinct clusters of women labelled *Stressed*, *Teaching*, and *Nurturant*. Analysis comparing the clusters across a variety of behavioural components of parenting indicated that individuals in the *Stressed* cluster perceived there to be more parenting stress in their lives than individuals described as *Nurturant*, and they also reported having more difficulty dealing with the demands of their children than individuals in the *Teaching* cluster. Results are discussed in terms of the development of parental identity and the relationship between parental identity and parenting behaviour.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my dear friend Jennifer Phillips (1970-1998). Thanks for being so loyal to me and for reminding me how beautiful life is.

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Developing a parental identity: Expectations about parenthood and descriptions of self as parent

What does it mean to be a parent? Palkovitz (1996) would argue that, compared to non-parents, individuals who are parents "manifest different patterns of cognitive, personality, emotional and affective development" (p. 574). Thus, he suggests that one's development as an adult is greatly influenced by whether or not he/she is a parent. However, the majority of research has focussed on the bi-directional nature of the parent-child relationship and oftentimes, it is the child that is the focus of study (Gillberg, 1975). Barnard & Martell (1995) comment on the paucity of research dedicated to the examination of "mothering"; even less has been geared toward "parenting." More specifically, there is a dearth of literature addressing the concept of "parent" in and of itself. Being a parent is a dynamic process in a state of continual change. Some researchers go so far as to suggest that the process of being a parent starts in childhood when one experiences being "mothered" (Uddenberg, 1974; as cited in Mercer, 1986). Some people believe that one becomes a parent at the moment of the conception of one's child. Of course, the notion of being a parent becomes more real throughout pregnancy and is realized at the birth of the child. Although at the birth (or conception) one has become a parent in the literal sense, the process of developing an identity as a parent has also realized itself more fully. Cowan, Cowan, Heming and Miller (1991) argue that the transition to parenthood takes roughly two years from the birth of the first child. How is this process achieved? What factors encourage and foster this process? Once an initial identity as a parent has been developed, it no doubt operates in a continual process of change that lasts throughout one's entire life. This relates

back to the initial question, what does it mean to be a parent? What is parenting? And what is parental identity? It is the purpose of this dissertation to address these questions.

An optimal starting point for an examination of the development of one's identity as a parent would be a study of the transition to first-time parenthood. Individuals in this stage are in the process of becoming parents and are considering, now more seriously than before, the notion of self as parent. Thus, for study one, I investigated individual differences during the transition to parenthood in an attempt to understand why some individuals make the transition seemingly well, whereas others experience more difficulty. I focussed specifically on the role of expectations and how they may influence the ease with which one becomes a parent. It is likely that individuals' initial expectations about parenthood may provide the first inkling of the development of their identity as parents. The decision to become a parent is likely related to one's expectations about parenthood and thus, during the prenatal stages of the child's development, we see the initial stages of the development of the parent. For study two, the participants were individuals who had been parents for much longer (roughly three to eight years) and thus had had more time to incorporate "parent" into their sense of self. The purpose of study two was two-fold. The main focus was to examine the concept of a parental identity and the secondary purpose was to examine the relation between parental identity and parenting behaviours. It is hoped that the combined results of these studies will shed light on what it means to be a parent.

Study 1

"You know, the Ivory Snow stuff and the baby smell. I look forward to that."

"I never realized how stressful having a baby can be."

(Comments from two different individuals: the first about becoming a parent and the second about actually being a parent.)

The addition of a new member to one's family is usually a happy experience. Couples expecting their first child anticipate the birth with enthusiasm and excitement. They are typically optimistic (Feldman & Nash, 1984) and often have romantic notions about first-time parenthood (Le Masters, 1957). However, many couples experience a large discrepancy between their expectations prior to the birth and the reality they face when their baby arrives. As Belsky and his colleagues (Belsky, Ward, & Rovine, 1986, p. 124) note, "often unrecognized is the degree of real and frequently stressful adaptation that goes on when an individual as dependent as a new baby is added to the family." Moving from the marital dyad to the family triad requires a major restructuring of the family system (Antonucci & Mikus, 1988; Cowan & Cowan, 1992; Russell, 1974). Not only do husbands and wives acquire new roles, but, on average, the quality of their marital relationship appears to decline (Belsky, Spanier, & Rovine, 1983). Furthermore, changes may transcend the boundaries of the immediate family and influence relationships outside the family, such as those with co-workers, friends, and relatives (Palkovitz, 1988; Sussman, 1988). In addition, there are significant physical and emotional demands inherent in adjusting to life with a newborn. Thus, the impact of new parenthood has widespread implications for both individuals' and couples' lives.

One area often adversely affected is the marital relationship. It is well-documented

that many couples experience a decline in marital satisfaction after the birth of their first child (Belsky et al., 1983; Feldman & Nash, 1984; Miller & Sollie, 1980; Ruble, Fleming, Hackel, & Stangor, 1988). The first month postpartum may be characterized as the "honeymoon" phase (Miller & Sollie, 1980) as some couples report feeling closer to their spouse (Wallace & Gotlib, 1990). However, by the third to fourth month postpartum, the picture changes with couples typically reporting a decline in satisfaction with the quality of their marriage (Belsky et al., 1983).

In addition to the effects on the marital relationship, new parenthood can have a significant impact on the individual parent as well, especially the mother. Women often experience emotional changes following the birth of their children (Fleming, Ruble, Flett, & Shaul, 1988). Postpartum depression is common, affecting approximately 20% of women (Paykel, Emms, Fletcher, & Rasserby, 1980), and may be more prevalent among primiparous women (Hopkins, Marcus, & Campbell, 1984). The postpartum period can be characterized by feelings of anxiety, depression, mood swings, prolonged crying episodes, and hypersensitivity to rejection, even among women who do not experience postpartum depression (Leifer, 1977). A woman's postpartum emotional state is of considerable importance as it can have adverse effects on both her own and her infant's welfare (Field et al., 1985; Fleming et al., 1988).

The changes that accompany new parenthood are so profound that early investigators of this transition referred to this period as a "crisis" (Dyer, 1963; Le Masters, 1957). However, the term crisis suggests a very temporary, short-lived period of disorganization which seems unrealistic when examining something as significant and enduring as having a

child. As such, several more recent investigators have conceptualized this transition as a "developmental phase" or "process" (Cowan, 1991; Cowan & Cowan, 1988; Levy-Shiff, 1994; Michaels & Goldberg, 1988). This conceptualization paints a more dynamic portrait of new parenthood as variable and diverse (Levy-Shiff, Dimitrovsky, Shulman, & Har-Even, 1998). The impact of becoming a parent varies over time, from couple to couple, and from individual to individual. In fact, some couples experience an increase rather than a decrease in marital satisfaction (Russell, 1974), and not all women suffer emotional burdens; some women report an increase in their self-esteem (Cowan & Cowan, 1988; Leifer, 1980).

Why is it that some couples make the transition to parenthood quite competently, whereas others have more difficulty with the experience? Some researchers suggest that there is an association between individuals' and couples' expectations of parenthood and how successfully they negotiate the transition. One of the most extensively studied aspects of the transition concerns the couples' expectations regarding the distribution of household chores. It has been demonstrated that the quality of the postnatal marital relationship declines when prenatal expectations about sharing chores and child care are violated (Belsky, Lang, & Huston, 1986). That is, when postnatal experiences turn out to be more negative than anticipated, women report feeling more negatively toward their husbands and toward their marriage in general (Belsky et al.,1986; Ruble et al., 1988). Hackel and Ruble (1992) suggest that violated expectations generate overall "negative affect" which adversely affects the marital relationship.

With respect to the individual's expectations, Pancer, Pratt, Hunsberger, and Gallant (in press) found that women with more complex, differentiated expectations about what

parenthood would be like, when assessed three months prior to the child's birth, demonstrated higher levels of self-esteem, lower levels of depression, and better marital adjustment six months after their babies were born. Similarly, Sommer et al. (1993) found that individuals who were "cognitively ready" for parenthood had lower levels of parenting stress and were more adaptive in their parenting style. "Cognitive readiness" was defined in terms of a general awareness of basic child development issues, knowledge of suitable parenting practises, and being attitudinally predisposed to becoming a parent. Lastly, Deutsch, Ruble, Fleming, Brooks-Gunn, and Stangor (1988) found that pregnant women who sought more information about parenting were able to incorporate "motherhood" into their sense of self more effectively, which, in turn, appeared to help them to feel more self-efficacious postnatally.

Most literature on the transition to parenthood focuses on women's experiences; considerably less attention has been directed towards men's adjustment to fatherhood (Osofsky, 1982). Early studies addressing this issue examined how men are affected from a pathological perspective as opposed to taking a normal developmental outlook (e.g., Freeman, 1951; Kaplan & Blackman, 1969; Wainright, 1966). This trend is changing, as is the kind of role that men envision for themselves after their babies are born (Parke, 1995). More recent investigations indicate that many fathers prefer marital relationships in which the demands of work and family roles are more equal, and want to participate more actively in child care and other household responsibilities (Willinger, 1993; Parke, 1995). Farrell, Rosenberg, and Rosenberg (1993) report that during the transition to parenthood, mens' roles as fathers and providers become more salient and men are as likely as women to hold

possible selves as parents. During the transition to fatherhood, the importance men place on their spousal-role decreases as their father-role increases in importance (Strauss & Goldberg, 1999). Strauss and Goldberg (1999) note that fathers' social and leisure roles decrease during the transition, but their work roles remain stable. They suggest this may be a result of fathers feeling pressure to continue in their role as providers. Women, on the other hand, undergo a more significant decline in marital quality than do men (Belsky & Pensky, 1988; Belsky et al., 1983; Cowan et al., 1985; Levy-Shiff, 1994; Spanier & Lewis, 1980). This may be a result of the more significant changes in their lifestyles and the greater physical and emotional demands with which they must cope. Feldman and Nash (1984) found that women reported more positive changes (e.g., better relationships with their parents, more satisfaction with infant care) *and* more negative changes (e.g., less time spent with spouse, less satisfaction with physical appearance) in the overall quality of their new roles than did men. Emotionally, women often experience a decline in their self-esteem (Reilly, Entwisle, & Doering, 1987), whereas men may have feelings of anxiety, neediness, and a sense of loneliness (Osofsky & Osofsky, 1980). All in all, evidence suggests that men's experiences of the transition to parenthood are quite different than those of women.

There are also gender differences in the relations between expectations about parenthood and how well individuals adjust (Pasch, Bradbury, & Schloss, 1993). Most men and women anticipate equal involvement in child care and household responsibilities; however, postnatally, it is the women who tend to the majority of these demands (Belsky, 1985; Ruble et al., 1988). Belsky and Volling (1987) report that men engage in caretaking less frequently than do women, even if the situation provides equal opportunities for both.

Violated expectations do not appear to have as severe an impact on men's evaluations of their marriage. Indeed, Belsky et al. (1986) reported that only 10% of the variance in marital dissatisfaction among men can be attributed to men's violated expectations, whereas 25% of the variance in women's marital dissatisfaction can be accounted for by women's violated expectations. Similar results are reported by Cowan and Cowan (1987) and McDermid, Huston, and McHale (1990). Lastly, women are more complex in their thinking about parenthood than are men at both pre- and postnatal periods (Pancer et al., in press).

The research literature, then, is consistent in demonstrating the considerable impact that the birth of a first child has on every aspect of family life. One aspect that is likely influenced, but which has received little attention, is the development of one's identity as a parent. As individuals experience the multitude of changes inherent in becoming parents, how they think about themselves as individuals experiencing this process also changes. Understanding the role of individuals' expectations about parenthood may help us to understand the development of their identities as parents. Current research clearly illustrates the importance of individuals' and couples' expectations in determining how they will adjust to the changes in their family during the transition. However, this literature is limited in some important aspects. Much of this literature has focussed on a very limited aspect of parental expectations -- the marital relationship, and even more specifically, the distribution of household chores and responsibilities between marital partners after the baby has arrived. While important changes do certainly occur in these areas, they are not the only things that are likely to be altered during the transition to parenthood. Finances, leisure activities, work and career plans, relations with friends and extended family members – all of these, and

many other things, may be profoundly affected by the birth of the first child. Little is known about the nature and content of people's expectations with regard to these issues. Additionally, the literature on expectations and adjustment to parenthood has tended to neglect the fact that there may be profound differences in the kinds of expectations that couples have about this transition and the impact that these differences may have on their adjustment to parenthood. While individuals and couples may vary with regard to their expectations concerning the division of household chores, or the quality of their marital relationship after the baby is born, they may vary in other important ways as well.

What is the best way to discover and describe the kinds of expectations that individuals have about parenthood? How best to understand differences among individuals in the way they anticipate becoming parents? In the present study, a qualitative approach was used to understand and describe individuals' expectations by asking them a series of open-ended questions about what they thought parenthood would be like and what their hopes, fears, and concerns might be. Very few studies have employed this kind of approach in studying expectations about parenthood. One exception is the work of Belsky and colleagues (Belsky et al., 1983; Belsky, Lang & Rovine, 1985; Belsky & Rovine, 1988) who administered open-ended interviews in their research on the transition to parenthood, but used the results primarily to develop closed-ended questions. It was hoped that by allowing individuals to describe their own thoughts about becoming parents, one might develop a richer account of the kinds of expectations individuals have about impending parenthood and identify some of the key individual differences in their expectations. Furthermore, allowing this kind of freedom in responses may provide valuable information regarding the

development of parental identity. In order to better describe the differences among individuals, in addition to using a qualitative approach, a cluster analysis was employed to identify possible patterns of expectations regarding the transition to parenthood. A cluster analysis is used to "identify patterns of associations and distinguish subgroups in samples" (Rapkin & Luke, 1993, p. 248). In the present study, adjustment to parenthood was assessed from the third trimester of pregnancy across the first 18 months postnatally, using measures of stress, depression, self-esteem, and marital adjustment. The goals of this study were (1) to identify some of the key dimensions of individuals' expectations about the transition to parenthood, (2) to identify gender differences in expectations about parenthood, and (3) to examine how prenatal expectations are associated with subsequent experiences of parenthood.

Method

Participants

The data for this study were collected as part of a longitudinal investigation of the transition to parenthood entitled, "The New Families Project" (see Pancer et al., in press). Requests for participation were made through newspaper advertisements and prenatal classes within the Waterloo region of Ontario, Canada (see Appendix A). A total of 73 primiparous couples responded to the initial requests for participants. The couples completed a prenatal interview and all but one completed and returned the set of prenatal questionnaires. Sixty-nine couples (94.5%) completed a package of questionnaires six months after the arrival of their first child. Of the four couples who did not complete the questionnaires, two had moved, there were scheduling difficulties with one, and, as mentioned, one failed to return

the original prenatal questionnaires. Fifty-nine (85.5%) of the couples in the second stage completed an 18-month postnatal package of questionnaires. Of the 10 couples who did not complete those questionnaires, three had moved, one couple had divorced, and five couples had dropped out of the study reporting they were too busy to continue. The women ranged in age from 18 to 40 years (M = 27.3, SD = 3.55) and the men ranged in age from 19 to 48 years (M=30.1 years, SD=5.24). The couples had been married for an average of 4.2 years (SD=2.3) and English was the first language for the majority (94.5% of the females and 93.2% of the males). Other first languages were German and French; nonetheless, all participants were fluent in the English language. With regards to level of education, 19% of the women reported having a secondary school diploma or less, 43% reported having some postsecondary and/or community college, and 38% reported having a university degree or better. For men, 33% reported having a secondary school diploma or less, 34% reported having some postsecondary and/or community college, and 33% reported having a university degree or better. At the time of the prenatal interview, 69.9% of the men and 49.3% of the women reported being employed full-time.

Procedure

Husband and wife partners were interviewed separately in their home, during the third prenatal trimester, by female graduate student research assistants. Before the interview, the researchers reviewed the consent form, which included the purpose of the study, a general overview of the type of questions to be asked in both the interview and on the questionnaires and reassured the participants of their anonymity (see Appendix B). The interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed verbatim by a different research assistant from within the

lab group. After the interviews were completed, both spouses received a separate package of identical questionnaires (in separate, stamped envelopes), and were asked to complete them independently and mail them to the research team within the week. Couples were given questionnaires containing the same measures as the prenatal questionnaires 6- and 18-months postnatally. A cheque for $20 was sent to each couple, at each of the three time periods, as a token payment for their participation.

The Prenatal Interview and Questionnaires. The main purpose of the prenatal interview was to explore the ways in which the prospect of parenthood had affected the couples' and individuals' lives. There were 22 questions in the interview regarding, for example, their beliefs about parenting and family, their sense of self and their relationship as a couple, and their thoughts about their work routines, social activities, and finances (see Appendix C). The questions were phrased to elicit their thoughts about how they felt that these things might change as they moved from being nonparents to parents. Only the responses to four questions were analysed for this study: (Q #4) "What do you think it will be like to be a parent," (Q #16) "What are you looking forward to about having this baby," (Q #17) "What concerns do you have about having this baby," and (Q #18) "Have you given any thought to some of the problems you might encounter as a result of becoming a parent?" These open-ended questions were selected because they were particularly useful in eliciting general expectations, both positive and negative, about the impact of the transition on various aspects of their lives. The interview typically lasted about 45 to 60 minutes.

Categories of Expectations.

Qualitative Analysis of the Prenatal Interview. Individuals' responses to the four target questions were analysed using an open coding approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Open coding is an analytic inductive approach which involves "breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 61). Participants' responses were divided into "meaning units" (usually one sentence), each representing a distinct concept. This approach has been used successfully in several other investigations (e.g., Blecke, 1990; Jackson, Pancer, Pratt, & Hunsberger, 1998; Rennie, Phillips, & Quartaro, 1988; Stamp, 1994) (see Boyatis, 1998 for an excellent discussion of coding via themes). Each meaning unit was coded and placed in a category with similarly coded units. New categories were developed when unique units were encountered. When this process was completed, each of the categories was individually reviewed to ensure that it was mutually exclusive and represented one cohesive pattern of thinking. Titles for the categories were determined after all the categorizing was finished.

Women. Four main categories emerged from the analysis of women's responses to the four target questions. These categories, their frequencies, and some examples of each are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Examples and Frequencies of Women's and Men's Prenatal Thought Patterns.

Category	Example	Percent Reporting Each Category* Women	Men
Enthusiasm	"Just the quiet moments I'm looking forward to, like especially when the baby's just born and it just lays in your arms." "Something inside that makes you all giggly and bubbly." "I'm just kind of sitting in the glow of the warmth and the wonderfulness of the happening."	93*	84
Anxiety	"When I listen to other babies and they cry and cry and cry and won't stop, I just want to make them shut up, you know, so I find that really stressful." "I worry that we don't know enough about it to be good parents." "I'm anxious, I don't know how I'm going to handle it at this point"	89	86
Coping	"We both do lots of reading, so I just sort of feel that if something comes up now, we'll just sort of take it in stride. I feel pretty confident about that aspect of parenting." "I'm aware that there's going to be stressful situations and I think that awareness in itself will be able to let me handle it better." "I'll deal with the problems when they come."	67	54
Uncertainty	"I'm really looking forward to it, but it seems so scary." "It's going to be different I guess." "I'm not sure what's going to happen."	40	49
Socialization	"I'm really influenced by that sort of the gift of knowledge...teaching the child...imparting knowledge and wisdom." "Taking him to judo, that's one thing I'm looking forward to." "The three of us being able to spend time together doing things and growing up together, teaching different things."	N/A	36

*percentages are based on the total N of 73 men and 73 women. Since one complete response to each question could include meaning units from more than one category, the percentages do not total 100.

Statements reflecting feelings of pleasure, excitement and enthusiasm about becoming a parent were grouped together and labelled *Enthusiasm*. These responses focussed solely on the joys and gratifications of parenthood. Another distinct theme that emerged in many of the responses was labelled *Anxiety*. Responses assigned to this category indicated a lack of self-confidence in being able to deal with parenting; they were marked with anxiety, pessimism, and feelings of being overwhelmed. Responses in the *Coping* category consisted of strategies and plans with which to handle difficult situations. Individuals who expressed these thoughts appeared to have a sense of control and mastery in becoming parents and showed evidence of thinking about potential problems and possible strategies to deal with their concerns. The final category, *Uncertainty*, included statements reflecting vague notions about their future situation, how others' experiences related to their own situations, and responses reflecting a combination of both positive and negative expectations.

Men. Five main categories emerged from the analysis of the men's responses. These categories, their frequencies, and some examples of each are also presented in Table 1. The definitions for the first four categories are the same as defined above for the female participants. The fifth category, *Socialization*, consisted of thoughts about raising children with respect to discipline and family values, the individual's role as a teacher, giving guidance and support, and the excitement of playing with the child.

Reliability Coding. Data were coded independently by two coders, the author and a female graduate student. These data are part of a larger data base previously collected by graduate students at another university. Neither coder was involved in the collection of these data. Reliability was established on 25% of the participants' complete responses to each of

the four questions, for both women and men. Using Cohen's kappa, reliability for the four target questions ranged from .73 to .90 for the women's responses, and from .78 to .85 for the men's responses.

Thematic Coding. Responses to the same open-ended questions were also coded thematically. The author read through the responses to these questions in each of the interview transcripts and recorded each time a particular theme or topic was addressed in the response. A total of 11 major themes or topics emerged; *delivery/labour, lack of sleep, financial stress, teaching the child, health of the baby, baby's development, routine/scheduling, possible negative influences of society, playing with baby, ability to parent effectively,* and *the joys of starting a family.* The second reliability coder read through 25% of the males' and females' complete responses to each of the four questions and coded them according to the first coder's categories. Inter-rater agreement on code assignment was 88% for the females and 91% for the males. Any discrepancies were discussed and consensus was reached.

Dependent Variables. After the interview, participants completed a variety of measures tapping a number of domains in their personal lives. Of particular importance to the present study were measures of stress, depression, marital adjustment, and self-esteem. Parallel questionnaires addressing these issues were completed at the 6- and 18-month postnatal testing periods.

Stress. The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein,1983) is a global measure of the degree to which people appraise situations in their lives as stressful (see Appendix D). The PSS contains 14 items, each presented on a 5-point scale (0 = never,

4 = very often), assessing the individual's feelings and thoughts experienced "during the last month." The items examine how often one has felt upset, stressed, or irritated, and one's perceived degree of control over these feelings (e.g., "In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?"). Total scores can range from 0 to 56, with higher scores indicating higher levels of stress.

The PSS is a widely-employed scale with good psychometric properties. Cohen et al. (1983) reported a test-retest reliability of .85 after two days, and .55 after six weeks. Coefficient alpha reliability was demonstrated to be above .84 for three different samples. In support of the scale's validity, Cohen et al. also reported that the PSS correlated with the number and impact of stressful life events (.20 to .49).

Depression. Current levels of depression were assessed by the Centre for Epidemiologic Studies Depression (CES-D) scale (Radloff, 1977) (see Appendix E). The CES-D emphasizes the affective components of depression (e.g., helplessness, loss of appetite), focusing on the frequency of these depressive symptoms (e.g.,"During the past week, I thought my life had been a failure."). There are 20 items in this measure, each rated on a 4-point scale, ranging from "rarely or none of the time" (0) to "most or all of the time" (3). Higher scores represent higher levels of depression.

In addition to its solid psychometric features, the CES-D is one of the best measures of depression for use with the general population (Shaver & Brennan, 1991). The scale has been administered to both psychiatric and non-clinical individuals with coefficient alphas above .90 for both samples. In addition to this high degree of internal consistency, the scale has good test-retest reliability, ranging from .67 over 4 weeks to .32 over 12 months. Lastly,

there is a high correlation between the CES-D and the Beck Depression Inventory (r = .81; Beck, 1967) and the Self-Rating Depression Scale (r = .90; Zung, 1965).

Marital Adjustment. Locke and Wallace's (1959) Marital Adjustment Scale (MAS) was used to assess the state of the couple's marital relationship (see Appendix F). The MAS is a 16-item scale measuring the extent of agreement between partners on such topics as arguing, finances, and confiding in one another. For example, one of the items states, "When disagreements arise, they usually result in: a) man gives in, b) woman gives in or c) agreement by mutual give and take." For this item, answer (c) is given the highest score. Total scores can range from 2 to 158. A higher score indicates better marital adjustment.

The MAS is a widely utilized measure, with Locke and Wallace reporting high internal consistency and a split-half reliability of .90. Cowan et al. (1985) found strong correlations between couples' marital adjustment scores and observer ratings of husband and wife behavioural interactions.

Self-Esteem. Rosenberg's (1965) Self-Esteem Scale (SES) includes 10 items with a 4-point response format requiring participants to indicate how much they agree with each statement (e.g., "At times I think I am no good at all") (see Appendix G). Responses range from (1), indicating strongly agree, to (4), strongly disagree; thus, scores can range from 10 to 40, with higher scores representing greater self-esteem.

The SES is a frequently used scale with strong internal consistency (alphas from .77 to .88), and good test-retest reliability (.85 over a two week period). The SES correlates well with a number of other measures of self-esteem, such as the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (Demo, 1985).

Results

Pre- and Postnatal Adjustment Measures

Parents' adjustment from pre- to postnatal periods was measured using scales assessing the four separate domains just described: stress, depression, marital adjustment, and self-esteem. The mean scores for each of these variables for both women and men are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations for Women's and Mens' Scores on Outcome Measures at Prenatal and Postnatal Testing Periods.

	Women			Men		
Measure	Prenatal	6-mo.	18-mo.	Prenatal	6-mo	18-mo.
Stress						
M	22.97	22.87	25.55	19.39	20.63	21.36
SD	7.19	7.67	6.18	5.88	6.05	7.55
Depression						
M	10.95	11.56	12.73	6.95	7.97	8.05
SD	7.38	10.52	8.58	5.50	7.82	7.66
Marital Adjustment						
M	129.59	120.20	117.49	124.73	118.91	114.11
SD	12.24	17.82	21.55	17.26	15.97	21.10
Self-Esteem						
M	33.64	33.51	33.72	35.60	35.08	35.71
SD	4.39	4.84	4.29	3.85	4.40	3.93

All dependent variables were analysed by using a 2 (parent: mother, father) X 3 (time: prenatal, 6-month postnatal, 18-month postnatal) mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA), with parent as a between-participants factor and time as a within-participants factor. Significant effects were examined using Neuman Keul's post hoc comparisons at an alpha level of .01.

The ANOVA results for the perceived stress scores revealed a significant main effect for parent, $F(1,57) = 14.36$, $p < .01$ and a main effect for time, $F(2,114) = 5.56$, $p<.01$. Examination of the relevant means for the main effect of parent indicated that women reported significantly higher levels of perceived stress than did men at all three testing periods. Examination of the relevant means for the main effect of time indicated that perceived stress scores reported at 18-months postnatally were significantly higher than perceived stress scores at both the prenatal and the 6-month postnatal testing periods.

Analysis of depression scores indicated a significant main effect for parent, $F(1,58) = 12.68$, $p<.001$. Women reported significantly higher levels of depression than did men at all three testing periods.

Results from the analyses of marital adjustment scores indicated a significant main effect for time, $F(2,110) = 19.53$, $p<.0001$. Post hoc comparisons indicated that parents' mean marital adjustment scores at the prenatal testing period were significantly higher than their mean scores at both the 6- and 18-month postnatal testing periods. As well, marital adjustment scores at 6 months postnatal were significantly higher than they were at 18 months.

Lastly, the ANOVA results for self-esteem scores indicated a significant main effect for parent, $F(1,58) = 11.69$, $p<.01$. Women exhibited significantly lower mean levels of self-

esteem than did men at all three testing periods.

Clustering the Participants

One of the purposes of the present study was to account for individual differences in the transition to parenthood. To help examine these differences, cluster analyses were conducted using participants as cases. A cluster analysis is a multivariate technique which identifies the number of cases in a sample with similar scores on a set of variables and then groups these cases together to form clusters. The resulting cluster is characterized by the pattern of mean scores on each variable (Borgen & Barnett, 1987; Rapkin & Luke, 1993). Cluster analysis is becoming a more popular statistical technique due to its more complex data-analytic capacities (e.g., Belsky & Hsieh, 1998; Wyatt et al., 1999). Rapkin and Luke (1993) highlight a number of "Rules of Thumb" for deciding on the correct number of clusters. They suggest that the number of cases within a cluster should be fairly substantial. Thus, a cluster comprising only 3 or 4 cases is too small to be meaningfully interpreted. They also advise using one-way ANOVAs "to maximize group differences on profile variables" (Blashfield & Aldenderfer, 1988, p. 269). Significant differences between the clusters on the variables indicate a strong cluster solution. Interpretability is another issue to be considered when choosing the cluster solution (Rapkin & Luke, 1993). Having clusters that are meaningfully distinguishable from one another is essential. The clustering technique employed in the current study was an agglomerative hierarchical algorithm with Ward's method of linkage (Ward, 1963). This technique was "designed to optimize minimum variance within clusters" and is distinguished for "its ability to find known structure in data" as exhibited via Monte Carlo studies (Blashfield and Aldenderfer, 1988, p. 452). The

variables used in the cluster analysis were the frequencies with which each of the categories of expectations was mentioned by each participant. Consequently, four variables were used in clustering the women and five were used in clustering the men. A dendrogram indicated that a three cluster solution was most appropriate for the women's responses, and a four cluster solution for the men's. As a result, a second cluster analysis was conducted, for both men and women, using an iterative algorithm specifying three or four clusters, respectively.

Women. The three distinct clusters of women were labelled *Fearful*, *Complacent*, and *Prepared* (see below). These labels were given based on the frequency of the categories comprising each cluster. There was one outlier (score greater than two standard deviations from the mean of the cluster) and her scores were removed from any additional analyses. The three clusters differed significantly from one another on all four of the coding categories: *Enthusiasm*, $F(2,68) = 4.71$, $p<.05$, *Anxiety*, $F(2,68) = 16.69$, $p<.0001$, *Coping*, $F(2,68) = 85.67$, $p<.0001$, and *Uncertainty*, $F(2,68) = 17.29$, $p<.001$ (see Figure 1). This high degree of distinctiveness indicates that this is a credible solution (Blashfield & Aldenderfer, 1988; Rapkin & Luke, 1993).

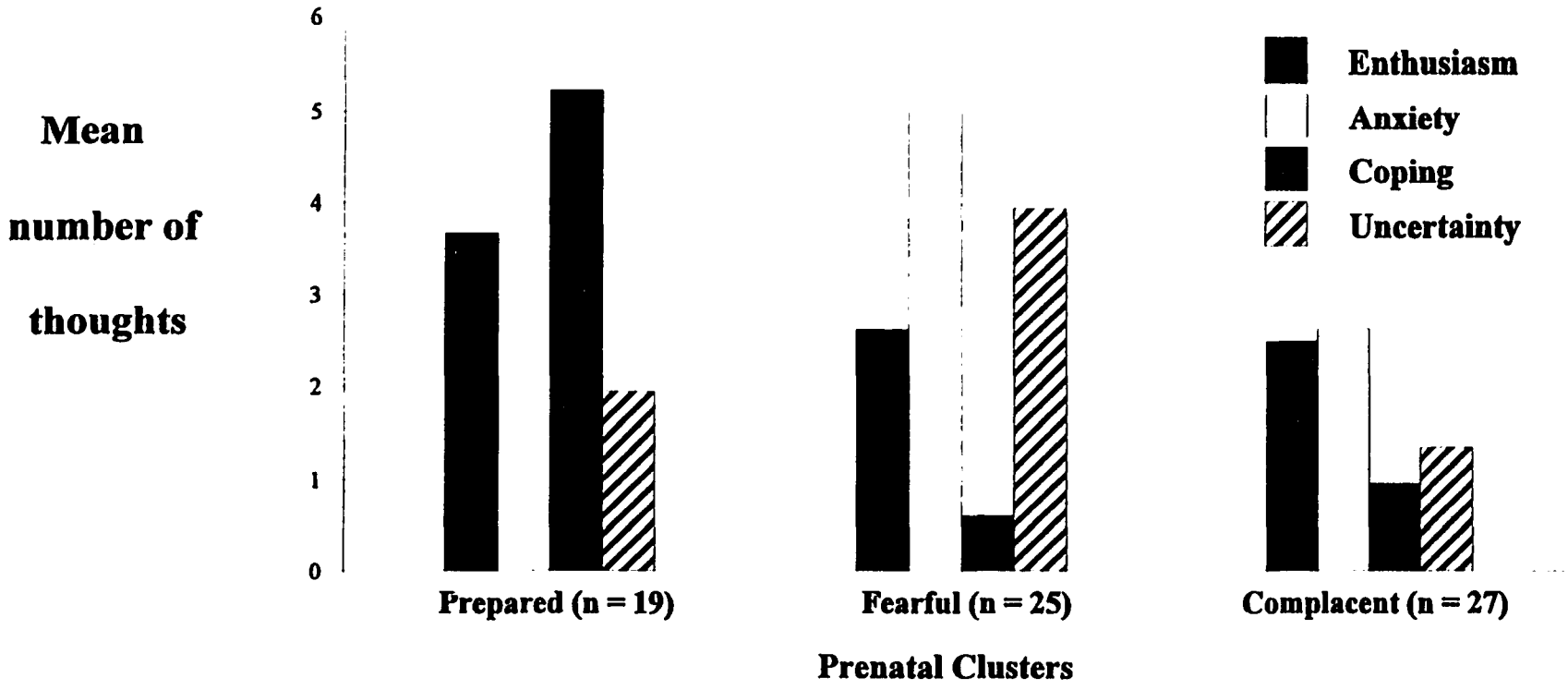

Figure 1. Mean number of reported thoughts by each of the three clusters of women.

The first cluster was composed of individuals with expectations suggesting they were *Prepared* for parenthood (N=19; 27%). These women employed the highest number of Enthusiasm responses, very few Anxiety and Uncertainty responses, and the highest number of Coping statements. The *Prepared* group had thought about a diverse range of possibilities in becoming parents and, most importantly, had developed strategies to help them handle the difficult situations. Their comments indicated a sense of mastery, confidence, and control over their upcoming roles as mothers. The second cluster of women, labelled *Fearful* (N=25; 35%), had the highest frequency of Anxiety statements. They employed the smallest frequency of Coping responses and generated the highest number of statements from the Uncertainty category. In general, these individuals seemed unsure of themselves as mothers and were quite apprehensive and pessimistic about their mothering abilities and how they would deal with parenthood. Lastly, the third cluster was composed of individuals with a rather *Complacent* perspective toward future parenthood (N=27; 38%). These women expressed relatively few Enthusiasm or Anxiety expectations, and made very few statements in the Coping and Uncertainty categories when discussing their expectations for parenthood. They appeared relatively indifferent toward and unaffected by their upcoming roles as mothers.

An analysis of the relation between cluster group and education level was conducted to ascertain if the clustering of parents according to expectations might simply be a function of parents' ability to express their expectations. A one-way ANOVA with cluster as the independent variable and education level as the dependent variable indicated no relationship between education and cluster, $\underline{F}(2, 67) < 1$.

Men. Cluster analysis of the men's expectations resulted in four unique groups labelled *Prepared, Fearful, Complacent,* and *Mixed* (see Figure 2). There were three outliers (scores greater than two standard deviations from the mean of the cluster) and their scores were removed from any additional analyses. These four clusters differed significantly from one another on all five of the coding categories: *Enthusiasm*, $F(3,65) = 11.42$, $p<.0001$; *Anxiety*, $F(3,65) = 132.96$, $p<.0001$; *Coping*, $F(3,65) = 5.02$, $p<.01$; *Uncertainty*, $F(3,65) = 3.18$, $p<.01$, and *Socialization*; $F(3,65) = 10.13$, $p<.0001$. Again, this high degree of distinctiveness suggests that this solution is credible (Rapkin & Luke, 1993).

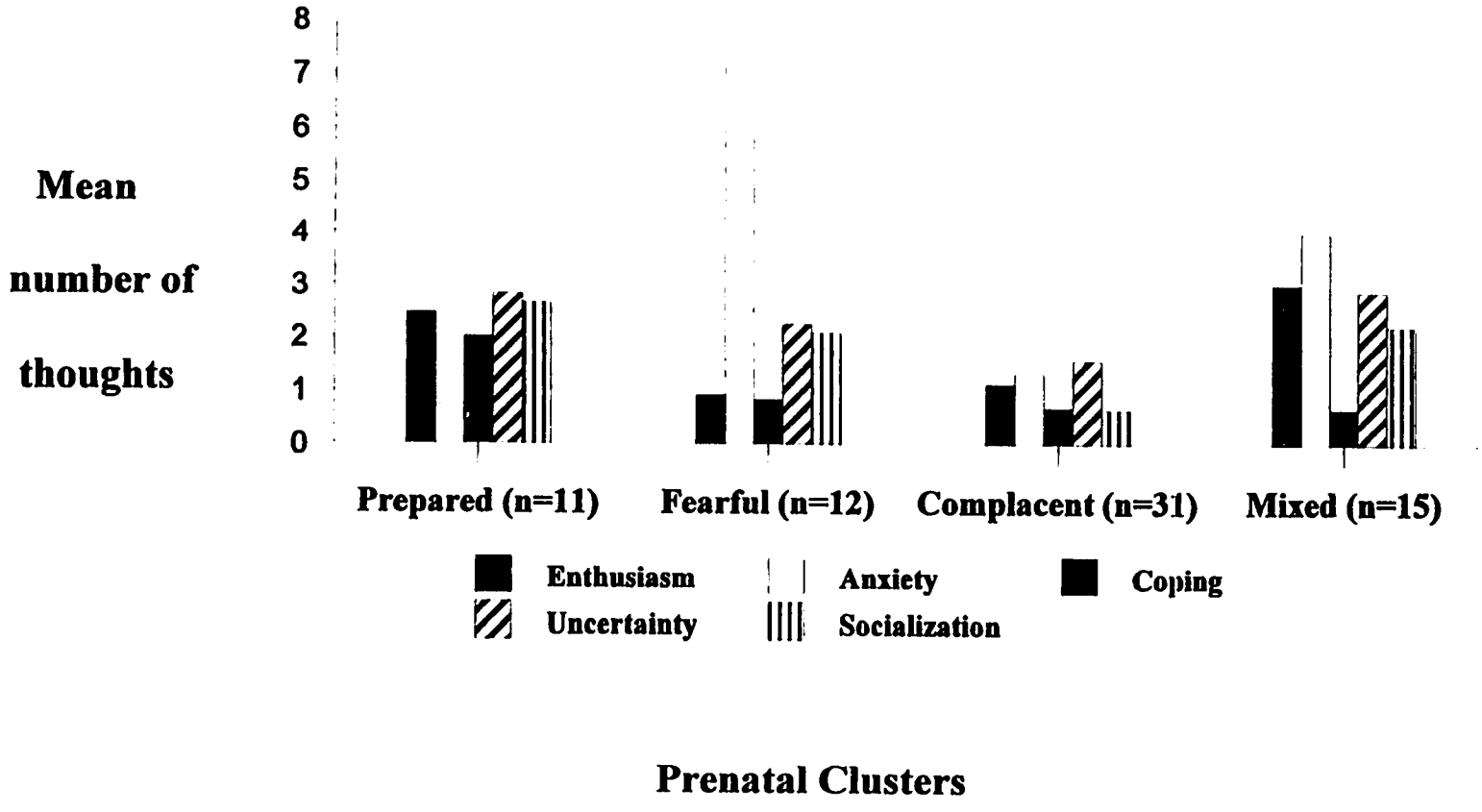

Figure 2. Mean number of reported thoughts by each of the four clusters of men.

The first cluster of men, *Prepared* (N=11; 16%), expressed the highest frequency of Coping responses, the lowest frequency of Anxiety responses, and a high number of Enthusiasm statements, relative to men in the *Fearful* and *Complacent* clusters. Of all the male clusters, this group seemed the most "prepared" for parenthood in terms of their expectations, as they expressed a sense of confidence about becoming fathers. Similar to the women, the second cluster of men was composed of individuals with *Fearful* expectations about becoming parents (N=12; 17%). They displayed the highest frequency of Anxiety comments, laden with pessimism and doubt, and rarely discussed potential positive attributes of fatherhood. They also expressed a fair degree of uncertainty and rarely employed Coping statements. Quite different from this group was the cluster of individuals which were labelled *Complacent* (N=31; 45%). This group was the largest of all four clusters. These men seemed somewhat unaffected by the changes they were about to experience. Their responses covered the gamut of possibilities as they expressed similar frequencies of statements from each category. In other words, these men said they were both excited and worried, not very confident or sure of themselves, but were looking forward to interacting with their child. The final group was labelled *Mixed* (N=15; 22%). These men expressed a high frequency of comments from all categories except Coping.

Again, to determine whether cluster membership was related to parents' ability to verbalize their expectations, analysis of the relation between cluster group and education level was conducted. A one-way ANOVA with cluster as the independent variable, and education level as the dependent variable, indicated no relationship, $\underline{F}(3, 63) < 1$.

Relation Between Prenatal Clusters and Parental Identity

These clusters represent groupings of the various expectations which individuals' hold regarding their future roles as parents. The results indicate that individuals think about parenthood in distinctly different ways. Some are more excited about becoming parents than others, as reflected in the frequency of *Enthusiastic* comments they expressed. Some individuals are more *Anxious* than others, some quite *Uncertain* about parenthood, others feel confident and appear to have developed some *Coping* strategies to help deal with potential difficulties. At this point, it may be useful to discuss the relation between these prenatal clusters of expectations of parenthood and the notion of parental identity. Is there a relationship between how individuals think about parenthood and how they think of themselves as parents? Intuitively, one would say yes. What individuals think parenthood involves, what their hopes, worries, and fears are is likely a reflection of how they see themselves playing the role of parent, which may be related to how they would describe themselves as parents. Thus, for example, individuals comprising the *Prepared* cluster expressed a high frequency of comments from the *Coping* and *Enthusiasm* categories indicating they feel confident and are excited about how they would play the role of mother and father. It is likely then, that these individuals may use words like "capable", "willing to learn", and "accepting" to describe their identities as parents. Similarly, individuals with *Fearful* expectations about parenthood may have parental identities defined by words such as "worried", "doubting", and "overwhelmed." These prenatal clusters represent individuals expectations of parenthood a few weeks before they actually become parents, in the literal sense. Thus, these expectations are likely to be strong indicators of how these individuals

may describe themselves as parents.

Prenatal Clusters and Postnatal Outcomes

Women. In order to explore the relationship between prenatal expectations and adjustment to parenthood, comparisons of the three clusters of women on the four specific outcome variables (stress, depression, self-esteem, and marital adjustment) were conducted (see Table 3). All dependent variables were analysed using a 3 (cluster: *Fearful, Prepared, Complacent*) X 3 (time: prenatal, 6- and 18-month postnatal) ANOVA with cluster as a between participants factor and time as a within participants factor. Significant effects were examined using Newman Keul's post hoc comparisons.

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations for Women's Outcome Measures as a Function of Prenatal Cluster

	Stress			Depression			Self-Esteem			Marital Adjustment		
Cluster	Pre	6-mo.	18-mo.	Pre	6-mo.	18-mo.	Pre	6-mo.	18-mo.	Pre	6-mo.	18-mo.
Fearful												
M	25.08	23.85	27.19	12.31	12.85	15.75	32.25	32.00	32.58	129.35	118.68	117.21
SD	5.92	7.93	6.34	8.17	11.50	12.74	4.58	4.73	4.80	14.71	10.76	18.99
Prepared												
M	19.40	17.90	23.97	9.13	6.38	10.63	35.69	36.06	34.88	127.75	121.49	112.87
SD	5.67	6.59	7.57	6.20	5.61	9.29	3.98	4.49	3.46	1.39	17.88	33.94
Complacent												
M	23.43	24.23	25.35	11.12	12.97	12.35	33.44	33.09	32.58	127.57	117.29	111.58
SD	7.75	7.17	5.25	7.34	11.15	5.39	4.85	4.69	4.92	14.04	24.11	22.41

pre = prenatal time period
6-mo. = 6-month postnatal time period
18-mo. = 18-month postnatal time period

The ANOVA results for the perceived stress scores indicated a significant main effect of cluster, $F(2,58) = 3.95$, $p<.05$. Post hoc tests on the relevant means indicated that the *Prepared* women had significantly lower levels of stress at all time points than did women in both the *Fearful* and *Complacent* clusters.

ANOVA results for the depression scores revealed no significant main effects or interactions. However, the means follow a pattern similar to that of stress, with women from the *Prepared* cluster demonstrating the lowest levels of depression at all three testing periods, followed by the women from the *Complacent* and then the *Fearful* clusters, respectively.

With respect to self-esteem, there was a marginally significant main effect of cluster, $F(2,59) = 3.02$, $p<.06$. Post hoc tests on the means indicated that the *Prepared* individuals had significantly higher levels of self-esteem than both the *Fearful* individuals and the *Complacent* individuals (though the *Prepared-Complacent* comparison yielded only a marginally significant effect).

Lastly, for marital adjustment, the ANOVA results indicated a significant main effect of time, $F(2,118) = 11.00$, $p<.0001$, with post hoc comparisons revealing that prenatal levels of marital satisfaction were significantly higher than the 6- and 18-month postnatal levels in all clusters.

There were no time X cluster interactions for any of the dependent variables.

Men. Results demonstrating the relation between prenatal expectations and men's adjustment are presented in Table 4. All dependent variables were analysed using a 4 (cluster: *Fearful, Prepared, Complacent, Mixed*) X 3 (time: prenatal, 6- and 18-month postnatal) ANOVA with cluster as a between participants factor and time as a within participants factor. Significant effects were examined using Newman Keul's post hoc comparisons.

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations for Men's Outcome Measures as a Function of Prenatal Cluster.

	Stress			Depression			Self-Esteem			Marital Adjustment		
Cluster	Pre	6-mo.	18-mo.	Pre	6-mo.	18-mo.	Pre	6-mo.	18-mo.	Pre	6-mo.	18-mo.
Fearful												
M	17.43	19.86	20.42	5.86	7.71	6.37	36.57	35.57	35.71	125.58	117.92	115.25
SD	4.39	4.22	6.29	2.12	5.47	5.15	2.64	3.78	3.90	15.00	13.56	16.97
Prepared												
M	15.82	16.45	18.95	2.72	2.82	5.55	35.91	36.18	37.00	133.91	123.62	124.43
SD	5.72	3.70	5.24	2.61	1.99	5.96	3.94	5.19	3.77	17.92	11.70	19.50
Complacent												
M	20.81	22.06	24.08	8.06	9.96	10.95	34.46	34.48	34.80	123.74	120.64	112.10
SD	6.50	6.33	8.90	6.11	10.13	9.19	4.36	4.47	4.29	17.97	17.45	22.80
Mixed												
M	20.83	22.25	20.00	10.04	8.33	5.33	36.92	34.75	35.92	118.25	116.63	111.41
SD	4.59	5.66	5.65	5.42	5.21	4.98	3.40	4.59	3.80	15.34	9.50	14.92

pre = prenatal time period
6-mo. = 6-month postnatal time period
18-mo. = 18-month postnatal time period

The ANOVA results for the perceived stress scores indicated a significant main effect of cluster, $F(3,51) = 3.09$, $p<.05$. Examination of the means indicated that the *Prepared* group had significantly lower levels of stress at all time points than did the *Complacent* cluster.

ANOVA for the depression scores resulted in a marginally significant main effect of cluster, $F(3,51) = 2.67$, $p<.06$ with the *Prepared* group having marginally significantly lower levels of depression than the *Complacent* group. However, there was also a significant cluster X time interaction, $F(6,102) = 2.71$, $p<.05$. Simple effects analyses were conducted comparing depression scores among the four clusters at each of the three testing periods. Simple effects analysis of the prenatal depression scores indicated a significant cluster effect, $F(3, 63) = 4.31$, $p<.01$. Comparison of the clusters indicated that individuals in the *Prepared* cluster were significantly less depressed than were individuals in the three other clusters. Analysis of the six-month depression scores showed no differences among the clusters, $F(3,59) = 1.88$, n.s. Analysis of the 18-month depression scores produced a marginally significant cluster effect, $F(3,52) = 2.36$, $p = .08$. Post hoc comparisons indicated that the *Prepared* cluster had lower levels of depression than did the *Complacent* cluster (at a marginal level of significance).

There were no differences among clusters or across time periods with respect to self-esteem.

ANOVA for the marital satisfaction scores indicated a significant main effect of time $F(2, 96) = 6.99$, $p<.01$ with prenatal levels of marital satisfaction being significantly higher than the 6- and 18-month postnatal levels.

Another question addressed in the analysis of the cluster results concerns the issue of assortative mating. Do women classified as *Prepared*, *Complacent*, and *Fearful* have husbands who are similarly classified as *Prepared*, *Complacent*, and *Fearful*? To answer this question, a chi square analyses comparing the cross-classification of cluster membership for husbands and wives was conducted. Results indicated no association between the categories into which husbands and wives were placed, $X^2(6)=6.831$, n.s. (See Table 5).

Table 5

Relation Between Female and Male Cluster Assignment.

		Male Cluster Assignment			
		Prepared	Complacent	Fearful	Mixed
Female Cluster Assignment	Prepared	3*	10	4	2
	Complacent	5	12	6	4
	Fearful	3	9	2	11

* refers to number of couples

Thematic Coding Results

The percentages of women and men who mentioned each of the topics emerging from the thematic analysis are presented in Figure 3. Comparison of the frequencies with which husbands and wives discussed each of the topics indicated a number of significant differences (see Table 6 for means and standard deviations of each of the categories). Women were more likely than men to discuss issues relating to the delivery of the child, concerns about sleep disruptions after the baby has been born, and worries about their ability as parents,

t(68)=3.53, 2.62, 2.08, p<.002, .05, .05, respectively. Men were more likely than women to discuss issues relating to teaching the child and playing with the child, t(68)=2.57, 3.75, p <.05, .001, respectively. Men and women did not differ significantly in the frequency with which they discussed issues relating to finance, health, routine/scheduling, child development, the impact of society on the children or starting a family, t(68)=.83, 0, .66, 1.59, .19, .47, respectively, p = n.s.

Table 6

Means and Standard Deviations of Thematic Categories for Women and Men.

Theme	Women	Men
Delivery	**.347 (.479)[a]**	**.125 (.333)[b]**
Sleep	**.250 (.496)[a]**	**.083 (.278)[b]**
Finances	.319 (.499)	.264 (.443)
Teaching	**.236 (.427)[a]**	**.472 (.649)[b]**
Health	.514 (.581)	.514 (.604)
Child's Development	.264 (.444)	.389 (1.338)
Routine/Scheduling	.361 (.564)	.222 (.451)
Society's Influences	.278 (.510)	.263 (.444)
Playing	**.013 (.118)[a]**	**.236 (.459)[b]**
Ability	**.403 (.548)[a]**	**.208 (.442)[b]**
Family	.333 (.504)	.306 (.493)

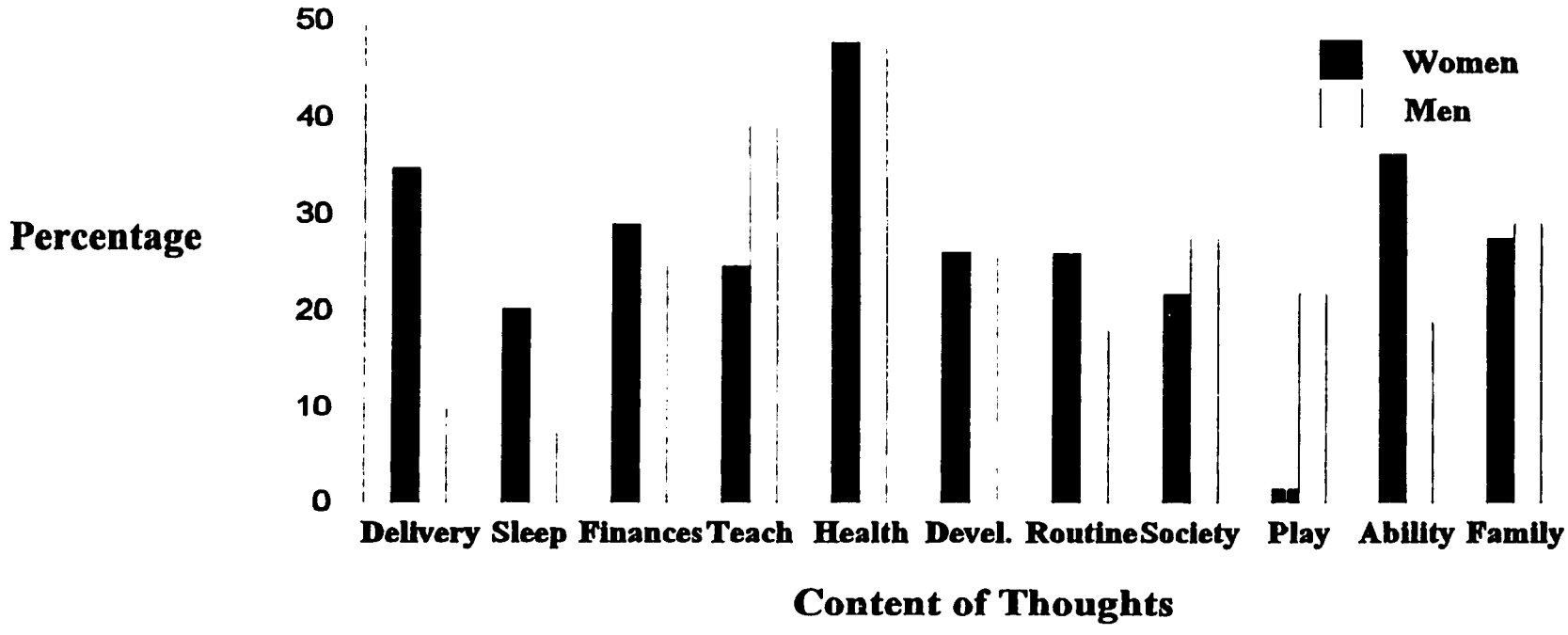

Figure 3. Percentage of women and men reporting each parenting topic.

In examining the responses, it became evident to the author that the time orientation of women's thinking was rather different from that of the men. Women appeared to be concerned with how they would deal with a newborn infant, while men's responses often referred to a time much further in the future, when their children would be of primary school age or teenagers. In order to assess these differences in time orientation, the author read through the responses to each of the four target questions and recorded each instance in which the age of the child was clearly specified in the responses. Five separate, mutually exclusive age categories were used: baby (0-about one year), toddler (one to three years), childhood (4-12 years), adolescence (13-19 years), and adulthood (19 years and up). A second reliability coder read through 25% of both the males' and females' responses to each of the four target questions and coded them according to the first author's five categories. Inter-rater reliability was 95% for the females and 92% for the males. Discrepancies were discussed and consensus was reached.

The percentages of women and men who made the reference to each of the age groupings are presented in Figure 4; the means and and standard deviations are presented in Table 7. Comparison of the frequencies with which husbands and wives mentioned each of the ages indicated that women made reference to their child as an infant significantly more often than did men, $t(68)=3.73$, $p<.001$, while men made reference to their future offspring as a child or adolescent more often than did women, $t(68)=2.63$, 2.49, respectively, $p< .05$ for both ages.

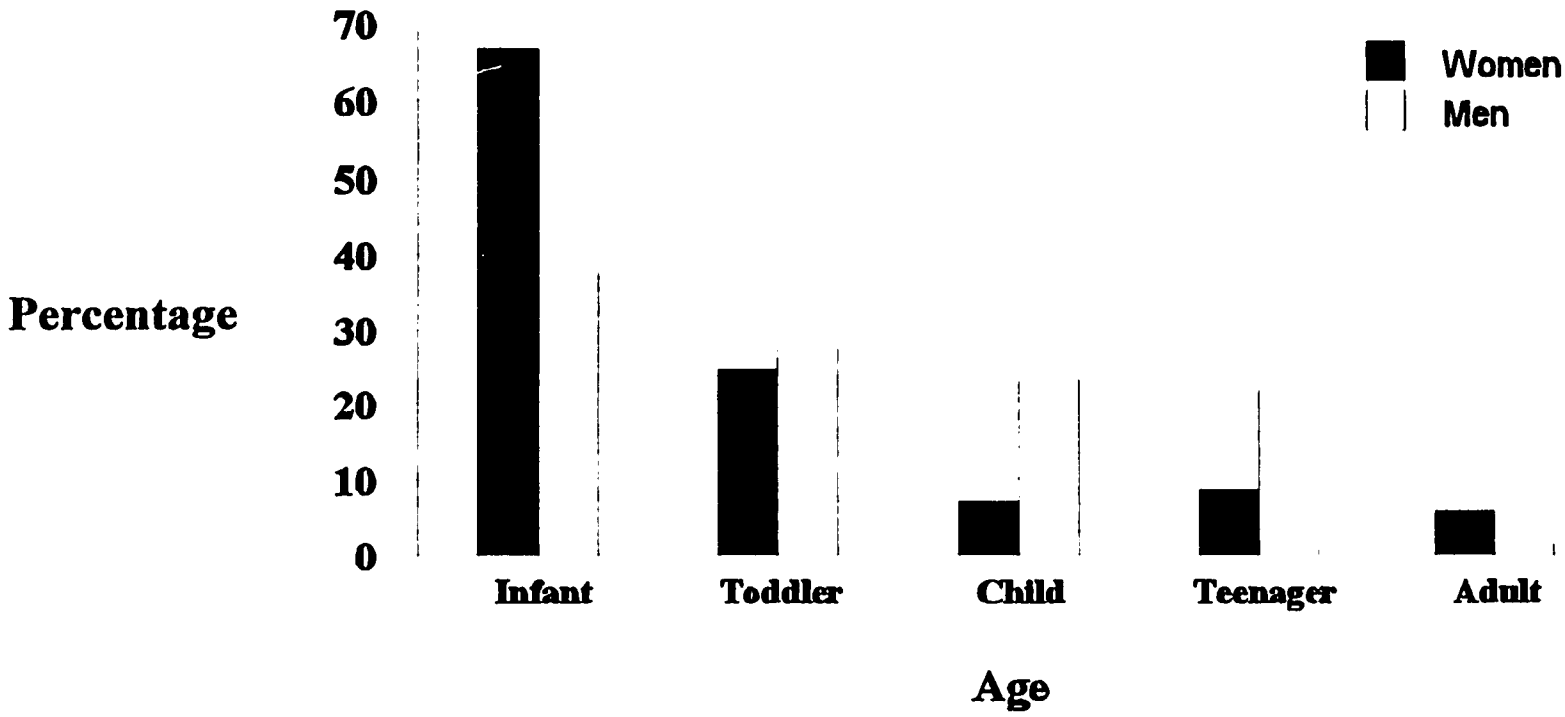

Figure 4. Percentage of women and men reporting each category of time orientation.

Table 7

Means and Standard Deviations Regarding Time Orientation for Women and Men.

Time Orientation	Women	Men
Infant	**1.09 (.99)**[a]	**.52 (.78)**[b]
Toddler	.34 (.78)	.29 (.55)
Child	**.10 (.39)**[a]	**.26 (.50)**[b]
Adolescent	**.07 (.26)**[a]	**.24 (.50)**[b]
Adult	.01 (.12)	.06 (.24)

$p<.05$

Discussion

Adjustment to Parenthood

The present investigation contributes further evidence that the transition to parenthood is a time of substantial change, as individuals' roles change from husband and wife to father and mother, and as their relationship shifts from couple to family unit. Similar to previous studies (e.g., Alpert, Richardson, & Fodaski, 1983; Levy-Shiff et al., 1998; Miller and Sollie, 1980; Osofsky & Osofsky, 1980; Sommer et al., 1993; Tessier, Piche, Tarabulsy, & Muckle, 1992), in this study, the levels of stress for women increased during the transition to parenthood. As well, their stress levels were higher than men's at all three testing periods. This is not surprising given the significance of the changes which have occurred in their lives. Their routines, employment status, social networks, financial situations, and physical appearances have all been altered dramatically. In addition, women were more depressed and had lower self-esteem than men. Again, this is expected given that women experience

varying degrees of prenatal (Fleming, Ruble, Flett, & Shaul, 1988; Raskin, Richman, & Gaines, 1990) and postpartum depression (Paykel et al, 1980; Leifer, 1977). These tendencies for stress and depression to be higher for women are consistent with previous research. For example, Kumar and Robson (1984) report that pregnancy and postnatal experiences are often more emotionally challenging for women than for men.

The current results also support previous research showing that both men and women express less satisfaction with the quality of their marital relationship as they adjust to being first-time parents (Belsky, Lang, & Rovine, 1985; Cowan & Cowan, 1988; Feldman & Nash, 1984; Kluwer, Heesink, & Van de Vliert, 1997). Cowan et al., (1991) report that the transition to parenthood is roughly a two-year process. Thus, the decline in marital satisfaction continuing to 18-months is not surprising. In addition, Cowan and Cowan (1985, 1992) reported that fathers' marital satisfaction decreased moderately from birth to 6-months postpartum but then decreased more dramatically from 6- to 18-months postpartum. Mothers, too, showed a decrease in marital satisfaction from 6- to 18-months, but this decrease was not as precipitous as it was for men.

The Nature of First-Time Parents' Expectations

One purpose of this investigation was to examine and describe individuals' expectations about parenthood. Previous research has focussed on a rather narrow range of parents' prenatal expectations (e.g., the distribution of household chores, marital satisfaction, child care issues) and therefore, yielded a very limited and constrained account of what individuals expect. Essentially, what first-time parents think parenthood will be like was previously not investigated to address questions such as what are their worries, their fears, their hopes. This is important

information to have given that how individuals conceptualize upcoming events influences how well they are able to cope with them (Lazarus, 1993). To address this issue, individuals were provided with an open-ended opportunity to express their views, which provided a detailed narrative of what they believed parenthood would entail. Results indicated that individuals have a diverse and varied repertoire of expectations; previous literature has focussed mostly on childcare and household issues but these results show that individuals think about many more issues. Some individuals worry about the physical demands, about coping financially, and about their ability to meet their newborn's needs. Others are focussed on the opportunity to teach their child about the world and to enjoy the experience of watching a child grow and develop. Still, others were focussing on developing a physical and emotional bond with their newborn while some were already thinking about possible difficulties their children might encounter as teenagers.

Le Masters (1957) and others (Dyer, 1963; Feldman & Nash, 1984) claimed that most expectant parents have positive, romanticized notions about what parenthood will be like. Many of the individuals in this study conceptualized parenthood in this fashion via comments from the *Enthusiasm* category, but these comments were used to varying degrees and in addition to comments from the other categories. Of course, not everyone held such romantic notions. Indeed, a number of individuals were quite fearful and worried in their views. Some individuals spoke of feeling overwhelmed and unsure of their abilities and appeared to be quite worried about being able to handle their new roles. Conversely, there were other individuals who expressed a sense of control and mastery over their situation. These individuals appeared to be aware of potential difficulties, such as busy schedules, financial hardships, or "difficult" infants,

but they had developed plans to cope with these difficulties. That is, instead of merely acknowledging difficulties, they went one step further and actually thought about how these issues might affect their lives and how they would handle these situations if they should materialize. Thus, results from this study indicated that individuals are thinking about a wide range of issues. By providing expectant parents with an opportunity to speak openly about their hopes, fears, and worries, substantial differences in the quality of individuals' expectations about parenthood were found. Employing a qualitative approach enables one to move beyond the constraints of the current literature to help understand the content and nature of individuals' expectations about first-time parenthood. As Lincoln (1992) argues, researchers who use the qualitative approach are attempting to "understand a phenomena within its own context" (p. 376). This approach was advantageous when trying to understand something as influential as the transition to parenthood.

Gender Differences

Although research exploring the transition to parenthood has focussed mainly on women's experiences, men also experience a transition, but much less is known about their experiences. The descriptive information gathered in this study is valuable with respect to understanding how men conceptualize the process of becoming a parent and how their perceptions are related to their experience of parenthood. Given that the transition to parenthood is a familial process (Belsky, 1984; Cox & Paley, 1997; Parke, 1995; 1996), it is valuable to include both parents.

There were a number of similarities and differences in women's and men's expectations about parenthood. Both women and men anticipated the joys and the hardships to varying degrees. Frequencies of comments from both the *Enthusiasm* and *Anxiety* categories were

similar for women and men and both expressed mixed feelings and ambiguity about their new roles. Both expressed concern over finances, routine/schedules, the health of their baby, building a family together, and the effect of society on their child. However, there were also distinct differences. An examination of their responses indicated two general areas in which males' and females' responses differed: the content of their thoughts, and the time orientation of their thoughts. Women, more often then men, talked about their concerns regarding their ability to parent, the lack of sleep they expected to get, and the labour and delivery process. Men, on the other hand, talked more often than women about playing with and teaching their child. A typical comment from the women when asked what their concerns were about having a baby was "the lack of sleep, are we going to be able to keep going, when it's 3:00am and when you don't know what's wrong and the baby's crying, am I going to be able to settle it down?" Men, on the other hand, made reference to discipline and teaching their children values, etc., and they discussed looking forward to playing with their children more often than women did: "I think in the years ahead, if it's a boy, hockey, baseball, that kind of thing" and "taking him to judo, that's one thing I'm looking forward to." Whereas women in this sample were concerned with how they would cope with the physical and emotional demands of having a baby, the men in the sample were thinking more about their roles in the distant future as guides and teachers of school-age children and adolescents. This difference is important given that these comments illustrate what couples are expecting. If there is a large discrepancy in the husband's and wife's prenatal expectations, then dealing with the changes, the adjustments, and the unexpected surprises postnatally may put extra stress on both familial and marital relationships. These results are supported by the work of Levy-Shiff (1999) who demonstrated that fathers appraise parenthood as "less stressful and

less threatening" than mothers (p. 563).

Prenatal Clusters Across the Transition

Cluster analyses on prenatal expectations about parenthood resulted in three unique clusters of women (labelled *Prepared, Fearful,* and *Complacent*) and four unique clusters of men (labelled *Prepared, Fearful, Complacent,* and *Mixed*). This suggests that individuals have distinct styles of conceptualizing parenthood, and that there are patterns of expectations of parenthood. More importantly, however, these clusters were associated with how well individuals made the adjustment to parenthood. That is, prenatal expectations are related to the quality of postnatal experiences. Although these results do not establish causality, they are potentially valuable in identifying who may be at risk for poor adjustment to parenthood.

Women classified as *Prepared* had significantly lower levels of perceived stress and higher levels of self-esteem than women in either the *Complacent* or *Fearful* clusters. Similarly, men in the *Prepared* group had significantly lower levels of perceived stress than men in the *Complacent* cluster, and exhibited lower levels of depression than those in the *Complacent* cluster (though this latter effect was qualified by a cluster X time interaction). These results suggest that individuals with realistic expectations and a sense of mastery over their situation are able to contend with their life stresses more effectively, are less susceptible to depression, and feel more self-efficacious throughout later pregnancy and early child-rearing periods. The nature of their expectations may or may not have caused them to be less stressed and depressed postnatally, but their expectations are certainly associated with and predictive of a more positive transition to parenthood. These results are consistent with other research showing that women with complex and differentiated styles of thinking (i.e., more realistic views of the transition)

demonstrate better adjustment postnatally than women with simpler expectations (Pancer et al., in press). Not only are these results important with regard to individual adjustment, but the work of Bouchard and her colleagues (Bouchard, Sabourin, Lussier, Wright & Richer, 1998) in a study of coping strategies and marital satisfaction indicates that individual coping styles (both husbands and wives) relate to the overall quality of one's marital relationship. Thus, how well an individual copes on his or her own influences how well the couple will cope.

It is important to note that differences in adjustment among the clusters tended to appear both prenatally and postnatally, suggesting perhaps that both the kinds of expectations that individuals have, and their levels of self-esteem, depression and perceived stress may be a function of more general differences in personality. However, regarding the women in her study, Leifer (1977) reported that "even though those women with relatively high levels of adjustment prior to pregnancy experienced considerable stress at postpartum, suggests that personality factors alone cannot account for the difficulties in the assumption of the parental role" (p. 90). In this regard, personality may play some role, but one cannot completely ignore the influence of individuals' expectations.

How can one account for these differences in postnatal experiences based on prenatal expectations? Some researchers argue that a strategy of defensive pessimism is effective in coping with potentially stressful situations (Norem & Cantor, 1986). This view suggests that setting unrealistically low expectations for oneself helps to maintain optimal performance. These results suggest otherwise. Women in the *Fearful* cluster, who had negative expectations and seemed to have low confidence in their parenting abilities, were the ones most detrimentally affected. Thus, the strategy of expecting the worst, in the hopes of getting the best, was

ineffective. However, Norem and Cantor (1986) also note that defensive pessimism can operate in a second way. Thinking about negative possibilities may actually motivate one to avoid the outcome. As Showers and Ruben (1990) suggest, the anxiety that results from considering negative outcomes may "scare defensive pessimists into action" (p. 386). This may be the case with these data. Both men and women in the *Prepared* cluster reported considering some of the potential difficulties and stressful situations they might encounter. These "fears" may have motivated them to think about and develop strategies to cope (see Dweck & Gilliard, 1975 and Goodhart, 1986). Thus, they were able to maintain lower levels of stress and depression postnatally than those individuals who were mostly pessimistic (*Fearful*) or those who were ambivalent and unsure of what to expect (*Complacent* and *Mixed*).

In general, individuals in the *Fearful* groups fared the poorest. Why is this the case and, more importantly, how is this related to their transition to parenthood? Thirty-five percent of the women in this study were classified as having *Fearful* expectations about parenthood. Previous research has been unable to explain why some individuals have difficulty adapting to their new roles as parents. The present study potentially provides at least part of the answer. A substantial portion of women are apparently worried and stressed in later pregnancy, and feel incompetent about their ability to function effectively as mothers. Research has indicated that individuals with a negative appraisal style tend to be more distracted and distressed (Tomaka, Blascovich, Kelsey, & Leitten, 1993). The transition to parenthood is a time of significant change affecting many facets of an individual's life. Heading into this transition with a pessimistic outlook and a lack of confidence could be highly detrimental. Lederman (1996) reports that women with doubts about their ability to parent often find it "difficult to contemplate their new role" (p. 85).

Levy-Shiff et al. (1998) report that individuals who viewed parenting as a threatening and stressful situation at 1-month post-partum had higher levels of distress, were less involved with their infant, and were less effective in their parenting 12-months post-partum. Research also indicates that individuals who see parenthood as stressful experience a more negative adjustment to the role as evidenced by higher levels of burnout and less involvement with their children at 12-months postpartum (Levy-Shiff, 1999). Thus, perceptions of parenting as a stressful situation are associated with maladjustment to parenting. The present results support this notion.

Only 18% of men were included in the *Fearful* cluster. This may be another reason why women may have more difficulty successfully negotiating the transition to parenthood. Not only do they have much more to contend with, but they may be more fearful about how they will adjust to the transition. Some may argue that men were simply less likely to admit fears and weaknesses to the interviewer. While this may be true to some extent, men's responses indicated that their way of thinking was much less immediate than that of their partners. While women were concerned with how they were going to handle a newborn infant, men were just as likely to talk about what it would be like being the parent of a toddler, or child, or teenager. These kinds of distant musings are much less likely to engender thoughts of a highly anxious nature. Furthermore, men may be less fearful because they perceive the parenting of an infant to be their wives' job, since mothers still spend more time with infants than do fathers. If men expect little involvement in the first months (as these qualitative data suggest), then they have little to fear. If mothers know they will be the main caregiver, they have much more of a transition with which to cope.

There is, however, an alternative interpretation that can be made of the difference between

Fearful individuals and the other groupings. I have suggested that it is the negative tone of their expectations that is related to their poor adjustment. However, there is also the possibility that their expectations might simply represent accurate appraisals of their ability to cope. Perhaps the "fearful" nature of their expectations is justified. Their life experiences may have taught them that transitions and changes requiring a major reorganization of their lives are difficult. Thus, in addition to their specific expectations about parenthood, it may be that their overall style of functioning may contribute to their poor adjustment, and they are realistically aware of this. It would be of interest to study these individuals' expectancies regarding other life contexts and transitions as well.

The fact that there was no relation between prenatal expectations and postnatal levels of marital satisfaction merits some attention. Previous research (e.g., Belsky et al., 1986; Ruble et al., 1988) indicates that violated expectations regarding household chores and the demands of child care result in a decline in the quality of the postnatal marital relationship. The present study focused on the kinds of expectations that prospective parents had and not on the extent to which these expectations were or were not borne out. Indeed, it is noteworthy that the potential impact on marital relations was rarely even mentioned when individuals were asked about their expectations concerning parenthood. It may well be the case that pre-natal expectations themselves have little impact on post-natal marital adjustment. Rather, it is the combination of prenatal expectations and postnatal experiences (i.e., the extent to which expectations are violated) which influences marital adjustment after the baby is born.

Lastly, results indicated no relation between wife and husband cluster grouping. That is, if the wife was categorized as *Prepared*, it did not mean that her husband was too. Previous

research has shown a lack of assortative mating with regard to psychosocial distress (Raskin et al., 1990). The discrepancy between husband and wife cluster grouping may help to explain the decrease in levels of marital satisfaction across the transition to parenthood. If the husband and wife have different expectations about becoming parents, then their styles of negotiating the transition may be at odds with one another, thus increasing conflict and overall negative affect. This emphasizes the notion that the transition to parenthood is a time of change for each individual on his or her own as well as each individual as part of a couple. As previously indicated, husband and wives are thinking about different issues of parenting and thinking about their unborn child at different ages, thus it is not surprising that they have different expectations.

Limitations and Future Research

One drawback to the present study is the absence of information regarding infant characteristics. As the infant is obviously an integral part of the process of becoming a family, his or her traits inevitably influence the quality of interactions between the parents and the infant. Second, the majority of participants in this study are Caucasian and middle class. Thus, caution is to be exercised when making generalizations. Third, it is important to reiterate that this study could not establish that individuals' prenatal expectations are causally related to postnatal adjustment as differences in adjustment among the clusters tended to appear both prenatally and postnatally. Nonetheless, it remains the case that prenatal expectations were consistently *associated* with postnatal adjustment in both men and women. Possibly, the potential causal impact of expectations on postnatal adjustment could be studied in an experimental design by incorporating an expectations intervention into prenatal classes and comparing the adjustment of these people with individuals who take classes which do not have this component.

One issue to consider in designing future studies is the fact that adjustment to a major transition, such as the birth of a child, requires a substantial amount of time, roughly two years from the birth of the first child according to Cowan et al., (1991). Further, it is not clear just when the transitional period begins. Because some individuals consider themselves to be parents at the moment of conception, it might be argued that the transition to parenthood beings prenatally (Leifer, 1977; Rubin, 1977). Individuals in this study, then, were already in the transition at the first interview in some sense. Thus, to address the notion of the influence of prenatal expectations, one may need to interview individuals long before pregnancy occurs, for example, when the couple *decides* to become pregnant.

From the Transition to Parenthood to The Development of a Parental Identity

During pregnancy, prospective parents are just beginning to develop a sense of themselves as parents and the kind of parents they will become. In study one, it was demonstrated that prenatal expectations of one's parental role are related to one's experience of parenthood several months later. Indeed, the style and content of individual's expectations about what parenthood would be like were related to how well they negotiated the transition. It is likely that individuals' expectations about future parenthood are the initial building blocks of the development of their parental identities. After all, individuals' ideas of parenthood and, more importantly, individuals' ideas of what they may be like as parents, could be strong indicators of how they perceive themselves in that role. There is a relation between how we think of ourselves and how we behave; thus, initial conceptualizations and expectations of one's self as a parent (i.e., one's parental identity) form the foundation for future behaviours as a parent. Cowan et al., (1991) believe that the transition to parenthood ends roughly around the second birthday of the first child. However, how fully developed one's sense of self or identity as a parent may be at this time is somewhat questionable, given the dynamic and malleable nature of individuals' self-concepts (Markus & Kunda, 1986). Furthermore, given the bidirectional nature of the parent-child relationship, an individual's identity as a parent is likely to be influenced by the characteristics of the child. Thus, acquiring an identity as a parent would be a lengthy developmental process with multiple components influencing the process in various ways at various times. Barnard & Martell (1995) suggest that the transition to motherhood has a "lifelong developmental impact" (p.11). Thus, one relevant question is what are the components

of a sense of self as parent? Examining the notion of a parental identity may be a first step in this exploration. Study two was designed to gain a more comprehensive understanding of individuals' notions about parenthood, and how they describe themselves as parents. This is essentially a question of parental "identity."

Study 2

"No one is born a parent. Not everyone is made to be a parent. That's a fact. All you can do is try and maybe just learn more about yourself."

(*One mother's response when asked what might make someone a good parent.*)

What is Parental Identity?

Of all the roles people assume in their lifetime, the role of parent is one of the most common. Yet, it can also be the role for which most people are the least prepared and know the least about; there is no job description for "parent". Various factors associated with parenting have been written about and studied extensively for several decades: these are often studied under the rubrics of parental beliefs and attitudes (Goodnow, 1988; Holden, 1995; McGillicuddy-De Lisi & Siegal, 1995), parenting styles (Baumrind, 1967, 1971; Crittenden, 1981), variations in parenting styles across cultures (Chao, 1994; deVries & Sameroff, 1984; Farver, 1993), the transition to parenthood (Belsky, Ward, & Rovine, 1986; Cowan et al.,1985; Delmore-Ko, Pancer, Hunsberger, & Pratt; (in press); Pancer, Pratt, Hunsberger, & Gallant (in press), the parental personality (Antonucci & Mikus, 1988; Sirignano & Lachman, 1985), homosexuality and its relation to parenting (Lewin, 1993; Patterson, 1995), and

teenage parenthood (Miller, Miceli, Whitman, & Borkowski, 1996; Sommer et al., 1993) to name a few. Surprisingly, however, there is one area which has remained virtually unexplored: parental identity. What is parental identity? How would one define it? What impact might parental identity have on how an individual parents? The primary purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of the way in which people describe and think of themselves as parents. A secondary purpose was to examine the relation between people's parental identities and their self-reported parenting behaviours and attitudes.

What is Identity?

Before I take on the task of exploring parental identity, specifically, it is important to define identity more generally. The notion of "identity" is a complex and inherently abstract construct which researchers, across disciplines, have grappled with for decades. It seems there are as many meanings of identity as there are theories that employ it. Not only is there debate in conceptualizing identity, but attempts to operationalize it have also been problematic (Hoelter, 1985). Part of the difficulty lies in distinguishing identity from notions of the self. Over 30 years ago, De Lavita (1965) commented that separating the concepts of identity and self was the "most difficult problem of all." Many researchers neglect to make a distinction and simply use the terms interchangeably or use one term and ignore the other suggesting that distinguishing between these two concepts is unnecessary. However, I believe that self and identity are significantly different enough to merit distinction. The self is described as a collection of self-images and self-conceptions (Markus and Nurius, 1986), as a cognitive process of "continuing interpretive activity" (Gordon, 1968, p. 116) that is affected by personal knowledge and experience (Nuttin, 1984). Burke (1980) argues that the

self is actually a collection of identities. An identity, therefore, is the manifestation of one part of one's self in a particular role. For example, I have an identity as a student, which is expressed via my behaviours of going to school, buying textbooks, paying tuition, studying, and writing papers. I also have an identity as a runner which is expressed in my actions of buying running shoes, joining a running club, and entering road races. This is a brief example of two identities, or roles, which are part of my self. In the present study, identity, rather than self, is the construct being explored. More specifically, parental identity and how individuals describe themselves via that role is the focus. I define parental identity as

> a mental representation of one's role as a parent. This dynamic representation is composed of individuals' perceptions of their role as parents, the relative importance they assign to that role with respect to their sense of self, the traits they ascribe to themselves as parents, the feelings and emotions they associate with parenting, and how they think about themselves as parents and appraise their parenting performance.

This definition of parental identity is supported by previous research on identity itself. Namely, there are four different themes in the literature. Identity can be viewed as 1) one's self in a role, 2) a result of social interaction, 3) a collection of traits, and 4) a process. Each of these will be discussed in turn.

Identity as Self in Roles

One of the most popular themes in the study of identity is to view identity as a role. Role theory, also known as identity theory or role-identity theory, has received substantial attention in the literature. This theory stems from the work of the symbolic interactionists who believe that the self is a "product of social interaction" (Roberts & Bengtson, 1993, p.

264). Thus, one's definition of "self" is a reflection of the social roles in which one engages. This notion is exemplified in Burke and Tully's (1977) role-identity model where they claim that identities are meanings that we use to define our selves. Our identity is derived via the social roles that we enact and each of these roles (identities) come with certain behavioural expectations (Heiss, 1981; Thoits, 1986). Role-identities have two functions: 1) they define who an individual is and 2) they state how that individual should behave. In other words, role-identities provide purpose, meaning, and behavioural guidance to an individual (Thoits, 1983). Individuals can maintain a number of identities (or roles) which vary in their salience to an individual's sense of self; that is, certain identities are more meaningful to certain individuals (Lemon & Warren, 1974; Stryker, 1986; Hoelter, 1983). The notion of a hierarchical organization of role-identities is central here (Stryker & Serpe, 1982; Turner, 1978). Thus, as expressed in my definition, the notion of roles is central to our understanding of parental identity.

Identity as a Result of Social Interaction

A second theme in the literature is the role of society in the development of one's identity. Erikson's (1959) work is most notable in this regard. His theory of ego identity development is psychosocial in nature claiming that there are both individual and communal aspects of identity. In other words, identity is a mental representation of the interaction between the self and the social world. Erikson believed that individuals' identities are active, ongoing processes in which they describe themselves not only in terms of their social experiences, but in terms of the relative importance they assign to these experiences. Thoits (1991) also endorses the social nature of identity development. She describes identities as

"self-conceptions based on enduring, normative, reciprocal relationships with other people" (p. 103). Again, the notion of a social influence to identity is important to our understanding of parental identity.

Identity as a Collection of Traits

A third perspective concerning the conceptualization of identity is to take a descriptive, trait-like approach. Identity can be described as the integration of various characteristics which one attributes to that part of his or her self which is manifested in that role (Whitbourne, 1986; Whitbourne and Weinstock, 1979). Identities are "self-descriptive" (Thoits, 1992, p. 237). Whitbourne proposes a very detailed structure of possible characteristics one could employ when describing him or her self, such as 1) physical features and functioning, 2) sensory, cognitive, and intellectual abilities, 3) personality traits, motives, and values, and 4) social/family/work roles. Whitbourne (1986) notes that although certain characteristics may be common to many individuals, one's identity is the specific combination of "qualities that the individual recognizes as uniquely his or her own" (p. 4). These self-descriptions play an important role in identity reconstruction which is essential in developing and maintaining one's overall sense of self (Schouten, 1991). With regard to parental identity, one's descriptions of him or herself in the role of parent is relevant to understanding that person's identity as a parent.

Identity as a Process

Lastly, identity is not static and unchanging, but rather dynamic and multi-dimensional (Erikson, 1959; Hoelter, 1985; Whitbourne, 1986). One's identity undergoes constant modification and adjustment depending on the experiences one encounters (Whitbourne,

1986). Thus, identity is the result of a process. The notion of identity as a process is a substantial component of Whitbourne's theory of adult development. Specifically, she proposes that identity is formed by two separate processes: identity assimilation and identity accommodation. Stemming directly from Piaget's (1952) original descriptions of these terms, Whitbourne describes identity assimilation as the process of imposing one's current "framework of self-knowledge" (p. 179) onto new experiences; identity accommodation is the process of modifying one's existing framework by adding new information acquired from these experiences. Whitbourne's use of the term assimilation is consonant with the notion of self-schema. A schema is a cognitive structure and self-schema is a concept about the self. During assimilation, we use our schemas to interpret our experiences. Optimal identity development occurs when individuals maintain a balance between identity assimilation and accommodation, that is, when individuals are able to continue to successfully integrate and modify information from their social experiences. When individuals cannot do this, they become anxious and overwhelmed. This imbalance results in ambiguity regarding one's identity, which in turn, may lead to poor adjustment.

Marcia (1993) also conceptualizes identity as process-based. In his theory, there are two critical processes necessary for the development of identity: crisis and commitment. Crisis refers to evaluating choices about possible identities and commitment refers to the decision to maintain one choice (i.e., identity) among several alternatives. Thus, identity is both the outcome of a series of decision-making processes and a process itself. This highlights the malleable nature of identity. Marcia claims that there are four possible outcomes (referred to as identity statuses), each dependent on the depth of the decision-

making process: *Identity Achievement*, *Moratorium*, *Foreclosure*, and *Identity Diffusion* (see Marcia (1993) for a more thorough description of each status). With regard to the present definition of parental identity, therefore, it is important to consider the dynamic nature of identity.

I have just examined how descriptions of identity, in general, pertain to my definition of parental identity. The next step is to review literature on parental identity, specifically.

Parental Identity

Surprisingly, a review of the literature reveals little material regarding parental identity. Whitbourne and Weinstock (1979) claim that there is no information regarding the "incorporation of the role of parent into identity" (p. 187). In general, the notion of identity within the area of family roles has received limited attention (Waterman, 1985). Partridge (1988) reported that although others have indirectly referred to the *idea* of a parental identity, no one has fully explored the phenomenon. To the best of the present author's knowledge, there are only four researchers who directly discuss parental identity: Partridge (1988) and Simon (1992) discuss parental identity more generally and Rubin (1967a, 1967b) and Mercer (1981) discuss maternal identity more specifically.

In an attempt to understand the self-concept as parent, Partridge (1988) drew from the existing literature to postulate a general definition. Partridge does not make a distinction between self, self-concept and identity, but uses the terms interchangeably. In fact, her article begins with a brief discussion of the "psychological birth" which she describes as "a complex process by which a parent comes to have a sense of self-as-parent, a parental identity" (p. 281). Partridge claims that there are four main components to the parental self-concept.

First, there is an *affective* component, referring to the feelings and emotions associated with being a parent and caring for a child. Second, the *moral* component of the parental self-concept highlights one's beliefs, values, and ideals within one's cultural standards of parenting, and includes a self-evaluation of one's parenting abilities compared to the "ideal" parent. Third, Partridge describes an *integrative* component which focuses on the assimilation of past and present interactions with parental figures leading to an overall mental representation of attachment relationships and attachment figures. Finally, the *cognitive* element is composed of individuals' perceptions of their parenting performance, their definition of their role as a parent, and their reasons for their previous child-rearing decisions and current parental behaviour. Partridge ends her discussion by stating that "the parental self-concept brings affective and cognitive organization" (p. 286) to one's experiences of parenthood. Mercer's (1985) work on maternal identity supports Partridge's emphasis on both the cognitive (i.e., the practical aspects of child care) and affective (i.e., commitment, empathy) components. Although Partridge's work makes theoretical sense, it is without empirical validation, as she would be the first to state. In fact, the purpose of her article was to "spur theoretical explorations of the concept of parental identity" (p. 281), which is, of course, the main purpose of the present investigation. In summary, the main features of Partridge's work are the specification of affective and cognitive components of parental identity. These features are central components in the current definition of parental identity.

Thoit's identity theory (1983, 1986) has been employed by Simon (1992) who examined the relation between parental identity and parental role strain. Role strain refers to the amount of stress an individual experiences with respect to his or her role as a parent.

Again, Simon does not distinguish between self and identity, but speaks in terms of a number of identities of which parent is one. Simon defined parental identity as how "committed" people were to being a parent. Simon reported that individuals who were highly committed to a "parental identity" were more susceptible to stress associated with the parental role. In addition, individuals with a low commitment to the parental role experienced more distress when attempting to balance the demands associated with both parent and worker roles. A limitation of Simon's (1992) study was the nature of the operationalization of parental identity. Individuals were merely asked to rate, on a seven-point scale, how committed they were to being a parent. Assessing the notion of parental identity with this single question seems too one-dimensional and likely does not capture the totality of the concept. One's commitment to the parental role may be one aspect of parental identity, but there are certainly other factors worth consideration (e.g., how one feels about her performance as a parent, what one thinks is her role as a parent, etc.). Nonetheless, Simon's research demonstrates that the salience of one's identity as a parent has an impact on one's vulnerability to the stresses inherent in the parental role. Thus, commitment to parenting is an influential and meaningful component of parental identity and worth further investigation. In summary, the main feature of Simon's study of parental identity is one's commitment to the parenting role. Again, this component is a part of the current working definition of parental identity.

Rubin (1967a) and Mercer (1981), researchers from the nursing profession, have examined the concept of maternal identity or the "mothering role." They suggest that there are two processes inherent in the "mothering role": developing the capacity for mothering and attaining the maternal role. The second process is relevant to the current study. Attainment of

the maternal role, is defined as "a process in which the mother achieves competence in the role and integrates the mothering behaviours into her established role set, so that she is comfortable with her identity as a mother" (Mercer, 1985, p. 198). Certain cognitive behavioural processes are central to attaining maternal role identity. Initially, Rubin (1967a) identified five tasks "actively pursued" (p. 47) by women: mimicry, role play, fantasy, introjection-projection-rejection (matching an internal model of behaviour with an outside model and either accepting or rejecting it based on how well it "fits"), and identity. Later, she added the processes of replication, fantasy and dedifferentiation (the decision about how she will perform in her maternal role and what specific maternal behaviours she will employ). Mercer (1995) notes that "each successive operation represents movement toward greater internalization of the maternal identity" (p. 48-49). The endpoint of maternal role attainment is achieving a maternal identity and feeling competent in that role. The time necessary for this process to occur varies from pregnancy to beyond 12-months postpartum, depending on the individual (Mercer, 1985). Thus, although Rubin and Mercer study maternal identity, it is at a very limited stage in the developmental life cycle of the parent. In contrast, I explored, in the present study, the notion of parental identity in mothers with children aged three to eight years.

I have just reviewed research on identity, in general, and research pertaining to the specific identity of parent. The next issue to discuss is why parental identity should be examined in the first place.

Why Study Parental Identity?

Parental identity is an important construct to study because parenting plays a significant and influential role in individuals' lives. There is evidence of a relationship between how we see ourselves and how we view others (Fong & Markus, 1982; Markus, Smith & Moreland, 1985). Therefore, how individuals see and describe themselves as parents may influence how they perceive their children. Thus, one's identity as a parent may influence one's perceptions of potential difficulties in caring for and parenting children, and conversely, how their children perceive them. For example, Deutsch et al. (1988) reported that if women can incorporate features of "good mothers" into their self-perceptions, then they may parent more confidently. This suggests that there may be a relation between an individual's perceived sense of self as a parent and how he/she parents. Similarly, Vaugh, Taraldson, Crichton, & Egeland (1981) reported that mothers, with high levels of anxiety about parenting, tend to rate their infants less positively than other mothers. Bloom, Delmore-Ko, Masataka, & Carli (1999) suggested that individuals with "weak parent self-schemas" may not have favourable attitudes toward children, which, in turn, may lead to having negative interactions and experiences with children which may feedback into their weak parent self-schemas. Bugental, Blue, and Lewis (1990) demonstrated that adults who saw themselves as having little or no control over negative adult-child interactions had less positive attitudes toward children, especially temperamentally difficult children, whether or not the adults were parents. This literature suggests that the notion of parental identity has potential relevance to the development of children and is thus worthy of study.

Parental identity is also important to study because parenting is important to people

(Benedek, 1970; Cowan et al., 1991). To assess just how important it is, Cowan, Cowan, Coie, and Coie (1978) developed an instrument called *The Pie* to measure the relative importance individuals assign to their various life roles. For new parents, the "partner"/ "lover" pieces of the pie decreased significantly from 6 to 18 months postpartum, whereas for nonparents, their "partner"/"lover" pieces of the pie grew significantly larger during an equivalent period of time. In addition, for new parents, the "parent" piece of the pie increased from prenatal to 18-month postnatal periods where it occupied 39.1% of the pie for women and 20.3% for men. Thus, parental identity is worthy of study because parenting plays such a pervasive and fundamental role in people's lives. Moreover, it is important to examine how individuals describe and think of themselves as parents as this may have an impact on their parenting behaviours and attitudes which, in turn, influence the social and emotional development of children.

The main purpose of the present study is to develop an understanding of the way in which people describe themselves as parents, how they define their role as parents, and how they think and feel about being parents; that is, to understand and describe their parental identities. As this area is relatively unexplored, it was decided that an appropriate first step might profitably employ a qualitative method of data collection (as in study 1). Following this strategy, I interviewed mothers in an open-ended fashion and asked them, among many things, to describe themselves as parents, to discuss how they perceive their roles as parents, and to describe how they think and feel about being parents. This approach holds potential to provide a detailed understanding of the content and structure of parental identity. It will provide a base from which to further our understanding of parental identity and how it

contributes to both adult and child development.

As mentioned, numerous dimensions associated with parenting have already been studied extensively, dimensions such as parenting style, parenting attitudes, the transition to parenthood, etc.. Each of these aspects has been successfully measured via standardized questionnaires. Thus, one may ask why an interview was developed in the present study as opposed to designing a questionnaire which, arguably, is less time-consuming to administer and more objective to score. The reason is one of conceptual constraint. If a questionnaire were developed, it would be based on the theoretical notions and speculative ideas of the developers. Although these researchers would obviously be knowledgeable about the field of parenting and thus would likely be able to produce a meaningful measure of parental identity, it is sometimes beneficial to speak to the individuals who are actually part of the phenomena being measured. Thus, *speaking with parents* in the context of an open-ended interview *about being parents* is the most logical and informative route to take. Speaking with individuals who are not formally involved in studying human behaviour provides an open-ended and discovery-oriented perspective and may capture aspects of parental identity that theorists may not have considered or of which they may not have even been aware. It is believed that using an open-ended interview will elicit genuine and meaningful information that can be used as an initial step to developing an understanding of parental identity. Furthermore, the responses to these open-ended questions may enable us to distinguish important differences in the ways in which individuals conceptualize their parental identities. These distinctions may be strong enough to differentiate individuals based on, for example, their parenting behaviours and attitudes.

Thus, a secondary purpose of this study is to explore relations between people's parental identities and their parenting behaviours and attitudes. To achieve this goal, I administered a variety of questionnaires which assess various domains of parenting: parenting style, parenting stress, and parenting behaviour. Given that there is no current theory of parental identity, it was necessary to employ a variety of measures pertaining to aspects that may be related to parental identity. Thus, a number of questionnaires assessing dimensions that may, arguably, be components of parental identity were administered. For example, during the interview, participants were asked, "How do you feel about being a parent?" There are some "parenting" questionnaires that ask similar questions. Again, the reason why an interview was developed was to ensure that the responses were not limited to the ideas of the researchers. In addition, there is no standardized questionnaire that examines all aspects of parental identity - whatever those aspects may be. Thus, a number of questionnaires addressing aspects of parental identity that were employed in the interview were also administered. These questionnaires are as follows: Parenting Satisfaction, Parenting Competence, Parental Salience, and Maternal Sense of Self. Comparisons between these questionnaires and the responses to the Parental Identity interview can act as validity checks for one another. It is important to note that these specific questionnaires were not originally designed to measure parental identity, but they are standardized measures of aspects that may be related to parental identity. Each of these aspects will be discussed in detail in the procedure section (see below). There are a number of advantages to employing both the interview and questionnaire method of data collection. The main benefit is that it provides participants with an opportunity to speak freely and to openly express their beliefs,

thoughts and attitudes while at the same time allowing researchers to provide some structure using established measures of domains that they feel are relevant.

Method

Participants

Parents. Although both men and women may be parents, only women participated in this study. Women, instead of men, were chosen for a number of reasons. First, as evidenced in study one, women experienced a more challenging transition to parenthood than did men, as demonstrated by the women's higher depression and perceived stress scores, and women's lower self-esteem scores. Suffice it to say, the process of becoming a parent seems to be more dramatic for women. Second, Cowan et al. (1985) reported differences in spouses' self-descriptions across the transition to parenthood. Mothers' "sense of themselves" (p. 464) as parents increased more than it did for fathers. Fathers reported an increase in their sense of selves as "workers", which decreased for mothers. These results suggest that parental identity starts to develop earlier for women. Third, Simon (1992) also reported gender differences with parental identity being more salient in women's self-conceptions than in men's. Therefore, if sense of self as parent is more salient in women than it is in men, it may be more profitable to study women first as a starting point in this new area of research. Furthermore, in study one of this thesis, women were significantly more concerned with their parenting ability than were men. Fourth, it is wives who experience pregnancy and labor first-hand, and therefore, the physical and emotional counterparts of this experience. Fifth, females are generally more involved in childcare and related issues; thus, it seems more appropriate to talk with them about "parenting." Sixth, there are a number of

recent projects on parenting which have included only females in their samples (e.g., Ruble et al., 1990); thus, it is not unusual to focus on wives only. For these reasons, fathers' self-descriptions and comparisons of mother/father notions of parental identity will not be explored in the present study.

All data for this study were collected by the author. Participants were recruited from various preschools and daycare centres located within the Guelph, Kitchener, and Waterloo, Ontario regions. A letter outlining the purpose of the study (see Appendix H) was given to the head staff member at each of the centres who, in turn, distributed these letters to each of the children's parents. Attached to this letter was an "agreement to be contacted" form. If the parent was interested in participating in the study, she completed the form and returned it to the staff member at her child's centre. One or two weeks after distributing the information letters, the author contacted each of the centres and made arrangements to collect any "agreement to be contacted" forms that had been completed and returned. After completing the interview, mothers were asked if they knew of any one else who might be interested in participating in the study. If they did, then they contacted this person to ask for permission for a letter to be sent to them and for their phone number to be given to the investigator. If permission was granted, the investigator sent an information letter to the potential participant and followed up with a phone call about a week later.

A total of 80 married females participated in this study. The women ranged in age from 26 to 45 years ($\underline{X}$ = 35.35, $\underline{S.D.}$ = 4.19) and had been married for an average of 10.56 years ($\underline{S.D.}$ = 3.73) with a range of 4 to 24 years. The majority of participants were Caucasian (N = 76, 95%), two were Oriental (2.5%) and two were Black (2.5%). All participants were fluent

in the English language. At the time of the interview, 46.3% of the mothers reported working full-time outside the home, 33.8% part-time, and 17.5% reported not working outside the home. With respect to their highest level of education achieved, one mother reported that she had an elementary school education (1.3%), 16 reported having a high school diploma (20%), 24 reported completing college (30%), 26 reported having undergraduate degrees (32.5%), and 12 mothers (15%) reported having post-graduate degrees. Average total family income was between $51,000 and $60,000, with the range from under $20,000 to over $70,000.

Children. The main criterion for parental participation was having at least one child between the ages of three and eight years, inclusive. In order to ensure a relatively even distribution of respondents across this age range, the participants' children were placed in one of two age groups: 3-5 years inclusive (N=40), and 6-8 years inclusive (N=40), with equal numbers of male and female children in each group. The average age for all the children (N=80) was 5.20 years (S.D. = 1.57). The average age of the male and female children in the younger group was 4.15 years (S.D. = .81) and 3.66 years (S.D. = .66), respectively. The average age of the males and females in the older group was 6.30 years (S.D. = .57) and 6.94 years (S.D. = .94), respectively. The main reason for choosing this age range was to ensure there was a stratified sample with the purpose of exploring possible differences in parental identity based on age differences in children. There was an average of 2.13 children per family with a range of 1 to 4 children in each family. If the mother had more than one child who met the age requirements, she was simply asked to pick one of them. To help maintain consistency between subjects, it would have been preferable to have had the target child as the first-born child, but as the sample requirements were already rather narrowly defined, it

was thought that adding yet another restriction would make participant recruitment more difficult. Parents were asked to answer all questions with respect to the target child only. This method has been used successfully in other similar studies (e.g., Greenberger, 1988; Pratt, Arnold, & Hilbers, 1998).

There are a number of reasons for choosing parents of children of these particular ages. McHale (1997) reports that at ages three to five, children become much more challenging to discipline. It is during the preschool years that parental pressure to regulate their children's behaviour coincides with children's displays of behaviour which needs their regulation (Kuczynski & Kochanska, 1987). As well, during this age, children are more capable of attending to and complying with parental demands (Vaughn et al., 1984). Children aged six to eight constitute another developmental phase. These children are entering school, dealing with a new authority figure (the teacher), adjusting to teacher expectations and are faced with new cognitive challenges (Bogat et al., 1980; Ladd & Price, 1987). Children are meeting new peers, learning to interact in small groups, and developing sensitivity to others' needs (Holland et al., 1974). They are also beginning to establish lasting friendships (Schwarz, 1972). Children's peers are one of their main socializing agents and so children are somewhat less reliant on their parents to be playmates (Bhavnagri & Parke, 1991; Ladd & Price, 1987). These new changes in the child's life, no doubt, affect the identity of the parent.

Procedure

Participants were interviewed in their homes or at the University of Waterloo, depending on the more convenient location for them. The interviews were audiotape-recorded and later transcribed by the author.

There are two areas of focus in this study. The first, and most central area, is to generate a data base that might lead to the development of a more thorough understanding of parental identity. A "Parental Identity" interview was designed to specifically address this issue. In addition, a number of pencil and paper questionnaires were administered as a validity check for the interview: Parenting Satisfaction, Parenting Competence, Parental Salience and Maternal Sense of Self. The second area focuses on a variety of parenting domains and these were also addressed using pencil-and-paper questionnaires. The purpose of this was to determine if there was a relation between parental identity and parenting behaviour and attitudes. The following domains were examined: Parenting Style, Parenting Stress and Parenting Behaviour. The two focuses of this study will be discussed in turn.

Parental Identity.

The Parental Identity Interview. Because the interest was to obtain a participant's view of parental identity, I believe the best way to learn is to simply talk to individuals who are parents. A "Parental Identity Interview" was established to this end (see Appendix I). The main purpose of the interview was to develop a better understanding of how individuals describe themselves as parents, how they perceive themselves in the role of parent, and how they think and feel about being parents. As is evident in Table 8 (see below), the interview questions were designed to address the areas of identity previously outlined (i.e., traits, role, emotions, and cognitions). As these components support my definition of parental identity, the questions were derived from them. The questions were open-ended in nature in order to let the individuals express their ideas, their viewpoints, and their values without the preconceived and perhaps limiting notions of the investigator. For

the present study, only the interview questions directly addressing the main components were analyzed.

Table 8

General aspect of identity, its relation to parental identity and the associated interview questions.

Aspect of Identity	Relation to Parental Identity	Interview Question
AFFECTIVE components associated with one's sense of self; how one feels about who one is	part of one's identity as a parent includes the FEELINGS and EMOTIONS associated with how he/she identifies him/her self as a parent	- How do you feel about being a parent? - What are some of the pleasures you get out of being a parent? - What are some of the things you find stressful or difficult about being a parent?
COGNITIVE components of identity; how one thinks about one's sense of self	parental identity involves how one THINKS about his/her actions as a parent and appraises his/her performance in that role	- Do you have any ideas about what makes someone a good parent? - How does your own parenting match up with what you've just said makes someone a good parent? - Are there ever times when you think you're not a very good parent? Why would you say you weren't being a good parent at those times?
identity as a series of TRAITS or characteristics which one uses to describe his/her self	parental identity is composed of a set of TRAITS which one ascribes to his/her self in that role	- What are you like as a parent? That is, how would you describe the kind of parent you are? - All of us have certain traits or characteristics that we're not happy with. What are some of the traits that you have as a parent that you're not pleased with?
identity as a ROLE which helps to define one's sense of self	one's ROLE as a parent gives purpose and meaning to one's sense of self as a parent; one's ROLE as a parent influences one's overall sense of self	- How has being a parent influenced the kind of person you are? - Has being a parent had any influence on your goals and purpose in life and where you see yourself heading in the future? - What is your role as a parent?

One section of questions in the interview were based on the emotional and cognitive components of parental identity. These questions focussed on individuals' feelings and

thoughts about themselves as parents, for example, "*How do you feel about being a parent?*" and "*What are some of the pleasures you get out of being a parent?*" (see Table 8).

Another section of questions were based on the notion of traits and how it relates to one's parental identity. Participants were asked to describe themselves as parents: "*What are you like as a parent? That is, how would you describe the kind of parent that you are?*" and "*All of us have certain traits or characteristics that we're not happy with. What are some of the traits that you have as a parent that you're not pleased about?*" (see Table 8).

Participants were then asked to think about the impact the parental role has had on their sense of self. As mentioned, Thoits (1983, 1986) emphasized the purpose, meaning, and behavioral guidance which role-identities provide for individuals (see Table 8). The questions designed to address these issues were as follows: "*How has being a parent influenced the kind of person you are?*", "*Has being a parent had any influence on your goals and purpose in life, and where you see yourself heading in the future? In what way?*" and "*What do you think is your role as a parent?*"

There were a few additional sections in the interview: 1) questions regarding the individuals' decision-making process and issues that they felt were an integral part of their decision to have children, 2) questions about discipline styles, 3) questions regarding the individuals' experiences with their own parents, other families, and with their own children, and 4) questions about the relative importance of their role as a parent compared to other roles. These sections were not coded for the present study.

The order of the questions in the interview was based on a number of issues. The interview starts with a general question regarding the participant's children ("*To begin,*

perhaps you could tell me a bit about your child(ren). How old they (he/she) are (is), what their (his/her) personalities are like, just some general information about them (him/her))". This question was used as it is non-threatening, and may help to put the interviewee at ease. Responses to this question were not coded.

The body of the interview is divided into sections, each prefaced by an introductory sentence to help focus the interview, to inform the interviewees about what they will be asked, and to help put them at ease. Briefly, the first section of questions starts at "the beginning." That is, participants are asked to think back to when they first became interested in having a family. The next section addresses how they feel about being a parent and what they think would make someone a good parent. Then they are asked to describe themselves as parents, then to describe their experiences as parents, and then to describe their experiences with their children. Thus these sections go from "within" their selves, so to speak, to "outside" their selves and into their relationship with their children. The next section asks them to talk about their role as a parent relative to other roles they have, followed by a section which asks them to discuss the overall impact of parenthood on their lives. Thus, the sections of the interview are organized from the "beginning" of parenthood (i.e., thinking of becoming a parent) to the more abstract notions of the impact of parenthood on one's sense of self.

Within each section, the questions are organized from rather general and fairly simple, to encourage the interviewee to think about that topic in general, to somewhat more complex and involving more in depth thinking on the part of the interviewee. Interviews took between 45 and 90 minutes.

Questionnaire Booklet

After the interview was completed, participants were given a booklet of questionnaires, including a Biographical Information Questionnaire (see Appendix J) and asked to complete it, as soon as possible, preferably within the next week. They were also given a feedback sheet (see Appendix K), with the booklet, and asked to refrain from reading it until after they completed the questionnaires. Participants were provided with a stamped envelope in which to mail their booklet to the researcher. All booklets (except for two) were returned within one month of the interview with the majority being returned within a week. Two booklets were returned within roughly six weeks after the interview. Participants were not remunerated for their participation. The first set of questionnaires to be discussed is the ones that measure aspects of parenting that may be dimensions of parental identity.

Standardized Measures of Possible Dimensions of Parental Identity

Parenting Satisfaction. The Cleminshaw-Guidubaldi Parent Satisfaction Scale (Guidubaldi & Cleminshaw, 1985) was employed to measure parenting satisfaction (see Appendix L). There is a total of five separate scales, each containing 10 items, but only the Parent Performance and the General Satisfaction scales were used in the current study. The Parent Performance subscale contains 10 items reflecting adults' perceptions of how well they behave and interact with their child, for example, "I am upset with the amount of yelling I direct towards my children." The General Satisfaction subscale contains items which reflect the overall gratification and enjoyment which adults receive from parenting, for example, "My children's sense of humor amuses me." The items are presented on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from (1) *strongly agree* to (4) *strongly disagree*. Total scores, for the two scales

only, range from 20 to 80 with higher scores indicating greater parent satisfaction.

Cronbach's alpha for the two scales is quite good with a reliability of .76 for the General Satisfaction scale and .83 for the Parent Performance scale. Scores from these two scales have been significantly correlated with measures of life and marital satisfaction (Lee, 1978) indicating strong construct validity. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha for the Parenting Performance factor was .74 and for the General Satisfaction factor, the alpha was .82. The reliability of the two scales combined was .79.

Parenting Competence/Efficacy. The Parenting Sense of Competence Scale (PSOC) (Johnston & Mash, 1989) is a 16-item measure used to assess parenting competence (see Appendix M). Each item is answered on a 6-point scale ranging from (1) *strongly agree* to (6) *strongly disagree*. There are two subscales in the PSOC scale: Satisfaction (e.g., "If being a mother were only more interesting, I would be motivated to do a better job as a parent") and Efficacy (e.g., I honestly believe that I have all the skills necessary to be a good mother to my child"). Total scores range from 16 to 96, with higher scores indicating greater self-esteem. Cronbach's alpha for the Satisfaction scale (nine items) and the Efficacy scale (seven items) is .75 and .76 respectively, with an overall alpha of .79. Johnston and Mash (1989) reported a test-retest reliability over a six week period to range from .46 to .82. The total PSOC score was both significantly and negatively related to both the externalizing and internalizing factors of the Child Behavior Checklist (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983). In addition, Cutrona and Troutman (1986) found good internal reliability on the Efficacy scale (.72) when they used it with mothers of infants. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha for the Efficacy factor was .75 and .85 for the Satisfaction factor. Combining the two scales resulted in an

alpha of .86.

Parental Salience. The Parental Commitment Scale (Greenberger, Payne, & Goldberg, 1988) is a 17-item measure used to assess the centrality of parenting to the self, the psychological salience of parenting relative to other activities, and the level of aspirations for performance as a parent (see Appendix N). Participants respond to each item on a 6-point scale ranging from (1) *Agree Very Strongly* to (6) *Disagree Very Strongly*, for example, "I often find myself thinking of my child when I'm at work" and "I don't like to talk about my children when I'm out for an evening." Total scores range from 17 to 102 with higher scores representing greater commitment to the parental role. Greenberger et al., (1988) report the coefficient alpha to be .71 for both married men and women. Analysis revealed a significant negative relationship between work commitment and parental commitment. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was .75.

Maternal Self-Definition. The Maternal Self-Definition Questionnaire (MSDQ) (Ruble et al., 1990) is a 33-item measure used to assess the extent to which individuals would exhibit a number of attributes and behaviors relevant to mothering (see Appendix O). Participants are asked to rate "to what extent do you think you as a mother exhibit the following characteristics or behaviors." Items are presented on a 5-point scale ranging from (1) *Not at all* to (5) *Extremely*, for example, "devoted to homemaking", "putting child's needs above one's own", and "not being too involved in career." Total scores range from 33 to 165 with higher scores reflecting more positive, "good" mothering qualities. This questionnaire was originally designed to assess the development of "maternal attributes" across the transition to parenthood and was administered at three separate time periods: 1)

pre-pregnant, 2) pregnant, and 2) postpartum. During the pre-pregnant and pregnant phases, the items were worded in the future tense. Collapsing across time periods, initial principal components analyses resulted in five separate "interpretable aspects" of maternal self-definition: Fun, Involved, Traditional, Protective, and Knowledgeable. The average reliability coefficients, across the three time periods for each of the factors are .71, .69, .68, .68, and .69 respectively. Further analyses indicated that a one-factor model representing "positive aspects of mothering" best described maternal self-definition. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was .87.

Measures of Parenting Behaviours

As mentioned, included in the booklet were a number of questionnaires assessing various parenting behaviours/attitudes. These are discussed below.

Parenting Style. The Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) (Buri, 1991) was used to assess individuals' parenting styles (see Appendix P). This scale measures the three separate parenting prototypes based on Baumrind's (1971) interpretation of parental authority: Authoritarian, Authoritative, Permissive. The PAQ contains 30 items (10 from each of the three prototypes). Parents are asked to respond to the items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) *strongly disagree* (5) to *strongly agree*. An example of an item is as follows: "I do not allow my children to question decisions I have made." Total scores for each of these prototypes range from 10 to 50 with higher scores denoting more agreement with that specific prototype.

The test-retest reliability of the PAQ for each of the six possible scales (i.e., three prototypes for mother and three for father) ranged from .77 to .96 (Buri, 1991). Cronbach's

alpha for each of the six scales was good, ranging from .74 to .87. The test-retest reliability and Cronbach's alpha are excellent given that each scale consists of only 10 items (Buri, 1991). Bivariate correlations between the six PAQ scales and the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (M-CSD) (Crowne & Marlow, 1964) were all non-significant. Cronbach's alphas for the present study were good: Authoritativeness = .76; Authoritarianism = .86; Permissiveness = .76.

Parenting Stress. The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983) is a global measure of the degree to which one appraises situations in his/her life as stressful (Appendix Q). The PSS contains 14 items, each presented on a 5-point scale (0=never, 4=very often), assessing the individual's feelings and thoughts "during the last month." The items were modified to direct individuals to think of their stress in terms of their role as a parent. For example, the original item, "During the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life" was changed to "During the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life as a parent." The items measure how often one has felt upset, stressed, and irritated, and his/her perceived degree of control over these feelings, for example, "In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life." Total scores range from 0 to 56 with a higher score indicating higher levels of stress.

The PSS is a widely employed scale with good psychometric properties. Cohen et al., (1983) reported a test-retest reliability of .85 after two days, and .55 after six weeks and a coefficient alpha reliability of above .84 for three different samples. The PSS is adequately correlated with the number and impact of stressful life events (.20 to .49). For the present

sample, Cronbach's alpha was .76.

In addition to the PSS, the Parenting Daily Hassles Scale (PDHS) (Crnic & Greenberg, 1990) was used to assess parenting stress (see Appendix R). This 20-item measure contains statements that reflect minor potentially stress-inducing daily activities that are normally associated with parenthood. This measure contains two factors: (1) hassles associated with parenting tasks (e.g., babysitters are difficult to find) and (2) children's challenging behaviours (e.g., being nagged, whined at, complained to). Two summary scores based on the frequency of daily hassles associated with these parenting and child behaviours are calculated. Higher scores indicate more daily stresses. There are two scales for each item. The first scale asks participants to report on a scale from (1) *rarely* to (4) *constantly* how often they experience that particular hassle. For the second scale, they are asked to rate from (1) *no hassle* to (5) *big hassle* how much of a hassle they find that particular item to be.

The PDHS has good psychometric properties. Crnic and Greenberg (1990) reported a coefficient alpha reliability of .81 for the frequency scale and .90 for the intensity scale. The correlation between the two scales was .78. Both scales of the PDHS are correlated with parenting satisfaction (-.33 and -.49, respectively) and maternal emotional functioning (.27 and .26, respectively) (Crnic and Greenberg, 1990). McKinnon (1994) also reported a significant negative correlation with maternal sensitivity and a significant positive correlation with maternal negativity. In the present study, Cronbach's coefficient alpha reliability for the Total Parenting Tasks Factor was .78; for the Total Challenging Behaviour Factor was .74; and .84 for the PDHS as a whole.

Parenting Behaviour. The Iowa Parent Behavior Inventory (Crase, Clark, & Pease, 1978) is a 36-item, paper-and-pencil self-report inventory of parenting behaviors (see Appendix S). Parents are asked to respond to the items on a 5-point scale ranging from (1) *I almost never behave this way* to (5) *I almost always behave this way*. An example of an item is as follows: "Give your child things he or she especially likes when he or she is ill?" and "Insist your child speak politely to you as opposed to being sassy?"

A total of six subscales are derived from the mother's form: 1) a "*parental involvement*" scale, which measures the degree to which she is actively involved with her child; 2) a "*limit setting*" scale, examines how consistently the mother sets limits for her child; 3) a "*responsiveness*" scale, which assesses how promptly the mother responds when her child is in need; 4) a "*reasoning guidance*" scale which indicates the degree to which the mother provides reasons to her child for the purpose of teaching him/her acceptable behavior; 5) a "*free expression*" scale which indicates the degree to which the mother allows her child to hear and/or see how she is feeling and how she expresses herself; and, 6) the "*intimacy*" scale which measures the degree to which the mother expresses positive affect to her child.

Reliability coefficients range from .61 to .86 (Crase, Clark, et al., 1978). The Iowa Parent Behaviour Inventory has been used in other studies with promising results (e.g., Roopnarine, 1987). Unfortunately, in the present study, the internal reliability of three of these scales was rather weak: Parental Involvement = .35; Limit Setting = .48; Free Expression = .57. As a result, these factors were not used in any analyses. The internal reliability of the other three factors was good: Responsiveness = .73; Reasoning Guidance = .74; Intimacy = .76.

Results

Parental Identity Interview

Each of the four sections of questions (i.e., traits, roles, emotions, and cognitions) was coded individually. For example, every participant's response to questions pertaining to traits was coded as one separate section. Every participant's response to questions pertaining to feelings, traits, roles and cognitions about parenting were coded separately. Individuals' responses to the questions were analyzed in the same manner used in study one, that is, via an open coding approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). With respect to reliability, the author and a female undergraduate Psychology student served as coders. The undergraduate student coded using the categories developed by the author. The reliability was calculated on 25% of the participants' (N = 20) complete responses to each of the questions within each of the four sections. Cohen's Kappa was .82 for the Emotion section, .81 for the Cognition section, .84 for the Traits section and .85 for the Roles section. Any discrepancies were discussed and consensus was reached.

Responses to Questions Regarding How One Feels About Being a Parent

A total of 7 categories emerged from the analyses of the questions regarding how the individual feels about being a parent. See Table 9 for a listing of all the categories, a sample quotation from each category and the associated means and frequencies.

Table 9

Categories of Responses, Number and Percentage of Participants, and Mean Frequencies for the Emotion Questions.

Category	Sample Quote	# of Participants	% of Participants	M (S.D.)	Range
Challenge/Stressful	*"Conflict is extremely stressful, especially between the two of them."* *"The continuous demands on me, it goes on and on and on and on."*	80	100	2.58 (1.81)	1-8
Child Enjoyment	*"I love to see children grow and develop."* *"I really really enjoy it, I really love my kids."*	63	79	1.68 (1.44)	1-7
Teaching/Interaction	*"It's so fun to laugh with them, to play with them, to read with them."* *"I like to be able to share things and teach things and stuff like that."*	47	59	1.04 (1.06)	1-3
Ambiguous	*"Well I guess I feel good, I don't know, I've never thought about how I feel about being a parent."*	42	53	.68 (.74)	1-3
Emotional Bond	*"I'm overwhelmed sometimes at the powerfulness of the love you feel for them."*	35	44	.60 (.81)	1-4
Proud/Fulfilled	*"I think it's probably one of the most rewarding things you can do in your life."*	33	41	.61 (.93)	1-5
Worry	*"The worry of them is stressful throughout the day when I am here and they are elsewhere."*	8	10	.14 (.44)	1-2

The most frequently mentioned category, used by each participant at least once, was entitled, "Challenge/Stressful" (N = 80; 100%). This category comprised comments indicative of the negative emotions associated with parenting, the difficulties that mothers had coping with the fighting and the conflict between their children, trying to deal with busy schedules, feeling overwhelmed with parenting demands, and not having enough time for herself. One mother described her situation as follows: "you're tired at the end of the day and you come home and you gotta do the dinner thing and throw a load of laundry in and everything else and it's like, 'Oh man, if you could just turn it off for a minute', that kind of thing, I find that stressful." Another mother said, "One conflict is fine, 2 conflicts, but when it gets to like 3, 4, 5 during the day, I just feel like my nerves are shot and I'm just worn down, worn down, worn down. I find that very hard." Other examples are as follows: "There are times when it's quite frustrating", "It can be a real challenge" and "It's tiring, very tiring."

The next most common category was entitled "Child Enjoyment" mentioned by 63 (79%) of the participants. Comments in this category were indicative of the joys and pleasures of parenthood, of how parenting is a very positive experience, about enjoying the developmental stages that their children are experiencing and how they like to see their children learn and grow in a variety of ways (e.g., physical growth, emotional development). For example, one mother said, "I thoroughly enjoy every moment that I spend with my son. Um, it's just a wonderful experience," another mother said, "I'm very happy, it's the best thing I ever did for myself." Other examples are as follows: "But I really, I mean, every time she hits a new stage I think, this is the best stage, and then she hits another stage and, and it's

like no this is the best stage. You know, it's just so exciting watching, I mean all the theory in the world is wonderful, but when you actually get to see it happen, it's like wow"; "I mean it was so fun to watch them learn to talk and when we go back and look at family videos I mean real thrilling moments as parents is watching your children develop and doing neat things."

The next category, "Teaching/Interaction" (N = 47; 59%) was composed of statements representing how they enjoy teaching their children about the world and watching their children learn new things, the fun that mothers have interacting with their children, and how much they enjoy spending time with their children. A few examples are as follows: "We really enjoy doing things with them, like I said I think for us, we're almost re-living our childhood, we're doing all the fun things now and even more and we love that", "doing things with my kids, um learning with them, like now we're getting into some of her schooling where we're doing research projects and things together and I'm learning things that I didn't know", "they're little sponges, they absorb so much, they're always fascinated with stuff" and "I enjoy the interaction with him, I enjoy spending time with him, going places with him, doing things."

The next category, "Ambiguous" (N = 42; 53%), was comprised of statements reflecting both the positive and negative aspects of parenting and the ambiguous feelings one has as a parent. One mother said, "Well I guess I feel good about being a parent –some days." Another mother said, "I don't know, I enjoy it. It's hard to say" and "I have mixed feelings about being a parent."

The next most frequently mentioned category was entitled, "Emotional Bond" (N = 35; 44%). Comments in this section reflected the affective elements of parenthood such as

enjoying the hugs and kisses they get as parents and cuddling with their children, feeling needed and important to their children, and receiving unconditional love from their children. One mother said, "It's just a real joy to realize that they need you and they love you and they, ah, want to be with you." Other mothers said, "I know this is going to sound hokey but there really isn't anything to me like that, that connection with your children, that bind and love" and "their hugging and kissing and showing you so much affection and it's completely unconditional and it's just wonderful." A number of mothers made short comments such as "those kisses that are offered without any asking, such a treat."

The next category contained comments about being proud of their children and their accomplishments, feeling good about their roles as parents, and about how they find parenting to be rewarding and fulfilling. This group of comments was labelled "Proud/Fulfilled" (N = 33; 41%). The following are some of the comments: "I feel good about the way my children are growing up and the experiences that they have had", "I feel really good about my role as a parent", "I see it as an important role, and as a role that is very fulfilling to me, that I get a lot of enjoyment from" and "sometimes I just ah, I just feel so proud of her and proud for her and the kind of person she's becoming."

Another category, entitled "Worry" (N = 8, 10%), is comprised of general comments about worrying about their children's safety, health and future and worrying about whether or not they are doing a good job as a parent: "I guess the fears that you have for your children, especially having two daughters", "you worry about them all the time, you know we worry about your safety" and "I always struggle with 'am I doing a good job' you know, or maybe a situation arose and I think gee I should handle that differently."

In sum, the categories used by at least half of the participants to describe their feelings associated with being a parent are Challenge/Stressful, Child Enjoyment, Teaching/Interaction, and Ambiguous. The biggest range, with respect to frequency of responses, comes from the first two categories: Challenge/Stressful, Child Enjoyment. Thus, it appears that individuals frequently experience somewhat conflicting emotions; they find parenting very demanding and stressful, but, at the same time, they also greatly enjoy both the experience and their children.

Responses to Questions Regarding How One Thinks About Herself as a Parent

A total of 9 categories emerged from the analyses of the questions regarding how the individual thinks about herself as a parent. See Table 10 for a complete listing of all of the categories, a sample quotation from each category, and the associated means and frequencies.

Table 10

Categories of Responses, Number and Percentage of Participants, and Mean Frequencies of Responses for the Cognition Questions.

Category	Sample Quote	# of Participants	% of Participants	M (S.D.)	Range
Rushed/Stressed	*"I am very short-tempered and irritable and I snap at her." "It's very demanding, there's not as much time, you're exhausted at the end of the day and you have to get ready for tomorrow."*	58	73	1.28 (1.08)	1-4
Child First/Listen	*"A good parent has to think about their child's needs as an individual."*	53	66	1.30 (1.15)	1-4
Love	*"Trying to be nurturing and supportive."*	20	25	.31 (.63)	1-3
Guilt	*"I feel like I have my own agenda and I wish to put it before his and I feel guilty about that."*	20	25	.25 (.44)	1
Know yourself	*"You can't start to raise somebody until you know who you are."*	9	11	.18 (.55)	1-3
Knowledge of Child Dev't	*"You have to be knowledgeable, you have to have wisdom."*	6	8	.08 (.27)	1
Consistency	*"To me, consistency is really important in parenting."*	5	6	.06 (.24)	1
Humour	*"A sense of humor is essential."*	5	6	.06 (.24)	1
Role Model	*"Setting a good example."*	3	4	.04 (.19)	1

The most common category in this section was entitled "Rushed/Stressed" (N = 58; 73%). Comments in this category reflected the mother's dissatisfaction with losing her patience and feeling like she has lost control, about feeling overwhelmed and stressed with the demands of being a parent, having to rush all the time, always feeling tired and being upset with herself for yelling and screaming at her children. The following are some examples: "I don't have the patience, that's probably the biggest one, I just don't have the patience to deal with them that day, for whatever reason", "because I'll yell at them, and say things or just scream or something and I really don't think I should do that", "I think also times where you're just tired and stressed and you know all the things to do and you know the best way to handle the situation but you're just too tired you know, I do feel that", "when you are by yourself it's just like, it's like ahhhh I mean you just feel like screaming", "I've got screaming, crying kids, or they're not sharing and they're tired, they're hungry and the house strikes me as being chaotic because I'm yelling down the stairs and I'm trying to get dinner ready, you know."

The next most frequently used category, "Child First/Listen" (N = 53; 66%) was comprised of comments reflecting the need to be selfless and to put the child's needs ahead of her own, to recognize that the child is an individual separate from his/her parents, being there for the child to listen and be a support, and to be flexible and adapt to suit the child's needs. For example, one mother said, "they don't always fit into your plans, so uh to be flexible." Others said, "You need an awful lot of patience", "It's just being patient with them", "so try to see things from their perspective, it helps to understand why they're acting the way they are", "I think a good parent is someone that's really in tune with their child, that

can kind of step back a little bit and be able to describe their child and the type of personality they have and the characteristics they have and take their parenting skills from there" and "somebody who actually listens, but not just listening to their words, but understanding what they're trying to tell you."

The next category, "Love" (N = 20; 25%) was composed of comments about the importance of loving your children such as "I think you have to be very loving", "a tremendous capacity to love your child" and "I believe the best thing a parent can do is to truly love the child unconditionally."

The next category, "Guilt" (N = 20; 25%) contained comments about feeling guilty about how she treated her child or about working and therefore not being home with her children: "I think, some, I, I really um, when I'm really busy, I feel really guilty" and "Well you tend to as a mother, or as a parent you get mother guilt. We call that mother guilt here and ah, so you get that, and I think you're hard on yourself, so you tend to think, you know, they're being rushed because or you know, my demands and everything."

The next most frequently mentioned category was entitled, "Know Yourself" (N = 9; 11%) and comprised comments about the importance of how knowing yourself as a person helps someone to be a good parent and how having a secure/stable childhood helps one to be a good parent. A good example from this category is as follows: "I think it's really important that you have yourself figured out, not that you have to be totally together to do it" and "probably having a good um stable background yourself as far as your growing up."

The comments in the next category, "Knowledge of Child Development" were mentioned by only 6 (8%) of the mothers and involved the importance of knowing about

children and their natural developmental processes and reading books about child development, etc.: "an understanding of child development is essential. Lots of people don't know what to expect and so they're surprised or dismayed by some of the things they're seeing, like if their child is a bitter and things like that, which is all normal development."

"Consistency" was the title of the next category (N = 5; 6%) and it contained comments about the importance of being consistent in how one raises one's child: "consistency in rules and regulations, regarding that. Um, what, what they can and can't do at certain ages" and "to me consistency is extremely important in parenting."

The next category, "Humour" (N = 5; 6%) contained comments about simply having a sense of humor and how important it is: "A sense of humor" is important.

The last category in this section, "Role Model" (N = 3; 4%) comprised comments about wanting to improve herself, and wanting to be a positive influence on her child: "I think positive role, like models that our parents today have, you know, do they have a positive role model that would be what we consider good parents so that they can respect their child."

In sum, with regards to the cognitive aspects of parental identity, the majority of participants' responses fell in the Rushed/Stressed and Child First/Listen categories. Again, this demonstrates a somewhat conflicting sense within the participants. They described themselves as being short-tempered, exhausted, and stressed, but at the same time emphasized the importance of putting their child's needs first and to listen to and be supportive of the child. Interestingly, these two categories are quite interrelated as being available to the child and putting the child's needs ahead of one's own means that one may

not have as much time for herself and may inevitably feel rushed and stressed.

Responses to Questions About How One Would Describe Herself as a Parent

A total of 9 separate categories emerged from the analyses of the questions regarding individuals' descriptions of themselves as parents. Interestingly, many of the individuals seemed caught off-guard when asked to describe themselves as parents. It would appear that perhaps thinking of oneself as a parent is not necessarily an easy task and not something that a number of the participants had consciously considered. Nonetheless, participants generated diverse and eclectic descriptions of themselves as parents. See Table 11 below for a complete listing of all of the categories, a sample quotation from each category, and the associated means and frequencies.

Table 11

Categories of Responses, Number and Percentage of Participants and Mean Frequencies of Responses for the Trait Questions.

Category	Sample Quote	# of Participants	% of Participants	M (S.D.)	Range
Expectations/Angry	*"Like I snap and just hit the wall kind of, and there's just no more I can take."* *"I have very high expectations for myself and I have high expectations for my kid."*	65	81	.83 (.59)	1-2
Involved	*"I'm around for them if they need me."*	39	49	.70 (.93)	1-5
Nurturant	*"I'm very devoted to my kids."*	36	45	.86 (1.36)	1-9
Patient	*"Well, I think I'm probably an understanding parent."*	26	33	.50 (.87)	1-5
Good Parent	*"I think overall I'm a very good parent."*	25	31	.48 (.83)	1-4
Fun	*"I'm fun I think, I'm outgoing."*	16	20	.24 (.53)	1-3
Teaching	*"I like to keep them motivated, learning new things."*	10	13	.19 (.60)	1-4
No time for Kids	*"I wish I could take more time to sit and listen to them."*	9	11	.11 (.32)	1
Fair	*"I think I'm fair."*	7	9	.13 (.46)	1-3

The most common category, entitled "Expectations/Angry," was mentioned by 65 (81%) of the participants. Comments in this category included descriptions of one's self as angry, yelling/screaming at kids, being strict and demanding, and as having clearly defined boundaries and expectations that their children are to meet. Mothers' described themselves as "frustrated", "impatient", "short-tempered", "I'll simmer long and then I'll explode," "I think I have pretty uh --expectations of the way I want her to behave and um --be with other people and with me," "I guess in some sense I'm a strict parent. I don't put up with a lot of crap" and "demanding, perfectionistic."

The next most frequently mentioned category was entitled "Involved" (N =39; 49%). Comments in this section were composed of descriptions of herself as one who is interested in what her child does, gives her child attention, makes time to be with her child, makes the needs of her children a priority, and engages in activities, sports, etc. with her child. The following are some examples: "I would say that I try to be child-centered, like try to put their needs first", "we take a lot of time for the kids, like sometimes we put our things on hold", "I like to play with and listen to my kids" and "I like to be creative with the kids and we do a lot of making our own play doh and painting and things like that".

Another category, "Nurturant" (N = 36; 45%) included self-descriptions as loving, caring, warm, and nurturant towards children. Comments regarding physical affection and "being a family" were also included. One mother described herself in this way: "well I think first of all, I just try to be a very loving parent. I think I would characterize myself as a loving parent, one who was there --ready to console, ready to love to do those sorts of things". Another mother used the following phrase: "I'm a very affectionate parent, always giving

hugs and cuddles and telling them I love them." Examples of other comments are "we like to do things as a family", "considerate" and "devoted."

The next most frequently used category was entitled "Patient" and was mentioned by just over one third of the mothers (N = 26; 33%). This category included descriptions of one's self as relaxed, easy-going, patient, and flexible: "I'm a pretty laid-back parent", "I'm flexible" and "I'm pretty patient."

The next most common category was entitled "Good Parent", mentioned by 25 (31%) of the participants. Comments in this category included descriptions of one's self as, simply, a good mother/parent, one who was a good role model and responsible and described herself as routine, structured and consistent: "I think, overall, I'm a very good parent" and "I guess a good role model, I hope", "certainly responsible", "I think as a parent, very organized and structured" and "I --try to be fairly consistent."

Another category, "Fun" (N = 16; 20%) was comprised of descriptions of one's self as having a sense of humour, being enthusiastic, silly and funny. The following are a couple of examples: "I think I'm fun, like, we like to play a lot with the kids" "silly, a great personality for the kids" and "I'll say fairly enthusiastic."

The next category, "Teaching" (N = 10; 13%) comprised descriptions of herself as a teacher, as one who enjoys teaching her children about life, etc., working with kids in a "teaching" style, and being knowledgeable about children. The following are a couple of examples: "just teaching him things, that is what I like to do", "giving him guidance", and "I try to role model what I want them to do, or you know, just the good social skills that you want them to do."

The next most common category, "No Time for Kids," was mentioned by only 9 (11%) of the participants and was comprised of comments about not having enough time for her children. For example one mother said, "I would like to do a little bit more with the kids right now, so I guess I feel bad for that cause I don't, like time, with working it's so hard, I don't have time."

The final category, entitled "Fair," was composed of descriptions of one's self as a fair person, one who tried to treat her children equally, and being open-minded and honest (N = 7; 9%). One mother described herself in the following way: "I try to treat them fairly by giving them a chance to tell me how they're feeling. Like if they did something wrong, I give them a chance to tell me why, why they acted the way they did, sometimes maybe I'm not fair, but I try to be."

In sum, the majority of responses in this section came from the following categories: Expectations/Angry, Involved, and Nurturant. Compared to the less frequently mentioned categories, such as Teaching, No Time, and Fair, these categories are more emotionally laden. It would appear that individuals describe themselves as parents in an affective style reflecting upon their feelings and emotions.

Responses to Questions Regarding What They Think is Their Role as a Parent

A total of 9 categories emerged from the analyses of the questions regarding how being a parent has influenced her as a person and made an impact on her life. See Table 12 below for a complete listing of all of the categories and the associated means and frequencies.

Table 12

Categories of responses, Number and Percentage of Participants and Mean Frequencies of Responses for the Role Questions.

Category	Sample Quote	# of Participants	% of Participants	M (S.D.)	Range
Family Focus	*"Instead of being a career person I'm more family oriented now"* *"to be someone who's there for him, someone that cares for him, someone who can understand him."*	65	81	1.69 (1.52)	1-6
Better Person	*"I think it's probably made me a better person."* *"I'm much more generous and understanding as a person. It makes you bigger."*	59	74	1.49 (1.49)	1-6
Teacher	*"I see my role as a teacher, you know, in terms of teaching values and helping to instill values so they go forward as adults."*	51	64	1.13 (1.04)	1-6
Nurturer	*"I would describe myself as loving and dedicated."*	28	35	.39 (.56)	1-2
Involved in Community	*"I've learned so much about the world around me and stuff that I didn't really care about until the little ones started asking questions."*	12	15	.18 (.44)	1-2
Lack of Time	*"I'm tired and I'm run-down."*	11	14	.20 (.53)	1-2
Goals not Changed	*"I always planned on having children and being a mother, I saw myself where I am now."*	9	11	.13 (.37)	1-2
"Me"	*"It's part of my whole make-up."*	9	11	.13 (.27)	1-2
Career Affectd Negatively	*"I feel like I've really lost status in the outside world."*	5	6	.09 (.40)	1-3

The most frequently mentioned category in this section was entitled, "Family Focus" (N = 65; 81%) and comprised statements regarding how work is simply not a priority any more or that her career is on hold for the time being, about how her role as a parent is to raise happy children who are confident in themselves and feel secure in their environment, and to provide them with opportunities: "oh yeah, before it was just work and getting ahead and doing this and that, um, now it's more being with my kids and enjoying other stuff, going on walks, just going to the playground", "Well, I think, I think being a parent, at least at this stage has made me realize that, um, work outside the home isn't as important to me as it once was or I thought it was", "not caring so much about myself anymore. You know, life doesn't center around me anymore. It totally centers around my children", "I guess the ultimate goal is to raise uh --happy, healthy, competent young adults, so I guess my role is to support them emotionally, physically in whatever way I can so that they have what they need to be happy, healthy adults", and "to expose your children to a variety of situations and --um, to provide them with the most experiences that you can provide them with."

The next most frequently used category was entitled, "Better Person" (N = 59; 74%). Comments in this category reflected the mothers' beliefs that becoming a parent had, in general, made them better people, more confident and given special meaning and value to their lives. Their comments also focussed on how becoming a parent had taught them to be more patient and understanding of others. One mother said, "oh, it's changed me completely. You become more understanding and sympathetic of a lot of things, uh, more accepting, more tolerant. Just because, you know when, it's like when you have a problem and you go through it, then you can appreciate other people with problems more." Other examples are:

"I don't see things quite as black and white as I used to" and "I think it's positively influenced me in that I have a lot more respect for other people", and "being a parent has helped me to –have more confidence in who I am and the person I am, to be –I was always happy with myself, but I guess I just find more to be happy about", "I guess it's also made me have a more positive outlook on things", "It's probably the best thing that's ever happened to me", and "my self-esteem is higher."

The next most frequently used category was entitled, "Teaching"(N = 51; 64%) and contained comments about the mother seeing her role as that of a teacher, a guide, a mentor for her children and wanting to influence her children in a positive way: One mother said, "I am their teacher, definitely. I am, I think of it as teaching them, I teach them how to learn stuff, to learn stuff today that is going to effect them tomorrow, that they're going to need to use in the future when they're adults", "parenting is such an important role and you influence them so much, it really made me want to be a better person, because I know that I'm a role model for them. So I try to be more honest", "to be the best I can be because the better I am, the better I will be for my children and I want to be a very good role model for my children" and the following was a typical comment: "um I think I should be a mentor, a guide for them, you know, just kind of steer them."

Comments describing her role as a nurturer and as one who is to love her children comprised the next category which was appropriately labelled "Nurturer" (N = 28; 35%). The following are a couple of examples: "I think that if you love them and let them know they're loved", "to protect her", "to nurture my children", "I'm a very loving parent" and "I'm very devoted to my kids."

The next category was entitled "Involved in Community" (N = 12; 15%) and was comprised of statements about how becoming a parent has helped her to become more involved in the community, schools, and social activities and made her more aware of her neighborhood and people in her locale. The following are some examples: "it's made me more aware of community issues like school and politics, um --so I can see myself --as being more involved in those issues and if I weren't a parent, then I wouldn't care about --school boards and things like that" and "oh it's expanded um all kinds of aspects of my life. Um I've met more people because of being a parent, um, been in all kinds of different situations um because of being a parent."

The next category, "Lack of Time" (N = 11, 14%) was comprised of comments about how she feels exhausted all the time, and how she has no time to do everything she wants to do: "as a person, I don't have any time for myself, um, whereas all my time used to be myself before I had kids, um, I don't shop for myself, every time I go shopping it's for the kids, um, --I don't know, I'm just, uh, I'm second" and "It is it's very demanding, there's not as much time, you're exhausted at the end of the day and you have to get ready for tomorrow and so."

Only nine mothers (11%) mentioned comments from the next category, "Goals Not Changed," which contained comments about how becoming a parent has not changed her "life" goals or where she sees herself heading in the future: "changed my goals, uh, no, I don't think. No, I don't really think it has too much" and "well, considering I was probably going to be a mom, I'm about on track with my goals."

The next category, also mentioned by just nine mothers (11%) entitled, "Me" contained comments about how she has changed as a person and how her identity has been

influenced since she's become a parent: "I don't think the core of who I am has changed, but my focus has changed."

The final category in this section was entitled, "Career Affected Negatively" (N = 5; 6%) and contained comments about how becoming a parent has had a negative affect on her career: "I've lost my career, I've lost so many things" and "we've kind of put his career on the go so he gets to do what he wants to do and I'm sort of stuck in the back. In some ways it is a negative influence on me as a person."

In sum, the categories used by the majority of participants reflect a variety of notions about the role of parent: Family Focus, Better Person, and Teacher. Interestingly, these roles encompass both a sense of self and a sense of other. Not only were individuals talking about how they have become more confident and less judgmental as individuals, but they also spoke of their role as one which requires them to put others first, to be somewhat selfless.

Combining Categories Between Sections

After examining the categories within each section, it was apparent that some of the categories between sections seemed similar to one another. In fact, some were identical. As a result, a number of categories between sections were grouped together and re-titled. The following is a list of these groups. The word in brackets following each category represents the section from which the category originated. The following categories were grouped together and titled "STRESSED" (N = 77; 96%): "Expectations/Angry" (Traits), "Challenge/Stressful" (Emotions), "Rushed/Stressed" (Cognition). The following categories were grouped together and labelled "TEACHING" (N = 68; 85%): "Teaching" (Traits), "Teaching/Interaction" (Emotion), "Teacher" (Roles), "Role Model" (Cognition). The

categories "Nurturant" (Traits), "Emotional Bond" (Emotion), "Nurturer" (Roles), and "Love" (Cognition) were combined and titled, "NURTURANT" (N = 63; 79%). And lastly, the title "CHILD- ORIENTED" (N = 60; 75%) was given to the combination of the "Patient/Relaxed" (Traits) and "Child First/Listen" (Cognition). Table 13 lists all final remaining categories and the associated means and frequencies.

Table 13

Categories of Responses, Number and Percentage of Participants and Means for All Questions After Combining Similar Categories Between Sections.

Category	# of Participants	% of Participants	M (S.D.)	Range
Combined Between Sections				
Stressed	80	100	6.46 (3.73)	1-19
Teaching	68	85	2.36 (1.74)	1-8
Nurturant	63	79	2.16 (1.74)	1-12
Child-Oriented	60	75	1.80 (1.52)	1-7
Emotions Section				
Child Enjoyment	63	79	1.68 (1.44)	1-7
Ambiguous	42	53	.68 (.74)	1-3
Proud/Fulfilled	33	41	.61 (.93)	1-5
Worry	8	10	.14 (.44)	1-2
Cognitions Section				
Guilt	20	25	.25 (.44)	1
Know Yourself	9	11	.18 (.55)	1-3
Knowledge of Child Dev.'t	6	8	.08 (.27)	1
Consistency	5	6	.06 (.24)	1
Humour	5	6	.06 (.24)	1
Traits Section				
Involved	39	49	.70 (.93)	1-5
Good Parent	25	31	.48 (.93)	1-4
Fun	16	20	.24 (.53)	1-3
No Time	9	11	.11 (.32)	1
Fair	7	9	.13 (.46)	1-3
Roles Section				
Family Focus	65	81	1.69 (1.52)	1-6
Better Person	59	74	1.49 (1.49)	1-6
Community	12	15	.18 (.44)	1-2
Lack of Time	11	14	.20 (.53)	1-2
Goals Not Changed	9	11	.13 (.27)	1-2
Me	9	11	.13 (.27)	1-2
Career Affected Negatively	5	6	.09 (.40)	1-3

Standardizing Frequencies and Assessing Validity

In order to account for the possibility that some individuals may be more verbose and thus use some of the categories more frequently, resulting in an inflated frequency of that category, the total number of times each individual mentioned each category was determined. This number was then divided by the total number of times that all the categories were mentioned by that person. This provided the number of times each category was mentioned by an individual, relative to all the categories. The resulting standardized frequencies were used for the remainder of the analyses.

As can be seen in Table 13, there are a total of 25 categories representing individuals' responses to questions regarding how they feel about being parents, how they think of themselves as parents, how they would describe themselves as parents, and what they think is their role as parents. Although each of these categories is meaningful in and of itself, the majority of categories were not used frequently, as evidenced by the low means. Therefore, only categories with a relatively substantial mean (1.5 or higher) were used in subsequent analyses. The following is a list of these seven parental identity variables: Stressed, Teaching, Nurturant, Child-oriented, Child Enjoyment, Family Focus, Better Person.

As an assessment of validity, these seven variables were correlated with one another. The inter-correlations between the parental identity variables indicate that a number of these variables are distinct from one another (see Table 14). For example, the Stressed variable is significantly negatively correlated with the Nurturant, Child Enjoyment, and Better Person variables, suggesting that individuals who describe themselves as less stressed and less angry also described themselves as loving and nurturant, as enjoying the pleasures of parenthood, as

excited by the development of their children, and as feeling more confident, patient and understanding. Interestingly, individuals who described themselves as teachers/role models also described themselves as being significantly less patient of others and as less confident and understanding. Thus, although these individuals may receive a lot of personal pleasure from their children and see themselves as guides (Teaching), they do not necessarily see themselves as very patient and relaxed (Child-Oriented). Individuals who described themselves as enjoying the pleasures of their child and their child's development also described themselves as significantly less patient.

Table 14

Inter-correlations Between Parental Identity Categories

	Stressed	Teaching	Nurturant	Child Oriented	Child Enjoy.	Family Focus	Better Person
Stressed	1.00						
Teaching	-.14	1.00					
Nurturant	**-.25***	-.16	1.00				
Child-oriented	.03	**-.25***	-.14	1.00			
Child Enjoy.	**-.26***	.01	.02	**-.26***	1.00		
Family Focus	-.07	-.08	-.04	-.12	-.11	1.00	
Better Person	**-.27***	**-.23***	.09	-.05	-.10	-.09	1.00

* = $p < .05$

Relation Between Parental Identity Categories and Standardized Potential Measures of Parental Identity

To assess the relation between the parental identity categories and standardized measures of potential aspects of parental identity, correlations between the parental identity categories and these standardized measures were also conducted (see Table 15).

Table 15

Correlations between parental identity variables and standardized measures.

	Stressed	Teaching	Nurturant	Child Oriented	Child Enjoy.	Family Focus	Better Person
Parenting Satisfaction							
Parenting Performance	-.29***	-.14	.18	-.14	.35***	.09	.11
General Satisfaction	.01	-.04	-.01	-.20	.07	-.07	.16
Parenting Competence/Efficacy							
Parenting Satisfaction	-.26**	-.18	.17	-.21**	.29*	.07	.27**
Parenting Efficacy	-.29*	-.03	.17	.03	.29***	-.22**	.19*
Parental Salience	.07	-.12	.01	-.11	.01	-.03	.06
Maternal Self-Def.	-.23**	.01	.28**	-.07	.02	-.10	.22*

*** = $p<.01$; ** = $p<.05$; * = $p<.10$

Results indicate that individuals who described themselves as stressed, challenged and angry as parents (i.e., Stressed category) during the interview were significantly less likely to feel good about their parenting performance, and their parenting competence/efficacy. They also rated themselves significantly lower on having "good/positive" mothering qualities.

Individuals who described themselves as loving, nurturant and affectionate as parents (i.e., Nurturant category) during the interview rated themselves significantly higher on having "good/positive" mothering qualities.

Interestingly, individuals who responded to the interview questions by describing themselves as patient and flexible (i.e., Child-Oriented category) described themselves as significantly less satisfied with their parenting competence/efficacy on the questionnaire.

Individuals who described themselves as enjoying the pleasures of raising their children and seeing their children develop (i.e., Child Enjoyment category) were significantly more likely to report feeling good about their parenting performance, and their parenting competence/efficacy.

Interestingly, individuals who described themselves as family oriented (i.e., Family Focus category) reported being significantly less satisfied with their parenting ability.

Lastly, individuals who described themselves as more confident, understanding and patient of others (i.e., Better Person category) during the interview, were significantly more likely to report feeling satisfied and competent as parents, and rated themselves significantly higher on having "good/positive" mothering qualities.

Relation Between Parental Identity Categories and Behavioural Variables

As mentioned, the second purpose of study two was to examine the relationship between individuals' identities as parents and their parenting behaviours and attitudes. First, a correlational analysis between the seven parental identity variables and the behavioural / attitudinal measures was conducted. As shown in Table 16, there were a number of significant relationships. See Table 17 for the inter-correlations between these behavioural /

attitudinal measures.

Table 16

Correlations Between Parental Identity Categories and Behavioural Variables.

	Stressed	Teaching	Nurturant	Child Oriented	Child Enjoy.	Family Focus	Better Person
Parenting Style							
Authoritarianism	.26***	.20*	.07	-.14	-.22**	-.21*	-.05
Authoritativeness	.04	-.14	.08	.01	-.05	-.11	.37***
Permissiveness	.12	.10	-.07	.10	.05	.03	-.24**
Perceived Stress	.34***	.05	-.19	.03	-.27**	.00	-.36***
Parenting Daily Hassles							
Parenting Hassles	.16	-.06	-.16	.08	-.11	-.06	.04
Challenging Behaviour	.32*	-.02	-.16	.02	-.38***	-.01	-.29***
Parenting Behaviour							
Responsiveness	-.09	-.26**	.22***	.01	-.14	.02	.13
Reasoning/Guidance	-.01	.08	.17	-.07	.06	-.12	.20*
Intimacy	.00	.10	.08	-.04	-.02	-.09	.09

*** = $p<.01$; ** = $p<.05$; * = $p<.10$

Table 17

Inter-correlations Between Behavioural Variables.

	Authoritarian	Authoritative	Permissive Oriented	Perceived Stress	Parenting Hassles	Challenging Behaviour	Response	Reasoning	Intimacy
Authoritarian	1.00								
Authoritative	-.14	1.00							
Permissive	-.21	-.08	1.00						
Perceived Stress	.32*	-.21	-.02	1.00					
Parenting Hassles	.12	.05	.11	.23*	1.00				
Challenging Beh.	.18	-.24*	.20	.37*	.49*	1.00			
Responsiveness	-.15	.05	-.06	-.13	-.05	-.15	1.00		
Reasoning	-.15	.51*	-.12	-.20	-.14	-.39*	.31*	1.00	
Intimacy	-.10	.35*	.02	-.13	-.12	-.27*	.38*	.49*	1.00

* = $p < .05$

Individuals who described themselves as stressed, challenged and angry as parents (i.e., Stressed category) were significantly more likely to hold authoritarian attitudes toward parenting, to report high levels of perceived parental stress and to report feeling overwhelmed with the daily stresses associated with their child's challenging behaviour.

Interestingly, individuals who described themselves as role models, teachers and guides for their children (i.e., Teaching category) were significantly more likely to hold authoritarian attitudes toward parenting and to describe themselves as less responsive to their child's needs.

Individuals who described themselves as loving, nurturant and affectionate as parents (i.e., Nurturant category) reported significantly higher levels of responsiveness to their children's needs.

Individuals who described themselves as enjoying the pleasures of raising their children and seeing their children develop (i.e., Child Enjoyment category) were significantly less likely to hold authoritarian attitudes about parenting, to report high levels of perceived stress associated with parenting, and to report feeling overwhelmed with the daily stresses associated with their child's behaviour.

Individuals who described themselves as family oriented (i.e., Family Focus category) were significantly less likely to hold authoritarian attitudes toward parenting.

Lastly, individuals who described themselves as more confident, understanding and patient of others (i.e., Better Person category) were significantly more likely to hold authoritative parenting attitudes and significantly less likely to hold permissive parenting attitudes, to report low levels of perceived stress associated with parenting, to report feeling

confident with the daily stresses associated with their child's behaviour, and to report using methods of reasoning and guidance with their children.

Cluster Analysis

A cluster analysis was conducted in order to examine possible groupings of a parental identity. The clustering technique employed in the present study was an agglomerative hierarchical algorithm with Ward's method of linkage (Ward, 1963). The variables used in the cluster analysis were the standardized frequencies with which each of the categories was employed by each participant. The following seven variables were used: Stressed, Teaching, Nurturant, Child Oriented, Child Enjoyment, Family Focus, and Better Person. A tree plot indicated that a three cluster solution was most appropriate. As a result, a second cluster analysis was conducted using an iterative algorithm specifying three clusters. The three distinct clusters were labelled *Stressed*, *Teaching*, and *Nurturant* (see Figure 5).

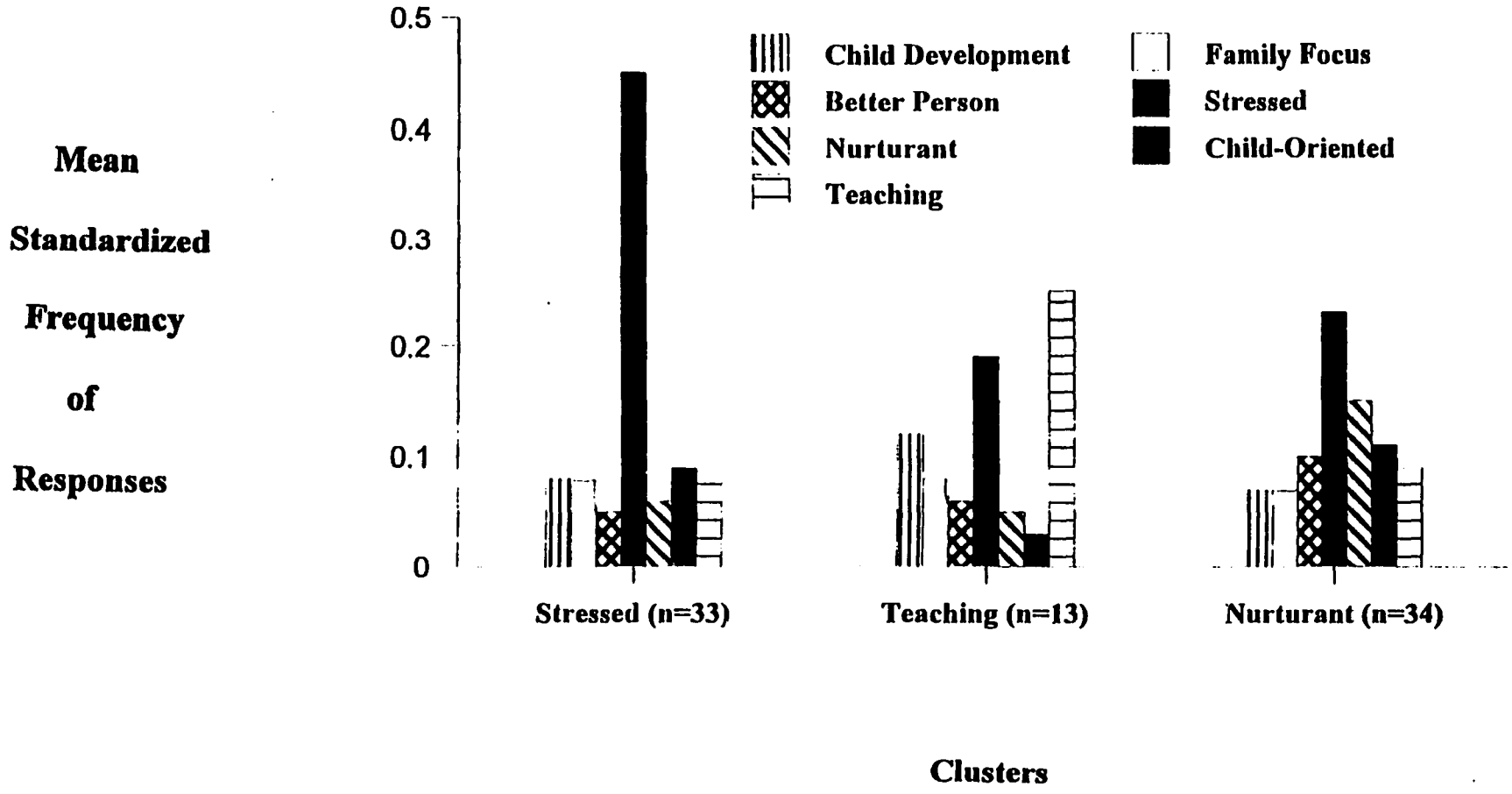

Figure 5. Mean standardized frequency of responses for each of the categories.

These three clusters differed significantly from one another on six of the seven variables used to generate the clusters: "Child Enjoyment" $F(2,77) = 4.04$, $p < .05$, "Better Person" $F(2,77) = 4.94$, $p < .01$, "Stressed" $F(2,77) = 49.28$ $p < .0001$, "Nurturant" $F(2,77) = 18.85$, $p < .0001$, "Child-oriented" $F(2,77) = 9.08$, $p < .01$, "Teaching" $F(2,77) = 19.90$, $p < .0001$. This high degree of distinction between the variables indicates that this solution is credible (Blashfield & Aldenderfer, 1988). The "Family Focus" variable did not distinguish between clusters, $F(2,77) = 1.05$, n.s.. See Table 18 for a list of cluster means and standard deviations.

Table 18

Cluster Means and Standard Deviations of Each of the Three Parental Identity Clusters.

Category	Stressed Cluster (N = 33)	Teaching Cluster (N = 13)	Nurturant Cluster (N = 34)
Child Enjoyment	.07 (.05)	.12 (.07)	.07 (.07)
Family Focus	.08 (.07)	.09 (.06)	.07 (.06)
Better Person	.05 (.05)	.06 (.05)	.09 (.07)
Stressed	.45 (.11)	.19 (.11)	.23 (.08)
Nurturant	.06 (.06)	.05 (.05)	.15 (.08)
Child-Oriented	.10 (.08)	.03 (.04)	.11 (.08)
Teaching	.09 (.09)	.25 (.11)	.09 (.05)

The first cluster, labelled *Stressed* (N = 35; 44%), can be distinguished by its high frequency on the Stressed category. These individuals reported feeling stressed, overwhelmed, and frustrated as parents; they reported having difficulty dealing with conflict between their children and felt they lacked patience. These individuals also scored low on the Nurturant, Better Person and Child Enjoyment categories, with scores indicating a lack of confidence and few feelings of happiness as a parent; they did not describe themselves as warm, nurturant and emotionally close to their children. They also scored low on the Teaching variable suggesting that being a role model and enjoying a role as a teacher was not indicative of them as parents.

The main distinguishing feature of the second cluster, *Teaching* (N = 13; 16%), was its high score on the "Teaching" variable. Out of all the categories, individuals in this cluster spoke most frequently of the joy and fun they experienced in interacting with their children, being a role model and a guide for their children. The next most frequently mentioned category in this cluster was Stressed, indicating feelings of being rushed and overwhelmed. The category, Child Enjoyment, was also mentioned relatively frequently. Thus, these individuals also spoke of the joys in watching their children grow and develop and learn about their world and they reported how much pleasure they received from being parents. Interestingly, however, they also scored low on the Child-Oriented and Nurturant variables. Hence, these individuals did not describe themselves as flexible and relaxed and did not express a lot of affect regarding their emotional attachment to their children.

Individuals in the third cluster, labelled *Nurturant* (N = 32; 40%), scored higher on the Better Person, Nurturant and Child-Oriented variables, relative to the other clusters.

Thus, these individuals reported feeling more confident as individuals since they became parents. They reported feeling happier and more patient and understanding of others. They also described themselves as very nurturant and loving and expressed a great deal of emotional closeness with their children as well as being patient, flexible and relaxed.

Relation Between Parental Identity Clusters and Standardized Potential Measures of Parental Identity.

All dependent variables were analyzed using one-way ANCOVA's with the following variables as covariates: parent's education, total family income, child's age, child's gender, parent's employment status and total number of children. Of note, there was no relation between the parental identity clusters and these covariates. Also note, there was no relation between the two different age groups of children (i.e., children aged three to five years, and children aged six to eight years) and the parental identity clusters.

The means and standard deviations for each of the three clusters on the parental identity measures are presented in Table 19.

Table 19

Means and Standard Deviations for Each of the Parental Identity Clusters on the Parental Identity Measures.

Parental Identity Measure	Parental Identity Cluster: Stressed Cluster (N = 33)	Teaching Cluster (N = 13)	Nurturant Cluster (N = 34)
Parenting Satisfaction	58.25 (5.54)	61.45 (6.94)	57.58 (8.42)
Parenting Performance	**24.53 (4.22)**[a]	**27.75 (5.34)**[b]	25.50 (4.55)
General Satisfaction	33.72 (3.02)	33.70 (3.68)	32.08 (6.59)
Parenting Competence/Efficacy	67.63 (10.13)	72.55 (8.49)	68.57 (13.31)
Parenting Satisfaction	39.66 (6.29)	43.70 (4.76)	39.73 (9.68)
Parenting Efficacy	27.96 (5.16)	28.85 (5.59)	28.83 (4.90)
Parental Salience	77.50 (8.58)	76.60 (7.35)	74.53 (10.53)
Maternal Self-Definition	124.50 (12.32)	129.00 (8.21)	130.92 (11.40)

$p<.05$

Relation Between Parental Identity Clusters and Parenting Behaviour Variables.

Analyses indicated a significant difference between the clusters regarding reported levels of parenting performance, $F(2,63)=3.17$, $p<.05$. LSD post hoc comparisons indicated that individuals in the *Teaching* cluster reported being significantly more satisfied with their parenting performance than individuals in the *Stressed* cluster.

None of the other ANOVA's resulted in significant differences between the clusters.

The means and standard deviations for each of the clusters on the behaviour/attitude measures are presented in Table 20.

Table 20

Means and Standard Deviations for Each of the Parental Identity Clusters on the Behavioural Variables.

Behaviour/Attitude Measure	Parental Identity Cluster		
	Stressed Cluster (N = 33)	Teaching Cluster (N = 13)	Nurturant Cluster (N = 34)
Parenting Style			
Authoritarian	24.84 (5.70)	21.40 (7.49)	23.87 (7.66)
Authoritative	41.09 (4.13)	40.00 (3.65)	41.53 (5.02)
Permissive	23.81 (4.26)	21.90 (5.92)	21.40 (4.66)
Perceived Stress	**25.21 (5.37)**[a]	**22.00 (6.46)**[b]	**22.33 (4.81)**[b]
Parenting Daly Hassles	65.23 (11.10)	58.60 (11.38)	61.48 (8.29)
Parenting Hassles	32.41 (7.11)	30.20 (6.09)	31.05 (4.96)
Challenging Behaviour	**32.83 (6.03)**[a]	**28.40 (5.99)**[b]	30.43 (4.78)
Parenting Behaviour			
Responsivity	30.13 (3.63)	29.20 (3.29)	31.28 (2.84)
Reasoning/Guidance	30.06 (3.74)	30.30 92.16)	30.60 (2.74)
Intimacy	30.22 (3.49)	29.95 (3.04)	30.80 (3.47)

$p<.05$

Analyses indicated a marginally significant difference between the three clusters regarding perceived stress, $F(2, 63) = 2.67$, $p = .08$. Least Significant Difference (LSD) post hoc comparisons indicated that individuals in the *Stressed* cluster reported significantly higher levels of perceived parenting stress compared to individuals in both the *Nurturant* and *Teaching* clusters. In addition, there were significant differences between the clusters

regarding how overwhelmed they feel with the daily stresses associated with their child's behaviour, $F(2, 63) = 3.16$, $p<.05$. LSD post hoc comparisons also indicated that individuals in the *Stressed* group reported higher levels of child hassles than individuals in the *Teaching* cluster.

None of the other comparisons resulted in significant differences between the clusters.

Discussion

The main purpose of study two was to develop a better understanding of the way in which individuals think of and describe themselves as parents. Several theorists have explored the concept of identity and hypothesized about its components and its structure. One kind of identity is parental identity; but this notion is still in its infancy. Although a few researchers have theorized about parental identity, the current study represents the first empirical attempt to operationalize this construct. Results from this study explained that there are affective, cognitive, self-descriptive and role-based components to identity. More importantly, these results have informed us about the precise content of these components as they pertain to parental identity. Given that these ideas have never been explored in the context of parental identity, open-ended questions were designed to elicit responses. This qualitative approach proved to be quite fruitful. Indeed, a variety of multifaceted responses was provided demonstrating the depth of the concept of parental identity and highlighting the sometimes restrictive nature of standardized measures. The current results have provided us with concrete examples of how people think about and describe themselves as parents and enabled us to go beyond the theory to flesh out our understanding of parental identity.

Parental Identity as a Role

Thoits (1986) proposed that roles are central to one's identity as a parent. She argued that roles provide purpose, meaning and behavioural guidance to an individual. Results from this study provide evidence to support her claim. The majority of individuals in this study spoke about re-orienting their goals from being self-focussed to being more family focussed; thus their role as parent was emphasized. These participants mentioned how being a parent forced them to realize how unimportant their role outside the home actually was and how personal issues were less salient to them than their children's concerns: "Work outside the home isn't as important to me as it once was" and "not caring so much about myself anymore, you know, life doesn't center around me anymore, it totally centres around my children." There was a sense of responsibility to one's children in these statements. Perhaps it can be described as ownership of one's role as a parent and an obligation to meet the requirements of that role: "my priorities have completely changed, my children are first, they really are." Roles come with social expectations (Hoelter, 1983; Thoits, 1983, 1991) and individuals in this study actively assumed those expectations: "we were always saving for a big house, now, we've put money aside for our children's education. We really think ahead to what they will need in life." A number of individuals reported that their roles as "parent" became a more salient aspect of who they were, which supports Stryker's (1986) claim that certain identities are more salient to an individual's identity than others. As such, their behaviours changed accordingly: "whereas maybe 5 or 10 years ago I may of thought of myself as furthering my career, whereas now, it's no - my kids are young and they need me at home and I feel that's where I should be and so that's what I will do now."

One positive outcome of this "role change" for a number of these individuals was the belief that being a parent had actually made them better people: "I think I'm a better person than I would have been if I hadn't had children" and "In some ways it's made me more confident because I can feel confident as a parent." This is a novel finding as there is nothing in the current literature which speaks to this notion. Individuals described themselves as more positive, less judgmental and more accepting of others. Thus, the behavioural changes that these individuals made resulted in a new understanding of their identities and a better appreciation of who they are. Identities are meanings individuals use to define themselves (Burke & Tully, 1977) and results from this study support this belief. Other descriptions of one's role as a parent included that of Teacher and Nurturer. Individuals indicated that their role was to guide and direct their children, to nurture and love their children: "my role as a parent is to facilitate my children's growth in all ways" and "I am their teacher." These categories are similar to Flaherty's (1988) caretaking and nurturing roles which she proposes to be part of the "functions of grandmothering." Flaherty (1988) describes caretaking as caring directly for a child or other dependent family members and nurturing as providing "emotional support and love to the child" (p. 195). In some of Mercer's (1985, 1986) work on maternal role attainment, mothers were asked to describe an ideal mother. Characteristics such as loving, giving, teaching, and nurturing were provided which are exactly the same as some of the descriptions provided in this study. Thus, on a theoretical level, these data support and further contribute to the notion of roles being central to one's identity as a parent. On a more concrete level, these data demonstrate exactly *what* roles are relevant to one's identity as a parent and how these roles contribute to one's parental identity.

The Contribution of Traits to Parental Identity

Whitbourne (1986) defines identity as the integration of various characteristics and qualities which one attributes to his/her self and hypothesizes that it is the uniqueness of the characteristics which make them specific to each individual's identity. Results from this study expand upon her beliefs by providing concrete descriptions of one's parental identity. In all, there were nine distinct and varied categories of descriptions of one's self as a parent. Although eight of the nine categories were positive in nature (e.g., Child-Oriented, Nurturant, Fair), the most frequently mentioned category was negative in tone: Expectations/Angry. Descriptions in this category reflected individuals' dissatisfaction with themselves when they lost their patience and got angry with their children and reflected how demanding they could be as parents: "I can get quite strict if it's something I really believe in", "I tend to get very snippy, you know, when I'm tired and grumpy", "we have certain rules and we like them to follow the rules and when they don't follow the rules, they have consequences", "I've lost control, not control over him, but control over myself and let him get the better of me." Other categories of descriptions were labelled Involved, Nurturant, Child-Oriented and Good Parent. These responses reflected the more positive attributes of their self-descriptions as parents. A sense of confidence was reflected in some of the descriptions: "I've got a lot of patience, I don't jump at little things", "I think I have enough flexibility to know when the rules do need to be changed", "overall I think I'm a very good parent." Schouten (1991) reports that self-descriptions are an important element in the reconstruction of an individual's identity. This was also reflected in the current results. For example, the following quotes demonstrate how some individuals have described themselves in ways that have defined who

they are: "I am very committed to this job of being a parent", "I know I'm very devoted to my kids", "I'm very involved, and um --that's my focus, it's what I do for the most part." What the current results have provided therefore are concrete and specific characteristics that mothers use to describe who they are as parents. Furthermore, these results illustrate that individuals describe themselves using both positive and negative qualitites. Indeed, individuals resonated with the negative aspects of their parental identities.

Parental Identity and Emotion

Partridge (1988) hypothesized that emotions bring affective organization to the experience of parenthood. Again, results from the current study regarding how individuals feel about being parents elaborate and make concrete the nature of the emotions that Partridge gestures towards. Individuals provided both positive and negative affective characteristics. One category comprised descriptions of feeling stressed and overwhelmed with the constant demands of parenting and the difficulties inherent in dealing with conflict. Participants reported feeling tired, frustrated and challenged: "the thing that nobody tells you about, one of the things is, you don't take a break when you want to, like you have to be there for them and if you're feeling tired or whatever, that's too bad", "I was late getting home, and it was one thing after another the whole time, you know, it was "mommy, mommy, I need mommy, I want mommy, I need I need..." and it was one thing after another and I just wanted to push the pause button", "it was smothering at times, really smothering" and "I feel drained."

At the same time, individuals reported feeling a variety of positive emotions. Indeed, almost 80% of the participants spoke of parenting as a very positive experience and

mentioned the joys and pleasures they received. Many individuals commented on how gratifying and rewarding it was to see their children grow both emotionally and physically and appreciated the opportunity to experience these pleasures with their children: "it's fascinating to see their personalities emerge and how they look at the world and how they deal with things each in their own unique way", "I love it when they're sleeping at night, you can go in and see them and they're all cuddled up sleeping and peaceful" and "as a couple, it's just added another dimension to us." A number of participants mentioned the joy they received when they could play and interact with their children and teach them about their world: "I love sharing experiences with them", "I like sharing her growing and her sort of discovering things and watching her as she changes and discovers."

Not surprisingly, a number of participants provided ambiguous responses. Some mothers appeared to be caught off-guard when asked some of the questions. Some were able to respond, others seemed to be at a loss for words and simply responded with "I don't know", "I'm not sure" or "I don't know. I enjoy it. It's hard to say." Some individuals also reported feeling an intense emotional bond with their children and emphasized the affective experiences of parenting: "I don't know how to describe it, it's just um there is, you know, and I know this is going to sound hokey, but there really isn't anything to me like that, that connection with your children, that bind, that love." Similarly, some mothers reported feeling extremely proud of their children and described parenting as very rewarding and fulfilling: "It is probably the best thing. It is what I am most proud of." These findings help to flesh out Partridge's (1988) proposition and further indicate that affect is an important component of parental identity. These results contribute to the current literature by

demonstrating the multifaceted nature of affect. In other words, affect was not a unidimensional construct consisting of only one emotion: anger or love, for example. Instead, there were a variety of categories illustrating the multidimensionality of affect.

Cognition and Parental Identity

Barnard and Martell (1995), in reviewing Mercer's (1985) work, discussed the cognitive components of a maternal identity and defined them as the "how, what and why" (p. 7) of childcare. This description is elaborated in results from the current study. Partridge (1988) claimed that individuals' perceptions of their parenting performance were central to one's identity as a parent. When asked to reflect on what they think would make someone a good parent, individuals in the current study responded with comments such as the importance of knowing oneself, being consistent, and having some knowledge of Child Enjoyment in general. However, these categories were mentioned very infrequently. The more frequently mentioned categories - "Rushed/Stressed" and "Putting the Child First/Listening" - were used in response to occasions when they felt that they were not a good parent. Ironically, these two themes seem to be highly interrelated. One is likely to feel stressed and rushed if they are consistently putting their child's demands first. For example, one mother said, "a parent has to devote more than 100% of their time to their family" and another mother said, "being selfless and not selfish." It is not surprising that there were two main categories in this area and that the majority of parents essentially just feel rushed/stressed as parents. This is a function of our current fast-paced social life-style. Individuals reported feeling dissatisfied with their parenting when they would lose their patience and resort to yelling and screaming at their children and many also commented on

how they felt stretched to the limit and at the end of their ropes: "I see the household as being chaotic, I guess you know, I've got screaming, crying kids, or they're not sharing and I think that's typical when, you know, especially at 4:30 on, they're tired, they're hungry and um the house strikes me as being chaotic because I'm yelling down the stairs and meanwhile I'm trying to get dinner ready and I see it as my responsibility to keep the house running smoothly." These current data lend credence to the cognitive portion of Partridge's (1988) hypothesis of parental identity. Furthermore, these data expand upon and provide empirical substance for Partridge's (1988) theoretical claim.

It is interesting to note, however, that the cognitive descriptions that mothers provided were actually not very cognitive; they seemed to be more affective in nature. Categories such as Love, Guilt, Humour, and Rushed/Stressed are simply not very cognitive. Why is this the case? Perhaps the questions designed to elicit the cognitive components of parental identity were not effective in so doing. Therefore, instead of asking "Do you have any ideas about what makes someone a good parent?" or "Are there ever times when you think you're not a very good parent?", more effective questions might be, "What do you think it means to be a parent?" or "What is a parent?", "How do parents behave?" Questions that were more abstract and less evaluative might have been preferable. On the other hand, perhaps the idea that cognitions are a central part of one's parental identity is weak and not as essential as we may believe. Perhaps the affective component of parental identity is stronger and more reflective of the true nature of parental identity. Maybe people simply do not *think* about being parents; they simply react as parents. They seem to reflect upon their behaviour after the fact (e.g., "I wish I didn't yell at them so much."), but at the time, they do not cognitively

process the situation.

Salient Issues for Parental Identity

Although each of the four sections of interview questions was designed to elicit different aspects of one's identity as a parent, which they did, there were similarities in responses between sections and thus, like categories were combined. This suggests that there may be certain characteristics which individuals consider to be more salient aspects of their parental identities, and these specific aspects permeate the many components of their identities as parents. For example, the categories "Nurturant", "Emotional Bond", "Nurturer" and "Love" were all elicited from questions examining different parts of parental identity (i.e., traits, emotions, roles, and cognitions, respectively), yet, the content of the categories was quite similar. The same can be applied to the categories "Rushed/Stressed", "Expectations/Angry" and "Challenge/Stressful" which were derived from different questions. Again, the congruence between these categories suggests that parental identity may not be composed of separate dimensions, but of integrated factors. Hence, the definition of parental identity developed for this study is supported. Parental identity is not *only* a set of traits individuals attribute to their selves nor is it *only* a set of feelings about being a parent, etc., etc. As proposed earlier, Parental identity is *a mental representation of one's role as a parent. This dynamic representation is composed of individuals' perceptions of their role as parents, the relative importance they assign to that role with respect to their sense of self, the traits they ascribe to themselves as parents, the feelings and emotions they associate with parenting, and how they think about themselves as parents and appraise their parenting performance.*

It is important to note that the diversity and richness of these results could not have been achieved if typical standardized measures had been employed. These results clearly demonstrate the utility of designing an open-ended interview. Some of the categories, for example, "Better Person" and "Child Enjoyment" would likely not have been thought of, and thus, not considered to be a part of one's identity as a parent. The current results indicate that these two categories were significant components of parental identity. Thus, the qualitative approach has added to our understanding of the notion of parental identity.

Patterns of Parental Identity

Not only do the present results demonstrate that there are distinct differences in how individuals characterize themselves as parents (as evidenced by the variety of descriptive categories), but they indicate that there are certain patterns with which individuals conceptualize themselves as parents. In addition to an open-ended approach, the use of a cluster analytic method allowed individuals with similar patterns of self-descriptions as parents to be grouped together. Analysis resulted in three separate and distinct patterns: *Stressed*, *Teaching* and *Nurturant*. This means that not everyone thinks of themselves as parents in the same manner. Instead, individuals emphasize certain aspects of their roles as parents more than others. This lends credibility to the notion of a parental identity as a meaningful construct.

The *Stressed* cluster can be distinguished by their extremely high frequency of responses in the "Rushed/Stressed" category. When these individuals described themselves as parents, they used words such as stressed, overwhelmed, and "always tired." They reported low frequency of responses in the "Nurturant" category and few responses from the

"Child Enjoyment" category indicating that they do not see themselves as very nurturant or emotionally connected with their children and that experiencing the joys of their child's development is not the most salient aspect of their identities as parents. These individuals see the demands and stresses of being a parent as the most salient aspects of their parental identity.

Individuals in the *Teaching* cluster can best be characterized as, obviously, teachers and mentors to their children. When these individuals described themselves as parents, they used phrases such as "role model", "instilling values" and they spoke favourably about interacting with their child. Indeed, these individuals reported the highest frequency of responses from the "Child Enjoyment" category indicating how much they enjoy watching their children grow, learn, and experience life. Interestingly, these individuals reported a low frequency of responses from the "Child-Oriented" and "Nurturant" categories. This suggests that perhaps they do not see themselves as having a strong emotional connection with their children and instead, see their relationships as more functional.

Individuals in the last cluster, *Nurturant*, are best characterized as loving. These individuals have a strong emotional connection with their children and that seems to be the nucleus of their self-descriptions as parents. In addition, these individuals reported that becoming parents has helped them to become "better" individuals - more accepting, less judgmental and more content with themselves. It is almost as though they feel fulfilled as people in their role as parents. For these individuals, the emphasis is on physical love and an emotional connection.

The Relation Between Parental Identity Categories and Parenting Behaviours

The second purpose of study two was to investigate the relationship between individuals' parental identities and their parenting behaviours and attitudes. Analyses indicated significant relation between the parental identity categories and both the Challenging Behaviours measure and the measure of Perceived Stress (although this latter relation was only marginally significant). More specifically, individuals in the *Stressed* cluster found it more challenging to deal with their child's negative behaviours and perceived there to be more stress in their lives. These results support Crnic and Greenberg's (1990) study demonstrating a strong negative relation between parenting satisfaction and parenting stress.

Again, it is important to note that the current results would not have been achieved if only standardized measures had been employed. Analyses indicated little relation between the clusters of parental identities and the questionnaires assessing potential domains of parenting identity. The only measure that was statistically significant was the parenting performance factor of the Parenting Satisfaction questionnaire. This measure distinguished between individuals in the *Stressed* and *Teaching* clusters. What does this mean? There are a number of interpretations. First, these standardized measures, on their own, do not fully capture the essence of parental identity, as defined in this study. Thus, each of these individual measures of parenting satisfaction, competence, efficacy, etc., fails to assess the nature of mothers' identities as parents. These measures may be addressing individual aspects of a person's parental identity (e.g., how he/she feels about being a parent), but they are not capturing the complete gestalt of one's identity as a parent. Alternatively, the lack of

congruence between the parental identity categories and the questionnaires could simply indicate that what theorists believe is central to one's sense of identity as a parent is different from what mothers believe comprises their core identity as a parent. Of course, one needs to remember that the researchers who developed these measures did not set out to measure parental identity per se and thus cannot be faulted in that respect. It is quite instructive to learn that the closed-ended measures of parenting beliefs/attitudes were different from the open-ended responses. This stresses the utility of a qualitative approach. If only these questionnaires were employed, then our understanding of parental identity may have been misleading.

Limitations and Future Research

There are a number of limitations of these data. Participants generally were well-educated, working mothers in two-parent families. Future research should extend these results to the general population of mothers. Unfortunately, there were no child data collected. One's identity as a parent is likely to be strongly influenced by the child's characteristics (Belsky, 1984). It would have been advantageous to have collected some personality measures from the children (e.g., temperament, self-esteem). This would have enabled a more detailed and perhaps more accurate understanding of parental identity. Ideally, it would have been preferable to have observed both the parent and child in a joint activity as this would have provided valuable information about the overall dynamics of their relationship.

Another related limitation of these data is the absence of information regarding the husbands. More and more, researchers are stressing the importance of moving beyond the

basic nature of dyadic relationships to consider the systemic nature of the family unit as a whole (Putnam, Belsky, & Crnic, 1995). The notion of co-parenting has become central in this regard (McHale, 1997). Co-parenting is described as the level of mutual support and shared leadership that parents provide to one another in the rearing of their children (Minuchin, 1974). Although there is no research on the relation between co-parenting and parental identity, one could surmise that, based on the underlying theory of co-parenting, one's sense of self as a parent is partially constructed from his or her spouse. Thus, by only examining the mother's parental identity, as in the current study, it is likely that these results do not capture the complexity of parental identity. However, it is also quite interesting that "co-parenting" did not emerge in these descriptions. Despite the numerous questions to which mothers responded, they did not discuss their membership on a parenting team –or their co-ordination with their children's fathers as significant themes. This issue needs further exploration.

These results represent the first attempt to empirically tease apart our understanding of parental identity. As is typically the case, results of a study in a new area of research tend to provide more questions than answers. Obviously, the first route to take is to validate the current theory of parental identity by replicating these results with fathers and with different populations. It is expected that there would be different categories of responses for fathers, but the main structure of the theory would be similar (i.e., parental identity is composed of notions of roles, cognitions, emotions, and traits to varying degrees). Second, the attitudinal and behavioural portions of these results were collected via pencil and paper techniques. It may be fruitful to collect behavioural observations of family interactions in an effort to

develop a more meaningful understanding of the notion of parental identity as it relates to overall family functioning. Third, these data demonstrate the benefits of qualitative research. One drawback to this style of research is that it is very labour-intensive. However, now that I have developed a sense of parental identity, these data can be used to generate closed-ended questionnaire items.

General Discussion

At the beginning of this thesis, I asked, "What does it mean to be a parent?" I attempted to answer this question by exploring the notion of parental identity. I believe that the first substantial inklings of one's identity as a parent begin during the transition to parenthood and continue to develop and change as one grows and encounters different experiences as a parent. Thus, parental identity is not a static construct, but a multidimensional concept that changes and adapts as new information and experiences are encountered. In this project, the development of parental identity was examined in adults at two time points: one, from prenatal to 18-months postnatally and two, when children were three to eight years of age. Given that there were different samples used at the two different time points, I cannot make direct comparisons between study results. However, there is room for hypothesizing. In study one, the three female clusters were labelled *Prepared*, *Complacent*, and *Fearful*. In study two, the three clusters were labelled *Stressed*, *Nurturant* and *Teaching*. Is there a relationship between these clusters of people from the two studies? It is difficult to make such a comparison given that individuals in the first study were asked to describe their expectations about parenthood whereas individuals in study two were asked to describe themselves as parents. However, these two concepts are not that discrepant. Nonetheless, it appears as though there are few similarities between the study one and study two clusters. Some individuals in the first study were described as realistic and confident about becoming parents (*Prepared*), others were described as somewhat indifferent and unaffected by their upcoming roles as parents (*Complacent*), and key words used to described the final group were worried and overwhelmed (*Fearful*). In the second study, one group of

women described themselves as rushed and harried (*Stressed*), another group used words like loving and giving (*Nurturant*), and the final group described themselves as role models and guides (*Teachers*). Each of these clusters is different from one another; direct comparisons of the clusters between the two studies are not easily discernible. Why is this the case? I believe, as I am sure many others would, that this is because there is a vast difference in how people conceptualize themselves as parents during the prenatal period versus the time when their children are three to eight years old. During the transition to parenthood, individuals are just beginning to develop more concrete notions of themselves as parents. They are bombarded with the discovery and unexpectedness of "first-time" parenting experiences and are simply trying to adjust their family unit to include one more member. By the time their children are between three and eight years of age, parents have had more parenting experiences and thus, more "data" to help develop a sense of themselves as parents. In fact, it would be surprising, and somewhat disconcerting, if there was too much similarity between individuals' parental identities prenatally and their parental identities up to eight years postnatally. If there was too much similarity, it would suggest that the actual transition to parenthood has little impact on one's identity as a parent and that having a child has little influence on being a parent. Of course, if there was too much dissimilarity, it would call into question the stability of one's overall sense of self. The best way to assess continuity in parental identity would be to conduct a longitudinal study, using similar measures across a number of time points from prenatal time to several years postnatally.

Another issue to examine is the notion of gender differences in parental identity. The four clusters of men from study one were labelled *Prepared*, *Complacent*, *Fearful*, and

Mixed. Given that only women participated in study two, it is difficult to make comparisons, but one might ask how these men might describe themselves as parents in two to six years? I would surmise that their responses would be substantially different from women's. The most frequently mentioned category (N=100%) was labelled, "Rushed/Stressed." The main focus of this category was feeling overwhelmed and tired with the demands of parenting, working outside the home in addition to parenting, never having enough time, etc.. Given that women still perform the majority of household chores and childcare demands, it is likely that this category would not be mentioned as frequently by men. However, based on the results of study one, it is likely the second most frequently mentioned category, Teaching (N=85%), would be mentioned at least as often by men as it was by women. Results from study one indicated that men talked about teaching and playing with their child significantly more often than did women. Another main gender difference that surfaced in study one was the time orientation of men's and women's expectations. Men were much more future-oriented than women. Thus, one might expect more of a similarity between men's prenatal expectations and their postnatal descriptions of themselves given that men are already thinking of themselves as "established" parents. This suggests, therefore, the possibility that the notion of parental identity, in spite of structural similarities, may be quite different for men than for women.

One of the key contributions of this study is the effective use of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Each approach has its merits and by employing both, I have attempted to utilize the strengths of each. By using an interview, I was able to derive a meaningful description of mothers' parental identities. As mentioned, these results can now

be used to develop a closed-ended questionnaire enabling researchers to eliminate the labour-intensive aspects of conducting qualitative research. By quantifying the qualitative data, I was able to conduct a number of statistical analyses enabling me to make comparisons with previously established measures. Given that these measures have been shown to be reliable and valid, they make useful comparisons. The key point is that qualitative and quantitative methodologies compliment one another (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor & Tindall, 1996).

APPENDICES

Appendix A
Verbal Information for Recruitment

"Hi, my name is _____. I am a student at Wilfrid Laurier University, taking my Masters in Psychology. I am presently working on a project at WLU with Dr. Mark Pancer, Dr. Michael Pratt, and Dr. Bruce Hunsberger, called the "New Families Project." Basically, what we are interested in is looking at the changes that couples go through when they have their first baby. Becoming a parent is one of the most important transitions in a person's life and it can mean a great deal of change, not only in the kinds of activities people are involved in, but in the way they look at things. The New Families Research Project will be examining some of the ways in which individuals change when they become parents and how they adjust to parenthood. The major focus of the research will be on how people's thinking about things such as family life, relationships, and work changes through this transition.

If you agree to participate in the New Families Project, we will be asking you to take part in three interviews, each lasting about an hour. The first interview will take place when you are about six months pregnant, the second interview will be when your child is about six months old, and the third interview will be when your child is 18-months old. The interview will consist of questions concerning the effect that the prospect and actual experience of parenthood has had on your sense of self, your relationship as a couple, your ideas about parenting, your concept of family life, and your ideas about work and career. In addition, at each interview, we will give you a questionnaire to complete. This questionnaire will include questions concerning your feelings about yourself, the amount of support you have from family and friends, your relationship with your partner, in addition to some basic background information. For the final part of the study, you and your partner will be asked to discuss a parenting issue of your choosing that we will be videotaping. As a token of our appreciation for your participation, we will be paying you $20 once we receive your completed questionnaire after each interview.

Everything you say will be held in the strictest confidence and your identity will remain anonymous. The transcript of your interviews and your questionnaire will be identified only by a code number, and all the information that you provide will be kept in a locked cabinet. Only authorized members of our research team will have access to these records. Also, if three are any aspects of the interview (or questionnaire) that you are not comfortable with, then you have the right to refuse to answer or participate in that part of the interview.

We feel that you will find this to be an interesting and rewarding experience. You will get a chance to express your feelings about parenting and family life. Also, you will receive feedback and result of the study after the final interview. Any questions? I will leave the sign-up sheet with your instructor to pass around after I leave the room. Thank you for you attention.

Newspaper Ad for Recruitment

"We are seeking couples who are expecting their first child to take part in a research study at W.L.U. Small payment provided for participation. For more information, call 884-1970 (ext. 2272), weekdays 8:30 - 4:30."

Appendix B
Prenatal Consent Form

Becoming a parent is one of the most important events in a person's life. It can mean a great deal of change, not only in the kinds of activities people are involved in, but in the way they look at things. The New Families Research Project will be examining some of the ways in which individuals change when they become parents and how they adjust to parenthood. The major focus of the research will be on how people's thinking about things such as family life, relationships, and work changes through this transition.

If you agree to participate in the New Families Project, we will be asking you to take part in three interviews, each lasting approximately one hour. The first interview will take place when you are about six months pregnant; the second interview will take place when your baby is about six months of age; and the final interview will be when your child is about a year-and-a-half. The interview will consist of questions concerning the effect that the prospect and actual experience of parenthood has had on your sense of self, your relationship as a couple, your ideas about parenting, your concept of family life, and your ideas about work and career. In addition, at each interview we will give you a questionnaire to complete. This questionnaire will include questions concerning your feelings about yourself, the amount of support you have from family and friends, your relationship with your partner, in addition to some basic background information. For the final part of the study, you and your partner will be asked to discuss a parenting issue of your choosing that we will be videotaping. As a token of our appreciation for your participation, we will be paying you $20 once each interview is completed, and we receive your completed questionnaire.

Everything you say will be held in the strictest confidence, and your identity as a provider of information will remain anonymous. The transcript of your interviews and your questionnaire responses will be identified only by a code number, and all the information that you provide will be kept in a locked cabinet. Only specifically authorized members of our research staff will have access to these records.

If three are any questions in the interviews that you would rather not answer, or feel that you cannot answer, please feel free to decline to answer and we will move on to the next question. If, at any point, you wish to end your participation in the interview, please tell us and we will conclude the interview. Also, if there are any questions on the questionnaire that you would rather not answer, just leave them blank. Your decision to participate or not participate in the research (or any part of the research) will not in any way affect your access to prenatal or postnatal services.

We hope that the information about the purposes of this research and the guarantees of confidentiality will enable you to feel free to share your opinions and experiences with us. We ask you to sign the next page to indicate that you understand the purposes and conditions of participation in the research and agree to participate.

For further information, please phone _____ at _____.

I understand the purpose of this research, as outlined in the document entitled "New Families Research Project: Consent Form." I also understand that my records will be kept confidential and that I will not be personally identified on the interview transcripts or questionnaires. I also understand that I may refuse to participate in this study without penalty, and that I may choose not to answer any part of the interviews of questionnaires.

I understand that I am free to participate in prenatal classes and any other program sponsored by the Waterloo Regional Health Unit regardless of whether I decide to participate in this study or not.

I acknowledge receiving a copy of this consent form.

I give permission to have the interviews tape recorded.

Date: _____

Signed: _____
participant

_____
interviewer

The New Families Research Project
Department of Psychology
Wilfrid Laurier University

Principal Investigators:

Mark Pancer, Ph.D.
Michael Pratt, Ph.D.
Bruce Hunsberger, Ph.D.

Appendix C
Prenatal Interview

Hi. Thanks again for agreeing to participate in this research. Before we start, let me just tell you a bit more about what we'll be asking you to do in this research (read consent form). O.K.? Now, could you just sign this form indicating that you understand everything and are willing to participate? Thanks. Now we can get started.

1) How long have you (has your wife) been pregnant?

2) Deciding to have a child is a complicated decision these days. How is it that you came to be having a family at this time?

3) How did you feel when you found out that you were going to become pregnant?

4) What do you think it will be like to be a parent?

Having a baby, or even the prospect of having a baby, can have a significant impact on a person's life. I'm going to ask you a number of questions about how the prospect of becoming a parent has affected various aspects of your life and your way of thinking.

5) Do you think your life has changed at all since discovering that you were going to become a parent? In what way?

6) How do you think your life will change after the baby has arrived?

7) Has your <u>sense of who you are or what kind of person you are</u> (how you feel about yourself) changed since discovering that you were going to have a child? In what way?

8) how do you think your <u>sense of who you are, or what kind of person you are</u> will change after the baby has arrived?

9) Now I'd like you to think about you and your partner, and your relationships as a couple. Has your relationship as a couple changed since discovering that you were going to have a child? In what way?

10) How do you think your <u>relationship as a couple</u> will change after the baby has arrived?

11) Now I'd like you to think about your concept of family. People have many different ideas about what a family is. Have your ideas about <u>the family</u> changed since discovering that you were going to have a child? In what way?

12) How do you think your ideas about the family will change after the baby has arrived?

13) Have your ideas about work and career changed discovering that you were going to have a child? In what way?

14) How do you think your ideas about work and career will change after the baby has arrived?

15) O.K.. Now I've got a number of different questions I'm going to ask you about different things that becoming a parent might affect. How do you think becoming a parent will affect

a) your social and recreational activities?
b) your daily work/study activities (daily schedule)?
c) your financial situation?
d) your emotional state?
e) your physical state?

16) What are you looking forward to about having this baby?

17) What concerns do you have about having this baby?

18) Being a parent can, on occasion, involve dealing with a number of stressful situations. Have you given any thought to some of the problems you might encounter as a result of becoming a parent? What kinds of things have you thought about (cue to be used only if respondent can't think of any stressful situations: e.g., crying, bedtimes, lack of sleep).

19) One of the issues that comes up in many households once a baby arrives is how to share housework and child care. Have you and your spouse considered how you will deal with this issue?

20) What kinds of things do you take into consideration when deciding who will do what in terms of housework and child care?

21) One of the things we're interested in is how people think of themselves, and how their thoughts about the kind of people they are change when they have a baby.

a) How would you describe yourself or the kind of person that you are right now?

b) People don't necessarily behave the same way all the time. We can seem like different people, depending on the situation we're in, or who we're with. Would you say this is true of you? How would you describe the different kinds of persons you can be (for example, you may be a different kind of person with your friends that you are with your family).

22) Next is the Linville Card-Sorting Task.

23) Well, that's the end of the interview. How did you find it? Did you have any questions that you wanted to ask me about the study or things we've talked about in the interview? Great. Before I go, let me give you the questionnaire that I mentioned before the interview began. I'd appreciate it if you would complete it within the next day or two, on your own, and out it in the mail. When we received you and your partner's completed questionnaires, we'll send you your $20. Also, we will be in touch with you once your baby is born. Good luck! I'll look forward to seeing you and your baby in about nine months.

Appendix D

The questions in this scale ask you about your feelings and thoughts during the last month in your role as a parent. In each case, you will be asked to indicate how often you felt or thought a certain way. Although some of the questions are similar, there are differences between them and you should treat each one as a separate question. The best approach is to answer each question fairly quickly. That is, don't try to count up the number of times you felt a particular way, but rather indicate the alternative that seems like a reasonable estimate. Choose from the following alternatives for each item:

O = never 1 = almost never 2 = sometimes 3 = fairly often 4 = very often

Never ———— Very Often

During the last month how often have you:	Frequency rating				
1. been upset by something that happened unexpectedly?	0	1	2	3	4
2. felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?	0	1	2	3	4
3. felt nervous and "stressed"?	0	1	2	3	4
4. dealt successfully with irritating life hassles?	0	1	2	3	4
5. felt that you were effectively coping with important changes that were occurring in your life?	0	1	2	3	4
6. felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?	0	1	2	3	4
7. felt that things were going your way?	0	1	2	3	4
8. found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?	0	1	2	3	4
9. been able to control irritations in your life?	0	1	2	3	4
10. felt that you were on top of things?	0	1	2	3	4
11. been angered because of things that happened to you as a parent that were outside of your control?	0	1	2	3	4
12. found yourself thinking about things that you have to accomplish?	0	1	2	3	4
13. been able to control the way you spend your time?	0	1	2	3	4
14. felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?	0	1	2	3	4

Appendix E
Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale

Instructions for Questions: Below is a list of ways you might have felt or behaved recently. Please tell me how often you have felt this way during the past week.

1	2	3	4
rarely or none of the time (less than 1 day)	some or a little of the time (1-2 days)	occasionally or a moderate amount of time (3-4 days)	most or all of the time (5-7 days)

During the past week:	How often did you feel this way?
A. I was bothered by things that usually don't bother me.	
B. I did not feel like eating; my appetite was poor.	
C. I felt that I could not shake off the blues even with help from my family or friends.	
D. I felt that I was just as good as other people.	
E. I had trouble keeping my mind on what I was doing.	
F. I felt depressed.	
G. I felt that everything I did was an effort.	
H. I felt hopeful about the future.	
I. I thought my life had been a failure.	
J. I felt fearful.	
K. My sleep was restless.	
L. I was happy.	
M. I talked less than usual.	
N. I felt lonely.	
O. People were unfriendly.	
P. I enjoyed life.	
Q. I had crying spells.	
R. I felt sad.	
S. I felt that people dislike me.	
T. I could not get "going".	

Appendix F
Marital Adjustment Scale

The following questions have to do with your relationships with your partner, and the extent of any disagreement you might have with your partner. Place a check in the box that indicates the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner on each of the following items.

	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Occa-sionally Agree	Fre-quently Disagree	Almost Always Disagree	Always Disagree
1. Handling family finances						
2. Matters of recreation						
3. Demonstrations of affection.						
4. Friends						
5. Sex						
6. Conventionality (right, good, or proper conduct)						
7. Philosophy						
8. Ways of dealing with in-laws						

9. *Please place an "X" on the line below (e.g., —X—) to indicate* which best describes the degree of happiness, everything considered, of your relationship. The middle point, "happy", represents the degree of happiness of most relationships, and the scale gradually ranges on one side to those few who are very unhappy in their relationship, and on the other, to those few couples who experience extreme joy.

0	2	7	15	20	25	35
Very Unhappy			Happy			Perfectly Happy

Please record the appropriate answer (a, b, c, or d) to each question in the space provided to the right of each question.

	Response
10. When disagreements arise, they usually result in: a) man gives in b) woman gives in c) agreement by mutual give and take	
11. Do you and your partner engage in outside interests together: a) all of them b) some of them c) very few of them d) none of them	
12. In leisure time do you generally prefer: a) to be on the go b) to stay home	
13. In leisure time does your mate generally prefer: a) to be on the go b) to stay home	
14. Do you ever wish that you had not gotten together with your partner? a) frequently b) occasionally c) rarely d) never	
15. If you had your life to live over, do you think you would: a) choose the same partner b) choose a different person c) not be involved in a long term relationship at all	
16. Do you confide in your partner: a) almost never b) rarely c) in most things d) in everything	

Appendix G
Self-Esteem Scale

Please indicate how strongly you agree with each of the statements below by placing the appropriate number in the box beside each item. Use the scale below in making your ratings.

1	2	3	4
strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree

	Rating
A. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others.	
B. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	
C. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	
D. I am able to do things as well as most other people.	
E. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	
F. I take a positive attitude towards myself.	
G. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	
H. I wish I could have more respect for myself.	
I. I certainly feel useless at times.	
J. At times I think I am no good at all.	

Appendix H
The "Mothers as Parents" Project
Information Letter

Dear Parent,

My name is Patricia Delmore-Ko. I am a Ph.D. student in the Department of Psychology at the University of Waterloo. I am conducting a study, under the supervision of Dr. S. Mark Pancer, entitled, "Mothers as Parents" and I am looking for volunteers to help me with my research. This letter is being distributed through your child's preschool with the support of the preschool director, _____, and the other preschool staff members.

Being a parent is one of the most influential roles in a person's life. The purpose of my project is to understand how people describe and think about themselves as parents. The major focus of my study will be on the relationship between people's thinking about themselves as parents and their different approaches to and beliefs about parenting. Although fathers are parents too, of course, for the present study, I am looking only at mothers of two-parent (wife and husband) families. There are a couple of reasons for this. First, the notion of "parental identity" is a new area of study. Mothers and fathers probably have very different ways of thinking of themselves as parents; therefore, to keep my study simple and focused, I am only looking at mothers' identities of themselves as parents. Second, there is the issue of time to consider. If I were to consider both fathers' and mothers' identities as parents, then it would literally double my study and make it too large for me to conduct on my own.

If you agree to participate in the "Mothers as Parents" project, you will be asked to take part in one interview, lasting approximately 45 minutes. This interview will take place in your home, or another convenient location, and, with your agreement, will be audio-taped. The interview will consist of questions concerning your decision to have a family, your view of yourself as a parent, your experiences as a parent, and the relationship between your role as a parent and other roles you may have. In addition, at the interview, I will give you a package of questionnaires to complete. These questionnaires will include items about different approaches to parenting, the significance of the parenting role, different parenting beliefs and attitudes, in addition to some basic background information (e.g., number of children you have, level of education, etc.).

Everything you say during the interview will be held in the strictest of confidence, and your identity as a participant in this research will remain anonymous. The transcript of your interview and your questionnaire responses will be identified only by a code number, and all of the information that you provide will be kept in a locked cabinet. If this data is published, no names or any other personal identifying information will be used. Results will be discussed in general terms with respect to everyone in the study. Access to these records will be specifically restricted to myself and my supervisor, Dr. S. Mark Pancer.

If there are any questions in the interview that you would rather not answer, or feel that you cannot answer, you can decline to answer and we will move on to the next question. In addition, if at any point you wish to end your participation in the interview, we will conclude the interview immediately, no questions asked. Similarly, if there are any questions on the questionnaires that you would rather not answer, just leave them blank. Your participation is completely voluntary. This study has been reviewed by and received ethics approval through the Office of Human Research and Animal Care at the University of Waterloo.

I hope that the information about the purposes of the research and the guarantees of confidentiality satisfy any concerns you may have and encourage you to participate in this project. If you are interested in being in this study, please complete the attached form and return it to one of the preschool leaders. I will contact you shortly thereafter to arrange a convenient time for the interview and/or to answer any questions you may have at that time. In the meantime, I have enclosed my home phone number, my supervisor's office number, and the number for the Office of Human Research if you have questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

_____

Patricia Delmore-Ko.
(519) 821-2728

_____

Dr. S. Mark Pancer
(519) 884-0710 Ext. 3149

Office of Human Research: (519) 888-4567, Ext. 6005

Agreement To Be Contacted

_____ Yes, I am interested in participating in the "Mothers as Parents" project. Please call me to schedule an interview. I can be reached at the phone number indicated below.

_____ I am interested in participating in the "Mothers as Parents" project, but I would like more information. Please call me at the number listed below to address my questions/concerns.

Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Appendix I

First, I would like to say thank-you for agreeing to meet with me. We appreciate your taking the time to help us with our research.

Before we begin, I would like to review with you the information that you received regarding the study, and then if you agree with everything, you can sign the consent form and we can begin.

As mentioned in the information letter, the purpose of my project is to understand how people describe and think about themselves as parents. The major focus of my study will be on the relationship between people's thinking about themselves as parents and their different approaches to and beliefs about parenting.

The interview should last about 45 minutes and it will be tape recorded. The interview will consist of questions concerning your decision to have a family, your view of yourself as a parent, your experiences as a parent, and the relationship between your role as a parent and other roles you may have. When we are finished the interview, I will give you a package of questionnaires which should take about 30-45 minutes to complete. These questionnaires will include a variety of items about different approaches to parenting, the significance of the parenting role, parenting beliefs and attitudes, in addition to some basic background information (e.g., marital status, number of children you have, etc.).

Everything you say during the interview and all of your responses to the questionnaire items are strictly confidential. You will be identified by number only - your name will not appear anywhere. I will be the one who transcribes our interview and I will replace names and any other identifying information. This transcript will be kept in a locked cabinet and access to these records will be specifically restricted to myself and my supervisor, Dr. S. Mark Pancer.

If there are any questions in the interview that you would rather not answer, or feel that you cannot answer, please simply say so and we will move on to the next question. If at any point you wish to end the interview, we will stop right away, no questions asked. Similarly, if there are any items on the questionnaires that you would rather not answer, just leave them blank. Your participation is completely voluntary.

Lastly, this study has been reviewed by and received ethics approval through the Office of Human Research and Animal Care at the University of Waterloo. I will leave you their number and you can contact them if you have any concerns or questions.

Do you have any questions right now? Here is the consent form for you to sign if you would still like to participate.

The Mothers as Parents Project
Consent Form

I agree to participate in an interview conducted by Patricia Delmore-Ko of the Department of Psychology under the supervision of Dr. S. Mark Pancer. I have made this decision based on the information I have received in the "Mothers as Parents" Information Letter and I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the study. As a participant in this study, I realize that I will be asked to take part in a 45 minute interview and that I may decline answering any of the questions, if I so choose. All information which I provide will be held in confidence and I will not be identified in the thesis, report, or publication. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time by asking that the interview be stopped. I also understand that this project has been reviewed by and received ethics approval through the Office of Human Research and Animal Care at the University of Waterloo and that I may contact this office if I have any concerns or questions about my participation in this study.

Participant's Name: _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Name of Witness: _____

Signature of Witness: _____

Date: _____

To begin, perhaps you could tell me a little bit about your child(ren). How old they (he/she) are (is), what their (his/her) personalities are like, just some general information about them (him/her).

A. The first set of questions have to do with when you first became interested in having a family.

1. When did you first become interested in having a family? Was being a parent something you always wanted to do?

2. What did you find appealing about the idea of having a family?

3. When you were considering having a family, were there things that you were fearful or worried about? If so, what were they?

4. Was there a time when you thought you might not have a family? (If yes:) Why were you thinking you might not have a family?

5. How did you come to start your family? Was it planned or unplanned?

6. Did you ever feel that you were actively deciding between having children and not having children?
   a) How difficult was this decision?
   b) What helped you make your decision?

7a) On a scale of 0 to 6, where 0 is not seriously at all and 6 is extremely seriously, how seriously did you consider having children?

b) On a scale of 0 to 6, where 0 is not seriously at all and 6 is extremely seriously, how seriously did you consider **not** having children?

B. The next set of questions focus on your feelings about being a parent and your perceptions of how you parent.

8. How do you feel about being a parent?

9. What are some of the pleasures you get out of being a parent?

10. What are some of the things that you find stressful or difficult about being a parent?

11. Do you have any ideas about what makes someone a good parent?

12. How does your own parenting match up with what you've said makes someone a good parent?

13. Are there ever times when you think you're not a very good parent? Why would you say that you weren't being a good parent at those times?

C. The next set of questions deal with how you would characterize yourself as a parent.

14. What are you like as a parent? That is, how would you describe the kind of parent you are?

15. All of us have certain traits or characteristics that we're not happy with. What are some of the traits that you have as a parent that you're not pleased about?

D. Next I would like to ask you about your experiences as a parent and how they relate to the way you parent your child(ren).

16a) Thinking about your own parents, can you describe some of the things about your experiences with your own parents as you were growing up that influenced the kind of parent you are?

b) How important were these experiences in shaping you as a parent?

17a) Have you had any contacts with other families (e.g., relatives, friends, neighbours) that have influenced the way you parent your children? What were they, and how did they influence you?

b) How important were these experiences in shaping you as a parent?

18. Thinking about your own experiences as a parent, could you tell me about an incident or experience with your own child that illustrates the kind of parent you are?

E. The next few questions have to do with how you deal with your child when he/she misbehaves.

19a) What do you usually do when your child misbehaves?

b) How did you come to decide on this way of handling your child's misbehaviour?

c) What do you consider the benefits of this approach?

d) What do you consider the drawbacks of this approach?

20. Have your ideas about how to handle your child's misbehaviour changed over the last while? In what way? What produced this change?

21. Have you ever considered using a different approach? Why or why not? [If so] why did you consider using a different approach?

22. On a scale of 0 to 6, where 0 is not seriously at all and 6 is extremely seriously, how seriously did you consider each of these approaches?

23. [if provided 2 or more specific approaches]

    a) Did you ever feel that you were actively deciding between _____ and _____? (select between first two strategies mentioned)
    b) Was it a difficult decision to make? Why or why not?
    c) What may have helped you make your choice?

[if no other approach considered]

    a) Do you feel that choosing a specific approach is something that you're trying to work out, or do you feel that this is where you can let time take its course and just see what happens?
    b) Do you feel that choosing a strategy is an important decision for you to make now, or are you more concerned with other things right now?

G. For this next part of the interview, I'd like you to think of your role as a parent relative to the other roles you play.

24. How important is being a parent to you, relative to the other roles that you have in life (e.g., career, spouse)

25. a) This next question involves a short activity on your part. If you would, just take a minute to think about all of the different roles that you take on in your life at present: mother/father, career person, daughter/son, coach, gardener, perfectionist, etc.. Here is a diagram of a circle, we call it a pie. Divide this pie into sections, each representing the *main* roles in your life, so think to yourself, "Me as I am". Each section should reflect the importance of that role, not necessarily the amount of time you spend in that role.

b) When person has finished: Now, here is another pie. I would like you to do the same exercise, this time, however, divide the pie into sections which represent how you would like to be, so "Me as I'd like to be". Again, each section should reflect the importance of that role, not necessarily the amount of time in that role.

F. Being a parent can have a huge impact on a person's view of his/herself. I would like to ask you how parenthood has affected you as a person.

26. How has being a parent influenced the kind of person you are?

27. Has being a parent had any influence on your goals and purpose in life, and where you see yourself heading in the future? In what way?

28. What do you think is your role as a parent?

29. What would you say a person's major responsibilities are in being a parent?

Appendix J

Participant Code # _____

The Mothers as Parents Project

Questionnaire Package

Investigators:
Patricia Delmore-Ko
S. Mark Pancer

Department of Psychology
University of Waterloo
Waterloo, Ontario

As you know, the purpose of my research is to understand how people think about and describe themselves as parents. In addition, I am interested in exploring the relationship between how people think about themselves as parents and their different approaches to and beliefs about parenting. We have just completed our interview, the first step of this process. The next step is to complete the enclosed questionnaires. The questions contained in this booklet ask you to tell me about your experiences, thoughts, and feelings as a parent. If any of the questions ask you to refer to "your child", please refer to the same child you referred to in our interview. As always, this information will be kept completely confidential.

Background Information

The following information will be used for demographic purposes only.

Age:

20-24	_____	25-29	_____
30-34	_____	35-39	
40-44	_____	45-49	_____

Marital Status:

Married _____
Re-married _____
Due to divorce _____
Due to widowed_____
Married, for how long: _____ years
Age at which married: _____ years

Educational background:

Highest level achieved: _____
Elementary school _____
High school _____
College _____
University (undergraduate) _____
University (graduate) _____

Employment Status:

Full-time _____
Part-time _____
Unemployed _____
What type of work do you do?

_____

_____

Total Family Income

under $20,000 _____
21,000 - 30,000 _____
31,000 - 40,000 _____
41,000 - 50,000 _____
51,000 - 60,000 _____
61,000 - 70,000 _____
over 70,000 _____

Number of children: _____
Age and Gender of child(ren):

_____

_____

_____

Age at which "Target Child" was born:

20-24	_____	25-29	_____
30-34	_____	35-39	_____
40-44	_____	45-49	_____

Ethnic Background: _____

Please list all the people living within your household and their relationship to you:

_____

_____

_____

Appendix K

Feedback Information Sheet

Dear Parent,

First of all, we would like to thank you for helping us with our research. We appreciate your taking the time to be interviewed and to complete the questionnaires.

As mentioned, the purpose of this project is to understand how mothers describe and think about themselves as parents. As you probably know, there are many factors involved in parenting. A number of these factors have been thoroughly investigated. For example, there is research on parenting styles, parenting beliefs, parenting in different cultures, the transition to parenthood, etc.. However, there is little research in the area of how people think of and describe themselves as parents. In addition, there is little known about the relationship between individuals' views of themselves as parents and their parenting behaviors and attitudes. It is hoped that the data collected from this study will help us to understand this relationship more thoroughly.

We would like to remind you that all of the information collected in this study will be kept completely confidential. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact either myself, my supervisor Dr. Mark Pancer, or Dr. Susan Sykes. Thank-you once again for your help.

Patricia Delmore-Ko.
(519) 821-2728

Dr. S. Mark Pancer
(519) 884-0710 Ext. 3149

Dr. Susan Sykes, Office of Human Research
(519) 888-4567, Ext. 6005

Appendix L
Parenting Behaviour Scale

For each of the following statements, choose the number on the 5-point scale that best describes how that statement applies to you. We are looking for your overall impression regarding each statement. There are no right or wrong answers, so don't spend a lot of time on any one item.

1 = strongly agree 2 = agree 3 = disagree 4 = strongly disagree

	Strongly Agree				Strongly Disagree
1. I wish I did not become impatient so quickly with my children.	0	1	2	3	4
2. I am upset with the amount of yelling I direct towards my children.	0	1	2	3	4
3. I wish I were more consistent in my parenting behaviors.	0	1	2	3	4
4. Sometimes I feel I am too critical of my children.	0	1	2	3	4
5. I feel uncomfortable with the way I often discipline my children.	0	1	2	3	4
6. I wish I were a better parent and could do a better job parenting.	0	1	2	3	4
7. I am satisfied with my child-rearing skills	0	1	2	3	4
8. I wish I gave my children more individual attention.	0	1	2	3	4
9. Sometimes I feel I should provide more supervision for my children	0	1	2	3	4
10. I am satisfied with the amount of time I can give to my children.	0	1	2	3	4
11. Being a parent has brought me a lot of work and heartaches.	0	1	2	3	4
12. Having children causes many problems between a husband and wife.	0	1	2	3	4
13. The most difficult years of my marriage have been the child-rearing years.	0	1	2	3	4
14. I think my children will be a source of comfort and security in my old age	0	1	2	3	4
15. My children's sense of humor amuses me.	0	1	2	3	4
16. All the efforts a parent makes for his/her children are worthwhile in the long run.	0	1	2	3	4
17. I think my children will always contribute to my happiness.	0	1	2	3	4
18. Overall, I am not happy being a parent	0	1	2	3	4
19. I can't wait until my children grow up and move out.	0	1	2	3	4
20. It pleases me that having children has kept me feeling young.	0	1	2	3	4

Appendix M

Scale of Parenting Beliefs

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following items.

	Strongly Agree					Strongly Disagree
1. The problems of taking care of a child are easy to solve once you know how your actions affect your child, an understanding I have acquired.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Even though being a parent could be rewarding, I am frustrated now while my child is at his/her present age.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. I go to bed the same way I wake up in the morning, feeling I have not accomplished a whole lot.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. I do not know why it is, but sometimes when I'm supposed to be in control, I feel more like the one being manipulated.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. My mother was better prepared to be a good mother than I am.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. I would make a fine model for a new mother to follow in order to learn what she/he would need to know in order to be a good parent.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Being a parent is manageable, and any problems are easily solved.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. A difficult problem in being a parent is not knowing whether you're doing a good job or a bad one.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Sometimes I feel like I'm not getting anything done.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. I meet my own personal expectations for expertise in caring for my child.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. If anyone can find the answer to what is troubling my child, I am the one.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. My talents and interests are in other areas, not in being a parent.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. Considering how long I've been a mother, I feel thoroughly familiar with this role.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. If being a mother of a child were only more interesting, I would be motivated to do a better job as a parent.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. I honestly believe I have all the skills necessary to be a good mother to my child.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. Being a parent makes me tense and nervous.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Appendix N

Being a Parent: Part 1

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following questions. Remember, when the phrase "my child" is used, please focus on the child you have been describing.

1=Agree very strongly	2=Agree strongly	3=Agree slightly	4=Disagree slightly	5=Disagree strongly	6=Disagree very strongly

	Agree Very Strongly			Disagree Very Strongly		
1. On week nights, I'm usually too busy or tired to play enthusiastically with my child	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. I often find myself thinking about my child when I'm at work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. I probably talk too much about my child.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. I do not take my child to "child events" unless I expect to enjoy them, too.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. I seriously wonder whether I was cut out to be a parent.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. When I meet new people, one of the first things I tell them about is my child.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. I would not be able to lower my career goals in order to spend more time with my child.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. I don't like to talk about children when I'm out for an evening.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. I ask my child for a lot of details about what he or she did during the day.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. Being a parent allows me to express some of the traits and values I most prize in myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. Being a parent is important to me, but isn't central in how I define myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. It's enough to be a good parent, I don't expect myself to be a model parent.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. I give up personal pleasures, such as extra sleep or socializing with friends, to be with my child.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. Children seem to grow like weeds: They don't need a great deal of "working on" by their parents.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. I can not imagine a satisfying life without children.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. I can't concentrate on my work if my child is ill.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. Being a parent isn't as rewarding as I had expected it to be.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Appendix O
Mothering Characteristics

Please rate yourself on these items. To what extent do you think you as a mother exhibit the following characteristics or behaviours. Please use only one number.

not at all		moderately		extremely
1	2	3	4	5

_____ patience

_____ effective disciplinarian

_____ ability to answer child's questions

_____ devoted to homemaking

_____ nurturance

_____ preparing all baby foods at home

_____ ability to listen and empathize

_____ successfully nursing the baby

_____ ability to stop child's crying

_____ protecting the child from harm

_____ affectionate

_____ provide religious training

_____ being a good provider

_____ not being too involved in career

_____ being available when the child needs you

_____ open-minded

_____ love children

_____ knowledge of child development

_____ realistic expectations for child's behaviour at any given age

_____ stimulating the child intellectually

_____ keeping the child neat and clean

_____ spending lots of time playing with the child

_____ energy

_____ good relationship with husband

_____ keeping baby on a schedule

_____ controlling negative emotion

_____ sensitivity to child's needs

_____ getting enjoyment out of life

_____ protecting the child from illness

_____ sense of humour

_____ easy going

_____ putting child's needs above one's own

_____ dedication

Appendix P

Parenting Beliefs

For each of the following statements, choose the number on the 5-point scale that best describes how that statement applies to you. We are looking for your overall impression regarding each statement. There are no right or wrong answers, so don't spend a lot of time on any one item.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree Slightly	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

	Response
1. I feel that in a well-run home, the children should have their way in the family as often as the parents do.	
2. Whenever I tell my children to do something, I expect them to do it immediately without asking any questions.	
3. Once family policy has been established, I discuss the reasoning behind the policy with the children in the family.	
4. Even if my children don't agree with me, I feel that it is for their own good if they are forced to conform to what I think is right.	
5. I always encourage verbal give-and-take whenever my children feel that family rules and restrictions are unreasonable.	
6. I have always felt that what children need is to be free to make up their own minds and to do what they want to do, even if this does not agree with what I might want.	
7. I do not allow my children to question decisions I have made.	
8. I direct the activities and decisions of the children in the family through reasoning and discipline.	
9. I feel that more force should be used by parents in order to get their children to behave the way they are supposed to.	
10. I do not feel that children need to obey rules and regulations of behavior simply because someone in authority had established them.	
11. My children know what I expect of them in my family, but are free to discuss those expectations with me when they feel they are unreasonable.	
12. I feel that wise parents should teach their children early just who is boss in the family.	
13. I seldom give my children expectations and guidelines for their behavior.	
14. I usually do what my children want when making family decisions.	
15. I consistently give the children direction and guidance in rational and objective ways.	

	Response
16. I get very upset if my children try to disagree with me.	
17. I feel that most problems in society would be solved if parents would not restrict their children's activities, decisions, and desires as they are growing up.	
18. I let my children know what behavior I expect of them, and if I didn't meet those expectations, I punish them.	
19. I allow my children to decide most things for themselves without a lot of direction from me.	
20. I take my children's opinions into considerations when making family decisions, but I do not decide for something simply because the children want it.	
21. I do not view myself as responsible for directing and guiding my children's behavior.	
22. I have clear standards of behavior for my children in our, but I am willing to adjust those standards to the needs of each of the individual children in my family.	
23. I give my children direction for their behavior and activities and I expect them to follow my direction, but I am always willing to listen to their concerns and to discuss that direction with them.	
24. I allow my children to form their own point of view on family matters and I generally allow them to decide for themselves what they are going to do.	
25. I feel that most problems in society would be solved if we could get parents to strictly and forcibly deal with their children when they don't do what they are supposed to as they are growing up.	
26. I often tell my children exactly what I want them to do and how I expect them to do it.	
27. I give my children clear direction for their behaviors and activities, but I am also understanding when they disagree with me.	
28. I do not direct the behaviors, activities, and desires of the children in my family.	
29. My children know what I expected of them in the family and I insist that they conform to those expectations simply out of respect for my authority.	
30. If I make a decision in the family that hurts my children, I am willing to discuss that decision with them and admit it if I have made a mistake.	

Appendix Q

Life Experiences Scale

The questions in this scale ask you about your feelings and thoughts during the last month in your role as a parent. In each case, you will be asked to indicate how often you felt or thought a certain way. Although some of the questions are similar, there are differences between them and you should treat each one as a separate question. The best approach is to answer each question fairly quickly. That is, don't try to count up the number of times you felt a particular way, but rather indicate the alternative that seems like a reasonable estimate. Choose from the following alternatives for each item:

0 = never 1 = almost never 2 = sometimes 3 = fairly often 4 = very often

	Never ---------- Very Often				
1. In the last month, how often have you been upset by something that happened unexpectedly to you as a parent?	0	1	2	3	4
2. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life as a parent?	0	1	2	3	4
3. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and "stressed" in your role as a parent?	0	1	2	3	4
4. In the last month, how often have you dealt successfully with irritating life hassles in your role as a parent?	0	1	2	3	4
5. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were effectively coping with important changes that were occurring in your life as a parent?	0	1	2	3	4
6. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems related to your parenting?	0	1	2	3	4
7. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way with respect to your role as a parent?	0	1	2	3	4
8. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do as a parent?	0	1	2	3	4
9. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life as a parent?	0	1	2	3	4
10. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things in your role as a parent?	0	1	2	3	4
11. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that happened to you as a parent that were outside of your control?	0	1	2	3	4
12. In the last month, how often have you found yourself thinking about things that you have to accomplish as a parent?	0	1	2	3	4
13. In the last month, how often have you been able to control the way you spend your time as a parent?	0	1	2	3	4
14. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high in your role as a parent that you could not overcome them?	0	1	2	3	4

Appendix R
Being a Parent: Part 2

The statements below describe lots of events that routinely occur in families with young children. These events sometimes make life difficult. Please read each item and circle a number to show how often it happens to you (HOW OFTEN: 1 = rarely, 2 = sometimes, 3 = a lot, 4 = constantly). Then, please shoe how much of a "hassle" you feel it is for you by circling one of the numbers on the 5-point scale to the right (1 = no hassle, 5 = big hassle). If you have more than one one child, these events can include any or all of your children.

	HOW OFTEN				NO HASSLE			BIG HASSLE
1. Continually cleaning messes of toys or food.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
2. Being nagged, whined at, complained to.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
3. Mealtime difficulties (picky eaters, complaining, etc).	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
4. The kids don't listen -- won't do what they are asked without being nagged.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
5. Babysitters are difficult to find.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
6. The kids' schedules (e.g., preschool, school naps, other activities) interfere with meeting your own or household needs.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
7. Sibling arguments or fights which require a referee.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
8. The kids demand that you entertain or play with them.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
9. The kids resist or struggle over bedtime with you.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
10. The kids are constantly underfoot, interfering with other chores.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
11. The need to keep a constant eye on where the kids are and what they are doing.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
12. The kids interrupt adult conversations or interactions.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
13. Having to change your plans because of an unpredicted child need.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
14. The kids get dirty several times a day requiring change of clothes.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
15. Difficulties getting privacy (e.g., like in the bathroom).	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
16. The kids are hard to manage in public (e.g., grocery store, shopping center, restaurant).	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
17. Difficulties in getting kids ready for outings and leaving on time.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
18. Difficulties in leaving kids for a night out or at school and daycare.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
19. The kids have difficulties with friends (e.g., fighting, trouble getting along, or no friends available).	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
20. Having to run extra errands to meet kids' needs.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

Appendix S
Parenting Behaviour

The following statements represent a variety of ways that parents may interact with their children. Please respond to the statements in the way which you feel best represents your behaviour toward your child. Base your ratings on your own experience with this child over the last month.

I almost never behave this way	I seldom behave	I behave this way about half the time OR I'm not sure how often I behave this way	I often behave this way	I almost always behave this way
1	2	3	4	5

To what extent do you.....

Item	Rating
1. Excuse yourself from invited guests when your child asks for help with such things as pasting, sewing, or model building?	
2. Require your child to remain seated in the car while you are driving?	
3. Give your child things he/she especially likes when he/she is ill?	
4. Go to your child quickly when you see his/her feelings are hurt?	
5. Find children's books, reference books or records that you and your child can share together?	
6. Explain to your child the consequences related to his/her behaviour?	
7. Restrict the times your child can have friends over to play?	
8. Find crafts such as painting, coloring, woodworking, or needlework you and your child can do together on cold, rainy days?	
9. Listen when your child tells you of a disagreement he/she has had with another child?	
10. Interrupt a telephone conversation to assist your child if he or she can't find such things as scissors?	
11. Require your child to put away his/her clothes?	
12. Enforce your child's established bedtimes when he/she ignores them?	

Item	Rating
13. Restrict the kinds of food your child eats?	
14. Listen to your child when he/she is upset even though you feel he/she has nothing to be upset about?	
15. Tell your spouse of your annoyance with a neighbour or employer while your child is listening?	
16. Insist your child speak politely to you as opposed to being sassy?	
17. Remind your child when he/she forgets to do daily household chores?	
18. Explain to your child, when he/she behaves in an unacceptable way, your reasons for not approving that kind of behaviour.	
19. Hold, pat, or hug your child?	
20. Point out to your child the acceptable choices of behaviour when he/she misbehaves?	
21. Maintain the limits you have set for your child's television watching?	
22. Change plans to attend a night meeting so you can be with your child if he/she becomes ill?	
23. Go immediately to your child when you see him/her from a fall off a bicycle?	
24. Disagree with your spouse when your child is present?	
25. Ask your child for his/her reasons when he/she misbehaves?	
26. Go to your child quickly when you hear him/her sobbing?	
27. Get out of bed at night to go to your child as soon as you hear him/her crying?	
28. Let your child know that you are afraid during dear provoking situations such as storms?	
29. Make special efforts to stay with your child when he/she is ill?	
30. Hug or kiss your spouse in the presence of your child?	
31. Help your child to recognize another person's point of view?	
32. Take your child with you when you visit friends?	
33. Tell your child when you are in agreement with him or her?	
34. Cry if you feel like crying when your child is present?	
35. Work together with your child on household and yard cleaning tasks?	
36. Hold, pat and/or hug your child when other children are watching?	

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