

Reflections on the Researcher-Researched Relationship: A Woman Interviewing Men¹

Terry Arendell

The enactment of gender in interviews with the men in my recent study of divorced fathers is the focus of this paper. Neither the role of gender in the qualitative research process nor its influence on research products has been given much descriptive or analytical attention, especially with respect to studies of men by women. While contextually situated, the relationships which evolve during the research process are influenced by the identities and histories of those involved, including those of gender. Such questions about the researcher-researched relationship and interactional dynamics which emerge during interviewing are ones of reflexivity. This paper, then, retrospectively examines men's assertions of gender identities and the gender hierarchy during interviews with me, and suggests that the negotiation of gender in research warrants much more attention.

KEY WORDS: researcher-researched relationship; gender identities; reflexivity; in-depth interviewing

The enactment of gender during the interviews with the men in my recent study of divorced fathers is the focus of this paper (Arendell 1997, 1995, 1992a, 1992b). Studies of men conducted by women have received little descriptive or analytical attention with respect to the interactional dynamics during the research process. As Williams and Heikes (1993:282) concluded, with respect to research involving interviewing generally, "We could find no studies that presented information documenting the importance of the researcher's gender in the in-depth interview." This limited focus on gender in the research process is the case despite the dramatic

Direct correspondence to Terry Arendell, Ph.D., Department of Sociology, Colby College, Waterville, Maine 04901.

expansion over the past several decades of both the study of gender and scholars' advocacy to consider its ubiquitous place in social life. Where attention is directed to issues of gender in research, the typical concerns are the study of women by men and women by other women. The historical exploitation of women subjects and the silencing of their voices by androcentric research methods, patriarchal assumptions, and an uncritical acceptance of women's subordinate status and alleged "difference" are the typical topics of discussion. Questioned are the dynamics of power and place of values in social science research (e.g., Reinharz 1992, 1993; Cook and Fonow 1990; Fontana and Frey 1994).

Such epistemological and methodological concerns are core components of issues of reflexivity: subjecting research itself to investigation and the researcher's role to analysis (Gouldner 1970; see also Callaway 1992; Wasserfall 1993). Concerns with reflexivity often call into question issues of gender, race, and class (e.g., Denzin and Lincoln 1994a, 1994b), and have been promoted especially by feminist scholars (e.g., Hertz 1995). Cotterill and Letherby (1993:72) describe the contributions and current situation, "The general agreement is that the 'conscious subjectivity' of much feminist (and other) research which has replaced the 'value-free objectivity' of traditional research is not only more honest, but helps to break down the power relationship between researcher and researched." Also advocating more open self-reflectiveness in the research endeavor are postmodernist, poststructuralist, and critical theorists (e.g., Denzin and Lincoln 1994a, 1994b; Denzin 1992; Flax 1989).

Self-reflexivity is present also during interviewing, even though little has been written about the unspoken inner or self-dialogue.² The researcher must remain cognizant of and handle several activities simultaneously. The conversation with the interviewee, a dialogue, has to be followed closely; responses and attempts to change the line and direction of discussion considered, anticipated, and guided, both in order to talk about topics not yet covered or to return to others in order to flesh them out; and the overall situation monitored, logistically and emotionally (Arendell forthcoming). The *active listening* intrinsic to in-depth interviewing "requires the researcher to look beyond the surface of the conversation for implicit analytic questions, alternative frames, and the content of categories created and used by the informant" (Sankar and Gubrium 1994:xii-xiii). That is, "attention to meaning is far more complex than simply asking open-ended questions and allowing participants to speak extemporaneously. It requires a heightened sense of self-awareness about the researcher's personal understandings, beliefs, prejudices, and world view. Researchers bring to the research encounter considerable social, historical, and cultural baggage [Gubrium 1992; Harding 1987; Keller 1984]" (Sankar and Gubrium

1994:xi). This *baggage*—personal history and identity, themselves interrelated—inevitably influences the interactional processes and the ultimate research outcome. The researcher, engaged in an interactive, dialectical relationship with both the interviewee (Riessman 1987; Devault 1990; Sheldon 1993) and self is, fundamentally, the primary research instrument (e.g., Emerson 1988; Denzin and Lincoln 1994a, 1994b).³

Extending the consideration of gender in research involving men as subjects and women as researchers elicits various questions. These include: What does gender mean for the research process, in general? More specifically, what are the power dynamics when a woman studies men, given that the society remains stratified by gender? Does the power imbalance shift because of the researcher's expertise with respect to the topic being studied and her initiation and handling of the study? That is, does the overt definition of the situation override or reverse temporarily the usual gender order? Or is the conventional gender hierarchy maintained or re-established across the interaction (Riessman 1987; Devault 1990)? Is a woman studying men a "low status stranger" (Daniels 1967), an outsider (e.g., Simmel 1950; Sway 1981; Naples 1996), or an "outlaw" (Pierce 1995), positioned by the participants into a subordinated status? Are there variations in these dynamics by race, ethnicity, or class, and, if so, how are they shown? How does, and should, a woman researcher finesse gender politics in the interview context? Should a researcher with feminist politics, or any other, for that matter, discuss these with her or his study's participants?

THE DIVORCED FATHERS STUDY

The data for this paper are taken from a larger project, the purpose of which was to gain access to men's experiences, actions, and feelings in divorce. I had previously interviewed and written about divorced mothers (Arendell 1986). My interests in men's perspectives on and experiences in family were piqued further by my knowledge of the national survey data which show that many divorced fathers disengage from parenting after divorce as well as by discussions with students in my classes. I was well-aware that men were relatively neglected in studies of divorce, even though divorce research, generally, increased dramatically over the last several decades.

The Sample

The sample was one of convenience; that is, participants were men who responded to notices placed, during the early 1990s throughout New

York, in newsletters, magazines, and newspapers or to referrals from men who were interviewed. Because of the difficulty in gaining access to full divorce records in New York State and the general problems in recruiting men into studies (Daly 1992), this modified snowball technique was the logical recruitment avenue.

The 75 participants ranged in age from 23 to 59 years, with a median age of 38. Sixty-four interviewees were white, three were black, four Hispanic, two Asian-American, and two Native American. Nine additional men stressed the significance of their ethnic identities. The group was well-educated: nearly half had some college education, with over one-third having completed college and approximately one-sixth having earned a graduate or professional degree. Two-thirds of the group were middle class while one-third held steady employment in working class positions. Six men were unemployed at the time of the interview, three by choice. The participants were divorced or legally separated for periods ranging from two to ten years; the median postdivorce time was nearly five years. Each man was a parent to one or more minor children born to the marriage prior to its legal dissolution. Custody arrangements of children, born to the marriages while they were intact, varied. Of the 61 fathers who were nonresidential parents, 36 were regularly "visiting" fathers, 15 were "occasionally" visiting, and 11 were "absent" fathers, meaning that they had not seen their children in at least the past 12 months. Nine men shared with their former wives the physical custody of their children.

A Caveat: Given that the sample was a self-selected one of convenience and, so, not statistically representative of divorced fathers, it may be skewed. Generalizations, then, from the findings of this study are inappropriate. Participants agree to engage in an interview for their own reasons (Sankar and Gubrium 1994:xxv), and it is impossible that some men volunteered to be in the study because they were both angry about their divorces and overly-committed to the conventional definitions and expectations of gender, unusually *masculinist* in their actions and attitudes (Brod 1988). Having an opportunity to express these sentiments may have motivated their participation. Thus, it is possible that the proportion of participants expressing sexist and misogynist views and attitudes during the interviews and in their reported confrontational behaviors, particularly in relation to the former wife (Arendell 1995), was higher than a representative sample of divorced fathers would find.

Complicating the consideration of whether or not this was a skewed sample, the participants in this study over-represent "involved" divorced fathers: absent fathers comprised 15 percent of this sample compared to the national figure of nearly 30 percent (Seltzer 1991; Seltzer and Bianchi 1988). With very few exceptions, the nonresidential fathers wanted in-

creased access to and involvement with their offspring, and a large majority of fathers desired more satisfying relations with their children. The group was comparable, generally, to the national one of divorced fathers in terms of age range, median age, and numbers of children. Compared to the national pool, these men had fewer remarriages and paid somewhat higher amounts of child support, more regularly. Thus, their overall commitment to their children, as evidenced in these behaviors, was greater than divorced fathers' nationally. The participants' reports of intraspousal (and former spousal) conflict, including separation violence, for example, were of levels comparable to (and not higher than) those reported in nationally representative surveys (see Kurz and Arendell in progress; Arendell 1995). Moreover, the favorable responses I've received from both reviewers and readers, including divorced fathers, of the published work based on this research (see Krieger 1985) suggest that the study is credible and trustworthy, the primary criteria for assessing qualitative research (e.g., Guba and Lincoln 1989; Denzin and Lincoln 1994b).

Interviews

Interviews were the appropriate method for the study given my objective to obtain men's accounts and understandings of their divorce experiences (see, for example, McCracken 1988; Fontana and Frey 1994; Strauss and Corbin 1990). It is qualitative research which "acknowledges the considerable native ability people have to know things about their own lives, one another, and their respective worlds" (Sankar and Gubrium 1994:viii), and through talk that meanings are conveyed and world views shared (e.g., Mishler 1986; Burgess 1988).

I conducted the face-to-face interviews in late 1991, throughout 1992, and into early 1993. All participants resided and divorced in New York. The interviews, ranging in length from three to seven hours with seven men also participating in lengthy follow-up interviews, were predominately friendly, evolving conversations (Burgess 1988; Ely et al. 1991). They were formal in the sense that the interviews were planned, scheduled, and the focus of the activity rather than informal, occurring somewhat spontaneously in the midst of other activities (e.g., Ely et al. 1991; Fontana and Frey 1994). Nine general areas were covered in the semistructured interviews: the legal divorce experience, work and economic transitions, living arrangements, child custody and access issues, parenting activities, social life, relations with the former wife, children's well-being, and hopes and fears. The order of coverage varied, depending on the flow of conversation with each father. Participants were active and engaged and, once talking,

moved among and between topics, often with little prompting from me. They had stories to tell and told them largely in their own fashion. The interviews were productive and revealing, and it will be interesting to see how the findings compare to future studies done with divorced fathers. Hopefully, such work will be conducted by both male and female researchers, enabling us to compare the narrative accounts offered by participants as well as the play of gender in the interview situations.

Findings in Brief

I found two predominant tales in these interviews. Overlapping in many respects, the tales diverged along two rather distinctive trajectories with respect to participants' priorities and behaviors. Broadly outlined, the story shared by a large majority of these divorced fathers was one of perceived injustice and discrimination, resistance, and frustration and discontent. It was also, paradoxically, a story of self-confidence and certainty. Involving little role-taking or self-reflectiveness, the 'majority story' was one of men preoccupied with the maintenance, repair, and self-assertion of their identities *as men*. These men sought answers, direction, and affirmation in divorce by looking to customary views and approaches. They acted in largely conventional ways, relying on the practices and tactics of the gender belief system. They were gender conformists (Bem 1993).

These men, 66 of the 75, engaged in the processes of *traditionalization* (LaRossa and LaRossa 1989), and had difficulty separating their children and the parental role from the former wife or the former spousal role. Relational boundaries were blurred. These participants embraced two types of fathers: *traditionalist* and *neo-traditionalist* (May and Strikwerda 1992). Antagonisms and resentments toward the former wife preceded or interfered with concern for children's well-being and the father-child relationship for the *traditionalists*. The *neo-traditionalists*, in contrast, vacillated across the postdivorce period between a focus on the former wife and their own parenting, including concerns for their children's well-being and their own childrearing involvement.

Nine participants engaged in the processes of *innovation*. Caught up in processes of adaptation and creativity, these fathers actively rejected what they perceived to be men's standard behaviors in divorce, and searched out and developed strategies more congruent with their objective to actively parent their children. They were gender deviants (Bem 1993). Child-centeredness prevailed in their accounts and actions. They were engaged, nurturing parents who collaborated with the former spouse. Caring for and rearing their children was a team effort, requiring extensive coop-

eration between the parents: together they created and maintained *parenting partnerships*. Thus, the former wife was seen and treated as a close associate, not an oppositional figure. Mutual concerns for their children's well-being enabled them to transcend their differences and the residual feelings about both each other and the demise of the marriage.

Overall, what was especially of concern for the participants in this study was the issue of their identity *as men* which, in their views, had been brought into question by their divorce experiences. "Much of the work of doing gender is taken for granted and thus made invisible, but at boundaries and points of change these gender dynamics become open to explicit negotiation [Gerson and Peiss 1985]" (Ferree 1990:869). "Most, [of these divorced fathers] indeed, were far less concerned about fathering or the quality of their relationships with their children than they were with their identities as adult men. As Capraro [1993] observed, while the *discourse* was about divorce, the *metadiscourse* was about being a man" (Arendell 1995:13). This was the case generally, irrespective of each man's respective class status, race, or ethnicity (Arendell 1995, 1992b). In addition to discussing these issues during the interviews, the participants buttressed and buffed their masculine identities through their interactions with me. That is, gender identity was a crucial issue in the telling of their divorce stories and gender was both displayed and accomplished (West and Zimmerman 1987), during our contacts. That is, they were both presenting themselves as *masculine* persons—defined by them as being competent, assertive, controlling and rational—and working on proving their manhood during their conversations with me. I simply had not anticipated how significant an issue their identities as men would be in this study advertised and introduced as one focusing on post-divorce parenting.

Although aware of how differently the men acted compared to the women in the earlier study, I didn't fully appreciate until far along in the interviewing and data analysis the extent to which the variation in men's behaviors typically correlated with their overall strategies of action in divorce. Only a handful of men behaved relatively similar to the women in the earlier study, and these were mostly the nine men described as *innovative* in their overall strategies of action. While, on the one hand, earlier recognition of this relationship might have expedited the analysis of data, it might have, on the other hand, prematurely closed off possible analytical paths.

Interviewing these men, I found myself in a paradoxical position. On the one hand, I am a woman and most men were critical of women, at least in some areas. A majority argued that women are largely responsible for the high divorce rate, uncertainty about men's and women's roles, and their own difficult divorce experiences (Arendell 1995). Yet, these men dis-

closed their experiences and feelings to me in the depth and emotional detail which they did *because* I am a woman. Numerous men remarked that they had seldom or, more commonly, *never* shared their experiences or feelings about divorce to the extent they did during our meeting, a finding also from interviews done with married and divorced English fathers by women researchers McKee and O'Brien (1983). Most participants in my study stressed that they especially exercised caution to not disclose their deeper feelings or even to fully describe their divorce and after-divorce experiences to other men who, they believed, were more likely to be critical of any displays of emotional distress. They expressed gratitude and appreciation "for having the chance" to share their experiences. Yet, I came to understand that it was not so much *me* as a person having a particular interactional and interview style to whom they were sharing their stories. Rather, they were relating to me on the basis of their expectations of me as a woman (West and Zimmerman 1987). Pierce (1995:98) commented on this phenomenon in her study of male attorneys: "What I began to realize over time is that male attorneys did not confide in me as a person, but rather as a position in an imagined relation—as a feminized Other [de Beauvoir 1949]." In this paper, then, I consider and describe the play of gender on the interviewing process and the interactions between the participants and me.

THE "CONTEXT FOR CONVERSATION"⁴

Initiating Contact

Most of the fathers who volunteered for the study telephoned to inquire about and indicate their interest in it, while several sent letters. Many assumed that I was a man because of the spelling of my first name and my interest in the subject, and conveyed surprise when they realized I was a woman. Indeed, as I learned in one interview after another, most anticipated that *only* a man would be interested in hearing men's stories. The telephone conversations were often lengthy and I took written notes, with the person's permission and assurances from me of confidentiality, as potential sources of information and to assist me in placing the particular person upon actually meeting for the interview.

During the initial telephone contact almost half of the participants said to me, often in these very words, "Have I got a story for you?" Many characterized their divorce situations with such terms as "unique," "unequaled," "unparalleled," "unrivaled," and "unbelievable." At the same time, most argued that divorced fathers have similar experiences and attitudes. Indeed,

a shared discursive theme across most interviews was the perspective that fathers, collectively, are victims of divorce (Arendell 1995). Thus, a majority of participants held a dual position: arguing, on the one hand, that I would be fortunate to interview them for my study since their circumstances and experiences were so unique and, on the other hand, insisting that their experiences speak to every man's (or nearly every man's) divorce experience and that they, then, could provide me with the full picture.

Two men telephoned later to cancel out. Both said straight-forwardly and directly, "You might be one of those feminists." I was later to hear the phrase "those feminists" many times over the course of the interviews, though never again that I might be one of them. When two participants asked, however, during our meetings, I indicated that I did, indeed, hold feminist views. I didn't volunteer my position when not asked. I justified this omission, to myself, with the argument that I did not set out to do a feminist study per se but, rather, one framed by interactionism (Blumer 1969) and aimed at interpretation (e.g., Guba and Lincoln 1989; Schwandt 1994). I had no illusions that I was free of biases or personal values, but I viewed my feminist understandings as offering *sensitizing concepts* (Blumer 1969), not the ultimate interpretive paradigm. Whether I violated the participants' trust by not making clear my feminist orientation remains for me an unanswered question, particularly since the study evolved into one about men and masculinity. This focus was a direct consequence of the fathers' priorities: fathering in divorce, for the majority, was a secondary issue. Still, I did not apprise the participants when I moved to develop a definitively feminist analysis of their accounts (Arendell 1995, forthcoming). Nor did I contact them regarding the development of and arguments made in this paper. The question as to whether or not I should have reinitiated contact in order to discuss these issues seems to me to be all the more salient given my deep appreciation for their participation in the study.

Choosing a Meeting Place

Where to conduct the interviews was a challenge throughout the project, partially because I usually was going to unfamiliar places in order to meet volunteers at sites convenient for them. The logistics of establishing a meeting place were much more complicated than in my earlier study with women (Arendell 1986). Then I gave little thought to potential personal safety questions and often met in participants' homes. Subsequently, I had become more cognizant of safety issues through teaching methods courses and working with students doing field work. Seeking to always protect a participant's confidentiality, I told no one exactly where I was going nor

the name of the person I was meeting. Common sense suggested that going to a stranger's home, especially under these constraints, was not the wisest course of action. Additionally, in the latter study, during our initial telephone conversations, numerous men used the phrase "your place or mine." This comment was typically followed with the speaker's laughter, seemingly implying a veiled analogy to arranging a time and place for a blind date, and suggesting a stance of informality which I then tried to alter by finding a more neutral meeting place. Ultimately, though, I met with 13 of the participants in their homes. In two cases, I agreed to this because these fathers were coordinating meeting with times when their children would be sleeping. The other circumstances were mostly a result of our inability to determine a suitable alternative meeting location while talking on the telephone. As it turned out, there were definite benefits (although not unmitigated) from meeting with these particular men in their residences, including having the opportunity to assess the visible presence or absence of children, and, generally, being subjected to fewer interruptions or distractions (Arendell in progress).⁵

TAKING CHARGE

Jumping the Gun

From the initial moment of contact, nearly all of the participants in the fathers' study, unlike the mothers in the earlier one, took charge, establishing that they were collaborators if not actually conductors of this research enterprise and not waiting to hear further, beyond the phone conversation, what I had in mind with regard to the project. *Taking charge*, as the majority did, took various forms but began within the first several minutes of meeting. Nearly half conveyed the message that they understood I was to be instructed: I had asked to interview them as divorced fathers about which I, as a woman, was no doubt uninformed or misinformed. For example, this father, divorced five years, said, "You probably believe all that crap your friend [sic] Phyllis Chester says. It's crap, you know, crap. Totally misrepresents men in divorce, divorce."⁶ Another said, "You know, you can't believe what you read in the papers. You'd think those poor women are being beat up by men, and left poor as church mice when it's us, their husbands, being left poor as street urchins. This is the story that has to get out." Almost two-thirds of the fathers instructed me on where to position my tape recorder and how to operate it, actions I never encountered in my interviews with 60 divorced mothers (Arendell 1986). Wanting to encourage an atmosphere of comfort and build rapport and,

thus, not wanting to be perceived as being confrontational, I accepted without direct comment or question these early instructional offerings which, in some cases, were given in very assertive and commanding, interactional styles and tones. As Gurney (1985:43) wrote, more than a decade ago: "Female researchers must work especially hard to achieve an impression combining the attribute of being nonthreatening with that of being a credible, competent professional." This challenge prevailed over the course of a high number of the interviews.

Challenging the Process

After introducing myself and thanking the person for agreeing to participate in the project, I explained how I would protect his confidentiality: no one but me would hear or have access to the tape recording, and all identifying material would be kept out of the transcripts. I then turned to the consent form and background information sheet I'd prepared. With the men, as with the women earlier, the consent form posed no problem; it was treated by most men with a dismissive abandon: "Who needs confidentiality? I don't. No secrets here." About a third of the participants said they hoped I would publish their names and stories and, as well, the names of particular attorneys and judges who were targets of their wrath. A full quarter of the men urged me to publish the names of their former wife together with allegations of her marital infidelity. None of the men who was engaged in a high level of collaborative parenting with the former wife, however, offered to waive his confidentiality. These men, rather, expressed some concern about protecting their relationships both with the former wife and children. I offered further assurances about confidentiality to these men and, despite others' encouragement to the contrary, maintained the confidentiality of all participants (and that of their former spouses and legal contacts).

In contrast to the consent forms, the background information sheets evoked many complaints. My experience with the divorced mothers was that, by beginning our conversation with general informational questions, we established some initial rapport, which often involved chatting about our children. From there, we moved gradually into discussing their divorce experiences. Whereas the background sheets had been completely unproblematic in that study, they sparked unexpected problems in the study with fathers, triggering an initial and often lengthy tirade about the injustices of divorce for men. Because eight of the first ten interviewees became agitated, even angry, in trying to complete the form, a perilous way to begin an interview covering numerous sensitive areas, I changed my approach at

the eleventh interview. From then on, I simply asked for the information on the form. This strategy also elicited some immediate harangues about the unjustness of divorce from a few participants but, in general, the process went more smoothly and took less time. When a particular participant would go on at length about the wrongdoings of his former wife or the injustices of the legal system, topics often entered into in a circuitous fashion, for example, in response to a question as to when his divorce occurred, I eventually referred back to the form in an overt fashion and suggested we return to this more complicated topic a bit later, after first answering the general background questions. This enabled me to retain greater control of the interview sequence initially (e.g., Ostrander 1995) or, at least, resulted in less immediate relinquishment of the interview process.

The background questions which raised concerns and evoked strong reactions suggested that some fathers' immediate offensive responses were actually defensive ones.⁷ For example, requests for the dates of marriage, separation, and divorce, and for their children's birthdates and ages, sometimes evoked "speechifying" responses (McKee and O'Brien 1983), but ones which did not answer the questions. Responses to these questions consisted of questions in return, such as: "What do you mean by this [date of divorce]? The day she kicked me out, or the day I was served a Order of Restraint, or the day she began an affair, or the day we went to court?" With respect to the requests for the dates of their children's births or other specifics, such as their grade levels, some responded with statements such as: "My ex won't let me see them except when it's in her interest, so it's impossible for me to celebrate birthdays with them." "Last year, the kids didn't even send me a card on my birthday. Why would I send them one?" (Both of these fathers' children were preschoolers at the time.) Others who also did not provide birth dates for their children gave, instead, unsolicited and detailed descriptions of their presence at their children's births.

Not all participants were unable to answer questions about their children's birth dates and grades and, indeed, several who knew these facts teased me when I apparently conveyed (non-verbal) surprise that they could immediately provide such the information. One father said, "Are you surprised? I can tell you the exact times of birth for each of the three of them," and promptly did. So often did I experience it over the course of the project, I came to accept men's lack of knowledge about their children as almost normative. Fathers' lack of specific information became even more salient to my analysis over the months as I heard repeated assertions from participants that they had superior claims, often because of their extensive parental involvement, past and present, to child custody. How is it

that actively involved parents would not know their children's ages and grade levels?

Leading the Conversational Dance

Nearly all of the participants in the fathers' study questioned me, even those who deferred to me initially and allowed me to introduce the overall project in my own way. Some questioned me throughout the encounter. In comparison, mothers in the earlier study asked some select questions, such as how old my son was, and, from several women, whether or not I thought I would one day remarry. Questions posed by men covered a wide array of topics, and I tried to be forthcoming and direct, while returning the focus of conversation to their experiences and views. I was active in all of the interviews, asking probing questions in an effort to gain clarity and understanding: I was the one with research objectives and was vigilant, or tried to be, about what those were and what areas needed to be discussed. Overall, though, I was the most directive with the more *traditionalist* participants. Once talking, these men pushed ahead, often without pause or reconsideration of a point and without response, as if lecturing me. Even the several men among this group who were generally less verbal, and who would pause and search out a particular word or look to me for confirmation, would launch again into an instructional mode, after a brief interim.

More specifically, I was actively interviewed by about two-thirds of the participants, most of whom unabashedly and openly drew conclusions about my character and lifestyle with relatively little information and hardly a moment's consideration. A continual challenge was the question of how disclosing to be about myself and my personal life. I was asked, "Are you married?" "Were you married before?" "Were you married to your son's father?" "What happened then?" "How old were you?" "How old are you?" Nearly a third of the participants commented that they'd observed I wasn't wearing a wedding band. When I'd respond that I wasn't married but was involved in a long-term relationship, a common response was, "Oh, but you're not married?" Some asked, "Are you going to marry him?" (At various times, I considered wearing a wedding band to interviews; if nothing else, it would have reduced one area of conversation which was irrelevant to the project.) I was asked if I was religious, in what church I was raised, and to which I now belonged. My position on reproductive rights and what I considered appropriate monetary etiquette between a man and a woman on a date were common areas of questioning; these two topics especially sometimes evoked tirades against the "unfairness" and "inconsistencies" of contemporary women's demands. I was asked where I grew up, and how,

then, I arrived in New York. Almost half of the participants asked if I had brothers.

Nearly half of the participants had constructed a biography for me during the time between the initial telephone contact and our meeting. I must be an "angry" second wife, married to a man who had been "screwed" and, so, "bounced around" in a marriage by the random acts of a former wife. Why else would I, *a woman*, be interested in studying divorced fathers? When they learned that I was not the expected second wife, many participants shifted tack and urged me to do a study with second and third wives: "They'll tell you what it's like for a divorced father in this society. They'll tell you how it is living with some idiot judge's rulings, who can't possibly know what it's like trying to maintain a family on my income, and then having to turn over money that should stay in our household to that bitch who can squander it anyway she likes, any way, any day," is how one father specifically put it.

That I was not remarried raised more than a few eyebrows—literally. Several men asked me if I was "so bitter" that I had "sworn off marriage" or "off men." Eleven men asked me how I handled the moral issues of being involved with someone but not remarrying, "especially as a mother." In several instances, my efforts at redirecting the conversation were quite ineffectual and I was pulled along, responding to the questions put to me instead of successfully asking them or shifting the topic away from my own current personal life, or "love life," as several put it.

The part of my biography which I shared with each participant was that I am a parent. This was a significant disclosure, as it had been with the mothers in the previous study: that we shared being a parent helped establish rapport. Over three-quarters of the men asked if I was the custodial parent and, upon receiving an affirmative response, asked how that had come about. Men asked me to describe my son and my relationship with him, both of which were easy to do as I'm openly delighted with and proud of him. I was less forthcoming when asked, often repeatedly and pointedly, about both his and my relationship with his father. In general, I felt a responsibility to respect my son's private life and, so, gave rather vague responses about his relationships. When asked, I allowed that my own divorce, which occurred more than 16 years before and in a different state, under different legal statutes, had been relatively conflict-free. I noted that my son's father and I had done reasonably well in maintaining a focus on our child, in retrospect, especially since we had been quite young and sought no professional advice or assistance. Nearly half of the men noted that my child was fortunate to have had parents who "did not war" with each other. Since most held women responsible for postdivorce conflicts, in general, and for divorce as well (Arendell 1995), my description

of a relatively conflict-free divorce may have increased my stature in some men's assessments.

Some men asked me, when I made clear that my current relationship began only after my son entered college, what the effects on him were of growing up without a "man in the home," revealing the assumption that my son and I had lived alone in the intervening years. Did my son hold a dim view of marriage as a result of my not having remarried? Was I worried that he would be a "milquetoast" in relation to women due to the lack of male presence in the household? Twenty-four participants asked if my son had a girlfriend; nearly that many asked if he had a "problem" with girls.

One of the things I mostly missed until re-exploring the tapes and transcripts for this discussion was the importance assigned by many participants to the fact that my child was male. This should not have surprised me as it did, however, since I was aware during the interviews of the greater importance assigned by a majority of fathers to sons over daughters. While not universally expressed or conveyed, the preference for sons was a pattern, and the fathers who remained most actively involved with their children were, in general, predominantly those with sons. Fathers of children of both sexes tended to be more involved with their sons and expressed more concern about their well-being and development than they did about their daughters (see also Tiedje and Darling-Fisher 1993; Grossman et al. 1988). Additionally, two-thirds of the children from whom fathers were totally absent were daughters. The fathers in the study believed, overwhelmingly, that sons are damaged far more by divorce than are daughters, and a large majority expressed concerns about the possibility, perceived as dire, that their sons might become gay as a result of the divorce and, especially, "excessive mother presence," as several men put it (and, so, relative father absence). Other kinds of homophobic remarks were made by over a quarter of the men.

A few men openly assumed I had had, and must currently have, a life of leisure and privilege: I was well-educated and was employed as an academic, with my son attending a private college most knew to be prestigious and expensive, as they told me upon hearing its name in response to questions put to me. About 20 percent of the men openly conveyed their assumption that my former husband had financed both my education, given my relatively young age (20) when our son was born, and our son's. I overtly disclosed nothing about my class background or sources or levels of income, past or present; such disclosures seemed inappropriate and even irrelevant, given the context. Additionally, I tend to be reticent about discussing my background, a bit of an irony, perhaps, given my deep interest in conducting interviewing research. Since the assumptions that I came from money or

that my former husband had resources with which to support me through college subsequent to divorce were erroneous, clarifying the matter would have taken up time which was better spent interviewing them. Yet, not clarifying my past economic situation was a somewhat risky decision since most of these interviewees believed, and insisted repeatedly, that women unjustly "soak" or "bleed" men dry economically in divorce. My explanation as to why they did not indict me on these grounds is twofold. Firstly, I was interested in hearing *their* stories, "men's versions" as they put it. Secondly, I remained non-confrontational during our interactions. Thus, I must somehow have been different, not like those other women—former wives, "feminists," "rabble rousers," "ball busters," "lesbians," or "dykes"—who ruin men, financially and otherwise.

Placing Me

Men in the study assigned different and shifting identities to me. "The interview—from the moment of initial contact—becomes a socially constructed matrix of shifting multiple identities—both the researcher's and the respondents" (Hertz 1995:432). On occasion, I became merged with a former wife, providing a specific target for expressions of anger and hostility (see also McKee and O'Brien 1983). One person, for example, complained at length about how his former spouse had neglected to inform him of her increasing marital unhappiness and discontent. He later contradicted this assertion when he described how she had insisted, two years before she left the marriage, that they seek couples' counseling, to which he eventually agreed after initially refusing. He said, for example, "Listen: this is what you [women] have to get straight. You [women] have to talk to me. You [women] have to tell me, communicate with me. How did it get to the point where you [former wife] expect me to know if you don't tell me? If I'm too busy to listen, you [former wife] have to sit me down and make me listen." By the time he finished speaking, he was shaking his index finger at me.

At other times, I was an "honorary male" (Warren 1988), invited to share the scope of their anger and frustration *as men* as I was granted access to their stories. Sometimes I was asked questions about childrearing, at times as a parent and other times as a social scientist. Most commonly, however, I was the token nurturing, caretaking woman, carefully listening to and prompting their stories and encouraging the expression of feelings. I listened attentively, occasionally nodding my head in a supportive gesture, doing the "work women do" in conversations with men (Fishman 1978). Thus, I was the recipient of accounts I had not expected of such actions

as child snatching, stalking of the former wife; sexual activity, including a few instances of the use of physical force; and incidents of wife and estranged wife abuse. Nearly half of the participants told of involvement in one or more such instances. These actions were "necessary acts of resistance," legitimate responses to the injustices dealt men in divorce and unwarranted provocations (Arendell 1995). These accounts were often told in tones of self-righteousness and pride.

Checking Boundaries

Once it was established that I was not married, I was viewed in another light by some: a potential date. This was the case even though I'd indicated I was in a committed relationship. For the most part, inquiries were indirect, such as: "Let me know if you'd like to go to dinner sometime." "What kinds of things do you like to do in your spare time?" "Does a busy woman like yourself have time for a personal life?" Such remarks were sufficiently ambiguous so they could be sidestepped, saving face for both of us: the participant's, if he were suggesting a date which I declined, and mine, if I was misinterpreting his meaning.

Of the handful of men who explicitly invited me out, one of the most persistent questioners was, in addition to being inquisitive, warm and friendly. He frequently resorted to the use of flattery, and made remarks such as, "Boy, you *do* ask good questions," and "Wow, you *are* really observant." Throughout the interview, he repeated that he was looking for a wife, at least in part so that he could "more successfully" challenge the custody arrangement and revoke maternal custody. One of the few times in which my voice on the recorded tapes conveys a tone of uneasiness was in my response to his unexpected question, asked about three hours into the interview, which lasted four hours, and which was more powerful than the words alone because he suddenly spoke in a loud, directive voice: "Will you consider marrying?" I had already heard that I fit part of his "bill", as he'd described it: I was about his age, a mother who liked children, well-educated and employed (as was he), and had acknowledged having a spiritual faith (we participated in different religious groups, however). When, after a pause, I responded to his query, it was in an unusually high pitched voice, "Well, I might." I clearly was not sure where his question was leading. He telephoned me twice later and reissued an invitation to contact him if I found myself interested in getting together in the future in order "to get to know each other."

Extravagant comments regarding my knowledge or observational skills were not uncommon. For instance, when someone mentioned that he was

paying the tuition for his daughter's yeshiva, I asked if she was being raised Orthodox. He responded with: "Wow! It's not often that I meet someone who's so knowledgeable about Judaism without being a Jew. You're not, are you?" Since I think it likely that a large majority of people know what a yeshiva is, my "knowledge" offered a thin line, at best, from which to generalize about my level of familiarity with Judaism. Despite the superficial flattery, I thoroughly enjoyed our discussion. His deep affection and commitment to his child were evident, and he was a quick and witty conversationalist; we both laughed spontaneously and frequently throughout the four hours we talked. Even at points during the interview, I was aware that I was walking a fine line between warm appreciation of his disclosures and style and responding in kind to flirtatious comments and innuendo. I'd be reluctant to share with students or other researchers this particular audiotape.

I was given numerous personal compliments, including such remarks as, "You look like you're in very good shape: do you run?" "No! You don't?" "You can't possibly be old enough to have a son in college. What were you, a child bride?" And, "What's an attractive woman like you doing not wearing a ring?" I was often confused about how to respond to comments meant to flatter me. Mostly I offered what was intended to be a good-natured laugh and a statement aimed at responding only very generally while shifting the focus of our conversation back to the interviewee and his divorce experiences. But hearing these exchanges on tape is sobering: by my silence was I condoning the re-enactment of the gender stratified order, allowing these particular participants to relate to me in a stereotypical fashion?

Several participants, in contrast to indulging me with flattery, questioned my interviewing skills. Two men, for instance, challenged me for not having asked them the "typical questions" posed to men, according to them: "Who cooks when your child is with you?" and "Who does your laundry?" (I didn't ask such questions because they didn't occur to me: Who else but the parent would cook or do the laundry if he were alone with his child?) In both cases the tone of their questioning implied a reprimand: *my* interviewing was inadequate given that I missed asking such basic questions.

Another instance of being chastised involved a person who described his military achievements at some length. He used them primarily to illustrate the "gulf between the sexes" (as also did other participants). "Women don't get sent to war and have to face killing; it's impossible for them ever to understand us. It's impossible for you to understand us," he said when explaining that "sex differences" are a result of men's training in and experiences with aggression. As we concluded the interview, which took place in his home, he insisted on showing me his military medals received for

service in Vietnam. "You shouldn't just believe anyone who tells you he's received military honors." By tone and comment, he distinctly conveyed his conclusion that I was subject to being duped: in sum, I was a woman, without military service, *and* had seemingly accepted his account of army duty without asking for evidence. Since I had not demonstrated excessive interest in his military achievements and didn't ask for "evidence" for other assertions, this scenario surprised me.

ASSERTING SUPERIORITY

One of my concerns when I began the project was that men would be "genderwise," sensitive to issues of sexism and so careful to not express such sentiments even if they held them. I need not have been so concerned. A large majority seemingly felt no compunction to examine their taken-for-granted assumptions or to "take the role of the other" (Mead 1934), and consider the possibility of other perspectives in my presence. Most seemed impervious to the possibility that I might be offended by sexist remarks, or inclined to include myself among those—women—being demeaned.

Moreover, these participants were proponents of the existing system of gender stratification, seeing it as an outcome of natural sex differences. Several lamented the "decline" of the dual system, and numerous men blamed the "fall of the family" to women moving out of their "natural" places. One of the primary themes of the narratives as a whole—the belief that men and women differ naturally and inevitably—was coupled with the view of male superiority (Arendell 1995). This premise reinforced their *stance* of certainty (Ochs 1992), and participants seemed to feel free and, indeed, entitled, to express attitudes and feelings of hostility, rage, and misogyny, and fantasies of violence and revenge as component parts of their divorce experiences (Arendell 1995). A majority of men resorted to derogatory remarks about women generally, at least at times, and it was the few exceptions who stood out, not those who asserted superiority to women.

Denigrating Women

The denigration of women was extensive. Women, according to many of the fathers, are "irrational," "illogical," "devious," "lazy," "manipulative," and "exploitive." Terms used to describe former wives included: "bitch," "whore," "witch," "cunt," and "slut." Six men used the phrase "on the rag" when describing events involving their former wives. One person

characterized his former wife with the words "fuck" or "fucking" 88 times (out of 128 uses). I heard detailed accounts of wives' alleged sexual frigidity and, from some, descriptions of their own sexual prowess and high levels of desire. Over half discussed what they saw as sexual inadequacies among women, generally. Such accounts were offered by men across the sample, irrespective of educational levels, professional or occupational status, or age. Former wives were occasionally described as "feminists" but the more common assertion was that they, in their susceptibility, had been unduly and unjustly influenced by "feminists" or, as one described it, "the climate of feminist hatred of men" or, by another, "feminist male bashing."

My experience as a woman researcher listening to men devalue women was not unique. McKee and O'Brien (1983:158), for example, stated: "We had to absorb comments about 'fat' women, 'neurotic' women, unintelligent women, women who were a good 'lay' and so on." I became so used to being subjected to disdainful attitudes about women, in general, that when an occasional participant would inquire about my opinion or how I was receiving his remarks and account, I was caught off guard momentarily.

Touching

Various participants touched me physically in ways other than the common handshake given in greeting and parting, which I typically initiated with both women and men in the respective studies. When taking our leave, numerous men put a hand on my shoulder or my back, indicating that I was to go in front of them as we walked out the door or, if we were already outside, as I began to move toward my car, apparently to guide me. Some men touched me during interviews to make a point, or as part of the interaction when placing a food or drink order, usually on a hand, wrist, or lower arm. One person, to my surprise, suddenly tapped me on my upper chest to show me where his former wife had hit him with a telephone. Three other participants touched me in ways which left a lasting impression.

The first involved an incident in which a person, who was considerably bigger than I, was discussing the last time he had seen his two young children. We were sitting in a diner, with my chair next to and facing away from the back wall. As he recalled how he had picked up his estranged wife by the neck, causing her to struggle, choke, and gag, he thrust his arm across the table and put his hand around my neck. He kept it there as he continued to talk, becoming louder and more excited as he retold the episode. I pushed my chair back as far as it could go but quickly hit up against the wall and so was trapped within his reach. When he finally pulled his hand away, he wagged his index finger directly under my nose as he said,

"And I said to her, 'Don't ever make me this mad again. Don't you ever let me get this mad again, don't ever make me this mad.'" He then withdrew his hand back to his side of the table and picked up his coffee cup. My perception that I handled the situation with some degree of poise was disabused when I listened to the tape: my voice was clearly shaking and sounded strained for the next few minutes. Not until the fourth time hearing the tape did I realize that a waitress had approached the table and asked if everything was okay. She did so at about the same time that this man removed his hand from next to my face. I have no recollection whatsoever of her coming to the table at that point, but take it that she had witnessed at least part of the event and was checking to see if I needed assistance. At no time did the interviewee seem aware that I was shaken by this incident. I was surprised, and relieved, when I didn't develop bruises on my neck.

Another instance of memorable touching occurred at a participant's home and involved a sequence of movements. Initially sitting across from me, this man joined me on the couch when he returned, after a brief break, with cups of tea. As we talked, he began to slide closer and closer to me, with his arm thrown across the top of the couch, just shy of my shoulder. Sliding away, I soon was up against the arm of the couch. Throughout this maneuvering, he occasionally reached over and tapped my arm to emphasize points he was making. By the time I was able to end the interview, which I did somewhat prematurely, he was sitting only a few inches from me, leaving unused the greater share of the couch. Constantly aware of and preoccupied with what was occurring, I never addressed it, unable to find a suitable but sufficiently non-confrontational response even as we continued discussing his current parenting involvement.

The third situation occurred when a person and I had finished the interview and gone outside to leave. Standing by my car as we stood talking, I suddenly shook a bit with a chill. He immediately moved to my side and put his arm around me, saying, "Here, let me warm you up." I was astonished both that he noticed I had shivered and by his action. I moved away, using laughter and the comment, "Thanks, but I don't think so," as a strategy for not further addressing his actions. It was a totally spontaneous response.

Such physical gestures on the part of some participants conveyed messages of familiarity which, given the interview context and the fact that we were basically strangers, were inappropriate. Also, to varying degrees, these actions conveyed messages of dominance: superiors tend to touch subordinates and men women rather than vice versa, in unspoken exercises of their power (Henley 1977). I simply was not touched in these ways by women who were divorced mothers in the earlier study. Again, I did not

confront these men regarding these actions and my feelings or thoughts about them. Gurney's remarks in this regard are sympathetic, "Unfortunately, there are no ready prescriptions for female researchers' coping with such situations. Obviously, a modicum of tolerance is necessary with respect to any behavior respondents may exhibit, otherwise very little field research would ever be accomplished. However, the question of where to draw the line is a difficult one. Perhaps the best strategy is to acknowledge the possible complications that could develop *before* one enters the setting" (Gurney 1985:45; see also Smart 1984; Ostrand 1995). A difficulty remains, however; that is, how does one sufficiently anticipate such encounters *before* they are experienced?

Being Chivalrous? or, Chivalry in the Field

Over half of the 42 participants whom I met in restaurants, of one sort or another, asked me what I thought I'd order and, when a server came to our table, spoke for me before I had the chance. In part, this was due to the waitress usually addressing the men first. Paying a bill was inevitably an issue. I insisted on covering the costs, which usually were quite small, involving coffee and dessert, for instance. It was the least I could do, given their commitment of time and, as I'd say, I had sufficient research funds to cover such expenses. Was their insistence based in stereotypic gender patterns in which men "treat" women, or were they simply acts of appreciation, as some said, "for having this chance to talk." One person, for example, who insisted on covering the bill, said, "Aw, come on, this was a hell of a lot cheaper than paying a therapist to listen to me talk. And I learned a lot about myself just talking to you. Let me pay. I insist." I am happy to let such ambiguous comments and behaviors remain undefined: too many others leave almost no room for any interpretation but that they were sexist. Additionally, these particular men's motivations, no doubt, were varied. At the same time, even though these incidents were relatively minor, they, too, point to the continuous challenges posed by the underlying reality of the presence and dynamic of gender in the field.

CONCLUSION

The relationships which evolved during my meetings with men who were divorced fathers were complicated and varied. Most actively reasserted the conventional gender hierarchy as they told about their divorce experiences (Arendell 1995). Some men's presentations of their masculinity

and superordinate status were pronounced and persistent. The norms of the situation of the research interview did not override or displace those of a gender stratified society; gender work was ever present and predominant.

Examining the specific researcher-researched relationships which developed during my interviews with divorced men who were fathers raises an important and unavoidable question for those of us with feminist sensibilities. In serving as an "audience" to these men, as they asserted their beliefs in male superiority, expressed other kinds of sexist and misogynist sentiments, and described behaviors hostile to women, did I contribute to or even implicitly endorse the perpetuation of the system of male dominance? In my responses to actions which made me uncomfortable and which conveyed the actor's assumptions of male superiority, did I not only tolerate but encourage, though inadvertently, some men's unexamined objectification of women? Similarly, what were the effects of my not challenging the men who expressed homophobic or racist sentiments or who showed callousness and indifference towards their children? Qualitative researchers face such potential dilemmas any time they do research, perhaps especially when those they are studying are members of a group who hold a superordinate position (e.g., Pierce 1995; Ostrander 1995) and are discussing, in part, their relationships with those in positions subordinate to them. This does not, however, answer the question as to what the appropriate responses are to such actions and encounters in research settings. The understanding that our quest for knowledge about what is going on in our social world, and why, sometimes vies with our personal viewpoints, and that our objectives as social agents are multiple and sometimes incongruent do not put to rest these disquieting questions. Yet, for now, my answer for myself is this: I set out to study divorced fathers, wanting to hear about their experiences and perceptions, and so needed to allow them to tell their stories in their own fashion, whatever the content, style, or tone.

Thus, I mostly circumvented sexist innuendoes and comments and continued conversing without confronting men's expressions of sexism or misogyny or inappropriate attentions. I avoided evaluation or critical commentary during the interviews, even though it may well have implicitly encouraged, for some anyway, the continued displays of gender and assertions of the conventional gender hierarchy. My task was to obtain fathers' accounts of and perspectives on divorce; it was not, among other things, to try to educate them to my way of seeing things, raise their consciousness on matters of gender (or parenting), or attempt to dispel inaccurate assertions about divorce in the contemporary United States. My analysis and, sometimes, critique of the participants' views and actions as divorced fa-

thers occur in the written products, developed after completing the interviews. Had I responded critically in any way during my meetings with these volunteers, I would have prompted a different study than the one conducted. As Kleinman and Copp (1993:3) noted, "Scientists are supposed to be experts: They control the research process. But qualitative researchers know that the success of our work depends on participants." One of several outcomes would have been likely had I challenged them, depending on which participant was involved. I would have been dismissed as "one of those overly-sensitive women" or "feminists," out to prove an agenda and further "emasculate" men, and so not taken seriously with respect to the research. Or, I would have encouraged and become embroiled in arguments. This would have confounded further the interactional dynamics in that I would have served, more overtly, as the oppositional female.

In addition to remaining aware of my research goal and valuing the research method for allowing individuals to share their experiences and perspectives, I appreciated these men's voluntary participation in the study. They gave generously of their time and energy. Moreover, during the interviews, I generally felt empathy as well as curiosity: divorce is an emotionally wrenching experience for most people, and is all the more difficult when minor children are involved. And, from my viewpoint, many of the individuals in the study were caught up in actions and attitudes which were counterproductive with respect to their relationships with their children. Most showed little insight into the consequences of their own actions. Even as they expressed outrage and resentments about their divorce experiences, and sought to assert confidence, certainty, and male superiority, these men also conveyed frustration and sadness about their situations and relationships. That they conveyed a gamut of emotions and an array of objectives, many of which conflicted with others, continually caught my attention and elicited my interest and empathy. At times subsequent to particular interviews, I realized that I had been so caught up in and even captivated by some participants' passionate arguments that I accepted their arguments as to what "should be done in divorce," even occasionally agreeing, in my own mind, that these were "logical and rational" positions. With only a minimum of distance from the interview context, however, I then would see how these arguments, despite their passionate telling, at times completely obscured the needs or rights of other family members and ignored these individuals' past family behaviors and histories.

In sum, as suggested by this look at my interviews with divorced fathers, the relationships between participants and the interviewer in a research project are inevitably complex, multifaceted, and dynamic. While contextually situated, these relationships nonetheless are influenced by the identities and histories of those involved, researcher and researched alike.

Gender identity is a major factor in these interactional dynamics. Just how gender is constructed and negotiated in research using in-depth interviews warrants much more systematic attention. Offering "tales of the field" (Van Maanen 1988) and subjecting our research to analytical scrutiny can move us toward greater understanding of the import of gender in group life, generally, and in research, more specifically.

ENDNOTES

1. My appreciation goes to the anonymous reviewers, Rosanna Hertz, and Alan Berkowitz for their careful and thorough readings, extensive assessments and suggestions, and encouragement on this paper. Their input was extraordinary.
2. I address the issue of self-reflexivity as an on-going inner process for the researcher more fully in a forthcoming paper which examines issues of emotional management, participants' and mine, in this particular research project, as well as the larger questions of feminist epistemology and methodology (Arendell in progress).
3. See Hertz (1997,1996) for fuller discussions of reflexivity in research.
4. Despite all of the work on the importance of physical and spatial relations for social interaction, "methodology texts appear to make little reference to the importance of physical context and spatial relations in conversations. Indeed, many writers convey the impression that discussions are context-free" (Burgess 1988:141).
5. While I was somewhat nervous about my safety during and at the conclusion of two interviews, neither instance involved one of the meetings in a person's home. As it happened, several of the more unique and informative interviews took place in homes. In fact, of the 13 interviews conducted in private homes, seven involved men who were eventually classified as being engaged in *innovative* lines of action (a total of nine in the study). And three others, each a *neo-traditionalist*—a gender conformist who vacillated between preoccupation with the former wife and concern about his children (Arendell, 1995)—were also primary parents, having unusually high levels of parental involvement. Men interviewed in homes, then, comprised a majority of the primary parents in the entire sample. I did not discern this pattern until I reopened the transcripts and my files of notes for the purpose of developing this paper. One possible explanation is that, in agreeing to meet in their homes, I was responding to cues given over the phone that these fathers were especially child-oriented, and typically less angry and interactionally aggressive.
6. I have not met or corresponded with Phyllis Chester. The participant who referred to her as "your friend" told me, upon my asking him, that he was referring to her book, *Mothers on Trial: The Battle for Children and Custody*.
7. My appreciation to Alan Berkowitz for this and other insights.

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