What Makes a Father?

A Socially Constructed Dialogue on Gendered Masculinity

by

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BA, Vancouver Island University, 2006
BA, Vancouver Island University, 2002

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the School of Child and Youth Care

Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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This study explores how fathers exist within socially constructed micro and macro systems and are positioned within a discourse on gendered masculinity. Seven fathers from the Nanaimo, B.C. region volunteered to participate in two focus groups, to discuss "what makes a father". An exploration of the men's lived experiences reflected on memories from childhood that influenced choices they make in fatherhood. Through generative exchanges and personal narratives subjective and evolved perspectives on gender binaries, masculine stereotypes and traditional belief systems were articulated. The compilation and analysis of data attempts to disrupt preconceived notions of masculinity in the 21st century. Based on the focus group data the study reveals roles that challenge traditional paternal archetypes relevant to parental relationships and demonstrates that contemporary fathers continue to evolve and navigate what is being referred to as "new" fatherhood. The study contributes to the research on fathers as an exclusive research subject and their understanding of fatherhood in their own terms. The fathers in this study are challenging antiquated belief systems of how men are supposed to be within the structures of gendered masculinity. The study indicates there is no one-way or right way to be a dad and the curiosity and a conscious effort to trouble heteronormative archetypes by the participants indicates that men create space to chose to father according to their subjective experiences.

Keywords. Father, fatherhood, gendered masculinity and social construction.

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Acknowledgments

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those who have supported me throughout this arduous process. To Daniel Scott for validating my experience as I teetered on the brink of insanity, you offered the tools and wisdom I needed to regain focus. Thank you for hearing me and sitting with me when the tears could not be stopped. I have considered your guidance a light in the darkness showing me the way and pointing out the beauty in the shadows. To Sandrina de Finney for the wonderful feedback that gave me the confidence to complete the most challenging task I have ever undertaken. To Marie Hoskins for her patience so I could explore the twists and turns of Social Constructionism. To Catharine Andrew for her support, guidance and for believing in me when I did not. It is your voice I hear reminding me to stay strong when self-doubt starts to sneak in. To Alannah Bjur for being a sounding board, necessary distraction, voice of reason and the best sister I could ever be blessed with. To my friends LH, SC, CS, CJ, RB, CP and JR for the unending support, encouragement, validation, understanding, childcare and love. To the faculty of the Child and Youth Care department at UVic for supporting my learning, encouraging my curiosity and making sure all the T's were crossed and I's were dotted. To the staff of Nanaimo Family Life Association for providing me with knowledge, opportunity and friendship. To the men who volunteered their time and shared their stories D, S, H, A, B, R, C. And thank you to Jackson and Violet for sharing your mommy, giving me hugs and kisses when I was feeling overwhelmed, and trying to understand when I was away and missed singing to you at bedtime.

Dedication

To my Dad, Thomas Bjur for teaching me to question what I do not know and follow my instincts as I explore possibilities. I searched for you throughout this process, when all along you were by my side. And now I have finally learned the language to tell this story. I love you.

To my Mom, Linda Bjur for teaching me to value education and supporting me unwaveringly as I pursued my dreams. I love you

To my husband, Christopher Luchtmeyer for inspiring me; I am more connected to you throughout this process than I thought was possible. You embody the intricacies and complexities of masculinity and are the perfect role model for our children. I would not have been able to do it without you. I love you.

To my children, Jackson and Violet everything I do is for you. The ripples of this experience will lead you into the future. Anything is possible. I love you.

Exploring the Father Subject

Introduction

The notions of fathering and father involvement are informed by normative assumptions and stereotypes based on a patrilineal discourse, inherited from prior generations. According to the online *New Oxford American Dictionary* (2012) the definition of father is: "A man in relation to his natural child or children. A man who gives care and protection to someone or something, a man who has continuous care of a child, esp. by adoption; an adoptive father, stepfather, or foster father". Common archetypes of fathering include: powerful patriarch, moral teacher, breadwinner, and role model of masculinity, as discussed by Lamb (2010). The Father Involvement Research Alliance (FIRA) identify a:

> …growing body of research that is examining how fathers are constructing and redefining their role and identities in a period of rapid social, economic and cultural change, in part to appreciate what factors enhance or constrain fathers' opportunities and efforts to provide for their children economically and be active, engaged parents. (2010, p.4)

As a researcher, Child and Youth Care practitioner and mother, I am curious to know how men learn how to become fathers, and if in fact deliberate and conscious learning does actively take place. My questions relating to paternal experience include: how do they [men] construct and define their roles, and what factors contribute to their paternal identity and are embedded in issues of socialization. There is a degree of learning that occurs on an unconscious level through modeling of parenting and the tacit

ways learning takes place within a family context, especially with consideration that can include the acquisition of knowledge and skills in early childhood which may be body-based experiential knowledge that is not rationally or deliberately learned but where the learning occurs as a result of felt experiences: a lullaby every night helps me to sleep and feel safe and secure in the knowledge I am loved. I am interested to know the degree to which family contexts, childhood experiences and social influences impact paternal identification within the lens of gendered masculinity.

A variety of academic and popular literature, and data collected during my research process, explore the ways men evolve into fathers, and investigate the socially constructed gender system traditionally located in a place of dominance and power. The purpose is to determine if notions of the traditional paternal subject are still relevant in this shifting social climate where hegemonic masculinity is challenged and troubled in terms of what is acceptable. I seek to deliberately restructure what Lorber (1994) refers to as the microstructures and macrostructures that construct, reproduce and reinforce gender identity, in regard to fathering within the parental discourse. Lamb (2010) suggests a shift from traditional parental roles will reflect the significant contributions fathers make to the lives of their children when they are identified as positive contributors, in what FIRA recognizes as a multifaceted way. Fathers can be "companions, care-providers, spouses, protectors, models, moral guides, teachers and breadwinners" (Lamb, 2010, p.2). According to Hoffman (2011) there is limited research available that focuses exclusively on fathers. Much of the literature that does exist perpetuates the dominant discourse that mothers are the primary focus of parental involvement, and that fathering exists mainly in juxtaposition to maternal caretaking. Hoffman (2011) states: "the cultural norms are

stricter on the centrality and endurance of the mother-child dyad, regardless of what is happening outside that relationship" (p.7). The roles fathers play requires particular consideration to define them outside of the normative gender binary, with attempts to explain how fathers are socially constructed within, and not limited to, their familial, cultural, and economic class structures.

Context

This study is situated in three main areas: research, personal curiosity, and professional implications. A gap has been recognized in the research available on the discourse of fathers. Research on the topic of fathers is on the rise in Canada and throughout the world (Hoffman, 2011), yet the focus of this research is primarily located in three areas:

- Are fathers doing enough?

- How does fathering differ from mothering?

- Is father involvement uniquely beneficial, even necessary, for healthy child development? (Hoffman, 2011)

My study explores the father subject within the socially constructed discourse on gendered masculinity. This thesis examines data collected from two focus groups comprised of seven men who are fathers living full-time or part-time with their children and who either actively co-parent with their partner or are raising their children alone based on a half-time shared custody agreement. The study focuses on the various paternal situations embodied by the volunteer participants who reside in Nanaimo, British Columbia, which is the location of the study. The study defines "father" as a man who cohabitates with his partner or spouse or who lives in a separate home, co-parents his

child(ren) full-time [recognizing some fathers work outside of the home or do shift work that takes them away from their children for part of the day or night and are still considered to be full-time fathers] or part time depending on custody agreements, and contributes to the household either financially (employed) or as a stay-at-home parent (primary caregiver). The study also included one stepfather who is co-parenting a child not biologically related to him. The experience of adoptive and foster fathers, and same sex fathers are not included in the data due to the fact that no participants from those demographic groups volunteered to participate in the study. Restrictions were not made according to race, sexuality, economic status or age. Due to the difficulty of recruiting a large group of participants, and exclusivity of participant criteria, the study did not generate the numbers required for what I would consider to be a group reflective of the diverse population of men who are fathers in the Nanaimo area. I had anticipated a group of up to 10 participants, 7 father's volunteered for the study which I consider to be an ample sized group of suitable participants, homogeneous in economic, racial and cultural parameters satisfied the criteria necessary to conduct the study.

Rationale

I am curious to understand how a small group of men who could be considered homogeneous, defined as being "similar in kind and nature" (http://www.merriam-webster.com), and with similar cultural, economic, and religious backgrounds living in the blue collar community of Nanaimo, British Columbia, construct their sense of fatherhood and becoming a dad. My curiosity is prompted by the recent shift in the masculine archetype, popularized by social media such as movies, reality television, blogs and social groups. Discourse on the topic of socially-constructed paternal identity,

whether consciously or innately manifested, will generate dialogue and create space for the subjective narrative of a small group of fathers to be shared. Recognition of the shift in archetypal roles sheds light on the evolution of fathers from the antiquated hegemonic patriarch towards the more modern nurturing parental collaborator. How is the average male concept of acceptable masculinity embedded in cultural attitudes that influence their paternal identity and what aspects of society contribute to the construction of their father self?

Interest in the topic of how men become fathers was inspired by personal events that illuminated the invaluable role men play as fathers in my life. My interest in this subject began to develop after my father lost his battle with cancer in August 2011. I began to reflect on my memories and experiences with him as a father as part of my grieving process and became sensitively aware of the various fathers I would encounter or observe. This reflexivity inspired questions and curiosity about the different ways men father. Turnbull (2002) recognized the importance of self-location and awareness of personal agenda in research and identified "that all research is necessarily value laden and that it is preferable for the researcher to acknowledge her or his assumptions and beliefs through a process of reflexivity" (Turnbull, 2002, p.5). This is particularly significant due to the personal and sensitive nature of my loss, which had potential to influence my research.

I was also inspired by the way my husband fathers our children, which differs dramatically from the way he was fathered by both his biological father and his stepfather. I found myself asking the questions: How did he learn to be the father he is now? What factors contributed to his becoming a father? Does he make a conscious effort

to father differently than he was fathered? Is he influenced by external factors within our society, either locally or globally? Does his fathering style differ between our son and daughter; and is the difference a conscious or innate reflection of his cultural, traditional and personal values?

Purpose

An improved understanding of the social construction of fathers within the discourse of gendered masculinity will inform the development and influence of community services to meet the unique demands of fathers and shed light on the value of multi-perspective processes that support fathers and parental relationships. Understanding the unique way men occupy the parental sphere will assist community services to develop and offer services relevant to the lived experiences of men. According to Freeman, Newland and Coyl (2008) involvement in community based parenting programs "build[s] positive parental beliefs that reinforce what fathers already know or can do through empowerment-based interventions" (p. 804). In addition, Barker (2008) identified the importance of domestic social networking in the influence of paternal roles and identity formation. The topic of fathering has certainly become a recent sensation in social media. There has been a surge of attention on dads evident in the number of online blogs, social networking sites dedicated to fathers, reality shows that feature fathers within a variety of contexts, movies that feature fathers in prominent roles and increased attention paid to celebrity fathers in news and entertainment programs. The significance of increased attention on the father figure and the way the role of father is located within a discourse is that it challenges traditional masculinity. Traditional masculinity can be defined as the ideology that men must be strong, independent, emotionally guarded and successful

breadwinners. Featuring the father as the primary caregiver validates the variety of positive or proactive options available to the modern dad that had in previous generations not existed to this extent. In fact, some examples of positive and proactive fathers have not been valued as anything more than comic relief, imposed parental participation due to economic restrictions or familial crisis intervention.

It is my intention to utilize the research and data collected during this study to develop professional practice implications for working in collaboration with fathers. Robb (2004) argued that the limited exploration of subjective experiences of fatherhood contributed to a missed or lack of understanding in terms of the hazards of falling back into outdated stereotypes when working with fathers and the failure to engage with them in a productive way. I anticipate the results of this study will be used as a vehicle to better support and understand fathers, since "there is a need for research on fatherhood which views men's identities as fathers as the product of both social and internal processes" (Robb, 2004, p. 396). The study will also contribute to the growing research done exclusively on and for fathers, external to the traditional studies located within the mother/father binary and parenting paradigm.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Review of Selected Literature

Dialogue on Fatherhood

   Public policy. The discourse on fatherhood shifted in the mid 1980's with the introduction of paternity leave internationally in 1984 (Gregory & Milner, 2011). This shift was echoed in pop culture by movies such as *Mr. Mom* (1983), *Three Men and a Baby* (1987), and *Kramer vs. Kramer* (1979) which was nominated for an Academy Award in 1980. Gregory and Milner (2011) discuss the social construction of fatherhood in France and the UK and they acknowledge the contradictions between social policy and pop culture. Their research suggests that men are encouraged to take leave when a child is born, yet suffer career infractions for time taken. In France stay-at-home fathers are often referred to as "papa poule" or father hens and are satirized and ridiculed. Højgaard (1997) concurs that the increased interest in fatherhood in the past 30 years is a direct result of social construction and social policy changes within the workplace. The introduction of paternity leave in 1984 and shared parental leave gave men the choice to become more involved fathers, at a cost; they would have to choose between financial or familial benefits, as a paternity leave could be associated with a less competitive career focus. Halford (2006) suggests that the prevalent cultural belief is that to be a good father one has to be an effective provider and that the status of employment remains the "integral part of what fathers do as father" (p.386). Halford (2006) goes on to explain that fathers are reluctant to take time off work to share in parenting responsibilities, even if they are entitled to it, for fear it will lead to career death.

Højgaard (1997) contends that masculinity and active fathering are a contradictory notion in gender research within a feminized society, which is typically located within the domestic domain and promotes equality in both the workplace and at home. Men are criticized whether they actively participate in fathering roles or not. The social challenges to traditional gender roles identified by Højgaard (1997) can be accommodated but require a shift in perspective that is often met with reluctance. She states that gender is a fundamental category of differentiation in virtually every culture (apart from the LGBTQ community); you are either male or female with cultural practices that are associated with either masculine or feminine connotations, as 'gender symbols'. Matta and Knudson-Martin (2006) suggests that fathering is a socially constructed notion arising within the gender, economic and political structures that underlie families. Additionally, Matta and Knudson-Martin (2006) contest that even within egalitarian couples the default to stereotypical division of domestic labour after a child is born reinforces a hesitation in terms of the roles for fathers. "The concept of fatherhood emerges at the intersection of meaning and social interaction between men, families, extended families, and larger communities, and becomes reality as it is acted out day to day" (Matta & Knudson-Martin, 2006, p.20). Fatherhood therefore, is created in the shared experiences between people, living their lives through an intricate dance of negotiation, compromises and rearranging. Stereotypical gender structure perpetuates male dominance in broader society, replicates the unequal gendered division of labour and can often leave men on the outside looking in at the mother-child relationship without the emotional connection to their children (Matta & Knudson-Martin, 2006).

Challenges to the hegemonic gender roles require what Højgaard (1997) calls "prescribed limits" (p.248). "A father belongs to the masculine symbolic universe inhabited by men, manly virtues, vices and status" (Højgaard, 1997, p.249). To find a balance that blends the masculine with the feminine in the "new" social construction of fatherhood will entail blurring the existing dichotomies that have traditionally differentiated motherhood and fatherhood. "Fathers were instrumental, mothers were emotional, fathers were authoritarian, mothers understanding, fathers were breadwinners, mothers were carers and so on" (Højgaard, 1997, p.249). Matta and Knudson-Martin (2006) comment on the fact that several studies suggest men's gender ideologies, but not women's, predict the extent to which men in a nuclear family (heteronormative, straight family with two parents) share parenting responsibilities. Furthermore it was concluded that while women may engage men in the early stages of discussion of domestic labour division and family matters, control over the emotional depth and the outcome of the conversation fell to the men, and was indicative of how they positioned themselves within the socially constructed ideologies of acceptable masculinity within their micro and macro systems. If nurturing was a role familiar and consistent within their identified gender code, a man may be more likely to wake in the night with an infant and rock them back to sleep. In contrast if they grew up in a system where men did not typically engage with infants in a domestic capacity, a resistance to nurturing type behaviour could signal the end of the conversation about domestic labour roles and responsibilities. Feminist research discussed by Matta and Knudson-Martin (2006) suggests gender is hidden in language, behaviour and traditional thought processes and gendered notions of labour perpetuates the struggle to identify a man within a role of father external to the dominant

masculinized gender code. Kimmel's 2004 review of literature on men and women concludes that they are far more alike than they are different and that "men's ability to nurture and care for their children is related to their internal and social construction of masculinity" (as cited in Matta & Knudson-Martin, 2006, p. 23). Kimmel concludes that men are readily capable of caring and nurturing. However, it is in the gendered institutions such as workplace, family, school, and politics that the dominant definitions of masculine and feminine are reinforced and reproduced and where alternative ways of existing within a gendered society are discouraged.

Western commentators on parental policy have a pessimistic lens that suggests the proverbial "spotlight" on fathers in the past 30 years have reflected the rising divorce rates and reproductive innovations causing "concerns about whether families need fathers and, if so, what kinds of fathers these should be" (Gregory & Milner, 2011 p.589). Fathers who are absent or present, responsible or irresponsible, "good enough" or involved as primary caregiver have contributed to the public discourse on parenting. Gregory and Milner (2011) refer to the social construction of fathers as an existing discourse about the "cultural characterization or popular images of fathers… and how law and policy seek to attach men to children" (p.590). In seeking to attach men to their children shifts in perspective exposed contradictions within social policy. According to the Fatherhood Institute (2010) "inadequate financial compensation hampers fathers from taking up paternity leave, parental leave, and reduced working hours" (as cited in Gregory & Milner, 2011, p. 593). Nevertheless in 2002 evidence of behaviour shifts within the working father population suggests more fathers are requesting flex time and reduced working hours after the birth of their child in addition to taking the statutory

right to paternity leave and the use of additional informal paternity leave (Gregory & Milner, 2011). Literature from a French study documents that in 2002, an additional two weeks were added to the initial paternity leave introduced in 1984, with an overwhelming 60% of eligible men taking advantage of the additional time within a year of its application, and increasing to 69% by 2007 (Gregory & Milner, 2011, p. 593).

Since the early 2000's public policy's influence on the social construction of the paternal identity shifted in terms of custody and parental rights after separation or divorce, and in cases when there was no legal relationship between biological parents such as marriage contract. Judges and law makers were taking a more liberal stance on a father's right to be included in the lives of his children as more than a financial contributor. "Father's persistent determination to win care orders is often viewed favourably by appeal courts that see it as a sign of 'good fathering'" (Gregory & Milner, 2011, p. 596).

Gender binary. Other literature suggests that men's involvement in parenting is most strongly associated with their perceived level of competence (Freeman et al., 2008; Habib & Lancaster 2009; Hoffman, 2011; and Jordan, 2009). A father's confidence is greatly influenced by their partner's messages of their competence (Hoffman, 2011). "A major survey of Canadian parents suggests that fathers feel less supported as parents than mothers do" (Hoffman, 2011, p.9). FIRA found that in a 2006 survey, 81% of fathers lived full time with their children and reported observations from international studies that indicated an increased interest in supporting fathers to play a positive and active role in their children's lives. The role of father is a socially constructed discourse influenced by patriarchy, heteronormativity and a desire to conform to traditional gender binaries.

Colonial hegemony attempts to classify and define gender roles that serve to alienate the notions of equality within the parental paradigm, such as mother as the stay-at-home caregiver and father as the working role model. (Cabrera, Tamis-LeModa, Bradley, Hofferth, and Lamb, 2000).

Højgaard (1997) states that upon reflection on the "components of the female identity it becomes clear that motherhood is a much more important part of female identity and is perceived as an integral part of female sexuality" (p.249). Fatherhood in contrast is just one component of the social identity of a man, and as Højgaard suggests, it is not "a very central one". Judith Lorber (1994) discusses paradoxes of gender and suggests, "liberal feminism emphasized only the social construction of femininity and masculinity and their translation into family and work roles" (p.5). She discusses the deeply embedded ideologies of the gender discourse that privilege one gender over the other regardless of similarities and sought to confirm socially constructed dichotomies that continued to "create and maintain socially significant differences between women and men" (Lorber, 1994, p.5). The privilege extends to heteronormative nuclear families typically situated in western cultures. This notion is perpetuated in literature that credits social policy and deficit fathering to the social construction of fathers (Gregory & Milner, 2011; Højgaard, 1997). Furthermore, Jordan (2009) discusses the work of Gavanas (2004) that suggests that the "binary notions of gender in fatherhood politics are inextricably linked to notions of heterosexuality and complementarity" (Jordan, 2009, p.429).

The roles of fathers need to be disentangled from the deeply embedded gender binary in order to trouble the socially constructed messages that contribute to the

complexity and layers of the lived interactions of fathers. An attempted disentanglement is identified by Doucet (2006, as cited in Jordan, 2009), who contended that "the equal parenting perspective thus relies on a purportedly gender neutral claim that fathers 'can be just as nurturing, affectionate, responsive and active with their children as mothers are'" (p.429). However, to put parenting equity claims in context, Einstein argued that "if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing it is stupid". This sentiment is true of parenting roles and expectations. If a father is judged by his ability to be a mother, he cannot reasonably achieve success because it is impossible for him to excel at something he is not, which is not to say he cannot be exceptional within his own construction of fatherhood. Jordan (2009) credits Gravanas (2004) for identifying the "'new father' who 'unlike the distant patriarch of the past, is involved in everyday parenting'" (p.425).

Societal influence. The 2012 movie, *What to Expect When You're Expecting* highlights the dialogue between men on the topic of fatherhood in the weekly meetings of the "Dude Group"; a diverse group of men who meet every Saturday at a local park with their children to discuss the nuances, roles, and intricacies of navigating the social, familial and cultural systems as fathers in the 21st century. More recently, a reality show premiered on the Art & Entertainment channel (A&E) called *Modern Dads,* which follows the daily lives of four men who are stay-at-home fathers. Pop cultural opportunities such as this are an invitation for men to speak openly about their experiences of 'new' fatherhood. Increasing evidence of the 'modern dad' documented in political policy reform, popular cultural references and with an increased presence in media reinforces a notion popular with social constructionist theory and quoted by Brown

(2004) that suggests you find what you are looking for. Written or charted historical documents present one 'snapshot' or truth, which is removed from the intricacies or complexities of human subjectivity.

Kimmel (2009) a sociologist, founder and editor of the journal *Men and Masculinities* warns against trapping individuals within archetypical social constructs which are both unfair and inaccurate (as cited in Anderssen, 2012). The human experience is complex, based on relationships and not definitions. In a blog written about men and fathers a writer commented that rather than being a father figure he is, in fact a Daddy, an identity earned and valued, implied from the degree of intimacy the word daddy assumes, through subjective relationships and experiences.

An Examination of Social Constructionist Theory

Historical background. The history of modern positivists was immersed in the practice of removing self from the subject of study, and evolved into a post-modern perspective that emphasized "an understanding of history as a constructed narrative created by a particular cultural and political milieu" (Geer, 1997, p. 90). This postmodernist and constructionist epistemology led to the gradual erosion of 'objective history' in favour of a 'critical history'. For instance, Nietzsche suggested that "history [was] a work of art – something better aesthetically understood than morally judged" (p. 91). Postmodernism values individual interpretations as valid, reasonable explanations of life and favours pluralism while rejecting grand theories or meta-narratives. Likewise, social constructionist epistemology "argues that no single perspective is more valid than another, no interpretation more closer to the 'Truth', and no measurement more correct" (Greer, 1997, p. 85). Critical thinking however, acknowledges that the notion of there

being a variety of truths is a kind of truth claim; and social constructionist epistemology trying to escape claims of ultimate truth, but is caught in making a claim that has ultimate implications. Pluralism and multiplicity of perspectives makes space for the co-construction of subjective social realities. Mary Gergen (2010b) contended that:

> [The] social constructionist orientation is not designed to abandon any particular discourse, but rather to open up a new range of reflection and creativity. It also invites people to create new theories and methods that may meet challenges in ways that are congenial with one's values… nothing is universally the Truth; rather truth is located within particular communities of science. (p. 262)

Conceptualizing fatherhood as a subjective experience influenced by cultural, traditional, economic, spiritual, religious, historic, and systemic variables, creates space for perspective and possibility to replace absolutes and universalities. What is true for one father will most certainly differ from the inherent reality of another. It is in the telling of those realities and the sharing of how subjective experiences are formed where emerging theory and methodology are forged. This is evident in the social constructionist theory of multiplicity.

Ken Gergen (2009) illustrated the concept of multiple possibilities applicable to a singular notion with his interpretation of the social constructionist theory of multiplicity. According to the social constructionist, a human being may be viewed and described differently yet accurately from a variety of perspectives according to subjective experiences, values, relationship and location within a specific community.

- A physicist may see a configuration of atoms and molecules

- A biologist may see interdependent systems of DNA, bone, tissue, muscles and organs

- A theologian may focus on the soul or spirit

- A philosopher may challenge the existence of the being at all

- A psychologist may see the emotional, relational and behavioural capabilities

- A father may see a child, with his mother's smile.

These definitions are valid interpretations, located within the discourse or system the individual and subjective experience inhabits, influenced by relationships both past and present, serving to contribute to the construction of the subjective reality. A positivist discourse would likely favour the interpretation of the physicist or biologist. A postmodern paradigm, as described by Morley and Hunt (2004) emphasizes "the primacy of the social and the historical over the natural and the scientific" (as cited in Hosking & Morley, 2004, p. 2). Wittgenstein's (1922) *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* adopts the "slogan that people do not discover reality – they invent it" (Hosking & Morley, 2004, p. 2). Unlike the natural systems, social systems cannot exist without human beings, but are in fact what they are because of the ways human communities define them; language and relationship are constitutive of reality. Hosking and Morley (2004) highlight seven key themes found in the works of the eighteenth century critics of the Enlightenment, such as Vico, who they refer to as being a clarion to the social constructionists. They paraphrase these themes into a more psychological language and add an eighth theme.

(1) Worlds are artificial and constructed by people. As people change their constructions they transform their worlds, and in doing so change themselves.

(2) Those who create something have some sort of privileged access to their own creations. They are able to understand them in ways other people cannot.

(3) We invent some things, such as mathematics, and our knowledge of such things has to be understood as different from our knowledge of the external world.

(4) To understand human history we need to understand cultural change. To understand cultural change we need to understand forms of life. Forms of life are explicable solely in terms of certain purposive activities.

(5) Invention is a natural form of self-expression rather than an instrumental product.

(6) Such creations are to be understood by 'a correct grasp of the purpose and therefore the peculiar use of symbols, especially of language, which belong uniquely to their own time and place' (p. 10).

(7) There is a new category of knowledge, that of reconstructive imagination, sometimes called fantasia.

(8) The laws of mathematics are only true, Vico says, because they are invented and, in some sense, we have made them true. He states this in the slogan that 'The true [verum] and the made [factum] are convertible'. (p. 3)

Social Construction, fatherhood and gendered masculinity. The psychological language inferred in these themes by Hosking and Morley (2004) suggests that all psychologists are constructionists. They promote the human mind as a device that has evolved to the point of being able to make sense of the world providing explanations, rationalizations, and understanding. Hosking and Morley (2004) discuss the work of Bartlett (1958) in reference to *Thinking: An Experiment and Social Study*, in which he

related the extensions of evidence to social norms guided by institutions and customs. He studied the capacity of the human mind to take into consideration the constraints on social interactions (conversations) and social conventions (norms) when determining what counts as evidence, combining the social with the physical, (Hosking & Morley, 2004). "What we learn and how we express that learning is very much affected by those we meet, where we meet them, and by our relationships with them" (Hosking & Morley, 1991, p. 26). Burr (2003) concurred with that sentiment and in addition explored the possibility that a position of psychology may be central in the surveillance and regulation of people. Gerson and Peiss (1985) as cited in Kimmel, Aronson, and Kaler (2008) discussed how gender boundaries perpetuated inequality even when the attempt is made to resist traditional gender roles.

> Men's household labour appears to have increased somewhat in recent years, while ideological support for it (e.g., public discussion of paternity leaves) has grown. At the same time, women and men continue to define male household activity as secondary and marginal, taking the form of 'helping out'. The bulk of housework, childrearing and care taking remain women's work. (Kimmel, Aronson & Kaler, 2008 p. 84)

Thirty years after the introduction of paternity leave the discussion persists; Bielski (2013) a journalist for the Globe and Mail, comments on the irony of societal acceptance of active full-time fathers who received comments from members of their community who refer to their childrearing as "babysitting" (Bielski, 2013, p.1). Kimmel, et al (2008) discussed gender within a sociological approach as roles that should be understood as sets of improvisations on basic underlying gender themes, not as fixed scripts to be acted out

or written. Gender is performed in a multitude of different ways in relation to individual experiences and encounters with others. Gender is not something that one has, but rather a process that one does in everyday interactions with others (Kimmel et al., 2008).

While the current social construction of fatherhood may imply gender equality in both the workplace and family, this domestic exchange is not supported by research. Some men may resist traditional gender boundaries yet within most social constructs the traditional and dominant hierarchy continues to define what will be considered appropriate divisions of roles inside and outside the home. For example, the financial provider holds greater esteem than the domestically based primary caregiver. To refer to the domestic duties performed by fathers as "helping out" and "babysitting" coupled with the image in popular culture of the stay-at-home father (aka Mr. Mom) as a caricature of a real man; a comical figure satirizing domestic masculinity as something to be dismissed rather than aspire to, all serve to perpetuate the notion that masculinity and fathering are not complimentary notions.

Gender performed. Masculinity typically evokes images of independence, strength, power and dominance as identified by Katz (1999, 2006), a sexism activist and researcher who examines the masculine *Tough Guise* (1999) associated with violence and gendered masculinity. A challenge to traditional masculinity and gender roles disrupts heterosexual power and privilege favoured by the dominant leaders of society who make and maintain the rules that perpetuate their positions within economic, political, and domestic culture, such as men receiving higher wages than women in comparable employment. Katz (1999, 2006) suggests the performance of gender roles as defined by dominant social structures is a reflection of unchallenged hegemonic hierarchies

remaining in positions of power and influence. The feminist movement can be credited as the catalyst for the evolution of fathering; men and women in the latter part of the 20th century began to challenge the existing social structures and gender roles performed to enable gendered inequality. Subjective positioning, experiences, and 'acceptable' language used to define and discuss masculinity and femininity blurred the boundaries separating men and women by seeking to create equality across the gender spectrum. Disruption of the ideological masculine identification created space for a variety of options and opportunities for men to perform gender outside the traditional boundaries making possible a more complex and postmodern definition of masculinity and fathering.

The language associated with masculinity and fathering has the potential to suppress the evolution of men identifying as active fathers or support the change process, accepting active fathers as equal, worthy and important aspects of the gendered performance of masculinity. An example is illustrated in the feature film: *What to Expect When You're Expecting* (2012), which highlights the complexity evident in the evolution into fatherhood. In my opinion, the conversations in the "Dude Group" provide valuable insight into current issues, insecurities, fears and struggles of identity experienced by the men when faced with locating themselves within the foreign paradigm of fatherhood.

Gergen (2010a) described how Ludwig Wittgenstein, a twentieth century philosopher created the metaphor of language games that has become central to constructionists. Gergen quotes Wittgenstein as likening language to the game of chess whereas: "there are explicit rules about when and how each piece can be played, along with implicit rules of proper social conduct" (Gergen, 2010a, p. 8). Wittgenstein contended that there are game-like relationships such as greetings that can play out in a

number of possibilities but gain meaning only through the requirements of the game, for example if someone says 'good morning' there are multiple possible responses that would be acceptable. Screaming in response or striking out would not however be in line with the requirements of the game and would be cause for concern or rebuff. Wittgenstein extended the game metaphor into all areas of life and relationship, each following a similar pattern or set of rules specific to the topic, category and vocabulary. He called the entire array of relationships including objects, words and actions: *forms of life,* also known as cultural traditions. Within the social constructionist paradigm these forms of life are helpful in identifying how an adjustment in behaviour may be beneficial to understanding an array of 'games' conceived through a variety of cultural traditions, relationships and moments in time. Gergen (2010a) identified how it is possible to "appreciate why terms in which we construct the world come into being" (p. 9). *Language games* and *forms of life* as explained by Wittgenstein (1922) and Gergen (2010a) help us to understand how language and truth gain meaning through relationships. Gergen (2010a) asserted that "for any situation multiple constructions are possible, and there is no means outside social convention of declaring one as corresponding more "truly" to the nature of reality than the another" (Gergen 2010a, p. 9).

This view of language and reality can therefore pose a challenge for understanding the validity of the social world. All descriptions are not equal, subjective experiences and cultural relationship to the world will undoubtedly influence individual perspectives and vice versa. Gergen (2010a) suggested: "The existence of atoms is no

more or less true than the existence of the souls in any universal sense; each exists within a particular form of life" (p. 10).

Returning to the exercise of multiplicity from above, where all descriptions of the human being are accurate, the choice of self-location will depend on which language game or form of life you are more comfortable with and which set of rules more familiar and what is the context in which they will be used. Dominant groups carry more power and influence and have the resources available to promote their perspective on the game over that of others. Examples of this are evident in society's fascination with celebrity and media. The messages men are inundated with daily in the news, on the radio and television, and scattered across the internet either confirms or denies their position within the macro system of acceptable masculinity. Their position is not static, with time and through relationship an opportunity to shift perspective can be made possible. Religion is surpassed by science: creation vs. evolution; which is then influenced by relational theories: nature vs. nurture; and the existence of the brain and body in relation to the metaphysical is re-visited with the emphasis of the connection of the mind, body, and spirit. This is merely one possibility among many. As dominant groups shift in and out of power a shift in perspective, values and beliefs also occurs. The acquisition of knowledge and experience creates opportunity for multiple 'truths' to exist in multiple times, spaces, cultures and traditions. Each shift is true and accurate according to the subjective positions and forms of life through which it is conceptualized and actualized, until new knowledge and experience shift the existing model into a new form of life that more accurately reflects current relationships. A working father taking on the role of

breadwinner is just as acceptable as the stay at home father who dominates the domestic domain. Both forms of life are accurate and reflect current masculinity choices.

Post-entitative thinking located within a post-positivist and post-modern paradigm requires an epistemological shift accepting multiple realities and views of how the world can be perceived, rather than the "brute facts" or mapped reality with a singular or "right" way. Hosking (2005) credited Gergen (1994) who suggested the critical relational constructionism (CRC) is accompanied by the "healthy respect for the 'world as it is'". (p. 67). Rather than concentrating on what is 'real' reality, CRC centers on language and discursive practices that are viewed as constructing relational realities where: "objective-subjective, real-relativist dualisms are no longer relevant" (Hosking, 2005, p. 615). Within this discourse, bounded beings shift to relational processes and emphasis is placed on what is referred to as Wittgenstein's language games and possible forms of life. A man will not be able to truly understand the meaning of being a father until the birth of his first child, at that point the word daddy takes on a new form of life for him; it is a possibility to co-construct an alternate social and relational reality.

A contrasting relation to narratives in reference to general knowledge of reality (ontology) requires a conversation about social practices and how that knowledge is constructed across and within interacting systems. Knowledge is an emphasis on what is validated or credited as local (Western traditions or post-enlightenment) to the ongoing social practices that (re) construct a particular culture or community of practice, Hosking (2005). Historic conventions and processes form over time and space generatively through re-creation, outcomes are dependant on a variety of inter-actions and are rarely foregone conclusions…

Historical quality of relational processes should not be understood to imply a linear and unidirectional story in which the present is a moment between (the now finished) past and the (yet to come) future. Rather, relational processes are always ongoing, bringing past structuring into present (e.g., the convention of shaking hands) and anticipating futures (e.g., that a greeting will be successfully performed). Another way of saying this is that all texts supplement other texts *and* are available for possible supplementation and possible crediting. Inter-actions, and particularly regularly repeated ones, 'make history' so to speak and history is constantly being re-made. (Hosking, 2005, p. 619)

This notion is complimentary to Deleuze's concept of multiplicity: of time, place and in the case of fatherhood, self, the use of language to challenge a dominant discourse. Identity and other assumed characteristics become understood as relational, multiple, variable, and as performed rather than processed in networks of ongoing realities (Hosking, 2005).

Gendered masculinity is therefore a performance of accepted realities sustained within popular culture to perpetuate the dominant heterosexual hierarchy invested in men acting within the prescribed boundaries of their perceived male ideology. The current hierarchy is being disrupted by the younger generations who question the archetypes available to them and are in the process of shifting and morphing the existing masculinities to better reflect their relational experiences. This shift is evident in current statistics that reflect the increasing number of men choosing to take paternity leave, stay at home with their young children and share domestic responsibilities with their female partners:

In 12% of Canada's two-parent families in 2012, it was the men who stayed at home while their wives were breadwinners, up from just one per cent in 1976. More men are also taking parental leave – 13% in 2011, up from 9% in 2004. More strikingly, some 21% of single-parent families were headed by men in 2011. (Bielski, 2013, p.1)

The ability to shift positions within society to better reflect subjective experience influences a multi-dimensional perspective supporting diversity within acceptable roles of performing gendered masculinity in reference to fathering.

Shifting Discourse. The notion of fluidity and shifting discourse is applicable to the discursive dialogue of fatherhood. When the hegemonic norms no longer meet the evolving subject position, there may be an opportunity for a shift and/or manipulation of the discourse to occur. If the discourse in which a man was fathered, is no longer compatible with his paternal experience, it would stand to reason that he would elect to demonstrate his agency to make a micro discursive shift to the discourse of fathering in accordance to his evolved subjective experience and relationship to fatherhood. For example, he may choose to take advantage of a government subsidized paternity leave and take time off from his job after the birth of his child. He may be an active or passive actor, renegotiating in collaboration the parental roles within his household to designate himself as primary caregiver while his partner elects to financially support the family.

The feminist movement initiated the conversation on gender equality and on the notion that men had options for how to identify within their gender in more ways than what were typically designated to them. The acceptance of this movement was not however representative of a smooth epistemological shift in gender discourse. Burr,

(2003) discusses the work of Liebruck (2001) to further understand the realist position of accepting a plurality of perspective. "The world is not socially constituted at a different place depending upon time and place, but that each of us sees different aspects of the same world; we each look at it from a different perspective" (p. 95). From a personal or 'micro' level she explains that the "process of constructing and negotiating our own identities will therefore be ridden with conflict, as we struggle to claim or resist the images available to us through discourse" (p. 110). A possible translation of this sentiment could be that we are exposed to a variety of discourses throughout our lives and as we adopt a discourse as our own we accept the rights and obligations of that discourse. Therefore a new construction of our identity, according to the images, rules, and forms of life will become available to and assigned to (or constrained by) the discourse. This is a very liberal and self-determined assessment of the sentiment, there is not always an easy individual responsibility or accountability within all situations, it is one perspective out of many.

To resist these rights and obligations signals the time for a shift to take place and the necessity to find an alternate discourse that will be better suited to our sense of self, based on our subjective experience, relationships, and traditions at a particular time and place: this concept is known as positioning. "Positioning recognizes both the power for culturally available discourses to frame our experience and constrain our behaviour while allowing room for the person to actively engage with those discourses" (Burr, 2003, p. 113). Human beings are simultaneously produced by discourse and are manipulators of it (Harré & Davis, 1990; 1999). Identifying subject positions as offered, accepted or resisted is what defines us as persons capable of constructing reality, possessors of

agency in what Burr refers to as micro social-constructionism. Subjective identity is a fluid notion influenced by positions accepted or resisted:

> Who one is, that is, what sort of person one is, is always an open question with a shifting answer depending upon the positions made available within one's own and others' discursive practices and within those practices, the stories within which we make sense of our own and others' lives. (Harré & Davies, 1999 as cited in Burr, 2003, p. 114).

Additionally, one's personal history and unique life experiences will influence the extent to which we want to occupy and feel able to occupy particular positions within interactions. For example, within the discourse of my family I will interact in one way, while within the discourse of my job I may alter my position and the way in which I choose to interact or occupy that position. "Positions offered, accepted or resisted in everyday talk are the discursive practices by which discourses and their associated power implications are brought to life" (Burr, 2003, p. 115). In the literature on gendered masculinity, it has become glaringly obvious that the way in which a man interacts at home with his wife and or child that exposes vulnerability or tenderness is not an acceptable way to occupy a dominant position in the workforce or society (Brown, 2008; 2012). Conversely, aggressive egocentric behaviour favoured in male dominant social interaction has potentially adverse and possibly abusive implications in the domestic domain (Katz, 1999; 2006).

Burr (2003) suggests that: "opportunities for identity negotiation and for grasping power occur as we position ourselves and others within a variety of discourses in the shifting flow of social interactions" (p. 118). Understanding positioning and an ability to

use it skilfully are important tools to be able to change self or circumstance. Once invested in a socially constructed discourse and willingly positioned within it, it is inevitable that experience of the world and self will be from that vantage point. A new father will view the world around him in terms of how it is related to his identity within the socially constructed discourse of fatherhood. Activities that once were exciting or thrill seeking may now be interpreted as dangerous and unnecessary; extra money that in the past may have been spent frivolously or selfishly may now be contributed to an education savings plan or used to supplement the expenses of a household with more dependants than contributors.

Self-locations within a particular discourse or domain such as the masculine gender discourse, there is available a particular, limited set of concepts, images, metaphors, ways of speaking, self narratives, and so on that are taken as acceptable (Burr, 2003). The male subjective position can be further limited according to specific discourses within the macro domain; age, race, economic status for instance. The micro categories within the macro domain each harbour appropriate rules of right and wrong (morals) that define the micro social construction and these subject positions can be permanent, temporary or fleeting (Burr, 2003). Subjective location that the individual experiences based on history, culture, citizenship, geography, sexual orientation, family history, relationship and self-identification within a discourse can contribute to the discursive location or perspective. If a man loses his job he may feel depressed and allow that perspective to influence his participation within his micro (intimate) social relationships. He may retreat from relationships, judge himself to be a failure or be considered morally inadequate according to the rules or requirements of his discourse.

Alternately, the same man may be empowered by the opportunity to spend more time at home with his children, and encourage his spouse to take on the dominant provider role in the family. The possibility exists for individuals to resist what they may consider to be damaging subject positions, as part of the way they interact with their environment and the people in it, in favour of more beneficial ones. The knowledge that these subject positions can be altered and are affected by agency place the power with the individual.

As was mentioned previously, "we both actively produce and manipulate, and are products of discourse [which] allows in us the possibility of personal and social change through our capacity to identify, understand and resist the discourses to which we are subject" (Burr, 2003, p. 125). Change is possible because, given the right circumstance, we are capable of critical analysis of the discourses framing our lives (Burr, 2003). Subjective agents possess the ability to claim or resist a discourse according to the effects the discourse has the potential to bring about. This concept is applicable to gender roles and the challenge made to the dominant heterosexual discourse where men possess a position of power and dominance, in so far as those men accept the rights and obligations inherent to that position. Foucault (as cited in Burr, 2003, p.72) believed that change is made possible through opening up marginalized or repressed discourses, for example the feminist movement, as an alternate discourse (Burr, 2003).

The possibility exists for agents to create alternate identities that offer the potential to understand what is constructed by discourse, with the ability to use it for your own purpose. This concept is consistent with discursive psychology, which supports the view that people are users and manipulators of language and discourse, for their own purpose. Foucault identified the power differences available through discursive

psychology "those who are able to warrant voice are likely to enjoy greater power in society, may be given greater resources… and will enjoy generally higher social standing" (as cited in Burr, 2003, p. 136). This is consistent with the social constructionist epistemology: creation of a new narrative or re-storying/telling of an experience through the use of language and relational processes (Gergen, 2009).

Language has power. Language has the power to privilege particular paradigms in accordance with hegemonic discourse through understanding and interpretation. Language can be a powerful tool used to subjugate or oppress certain groups while privileging others. In the writing of an academic paper, for example, the lines of accessibility of information become blurred when the language used favours the minority members of academia while excluding the majority of the population. These words become elite and with them the message is lost. Language also has the potential to create and sustain divisions and boundaries or has the potential to normalize, validate and accommodate the sharing of knowledge and experience. Language has the means of transforming traditions, relationships, cultures and us. Gergen (2010a) suggests that: "as we speak together, right now, we participate in creating the future" (p. 12). He extends an invitation to become *poetic activists*, not through acceptance or rejection of language forms that currently exist, such as sexist or racist language, but rather by participating in the emergence of new forms of language and ways of interpreting the world: what he refers to as *generative discourses.* "Ways of talking and writing or representing the world (as in photography, film, art, theatre, and the like) that simultaneously challenge existing traditions of understanding, and offer new possibilities for action" (Gergen, 2010a, p. 12).

Gergen contends that the social constructionist dialogue is capable of shifting the balance from critique to creativity.

Through this discipline, social constructionists challenge the taken-for-granted logics or realities of the dominant culture and expose how these logics can at once support the self-interest of the dominant group and perpetuate injustice of the marginalized. Gergen (2010a) comments on Derrida's conversation on binaries and the preoccupation the western culture have with the "rational over emotional, mind over body, order over disorder, and leaders over followers" (p. 20). Consider for a moment, if masculinity is associated with rationality, mental control, order, and leadership as Derrida suggested, what are the implications for men who do not easily or readily identify with those characteristics or values? In an article written by Højgaard (1997) the discourse of the stay-at-home father, a role notably outside the dominant male culture, is discussed in terms of ridicule and deficit. Højgaard (1997) comments on the way society disregards a man who rejects the traditional patriarchal ideology of the breadwinner and participation in the dominant masculine roles accepted by the hegemonic discourse of the western culture, in favour of the adoption of a caregiver, domestic or feminized role. Men who are misplaced by hegemonic language forms are referred to by the derogatory title "Papa poule" or father hen; recall how "a father belongs to the masculine symbolic universe inhabited by men, manly virtues, vices and status" (Højgaard, 1997, p.249).

Katz (1999) challenges the dominant male identity in his research, and coined the term: "Tough Guise" to comment on the manufactured stereotypical behaviour males in popular culture often identify with. He suggests language has the ability to perpetuate gendered dialogues of dominance, oppression, violence and abuse through the dominant

discourse of masculinity in popular culture. He argues that men are represented as big, strong, powerful, invulnerable bounded beings; manipulating relationships and situations in order to propagate the heterosexual superiority favoured as appropriate masculine identification. Men who accept the rights and obligations of this discursive paradigm are valued as heroic, sexually attractive, politically successful, and as cultural icons (e.g. the Marlboro Man). Men who resist the hegemonic male discourse are dismissed as weak, feminized, failure, inadequate, unsuccessful, or forgettable (Katz, 1999; 2006).

The binary commitment in the dominant masculine discourse, perpetuates the 'have and have not' located within the search of an ultimate truth. Hosking (2005) advocates for a critical dialogue "exploring how power-full processes construct dominance or facilitate openness and multiplicity – exploring how unitary constructions can be deconstructed and disrupted" (p. 620). Creating space for new possible identities and (local) worlds – to 'transformation' rather than 'finding out'. Hosking (2005) suggests that re-storying the discourse by telling how it could be rather than how it probably is through a relational process has the potential to be world enlarging.

The relational process could suggest ways men could identify in fatherhood that accepts both discursive gender practices of being powerful breadwinner and vulnerable caregiver and also disrupts the binary that incites the contrast or opposition itself. Fathering ideology is conceived from socially constructed messages embedded deeply within the normative gender binary. The way a man is labelled as father can contribute negatively or positively to his experience within the paternal paradigm depending on his identification or position of fatherhood from his historical, familial, economic, political and cultural experience.

Gergen (1999) encouraged a reflection "on our own use of language, leading to more emancipatory ways of constructing things" (as cited in Burr, 2003, p. 141). He suggests we use discourses, opinions, points of view, stories in a "multiplicity of voices" to engage in relationship and co-exist in co-construction of the world we live in. Burr (2003) speaks to the work of Sarbin (1986) a classic contributor to narrative psychology who argued:

> … Human beings impose a structure on their experience, and that this structure is present both in our accounts of ourselves, and our experience that we give to others, and in how we represent those things to ourselves. This structure is narrative structure; we organize our experience in terms of stories. (Sarbin, 1986 as cited in Burr, 2003, p. 142)

Sarbin (1986) suggested that telling stories is fundamental to what it means to be human; we may not be in a position to readily articulate to ourselves the narrative that we have constructed about our life. He believed it is useful to think of these narratives as the ways we live out our lives as well as the way we privately or publicly tell of them. Invitations to engage in dialogue about the evolution of fatherhood and gendered masculinity create space for shifting discourse. Power exists in the ability to act, talk, question and seek meaningful insights into the ways men occupy their gendered positions in the 21st century; it can be as simple as acknowledging the ways a father nurtures his child, or as complex as a Master's thesis on gendered masculinity with implications for fatherhood.

Lived experiences necessarily fall into themes that we may use to define and reflect upon subjective experiences, in an ordered structure. Dreams, memories and plans for the future exist within the narrative structure of a story with a beginning, middle and

end. Sarbin (1986) contended that narrative structure is "hard wired" and children adopt traditional plot structures as they grow up to represent their own life story (as cited in Burr, 2003). The opportunity exists now to influence future generations to continue to challenge and disrupt antiquated stereotypes that promote static views on masculinity. Time and space are essential elements of narrative discourse; therefore subjective location within discursive practices will influence the themes and socio-historical perspective. The construction of role models of masculinity that reflect the fluidity of possibilities available to men in their self-identification allows for a greater potential for narratives to match lived experiences. Burr (2003) identified that social construction as an epistemology argues that it is not whether our theories about human nature are true or false but if they have "generative potential" (p. 144). She also poses the question: "what new narrative in psychology might be useful for people in changing their lives?" (Burr, 2003, p. 144).

Understanding relationship. Social Construction is a term frequently used by psychologists (Burr, 2003) to suggest that all things exist within relationship. Gergen (2009) implied: "all intelligible action is born, sustained, and/or extinguished within the ongoing process of relationship" (p. xv). Though this may be considered to be solipsistic or ego-centric, Greer (1997) argued that it is not; social construction "maintains that there are local normative rules of culture and custom which participate in the shared intelligibility of knowledge… ultimately there is no single vantage-point which offers a more valid perception of knowledge, for there is no context-independent realm" (p. 85). The emphasis from a constructionist standpoint is on the role of values as groundwork for all knowledge. Values are located within the cultural and historical customs and

traditions from which relationships emerge. Gergen (2009) contends that "knowing comes into existence only through social participation. Acts of research only become intelligible and worth doing through a relationship that [proceeded] the acts themselves… I speak with others and therefore I know" (p. 229). It is the suggestion that through the acquisition of new language and ways of speaking, understandings are altered and new ways of acting become possible. Kimberly Dark a Canadian artist and activist, is quoted by Gergen (2009)

> We have been able to relate to one another before our culturally patterned circumstances became real to us. When we see ourselves and each other in the complexity of our experiences, we start to see how we fit together – who has privilege, who is oppressed or marginalized, who seems worthy of love (p. 230).

Gergen (2009) considers relationship to be comparable to a "matrix of connections" (p. 246) and uses metaphor to influence the context of multi-beings into circles. As each circle comes into focus through a variety of lenses, potentials for sensitivity and creativity expand. Relationship exists and evolves through discursive practices that create contextual plains conducive to understanding, translating, and rationalizing information necessary to participation in the language games or forms of life.

> Life by its very nature is dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue: To ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree… In this dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds. He invests his entire self in discourse, and this

discourse enters into the dialogic fabric of human life, into the world symposium. (Bakhtin, year unknown as cited in Gergen, 2009, p. 251)

To ponder the actions of people is often to explore answers that stress the intrinsic pull of heredity or extrinsic push of environment. Mary Gergen, (2001) talks about the "Social Ghosts" (as cited in Burr, 2003, p. 144): those agents real or imaginary – dead or alive with whom we hold private dialogues when reflecting on experiences. They are those whose experiences pre-exist yet inform our experiences; their relationships co-constructed our reality and their dialogues co-created our languages. The narratives of fathers passed down through generations to form culture, legacy and family patterns; the plea of the new dad sent out across space and time to those who came before requesting guidance and wisdom in moments of distress or elation. "People support what they create" (Littlejohn and Domenici, year unknown as cited in Gergen, 2009, p. 323). A poly-vocal author will utilize a variety of voices to express questions, assurances, doubts, and invitations into their writing. A collaborative experience between reader and writer encourages critical commentary that may privilege neither; and rather value the multiplicity of ideas generated through the dialogue (Gergen, 2010a). Constructionists embrace the warmth of relationship over the cool insistence of the positivist academic relying on the imperialistic evidential proof of fact.

> The creation of meaningful language requires social coordination; there is nothing we call language that is born within the private mind. If there were no relationships there would be no meaningful discourse; and without discourse there would be no way of deliberating, in public or private, about "doubt" or "reason". (Gergen, 2010a, p. 160)

Closing Notes on Social Construction

"My Grandmother always told me to make friends with those who search for the truth, but to run for the hills when you meet those who have found it" Karen Dawson (unknown)

Social constructionist dialogue is an invitation to explore alternate ways that subjective experiences, traditions, languages, cultures, relationships, and every other aspect of social and historical life can exist. It exists within the paradigm where a multiplicity and plurality of perspective is invested in narratives that are collaboratively interwoven between time and space to create the domain in which we currently participate. To view the world in terms of flexibility and fluidity makes it possible to manipulate a dominant discourse on a micro social level until it accommodates subjective experience. Acknowledgment that men have the freedom to express themselves in accordance with the subjective positions they occupy makes possible a variety of acceptable gendered masculinity. Antiquated stereotypes and investments in outdated paternal hegemony limit the potential for current and future generations of men to experiment with language that best suits their experiences. Multiplicity of masculine archetypes creates a spectrum, where each individual can exist according to the way they fit into their subjective story. Gergen (2010a) said self-reflection and self-questioning are made possible by the fact we are multi-beings and multi-vocal in our construction and have potential to view the world from a multi-experiential lens… if we try.

Chapter III: Methodology

Methodology

Social Construction

Epistemology. My examination of fatherhood including factors that contribute to the construction of roles and identities of seven fathers working and living in the community of Nanaimo, B.C. is situated within a social constructionist epistemological orientation. This orientation is also the foundation for the methodological framework of the study. Greer (1997) suggests that social construction is an epistemological commentary that represents a new way to think about 'knowing'. He rejects the suggestion that social construction is a theory that can be used to explain observation, make predictions or answer fundamental questions about the world. In his discussion he states that:

> It cannot be 'proven' or 'disproven'. It is not a matter to be settled through 'empirical' debate. And perhaps, most importantly, it cannot be *used*: used to empower the majority viewpoint over others; used to subjugate 'voices' from the margins; or used to exonerate or condemn our actions or beliefs. (Greer, 1997, p.14)

Instead social constructionist theory attempts to understand what is possible and how a truth is both a subjective and accurate account of individual narrative. In this study, I use social constructionist theory to explore the complexities that a small, fairly homogeneous group of men are asked to address as they navigate the intricate social web of masculinity and 'acceptable' ideologies associated with fatherhood. I discuss a brief examination of instances of gendered masculinity and fatherhood as they appear in

popular culture. And analyze how the father/male centric perspective can be applied to current conversations specific to the metamorphosis from gendered male to father figure.

Within current social paradigms of masculinity, a shift occurs on the male developmental continuum from boy to man to father. Without over simplifying this metamorphosis, an investigation into the complexities is useful to determine the intricate social dance men may be engaged in to remain relevant in the shifting social discourse on masculinity. I use the principles of social construction as a guide to understand theory itself, and how it has been "used and abused" as suggested by Greer (1997, p.15). Social construction as a methodological framework influenced the tolerance and acceptance of differences necessary to validate the subjective experiences of the participants in the study. For example, the majority of participants in the focus groups work in professions typically designated as masculine jobs such as: a police officer, detective, construction and welder (trades); with the exception of one participant who is working in the field of Child and Youth Care, a particularly female industry. The construction of the men's subjective experiences, juxtaposed with their intimate familial experiences illustrate the complexities of "doing and un-doing gender" (Miller, 2011, p.1095). I discuss the concepts of nurturing and compassionate paternal figures, as being qualities that are not overtly practiced within the public domain. Vivien Burr (2003) suggests social construction is an invitation to be critical of ideas about the way we view the world and to challenge conventional knowledge based on objective, unbiased observation. My presence as a researcher is evident throughout the study, and addressed repeatedly as a means to maintain transparency and validity, especially within the co-construction of data and analysis. Social construction is a modern and innovative mode of what Greer (1997)

referred to as an influence on social practices, which shape and give context to understanding. Inspired by the philosophy of Nietzsche: human nature cannot be explained by any fixed set of ideas or concepts. Greer (1997) contended that, social construction can "emphasize an understanding of history as a constructed narrative created by a particular cultural and political milieu" (p.9), without assigning 'truths' or generalizing the human experience. Social artifacts rather than concrete objective truths prevail across time and the objective validity of a set of concrete beliefs cannot sustain knowledge created from the socio-historical context. Geer referenced Gergen (1985) who claimed that from a constructionist standpoint rather than objective validity, a series of social micro-processes are important through "communication, negotiation, conflict and rhetoric" (Greer, 1997, p. 85). The social artifacts collected from this study will contribute to the growing consensus that the masculine archetype is in metamorphosis, a state of constant change and development. The experiences of the men and fathers in the study are contrasted to their experiences as boys and sons. As their narratives unfold generatively through out the focus groups, they have the ability to shift perspective as they engage with their peers to witness the stories of evolution and change.

Turnbull (2002) attends to the notion that "social constructionists are interested in developing theory that is derived inductively from the "real world" to enhance understanding of how actors intersubjectively create, understand, and reproduce social situations" (p.4). These social situations will be introduced as evidence of how men construct their identities of fathering within a gendered discourse on masculinity. It is the intention of the social constructionist researcher to seek to explore a subjective point of view through detailed interviewing and observation. The social constructionist will also

seek to examine the constraints of the everyday social world with attention paid to the specifics of particular cases, since "they believe that rich descriptions of the social world are valuable, and they are concerned with discourse and the way language shapes the way we see the world" (Turnbull, 2002, p.7). Spoken and unspoken language colour the lived experiences of these men. Location of the subjective positions of the participants is determined by their use of language both spoken or non-verbal and the way they share narratives to illustrate what it is to exist within the macro and micro systems that inter-lap to create a complex web of masculinity and domesticity. Negotiations to establish acceptable balance between traditional, social, familial, and personal expectations are continually made and re-made as the group forms.

Methods

Qualitative research occurs in natural settings and is grounded in the lived experiences of people. It requires multiple methods and is naturalistic, emergent, and evolving (Marshall & Rossman, 1999 as cited in Kirby, Greaves, & Reid, 2010). Techniques for gathering evidence fall into three categories: listening to what people have to say, gathering stories and narratives in order to advance one's understanding of their experience; observing behaviour, using non-verbal or body language to read between the lines; and examining historical traces and records (Harding, 1987 as cited in Kirby et al., 2010). In this study I apply all three methods to my research to assist in trying to understand the nuances involved in what makes a father. Focus group discussion, data analysis including body language and non-verbal cues, and historical records in the literature review will attempt to unpack meaning in this topic.

Design

Knowledge-building continuum. The research design was developed with the intention to listen to a variety of narratives inspired by reflexivity and to document subjective representation of the way in which (if in fact they do) men reconcile between heteronormative paternal figures and their own lived experiences. There is limited research on the topic of fatherhood from a gendered masculinity perspective. I wanted to explore the father subject exclusively, beyond the binary of the mother/father relationship. One way I attempted to understand the topic was to approach it as a knowledge building process. Yegidis and Weinbach (2002) describe the knowledge-building continuum as being one way to understand research design. "To conceive of knowledge-building in a given problem area as a cumulative process" (p.105). My process began with the accumulation and study of relevant literature to uncover the nuances of the issues faced by modern fathers. The literature review lead me to more questions than answers, and I found myself drawn to father subjects in the media, in blogs and through personal observation as a method to explore further understanding. Yegidis and Weinbach (2002) acknowledge that to question the state of existing knowledge about a question or problem could shift the design toward an exploratory design.

Exploratory design. Exploratory designs are based on the assumption that more information is necessary to be able to understand something. "In exploratory research, we often don't even know what it is we need to know" (Yegidis & Weinbach, 2002, p.106). I wanted to know more about what makes a father, how gendered masculinity and social construction influence the evolution from man to father but my hypothesis was unclear. "Because the relevant variables cannot be specified, there can be no hypotheses to test,

and only the broadest of research questions can be examined" (Yegidis & Weinbach, 2002, p.106). I identified a goal to derive where more research would be necessary and to develop hypotheses for future research and community initiatives.

Research questions. Construction of the research questions were carefully planned to ethically introduce topics that had potential to be emotionally salient for the participants of the focus groups. The research questions also needed to be broad enough to appeal to a variety of fathers taking into account marital status, culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, economic status and religious diversity. Broad research questions make space for the information discovered in the literature review to confirm what the researcher had suspected; building knowledge does not take place in a vacuum, (Yegidis & Weinbach, 2002). Questions that are both general and specific would challenge the men to reflect on childhood experiences and explore consciously constructed and innate beliefs about fathering. The research questions introduce topics that are catalysts for generative discourse. My skills at conducting group discussions drew the participants into the conversation inviting curiosity and the opportunity to expand upon statements. The research questions can be referred to in Appendix C.

Focus Group

A focus group holds space for participants who share a similar life experience, in this case fatherhood, to share and listen to a variety of responses to the research questions led by a researcher, (Yegidis & Weinbach, 2002). The group setting shifts focus from the individual to the collective creating safety and space for validation as well as a forum to explore opposing experiences respectfully. "A focus group produces qualitative data that provided insights into the attitudes, perceptions, and opinions of the participants"

(Krueger, 1988, p.30). Participants can be prompted to think about and respond to issues mentioned by other members that can remind them of their own experiences. A limitation of focus groups is it is difficult to know if the participants are speaking honestly, or if they are revealing what they think is expected of them. It is natural for participants to want to present their most favourable examples of fatherhood to avoid judgment or criticism. Yegidis and Weinbach (2002) suggest that although focus group is a convenient way for research to be conducted in a relatively short period of time, data collected must be used cautiously because of the probability of group influence on individual stories. Data collected from a focus groups is utilized to derive understanding based on discussion as opposed to testing or confirming a preconceived hypotheses or theory (Krueger, 1988).

The initial focus group introduced the concept of the study while the follow up meeting created space for the men to speak to their subjective experiences through the facilitation of generative discussions based on the designed research questions. A copy of the research questions was included in a package the men were given (the package also contained the background information form, confidentiality form, consent form and contact information for the researcher); they had an opportunity to review the questions in the time between the first and second focus groups to prepare their thoughts and potential responses.

At the beginning of the initial focus group the participants were given a Background information form, (see Appendix A) this form was an instrument for understanding the constructed realities of the men that would not necessarily come up in discussion. I wanted to be able to make comparisons between the participants based on

age, marital status, number and gender of children, occupation, ect. The purpose of this additional information was to create a portrait of each participant and gain greater insight into the ways their lives are co-constructed to understand the extent of similitude of social influences. The background information forms were filled out in the initial focus group to ensure completion and collection.

A Consent form was reviewed verbally to make sure the participants knew what was expected of them and exactly what they would be signing up for, including the nature of the research, how it would be collected, how and the duration the information would be stored, utilized and destroyed. Verbal delivery of the information affirmed that each participant was sufficiently informed without assuming they read the form themselves, (see Appendix D).

The Confidentiality form was also reviewed at the beginning of the initial focus group. I verbally reviewed the form, explaining the necessity for confidentially, what it looks like in a focus group and what the limits to it are; I explained that I could not guarantee absolute confidentiality due to the circumstance of a focus group being made up by a group of people. "The ethical principles of anonymity and confidentiality exist to safeguard research participants from harm that can come to them if their identities are intentionally or inadvertently associated with any data that are collected" (Yegidis & Weinbach, 2002, p.40). I encouraged the participants to share their own stories when and if they reflected on their experience at home. When they left the group I requested that they respect the confidentiality of their fellow participants. I explained they are welcome to speak to their own experience and how they were affected by the experience, but to avoid speaking to or naming other participants and their experiences. I made space for

questions that might have arisen in response to the information. I explained that I would be protecting their identities within the data by using one of their initials, (either the first or last) to make it difficult for their identities to be discovered. I told them I would be represented in the transcripts as NL. The participants didn't express any questions or concerns about their confidentiality. See Appendix B for the Confidentiality form.

After the participants had reviewed and signed the consent and confidentiality forms I provided a brief rationale for the project, research questions and why we would be viewing a popular movie *What to Expect While You're Expecting* (2012). The rationale would encourage reflexivity and provide a context around which the men could focus their narratives and how I could shape and co-construct the data. My presentation of the rationale for the study focused reflection on the gendered assumptions and issues concerned with myself as the principal researcher, being female and exploring men's experience of fatherhood. Transparency of my potential gender bias and personal motivation inspired by my subjective experiences was essential to creating an environment of trust and respect. The decision to hold consecutive focus groups was a response to the difficultly I encountered in the recruitment of male participants prepared to dedicate their free time to a research study. Additionally, focus groups as opposed to individual interviews are more complementary to generative discourse with the participants building upon shared experience.

Recruitment

Seven participants, for two focus groups and analysis verification (which was declined by all seven participants), were recruited via advertisements at local parenting groups, recreation facilities, libraries, preschools, elementary schools, and popular

meeting places throughout the community of Nanaimo, B.C. Recruitment proved to be challenging. The demographic nature of Nanaimo, B.C. is mainly concentrated on blue-collar employment with the primary industries being trades, forestry, hospital and university unions and small business owners. My recruitment experience suggests that this community has a shortage of men who meet recruitment criteria and who are willing to be research study participants in this sort of study. It is possible to make assumptions that men involved in the trades, which can be perceived as a hyper masculinized domain, reinforce the existing hegemony of not speaking to father roles as socially constructed. Contrary to that assumption, the narratives are rich, complex and echo the urgency to break traditional stereotypical archetypes.

Dates for the proposed focus groups were postponed three times due to a lack of interested participants. With the recruitment posters failing to draw the interest and commitment necessary for the research to commence, I cast a broader net and accessed the Internet website Facebook. I posted the recruitment poster on my personal Facebook page requesting my *Friends* to share it with their own contacts. Additionally I emailed the recruitment poster to a variety of professional acquaintances and requested they pass the information along to fathers they knew to be appropriate candidates. Eventually suitable participants were found through snowball sampling. I learned from the men who eventually volunteered to participate that their involvement was largely initiated by their partners/spouses who encouraged them to become involved in the study. Based on the limited literature in existence on this topic, I was not surprised to find fathers were not knocking down my door to tell their story. As the literature review indicates, men have not traditionally been the exclusive subjects of research in the area of parenting. There is

a lot more to be explored on the topic of men in the parental paradigm including the assumed resistance to speaking to their fatherhood experience. The participants of this study represent a select portion of the target group the majority of whose presence in the study is reliant on their relationship with their spouse who is arguably responsible for their attendance. Further investigation into the connectedness of the spousal relationship in terms of fatherhood discourse may be necessary.

Participants consisted of fathers of children between the age 18 months and 13 years old with a mean age of seven, comprised of eight boys and nine girls. The participants had all been married; two are divorced and engaged in new relationships comprised of stepchildren as well as biological children, commonly termed a blended family. Information from the Background Information forms and discussions led me to the opinion that the group is homogeneous in terms of ethnicity, culture, economic and demographic factors which contributed to a rich dynamic for comparison and discourse. The men eased into their narratives with little hesitation and appeared to find commonalities within the group, as demonstrated through encouragement and validation of their opinions and commentary. Though homogeneous in many ways, the group did provide a diverse collection of narratives from their past and present family systems and the ideologies they have about fatherhood and the ways they exist in gendered society.

Data Collection

Methods used to collect data were limited to supervised administration of self-administered instruments such as the background information form and generatively created brainstorms and posters, as well as transcriptions of audio recorded discussion. The major reason for supervised data collection is a high rate of completion, (Yegidis &

Weinbach 2002). I recognized the need to have the participants take the time to complete the forms in the space of the focus group if I wanted to ensure a 100% completion rate.

The creation of the brainstorm and posters was consciously made to appeal to the various ways individuals learn and comprehend information. I recognize the value in visual cues to aid in discussion. The brainstorm was created when I asked the men to tell me what they thought the roles of a father were: I used brightly coloured markers to record their answers on a large piece of paper. They were able to see their answers and point to ones they wanted to expand upon or noticed when words/ideas were repeated. I utilized this method with the remaining discussion as the men informed me it was helpful to them to be able to visualize the responses as they ruminated on comments relevant to their own situation. The data took shape, literally, as it were being produced. At one point when the discussion turned to good vs. bad fathers the men requested specific colours to represent each category (green for good and red for bad). I carried forward the intentional colour choices as I began to code the data for analysis. The data from the brainstorm and posters were reflected in the transcripts.

Advantages to this type of data collection are that the participants are able to make immediate corrections or clarifications if the intention of their comment is not met. It also contributes to the validity of the data, as the men are able to identify inconsistencies or errors as they are recorded. Likewise, as the researcher, I was able to identify where more information was necessary to make a coherent statement and solicit further evidence to support the idea with more precise questions. Disadvantages to this style of data collection are the inevitable influence of the researcher, my interest in a particular narrative or line of questions could inspire the participants to focus on one

topic over another. "Researcher's presence can still have the potential to influence the data received. In addition, responses may be influenced by the reactions of others in the room" (Yegidis & Weinbach, 2002, p.230). This influence is significant to the way realities are generatively co-constructed within social discourses.

Data was also collected using two audio recording devices: an iphone and a laptop were used to make sure if one failed the other would capture the discussion.

Participants

During discussion I was able to put together a more detailed illustration of each man as they shared their narratives with the group, in addition to the information provided by each participant from the background information form they had filled out at the initial meeting. Each participant is an example of an 'everyday father' or a 'new father' as the literature suggests (Gavanas, 2004; Finn & Harwood, 2009; Halford, 2006; Miller, 2011; Wall & Arnold 2007; and William, 2008). Their stories are stunning accounts of how they have re-modeled themselves from the traditions of their forefathers to eke out a place within their current familial and cultural systems that best accommodates their individual family needs and identity.

R. R volunteered to be a part of the focus group after talking with a co-worker who had also agreed to participate. R is 46 years old and has been separated from his wife for three years after being together for 14 years. R is a self-employed professional as well straddling the space between blue and white collar as he attempts a change in employment. He considers himself to be the primary caregiver to his daughters (14 & 10) and has been for the last 6-7 years while his wife pursued post secondary education. R is the only single father in the study and was able to articulate the shift that occurred for

him as he evolved from a married to a single father and the struggle of juggling the shared caregiver role with his ex-wife between two homes. R said he spends an average of 40 hours (waking) with his kids per week. And when asked to rate the quality of the relationship with his father he chose 8/10. When asked to rate his confidence as a father he chose 8/10, stating that he "has always been there for his kids" (R, focus group, April 2, 2014) as a contributing factor in his decision.

S. S volunteered to be a part of the focus groups after his wife saw the poster at their son's preschool and encouraged him to take part. S is a ticketed tradesman, he generally works Monday-Friday 8-4pm, however the hours can be longer or shorter depending on the workload; in addition he is on call an average of two weekends per month. S has been with his wife for fourteen years married for the past seven years. He has three sons ages 7, 5, 3. S considers himself to be an active co-parent; when asked about home and work balance, he stated: "I would spend as little time at work as I could, if I could get away from things, I'd get away from things, to be as involved as possible" (S, focus group, April 2, 2014). S rated the quality of relationship with his father as an 8/10 and considers his confidence as a father to be 8/10: "I would say I'm confident but you know again I don't um, feel that if I just do what I think is right, you know if I look after my children's best interests then try and move forward then… I can't say I have ever felt not confident about being a dad…" (S, focus group, April 2, 2014). S considers his involvement with his children to be the contributing factor to his confidence.

B. B volunteered to participate in the focus groups after a friend told him about the study. B is an R.C.M.P. officer. He works shift work and shares parenting responsibilities with his wife who is also a shift worker. He has been with his wife for 19

years, married for the past 11 years; they have two daughters 8 and 4. B considers himself to be a role model to his daughters:

I have daughters so… I, ah, try to be the best husband you can to your wife… so that they see that, so you model their future so their future boyfriends sorta know what to expect…. Sorta model that for them. Try to set a good example of that (B, focus group, April 2, 2014).

When asked to rate his confidence as a father B gave himself an 8.6 "Right from birth [of my children] I've felt very confident as a dad so, sometimes more so than P [wife] (focus group, April 2, 2014). B declared that being a father is "the most rewarding thing ever above everything else" (B, focus group, April 2, 2014).

A. A is a field worker for a large company. He volunteered to participate in the study at the request of his wife, who is related to one of the other participants. A has been with his wife for 12 years, married for the past 9 years. They have three children two daughters 10 and 5 and a 7 year old son. A spends at least 30 waking hours with his children during the week and actively co-parents with his wife. He admitted his confidence as a father is at an 8/10 now but it wasn't always.

It was a little more delayed for me, it wasn't you know immediate, it was more

when like a little more eye contact or a little more…that's when it started to kick

in. I don't remember how long after that was, maybe a few weeks or something.

Ya, it was more delayed for me. (A, focus group, April 2, 2014)

A followed up this initial statement with a qualifying comment about the source of the withheld 2 points:

Sometimes I wonder if I'm missing cues about what they wanna do or are

interested in and am I putting them in activities that they wanna do, or that maybe

they haven't said they want to do it, but am I supposed to pick up on this? You

know do they want extra, am I doing the right thing with extra-curricular

activities? I guess would be something I'm wondering about, I'm trying to scatter

them through different things but they're not really saying 'I want to do this'…

so it's like this… (A, focus group, April 2, 2014)

A was the first in his peer group to become a father.

D. D has a position as a senior civil servant. He volunteered to participate in the study after seeing a recruitment poster at the Nanaimo Aquatic Centre. D is divorced and has three grown daughters from his first marriage; he recently remarried and is co-parenting his 7-year-old stepson. D has been in a paternal role with his stepson for the past 4 years as his wife has primary custody. D's stepson lives with him full time with the exception of one night a week when he is at his biological father's home. D is the oldest father in the study and has the most experience as a father; his daughters are 22, 20, and 18 years old. In order to meet the requirements of the study D spoke to his experience as a stepfather. His parental narrative reflects the entire span of his fatherhood experiences; even though he is reflecting on what it is like to be a stepfather his narratives are inextricably and inevitably linked. When asked about his confidence as a father D said he is a 9/10 and cites his experience as a contributing factor. He asserts that "life is more fun when you're dealing with kids" (D, focus group, April 2, 2014) and that his main role as a father is to be a teacher. As a stepfather he points out the difference between being a father and being a dad when retelling a story about how his stepson failed to correct someone who referred to D as his "dad".

Basically you produced that child and you have some responsibilities; just

because they're yours biologically, doesn't necessarily mean that you're going to

influence them, um I mean you will in some ways I guess if you choose to, but

you can say that that's my father but you may not have a relationship with them.

But you have a relationship with your dad (D, focus group, April 2, 2014)

D's participation in the group illustrates the evolutionary process that has occurred in a

single generation and highlights the generative qualities of fathering over a twenty-two

year span.

H. H is a university student with a background in Social Services. He volunteered

to participate in the focus group after seeing a recruitment poster at the local community

centre. H is married and has been with his wife for 12 years he has two sons, 3yrs and 18

months old. H spends an average of 40 hours per week with his children, or anytime he is

not at school. He expressed an academic interest in the research as it compliments the

work he has been doing in the community and at school focused on gendered

masculinity. H had an abusive stepfather for seven years and commented that he would

absolutely not father the way he was fathered by him. He recalled being smacked around

and learning that his role as a child was to be seen and not heard. He has made a

conscious decision to "be plugged into my kids and involved with them in their lives" (H,

focus group, April 2, 2014). When asked about his confidence as a father H gave himself

a 9.7/10.

I'm pretty confident as a person period. I'm a good person and I expect that I'll do

right by my kids and ah, I have the best of intentions, but even beyond that you

know, and part of it is too, I gave myself a little bit extra grade because I work in

the field with kids, it gives me a little bit added confidence. I have run parenting

groups and stuff like that in the past. It gives me a little bit of an edge. You know

a little more confidence having dealt with parents with kids for such a long time,

you know… helps so when it came to be my turn to have my own kids I felt I was

on pretty solid ground. My wife and I spent 10 years building a solid marriage

foundation before we ever started a family we are 100% on the same page just

you know I felt really confident that we were going to do good. (H, focus

 group, April 2, 2014)

H further reflected that his confidence is something he looks inward for and does

not rely on external feedback. He suggested his confidence is based on the belief that he

is a good person with good intentions and is not measured by his children's choices or

other's perceptions.

C. C is a ticketed tradesman. He volunteered to participate in the focus group

because he is my husband and one of the initial inspirations for doing this research. As I

mentioned before I was inspired to explore the subject of fathers due largely to the loss of

my own dad and the respect and awe I have for the way my husband is a father to our

children. C was hesitant at first about participating in the focus group yet decided to

participate after the difficulty I had recruiting participants. C decided he would take part,

and felt it was important that his narrative be included in my research. C and I have been

together for 17 years, married for 10. We have two children: a 7 yr old son and a 5 yr old

daughter. C said that the most significant difference between the ways he parents

compared to his father and stepfather is time and involvement. "I'm pretty much involved

in pretty much all aspect of my children's lives and want to spend as much time with

them as I can" (C, focus group, April 2, 2014). C rated himself 8.5/10 for his confidence

level as a father, "I feel pretty confident, probably about 8.5 with B. There still is that

little bit of lingering that you might 'F' up really bad and screw up your kid's life

somehow but that's about the only thing" (C, focus group, April 2, 2014). C's

participation in the focus group gave me the opportunity to become more aware of the

conscious and unconscious choices he makes as a father. It is also possible that C

censored the information he shared in the group based on his intimate relationship with

the researcher. I am conscious of his ability and/or inability to show up authentically in

the data.

Privileged Observations

It was exciting to see the way the men supported one another and resisted

criticism or judgment. Profoundly, it was the way the men interacted with each other just

as much as the information they shared in their answers that contributed to my quest for

greater understanding of what makes a father. As a female researcher and mother, I am

intimately tuned into the nuances of parenting from my subjective position, which is also

informed by research, personal experiences and societal awareness. The privilege to view

the parental domain through the lens of seven different fathers was nothing short of

amazing.

Chapter IV: Data Analysis

Data Analysis

Grounded Theory

Analysis of the data remained consistent with the notion of building knowledge and drew on some aspects of Grounded Theory, but did not exclusively adhere to a single theory. "Grounded theory research seeks to learn what meaning people give certain events in their lives" (Yegidis & Weinbach, 2002, p.141). Attempts are made to build theory from data as it is collected and analyzed simultaneously while the research is shaped and reshaped throughout the process of knowledge building. Strauss and Corbin (1990) describe the process of Grounded Theory, it: "provides procedure for developing categories of information, (open coding), interconnecting the categories (axial coding), building a story that connects the categories (selective coding), and ending with a discursive set of theoretical proposition" (as cited in Creswell, 2007, p160). Additionally "it is based primarily on symbolic interaction, which holds that people construct their own meanings for events based in part on their interactions with others" (Yegidis & Weinbach, 2002, p.142). Kirby et al (2010) concur and suggest that grounded theory is the framework for social research; it focuses on trying to understand the relationship between various social contexts and the way people make sense of the experiences they have in their lives. The men in this study have constructed father identities based on the experiences that have culminated over the course of their lives and are informed and influenced by the various father relationships they have been exposed to. Their combined "narrated realities" (Kirby et al., 2010, p.223) create an intersubjectivity in which all

participants are respected as equally knowing subjects. At the end of the research the importance of the embedded meanings these men assign to their paternal experience will be able to demonstrate that the grounded theory analysis is a percolation of all the information constructed through narratives and generative discourse. Bit by bit data coded and combined through repetition of analytic processes, exploring concepts among concepts until the analysis is "saturated" and the data have "spoken" (Kirby et al., 2010, p.223).

At first glance: Open coding. The first level of analysis is a close inspection of the participants, using open coding typical in grounded theory to unpack similarities and differences:

> broadly conceptualizing what the data seem to mean and beginning to categorize them. It requires a careful dissection of interviews, sometimes word-by-word. Questions such as "What is this?" or "What does this seem to mean?" are common at this stage of data analysis an evaluation of their similarities and differences. (Yegidis & Weinbach, 2002, p.141)

The background information forms the men filled out were analyzed to interpret the extent of similitude in the group. I reviewed each form, cataloguing similarities and differences into categories for cross-reference to develop the extent of assumed similitude. From the initial meeting with the participants it was visually apparent the group was homogeneous in many ways. The men were ethnically similar and all appeared to be White or of European descent. They were between the ages of 36-47 with a mean age of forty and based on discussion and observation enjoyed a healthy lifestyle devoid of obvious physical disability. The men are heterosexual and are or had been married to the

mother of their children; additionally each man had been in a committed relationship with his wife for a minimum of three years before conceiving their first child. Furthermore a list of their occupations suggested they had all graduated from high school and had completed some post-secondary education either in an academic institution or trade school. According to the parameters of the study the men have children between the ages of two and thirteen years old. They live within the municipal region of the City of Nanaimo on Vancouver Island. Differences surfaced within the narratives shared by the men about their childhood experiences and are notable with the divorced fathers, one of whom has three grown daughters (whose ages were not factored into the mean ages of the children as they are from a previous marriage and do not meet the requirements for this study's criteria) and a seven year-old stepson. My analysis of the data concludes the lived experiences of these seven men are not a representation of all men's experiences as fathers. It is a glimpse into a small and arguably analogous section of a much larger and diverse collective. In no way does this data speak to universal truths or make assumptions about objective experiences of all fathers.

Transcription. As primary researcher, I was compelled to perform the transcription of data as part of the analytic process. Hours were spent transcribing the focus groups. The transcription process made the experiences of the men more familiar. Reflection on vocal tone, background chatter and non-verbal comments added depth of intricacy to the dialogue. The emotional connectedness of the group as well as the commitment the men demonstrated to their own narrative realities became transparent as the subtle shifts in tone, volume, laughter and silences were studied during the repeated play back of the discussion.

Line-by-line analysis: Axial coding. A second tier analysis involved a line-by-line micro-analytic process of evaluation of concepts and patterns in dialogue and language within the data, what Strauss and Corbin (1998) call "opening up the data" (as cited in Matta & Knudson-Martin, 2006, p.25). The focus group discussions were broken down into smaller bits of data and were organized into colour-coded categories describing patterns or commonalities within the responses. Transcripts from the focus groups were read and re-read repeatedly to unpack the common themes and attempts were made to inter-connect the categories. Data that were conceptually distinct from the group were assigned a number and separated from the group for review of outlying or 'satellite' factors. The data from the single father and stepfather were distinct in their responses. Repeated analysis of the outlying responses concluded that data of the stepfather and divorced father narratives echoed the tone and thematic patterns of the group as a whole. The separated data were reassigned to the existing categories as they lacked significant differences to designate an additional category. Notably the data referring to *Time,* collected from the single father R, contrasted significantly to the narratives from the other fathers and was analyzed in reference to the swift passage of time in shared parental custody.

Within the relatively small sample a similitude of social context and subjective experiences surfaced across the narratives. The homogeneous nature of the participants created both ease and conflict in the analysis. Diversity and contrasting stories about their experiences in fatherhood were scarce, perhaps due to the dynamics of focus groups that suggest individual differences can get lost when something called a "group think" (Janis, 1971 as cited in Kirby et al., 2010, p.145) develops, despite the best interest of the

researcher. My analysis of the data shifted from comparative to exploratory, seeking to understand the lived experiences of the men. The small size of the participant group and the relative similarity of experiences contributed to a caution when making assumptions generalizing fatherhood. The men quickly assimilated and group norms were swiftly formed. Complimentary and collaborative connections may have influenced the selected narratives as a vehicle for conforming. The risk of not belonging; by sharing a dissimilar or contradictory narrative are heightened in a small group.

Patchwork of themes and patterns: Selective coding. Next, an additional reading of the data compared the analysis for cohesive and coherent themes across and within the categories, and indicated how the data would be defined and identified within the discussion. The themes that emerged were interwoven, "building a story that connects the categories" (Creswell, 2007, p.160). Further analysis to disentangle the subtle similarities and differences is required at this point. For example: as connection between categories became more clear examples of *routine* and *roles* became *involvement;* narratives of past and present *ideologies* became *intention* with an over arching theme of *time* as a measurement to examine how traditional and modern fathers have shifted over generations. Evidence to support the initial claim that an evolution from traditional patriarch to modern dad occurred within a dialogue of gendered masculinity; "what it means to be a man in society and what the role is for that" (H, focus group, April 2, 2014). I moved back and forth between the data in the transcripts, brainstorm and posters, and the background information as well as referring to current literature until different "cuts of data" (Kirby et al., 2010, p.223) revealed nothing significantly new, I had used a variety of lens to review the data and felt that more perspectives were not necessary. I

was satisfied at this point that the analysis was saturated, and even though it would be possible to continue to find further possibilities; for the purpose of this study I decided I had enough.

Language: verbal and non-verbal. The data collected from this small group are rich in complexity and subtle in the sophistication evident in the language, non-verbal signals and emotional displays. Non-verbal and body language will be included within the text using italics within parentheses. Sound effects, laughter, and body language were encoded in the data in addition to the spoken words. Throughout the focus group process I had been keeping field notes detailing observations on non-spoken cues and body language to illustrate important information found within the unconscious "tells" so to speak the men had. I suspected these "tells" were evidence of agreement, support of notions and shared sentiments demonstrated through body language; for example the men would adjust their posture by either sitting straighter or relaxing into their chair, shift their position by crossing or uncrossing their arms or legs or nod their head in the wake of a comment. In addition, when the men would laugh in response to a comment or story I interpreted as relaying an ability to relate to what had been shared, signalling a shared or common experience. Interpretation of the non-verbal data represented a unique challenge; men and women assign different meaning to non-verbal cues and body language. External assistance and gender specific guidance was sought to maintain validity of the findings. Conversations with male peers and a male academic supervisor confirmed the assumption that the use of sound effects in discussion can be interpreted as a substitute for expression of complex emotion. Review of the literature confirms it has not been socially acceptable for men to display emotions that could be a sign of weakness

or vulnerability. Jackson Katz (2006) asserts that men are encouraged to channel their complex emotions into more benign channels of expression as an unconscious preservation of their masculinity. Robb (2004) discusses his experience of interviewing men on the topic of fatherhood and how the combination of constructionist perspective and masculinities reveals how the men can be implicated as approaching masculinity as something that is continually worked on, 'accomplished' or 'performed'. He suggests "men will be partly motivated in such encounters by a desire to prove their masculinity" (Robb, 2004, p. 402). Laughter and imitation of iconic sound effects convey shared understanding of a complex web of emotions without the obvious risk to the façade of masculine strength that an overt display of emotion could produce. An example of this is the use of a "light sabre" sound effect within a story to enhance the emotional symbolism of a morning routine that was echoed by a chorus of light sabre sounds from the other dad's. On one level this could be interpreted to be similar to a group of mothers experiencing a well of tears at a shared emotionally rich narrative. Women are typically afforded the social freedom to express complex emotions openly as a way to connect in relationship using empathy; emotional subterfuge is not necessary.

Star Wars **digression.** The example of the light sabre could also reveal multi-layered intricacies and hidden meanings to this group of men, who are undoubtedly familiar with the Star Wars franchise based on their age and the vast popularity of the movies at the time of their youth. It is possible to unpack the symbolism further: the "light sabre" may be indicative of a delicate web of emotional dynamics. It is representative of an iconic and incredibly complex father/son relationship between Darth Vadar and Luke Skywalker where battles of identity, loyalty and innate vs. learned

talents embody the challenges faced within the paternal relationship and perhaps the relationship with self and society. This thread, though intriguing and noteworthy may lead the analysis astray, and therefore shall be shelved for another time or paper at the risk of digression.

Drawing Conclusions From the Analysis

The final step of analysis linked the data collected from the focus groups with the evidence collected in the literature review in an attempt to draw cohesive conclusions about the metamorphosis that occurs or does not occur in the fatherhood domain. The data explained how contributing factors of gendered masculinity and socially constructed influences from the media and peer groups effect the subjective identification each man encountered as they evolved into fathers. The aim of the analysis was not to prove or disprove anything about fathers, but rather to bring attention to a previously neglected parental perspective. The thematic exploration of the narratives critically challenged the assumptions and preconceived ideas about men as fathers in a small community on Vancouver Island. The assumptions arose from scripted research questions and my curiosity as the researcher. The data analysis was not without inferred bias from the lead researcher; I am female and a mother. The research and data analysis were approached with an innate gender bias made transparent throughout the course of the data collection and analysis; it is addressed in the discussion of findings.

Validity. "Validity in qualitative inquiry is more closely defined by words such as trustworthiness, authenticity, and dependability" (Matta & Knudson-Martin, 2006, p. 25). Validity is realized with questions such as: Have I represented the experiences of these fathers well? Fairly? Accurately? Does the interpretation of the data accurately reflect

the narratives of the men and are the subjective experiences critically evaluated and maintained in integrity, presented honestly and without alteration? Narratives from their childhoods and the ways they interact with their children and wives were received and handled with respect and integrity throughout the analytic process. I continually checked in with the participants during the focus groups to ensure I was accurately recording their words in a way that reflected their experiences. In addition I used quotations from the transcripts during analysis and discussion to reinforce the ideologies and sentiments of the participants. I deferred to first person in the composition of the findings to emphasize my own thoughts, perspectives and assumptions. Unpacking and organizing the emerging patterns such as *intention, involvement* and *time* contribute to a coherent illustration of the initial inquiry: What makes a father, according to the collective lived experiences of seven fathers?

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is designed to construct theories that are grounded in the data themselves. It is a process reading transcripts, identifying possible themes, comparing and contrasting themes and building theoretical models. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest thematic analysis searches for patterns across data sets that are important and associated to a specific research question. "This analysis consists of moving from category to category (constant comparative) looking for what is common (properties) and what is uncommon (satellites) within categories and between categories" (Kirby et al., 2010, p.233). These themes become categories for analysis. The process of coding to create established and meaningful patterns is:

- Familiarization with data

- Generating initial codes

- Searching for themes among codes

- Defining and naming themes

- Producing a final report

Thematic analysis identifies implicit and explicit ideas within the data, a process to recognize important moments in the data, encoding it prior to interpretation. It seeks to find the intricacies and meaning in the data set, Braun and Clarke (2006).

What Does the Data and Literature Suggest?

Recurrent patterns and linked categories such as: intention, time and involvement were identified in the data collected at the two focus groups. They suggested that a shift from past to present fathering styles does exist. The seven narratives shared by the volunteer dads from the focus groups were consistent with the evidence found in the literature review. Henwood and Procter (2003) suggest a new cultural image of fathers enables men to assert a new kind of masculine power in a time of cultural shifts to masculinities. Identifiable space is opening up for the "new father":

Rather than destabilizing, decentring, disturbing or interrupting men's sense of purpose in their fatherhood role or their confidence in their standing and identities as men, the cultural image of the 'new man' or 'new father' seemed to have opened up an identifiable space for men to occupy in the complex and changing landscape of family life. (Henwood & Procter, 2003 as cited in Robb, 2004, p.403)

Evidence in the literature combined with data from the focus group suggested a cultural shift away from the patriarch of the past toward what is considered the new or modern

dad. "Dad is somebody, it's more personal, more modern I think. Father is someone who is… you're a father because you don't really have a choice" (D, focus group, April 2, 2014).

> H: I define myself as a non-traditional dad. I just don't conform to ah what it used to be to be a father, decades ago. Kind of the cookie cutter what a father used to be.
>
> NL: So if, you're not that, what is non-traditional then? What are you?
>
> H: Um well I guess it's called "Modern day dads". (H, NL, focus group, April 2, 2014).

The three main themes emerged as continuous threads overlapping and intersecting throughout the data. They were interwoven to create a fabric rich in masculine nurturance and gender-neutral domesticity. The themes invited an exploration into the co-construction of the recently embraced frontier of what had formally been a female dominated domestic domain. These seven fathers explained the nuances of being a modern dad and identified the ways in which they had consciously and innately contributed to the shift. The emerging themes are socially constructed ideologies or ways of thinking about fatherhood and gendered masculinity as a series of possibilities co-constructed within and external to existing discourses, dichotomies and paradigms.

Intention.

The theme of intention ran throughout the data in a variety of ways. The intention to break the pattern of the distant patriarch of the past; the intention to do better than their father had done with them or to try their best to emulate the paternal figures they had; the intention to dissolve gender bias; the intention to be "plugged in" or present and available

to their children and partners as an active co-parent and the intention to be aware of societal expectations and stereotypes that can hinder the progress of gendered masculinity. Intention by definition is: "the thing that you plan to do or achieve: an aim or purpose" (January 22, 2015. http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/intention). The theme of intention involves emotional connection. The fathers in this study have the emotional intention to be present fathers, regardless of proximity to their children. The father with shared custody said that he is still consciously aware of what his children are doing and is emotionally invested in their lives during the weeks his daughters are living with their mother. Even when time to be with their children is not possible, the fathers are still intentionally and emotionally connected as fathers, demonstrated subjectively for each dad.

The subjective experiences of the participants analyzed and organized in the data set collectively builds a story that is illustrated with their intentions through a process of generative discourse inspired by the research questions. The category of intention was further evident with repeated reading of the transcripts cross referenced with the encoded body language and non-verbal cues and the associated links between inferred and stated beliefs. Intention became the key word to compare the traditional paternal archetype with the modern day Dad archetype.

Stereotypical dads. Socially constructed gendered stereotypes perpetuated in the media were identified as a platform for discussion about whether men identify with the images of fathers they have been exposed to throughout their lives. The hegemonic ideal of patriarchy celebrated by iconic and fictitious figures socially created and mass produced in media such as Ward Clever from the popular television show *Leave it to*

Beaver and Cliff Huxtable from the *Cosby Show* (The example of Bill Cosby reflects the fictional character he played on television between 1984-1992 and is not reflective of the real man or his recently uncovered violent behaviour towards women.) were contrasted with comedic and satirized characters depicted by Al Bundy from *Married with Children* and Homer Simpson from *The Simpsons*; neither were embraced as accurate or desirable. One father said:

> I can't say that there's a father on TV or in the cinema that I would love to be "that kind of father". Maybe the guy with lots of money, that's about it. (*Laughter*) but not in a fatherly role… Al Bundy, ya I wish I had a shoe store… (*laughter*) I find that most father's portrayed on TV usually are almost a joke, or comical. (S, focus group, April 2, 2014)

Comments suggested their subjective paternal roles, styles or intentions were not accurately represented by the father characters society flooded their childhoods with or with the expectations from the proceeding and present generations.

> H: They're portrayed like… or often they are nonexistent. I guess the first movie that pops into my mind is *Die Hard* with Bruce Willis. Throughout the movie he's not plugged into his kids, he's an absent father, you know by the fourth movie his kids don't know him, he doesn't have any kind of relationship with them, you know he was never there, always on the job, like that sort of thing. But that's just one example, I'm sure there's lots of examples to support. But I don't think society puts much focus on being able to show a "good dad" on TV (*no, nodding*) or on the movies, they don't…
>
> A: They don't sell tickets as good as…

H: It's entertainment that sells tickets and you have to have drama, where's the drama with a guy being a good father? That's not dramatic. (*No, nodding*) not going to make top dollar because "who cares"? (H & A, focus group, April 2, 2014)

The dads agreed that the role models afforded to them by society had missed the mark when it came to reality and sustainability. When reflecting on expectations from the proceeding generations, comments focused on a father's ability to provide financially for his family at a cost to spending time with them. They commented on the generalized notion that most blue and white collar families were different in the past with women staying home to raise the family while men went away to work or to war. Men were typically not available in a domestic capacity, if they wanted to show their affection or involvement it was done within the sphere of recreation. D commented that his father was an excellent dad; his childhood memories revolved around the game of hockey. Hockey was the medium through which he bonded with his father. When he became a father he had three girls and then a stepson; none of whom were interested in hockey. D recalled having to evolve in his capacity to connect with his children, which meant: "preparing them for school, feeding them, helping pick out clothing, helping dress, making lunches, take to school, pick up from school" (D, focus group, April 2, 2014). Although he respected the way his father showed up in his life, he needed to evolve into a more domestic and emotionally available father if he wanted to connect with his children.

Breaking the patterns. The concept of breaking the pattern of the traditional and stereotypical patriarchal ideal has to do with the rejection of the heteronormative concept of a father being the distant breadwinning disciplinarian whose role it is to maintain the

finances and coach the soccer team on the weekend, leaving all other matters of childrearing and domesticity in the capable hands of his wife.

The role of disciplinarian was absent from the list the men created about what paternal roles they identified with. When I pointed out the discrepancy, the general consensus was that they did not consider that to be their role. They instead spoke to the importance of communication, education and respect. "There's more of a close bond between us I think, as compared to just being a dad and having to be that authority figure you know" (R, focus group, April 2, 2014). Another father explained he made a conscious choice to break the pattern of what was considered acceptable discipline in his family: "Back then it was acceptable to smack around your kids; which is something I'd never do to my own children… the way I was disciplined is very different from how I would discipline my own children" (H, focus group, April 2, 2014). Another dad said:

> I always give an explanation too, after we've talked. I always talk about it. Not only what they did wrong, what caused me to discipline, but how I reacted and if I overreacted in my mind then I'll apologize. (B, focus group, April 2, 2014)

On the topic of domesticity the men agreed that they take part in all areas of family life. The idea of coming home from work to put their feet up and have their wife bring them the newspaper and a glass of scotch, reminiscent of the iconic Ward Clever role of patriarch from the mid twentieth century, was cause for laughter. They shared personal stories about changing diapers, bedtime and bath routines and how the domestic duties and responsibilities such as meal prep, household chores and carpooling were shared. B shared a story of how he and his wife, who are both shift workers, have to be able to do it all if they are going to run a successful household. His role is to be able to do

everything for his daughters and help his wife whether he's combing out hair after a bath or sitting at the kitchen table working on homework after he has made dinner. "When it comes to family and kids and schedules and all that stuff, basically what she does as a parent I sorta mirror" (B, focus group, April 2, 2014). One father, who is now a single dad, referred to himself as the primary caregiver, a title normally reserved for the mother. A description of his experience illustrated the degree to which he has evolved into a modern dad.

> Changing diapers and screaming in the middle of the night and waking you up in the morning, you know ya, it's tough. And hauling them around you know… but you kind of get used to it and you work on it and you can get grumpy. I mean I think that's normal, natural but um like I say they get to that point where they're manageable and when they get to that point where they're using the toilet themselves and bathing themselves, and all that kinda stuff then they become a little more playful and less taxing and then you can address them in a more fun way. You know, now both my kids are getting to a degree where I can play volleyball with my oldest and I can you know take them places and not have to watch them every 2 seconds you know that's been going on for about 2-3 years now, so you can actually have fun with them and tell them you know, hey go bugger off and play somewhere and I can clean the house, or they can help me clean the house. (R, focus group, April 2, 2014)

Being a father according to these men is making an intentional decision to be available and present in the lives of their children:

S: "If I just do what I think is right, you know, if I look after my children's best interests and move forward then…"

C: "Because cycles can be broken, it's different now".

H: "I have the best intentions".

A: "I'm trying".

B: "I'm your dad, I'll always be here for you'll always love me… (*Laughter*)".

H: "I do my best and I still have insecurities like everyone else… I'm doing the best job I can to make my son the best person he can be". (Focus group, April 2, 2014)

These seven men recognized a shift had occurred and they had evolved to keep up with the changing times.

Well when I think modern parent I think co-parent it seems like… the traditional father role, it seems like its gone by the wayside for the most part I think for a couple of reasons: obviously the work environment has changed drastically in recent years as well as the importance – the actual importance is to spend quality time with your children. I think 50-60 years ago maybe it wasn't quite seen that way, just having a parent there, the mother mainly, as a good parent the mother that was what was seen as important, but in reality spending quality time with your children is really the important thing, not 9-5 at the office. Mindsets have changed maybe that's the biggest part, so probably the bottom dollar is the biggest change, but mindsets have also changed. (S, focus group, April 2, 2014)

The attempted dissolution of gender bias in modern families contributed to the shifting mindset that began in 1984 with the introduction of paternity leave. With more

and more women working outside of the home from choice and out of financial necessity the change of traditional "mindsets" marks a sink or swim mentality evident in modern families. The traditional pink and blue jobs are no longer as prevalent in society, as one father commented on "some families are better in "blue job/pink job" and I think now a days they're blending more" (A, focus group, April 2, 2014).

Let's talk about gender. The division of gender in parental responsibilities has also undergone a transformation. When the roles of father were being discussed and the brainstorm was being created, the notion of gender identity was introduced within the first 10 comments. The seven participants take their role in forming the gender identity of their children very seriously. The discussion touched on gendered masculinity in a way I had not typically heard men talk about before. It was inclusive, accepting and matter-of-fact they did not talk about men's work and women's work in binary terms but rather in terms of collaboration, convenience and fluidity.

According to these few fathers it is their role to:

H: define their [children's] future roles in life, what it means to be a man in society and kinda what the role is for that

B: Try to be the best husband you can to your wife… model their future so their future boyfriends sorta know what to expect.

H: We kinda define the scope of what their job options will be when they grow up, based on their gender . I don't want my kids to be limited by what other people are doing.

A: They have to be who they are, the kids, and to try to stifle that then that's bad news. (Focus group, April 2, 2014)

These fathers want to promote non-biased possibilities for their children's futures without socially constructed boarders preventing them from work in non-traditional gendered jobs.

How do these few men tackle the gendered identity issue? One father intentionally decided to buy his son a doll so he can learn to nurture right from the get go. Another father deliberately decided to balk the traditional stereotype and he strapped his son to his chest and walked around the mall not caring what other people thought of him, he was emotionally and physically connected to his son. Towards the end of the focus group I noticed the word father had been substituted with the word parent in the men's comments, so I asked about the shift in language. This is one response:

> I don't segregate myself based on gender, I see myself as a parent not as a male parent, so I could chew the fat with men or women, because we're all going to have experiences with our kids (*ya*) it might be different for men and women but at the end of the day we're all parents. Right? So I don't feel the need to only sit in a group of guys and say ok what's life as a father like? Instead, what's life as a parent? (H, focus group, April 2, 2014)

The data show evidence of how these seven men intentionally refused to perpetuate the gender binary of man vs. women in favour of working in collaboration with their co-parents and going so far as to adopt gender neutral language when sharing their narratives.

Time.

Time as a theme is woven throughout the data set. It is explicit in the intentions the men share about dedicating time to their children or the unavoidable hours spent away

from them at work. It also refers to memories from the past, their own experiences as children and the time not spent with their fathers. The concept of time is present when reading between the lines and exploring the hidden meaning in the data such as: the uncontrollable passage of time in the swift movement of childhood development, the time spent investing in relationship prior to starting a family, and time used as a commodity when distinguishing the value of a man; time invested in career vs. time invested in family can be perceived as defining masculine worth. There is also a sub-theme dedicated to the special time that encompasses the collected, stolen and horded time the dads cherish when they have their children all to themselves and memories are made.

To have or not to have time. Overwhelmingly the seven men in this study discussed time in terms of have and have-not. C commented on a comparative assessment of the generational gap between himself and his stepfather "he was very… or he was busy; all the time. Well you know, I'm busy but I make time, for the kids" (C, focus group, April 2, 2014). S illustrated the challenge of being a working father and finding balance: "I would spend as little time at work as I could, if I could get away from things, I'd get away from things". R also compared himself to his father: "I think I spend way more time with my kids". He admitted his dad worked away and did shift work; he also acknowledged he grew up in a generation where kids had freedoms to explore and parents did not necessarily monitor their time as strictly. He enjoyed the freedom to go fishing and exploring in the woods with his siblings and friends, it was not something he relied on his father to do with him. Time spent with children has shifted over the generations due to social constrictions and expectations. Perhaps fathers are spending more time with their children because of societal pressure to entertain and monitor the

lives of their children. Society has become more interested in the ways children are supervised, therefore acceptable parameters of freedoms have tightened up which results in forced (encouraged) supervision of previously unsupervised time. In March 2015, "free-range" parents from Maryland, USA were found negligent after allowing their children to walk home from the park unsupervised (Francis Ward, 2015). The parents are advocate for "free-range parenting, which supports the idea that children learn to be independent by making choices. The outlook often also supports giving children unsupervised time outside their homes" (Francis Ward, 2015, para. 4). A shift from the freedoms enjoyed in the past is not necessarily consistent with current parenting practices or expectations, as echoed in R's comments:

> I lived out in the boon docks so we had to find ways to keep ourselves busy and we had a river and all that stuff so I hunted and I fished and caused trouble where ever I could, but our kids now a days it seems like everybody's got to keep them in all kinds of different functions, and so, we do piano, tae-kwon-do, volleyball, dance you know in a week. (R, focus group, April 2, 2014)

Perceived paternal confidence. Review of the data suggests a consideration of time to be an underlying presence in the equation of these experiences of fatherhood. When asked on a scale of one to ten how they would rate their confidence as a father one response shifted my interest in their confidence to the underlying concept of time. "My wife and I spent ten years in a solid marriage foundation before we ever started a family we are 100% on the same page" (H, focus group, April 2, 2014). From a review of the personal information provided in the background forms I was able to conclude that an investment of time had been made in each relationship before the conception of their first

child. The men indicated they had been in a committed relationship for a minimum of three years and up to ten years before starting a family. Becoming a father was not a decision taken lightly by the participants. They had each cultivated environments conducive to childrearing and had made the evolution into father in collaboration with their partner. They discussed the implications for their lives prior to introducing children into the mix and were prepared for the financial and lifestyle shifts before they happened.

The intention to spend time at home with their children was made consciously which is reflected in their parental beliefs evident throughout their narratives. The investment of time surfaced again when I had asked the fathers about whether they perceived their confidence would waver as their children grow into teenagers. The discussion revealed the belief that the investment of quality time with children from the get-go will lay a solid foundation to weather the inevitable ups and downs as they grow and push boundaries as illustrated by the following narrative:

> If my kids get derailed down the road I don't personalize that as being it being a failure as who I am as a father and how confident I am as a father. There's so many other variables that come into play right (*oh ya, nodding*) so I don't, you know if my kid is out doing drugs or drinking, whatever, I don't say: well I'm no longer confident as a father, cause my kids not doing what I think he should be doing making all great choices, however you define "right" choices, but you know I'm still going to have confidence that I'm a good father you know I treat him well, I do my best and I still have insecurities like everyone else… I'm in this stuff when maybe I should have done more and this and that… but it doesn't shake my confidence as a father. (H, focus group, April 2, 2104)

The passage of time. Urgency relating to the passage of time in terms of child development was evident most prominently in the narrative of the single father.

> You know you can think the summer's coming but in a broken family it's even worse because say you have one month out of the two you're with the kids so that's 4 weekends out of 8 now, so it's quick. It makes life a little more … I kind of see them growing up faster, and just getting by it, getting through it just making sure they're happy and looking for some quality time when you can whether it's camping or going out for dinner or whatever it has to be. The main difference for me would be the amount of time being able to spend with them. Now a separated family, it's harder to do that because you only have blocks of time and a lot of those blocks of time are booked up doing other things that involves the kids. I think ya, that and trying to find quality time that you could have had as a complete unit family; because if you're not you're having to split basically half your life with them. Say there's 4 years of high school you would have to spend with your kids, now you basically only have 2 years if you have a one-on, one-off type of thing. So they grow quicker. (R, focus group, April 2, 2014)

R went on to further discuss the importance of quality time:

> Sometimes late at night if we're still up, I like to play guitar and I try to get them, and they like to sit and sing or something. But the reality is that during the day and afterschool and work and getting the kids through all their functions, there's really not that much quality time left. It's pretty much bedtime then they do the

same thing over the next day. And on the weekends if there's more volleyball camps, or… there really isn't a lot of time. (R, focus group, April 2, 2014)

The lost, broken, shared and half time experienced by the divorced father is contrasted in the narrative of the stepfather experiencing a prolonged childhood phase with the relationship with his stepson. D had enjoyed time spent with his daughters throughout their childhoods and since they have grown up and moved out he is now experiencing the same activities, routines and is able to dedicate his time to his stepson. Essentially D is getting double time whereas R is limited to half time.

The daily importance of time. Time as a theme surfaced in a variety of ways in the data, it was also prevalent outside of the data when looking at the research process as a whole. The participant's intention to spend as much time as possible at home was evident at the time of recruitment. Several of the men disclosed that their participation in the research study was due mainly to encouragement from their wives. Their wives had seen the recruitment poster or had heard about the study and had presented the topic to them. They admitted that they probably would not have volunteered on their own simply because they prefer to spend time with their family rather than with a researcher.

Initially the focus groups were scheduled to take place on consecutive Sunday afternoons; at the end of the first focus group the men requested the second meeting take place on a weeknight after work. They preferred to sacrifice a couple of hours in the evening rather than have the focus group interrupt their family time on a Sunday afternoon. This request was cause for reflection on the difficulty experienced during the recruitment phase of research when the focus group dates were pushed ahead three times from lack of participants. Perhaps the idea of giving up quality family time over two

weekends was a hindrance to potential participants who value time spent with their children above anything else. "It's the most rewarding thing ever above everything else" (B, focus group, April 2, 2014). This realization became more apparent as the analysis of the sub theme about special time began to take form.

Special time. Special time emerged in the data in the form of narratives. The fathers shared anecdotes and stories about cherished time spent being dads.

I have learned how to play the guitar over the past 10 years and T now has a guitar as well and we will quite often go into the front room of the house and I'll play the guitar and I'll make up silly songs and I'll sing them about T and something T's doing and see him… the other day for example he's playing his trains in that room and as I'm doing the song I'm changing the lyrics to what he's doing and he gets my level of teasing and all that he'll be like "come on D…" and he's just smiling and he has this look on his face and those are the moments that I really enjoy. (D, focus group, April 2, 2014)

D reported that being a teacher is a role he cherished as a dad. He also defined the difference between being a dad and being a father. He embraced the opportunity to teach and spend quality time with his stepson who has been a large part of his life for the past five years. "I had had a ton of opportunity to be on my own and I think when you realize that there's more… life is more fun when you're dealing with kids" (D, focus group, April 2, 2014). Special time devoted to teaching children is a thread that has surfaced across the narratives. R reflected on an experience he had with his father that he wanted to recreate with his children.

My old man taught me how to drive when I was 12 or 13, being out in the country we were able to get around doing things that most kids wouldn't. And so just last summer when we were at our trailer at [the] lake, I took my daughter out, she was ah, just turned 13. I put her in the truck I got in the other side and I said ok well, drive. And I took her down to the power lines and I taught her how to drive and she was ecstatic about it, you know, (*ya chatter, awesome*) she learned how to drive, forward backwards, you know I taught her how to drive and at one point I even got out of the car so I could film it, and she just loved it. (*ya, chatter*) And then I did the same thing with my youngest, she was only nine and, well I put her on my lap, she's not that big yet, and you know she loved it too, it's just things like that that most kids won't have that experience until their 16 or ya those are great little moments. (R, focus group, April 2, 2014)

The dynamic of the group changed significantly with the telling of this memory. The men sat up straighter, leaned forward and interrupted the narrative with happy chatter reflecting on similar experiences they had with their fathers. I also gravitated to this narrative as it echoed a beloved memory I had with my dad. The ritual of learning to drive a truck on back roads or in parking lots; a type of initiation or passing of the proverbial torch so to speak between father and child. It is a valued and anticipated time for both the fathers and children, not confined to gender. Special time is not reserved for teachable moments or rituals; it is also reported in the daily routines the fathers look forward to as well. For instance, A shared the following:

A: My kids, well my daughters sleep in all the time but my son gets up with me at 5:20 in the morning, and he gets up like a routine thing, he gets up and I get up

and hit the coffee button and I hear him, I hear his light sabre come on in his room

(*laughter*) Swoosh (sound of light sabre) and he hits the lights, comes out and

feeds the dog and then we just sit, sometimes in silence on the couch for 15

minutes in the morning or we just quietly talk about whatever… you know, for

just like a half an hour in the morning and that's, that's great.

(*sound effects*) (*laughter*) I love hearing that too, you know it's like oh he's

getting up this morning, and you know 9 mornings out of 10 he gets up with me,

and sometimes he sleeps in but when I hear that it's like: oh good, he's getting up.

NL: It's a good way to start your day…

A: Ya it is. (*Big smile.*) He comes out with his blanket and just kinda snuggles in

and we just kinda slowly wake up together. (Focus group, April 2, 2014)

The importance of their routines and the roles the men from the focus group speak to are

unpacked to become the third theme in the data analysis, involvement.

Involvement.

The ways men are involved in family life has evolved throughout time. Wall and

Arnold (2007) said that a "new father role identity has emerged, one where the father is

more emotionally available to his children, more nurturing, more affectionate, and less

distant" (as cited in Dick, 2011, p. 108). Dick (2011) concluded that most new fathers

truly want to be more involved in their children's lives. The first question asked of the

men in the focus group was about the roles they apply to fatherhood. The list included:

role model, protector, coach, teacher, [primary] caregiver or nurturer, and provider. D

said: "my role as a dad is based on me simply being a positive role model who's involved

in every aspect of my child's life". When asked to speak more about that, the discussion

evolved into a generative discourse on what it is to be a dad. Essentially the dads represented in the data want to be involved in the intricacies of family life and attribute all aspects of fatherhood to the concept of involvement.

> H: I'm involved with them, I'm plugged into my kids and involved with them in their lives.
>
> C: I'm pretty much involved in pretty much all aspects of my children's lives.
>
> S: I try to be as involved as I possibly can.

What is involvement, and what are the details that speak to the intricacies of all aspects of a life? One participant was able to articulate his involvement with a variety of examples:

> D: So it starts from in the mornings preparing them for school, feeding them, helping pick out clothing helping dress, making lunches, take to school, pick up from school.
>
> I'm the "safety net".
>
> I have an opportunity to influence them.
>
> When I became a father and then a dad to my girls as they started to get older and the same thing with T was that, I try to be that influential person that is there and can be depended on.
>
> I am the go-to person and I like it. (D, focus group, April 2, 2014)

Memories can create present reality. To unpack the concept of involvement data were reviewed again searching for examples of involvement that would provide more clarity. Data were colour coded to identify references to roles and routines that indicated involvement. Additionally narratives that included felt responses to roles or routines were included in the category of involvement; examples of this were illustrated

in the telling of memories from the participants' childhoods or stories of how their own children respond to their involvement. One narrative from D reflected on a collection of memories of specific interactions with his father:

> Our lives revolved around watching hockey, talking about hockey, playing hockey and it was our safety net, and our dad, he was also a very good hockey player, but he sacrificed everything to make sure that my brother and I were given every opportunity to play the sport and fortunate for him and for us that we loved it. And what it did is he was involved in every single portion of our lives including hockey. He was always there and lot of parents weren't there, but he was always there. He was our biggest supporter. Everything that he did impacted me… (D, focus group, April 2, 2014)

D uses the hockey analogy repeatedly throughout the focus group specifically the term "safety net" which he uses more than once to describe his role as father. Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth & Lamb (2000) suggested men whose fathers were involved in raising them tended to be more involved with their own children and take more responsibility for them. D's father's involvement throughout his life and the importance placed on a shared or common purpose, in this case hockey, set the foundation for D's future aspirations in fatherhood.

Daily routines. B shared a story about bedtime and how his involvement in daily routine contributes to the gratification he feels in being a dad:

> If you're present and involved there's little moments everyday that you kinda notice more. For example the night before last E upset me, but she knew she upset me, she deserved whatever but, she wanted me to put her down to bed and when

we were laying there, we were looking at each other and rubbing each others head, and then she rubbed my head and she goes "ah", I went to her I said "you're my little baby" and she said "I'm not a baby anymore dad" so I said "ok, well you're my little girl but you're still my baby" and she says "ya" and she looks at me and she says "you're such a handsome man" so right there and then you just know that's this is the best thing in the world, because there's nobody that loves you more than your kids, right? (B, focus group, April 2, 2014)

The daily moments snowball into a collective sense of pride that defines a life as a father, according to the seven men in this study anyway.

It's a progressive thing, each time you go through a new stage you just feel more proud but in a different way until… like from the time that they're [your wife] pregnant and you're proud that you're going to share this amazing experience with your spouse to the moment that they're born and you see them and you're like wow! That's mine! To the first time they make eye contact to the first time you walk in the mall and they hold your hand or you go in and you catch a ball with them. It's a progressive thing. It's this bundle of pride at being a dad. (H, focus group, April 2, 2014)

Involvement is a choice. On the flipside the men also shared narratives that illustrate the hazards of not being involved, explored in terms of a cautionary tale experienced not as a father but from an interaction with a youth at work. Ensuing comments are feedback that arose within the group in reference to not being involved. B recounted a paraphrased exchange he had with youth in the past during the course of his employment.

B: It's the biggest part of it… Be involved, from what I see, ya. I've seen a lot of kids that have gone off the rails, perfectly good families but the only missing factor was their parents weren't there for whatever reason, and that's the biggest… [I would ask them:] "So, why did you…?"

"Well cause my parents were never there for me…"

"What are you talking about kid? Nice house, nice this.

"But they are never there though" [B went on to say] You might meet a 13, 14, 15 year old and you're thinking to yourself: What are you doing out, right now? Where the hell are their parents? How come they're not keeping track of where you are and knowing what you're doing?

A: And just always having them know that home is the safe place, you know you don't have to go out there and find a safe place. Repercussions are never that bad, at home. (Focus group, April 2, 2014)

S shared his own opinion on how being an involved dad will hopefully benefit his children.

S: The more you're involved (*that's right, nodding*) the more you're going to you know, mitigate what, probably what the bad choices, wrong choices they might make and when they do make wrong choices you'll be able to identify them early on and that's going to be key. The term being involved… you're involved but you're not, you're not hovering and you're not telling them the way it's going to be. You're just observing and making, well hopefully making good suggestions. And you're right there: mistakes happen along the way and…

C: You're a guide you know what I mean? You're a guide through…

S: Being an involved parent will hopefully lead to them being able to talk to you,

later on. (Focus group, April 2, 2014)

Being involved sets a foundation for your children so they will feel safe to experiment with life and take calculated risks with the confidence of someone to fall back on if they need it. It is the practice of unconditional love and walking the talk. "You have a little one, a girl or boy, that's yours and you're its world and you're there to protect it and there to do everything you can to make sure they're safe and raised well" (S, focus group, April 2, 2014).

What do the statistics reveal? Paternal involvement and responsibilities have increased over the past few generations. According to statistical findings, fathers from intact two-parent families used to spent 30-45% as much time with their children as the mother did, and now spend 67% as much time as mother on week days and 87% on weekends (Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth & Lamb, 2000). It is not clear why the numbers have increased but Cabrera et al (2000) suggest the increase may reflect increased maternal employment rates, flex schedules, and home-based work. Flexible hours and shift work, evident from the comments made during the focus group, contributed to men being at home and caring for their children more than their fathers did for them.

Chapter V: Discussion of Findings

Discussion of Findings

Shifting Paradigms

The task of exploring the concept of fatherhood in terms of what makes a father and how gendered masculinity is accounted for in a socially constructed environment, inevitably led to more questions than answers. Previous research on fathers has tended to look at the narrow approach of the dichotomous relationship between man and woman and perhaps more profoundly man and father, that minimized the complexity and richness of the subject. Systemically fatherhood was not understood apart from mothering and the contributions fathers make are not recognized as symbolic of their masculine identity. Typically men were evaluated in terms of their capacity to be a provider and authoritarian, rather than a nurturer and domestic role model, which had been located in the female arena. Men were compared within their own gender as well. Virtues of masculinity that do not accept the shift that occurs when a man becomes a father and the inherent learning and evolution that takes place as a result of the rights and obligations of the paternal role were not accounted for as part of the manly identity. Bruce Willis' character from *Die Hard* (1988) was not valued as a father but rather as an autonomous tough guy. A shift in gender identity has repositioned men within the parenting domain independent of the traditional gender binary. Fathers can be domestic entities within the realm of 'modern dad'. Men who prescribe to the new subjective positioning have renegotiated the terms of acceptable masculinity. Caring for and providing for a family are synonymous across the gender divide and although one author suggests men and

women are far more alike than they are different, Kimmel (2004) evidence to the contrary suggests they still possess unique qualities inherent to their culturally evolved position within society. Gender is a biological construct, Y chromosome and X chromosome signals a cellular difference between men and women; yet if gender is also a social construct are the roles of parents interchangeable with nothing lost? Are men no longer required to emulate their female domestic counterparts to get the parental or domestic job done? In other words, goodbye Mr. Mom and hello Daddy?

What is a "Fommy"? My literature review indicated a shift in parenting practices reflected in gendered ideologies; fathers have had more power than mothers in creating an atmosphere of egalitarian parenting, according to Matta & Knudson-Martin (2006). Yet some men struggle to establish cohesion between desired parental involvement and acceptable masculinity and it remains a societal reality for many fathers. *What to Expect When You're Expecting* (2012) commented on the evolution from man to father and implied the father role was a complex and subjective experience. However it was not without satire and emasculating messages that propagated the stereotype that men do not innately fit into the role of caregiver nor are they accepted in that capacity. In 2014, a popular children's book was remade into a movie: *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* (2014). The movie featured a domestic arrangement that has become increasingly common in recent years; the mother working full time in a professional capacity, competing for advancement in her career, while the father acts as primary caregiver fulfilling all domestic roles including infant care, meal prep, carpool and household chores. The father role was performed with respect and dignity, showcasing the choice to be a stay-at-home dad as valued and accepted. However, a

derogatory euphemism –the Fommy- dismissed the positive message of modern masculinity. The positive message was replaced with the satirical criticism that reinforced the mother/father binary perpetuated in the antiquated heteronormative stereotype. The father was referred to as a "Fommy" (father-mommy) which is then echoed by the infant son as his first word, possibly suggesting the challenge to the emasculation of the domesticated father will continue into the next generation. The movie does eventually get back on course with the message of masculine empowerment and provides hope for the next generation. The father eventually dismisses claims of masculine complacency with the assertion of his choice to stay at home and work in his chosen profession. The take away message was men can do it all, if they want to.

A few good men. Continued challenges to masculine hegemony in the form of patrilineal discourse will enlighten and empower the 'new' or 'modern' father perspective. The Good Man Project (GMP) is a website devoted to masculine discourse. The Editors challenge and trouble existing stereotypes and encourage discursive participation in the re-definition of masculinity. Hattori (2015) commented that: "the more gender stereotypes I drop the more human I become" (as cited in GMP, February 15, 2015).

Universal truths aside, the knowledge claims derived from the data illustrate the value of perspective and the importance of investigation of curiosities as a means to understand how and possibly why gendered differences need to be explained within the domain of fatherhood.

Calling all Role Models of Masculinity

21ˢᵗ century masculinity. John Anderson (2015) replied to a post on the GMP in reference to a conversation about what 21ˢᵗ century masculinity entails. He stated that: "it could only be answered by each individual person. 21ˢᵗ century masculinity is the intersection of what each man believes it to be and what his abilities allow him to make of it" (Anderson, 2015). The ability 'to make' masculinity echoes the social constructionist epistemology that humans are agents of their identity, able to negotiate and manipulate discourses that more accurately reflect their subjective positions (Burr, 2003). As men evolve into the macro system of fatherhood they are offered the rights, roles and obligations consistent with that position. To an extent individual choice of how to perform masculinity exists within the social systems where individuals must contend with other factors such as: culture, poverty, racism, sexism, violence and so on that constrain bids for individuality. Modern dads trouble the hegemonic obligations of fatherhood, shifting the macro system of the public domain by manipulating the micro system comprised of family and friends amidst the storm of political factors fighting to maintain the status quo. At home acceptable masculinity is not constrained by the stereotypical male archetype expected at work and beyond. Men are encouraged to nurture their children, share domestic responsibilities with their partners and abandon the emotionally stoic independence preferred within the public and dominant domains. As the new father movement gains momentum, the rights, roles and obligations of masculinity transverse the micro to macro systems occurring within and across social dimensions, most widely expressed from the platform of media. Opposition to change will always exist, with those among the opposition electing to resist movements that challenge them or their belief system. Evolution and change occurs as a series of subtle

shifts. I heard somewhere change is achieved when you decide to veer off the beaten path: "seven degrees and hold, and eventually you'll get there" (unknown).

Super bowl advertisements disrupt gender. Socially constructed archetypes have shifted too. Advertisements featured during the 49th Super bowl (January, 2015) embraced the sensitive father as an ideal role model of masculinity. Toyota's "My Bold Dad" advertisement featured a father as a gentle playmate rejecting violence in favour of discussion, showing up in multiple ways for his daughter and at the end openly weeping as he watches her leave for college. Even the iconic cowboy archetype has shifted from independent Marlboro Man to a sensitive guy at home with a puppy in the latest Budweiser ads. The men featured in these ads reject the emotionally static masculinity of the past. The traditional Marlboro Man was consistently alone with only his horse for company. He was also displayed as sombre or devoid of emotion; in fact in most advertisements it is impossible to determine emotion as his face is covered by his Stetson, which suggested the overt display of emotion is unnecessary. Men, and in extension society, increasingly demonstrate a rejection of the traditional stereotypes of masculinity and instead are performing masculinity in a way that embraces a diversity of rights roles and obligations. The Budweiser Cowboy is wearing a baseball cap tilted up to reveal his facial features which show a range of emotions from happiness to confusion and eventually relief. The actor committed to the emotions and tears are welling in his eyes at one point. Multiple advertisements that show men expressing a range of traditionally restricted emotions, including tears suggest a distinct discursive shift. Katz (1999, 2006) reminded us in his documentary *Tough Guise* that overt displays of emotions that symbolize vulnerability or weakness other than anger or happiness could be cause for

rejection, discipline, and criticism. Toyota and Budweiser have renegotiated the acceptable demonstrations of masculinity in the 21ˢᵗ century in a bold and overt manner. The Super bowl is watched by millions of men and women across economic, ethnic, geographic, religious, and generational borders. It is celebrated for its advertisements therefore the choice to feature multiple commercials of men rejecting the heteronormative archetypes of masculinity is evidence to suggest the evolution of masculinity is inevitable and has been widely accepted.

No right way to father. H rejected the role model of masculinity learned in childhood, demonstrated by his stepfather. He refused to accept that violence was an acceptable form of discipline. He shifted his subjective position of fatherhood towards an authoritative perspective and made the conscious choice to perform masculinity in a different way by being "plugged into his children" rather than distanced from them. D on the other hand accepted the roles of masculinity learned in childhood. His respect for the way his father performed masculinity positively impacted his choices. The freedom to accept and reject the way masculinity is defined and expressed is a subjective freedom that empowers the modern or new dad to make choices based on what feels right to him rather than what is expected from the dominant culture.

When Feminism Shows Up at the Masculinity Party

Feminism is not just for girls. Feminism has played an important role in society during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The feminist movement has made possible the metamorphosis of societal ideologies from repressive patrilineal hegemony to acceptance of shifting paradigms representative of possibility and opportunity for equality. Joseph Gordon-Levitt is a self proclaimed feminist and celebrity actively

troubling the persistent dichotomy between traditional and modern masculinity. He rejects the gender binary and encourages a shift in perspective that allows for men and women to take up whatever roles they feel will fit with their subjective experience. His message of feminism is:

> You don't let your gender define who you are—you can be who you want to be, whether you're a man, a woman, a boy, a girl, whatever. However you want to define yourself, you can do that and should be able to do that, and no category ever really describes a person because every person is unique. I'm a believer that if everyone has a fair chance to be what they want to be and do what they want to do, it's better for everyone. It benefits society as a whole. (Gordon-Levitt as cited by Vagianos, Internet Interview. August, 2014).

Disruption of singular notions of masculinity creates space for fluidity and potentially leads us towards equality across the gender spectrum. Intentional challenges to existing norms makes possible a postmodern definition of what it is to be masculine and a father external to positivist doctrines seeking to define a universal and objective truth that limits the existence of diverse rights, roles and obligations available to the modern dad.

The *F* word. *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* (2014) is an example of the feminist struggle gendered masculinity encounters in terms of language not being consistent with the overall postmodern message. If only the father would have rejected the term "*F*ommy" and chosen instead to educate the audience on the value of an emotionally present and available man within the family domain. If only the father overtly identified as confident within the domestic sphere and was rewarded for the contributions he made to family as being equal to the contributions he made to his

career. Instead, the stay-at-home dad was considered to be a consolatory or temporary position until something more traditionally understood as masculine, such as an engineering job, could be obtained. Just as women have been fighting the feminist battle for generations, so too are men taking up the proverbial arms in the name of re-storying the gendered discourse that no longer reflects their lived experiences of masculinity in a 'new' society. In order for the feminist message of equal rights and freedoms to exist for women, the same must be true for men. Just as women fight for the freedom to express themselves and hold space within society according to their subjective experiences, men must be able to occupy space and still be considered a masculine entity in whatever way he performs his role as man and father.

Feminists among us. Evidence of the feminist perspective in the focus groups is illustrated in the ways the men narrated their subjective experiences and challenged societal expectations. The choices these seven men intentionally made to interrupt archetypal patterns of masculinity in order to perform their fatherhood roles in accordance with a discursive shift that occurred for them as fathers. R defied his peers' expectations as he performed within his parental domain as primary caregiver: "a lot of people in the family and friends see that [father as primary caregiver] and they're quite amazed and they tell you that all the time: "How can you do that"? (R, focus group, April 2, 2014). H articulated his intentional choice to make space for his children to challenge societal stereotypes that could propagate gendered complacency:

I'll have to make a point of doing it because if it goes unspoken they'll just base it on what the norm is in society, and assume that, you know I can only do this

because men only do this, and I don't want my, our kids to be limited by what

other people are doing. (H, focus group, April 2, 2014)

Mallouck (2015), an editor at the GMP, suggests the focus on being a good man creates

fear of failure that sometimes can inadvertently lead to shame if you are perceived as not

living up to gendered expectations. He suggests that a gendered shift from attempting to

be good man/good woman according to contrived guidelines could instead encompass the

intentions to be a good person despite assumed roles.

Gendered Assumptions (Did I Say That Out Loud?)

Through the process of researching the topic of fatherhood and gendered

masculinity I have become well versed in the literature about fathers, the traditional

hegemonic patriarchal archetypes, societal expectations of masculine stereotypes, and the

historic evidence of how fathers typically contributed to the familial domain in past

generations; and still unconscious patterns emerge, born from assumptions. The purpose

of the research was to shift existing perspectives and create space for men to speak to and

be heard regarding their subjective experiences in becoming fathers amidst a shifting

cultural discourse on gendered masculinity. Conscious attempts were made to escape the

gender binary of mother vs. father; the research was not intended to be a he said/she said

comparative analysis of the differences or similarities between the two sexes. However as

a mother and female researcher it was impossible to completely park my gendered biases

throughout the focus groups and data analysis that followed.

Walk the talk. Reflexivity is a generative process; it is ongoing, happening even

now as I compose my thoughts for this chapter. I find myself becoming caught up in the

language and conditioned thought processes that habitually place men and women into

categories consistent with traditional heteronormativity. Questions repeatedly surfaced for me in reference to previously unconscious assumptions. Expectations of sameness or cohesion on the parental front are just as detrimental to the gendered dialogue as silence is. In seeking to disrupt the gender binary I uncovered an assumption of parental sameness that failed to take into consideration the distinct differences between male and female; an objectivist perspective arising from a social constructionist researcher seems disturbing, or is it timely?

When asked about their perceived level of confidence at being a good father, on a scale of 1-10 where one is no confidence and 10 is 'Rock star' confidence, the overwhelming response was 8.5 or above. That was not surprising but the discussion that followed was. Internal validation and division between self and other echoed across the responses. These seven men were confident; not as a result of evidence collected from people within and external to their immediate family and friends, but because they believe in their abilities as fathers. They did not overtly advertise their fatherly prowess in public, seeking validation from who ever happened to comment positively or negatively on the way they perform masculinity and domesticity simultaneously as an indication of paternal worth. They did not assess the successes and failures of their children as a measurement of their paternal assurance. The significance of this discovery existed within the personal assumptions of the researcher, me. I sought to find understanding according to my parental experience, and instead was exposed to a perspective I had not previously been conscious of.

H: If my kids get derailed down the road I don't personalize that as it being a failure as who I am as a father and how confident I am as a father. There's so

many other variables that come into play right (*oh ya, nodding*) so I don't, you know if my kid is out doing drugs or drinking, whatever, I don't say: "well I'm not longer confident as a father, cause my kids not doing what I think he should be doing making all great choices, however you define "right" choices, but you know I'm still going to have confidence that I'm a good father you know I treat him well.

R: You're not a bad dad because your kid's getting a C-… you know there's all kinds of reasons, it could be that every time they come home they go playing down the block instead of doing there homework and you're just not paying attention, so you step up and say hey you're doing your homework first, and all of a sudden they're getting B's again. (H & R, focus group, April 2, 2014)

In a study done in 1998 by FIRA men were asked how they assess their level of confidence at being a father. Significant responses determined men got their perceived level of confidence from their partner and determined if they were doing a good job or not according to feedback from their wives. This was problematic when their wives found fault with their husband's abilities or when the couple were no longer together or were co-parenting separately; the study suggested wives had the power to negate the father's confidence. Data from the focus groups challenges these findings, to a point. The men agreed that they take their wives' feedback into consideration but at the end of the day the perceived level of confidence is determined through self-assessment: "Ultimately it has to be yourself" (S, focus group, April 2, 2014). These men maintained power over their own paternal confidence. These men are still married or had maintained close relationships with their children in spite of the dissolution of their marriages, which contributes to

consistent positive feedback and involvement as fathers. "I am the go to guy" (D, focus group, April 2, 2014).

Maternal gatekeeping. The term 'Maternal Gatekeeping' or maternal resistance refers to the ways women can restrict involvement and access to children from fathers. It reinforces the gender binary by suggesting the mother's way is the only (right) way. Curran (2000) contends that both empirical findings and anecdotal evidence from service providers "posits maternal ambivalence towards paternal participation in child rearing as a major barrier to responsible fatherhood" (Curran 2000, p. 672). Men are encouraged to try to emulate their female counterparts if they want to be successful within the domestic domain. The movies *Mr. Mom* (1983)*, and *Mrs. Doubtfire* (1993) are the media's and by extension society's way of reinforcing that bias.

As a researcher I reinforced the notion of maternal gatekeeping by assuming the men would seek external validation for their perceived confidence level, consistent with my subjective experience and therefore universally applicable. Happily the analysis and reflexivity disrupted personal assumptions along with societal stereotypes.

Desperately seeking validation. My experience as a mother is to seek validation from my family, peers, professionals such as: doctors, nurses, teachers, counsellors, coaches and occasionally from strangers at the park, in the grocery store, on the ferryboat or at the Rec. centre, etc. The belief in my assessment as good mother, with the best of intentions for my children do not dispel the sought after validation from external sources which is sometimes prioritized above the opinions of my husband or my own. This trend has been observed in other mothers as well. Experiences of anxiety and guilt are more readily available in mother narratives according to the research featured by Wall and

Arnold (2007) "there are days when I say I am a terrible mother, I'm not fit for this… I worry, did I do the right thing?" (p.516). Empirical research finds mothers feel much more anxiety and guilt about caregiving issues that fathers do (Wall & Arnold, 2007). Society reinforces this need for external validation via social media such as Facebook, Pinterest, blogs, and parenting books. Parental (maternal) comparison is a constant attack on perceived confidence.

- How many *Likes* will I receive for the photo I posted on Facebook featuring my homemade birthday cake and organic picnic menu?

- What will people think of my mothering capabilities when they find out my child needs a math tutor?

- How does my inability to reproduce an art project pinned by "Supermom" affect my ability to compete with the other moms?

Reflexivity on the narratives shared by the group of dads raised questions about how maternal confidence can sometimes be determined by external sources. Why do I crave those opinions and approval? I had never really thought about it before. I figured everyone did it until the data shed light on a different perspective. The thought of not worrying about what other people thought about personal parenting style or choices: what a foreign concept for me.

NL: You don't wonder what other dads are thinking about you?

S: I can say that I never had that (*laughter and chatter*)

A: Sometimes, but I think guys in general are less, care less about that than women do…

R: I think sometimes you might compare yourself to say another dad, but I'm not going to say it's something I worry about. I don't think about them or how can I be like him or you know, nothing like that.

B: hey I make mistakes like everybody else but right from the get go, right from birth [of my children] I've felt very confident as a dad, sometimes more so than P [my wife] does and I would have to be there for her saying "put the book away, do what you think is right, as long as you don't kill the kid what can happen?" (*laughter*)

S: I mean I can see that [external sources] being the… where, you get most of your compliments or criticism from but for that [confidence], ultimately it has to be yourself. (*nodding and uh huhs*) if you think you are a good father, you know, if you think you're a good father then you probably are. If you think you're not a good father than you probably aren't. (Focus group, April 2, 2014)

These men demonstrated an innate belief in their abilities as fathers evident in their intentions with their children. They communicate with their partners about insecurities but do not seek confidence from them. They acknowledge feedback from their children and value their input but do not personalize criticisms.

Who is talking to whom? The question about talking with other fathers yielded similar responses. According to these men conversations with peers about their children for the most part remain fairly innocuous, unless the person on the other end of the conversation has earned the right to hear a struggle. Men tend to keep it light unless the experience is common or the relationship is established and then they seek support from

someone who has "entered the trenches" (A, 2014) rather than sharing as a means to earn validation.

> D: I think I tend to be more on the light side, um, ya I don't think I've gotten too deep with things. I'm not shy about sharing what we do and for me the people I'm closest to at work they also will open up and tell me similar stories and I enjoy hearing their stories and I think they enjoy hearing mine. In the last several years, probably 10-12 years, people, some friends away from work, it's nice to have something that will be a long-term foundation and we do share stories about our kids.
>
> C: I find a lot of the time that talking with other fathers we'd start sharing, usually comical stories of what our children have done or are doing. It all depends who you are talking to…
>
> S: I find more and more men actually talking to each other whether it's one on one or with a couple of guys, especially in the work force. I think there's a shift because more men understand parenting and the emotional aspects of it and I think it's a good reminder that work and providing for the family is important, but at the same time what really matters is healthy family and children. It just reaffirms your purpose of … (*interruption*)
>
> A: It's a good reminder that other guys are going through the tough stuff too. There are some friends in CR we've known for a long time, it's not always all the rosy stuff, (*uh huh nodding*) you get together and you talk about the tough stuff in the relationship and with the kids and I find it helped me. (Focus group, April 2, 2014)

Creation of meaningful connections occur with certain friends and co-workers who are able to support one another but are not typically relied on as a source of confidence. The data indicates the men tend to focus on the positive attributes of their families rather than finding comparison in the ways they are perceived to be failing. One dad said they talk in generalities, not the "precise" way women talk. These men do not worry about or internalize the opinions of other people.

My Story is Here Too.

The impetus for the research was conceived from a very personal place of grief and gratitude. The loss of one father coupled with the support of another sparked a desire to explore a paradigm previously taken for granted. It also unconsciously motivated the research process from the literature review, to how the study was organized and through the analytic process. My own emotional involvement with relationship to fathers can be interpreted as desire to understand fathers as a vehicle to validate my own experience. My disillusionment followed by disappointment at the deficit-based attitude applied to the construct of fatherhood within current literature fuelled my curiosity about this topic. I wanted to find evidence that reflected and validated my experience. Further inspection of literature exclusively devoted to fathers revealed a gap in the research that needed to be filled, and I have attempted to fill some of it.

Aha moments. What do the findings in the data suggest, are they valuable and if so why? Analysis shows the findings to be symptomatic of an inescapable gendered binary and littered with "aha" moments that are both humbling and potentially empowering. My identity as female researcher shows up in the interpretation of the data and the struggle to locate meaning derived from masculine perspective, translated by a

woman. It has been argued by some writers that men are more likely to open up about themselves and their emotional issues with a female researcher then with a man because there is a lesser risk to threatening the boundaries of their masculine self; "these men disclosed their experiences and feelings to me in the depth and emotional detail which they did because I am a woman" (Arendell, 1997 in Robb 2004, p. 403). Taking this theory into account my role as researcher becomes even more complex; the embodiment of an inescapable gendered binary confounded by the blatant evidence that men and women are in fact inarguably different regardless of claims made to the contrary. A belief I held from the conception of the research, however the dynamics of that difference shifted in a profound way that shed light on the darkness these fathers seem to exist in without complaint. Perhaps the gap in the research exclusively devoted to fathers exists because fathers do not feel the societal pressure to give voice to their experiences to the same extent women do?

More Questions Than Answers… Now What?

What value can be found in the collection of questions too large for the scope of the current study? The reality of a Master's thesis is that the proverbial glass ceiling of research required for appropriate analysis according to the breadth of the study is reached at a rapid pace. With each 'Aha' moment came a series of questions indicting further research was necessary. Reflection on how data collected can be translated into usable information to contribute to the field of study becomes the primary focus. What are the professional implications? What meaningful recommendations can be made? How can the lived experiences of the participants contribute to my field of study?

Professional Implications

The wealth of experiences and perspectives shared within the narratives and generative discourse of the focus groups has inspired professional recommendations beyond the initial community service focus. Further research is necessary to comprehensively understand practical implications for the empowerment and continuation of the discourse on fatherhood and gendered masculinity. Cabera et al (2000) suggests a shift towards appreciation for diversity in fatherhood and a suspension for empirical definitions:

> Perhaps now more than ever we appreciate diversity of fathers, including cultural and ethnic variations in the meaning of fatherhood, roles of fathers, and their influences on children. No single definition of "successful fatherhood" and no ideal "father's role" can claim universal acceptance or empirical support. Rather, fathers' expectations about what they should do, what they actually do, and their effects on children must be viewed within the contexts of family, community, culture, and current history. (Cabera et al. 2000, p. 132)

Continued research. Future work to the existing research could include inviting the participants back for another discussion acknowledging the preconceived notions about the fathers and men with the ability to:

- exercise a new curiosity and make space for possibilities and perspectives not previously accommodated;
- share insights about what was discovered throughout the analytic process and how those discoveries impact the subjective and collective experience of the group;
- revisit the group to determine if a perspective shift took place for them either consciously or subconsciously as a result of their participation in the research.

How did an active engagement in dialogue with their peer group external to the normative discourses they are used to having on their own contribute to a greater comprehension of their experience across micro and macro systems? The levels of complexity reached from this study scratched the surface on what is possible.

I suggest that in order to bring about a discursive and practical shift the perspectives of these men need to be shared with those within their micro systems so that the ripples can extend throughout their families, communities, and beyond. A third study including the wives and partners of the participants could reveal further gendered assumptions. Awareness of the intricacies fathers face when reconciling their subjective experiences with societal expectations could help avoid a propagation of hegemonic patterns, unknown or unrecognized within their intimate relationships. Reinforcing the gender binary 'new' fathers are trying to break free of. The focus groups can be recreated for the wives, to engage them in the same discussion about fatherhood and gendered masculinity in an attempt to understand it from the female and mother perspective. A comparative analysis between the two focus groups, that unveils the men's responses to their partners, could shed light on their experiences and enlighten participants to gendered assumptions that hinder the progress challenges to hegemonic masculinity seek. Follow up with the couples to discuss the potential 'aha' moments this type of activity could initiate may be possible as a group or as individual interviews with each couple to glean a greater depth of experience.

Brené Brown (2004) a social worker, grounded theory researcher and author, suggested that you find what you are looking for, even if you are not sure what it is you seek. Continued research of this kind can extend the level of understanding and

comprehension of the lived experiences of the 'everyday' man and father external to the previously assumed conviction that men 'should be' what ever it is that men 'should be'.

Personal Implications

I can see clearly now. Throughout the research process, challenges to personally held beliefs, assumptions and relationships have shifted, been exposed and brought into consciousness. I view the world I live in with new eyes. The relationship with my husband has always been solid. Since I began researching fathers and gendered masculinity, the appreciation and respect I have for my husband and the way he challenges and embodies masculinity has redefined our domestic collaboration. I recognize the struggle in finding balance between work and home. Before I thought he wore different 'man hats'; he was a strong, assured, independent and tough man's man at work. And at home he was the gentle, caring, fair, compassionate, emotionally available, silly and capable family guy. Curiosity and the courage to ask questions and seek understanding helped me to recognize that he does not switch hats depending on the context or environment; he embodies all those complex qualities at once on a intricate spectrum of masculinity. His unconscious challenges to archetypal heteronormativity, a term previously unheard in my home, were happening long before we knew the name for it. In speaking my respect and acknowledgement of his efforts to break traditionally held patterns in both his family and society we learned how to communicate in a way that made the unconscious conscious. The ripples of awareness have extended to family and friends; they are made transparent in both our professional careers and empowers our children, the next generation to trouble stereotypes and erase limits to their potential.

Then I found my dad. The memories I cherish of my dad are coloured more brightly by the recognition that he pioneered the feminist quest for gendered equality in his own way. He challenged heteronormative ideals and dismissed gender biases. His grasp on domesticity and empathy were a subtle challenge to my sister and I to raise our standards when walking through life and eventually choosing our life partners. His emotional comprehension and ability to show up for those he was in relationship with regardless of societal expectations made him the ultimate role model of masculinity to me and inspired me to learn the language necessary to tell this story.

Conclusion

The personal discoveries, subjective healing and appreciation for the participants' courage, vulnerability and wisdom unpacked and explored are the unexpected benefits gleaned from this research. My hope is that this research can inspire others to learn the language necessary to speak and hear the stories men and fathers have to share as the evolution of masculinity continues.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Background Information Form

Background Information Form

Date: _____

How did you hear about the research study?

_____

First Name: _____ Surname: _____

Address: _____ Postal Code: _____

Phone (w) _____ Phone (h) _____ Other: _____

Email: _____

DOB: _____ (year of birth)

Occupation: _____

Marital Status (circle): single, de facto, married, separated, divorced, widowed

Length of relationship: _____

Name of partner: _____ Blended Family? _____

Please list children (indicate whether step children/adopted ect):

_____ Age: _____

_____ Age: _____

_____ Age: _____

_____ Age: _____

How much time do you spend with your children per week? _____

How would you rate the quality of your relationship with your father? (circle):
    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10
        (1= poor/no relationship   10= excellent relationship)

Comments:

_____

_____

Do you ever watch TV or movies, read the newspaper or magazines or use the internet?
YES/NO

Appendix B: Confidentiality Form
Confidentiality Agreement
"Dialogue on Gendered Masculinity: Implications for Fatherhood"

1. Confidential Information

The "Dialogue on Gendered Masculinity: Implications for Fatherhood". Research Project hereby confirms that all of its confidential and proprietary information will be available only to the primary researcher, Natalie Luchtmeyer and her Supervisor, Daniel Scott from the department of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria.
Confidential information shall include all data, materials and other information disclosed or submitted, orally, in writing, or by any other media, to **Natalie Luchtmeyer** by _____

A. **Natalie Luchtmeyer** hereby agrees that the confidential data collected for the "Dialogue on Gendered Masculinity: Implications for Fatherhood" research study is to be used solely for the purposes of said study. Said confidential information should only be disclosed to members of said research study with a specific need to know.
Natalie Luchtmeyer hereby agrees not to disclose, publish or otherwise reveal any of the Confidential Information received from _____, or other participants of the project to any other party whatsoever except with the specific prior written authorization**.**
B. Materials containing confidential information must be stored in a safe location so as to avoid third persons unrelated to the project to access said materials. Confidential information shall not be duplicated by **Natalie Luchtmeyer** except for the purposes of this Agreement.

3. Limits to Confidentiality.
A. Due to the nature of focus group participation it is impossible for the researcher to ensure each participant will not break confidentiality outside of the group environment, this issue will be addressed in the consent form and verbal description of consent and confidentiality.
B. Any disclosure of or suspected incident of child abuse is required to be reported to the proper authorities according to the law.

4. Completion of the Work
Upon the completion of the work Natalie Luchtmeyer shall securely store all confidential information received in written or tangible form, including copies, so as to protect the confidentiality of said information. Any copies of confidential documents developed by Natalie Luchtmeyer and remaining in her possession after the completion of her work need to be destroyed so as to protect the confidentiality of said information. After 5 years time all confidential information will be destroyed.

With his/her signature, _____ shall hereby adhere to the terms of this agreement.

_____

Signature and Date

Appendix C: Research Questions

Focus Group Interview Questions

1) What do you see as your role as dad?

2) How do you see yourself as a father?

3) Do you treat your kids the same way your dad treated you?

4) Do you like being a dad?

5) What is the best thing about being a dad?

6) Do you ever talk with other guys about being a dad? (Why or why not? What do you talk about?)

7) Who tells you if you are a good or not good father?

8) How confident are you at being a dad?

9) What do you think about dads in popular TV and movies? Are there any you want to be like?

10) Do you want to be like any of the dad's you saw in the movie "What to Expect While You're Expecting" (2012)? Which ones? What do you see in those dads that you like?

Appendix D: Consent Form

Letter of Information for Consent

A Dialogue on Gendered Masculinity: Implications for Fatherhood.

You are invited to participate in a study entitled A Dialogue on Gendered Masculinity: Implications for Fatherhood that is being conducted by Natalie Luchtmeyer.

Natalie Luchtmeyer is a Graduate Student in the department of Child and Youth Care at the University of Victoria and you may contact her if you have further questions by email ndgluchtmeyer@gmail.com.

As a Graduate student, I am required to do research as part of the requirements for a Master's degree in Child and Youth Care. It is being done under the supervision of Dr. Daniel Scott, PhD. You may contact my supervisor at 1-250-472-4770.

Purpose and Objectives
The purpose of this research project is to understand how some men in the region of Nanaimo, B.C., think about fatherhood and becoming a dad according to recent changes in the masculine archetype or male roles popularized by social media, TV characters, movies roles and men in advertisements. The goal is to gather data about fatherhood and the social implications of being a father to see how much the family contexts; childhood experiences and social influences impact the way a man identifies himself in the role of father while still fitting into the stereotypical masculine identities accepted by his friends and others he is in relationship with; at work and in public. My research will explore the evolution of men into fathers and investigate the socially constructed gender system traditionally located in a place of dominance and power. I want to find out if the 'old school' ideas about being a man and a father still influence how guys decide what kind of father they are going to be. For example: do men still believe in being the disciplinarian, bread-winner, and "real men don't cry" kind of father or is it an option to be a stay-at-home dad in touch with a wide range of emotions and able to take part in all aspects of parenting in partnership? Are the modern ideas of fatherhood embraced or criticized in the Nanaimo region?

Importance of this Research
Research of this type is important because in the past fathering research has primarily existed in comparison to motherhood. I would like to explore the parenting model from the perspective of fathers. The importance of this research is to learn more about fathering, as it's own role without comparing it to mothering. This study will explore the role of fathers exclusively. It is also important to explore the role society plays in comparing masculine roles with the new definitions of fathering roles to determine if a cultural change is happening for how both men and fathers are viewed. How is popular culture and the media influencing masculinity and as a result the current culture of fathering? The research and data collected during this study will be used to develop professional practice implications for working in partnership with fathers. I hope the results of this study will be used as a vehicle to better support and understand fathers, and to contribute to the growing research done exclusively on and for fathers' which is different from ~~to~~ the traditional studies that compare and contrast fathers and mothers in the same model of parenting instead of looking at them within their own unique models.

Participants Selection
You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a father to children between the ages of 2-12, you actively co-parent with a partner or ex-partner and you currently live in the Nanaimo region of Vancouver Island.

What is involved?
If you consent to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include taking part in two group interviews with other men. In the initial group interview you will watch the movie "What to Expect When You're Expecting" (2012) and take part in discussion about the roles of father's according to current social implications represented in popular culture; scheduled time 3 hrs. The second group interview will follow up on the discussion from the first, to see if any new perspectives were gained from a week of thinking about the information and topics; scheduled time is 2 hrs. The group interviews will be held at Nanaimo Family Life Association 1070 Townsite Rd Nanaimo B.C. on Sunday afternoons March 23 and 30th 2-4:30pm. The discussion will be recorded on an audio recording device such as an iphone and transcribed for data analysis. Anonymity will be ensured to the participants by using a coding system rather than identifiable information.

Inconvenience
Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including time away from your family, as the group interviews will be held on either a Saturday or Sunday afternoon. Finding childcare may be an inconvenience and can be addressed if necessary. Potential gaps in confidentiality may be considered an inconvenience to the participants if they are concerned their experience, even though safeguarded for anonymity, may have the potential to be revealed by the their involvement in the research.

Risks
There are some potential risks to you by participating in this research and they include: potential exploration of past relationship with their fathers may lead to emotional discomfort, particularly if the past relationship was difficult or abusive. It is also possible that the participants may be embarrassed if they share intimate aspects of their private life during the group discussion. Vulnerability has the potential to cause emotional discomfort. Social risks may occur if the participant discloses information that could affect their ability to feel comfortable during group discussion, the researcher will be unable to control the subjective responses to the participant from the other men taking part in the research. The role of the facilitator will be to remind the participants of the potential hazards of sharing intimate and private details within a group setting and seek to clarify stories shared and attempt to normalize and validate the subjective experiences of the men in the group. The researcher will intervene to pause the discussion in the event the other members of the group criticize someone harshly or unfairly.

Benefits

The potential benefits of your participation in this research may include: the fathers will have reference material specific to their experience. The participants may benefit from sharing their fatherhood stories with their peer group with the potential for normalizing and validating their subjective experiences. It is possible the participants relationships with their families may also be positively affected; the fathers may experience an increased sense to confidence in their role as fathers and the way they identify as being a dad. It is possible the way the fathers' role model masculinity for their children will be influenced in a positive way. The research may influence tolerance and acceptance of differences necessary in validation of the subjective experiences of

the participants in the study. My hope is that fathers' will feel more confident, understood and supported as a result of my research.

To society the benefits will be increased attention paid to the role of father's with increased conversation on the implications of stereotypical expectations of how men act and the way men role model masculinity with their children. Within the current social models of masculinity a change happens as boys become men and again when men become fathers. Without over simplifying this transition, an investigation into the complex-social dance men may take part in to keep up with the ever-changing social demands of being a modern man may be useful. The research will contribute to the conversation on fatherhood in a contemporary context about father roles in society with an increased attention to masculine shift.

To the state of knowledge the benefit will be exploration of fatherhood exclusive to the male perspective and not bound by the traditionally constructed comparison of fatherhood as a model according to motherhood. This research study will contribute to the value assigned to the ways fathers are involved in the lives of their children. This study could be a vehicle to validate the importance of support of the father population within and external to the normative gender binary, that traditionally privileged the roles of mothers in the definition of parental norms.

Compensation

As a way to compensate you for any inconvenience related to your participation, you will be provided with light refreshments at the group interviews and provided with childcare should the need arise.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will be withdrawn from the study as well, unless you give permission to continue to use your contribution under the strictest of confidentially and with anonymity. Once the data analysis is complete and the data has been transformed into the written thesis document and submitted for defense, the opportunity to withdraw data is void.

Researcher's Relationship with Participants
The researcher will not have any prior relationship with the participants

On-going Consent
To make sure that you continue to consent to participate in this research, a verbal reminder of consent will be given at each group interview and an addition signature will be required on the consent form at the beginning of each group interview. In the event the participants would like to opportunity to review the transcripts the individual participants will be required to sign a final letter of consent to use the data collected from the two group interviews (if any participants elects not to review the final transcripts their consent of the material will be implied, and will be stated in the previous consent letters).

Anonymity
In terms of protecting your anonymity pseudonyms or fake names and a coding sheet will be used to avoid using any distinguishing identification or features. Due to the nature of a group interviews limits to anonymity exist, it is impossible for the researcher to ensure that the participants of the group interviews do not divulge the identities of fellow participants.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by the use of pseudonyms and a coding sheet to avoid using any distinguishing identification or features. The data will be stored using password protected computer files, locked cabinet, separation of key codes from raw data and kept in the researchers home. Due to the nature of group interviews participation it is impossible for the researcher to ensure each participant will not break confidentiality outside of the group environment, this issue will be addressed in the consent form and verbal description of consent and confidentiality. An additional limit to confidentiality is my duty to report a disclosure or suspected incident of child abuse. If I believe a child is being harmed or has been harmed I have a legal responsibility to report to the authorities.

Dissemination of Results
It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: data will be analyzed to satisfy the requirements of the thesis document and defense. The data may also be used in a paper for publication and in future workshops or public presentations on the topic of gendered masculinity and fatherhood.

Commercial Use of Results
This research may lead to a commercial product or service. The nature of this commercial use is: this material may possibly be included in workshops I facilitate in the future that I am paid for. The participants will not be compensated because the data will be used infrequently and non-specifically.

Disposal of Data
Data from this study will be disposed of in the following ways: raw data will be shredded and burned. Computer files will be deleted from usb storage devices and hard drive of the computer. Data will be stored for up to five years.

Contacts
Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include primary researcher: Natalie Luchtmeyer and supervisor: Daniel Scott. Please refer to this information at the beginning of this consent form.

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Please sign at beginning of each Group Interview.

Name of Participant	*Signature*	*Date*

Name of Participant	*Signature*	*Date*

Review of Transcripts (by request only and not compulsory) At the conclusion of the data collection the participant may choose to review the transcript prior to data analysis and submission of thesis document for defense.

Name of Participant	*Signature*	*Date*

[WAIVING CONFIDENTIALITY *PLEASE SELECT STATEMENT only if you consent:*

I consent to be identified by name / credited in the results of the study: _____
(Participant to provide initials)

I consent to have my responses attributed to me by name in the results: _____
(Participant to provide initials)

Future Use of Data *PLEASE SELECT STATEMENT:*

I consent to the use of my data in future research: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

I **do not** consent to the use of my data in future research: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

I consent to be contacted in the event my data is requested for future research: _____
(Participant to provide initials)

*Consent of Continued use of Data in the event the participant withdraws from the research project after the data analysis is complete and the data has been transformed into the written thesis document and submitted for defense, the opportunity to withdraw data is void. **TO BE SIGNED ONLY IN THE EVENT OF WITHDRAWL FROM THE RESEARCH PROJECT AFTER THE THESIS DOCUMENT IS COMPLETED**.

Name of Participant	*Signature*	*Date OF WITHDRAWL*

By completing and submitting the questionnaire, **YOUR FREE AND INFORMED CONSENT IS GRANTED** and indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

Please retain a copy of this letter for your reference.