The Experience of Fathering:
Men's Perspectives on Their Parenting Role

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ABSTRACT

This study addressed men's perspectives on their parenting role. The intent was to examine how fathers perceive paternal responsibility for the care of their child(ren).

In-depth interviews were conducted with five men who were fathers of preschool child(ren). Theory development took place using grounded theory, a qualitative research method.

The theory describes the process whereby fathers come to assume responsibility for the care of their child(ren). Prioritizing father identities and father roles associated with these was identified as the central process generated from the data. The experience of fathering seemed to involve various factors which impacted upon the development of paternal responsibility for child care. Implications for counsellors working with fathers and/or couples are included.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Over the past twenty years the field of men's studies has grown. In addition to critiquing masculinity issues, fatherhood topics have also been addressed. Some researchers have examined the meaning and changing nature of the cultural images and ideologies of fatherhood, while others have tried to conceptualize and study men's perceptions about their father role identities (LaRossa, 1988; Marsiglio, 1993; Pleck, 1987).

History of Fatherhood

Fatherhood has undergone many historical changes. Pleck (1987) breaks these down into three phases. The first of these was from the early 19th to the middle of the 20th Century, at which time the father was depicted as a "distant breadwinner." LaRossa (1988) points out that prior to the industrial revolution, mothers worked almost exclusively in the private sphere of the home where they were primarily responsible for child care. On the other hand, fathers worked in the public sphere and were primarily responsible for financial support of the family. At this time, men were regarded as "incompetent" as far as parenthood was concerned.

During the second phase, which took place from 1940 to 1965, the father was viewed as "sex role model," and the third phase, which began in 1966 and has continued into the '90's, emphasizes the "new," "involved" and "nurturing" father (Pleck, 1987).
Women's participation in the work force has steadily increased since the 1960's, which has resulted in an increase in the number of dual-income families. Research has attempted to determine whether changes in attitudes and expectations regarding mothers' and fathers' roles have transformed parents' traditional domestic work. It is suggested that changes in role behavior of men and women within the family is lagging behind the attitudes about these changes (LaRossa, 1988; Leslie, Anderson, & Branson, 1991).

LaRossa (1988) points out that a gap exists between the "culture of fatherhood" which includes shared norms, values and beliefs surrounding men's parenting, and the "conduct of fatherhood" which consists of their paternal behaviors. He maintains that although society assumes that these are in synch, this is often not the case, and evidence suggests that the conduct is not keeping up with the culture. Specifically, the culture has moved in the direction of androgyny more quickly than the conduct associated with this. LaRossa states, "Whatever changes have taken place in the behavior of fathers, on the basis of what we know now, seem to be minimal at best. Also, the behavioral changes have largely occurred with a single group—the middle class" (p. 456).
Statement of the Problem

There are several reasons why further research is needed, specifically in the area of paternal responsibility for childcare. First, many studies indicate that fathers in both dual and single earner households do not appear to be assuming "responsibility" for the daily care of their children, yet there is little known about the various factors that contribute to their lack of involvement in this area (Barnett & Baruch, 1986; Crouter, Perry-Jenkins, Huston, & McHale, 1987; Darling-Fisher & Tiedje, 1990; Lamb, 1987; LaRossa, 1988; Leslie et al., 1991; Marsiglio, 1993; McBride & Mills, 1993).

Secondly, the lack of a consistent and specific definition of both "parental involvement" and "parental responsibility" poses a difficulty in comparing and interpreting these past findings.

Thirdly, some of the past research on fathers' involvement in childcare has used reports from mothers about father's attitudes, behavior and relationships with their children. Given the influence of gender on the perspective taken regarding relationships and family life, it seems important to explore how fathers themselves come to define and interpret their realities and perceptions about their father role (Daly, 1992; Marsiglio, 1993) and specifically how they come to assume responsibility for the care of their children.

Marsiglio (1993) addresses the methodological problems associated with past research on fatherhood which has heavily utilized mothers' reports on
fathers' attitudes, conduct and relationships with their children. He suggests that future research on fatherhood issues should incorporate extensive reports from fathers, children and mothers in order to more fully acquire a better understanding of the key concepts and processes that underly this area of study.

It seems this is not a new concern in the area of fatherhood research. In a major review of studies, Lamb (1981) concludes that the literature in this area is "remarkably inconclusive." He attributed a great deal of this to conceptual vagueness regarding definitions and methodological inadequacies including a lack of data collected from fathers.

Specific Aims

The aim of this study is the development of a preliminary theoretical model which leads to the process whereby men come to assume responsibility for the care of their children. Information regarding men's experiences of fatherhood is explored by posing the open question: What has the experience of fathering been like for you so far? It is hoped that this model will shed new light on the psychosocial processes involved in this particular aspect of men's adjustment to parenthood.

Past research has examined father involvement regarding child care. While responsibility is suggested to be the most important aspect of involvement, and research indicates this is the area in which men least participate, what has yet to be explored are the various factors that contribute to
fathers' lack of involvement in this area. Such research may provide counselling implications in the area of family and marital therapy, specifically addressing division of domestic labour and childcare. Future research directions in this area of study may also evolve.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

For the purposes of the present study, the initial review of literature served to provide the researcher with theoretical sensitivity regarding the proposed area of study. This process resulted in the identification of gaps in past literature on men’s involvement in fathering, and highlighted areas of this topic in need of further research.

Strauss and Corbin (1994) maintain that theoretical sensitivity and preconceptions about data can be used to the researcher’s advantage, although caution is advised regarding the prevention of new perspectives. Similarly, Chenitz and Swanson (1986) address the many misconceptions which exist concerning the literature review specifically. It is noted that following the identification of the research problem, a background for the significance of the study needs to be developed and the researcher should be able to describe the ways in which it will lead to existing knowledge or theory (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986). Moreover, confusion about the literature review “...is based on a lack of differentiation between research aimed at verification versus discovery” (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986, p. 43).

According to Chenitz and Swanson (1986) grounded theory is based on a discovery model of theory development. The issue is not whether the literature should be reviewed, but rather, how and why it is done. In the beginning, past
literature is reviewed in order to learn about the "scope, range, intent, and type of research" which has been conducted in the field of study. This can also assist the researcher in identifying gaps in the literature which lead to ideas for future research. The purpose, background and significance of the study are then established based upon this literature (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986).

Theories of the Social Psychology of Fatherhood

There are several existing theories which attempt to explain fathers' participation in domestic labour and child care. Some of these address structural aspects of the family unit including personal resources such as education and occupation, power structures, income status (dual-income, single income), and time availability. Other theories focus upon personal attitudes toward division of domestic labour which are influenced by the socialization process.

Relative Resources

Relative Resources Theory is based upon two theoretical assumptions. The first is that power relations exist within the marital dyad which directly influence the division of labour. More specifically, it is assumed that the spouse who holds the most power will participate less in "undesirable activities" such as housework and child care. According to this theory, the more resources that a husband has in relation to his wife, the less time he will spend in domestic labour (Coverman, 1985). The second theoretical assumption involves the allocation of
household tasks in order to maximize earning potential. The underlying premise here is that market work time is more valued than domestic work. Therefore, if a husband's resources such as education, occupational position and wage earning ability were greater relative to his wife's, this would decrease his family work time (Geerken & Gove, 1983).

It has been noted however, that regardless of how resources are measured, a high proportion of variance in division of domestic labour is not explained by this theory (Berk & Berk, 1979; Coverman & Sheley, 1986; Ferree, 1991; Pleck, 1985). Brayfield (1992) points out the need for research which measures family status (absolute resources) and both spouses' contributions to family status by measuring relative amounts of education, income and occupational prestige.

According to resource theory the connection between resources and power is affected by family demands such as number and age of children. However, Mederer (1993) points out the need for a clearer definition of the term "resources." She also notes that "...resource theory has not considered how the translation of resources into power might vary depending upon how housework is defined" (p. 135).

**Sex Role Ideology**

According to the sex role ideology theory, sex role attitudes with which we have been socialized will influence our behavior, with more traditional attitudes resulting in less domestic labour for men. Sex role research suggests a
difference in sex role attitudes associated with higher education and socioeconomic status which results in the adoption of more egalitarian sex roles. Therefore, it would be expected that men who are educated and hold high-status jobs would perform more domestic labour (Coverman, 1985).

However, conflicting evidence exists in support of this hypothesis. For example, Thompson and Walker (1989) note that “in spite of all the talk about egalitarian ideology, abstract beliefs about what women and men ‘ought’ to do are not connected with the division of family work” (p. 857). On the other hand, Pleck (1983) points out that “studies yield relatively consistent evidence of a relationship between men’s sex-role attitudes and their level of family work” (p. 275). Specifically, Perry-Jenkins and Crouter (1990) found that men with traditional attitudes about their breadwinner roles and who also spent more time performing domestic work reported lower levels of marital satisfaction.

**Demand/Response Capability and Domestic Labour (Time Availability)**

According to the demand/response capability theory, when a husband has more domestic task demands and a greater capacity to respond to them, particularly regarding time availability, he will participate in more domestic work (Coverman, 1985). There is a certain amount of housework and child care to be performed in every household and while socialized gender roles assign most of this work to women, when women work outside of the home, they have less time to perform these tasks. More pressure is then placed upon husbands to participate in these activities, particularly in households with young children.
Demand is therefore influenced by spouse’s employment status and number of children and actually “reflects household pressures to modify the traditional division of domestic labour” (Coverman, 1985, p. 84).

However, past studies reveal conflicting evidence regarding the effect spousal employment status has on husbands' domestic labour. "Hypotheses derived from these theories have received only partial support in past household labor studies, and major ambiguities from previous research have not been reconciled" (Coltrane & Ishii-Kuntz, 1992, p. 45).

Ferree (1988) combines the relative resources hypothesis and the sex role ideology hypothesis and suggests the structural characteristics of the family such as dual incomes, places women in a position of negotiating for greater equality in family roles. However, it is noted that this is not likely to take place unless an egalitarian division of domestic labour is valued by women.

McHale and Crouter (1992) examine the implications of internal inconsistency between spouses' sex-role attitudes and the actual division of domestic labour. The effects this has upon husbands' and wives' evaluations of their marriages are explored. In keeping with Ferree's (1988) perspective, it was expected that "men and women who contributed less to their families' social status would be in a poorer position to achieve their preferred division of labour" (McHale & Crouter, 1992, p. 538).

MacDermid, Huston, and McHale (1990) found that new fathers who reported the lowest levels of marital satisfaction have more traditional sex-role
attitudes but practice a more egalitarian division of domestic labour. Also, Perry-Jenkins and Crouter (1990) found that among dual earner fathers, lower marital satisfaction is also experienced by those fathers who hold traditional sex-role attitudes yet participated more in domestic work.

Given the above findings, McHale and Crouter (1992) expected that the risk of marital distress would be highest for those husbands who hold traditional sex-role attitudes yet experience more egalitarian division of domestic labour. Results suggested that those men who hold traditional values yet participate most in domestic work tend to represent a lower socioeconomic status than those who participate less in this type of work (McHale & Crouter, 1992). It was also found that marital dissatisfaction is reported more by men when domestic work is divided more equally despite their belief that gender roles should not be equally divided. On the other hand, women express greater dissatisfaction when they hold nontraditional sex-role attitudes yet experience a more traditional division of household labour.

McHale and Crouter (1992) suggest that the notion two spouses may have different and even competing interests and needs in their marriage represents a deviation from the traditional view of the family as an integrated whole with shared goals. They point out the need for a balance among the very different and often conflicting needs and goals of various family members. They note that “From this more systemic perspective, consolidating resources around
the needs and interests of one family member may actually serve to undermine the well-being and satisfaction of another" (McHale & Crouter, 1992, p. 546).

**Identity Theory**

Identity theory is rooted in symbolic interactionism and proposes that one's identity is an ever changing process of social construction. One's sense of "self" is formed through interactions and negotiations with other individuals which results in a "self perception" that is associated with the various roles held in relationships with others. These perceptions are constantly changing, and the accompanying roles are arranged according to their importance to the individual at that particular time and place.

**The Role of Identity**

According to George Herbert Mead, one's conception of identity influences one's behavior, and is derived from the position one holds in society. Ihinger-Tallman, Pasley, and Buehler (1993) point out that many definitions of identity originate from the symbolic interaction perspective. It is suggested that cognitions and meanings that are connected with a particular status in society, are created and maintained through interaction with others. Identities are formed within a societal context and are maintained through a negotiation process (Becker, 1964). The important role that significant others play in forming, maintaining, and changing identities is emphasized within this
negotiation process. Ihinger-Tallman et al. (1993) define parent identity as "the self-meanings and cognitions attached to the status and roles of parent".

Salience

According to identity theory, identities are organized into salience hierarchies. Stryker and Serpe (1982) note that "...from the viewpoint of identity theory, the organization of identities in a salience hierarchy is a specification of the sociological conceptualization of personality as a structure reflecting the roles persons play" (p. 207).

In keeping with this definition, it would be expected that when the identity of "parent" is the most salient among all other identities, the status and roles identified with fatherhood will be valued by fathers above other statuses and roles. Ihinger-Tallman et al. (1993) point out that, not only are statuses compared and ranked hierarchically, but the roles attached to a specific status are also compared and ranked accordingly; for example, the status of father competes with status of other identities such as son, father, husband, employee. Each of these identities has a role associated with it such as companion, provider, nurturer and disciplinarian of children. Just as the status of father may be more salient than employee, the role of provider may be more salient than nurturer. "The way a man enacts the father roles provides insight into the meaning that he attaches to that role" (p. 555).
Commitment

Despite the fact that the concept of commitment is very important to identity theory, many different definitions of this term exist. For example, Burke and Reitzes (1991) define it as “the sum of the forces that maintain congruity between one’s identity and the implications for one's identity of the interactions and behaviors in the interactive setting” (p. 244). This conception of the term refers to commitment to a paternal identity. When a father’s perceptions of how others respond to his parental attitudes and behavior are not in keeping with his own perception of himself in these roles, his degree of commitment to the father role is determined by his response to this difference (Ihinger-Tallman et al., 1993). “The greater the commitment to an identity, the more consequential it is for the individual's conduct” (Stryker, 1980, cited in Gecas, 1982, p. 14).

According to identity theory we prefer to view our identities in a positive light and in a way which increases our self-esteem. Ihinger-Tallman et al. (1993) propose that “...all else being equal, fathers are more likely to make role choices perceived as relatively pleasant and entailing few barriers than to make role choices perceived as aversive and difficult to enact” (Tallman & Gray, 1990).

However, when all else is not equal, behavioral choices are affected by degree of commitment to self and others. Accordingly, when both level of commitment to self as father and to child are high, father identity saliency is also expected to
be high. "A high degree of salience is expected to modify difficulties or unpleasant situations, and fathers are expected to pursue involvement with their children in spite of such difficulties" (Ihinger-Tallman, 1993, p. 558).

**Significant Others**

Stryker and Serpe (1982) point out the importance of significant others in identity theory, and state:

We come to know who and what we are through interaction with others. We become objects to ourselves by attaching to ourselves the symbols that emerge from our interaction with others, symbols having meanings growing out of that interaction. As any other symbols, self symbols have action implications: they tell us (as well as others) how we can be expected to behave in our ongoing activity. (p. 202)

Ihinger-Tallman et al. (1993) point out that "significant others are important to the formation, maintenance, or change in father identity insofar as they respond to a man's behavior and attitudes related to fatherhood. In addition, a father's perceptions of others' (re)actions define the degree and strength of his commitment to father identity" (p. 558).

Attention is drawn to the variation among men regarding interpretations of what being a good father entails. This is evident in differences in how fatherhood roles are enacted, despite equal salience given to parent identity. "Thus, when determining the salience of father status and roles, careful
consideration must be given to an assessment of the perceived content by individual fathers" (Ihinger-Tallman et al., 1993, p. 560).

Marsiglio (1993) addresses the social psychology of fatherhood and suggests that the application of identity theory to fatherhood issues would assist in further understanding the many diverse social psychological factors which affect fathers' lives (Marsiglio, 1993). It has been suggested that fatherhood is an "emergent identity" which is constantly redefined and reinterpreted as new situations are encountered. In this way, men will regard certain father roles as more important than others (Daly, 1993; Marsiglio, 1993).

Marsiglio uses symbolic interactionism and specifically identity theory as a framework for studying how the concept of "commitment" is related to paternal behavior. According to Marsiglio (1993) "identity saliency" and "commitment" represent the primary theoretical concepts which explain how these self-perceptions are shaped. Men for whom the fatherhood role is more salient will be more inclined to focus on behaviors which are related to their father roles when other role demands are high. As noted above there are several definitions of the term "commitment" as applied to identity theory. However, Marsiglio (1993) refers to Stryker (1980) who defines it as the degree to which fathers engage in certain role relationships in order to become a certain type of father, how strongly they wish to maintain these relationships, and how many relationships are based on their identity.
Marsiglio (1993) refers to the cultural images of fatherhood which include both stereotypes and ideal images of our perceptions and expectations of fathers' behavior. Moreover, cultural meanings of fatherhood are also shaped by social factors such as the increase in the number of women in the work force (Marsiglio, 1993). According to a social constructivist perspective, the fatherhood images one is exposed to as well as one's sociohistorical context, culture and social background, must be examined in order to understand the socially constructed aspect of our fatherhood images (Marsiglio, 1993).

Furstenberg (1988) also points out that opposing images of fatherhood have been formed which represent a "good dad/bad dad" dichotomy (Furstenberg, 1988, cited in Marsiglio). He suggests that race and social class may be factors which affect this imagery. However, he notes that this is an area which has not been examined directly in the literature, and moreover, the degree to which class alone is related to fatherhood images is even less well understood.

Finally, Marsiglio (1993) emphasizes the need to consider fathers' involvement with their children and commitment to different identities as both socially influenced and individualistic. He points out that the larger social context can greatly influence the ideal images many fathers may hold, and gender and class are particularly important considerations here.

Daly (1993) examines the ways in which fathers of young children socially construct and define the fatherhood identity. His research is also conducted
within a symbolic interactionist theoretical framework. Daly maintains "...identity is an ongoing process of social construction." Participants in his qualitative study were asked to discuss the role models in their lives who influenced their ongoing construction of fatherhood, and to expand upon why and how these models became so important (Daly, 1993).

Findings reveal these fathers do not perceive that specific role models influenced the development of their own fatherhood identity. In fact, their own fathers were regarded as negative role models, and represent what these fathers do not want to be, and what they would therefore change in fathering their own children. Their fathers are described as largely unavailable to them when they were children. Not only is there the perception of an absence of good role models, but many of these fathers do not feel they had standards available to them by which they could judge their performance and progress as fathers (Daly, 1993).

One response to the absence of father models is the fragmentation of selected behaviors rather than modeling behavior after a particular individual. Here, Daly (1993) comments "...the process of role modeling for fatherhood appears to be characterized by a quiet absorption rather than deliberate and interactive pursuit" (p. 523). Although these men lacked a concrete role model, most were able to describe behaviors, standards or values which they wanted to assimilate into their father role (Daly, 1993).
Daly (1993) concludes: “From a social constructionist perspective, fatherhood is an ongoing project of action that involves the creation and reformulation of roles through observation, communication, and negotiation” (p. 525). However, like Marsiglio (1993) he also warns that the structural context of fatherhood must also be considered, as societal values, standards and norms can limit how these roles are carried out (Daly, 1993).

**Other Recent Theories**

There have been other theories which attempt to explain the more subjective aspects of fatherhood. Recently, a developmental perspective on fathers' involvement in child care rather than a social-structural perspective has been taken by Hawkins, Christiansen, Sargent, and Hill (1993). This theory focuses specifically on adult development using Erikson's conception of generativity which is defined as an interest in establishing and guiding the next generation. It is suggested that the transition to parenthood often sets women and men on "divergent developmental trajectories" which eventually places them in different developmental positions. This can negatively impact upon marital quality. According to this view, men's involvement in daily domestic work may play a crucial role in keeping parents in sync, which results in satisfying relationships.

Hawkins et al (1993) suggest four processes for developing generativity in the familial context. First, socialization highlights the developmental influence of children on their parents. It is suggested that children entering the family
system and father-child interaction contributes toward fathers' development of generativity.

A second process involves striving to achieve the possible self. This is based upon the notion that people maintain a conceptualization of themselves as they would like to become. It is suggested that one's "possible self" may become an incentive for changing particular behaviors. Striving to meet an ideal may therefore stimulate generativity.

Role-person merger theory represents a third explanation of how commitment to a particular role can be an important developmental factor. It is suggested roles that require the most investment will be merged with the individual. When one merges with a role, beliefs and attitudes associated with the role are acquired.

Finally, modeling and reinforcement represent a fourth process for developing generativity. It is suggested fathers may see their spouses modeling child care skills and attitudes which becomes a basis for learning how to be a caregiver. However, it is noted that modeling is incorporated only if the behavior is viewed as important to their future behavior.

Hawkins et al (1993) suggest that marital difficulties experienced by many couples are due in part to developmental incongruencies. A resolution to this problem which involves searching for ways to help men accept greater responsibility for nurturing children is offered.
Krampe and Fairweather (1993) propose a model which is based on object relations and self-psychology theory which leads to the development of the concept "psychic parental coalition". This refers to the inner psychic presence of the parents in their relationship and involves a shift of focus from the perspective of the parents to the effects of their relationship on the child. It is suggested that the parental coalition is formed at conception rather than in the second year of life, as previously hypothesized. According to this view, the concept of parental coalition signifies the need for a new paradigm of human development which emphasizes the significance of fathers in the lives of children from conception on.

Krampe and Fairweather (1993) maintain that father presence is a complex, "multifacted phenomenon" and that the concept of parental coalition implies that father presence cannot be understood apart from the father-mother relationship. It is suggested that father presence is formed by both a parental relationship with one's spouse and an "inner sense of father" which is greatly influenced by one's family of origin. It is suggested this is also true for mothers. The underlying assumption here is a biological basis for fatherhood, and that surrogate parental figures cannot replace the biological parents.

It is concluded:

The complexity of father presence should not be underestimated; some things are by their very nature, complex, and to simplify them may be to lose the extent of the father's meaning and place in
family life...exploration of the inner, subjective realm of the father
person and the mother, as pioneered by object relations theorists,
enriches our understanding of father and his meaning in the family
(p. 587)

Summary

A number of theories of the social psychology of fatherhood such as
relative resources, sex role ideology and demand/response capability and
domestic labour describe the various factors that contribute toward men's
participation or lack of participation in the domestic realm. However, research
which provides support for these theories is conflictual and inconclusive for the
most part. While these theories are useful in providing a broad overview of
many factors influencing the division of labour and child care among couples,
most fail to provide a detailed understanding of how men come to view their
parenting role and how their perceptions of responsibility for child care affect
their behavior.

Both relative resources theory and demand response theory fail to explain
individual differences in participation which exist regardless of paternal income
status or maternal employment status. Similarly, sex role ideology suggests
higher paternal education and socio-economic status results in more egalitarian
relationships which is associated with higher involvement in domestic labour and
child care. However, this theory does not address the reality of time constraints
associated with most high status jobs which require long work hours and less time available to spend at home with family.

While identity theory draws attention to individual variations among fathers and some of the more recent theories of father involvement have attempted to explain the more subjective aspects of fatherhood, further research is needed which elaborates upon these theoretical considerations. Research which is more subjective in nature and employs qualitative methods of inquiry will contribute toward a deeper understanding of how men come to assume responsibility for the care of their children.

Fathers and Parenting

As society continues to change resulting in more and more women working outside the home, increasing attention is placed upon men's contributions to domestic labour including child care. Some studies focus on maternal employment status in combination with other possible factors which affect male participation in family work. Other studies address fathers' involvement with their children by examining personality factors and attitudes toward the paternal role. Interpersonal variables such as personality characteristics of the father and child, as well as contextual variables such as the marital relationship have been viewed as important in determining father involvement. Recent research is also beginning to explore potential determinants of fathers assuming responsibility for the care of their children.
Participation Level

Despite the ever-increasing number of dual income families, many studies have found mothers continue to work the “second shift” which includes a significantly higher participation rate in childrearing activities, regardless of income status. This suggests a traditional pattern in the distribution of parental labour for these families, and it appears taking care of the home and children continues to be primarily women’s work (Darling-Fisher & Tiedje, 1990; Leslie et al., 1991; McHale & Crouter, 1992; McBride & Mills, 1993; Pleck, 1985).

Barnett and Baruch (1987) examine the determinants of fathers’ level of participation in family work based upon interviews of 160 mothers and fathers. Maternal employment status and several aspects of mothers’ work patterns are examined as possible determinants of paternal involvement. Several aspects of fathers’ work patterns are also examined. Other determinants of parental participation include family structure, parental sex-role attitudes, parental socialization and sociodemographic factors.

Results indicate that significant predictors of fathers’ level of participation vary by maternal employment status. For dual earner families, wives’ work-related variables and sex-role attitudes are found to be predictors of fathers’ involvement. In single-earner families, fathers’ attitude toward the quality of fathering they received as children is the strongest predictor of paternal involvement.
These findings suggest maternal employment status "moderates or conditions the relationship between particular determinants and particular forms of paternal involvement." In dual earner families the number of hours the wife worked is the strongest single predictor of father involvement which suggests participation may be less voluntary and more influenced by employment-related needs. It is also found that the female attitude toward the father role is a major predictor of father's participation for dual earner couples. When her attitude is liberal, he is more involved and when it is traditional, he is less involved (Barnett & Baruch, 1987). However, in a review of past literature Marsiglio (1993) considers the factors related to the level of fathers' involvement with their children. He refers to overall results which suggest neither maternal work status nor work schedule has a significant effect on fathers' involvement levels. He states "Clearly, recent increases in mothers' work force participation have far outstripped fathers' increased participation in all aspects of child care (Marsiglio, 1993, p. 491).

Involvement

Several studies address father "involvement" in domestic labour which refers specifically to their interactions with their children. Volling and Belsky (1991) examine the multiple determinants of father involvement during infancy in dual-earner and single-earner families using Belsky's (1984) process model of parenting. This model identifies interpersonal and contextual variables viewed as important in determining father involvement while outlining three sources of
influence on parenting quality. These include characteristics of the father (e.g., personality, attitudes toward childrearing); characteristics of the infant (i.e., temperament); and contextual sources of stress and support (e.g., marital relationship, social network contacts and occupational experiences). Belsky (1984) identifies a father's personality or psychological well-being as the most prominent determinant of his parenting style.

Crouter, Perry-Jenkins, Huston, and McHale (1987) point out that fathers' attitudes are significantly related to involvement in childrearing in single-earner families, but not for dual-earner fathers. It is suggested that father involvement in domestic labour and child care may be regarded as a personal choice in traditional single-earner families where demands for participation may be quite low. Therefore, personality may play more of a role in father involvement. On the other hand, demands for father involvement would likely be higher for dual-earner fathers. Time constraints and household demands associated with both parents working may leave these fathers no choice regarding involvement. This could result in resentment and marital conflict when fathers are forced to adopt more "feminine" household responsibilities (Crouter et al., 1987). Likewise, Cowan and Cowan (1987) report similar findings based on their longitudinal study which reveals a positive relationship between hours of maternal employment and increased father involvement.

Marsiglio (1993) points out that sociological perspectives on fatherhood have examined the one-on-one interaction of fathers with their young children as
well as various aspects of fathers' relationships with and financial support of their children when they do not live together. He refers to the agreement among many scholars that while mothers and fathers may interact differently with a child, "[M]en are not inherently deficient in their ability to parent and a father's gender is far less important in influencing child development than his qualities as a parent" (p. 490).

Coltrane (1988) explores household labour and the "routine production of gender" in a qualitative study of how twenty dual-earner couples shared domestic labour and child care. He refers to West and Zimmerman (1987) as he states that "'doing gender' involves a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine natures" (p. 4730). This study critically examines the widespread belief that mothering is "natural" for women and "difficult, if not impossible, for men." Coltrane (1988) suggests that:

When domestic activities are equally shared, "maternal thinking" develops in fathers too, and the social meaning of gender begins to change. This de-emphasizes notions of gender as personality and locates it in social interaction...To treat gender as the "cause" of household division of labour overlooks its emergent character and fails to acknowledge how it is in fact implicated in precisely such routine practices. (p. 489-490)
Responsibility

Petersen and Gersen (1992) examine the determinants of responsibility for child care arrangements among dual-earner couples. Rather than focusing on gender differences in explaining domestic inequality among dual-earner couples, a focus is placed upon trying to explain variations among men and among women. An attempt is made to identify factors associated with child care responsibility within each gender group.

Results support a demand/response theory of parental involvement in child care. The number of children in the family increases fathers’ responsibility for child care arrangements. It is also found that men whose spouses work longer hours also assume more responsibility. When women work long hours, responsibility is more likely to be viewed as a burden for both spouses.

Volling and Belsky (1991) found that personality characteristics of the father are important in predicting his responsibility for child care in single-earner families but not in dual-earner families. The contextual factors of marriage and work are predictors of father involvement in both dual and single-earner families.

Summary

Overall, it seems maternal employment status does not significantly affect father participation in domestic work and child care. Father participation levels do not appear to be rising along with increases in maternal employment.
A father's personality or psychological well-being has been viewed by some as the strongest determinant of his parenting style. However, while some studies have linked attitudes to paternal involvement for single income families where demands for father involvement are low, this relationship has not been found for dual-income fathers who appear to become involved when they have little choice. Here, father responsibility seems to be associated with number of children in the family and long maternal work hours.

Other research on father involvement has focused upon social interactions and thereby views father involvement as “socially guided.” It is suggested that "maternal thinking" as referred to by Coltrane (1988) can develop in fathers as the social meaning of gender changes. Further research which explores how this maternal thinking develops is needed.

Definitions of “Parental Involvement”

One of the problems with past research on this topic has been the ambiguity that exists regarding the meaning of the term “parental involvement.” This poses a barrier to research on the father role, as it is difficult to compare studies. A conceptually clear and consistent definition is necessary in order for father change to be assessed (Baruch & Barnett, 1986; Lamb, 1987; Marsiglio, 1991).

One definition which has been used in the research is provided by Lamb (1987). He proposes a model which identifies three components of father involvement. The first of these is engagement, which is defined as the time
spent in one-on-one interaction with a child. The second is accessibility which is defined as less intense interaction where one parent is involved in an activity but remains available to respond to the child. Lastly, responsibility is defined as being accountable for the child’s welfare and care.

McBride and Mills (1993) compared mother and father involvement with their preschool age children. This study involved 100 families and used the Lamb model to measure aspects of parental involvement (interaction, accessibility, and responsibility). Four predictors of paternal involvement (demographic backgrounds, marital quality, parental stress, and role perceptions) were also measured.

Results suggest that in both dual and single earner families, mothers participate in childrearing activities significantly more than fathers. Mothers were found to spend significantly more time in work-related activities, while fathers spent more time playing with their children. Specifically, it was found that in dual-earner families, mothers are the primary caretakers of their young children and report spending significantly more time than do fathers in interaction and accessibility. Both mothers and fathers also report little paternal involvement regarding responsibility.

Results also indicate that fathers and mothers may differ in their perceptions regarding individual involvement in child care. Little agreement is found among mothers and fathers regarding parental responsibility. These discrepancies in role perceptions and father involvement are negatively related
to family functioning for both spouses. McBride and Mills (1993) conclude: “Findings from this study indicate that the distribution of parental labour between mothers and fathers in contemporary society is not that different from that in previous generations of parents, and that a second-shift phenomenon exists in dual-earner families.” (p. 474).

Planning and Organizing: 'Responsibility' Types of Activities

Despite the suggestion that responsibility may be the most important aspect of parental involvement, research indicates that this is the area in which men participate least (Baruch & Barnett, 1986; McBride, 1990). In fact, Marsiglio (1993) points out that a neglected area of research on paternal involvement deals with what Lamb, Pleck, and Levine (1987) refer to as 'responsibility' types of activities. It appears that women tend to be responsible for children in terms of planning and making decisions about their care as well as the implementation of these decisions and plans. On the other hand, fathers seem to spend very little time organizing or managing their children's lives (Leslie et al., 1991; Marsiglio, 1993).

Further problems associated with unclear definitions are apparent in the lack of empirical research investigating the distinction between "parental responsibility" and "parental assistance." Even for dual-earner couples, it is implied that mothers are primarily responsible for planning and managing for care of the children while fathers assume a "helper" role (Crouter et al., 1987; Leslie et al., 1991).
Leslie et al. (1991) examined how gender and employment relate to the amount of responsibility taken for children using a sample of 60 dual-income couples. Similar to the McBride and Mills (1993) study, they found that husbands may perceive their level of responsibility for child care to be greater than that perceived by their spouses. Leslie et al. (1991) also note that variations in the level of responsibility and/or perceptions of responsibility for children combined with attitudes regarding who "should" be responsible may differ among dual-earner couples.

Leslie et al. (1991) note methodological difficulties associated with the concept of "responsibility" which may explain a lack of empirical attention in the past. They state "...responsibility is the integration of feelings, cognitions, and behaviors and may be more accurately represented as an ongoing perceptual state as opposed to a behavior." The assessment of specific activities performed relative to child-care tasks is emphasized. This includes thinking and planning as well as the completion of the task. It is also suggested that a more general approach is required to assess "that aspect of responsibility that may not be characterized by distinct behaviors but is characterized by a state of cognitive awareness—that is, the 'sense' of being responsible" (Leslie et al., 1991, p. 200).

Results of the above study support previous findings which suggest that women continue to be primarily responsible for child care. Specifically, mothers tend to be responsible for planning and implementing decisions regarding the care of children and the overall time commitment involved in caring for young
children. "These data suggest the main determinant of responsibility for children is one's gender: women are more responsible than are men" (Leslie et al., 1991, p. 208).

These results also suggest that men assume the role of assistant to their wives rather than a primary caretaker. Leslie et al. (1991) point out that fathers need to truly assume responsibility for children in order to relieve their spouses of the strain associated with this aspect of parenting. "A true indication of shared parental roles may be an equalization of the parental strain men and women experience as they take responsibility for their children" (p. 209).

Mederer (1993) examines the division of labour in two-earner households in her survey of 359 married, full-time employed women. She maintains that "to assess how household labor is divided, and how the division of labour is perceived by women and men, we need also to measure the allocation of responsibility for orchestrating family life." (p. 133).

Mederer (1993) discusses the conceptualization and measurement of household labour allocation. A distinction is drawn between household management and task accomplishment as domestic labour is divided into types of caring: for home, for family members, and for transactional matters. Division of domestic labour is measured in two ways: the allocation of tasks and the responsibility for managing family work. It is noted that managing household activities as the "behind-the-scenes orchestration" of attending to the needs of loved ones in particular, suggests that caring for family members may be highly
valued by women. "Managing the family can be thought of as a crucial part of
the definition of wife, and also as the ability to implement decisions, a common
definition of power" (p. 136).

Results of this study indicate that "task" and "management" allocation
contribute independently and differently to perceptions of fairness and conflict
about division of domestic labour. Mederer (1993) points out that:

Although women may receive "help", their acceptance of
responsibility for overseeing family life both enhances their
domestic power and creates a situation where they have no "down
time". The extra power, which keeps women in charge even when
they delegate and oversee, also constrains them. Since their
responsibility is invisible, it is ideologically not defined as work.
This definitional sleight of hand can be used to bargain for a
reduced task load for men, even when wives are employed. In this
way, household management may be more valid than who
physically does chores as a measure of how household labour
subtly and effectively constrains women and gives men power.(p.
143)

Including responsibility for managing the household is identified as
essential both in measuring domestic division of labour and in understanding its
significance for gender stratification.
In a review of past research, Russell and Radojevic (1992) highlight two areas in fatherhood research which have changed. These include an emphasis on lack of father involvement, nurturance or responsibility, and the outcome variable related to the impact of fathering on lifespan development.

Russell and Radojevic (1992) comment that "little has changed since 1981: The emphasis is still on direct effects of fathers and findings are still inconclusive" (p. 305). They advocate shared responsibility for parenting and more of a balance between paid work and family life for both men and women.

Although it is suggested that fathers should be provided with more opportunities to be involved in parenting, Russell and Radojevic (1992) note some barriers to increased involvement which would result in equal sharing of responsibilities for children between spouses. On the one hand, many employment policies pose difficulties for fathers requesting leaves from work associated with family situations. On the other hand, public perceptions of the ability for fathers to be sensitive and skilled in child care represents another barrier to involvement (Russell & Radojevic, 1992). "If parenting and employment options are to increase, then a major shift will be needed towards presuming mothers and fathers have equal responsibility, from conception onwards" (Russell & Radojevic, p. 306).

It is concluded that:
Theories of fatherhood or of mother-father differences are not highly developed, and researchers are having difficulty in adapting conceptual models, and methods of data collection and data analysis to the increased complexities involved in including fathers in family research paradigms (p. 309).

**Chapter Summary**

Past theories of the social psychology of fatherhood such as relative resources, sex role ideology and demand/response theory are not fully supported by studies which explore fathers and parenting. While some studies reveal a relationship between maternal employment and paternal participation in child care, they fail to explain why men's participation does not appear to be increasing along with maternal employment. The lack of clear and consistent definitions of parental involvement have made it difficult to compare past studies on this topic. A clear definition of parental involvement proposed by Lamb (1987) who identifies responsibility as the most important aspect of involvement, has been employed by some researchers. Results of these studies suggest that mothers participate significantly more than fathers in assuming responsibility for child rearing activities.

Theories which examine fathers' personality characteristics and attitudes regarding paternal involvement, and specifically responsibility for child care fail to explain why these individual traits are related to father behavior in single-
income families where demands for paternal participation are low, but are not found to be related to father behavior in dual-income families.

It has been suggested that the responsibility aspect of father involvement has been neglected in past research. Research which does exist suggests this is the area of childcare in which men least participate. Again unclear definitions exist regarding the terms “parental responsibility” and “parental assistance.” Even for dual-earner couples, mothers are found to be primarily responsible for child care while fathers assume a helper role.

Responsibility is suggested to be the aspect of parenting which involves managing, organizing and planning family life. The strain associated with this time-consuming aspect of parenting is now emphasized as an important aspect of family work. In particular, an emphasis has been placed upon the cognitive state of feeling responsible as opposed to the behavioral activity involved. It has been suggested that fathers may perceive their level of responsibility to be greater than that perceived by their partners. This has led me to my research question which asks how men come to assume responsibility for the care of their children and what this means to them. It is hoped that these findings will help to fill in some of the gaps which currently exist in the literature.
CHAPTER THREE

THE METHOD OF INQUIRY

Introduction to Grounded Theory

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the reader with an introduction to grounded theory, an explanation for why this qualitative methodology is well suited to this study, and a description of how the grounded theory method is utilized in this research.

Grounded theory is a form of systematic, qualitative analysis whereby substantive and formal theory about social and psychological phenomena are inductively generated (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986). This methodology involves a back and forth interplay between data which entails an "ongoing dialogue" between data collection, the identification of emerging themes, coding and analysis of data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Theoretical sampling involves purposively selecting subjects. Further data are collected in order to examine the variation in a category which guides the emerging theory, and to test the representativeness or range of each category (Chenitz and Swanson, 1986).

According to Glaser (1992) the purpose of grounded theory is to generate abstract concepts and the relationships between them in an attempt to "explain, account for and interpret" the variations in behaviour which are evident in the area of study. This continues until the researcher reaches a point of saturation.
at which time no new categories emerge from the data and there is little variation among patterns (Corbin, 1986).

**Rationale for Using Grounded Theory**

There are several reasons why I chose grounded theory as the method for examining the process whereby fathers come to assume responsibility for the care of their children.

First, my philosophical and theoretical orientation is based upon a constructivist view of the world as integrated, holistic, and comprised of a complicated web of relationships. Constructivist theories emphasize the proactive, self-organizing features of human knowing. According to this view, we are all subjective beings who are continually creating and construing our own meanings and therefore our own realities. We each interpret our world from our own individual perspectives. While some uniqueness of meaning exists, there is a great deal that is shared, and it is our personal narratives or stories which connect these shared meanings. We are all social beings and our sense of identity is connected to our relationships with others. We create meaning via our social interactions and some of these are interrelated in our stories or narratives. Guidano (1991) notes that "a highly complex social world has been superimposed on the mere physical environment, bringing about an intersubjective reality in which knowing oneself and the world is always in relation to others" (p. 10).
I am interested in how reality is constructed; specifically how men construct their fatherhood identity. In grounded theory many "voices" are listened to and theories "connect this multiplicity of perspectives with patterns and processes of action/interaction" (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 280).

Secondly, there has been an increased emphasis on the need for qualitative research in the field of marital and family therapy (Atkinson, Heath, & Chenail, 1991; Gale, 1993; Gilgun, Daly, & Handel, 1992; Leslie et al., 1991; Moon, Dillon, & Sprenkle, 1991; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Thompson, 1992). It is suggested that grounded theory is a well-suited approach to studying families as it permits meanings and perspectives to arise from the narratives provided by the participants in the study as opposed to the researchers' preconceived notions. The focus is on the process whereby these realities are created.

Thirdly, according to Chenitz and Swanson (1986) grounded theory allows for new perspectives or understanding of "familiar problems" and alternative ways of interpreting human behaviour. Saffilios-Rothschild (1969) warned that it is often women who speak for families and explain their realities.

**Theoretical Sensitivity**

Theoretical sensitivity involves the researcher's knowledge, understanding, skill and insight used to generate concepts and give meaning to substantive data. Personal and professional experience, as well as knowledge of the literature and data analysis contribute toward this sensitivity (Glaser, 1992).
My interest in this subject area was spurred by past research which suggests that although dual-earner families now represent the highest group of wage-earners in our North American society, many women continue to work a "second shift" and are subject to the stress associated with assuming primary responsibility for domestic labour including childcare (Hoschild, 1989). Many women also experience role conflict as they struggle to balance work and family. As society evolves, it does not seem that we are keeping up with these changes. I was interested to hear the stories fathers had to tell about their personal parenting experiences and perspectives on their paternal role; specifically in regards to responsibility for their children.

My feminist views also contribute toward my theoretical sensitivity. An area of keen interest for me involves our socialization process in North American society and the associated gender inequalities which reflect our stereotyped gender roles.

As a wife and mother of two young children, I have witnessed my husband's involvement in the care of our daughters. This also motivated me to investigate this area of study. I have noticed the apparent involvement of fathers with their young children everywhere I go. I see fathers pushing strollers, carrying snugglies and diaper bags, and participating in parent/child programs. This observation lead me to ask the question, "What is going on here?"

My area of interest as a "professional in training" is marital and family counselling. My practicum placement involved working with many couples and
families. It has been my experience that problems related to the division of labour, including childcare, often emerge during a counselling session. This often leads to a discussion of gender roles and negotiation of domestic work.

Although my experience represents a source of theoretical sensitivity which stimulates the generation of concepts and their relationships, I was also aware that I could not allow this to interfere with my ability to hear the voices of my participants as they tell their stories from their own perspectives.

**Getting Started**

Upon deciding to use grounded theory methodology for my research project, I began to immerse myself in all the literature I could find which described the process involved in generating a grounded theory. I quickly became aware of the many inconsistencies and contradictions in the literature regarding the process.

It became quite clear to me that the fundamental differences between, for example, the approach to grounded theory taken by Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1994) differed significantly from that taken by Glaser (1992). Glaser accuses Strauss of producing a "forced, preconceived, full conceptual description" of a phenomenon rather than a grounded theory. The main difference between these two approaches involves the interpretation of theoretical sensitivity and preconceptions about the data. On the one hand, Glaser maintains the researcher using grounded theory should neither identify a problem nor formulate preconceived ideas about an area of interest prior to beginning a
study. He emphasizes that the urge to preconceive should be "stifled" and the researcher should "learn not to know". According to Glaser (1992) assumptions, personal and professional experience and knowledge from the literature are "distorting baggage" which one should put aside and ignore. On the other hand, Strauss and Corbin (1994) maintain that the above can be used to the researcher's advantage as they provide a background for the study and explain the significance of the study. Using existing knowledge and information documents the development and importance of the problem (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986).

I chose to follow the approach to grounded theory proposed by Strauss and Corbin, as I had already conducted a literature review prior to beginning my research in an attempt to identify gaps in the literature in need of further study. The process of reviewing the literature combined with prior personal knowledge about this subject area automatically lead me to form preconceptions about fathers. Rather than ignoring these and pretending they did not exist I believed it was important to acknowledge my preconceptions and write them down in an attempt to prevent them from biasing my interpretations of the data. I could not have followed Glaser's approach because I already knew a great deal about my area of study.

The Issue of Context

The issue of context also arose as an important consideration for my research. Sandelowski (1993) states that qualitative research involves a
"culturally and historically situated process" and "stories...are time-bound, interpretive, political and moral acts" (Sandelowski, 1993, p. 5). Chenitz and Swanson (1986) also point out that grounded theory is contextual in that the actions and interactions occur in a specific setting and under specific conditions.

Similarly, Strauss and Corbin (1994) comment that "knowledge is closely linked with time and space." It is suggested that a central feature in grounded theory methodology is that it changes with the times and is therefore influenced by intellectual trends and movements such as feminism, political economy and postmodernism. Questions such as "What is the influence of gender, or power, or social class on this phenomenon?" are asked of the data, as well as how, by whom, when, and where? Entertaining questions such as these is associated with the "conditional matrix" which integrates all levels of society from international to individual, and recognizes the ways in which knowledge is closely linked with time and place (Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

As applied to the present study, an awareness of the time and place in which past research was conducted seems important. Consideration of society's changing attitudes toward the role of men in domestic labour and child care, feminism, social class of the research participants, and economic changes associated with more women in the work force seems necessary in interpreting and integrating past research with findings from the present study.
Preconceptions

Upon reviewing the literature which addresses the above issues, I became aware of my assumptions and biases regarding my chosen area of study. I decided to proceed carefully, as I incorporated my personal and professional experience as well as my review of past literature on this topic, with continual self-monitoring in place. Strauss and Corbin (1994) maintain that the researcher using grounded theory, should be knowledgeable about the topic of study yet also remain "puzzled" or "disturbed" about some aspect of interpretations made, based on research data. They refer to the use of preconceptions based on past research and literature which contribute to theoretical sensitivity to the area of study.

There were four major preconceptions which I identified before conducting my first interview:

Preconception 1: In both dual and single income families, mothers continue to be primarily responsible for childcare while fathers tend to assume the role of assistant or helper.

Preconception 2: Fathers tend to participate in aspects of childcare which involve play activities as opposed to providing direct care.
Preconception 3: The gender role attitudes held by mothers may be reflected in a "gatekeeping role" which impacts upon the amount of father involvement in childcare.

Preconception 4: Fathers' commitment to their role identity may affect responsibility for childcare. Perceptions about work role identity and father role identity, for example, may result in very different perceptions of "primary responsibilities".

Sampling

My sampling criteria at the early stage of my study were minimal and open. Men who were fathers of at least one preschool child were eligible for participation. This criterion was based upon the time commitment and constant attention required in parenting small children who depend on adults to attend to virtually all of their needs. This was viewed as a time in couples' lives where the demand and potential for father participation would be quite high. Due to the scope of this study which aimed toward the development of a preliminary theoretical model which describes the process whereby men come to assume responsibility for the care of their children, the sample was also limited to men who were identified as middle to upper class only.

Recruitment of participants involved the distribution of a written request for volunteers (see Appendix A) which was provided to organizers of
parent-child play groups such as Gymboree. Of the five men who were recruited by the organizers of these groups, two were selected to participate in the study. Also, four men agreed to participate after hearing about the study via word of mouth and three were selected.

Ten interviews were completed with five participants whose children ranged in age from four months to four years. All men were married and identified themselves as involved fathers in the lives of their children.

**Data Collection**

Unstructured interviews were conducted as a method of data collection. The goals of the interview were to understand participants' perspectives of responsibility for childcare and to clarify the meanings participants attribute to their father roles. This approach is based upon the belief that we are subjective beings who create our own meanings, and therefore our own realities. While there are multiple realities, there is a great deal that is shared, and it is our personal narratives which connect these shared meanings.

**Pre-Interview Contact**

Individuals who requested more information about the study or wanted to volunteer as participants were free to contact the researcher by telephone. After briefly speaking to all fathers who contacted myself and offered to participate in this study, theoretical sampling was used to purposefully select each participant as data collection was controlled by the emerging theory. A time and location for
an interview which was convenient for both myself and the participant, was negotiated with those who were selected to participate in the study. Each participant was interviewed twice, and the first interview usually lasted between one and two hours. A second interview served to clarify and elaborate upon information obtained in the first interview, as well as information obtained from subsequent interviews with other subjects. Prior to the first interview each subject was asked to prepare himself by thinking about the question: How have you adjusted to your role as a father?

The First Interview

The first interview began with introductions and verbal appreciation to the participant for his involvement in the study. Permission to tape record the interview and for the researcher to take notes was also obtained. A written description of the study was provided (see Appendix B) and the opportunity to receive clarification or further specific information about the study was provided before the consent form was signed (see Appendix C). Following this, confidentiality of identifying information was ensured by the selection of a pseudonym to be used, as well as the omission of any reference to places or persons during the interview which may reveal the subject's identity.

Demographic information including age, number of children and their ages, occupational status of both the subject and his partner were gathered and the researcher then asked the subject, "How have you adjusted to your role as a father?" During the interview I remained continually aware of my assumptions
and preconceptions about this topic in an attempt to prevent them from interfering with the interview process and thus becoming barriers to uncovering each individual's story. I also made a conscious effort not to ask leading questions, but rather to gather a wide scope of information. This was an attempt to avoid following my own agenda and thus steer the interview in a direction which would give me the answers I may have anticipated or expected based upon my assumptions and biases. The interviews therefore involved the subjects telling their stories, while I asked for clarification or elaboration on information which was unclear. I also posed further questions which guided the interview. Respect for the subject and the personal narrative he shared was acknowledged at all times.

The Second Interview

Prior to a second interview, I provided subjects with the opportunity to read an interpretive account of our first interview in order to verify what was said and to ensure that I had accurately interpreted the meaning of their words. The interpretive account is written by the researcher following the first interview. It takes the form of a written letter and represents the researcher's interpretation of the main points addressed during the interview. A revised interpretive account was provided to participants following the second interview and included their changes to the original account.

Due to the nature of grounded theory methodology, which involves a back and forth inter-play between the data and data collection, information obtained
from the transcription and coding of one interview informed and shaped the questions for the next interview. A second interview was conducted to fill in any gaps through more specific questions and a narrower focus to reflect the emerging themes from the data.

**The Research Process**

All interviews began with the same question. However, the questions that followed became more and more focused and specific as they were influenced by the information I had gathered from preceding interviews. Hypotheses began to formulate which were tested during each succeeding interview. Theoretical sampling was used in the selection of each participant in the study as each father was purposefully chosen according to criteria associated with evolving hypotheses. For example, after transcribing and coding my first interview I noticed that balancing the roles of father and student posed a difficulty for this individual. I wondered whether this was related to his present role as a student. I also wondered whether timing of fatherhood was a factor here, in that this father was in his early thirties and had left his job in order to return to school. I was curious about whether or not a man who was older at the time of fatherhood and who was established in his career would also experience this conflict in an attempt to balance the roles of breadwinner and father. Participant One also described a process whereby his confidence in his fathering skills increased over time. This seemed to be related to spending time alone with his son. I
wanted to explore this relationship between "solo time" and acquiring confidence in fathering skills further with future participants.

In choosing the next participant for my study I purposively selected a father who was older at the time of fatherhood and who was established in his career. After transcribing and coding this second interview I began to ask more questions of my data and formulate some hypotheses. Participant Two was forty years old at the time of fatherhood and had his own business. He did not seem to experience the same type of role conflict as my first participant described. However, he did explain how his confidence in his fathering skills were enhanced as he spent more and more time alone with his daughter and they developed their own special routines. At this point I was beginning to hypothesize that solo time with a child was related to increased confidence in parenting ability. I wanted to check this with my next participant. I also wondered whether the age of the child at the time of an interview impacted upon perceptions of fathering ability and responsibility. Participant One had a four month old son and his wife had recently finished nursing the baby in order to return to work. This man was relatively new at being a father. On the other hand, Participant Two had a two-year-old daughter and therefore had more experience with the phases of childhood from infancy to toddlerhood. Participant Two often referred to a time "in the beginning" which he compared with the present. I wondered whether the age of the child and the associated
phase of development at the time of an interview would be a factor in assuming responsibility for child care.

In choosing my third participant I purposely selected a father who was younger at the onset of fatherhood (twenty-six years old), had an infant child (under six months old) and who was employed. I was looking for a father who was similar to Participant One but who was not a student. I also wanted to select a father who was at a lower socio-economic status than my first two participants. Following the first interview with Participant Three I noted that this individual also described conflict with the amount of time spent at work and time spent with his son, which was similar to the balancing act described by Participant One. I began to hypothesize that a man's age at the time of fatherhood and/or how established he is in his career at the time he is interviewed may contribute toward the status he gives to his father role. I wondered whether this would partially explain the difference found between Participants One and Three when compared with Participant Two. A similarity was noted between this father and the first father interviewed. They both referred to the fathering they received when growing up and described ideal images of the type of father they aspired toward becoming. They both referred to a conscious effort to be different than their own fathers in the ways they parented their children. This was something I wanted to check with Participant Two as well as future participants. Participant Three also described how he acquired confidence in fathering role. However he differed from the first two
participants in that he seemed to feel more confident "in the beginning". I wondered if this was related to prior exposure to caring for infants and small children prior to the onset of fatherhood. Participant Two had commented that he did not have prior exposure to babies and I decided to check this with Participant One as well.

In choosing my fourth participant for this study I purposively chose a father who had more than one child. After transcribing and coding our interview I noted this father did not have prior exposure to babies and young children. I began to hypothesize that previous experience caring for children prior to becoming a father was related to confidence in parenting skills and perhaps perceptions of responsibility for child care.

I noticed that this father often referred to the influence his spouse exerted regarding his view of his father role. I began to note the similarity here with Participant One regarding different standards held by himself and his spouse regarding child care. I then remembered that Participant Three had also referred to his wife "wearing the pants". I decided to explore this comment further with him and to check with Participant Two regarding influences his spouse may have upon his perception of his father role.

Participant Four described a difference in his involvement between his son and his daughter. He commented that he wasn't sure whether this was due to differences in their gender or their ages. He described a close bond between himself and his three year old son which he did not yet have with his ten-month
old-daughter. I wondered whether the gender of a child impacted upon involvement with that child and a sense of responsibility for child care. This was something I wanted to check with my next participant. I also went back to Participant Two who had a two year old daughter and explored this idea of gender of the child and father involvement with him.

A similarity among two previous participants and this father was noted regarding reported conflict between the roles of breadwinner and father. I was noticing that while these men described a commitment to their father role, they all prioritized the breadwinner role. I also realized that while all participants described a high level of involvement with their child(ren), they all identified their spouse as primarily responsible for child care. At this point I wondered whether or not this could be my core category around which all other categories seemed to revolve. Integrative diagrams were drawn in an attempt to discover possible relationships among categories.

In choosing my fifth participant I intentionally selected a father who had two children of the same gender and whose spouse worked part-time. Upon discussing a child's gender with Participant Two I began to wonder whether it was the phase of development a child was at rather than gender of the child which influenced paternal involvement. I also wanted to explore whether the occupational status of one's spouse impacted upon fathers' perceptions of their responsibility for child care. Upon comparison between Participant Four and Participant Five regarding employment status of spouse I noted that participant
four described more time intentionally set aside in order to spend time with the children while participant four seemed to spend more time at work. I wondered whether this was related to a demand to spend more time with the children or a desire to spend the time. I compared this with memos regarding Participants One and Two who had discussed their spouse's work schedules (part-time and full-time) and how this impacted upon involvement with and responsibility for their children. I also checked back with Participant Three who had not discussed this aspect of his involvement in child care.

Throughout all interviews care was taken to remain continually aware of my personal preconceptions, values and beliefs. I frequently read over my list of preconceptions.

Chenitz and Swanson (1986) also outline several conditions that impact upon the research process. The first of these conditions is the perspective from which the data are approached. For example, I am approaching my data from a counselling psychology perspective which includes a constructivist world view.

A second condition is the back and forth movement between inductive to deductive thinking. Hypotheses are formulated and verified by carefully reviewing memos or collecting more data.

A third condition is abstraction of ideas. Chenitz and Swanson (1986) maintain that the researcher should continually move toward higher levels of abstraction. "The more general the theory, the wider its scope" (p. 94).
Finally, a detailed analysis is essential if a dense, well integrated theory is to be created. This included careful coding of all interviews, consistent and detailed memo writing, and "most importantly the data is analyzed, first line by line, then paragraph by paragraph, especially in the early phases of the research" (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986, p. 94).

**Ethical Considerations**

Some of the ethical considerations regarding the fathers who participated in this study included participant consent following a detailed description of what involvement entails. Steps were also taken to ensure confidentiality of the participants as well as the risks and benefits associated with their participation in the study.

**Consent**

Each participant was informed of specific details regarding his involvement in the present study and the right to discontinue participation without penalty was conveyed. Possible risks and benefits associated with participation were also revealed in the consent form.

Interviews were tape recorded only with the participants' consent and I offered to share any interview notes upon request.

**Confidentiality**

Confidentiality of each participant's identity was ensured by the use of pseudonyms and the omission of any reference to persons or places within the
transcript which could possibly reveal the identity of the participant. A single list of the names of all subjects and each corresponding pseudonym was kept in a locked file in my home office. Audio tapes of the interviews were also kept in the locked file and separate secure files protected the written data.

All interviews were transcribed by myself exclusively, and all tapes will be erased and transcripts shredded upon completion of the research.

**Participant's Risks and Benefits**

A potential risk associated with participation in this study involved the possibility that a participant could reveal some form of child abuse during an interview, at which time I would be legally required to report the information to the appropriate authorities.

A second risk included the possibility that a detailed review of one's parenting history may lead to increased awareness and insight into certain aspects of one's father role. This could result in feelings of guilt or resentment which may arise if differences between ideals about involvement as a father and actual behaviour became apparent to the participant. In the event that issues arose for which counselling would be recommended and desired, I was prepared to arrange for such services to be provided by an appropriate professional.

Potential benefits associated with participation in the present study included acquiring new insights or perspectives regarding the father's role in caring for his child(ren) and the possible positive benefits to marriage and family life.
Data Analysis

The constant comparative method of analysis involves the continuous comparison of data in order to identify differences and similarities. The data in the interview transcripts are coded with substantive codes which are then compared (See Appendix D for an example of the coding of a portion of a transcript; Appendix E for an example of substantive codes; and Appendix F for how the codes were distributed). Similar codes are then clustered, labeled and formed into a category. Further categories are identified as patterns which become hypotheses (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986). These core categories guide further data collection, and when "sufficiently grounded" existing literature in the field of study is related to the emerging theory (Glaser, 1992).

Substantive codes are compared with theoretical codes which represent hypotheses regarding the relationships between substantive codes and leads to a theory. Analysis involves the ongoing generation of hypotheses about categories and inter-relationships between these, which are then tested with further data.

Data collection continues until saturation is achieved, at which time no further categories emerge from the data, and little variation exists among patterns (Corbin, 1986). Saturation refers to "the completeness of all levels of codes" and takes place when "all the data fit into the established categories, interactional and organizational patterns are visible, behavioral variation is described and the behavior can be predicted" (Hutchinson, 1992, p. 204) This
process which involves repeatedly checking and asking questions of the data eventually results in the researcher achieving a sense of closure.

According to Leininger (1993) saturation occurs when the researcher finds no further explanation, interpretation, or description of the phenomenon under study, by the participants. In fact, there tends to be a redundancy in which the researcher gets the same (or similar) information on repeated inquiries. (Leininger, 1993)

According to Chenitz and Swanson (1987) "sufficient" data must be gathered in order for saturation to be achieved. However they state:

There are no set rules to determine what is sufficient. The analyst can, however, feel confident that the field has been thoroughly explored when no further categories emerge from the data, the categories are dense and well developed, the same patterns are seen repeatedly, and there is variation" (p. 93)

Chenitz and Swanson further note:

In some research situations, sampling along theoretical grounds could go on indefinitely. In this case, the analyst must determine the limits of a project and the degree of depth that will be pursued. Sampling should be limited to those conditions that prove to be of major relevance to the developing theory. (p. 98)

I decided that saturation had been reached in this study after interviewing five participants and finding repeated patterns with little variation in my data.
While theoretical sampling could have continued, I believed I had achieved my initial goal at this point, which was the development of a preliminary theoretical model which suggests the process whereby men come to assume responsibility for the care of their children.

Part of the research process involved in grounded theory includes writing and storing memos. These are personal notes consisting of ideas about the data, which are sorted and resorted in an attempt to organize and guide further data collection.

I began with substantive coding which described the action taking place in the data. The participant's exact words were often used. Some examples were "ideal image," "being there," "in the beginning" and "trading off." The use of substantive codes served to ensure that my preconceptions and biases were not imposed upon the data.

According to Glaser (1992), "Open coding is the initial step of theoretical analysis that pertains to the initial discovery of categories and their properties" (p. 39). Constant comparison is used to categorize incidents and open coding ends when a core category is discovered. All other categories appear to revolve around the core category. In open coding then, the data are reduced to incidents which are carefully examined and then compared for similarities and differences (Glaser, 1992). While comparing codes I constantly asked myself "What category or property of a category does this incident indicate?"
Searching for similarities and differences between several incidents involved reflecting upon my own past experiences as well as the literature I had researched on my topic. For example, Daly (1993) explored the process of socially constructing a fatherhood identity. He found that although participants in his study often made reference to their own fathers as role models, their fathers served primarily as negative role models and represented the type of father these men actively wanted to avoid becoming. When I compared this finding with some of the categories emerging in my own study, I discovered a strong similarity. All of these men indicated a desire to father differently than their own fathers. Three of these men expressed a motivating drive and were "determined to be different." They also perceived their fathers as "emotionally absent when they were growing up."

I utilized Glaser's (1978) theoretical coding schema, "the 6-C's" which is recommended for the "beginning analyst." This coding schema assists one to conceptualize how categories relate to each other and are then integrated into a theory. While coding, I asked myself the following questions associated with the 6-C's. "Is this category a condition of some other category?" "Is it a cause, a context, or a contingency?" "Does this category co-vary with other categories?" and "Under what conditions is this category maximized? minimized?" (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986).

Memos were kept on computer and were used to capture the connections taking place among the data. They assisted in the formulation of hypotheses
which would later be tested. I was able to access memos quickly and easily because each memo began with the corresponding code which it described. While writing memos, I constantly searched for relationships between and among codes and asked myself questions which lead to comparing and sorting to discover linkages. It was at this point that I became aware of the inductive and deductive, back and forth thinking process that is involved in this approach to inquiry. There were many pieces of codes and memos which I continually separated and then reassembled into a larger whole. However, I was also cautious not to make these links too soon. As Chenitz and Swanson (1986) warn, this can prevent the emergence and development of categories. They state that "early foreclosure of categories leads to a theory with a few weak concepts based on categories that are poorly developed" (p. 98). Chenitz and Swanson (1986) also warn, "It is very important at this point that the analyst not jump to conclusions and arrive at the central category too early, a common mistake in the novice unused to dealing with ambiguity" (p. 99).

**Evaluation of Grounded Theory Research**

Evaluation of this methodology includes issues of integrity; my conception of the term "rigor;" self-monitoring activities including memo writing and consulting with colleagues; and validity checks such as theoretical sampling and member checking using interpretive accounts.
Integrity

There are specific criteria according to which grounded theory is evaluated. In addressing the issue of integrity, Glaser and Strauss (1967) maintain that a well-constructed grounded theory meets four criteria for judging how the theory applies to a phenomenon. The first of these is fit, which results when a theory faithfully explains the primary interactional variations of the substantive area which is carefully induced from the data. The second criterion is understanding. The theory should make sense to those who study or practice in the field. The third criterion is generality which refers to wide interpretations and variation needed in order to apply the theory to related areas. Finally, the fourth criterion is control. Hypotheses which suggest relationships among concepts are based upon the actual data which are related to the phenomena. These conditions should apply to a specific situation.

"Rigor"

The term rigor is typically associated with quantitative methods of research where it refers to the strict enforcement of rules and logical exactitude. However, Sandelowski (1993) refers to the concept of "rigor" in qualitative research as an "illusion of technique". She describes the "inflexibility" and "rigidity" associated with this term which she views as a threat to the creative artistic aspect of qualitative research which focuses on meaning. Strauss and
Corbin (1994) also support this point when they note that "too rigid a conception of induction can lead to sterile or boring studies" (p. 277).

Strauss and Corbin (1994) point out that because researchers using grounded theory are interested in discovering patterns of human interaction, they are not as concerned about the specific actions or behaviors of particular participants. Therefore, they are not attempting to create theory about the individuals in the study. The extent to which their behaviors become "predictable" is "...in the limited sense that if elsewhere approximately similar conditions were obtained, then approximately similar consequences should occur" (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 278). This was considered to be an important point as I believe that for a theory to be useful, it should have some type of predictability about human behavior. However, this is very different from "replicability" which assumes the exact same results would occur if an identical study were to be conducted. Once again this concept is not applicable to qualitative research.

Sandelowski (1993) suggests we "soften" our idea of "rigor" to include the more artistic side of qualitative research. Rather than trying to obtain exact replications of previous findings, she suggests "grabbing the essence of a phenomenon" with all research results contributing to the overall "big" picture. Keeping a clear decision trail which can be followed by another researcher provides consistency in qualitative research. Sandelowski (1993) suggests that qualitative research is as much art as science and she views it as "a bridge that
connects the two." This seems an important point to remember when applying qualitative research methods as it reminds one of the artistic, creative and interpretive aspect of this type of research, which is intimately influenced by the researcher.

Adhering to the idea of distinct differences existing between science and art reflects thinking within a positivist paradigm, where everything is analyzed as a separate, objective segment functioning independently from other segments. A constructivist paradigm emphasizes a larger whole where the focus in on how the various segments are inter-related and connected. Approaching grounded theory from the latter paradigm enables me to see that all forms of knowledge are useful and they all contribute toward new ways of thinking about our world and the people in it. This leads to greater, richer knowledge. Thus, the question of which is more "accurate" or more "true" becomes irrelevant when operating from within this framework.

**Self Monitoring**

In an attempt to ensure that while I was creating and interpreting my data I was not allowing my assumptions and biases to interfere with or lead the process, I kept them on a list beside me as I worked. I also found memo writing and reviewing these notes with a critical eye to be a useful form of self-monitoring.

Engaging in discussions with colleagues who share similar research interests was extremely helpful as this provided an outside opinion regarding the
degree of influence my assumptions could be holding in my research. Further
insight into the data was also gained during a working group discussion which
addressed changing gender roles. This was part of a conference on gender and
culture which I attended while conducting this study. Presenting papers and
sharing research findings with other members of the working group became
another validity check on ideas and hypotheses I was formulating. According to
Chenitz and Swanson (1986) research "requires interaction with others as well
as interaction with the data" (p. 93).

Validity

When applied to quantitative research, the term validity refers to the
extent to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure. Sandelowski
(1993) states that "...validation is less a technical problem than a deeply
theoretical one" (1993, p. 2) which leads one to question whether quantitative
standards ought to be applied to qualitative inquiry. When viewed as an
historically and culturally situated social process, the researcher becomes an
interpretivist who relies on "contextually grounded linguistic and interpretive
practices." Sandelowski states "Trustworthiness becomes a matter of
persuasion whereby the scientist is viewed as having made those practices
visible and therefore, auditable" (1993, p. 4). Validation is therefore viewed as
connected to one's theoretical orientation.

On the one hand, a quantitative, positivist paradigm promotes a single
objective "truth" which is "out there" waiting to be discovered. On the other
hand, a qualitative, constructivist paradigm does not adhere to the existence of one "truth." Rather, according to this view, multiple, subjective realities exist "out there" and the concept of "truth" does not hold a place within this world view. Since I view reality as multiple and constructed the concept of "repeatability" becomes inapplicable.

In grounded theory, theoretical sampling represents a validity check on the data. The researcher interviews subjects and continually formulates and rejects hypotheses that do not fit, and intentionally searches for contradictory data which would lead to variation. Searching for, and discovering the "differences" adds to the richness of the evolving theory. In the present study, my first participant was a young thirty-year-old white, upper-middle class father of one male child, aged four months. In searching for a difference, my second participant was an older forty-one-year-old father of one. I was wondering whether the timing of fatherhood would make a difference in how fathers assume responsibility for the care of their children. Other potential sources of difference which arose in the interviews which followed included age of the child(ren), gender of the child(ren), number of children, and education level of the father. These were determined from the data which emerged in the analysis of each subsequent interview, which is in accordance with theoretical sampling.

Member checking can be viewed as another validity check on data. Sandelowski (1993) points out the paradox in member validation which represents an attempt to enhance integrity, yet researcher and participant each
have differing agendas which may conflict. It seems important to remember that stories are "time-bound" and interpretive and the mere act of telling one's story changes the experience and results in a new perspective. The individual who reads over a transcript from an interview has undergone growth and change in the brief time period that has passed, and in this way he is not the "exact" same person who is reading over what he said one week prior. Furthermore, as Sandelowski (1993) points out, "Lay and scholarly syntheses...may not be consistent with each other" (p. 7). When viewed in this light, member checking serves as a threat to validity rather than a means of validating the data. A possible problem associated with this perspective lies in the researcher assuming she has an accurate understanding of the essence of what was said by the other, and is in danger of assuming wrongly.

On the other hand, the use of member checking using interpretive accounts can assist the researcher in avoiding the above problem. These are summaries of what has been interpreted from an interview transcription. This appeared to be an important validity check which could minimize the possibility of inaccurate interpretations of what is being said as the researcher applies her subjective reality and experiences to the transcripts as a means of making sense of what is being read. One may wrongfully assume one knows what a participant means by a particular statement. Therefore, I chose to use interpretive accounts as a validity check in the present study. This seemed to capture the essence of the meaning of the phenomena under study, from the perspective of the
participant. The participant was encouraged to make changes or elaborate on any interpretation perceived to be inaccurate.
CHAPTER FOUR

Men's Perspectives on their Parenting Role

This chapter consists of two parts. The first part involves an overview of the men who participated in this study. Each individual will then be introduced to the reader, and a summary of his experience of fathering including his perspective on his parenting role will be provided.

The second part will describe the theoretical model and the themes which emerged as individual stories were compared for similarities and differences.

Part 1: The Research Participants

Descriptive information regarding the participants who volunteered to participate in the study is presented in Table 1. The men represented various educational backgrounds and occupations. The socio-economic level of all participants was middle to upper-middle class. All men were married and their spouses worked either part-time or full-time. Fathers ranged in age from 27 years to 41 years and the age range of their children was from 3 months to four years. Three men were the fathers of one child and two men were fathers of two children. Two fathers had one male child; one father had one female child; one father had one male child and one female child; and one father had two male children.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>Age of Fatherhood</th>
<th>No. of Children</th>
<th>Age(s) of Children</th>
<th>Gender of Children</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Employment Status</th>
<th>Employment Status of Spouse</th>
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<td>F/T</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2yrs</td>
<td>F</td>
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<td>Self-Employed</td>
<td>P/T</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>3mos</td>
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<td>10mos, 3yrs</td>
<td>M,F</td>
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<td>Self-Employed</td>
<td>F/T</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Lawyer</td>
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</tr>
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The Five Fathers

Each participant will be introduced individually in the order in which they were first interviewed. In order to maintain confidentiality the names of these men have been changed. The actual words spoken by the participants are frequently incorporated into the text, as they provide the most meaningful and profound account of these men's experiences as fathers. These quotes have been edited to provide ease of readership, however efforts were taken not to change the meaning of what was being said. An example of a quote prior to editing is provided below:

[He] started crying and all of a sudden it hit me, like whoah, I shouldn't have done this cause I don't feel like I'm in control, and and if I, like if something had gone really wrong, I wouldn't have been very um confident in, in my ability to deal with it.

Here is an example of the edited version of this quote:

[He] started crying and all of a sudden it hit me. I shouldn't have done this because I don't feel like I'm in control and if something had gone really wrong, I wouldn't have been very confident in my ability to deal with it.

Following the introduction of each participant, a revised interpretive account of the interviews will be provided. This took the form of a letter to the participant and was written following the second interview. As explained previously in Chapter Three, the revised interpretive account was written after
the participant read over the original interpretive account of the first interview and clarified or expanded upon the researcher's interpretations.

**Participant One: Denzil**

Denzil was the first father to participate in this study. He is thirty years old and has a university education. He was a graduate student at the time of the interview. Denzil became a father at age thirty, and he presently has one son, aged 4 months. His wife is a professional and she has recently returned to work full-time following a maternity leave.

**Revised Interpretive Account**

When you became a father you were initially very excited and totally absorbed with your newborn son as he took centre stage and other aspects of your life took a back seat. However, "reality slowly crept back in" and you then became aware of the impact that becoming a father had on your life. This is when you began to experience "role conflict" as you tried to balance school work and family, rather than maintaining an exclusive focus on your new son. This "balancing act" continues to pose a struggle for you as you strive to live up to your ideal image of the type of father that you want to be as well as spending sufficient time on your school work. From your perspective you are "still not that great" at balancing roles of father and student. You find yourself feeling guilty about one or the other most of the time although you try to make your time commitment to your son a priority.
A real driving force behind becoming the "ideal father" which you strive toward, is to be unlike your own father in many ways. You commented "...it works opposite to what you had, so my father and the way he was, it's fundamental to the way I am not...very fundamental." You describe your father as a "workaholic" who was absent most of the time and wasn't there for you when you needed him. The only connection you feel to him and the only way you relate with your father is through sports or discussions regarding financial matters. You want to have a different type of relationship with your son which consists of "being there" for him when he needs to talk about things that really matter. You commented:

I'd like him to see me as somebody who's open, who he can to talk to. We can do all the guy things like play golf and tennis and fish and do all that stuff but also be able to say "Dad, I have a problem about whatever", and for me to be open to it and for us to be able to talk about other things other than "Dad, I need money" and "Dad, I'm going to whip your butt in tennis", which is basically how I relate to my dad and I still do relate to my dad like that.

You tend to refer to your dad and his fathering style as a gauge for assessing how well you are performing as a father. You commented that "if I've learned my father's way then I think I've come quite a long way from that but if I compare it to where I'd like to be I still have a long way to go." You are very aware of the powerful impact that learned behavior, as well as relationships and
interactions modeled by one's family of origin has on an individual. You strive to overcome the negative aspects of this but you are also aware that you have "the propensity to become like [your] father" unless you continually and consciously live by your own personal values. You are also aware that you are presently modeling behavior for your son and you want him to see, beginning at a very young age, that you are an involved person in his life. For you, involvement includes all aspects of caring for your son. You stated:

I'm convinced that, the kids, you think they're not watching and not processing that. They see it. They see you doing the bottles. They see you feeding them. They see you taking part in the laundry. They see you doing all of that stuff, and you think [he's] only four months old, but [he's] still processing everything [he] sees.

As a child you were sick a lot and spent a great deal of time with your mom who you describe as "a very typical mom, very caring and you know, lovy dovy and all that stuff". You believe that spending so much time with her has had a huge impact upon you. You recalled:

A lot of the time that I spent with my mom was caring time, was sensitive time, was not the typical sort of male bonding time...When you spend time with a person like that all the time then I think you see it.
You describe yourself as a sensitive kid who could “play the guy’s game,” but throughout school your best friends were always female.

Although you want to “have it all,” which includes having a successful career and being a full-time, involved father, you continue to experience difficulty in buying into the very involved father part. You often find yourself influenced by what you learned from your father about prioritizing work over family. In the back of your mind, being a breadwinner equals success as an individual, however you are trying to convince yourself that spending more time with your son and placing more of a priority on your father role results in being a successful person as well. An incongruency seems to exist between your learned values and beliefs which you are trying to change, and your actions associated with these.

In your mind, the quantity of time your wife spent at home with your son while on maternity leave as well as nursing him both played a significant role in parent-child bonding. Now that your wife is no longer breastfeeding and has returned to work things have changed. You are now able to feed him his bottle and he is no longer physically dependent on his mother for food. Also, you look after him alone which allows for father-child bonding to take place.

Since the birth of your son you have noticed a rather dramatic lifestyle change, particularly regarding a loss of freedom and personal time. You never really understood the time commitment involved in parenting a young child until you became a father. Now you find that your time is carefully scheduled, where
practically every minute of your day is accounted for. Living this way is a new experience for you. You also use scheduling as a way of balancing your roles, allotting a certain amount of time for school work and time to be with your son.

Relationship changes have occurred since the birth of your son. You found that before your wife returned to work, the baby was practically the exclusive focus of conversation between the two of you. You also noticed a change in relationships with friends, particularly those who don't have children. You and your wife had unintentionally distanced some of these people because of your focus on the baby. However, since a few months have passed and your wife has returned to work, there is now a little less focus on your son and the two of you discuss other things such as work and school. You are also resuming friendships with those people you had distanced, and you use the terms "pulling out" and "refocusing" to describe a conscious effort to converse about topics other than your son and how wonderful he is. Childbirth classes were very helpful for you in preparing for the birth of your child. Your wife had the background and training in this area and the classes were really to teach you about caring for the new baby. You also learned some skills from your wife such as how to get him to take the bottle. However there are things that you do better than she does such as swaddling him tightly in a blanket, and you were the one who pulled off the umbilical cord.

When your wife was on maternity leave the distribution of domestic labour became more traditional, but now that "you're home more often and she's away
more often" you find that you have to "pick up some of the slack." As far as your role in parenting, you share most aspects of child care with your wife including feeding, bathing, bedtime, changing diapers etc. However when it comes to planning and organizing, your wife "does a lot more of the detail stuff." In your opinion your wife is primarily responsible for your son and you see yourself as needing to be the stable one providing support for her. You also feel like her assistant at times, however when you are alone with your son Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesday evenings you don't feel like an assistant. You like the fact that when you are alone with him you have your own way of doing things and the two of you have developed your own routine.

**Participant Two: Amie**

The second participant interviewed was Amie. He is forty-one years old and has a grade twelve education although he has taken some college courses. He presently runs his own business. Amie became a father at age forty and has one daughter who was nearly two years old at the time of the interview. His wife has a master's degree and presently operates a small part-time business out of the home.

**Revised Interpretive Account**

For you the experience of being a father has been "great" and "terrific." You have embraced it with much enthusiasm and have found that it puts everything in your life into perspective. Your roles as husband and father seem
to take priority in your life. Although you carry the brunt of the financial responsibility, you don’t necessarily view this as your “life role” and you prioritize your family over your work. You commented that you wouldn’t have a problem with becoming your daughter’s primary caregiver if the opportunity arose and your spouse was to assume the financial responsibility for the family.

You describe your family as “a traditional set-up” in that you go to work and your wife looks after your daughter. However the domestic work including cooking and cleaning is shared between the two of you. You both have child centered attitudes toward child rearing. Your daughter is your primary focus and concern and she takes priority over maintaining a spotless house.

The timing and “readiness” for fatherhood have played a significant role in your adjustment to becoming a father. From your perspective you had experienced many different things in life. You travelled and describe having a lot of fun prior to getting married and having a child. When your daughter was born you were ready for the change and therefore the adjustment wasn’t as difficult as it may have been for someone younger who hadn’t had as much life experience as yourself. You felt that you were “absolutely ready” for the transition to fatherhood when it happened.

Childbirth classes provided you with some knowledge about what to expect physically during the birthing process itself, but they didn’t prepare you for the emotional aspect of the birth experience. You did find that talking to
other fathers at the classes who were sharing similar experiences as yourself was very helpful.

You describe the birthing experience from your perspective as “scary,” “intense” and “incredible.” You felt “total helplessness” because you could only stand by your wife and do your best to “coach” her, while she did all of the physical work. Watching the miracle of birth was remarkable for you and it changed your perspective on life.

The birth of your daughter also seems to have brought new insights into, and knowledge about yourself, specifically regarding your own adoption. The sudden realization there was another human being with the same genetic make-up as yourself was very special for you. The impact of fatherhood led to a great deal of self-reflection including thoughts about your own birth. This led you to a search for your own birth parents. The birth of your child seems to have triggered self-discovery and placed an emphasis upon family roots.

You view the adjustment to fatherhood in a very positive light and describe it as a “learning process”. However, it involves many life changes including loss of free time and changes to your marital relationship. You have also noticed that changes take place as children move from one phase to the next (infancy to toddlerhood) and you point out that one has to adjust to these as a parent.

Your attitude toward parenting, particularly this specific stage of development that your daughter is at presently (toddlerhood) is one of
acceptance of the behavior that comes with this phase of her life. You believe that as a parent one has to have realistic expectations about what parenting is all about and this attitude is very important in your view.

In the beginning you viewed yourself as more of a "support structure" for your wife, and you did what you could to help out with your infant daughter when you were not at work. You see your wife as primarily responsible for your child, however you want to be an "active participant" in raising her. Your want to assume responsibility in raising her. The time factor comes into play here and your wife spends so much more time with your daughter. However you view yourself as an equal caregiver regarding quality of time spent with her, teaching her and making decisions on her behalf. You and your spouse share decision making regarding your daughter ranging from every day decisions including her health (illness, teething) as well as more serious long-term decisions (education).

Presently you feel very confident about your fathering skills, but it has taken time for this to develop. In the beginning you were very nervous because you hadn't had much exposure to infants and you were very aware of the helplessness of children at this age. Your confidence seems to increase as time passes by and you spend more and more time alone with your daughter. You seem to have progressed from coping with looking after her by yourself, to feeling very confident as far as parenting skills are concerned. You also find it easier now that she is older because not only can she communicate her needs
more clearly, but you have learned what works and what doesn’t. For example, you know what comforting acts will help her to get to sleep and you know that she gets “clingy” and wants to be close when she is teething.

When your daughter was first born you sought advice about childrearing from your parents but didn’t find this to be very helpful. Then you turned to books on the subject which you found to be extremely informative as far as confirming for you that your child’s behavior was indeed “normal” for her stage of development. Finding the answers to your questions in these books seems to have been very important and reassuring for you.

You and your daughter have developed your own routine or way of doing things which is different from the way she and her mom do things. For example, you “rough-house” with her a little more and the two of you do things such as look through your tools in the garage, look at the flowers or pick vegetables from the garden. You really seem to appreciate and enjoy the teaching/learning process that takes place. This includes instilling some of your interests and values into your child with the hope that she will share some of these with you. You look forward to the future when she is able to join you in activities that you enjoy such as hiking in the back country. Along with this is an appreciation of what you see of yourself in your child—innate similarities that are part of her inherited personality.

Presently you describe a good relationship with your child where she is just as affectionate with you as she is with her mother, which you really like. You
hope that this continues as she grows up and you are aware of how a daughter's relationship with her father has an important influence on future relationships with men in her life.

**Participant Three: Ralph**

Ralph was the third father interviewed. He is twenty-six years old and has a college education from a technical institute as well as two years of university courses. His occupation is a telecommunications technician. Ralph became a father at age twenty-six and has one three month old son. His wife is presently on a maternity leave from her work as a manufacturer. She plans to return to work due to financial pressure, preferably in a part-time capacity.

**Revised Interpretive Account**

Prior to getting married you and your spouse had discussed having children and were both anxious to start a family right away. In terms of "readiness" for fatherhood, you indicated that the timing was just right when your wife got pregnant. In fact you had been "putting it off and waiting" for some time. You were finished school and had a job in your field and she was also working at the time, therefore you perceived yourselves as financially secure and ready to start a family.

As far as preparation for parenthood was concerned you went to prenatal classes and found that it was reassuring to be able to discuss concerns and similar experiences regarding the pregnancy with others. You were also able to
network with people from the class and maintained contact with them. It was helpful to discuss and share similar problems that were experienced after the babies were born as well. You commented that it was reassuring "having everyone feeling the same way and dealing with the same things."

The birthing experience itself was somewhat disappointing for you because you felt "cheated" when the delivery turned out to be an unexpected c-section. You described feeling that you somehow "missed out" on experiencing the progression of labour together with your wife. You had looked forward to helping her get through the contractions and providing your support as her labour coach. Everything happened very fast and it was over before you knew it. However, you felt you were able to bond with your son during the first few days of his life while your wife was recovering, which was a positive aspect of the whole experience and provided you with an opportunity that you really appreciated and enjoyed.

We discussed your expectations about fatherhood prior to the birth of your son and how these compared with the reality of fatherhood. You were expecting that there would be more playtime with the baby and that it wouldn’t be as much work. You didn’t realize the amount of time that a baby requires. Associated adjustments you have made in your life involve less personal free time and more time devoted to entertaining and caring for the baby. However, you have not experienced a life style change with the birth of your child, and you describe yourself and your wife as homebodies. In fact, the baby gives you an
excuse for not having to go out with friends and you are both happy and content to stay home with him and watch a movie together. Visiting friends and family back home [out of province] was difficult when your wife was nursing the baby because she experienced a lack of freedom due to the feeding schedule. You didn’t feel right about going out and leaving her alone with the baby which resulted in a conflict between pleasing your friends/brothers and pleasing your wife.

You describe yourself as a very involved father who wants to share child care with your wife and stated “I want to be in on everything.” You seem to have a great deal of knowledge about child development from the books that you have read. Primarily, you seek advice about childrearing from books but you also receive a lot of unsolicited advice from your family members who are trying to be helpful.

You also have an awareness of your son’s personal likes and dislikes. For example, you know how to hold him when he gets cranky and you know he likes to be walked around and driven in the car. You described some “special fathering skills” you have acquired over the past few months. For example, you are the “comfort guy” when he gets really cranky and you are able to quickly soothe him. You express a great deal of confidence in your fathering skills which has increased over time, and you believe that you will be a great dad.

You have an “ideal vision” of the type of father that you want to be to your son which includes being the “fun guy” and more of a friend than a father figure.
You aren't really sure where this ideal vision came from or influences that may have contributed to its formation. Part of it seems to be a desire to be a different type of parent than your own father was when you were growing up. Your father wasn't very involved in many aspects of child care such as diaper changing and helping your mom, and he wasn't around to be involved in your life when you were growing up because he was always away working. You seem to understand and accept that things were different back then as far as the role that fathers played in their children's lives. But you want to be the "new age dad" who is very involved in his child's life.

Your father-in-law seems to be a role model for you. You describe him as having been an involved father when your wife and her sister were growing up. Although he travelled a great deal he still managed to spend time with his family. He seems to be someone whom you respect and admire for his many abilities and talents. You believe he will be a wonderful grandfather for your son, exposing him to, and teaching him many different things.

You often find yourself thinking about your future relationship with your son and look forward to him reaching an age when he can play the sports that you enjoy like hockey and basketball. You want to be careful not to push him into sports or to try to "live through him" but you would like him to share a similar interest in sports and to "be better than [you were]."

You referred several times to being "in touch with [your] feminine side". You believe this is partly due to your parents divorcing which resulted in you
assuming responsibility for many domestic chores such as cooking, cleaning, doing laundry, etc. You presently share all of these with your spouse. It seems that you are extremely empathetic toward your spouse when it comes to understanding and relating to the amount of work involved in the daily care of a small child. You take advantage of relieving her whenever you have the chance and you want to share in his care so that she isn't the one doing all of the work. Decision making is shared between yourself and your spouse and you are involved in buying clothes, changing diapers, bathing etc. However you identify her as assuming primarily responsibility for his day to day care.

You are experiencing conflict between the roles of breadwinner and father/husband. Now that you are a family man you want your employer to know that you are mature and can take on more responsibilities. You see your main role as financial provider and ideally you would like to work and have your wife stay home with the baby. However you also strive to be “superdad” wanting to share all of the domestic work and child care in the home as well.

Although you want to make family a priority in your life, you foresee sacrifices occurring in your attempt to balance your roles as provider and family man. You anticipate these sacrifices taking place in the family. This is mainly dictated by a dedication to work in order to get ahead, which means putting more time in on the job. However it is important to you that you get weekends off and time off for the important things like your child's sporting event or recital.
Participant Four: Maurice

The fourth father to participate in the study was Maurice. He is twenty-eight years old and has a university education. He was formerly a government employee, but has recently started his own small business. Maurice became a father at age twenty-five and has two children: one boy age 3 years and one daughter age 10 months. His wife works full-time as a teacher.

Revised Interpretive Account

We discussed your family of origin, what it was like for you growing up in your family and what you liked/disliked about the way your father parented you. You describe your childhood as “normal” and indicated that you didn’t have a very close relationship with your parents and that you were quite independent from an early age. You commented that although your dad was “sort of supportive” he was not very involved in the activities which you participated in such as team sports and scouting. “He wasn’t a bad dad and he wasn’t a great dad” you said. But when you compare the type of father he was and the type of father you aspire to be, you see yourself as being “more actively involved than [your] dad was ever”.

As far as preparation for parenting or “readiness” for becoming a father was concerned, neither yourself nor your spouse planned the event, rather it just sort of “happened.” As you said “we weren’t trying to get pregnant...but we weren’t preventing it from happening.” You weren’t quite sure what to expect
from fatherhood and you hadn't had much prior experience with, or exposure to
caring for young children. You went to Lamaze classes and read books in
preparation for becoming a new parent

When your son first came home you were very excited and you wanted to
be very involved with him. You have been a parent for three years now and
describe it as a very positive experience which you have really enjoyed.

The first time around you describe your parenting role as that of an
assistant or helper. However this has changed the second time around. With
your first child everything was such a milestone and “everything was brand new
in terms of dealing with the kids, dealing with the situations.” However you find
that it's not at all like that with your second child. Things are similar yet also
different. For example, you video-taped your son much more than you have
video-taped your daughter, and you have noticed that his baby picture book is
much thicker than hers.

Your involvement with your son from the time he was an infant has been
much different than your involvement with your daughter. He experienced a very
difficult time nursing and it was a big ordeal when he would wake during the
night to feed. You were involved in this procedure helping your wife to get set
up and getting drinks for her. On the other hand, your daughter was a very
quick feeder and experienced no problems nursing. You found that you were
not involved when it came to night time feedings because it was so quick and
easy and often you didn't even wake up.
According to your perception, there is a difference in your involvement with your two children. You commented that "I'm maybe a little bit less involved with [my daughter] than I was with [my son]...maybe because she's a girl and I'm a man and there's a sex thing, I don't know and maybe because [he] was the only child." Presently, you find that you are more connected with [your son] than [your daughter]. You're not sure whether this is because she is the second child and still a baby (so things are not as new and exciting as they were the first time around). It may also be that because [he] is male you identify more with him than with [your daughter] who is female. It is difficult for you to know what your relationships with your two children will be like as [she] gets older. You wonder whether perhaps you will have more of a bond with [your son] and your wife will have more or a bond with [your daughter], but it's difficult to know at this point.

Another difference that you notice with your children is that because your son is older he is able to verbally tell you what is wrong whenever he is upset, or angry. You can also explain appropriate and inappropriate behavior to him and he understands. However your younger child only communicates with you through crying at this point and you find that difficult to deal with.

You really enjoy doing "guy type" things with your son and spending time together, just the two of you. As well, you enjoy the time spent during his bedtime routine and you stated that "it's usually just him and I, in his room, reading the books or singing or talking or whatever. It's something that I really enjoy and I wouldn't want to give it up."
Both you and your spouse have noticed lifestyle changes since starting a family, as well as changes in your relationships with your friends. You have found that your circle of friends has really broadened and you have many friends now who have children. Many of them are older than yourselves. You describe yourselves as "an anomaly" among your old friends because you were among the first to get married and have children. This has resulted in some difficulties experienced in the past when friends who didn't have children came to visit and had a difficult time understanding what it was like to be a parent and how this changes things. Since your family is young you now have different priorities than you had previously. You find that you prefer to stay home with the kids rather than going to the bar.

You describe the division of child care between yourself and your spouse as something that just "evolved" as opposed to being planned and divided up. You commented that "we both just evolved into the things that we do as a result of communicating and talking and knowing what each other wants." Routines more or less evolved with your older child (such as bath and bedtime) and you believe that this will also happen with your younger child, although it may be your wife who will be responsible for implementing the routine.

You believe that you and your wife work well together as a team. You "read each other" quite well, "relieve each other", and "balance each other out." For example, if one of you becomes frustrated the other one will "step in to try to calm things and soothe things". You describe your spouse as demonstrating a
lot more patience and understanding with the children, particularly with the younger child. You stated that "she'll deal with those situations better than I so she's often involved in those situations and not me."

When your spouse is working full-time you share the care of the children. Where you find that you are probably not pulling your fair share of the load is when it comes to domestic labour (house cleaning etc.). You did not have a lot of responsibility for doing chores and helping around the house when you were growing up and you find it hard to assume these responsibilities in your own home.

You describe your father role as “making sure that [your] family life is very happy...playing with the kids and making sure that everybody’s having fun.” When it comes to routines, specifically the bedtime routine, it has usually been you who gives the older child his bath, and it has always been you who puts on his pajamas, reads him his books and sings songs with him.

When it comes to planning and organizing, you view yourself as the one who is more likely to be responsible for this in your family. For example, you describe yourself as more likely than your spouse to know when you need to buy more diapers, baby food, etc. Also, when preparing for an outing, it is more likely you who will remember the essential items that will be needed such as snacks, hats, jackets etc.

As far as your view of your family life and your involvement with your family, you see yourself as being very much influenced by your wife and her
philosophy. Therefore it is important to you that you are home each night for dinner with the family and help put the kids to bed. You stated that "it's important to me and it might be important to me because I know it's important to [my wife]...I know what her expectations are and that probably has an effect on how I view it, and how I would feel about it."

When it comes to prioritizing the various roles you hold in life such as breadwinner, father, husband, son, etc. you express experiencing difficulty. Your view of your role as a father is "to be there, to work as a team with [my spouse] and to make sure that the environment that [our children] are growing up in is a very nurturing environment, a very caring environment." On the one hand you want to spend time with your family and it is very important for you to be there with the kids around dinner time and after dinner so that you can have some family time together. On the other hand, at this point in time your new business is most important. Right now you have to get it off the ground and ensure that the cash flow is generated. It has always been your dream to be the owner of a company that is doing really well. You identified your priority right now as "building this company from the ground up and being really proud of the accomplishment." Although you describe a struggle to figure out which role is the number one priority in your life at this time, you identified your job as first followed by parent and then husband. However, you do find yourself trying to balance your work and family life, and you commented that "deep down what's driving me is...being successful at my job and having a good balanced family
life." An example of one way that you strive to keep this balance is by making it clear to your business partner that you want to be home with your family between dinner time and bedtime for the children. You leave the office and then return when the children are in bed.

**Participant Five: Marvin**

Marvin was the last father to participate in this study. He is thirty-five years old and has a university education. He and his wife both work as lawyers. Marvin became a father when he was thirty-one years old and has two boys ages four years and two years. His wife presently practises law part-time.

**Revised Interpretive Account**

You describe your experience of fatherhood to date as "wonderful". You commented, "If I had more time I would probably enjoy it that much more."

Prior to having children you and your spouse travelled to Japan and Europe and "did all of those fun things that we probably won't do for a few years." Physical preparation for your first child included moving to a larger house. While you were expecting your first baby you went to all the childbirth classes and read many books on infants and childhood development. You described the mental preparation for becoming a new father as a "gradual type of thing" which occurred during the pregnancy. You stated, "I just took it normally...I just went along with it and experienced it for what it was without a whole lot of preparation."
When your first child was a newborn you were slightly apprehensive, however you did have previous exposure to babies. You have three younger brothers and you baby-sat from a very young age. As a teenager you did your share of baby-sitting, so dealing with babies didn't worry or bother you. You commented that "I didn't have a difficulty with having a newborn...I guess I just sort of fell into it...there was never this moment of panic or extreme fear." You describe yourself as feeling very comfortable and confident with your first child from the beginning. In fact you believe you felt more confident than did your spouse which made you feel "a little more a part of it". The only anxiety you recall experiencing with the baby was the fear of SIDS. You described this fear as becoming a focal point at that time. You commented that if there was one thing that you could remove from your early fatherhood experience it would be your continual concerns and fears about SIDS striking.

You describe your family of origin as "a 1960s household" and therefore quite traditional. Your father was the income provider and your mother was the homemaker. However, you describe your mom as independent and not "too feminine" to try anything. She took on various nontraditional roles around the house such as fixing things and taking care of the outside. You boys were not raised to take on a large role in maintaining the household other than working outside and cleaning your rooms, although you did occasionally help with dishes or vacuum under your mom's direction. You commented that "my mom usually
had the primary responsibility to do things around the house...good or bad that’s the way it was.”

You describe your relationship with your father as “distant.” “I don’t think I’ve ever had sort of a heart to heart with him...it’s not really a deep conversation, ever.” The two of you discuss “things” such as family, work etc. as opposed to discussing “feelings”. You have never felt that he was someone with whom you could share your feelings. You find that you tend to model yourself after your father in your own parenting however you don’t necessarily want to have the same type of “distant”, “more dictatorial” relationship with your boys as you and your brothers had with your father.

Although you couldn’t identify one person as “the ideal father” you did refer to an old 1960s television show about a father and son which “seemed like a pretty neat sort of relationship.” You saw this as somewhat of a “bilateral” relationship where they both had mutual respect for each other. They had fun together yet they also recognized that they had a distinct relationship.

There were a multitude of changes that seemed to be taking place almost simultaneously around the time your first child was born. You commented that “it’s sort of hard to pinpoint one event as being key.” One of the changes involved both your career and your spouse’s career. When your first son came along you were both encountering the change of position from associates in law firms to being up for partnership. You also experienced lifestyle changes when you became a father. Although you claimed that you were not going to change
very much after having a child and that you were going to continue to do a lot of
the things that you enjoyed doing before, you found that time with friends was
cut out and you didn't spend as much time "going out, entertaining and those
kinds of things which we would have otherwise have liked to have done." You
also noticed that the individual time that both you and your spouse used to have
to yourselves to go out with your own separate friends started to fade over time.
On the other hand, you found yourselves going to some family Christmas
parties which you hadn't attended previously.

Another significant change that took place involved your sister-in-law
moving into your home when your first son was approximately three months old.
This new living arrangement shifted the dynamics of your family as you became
somewhat of a three parent household. You perceived this situation as playing
a critical role which affected your fathering role.

You describe your present family structure including the division of labour
as "probably not a totally new age split" and "a little more traditional than we
would probably otherwise have it." Your spouse resumed her full-time career
when her maternity leave with your first child came to an end. You reported that
this situation was a little bit more difficult due to the many hours, the stressful
positions and the same types of pressures that you were both experiencing in
your careers at that time. Your spouse now works two and a half days a week
and you have a nanny and a housekeeper who cleans the house weekly. You
clean up the dishes and the kitchen after meals and you cook on occasion. You
also assume the typical male responsibilities such as servicing the vehicles, mowing the lawn, shoveling the driveway etc. You stated that “I’m sort of more responsible for the outside stuff and [she’s] more for the inside, but we split things too, for example child care.”

As far as the children are concerned you and your spouse share in any significant decision making. You also share responsibility for the children, for example, when they are at home sick or need to be taken to the doctor. You report having taken your older son to the doctor a couple of times but your spouse has since assumed that responsibility since she prefers to have a more detailed report from the doctor. Likewise, if one of the children were sick at home, your spouse would prefer to stay with him if possible. You identify your spouse as primarily responsible for the boys because “being a mother is very important to her.” When your second child was born you offered to quit your job and stay home with the children. However, it was her decision to work part-time and place mothering over career. You commented, “[T]hat’s sort of the perspective as far as primary responsibility is, she’s moved into that role, not because she’s been forced into that role, its because that’s what she wants to do, that’s the role she wants to be in.”

You describe your father role as something that you “grow into,” a “balance” and “blend” of various qualities. Therefore you view yourself as a counsellor and a teacher as well as someone to have fun with and to play with. You also provide for them financially and are there “just to be with them so that
they can feel appreciated and loved." One role that you are sensitive toward and do not want to assume is that of the disciplinarian. You do not believe it is fair that this role be automatically placed exclusively on fathers as they are no more skilled at enforcing it than are mothers. You commented that you dislike the idea of not spending enough time with the boys and then being required to divvy out the punishment when you get home from work.

You view parenting roles as being determined by individual strengths as opposed to gender roles. In this way parenting is seen as a "dual role" where two people balance each other and blend various qualities. You describe your spouse as a very detailed, organized person which you have never been. Therefore, she is the one who plans and organizes in the home and takes care of details.

When both boys were infants you participated in the "routine maintenance stuff" like changing diapers, getting up in the middle of the night to hold and rock them back to sleep, and bathing them. You did comment however that you have not been as involved with your second child as you were with your first due to lack of time spent at home. As the boys got older you participated equally in taking them to swimming lessons and other activities.

You describe the bonding that has taken place with yourself and your boys as a "collection of events" that you've shared. When they were infants you held them and rocked them and cuddled with them. Now that they are older you enjoy time together just the three of you hiking in the mountains, going to the
zoo, science centre or somewhere special. Many special times together have also taken place while on family holidays. You have also enjoyed individual time spent with your older son, taking him to soccer on Saturdays. This has been a special time for just the two of you to share. You describe sharing bedtime stories with your children as “probably the best sort of ongoing bonding.” They especially like to hear stories about a fictional character you created named Zeke. Telling these stories provides you with a unique activity to share with them, as only you three know about this character and his adventures.

Although you refer to a “short phase” when your second child was very young, during which you probably spent more time with your older son, you believe that you spend an equal amount of time with both boys. In your opinion, the gender of your children has not impacted upon your relationship with them nor the time you spend with them. You do not believe that it would make a difference if one were male and the other female.

We discussed prioritizing the various roles we hold in our day to day lives such as father, career person, etc. You commented:

I guess I would probably be an obvious example of someone whose priorities seem to be out of balance, only because I spend so much time at work that I don’t get a whole bunch of time to spend with my kids.
You described your job as taking most of your time and energy, your family being second and then everyone else holding a very small position of priority.

You indicated that you experience a certain degree of conflict regarding time spent at work and time spent at home with your family, although you describe this as “not overwhelming as of quite yet.” However it is an “ongoing goal” for you to “try to start putting more balance to spend more time with the kids.”

On the one hand you really enjoy your work and you are very successful at your job. This brings you a great deal of personal satisfaction. On the other hand you refer quite often to a lack of time available to spend at home due to work. You have been warned by several colleagues older than yourself to make sure you spend time with your children. These are men who have succeeded in their careers but would “do it all over again” as far as spending more time with their children.

However you did comment that home with your family is where you want to be, and family time is important to you. When you have the opportunity you spend it with your family rather than playing sports, watching television or going to clubs. It seems that your time is split between work and family with little room for anything else.
Part 2: The Themes

Several major themes and sub-themes emerged from the data when comparisons were made among the participants in this study. Prior to the birth of their first child participants referred to an “ideal image” of the type of father they wanted to become. All fathers described the various factors associated with the first major theme of “Getting it Together: Constructing a Father Identity.” This theme included family of origin influences, comparisons made with their own father’s parenting and how role models contributed to the formation of this new identity.

“Babybonding Versus Breadwinning: Prioritizing Roles” emerged as a central theme around which all other themes seemed to revolve. For the men in this study the identities of self as father and self as breadwinner were both described as important. However, these two roles often seemed to conflict with each other and attempts were made to achieve a balance between the two.

“Spousal Sharing: Father Participation in Domestic Work” was also a key theme. Fathers described their perceptions of their parental role, discussed their involvement with their child(ren) including how they view themselves as responsible for the care of their child(ren) and also described family dynamics associated with child-centred thinking. Gender differences in behavior
according to stereotypes and maternal gatekeeping were also viewed as impacting upon father participation.

Also associated with division of domestic work, particularly assuming responsibility for child care tasks, was the theme of “Who Does What: Detail Stuff.” This included aspects of household management including decision making, planning and organizing; as well as how fathers view changes occurring in gender roles.

“Conquering Child Care: Acquiring Confidence in Fathering Skills” was a theme related to father participation in child care. This involved participants’ previous exposure to children, initial experiences as new fathers, time spent alone with their child(ren) and parenting skills which they identified as unique to themselves as fathers.

The theme “Daddy In Training: Preparation for Fatherhood,” represented the base upon which confidence in fathering skills was built. This included child birth preparation; seeking advice from various sources regarding child rearing and what to expect; as well as networking with other couples who were also undergoing the transition to parenthood.

The “Changing Gears: Adjustments to Fatherhood” theme represents experiences taking place after the birth of a child including many lifestyle changes. Changes in relationships were also experienced between spouses and with family friends. Prior expectations about parenting and the reality of this
new role were often inconsistent, and readiness or timing of fatherhood appeared to be related to this for some fathers.

The final theme “Daddy Dearest: Father/Child Relationships” was described by the participants in this study. This description included the impact fatherhood had on their lives; the bonding that took place between themselves and their child(ren); a recognition of the various phases of childhood including infancy and toddlerhood; and the future relationship they envision with their child(ren).

Each of these major themes and sub-themes will be described in detail in the following sections. Related literature will be included where relevant.

**Getting it Together: Constructing a Father Identity**

The construction of a father identity took place prior to becoming a father. This represents the process whereby these men came to view themselves as fathers and how they envisioned this new role. Some factors which impacted upon this process for some participants included family of origin influences, an attempt to parent differently than their own fathers, and the influence of role models in their lives.

Three fathers referred to an “ideal vision” of the type of father they want to become and which they continually aspire toward. Denzil described “well, kind of an ideal vision of what I want to be, but I also have an ideal vision of what kind of husband I want to be, right? and I never seem to get there.” Ralph also
described an ideal vision and stated, “I’m going to be the dad that I always wanted...I don’t know where it comes from, I just want to be the ideal dad.”

**Family of Origin**

Cowan and Cowan (1987) maintain that “father involvement evolves from a matrix of influences that begin to exert their effects in the family of origin and continue to affect men throughout pregnancy and the early years of childrearing” (p. 150).

All fathers in the present study discussed their family of origin and the ways in which they were parented. Relationships with both their fathers and mothers were described, and reference was often made to how this impacted upon their own parenting practices. Two fathers described situations whereby they developed very close relationships with their mothers and came to identify with their “feminine side.”

Denzil revealed he was quite sickly as a child and therefore spent a great deal of time at home with his mother whom he described as “a very typical mom who is loving and caring.” He believed that spending so much time with her had a huge impact upon him.

Ralph made reference to his parents divorcing when he was young. Among himself and his two brothers he describes himself as the one who assumed responsibility for many household chores such as cooking, cleaning, and doing laundry in order to help out his mother who was working long hours.
He commented that this experience contributed toward “being in touch with [his] feminine side.”

All but one of the fathers in this study referred to a lack of paternal involvement on the part of their own fathers when they were growing up. Maurice commented that while his dad was “sort of supportive” he was not very involved in father-son activities. He explained, “He wasn’t a bad dad and he wasn’t a great dad.”

Ralph commented, “I don’t want to be the father that my father was, not that he was a bad father, but I would definitely want to be different than that, um because he was never around.”

**Different from my Dad**

Most of the men in the present study described their own fathers as largely unavailable to them when they were children. Some referred to an absent father who was seldom physically present in their lives. Two fathers referred to “being there” for their own children. For example, Denzil commented, “So for as long as I can remember, and I was sick when I was little quite a bit, and he was never there when I was sick. So I wouldn’t want to be like that.”

In reference to his infant son Ralph stated, “I want him to know me. Like when I was growing up my dad was always away working, didn’t really come to my basketball games or wasn’t around to help me with homework or stuff like that.”
As well as a physical absence, reference was also made to an emotional absence in these men's relationships with their own fathers who were often described as "distant." Marvin recalled "I don't think I've ever had sort of a heart to heart with him...it's not really a deep conversation, ever." It seems that for these men "things" such as work, sports, family were discussed with their fathers as opposed to "feelings". This was often identified as an aspect of the father/child relationship which they wanted to change with their own children.

Establishing this emotional connection was something that several participants emphasized as important to them. Denzil described the type of relationship he wants to have with his son. He commented:

I'd like him to see me as somebody who's open, who he can talk to.

We can do all the guy things like play golf and tennis and fish and do all that stuff but also be able to say, "Dad, I have a problem about whatever", and for me to be open to it and for us to be able to talk about other things other than, "Dad, I need money" and "Dad, I'm going to whip your butt in tennis", which is basically how I relate to my dad.

In describing the type of father he would like to be for his son Denzil stated:

My father and the way he was, it's fundamental to the way that I am not. Very fundamental, because like I say he was never really
there and the only time he was there was in a competitive situation when we were golfing, when we were playing tennis together.

Cowan and Cowan (1987) point out that "men who want to be highly involved with their children but do not have good models of the kind of family they hope to create must struggle to overcome their own early family patterns" (p. 166).

The fathers in the present study indicated they did not want to hold the stereotypical role of disciplinarian with their children which was a role their own fathers had assumed. This was not the father image they wanted to portray. Marvin commented:

I don't want to be a disciplinarian because I think that's a role that fathers tend to get stuck with often, and I don't think its a fair role. I don't think that fathers are any more skilled at being the disciplinarian than mothers.

Some of the literature on fatherhood supports these findings. For example, Daly (1993) found that the men in his study actually regarded their own fathers as negative role models. In fact, they often represented an image of what these fathers did not want to become. Comparisons with their own fathers' parenting practices therefore directly impacted upon their interactions with their own children. They intentionally set out to be different from their own fathers.

Socialization theory, specifically a structural functionalist view holds that the breadwinner role has been influenced by cultural values and stereotypes.
This has resulted in role prescriptions about fatherhood which are internalized by fathers (Daly, 1993). Although the fathers in the present study intended to be different from their own fathers, some of these role prescriptions regarding the breadwinner role appeared to be internalized to a certain degree, by some fathers more than others.

The types of statements made by the participants in the present study relate to Western society's stereotypical masculine image of men and how they learn to relate with others. Men are taught from an early age the manly values associated with autonomy and independence. They have not been taught the more stereotypically feminine values associated with nurturance and connection with others. However, the men in this study expressed a desire to be involved and nurturing with their children unlike their own fathers.

In support of this notion Bergman (1991) examines men's development in relationship from a relational perspective. He maintains, "[M]en as well as women are motivated by a primary desire for connection", however most current theories of male development address a "self" not a "self in relation". Unlike women, men experience a disconnection from the relationship with their mother, which is a right of passage in becoming "a man."

Bergman (1991) refers to Freud's theory of men's development which suggests that identification with one's father takes place via competition, fear, and renunciation, rather than through a wish to connect. He states:
Father's role, often, is to show a son how to become a better agent of disconnection from relationship, especially from that with mother, to "be a big boy" and "big boys don't cry"...Fathers are often described as "distant" or "absent"—out of relationship—and so remain a mystery (p. 6).

Bergman (1991) refers to a completely new way of fathering now taking place, where men participate in nurturing relationships with their children. He states, "I firmly believe that the potential exists, and I think there are signs that the potential is starting to be realized. Much more attention is being paid to how fathers can be in relationship with sons" (p. 12).

It seems this is what is happening with the participants in this study. They are rejecting many of the stereotypes associated with what it means to be a man and are adopting more traditionally feminine ways of relating with their sons and/or daughters.

**Role Models**

In the present study Maurice was asked whether or not he would describe himself as a very involved father with his children. He responded:

I think I am, I'm not sure, I guess I feel more involved than my dad, and the problem is I don't have a really good frame of reference. I don't know what to...more involved than whom and than what I don't know, right?
The fathers interviewed in this study were unable to identify a tangible role model in their lives. They also described collecting "fragmented images" which they pieced together and added to their repertoire of fathering skills. This included specific behaviors they observed in other fathers which they either agreed with and felt would be useful, or with which they disagreed and therefore dismissed. Maurice explained:

I don't know that many people that have kids and I would say "hey, I want to be like him"...I guess there are some situations sometimes that you might be exposed to or you might see how a parent reacts to a kid and say "I don't want to be like that"...or if they're doing something that you never thought of before I might try to connect to that and say "hey I'd like to be like, I'd like to do that, I'd like to aspire to that."

Amie commented, "I think you take from you know, whatever you feel is appropriate." In reference to the father of an old girlfriend he recalled:

I remember actually being sixteen and thinking, "That's a really neat way to treat people. I like that. I'll keep that one"...and did actually file it away so that many years later when I actually did decide to have children I utilized it.

Daly (1993) examined the ways in which fathers of young children socially construct and define their fatherhood identities. He found that the fathers who participated in his study did not identify specific role models as influencing the
development of their own fatherhood identity. He also points out that the fathers in his study also perceived an absence of good role models available to them. Moreover, many of those fathers expressed they did not feel they had standards available to them by which they could judge their performance and progress as fathers (Daly, 1993).

Daly (1993) found that one response to this absence of father models was the fragmentation of selected behaviors rather than modeling behavior after a particular individual. He comments that “the process of role modeling for fatherhood appears to be characterized by a quiet absorption rather than deliberate and interactive pursuit” (Daly, 1993, p. 523). Although these men lacked a concrete role model, most were able to describe behaviors, standards or values that they wanted to assimilate into their father role (Daly, 1993).

**Summary**

It seems that most of these men perceived a lack of role models for parenting behavior. The primary motivator in becoming a good father was to be unlike their own father's parenting in many respects. In particular the men in this study identified a desire to “be there” for their children, both physically and emotionally. In many ways they each described efforts to be in relationship with their own children; to be nurturing new-age fathers rather than distant and disconnected like their own fathers. This is supported by literature which addressed the social construction of fatherhood identities.
Baby Bonding Versus Breadwinning: Prioritizing Roles

The men who participated in this study identified the role of father and the role of breadwinner as conflicting with each other and attempts were made to balance these two roles.

According to Identity theory one's identity is an ever changing process of social construction. Perceptions are constantly changing, and the accompanying roles are arranged according to their importance to the individual at that particular time and place. It has been suggested that fatherhood is an "emergent identity" that is constantly redefined and reinterpreted as new situations are encountered. According to this view men will regard certain father roles as more important than others (Daly, 1993; Marsiglio, 1993).

According to Marsiglio (1993) "identity saliency" and "commitment" represent the primary theoretical concepts which explain how these self-perceptions are shaped. Fathers with greater saliency will be more inclined to focus on behaviors which are related to their father roles when other role demands are high. There are several definitions of the term "commitment" as applied to identity theory. The definition used in this study is that of Styker (1982) who defines it as the degree to which fathers engage in certain role relationships in order to be a certain type of father, how strongly they wish to maintain these relationships, and how many relationships are based on their identity. It is important to consider fathers' involvement with their children and commitment to different identities as both socially influenced as well as
individualistic. The larger social context can greatly influence the ideal images that many fathers may hold (Marsiglio, 1993).

The fathers in the present study regarded certain father roles as more important than others at this particular time in their lives. On the one hand, they described a commitment to the father role which meant spending time with their child(ren). On the other hand they described the importance of their role as breadwinner or "good provider" for their child(ren). Identity salience and commitment to these conflicting roles were revealed as these fathers struggled to prioritize them.

**Commitment to Father Role**

Arnie, whose spouse worked part-time at the time of our interview, described the impact that fatherhood had on his life at that time "...for me it's really put everything in perspective. As for work, well, it's still important because it supplies our income but it sure has taken a lower priority in my life." He also commented on his responsibilities as a father and stated that "I carry the brunt of the financial responsibility, but I mean, it's the luck of the draw really. I don't see that as my role in life necessarily."

Marvin commented that "my role as a father is, should be, when I'm home I don't go out and play sports, I don't watch much . Basically when I'm home I'm with the guys and we're doing things as a family."

Denzil, who was a graduate student at the time of our interview, discussed his commitment to his father role:
I never understood the time commitment until I had him and I really realized that you have to be one hundred percent there. You have to be committed to it. It's not like it goes away you know?... Yes, I've committed. I've said "this is the way I want to be as a father", and if you don't act, well then, you can blow it out your mouth as much as you want. If you don't do it then it's pretty hypocritical.

Maurice was in the beginning stages of starting up his own business which requires many long hours at the time of our interviews. He recalled: Friday night I went back to the office at nine fifteen and he (business partner) was there all along, but he understands that and that's important to me. I don't want to give that up. I'm not going to trade that in, in terms of trading that time with the family, the dinner-time thing to be at work.

Another father described his plan to be a good dad and what this involved as "being a part of everything, spending a lot of time, not thinking of work as a priority, making my family a priority and spending the time." He also described the ways in which his spouse influenced his commitment to his father role:

It's important to me, and it might be important to me because I know it's important to [her]. I know that if I try to come home at eight o'clock at night and go out at six in the morning [she] would not put up with it...She would say "I need you here with the family" I know what her expectations are and that probably has an effect on how I view it, and how I would feel about it?
Marsiglio (1993) points out that a man’s relationship with his partner is likely to influence his salience and commitment toward his father role identity in that placing value on the relationship and awareness that fulfilling a particular father role is expected, he will likely be more committed to at least some aspects of his father role identity.

**Commitment to Breadwinner/Career Role**

In reference to his career, Marvin noted:

When I am at work, I love what I do and I do it fairly well and I’m succeeding and I sort of like that feeling. So you get on the job and it’s one of those days that, nine o’clock, it’s been a long day and like it’s nine o’clock at night and I better get home. I’ve been here all day.

In reference to quitting his job and embarking on his dream of starting his own business Maurice commented:

Now it’s going to change and I’m not sure how that’s going to affect family life. It’s my company, it’s what I do will directly affect the money that I take in...but right now the business is more important. Right now we have to get it off the ground. We have to establish a presence and make sure that the cash flow is generated there to support myself and my partner.

Another young father described himself as trying to “do it all” as far as roles of father, husband and breadwinner were concerned. He recognized this
as a difficult task and anticipated that sacrifices would have to be made if things didn't go according to plan. When asked where he saw these sacrifices being made he indicated, "Probably family. Instead of working nine to five I'll have to put in overtime each day."

Marvin explained that he presently works long hours at his job and is at a point in his career growth where he must take on more responsibilities which means more time away from home. He commented:

I'm much more aware of age. Age that is because I know that a lot of men that I deal with are now in their fifties, forties or fifties and they're saying, "You have to make sure that you spend time with your kids." They all have a lot of regrets. I mean almost invariably men about that age who have succeeded in their careers all look back and say "I wish I could do it all over again".

In reference to his own present situation this father stated:

I guess I would probably be an obvious example of someone whose priorities seem to be out of balance only because I spend so much time at work that I don't get a whole bunch of time to spend my time with the kids.

Denzil explained his experience of "re prioritizing roles." He recalled learning at an early age, and then believing for a long time that a man's career is his most important role. He learned this from his father who worked very long
hours and was not home very often spending time with his family. Denzil described his attitude toward his friend who works as a teacher:

Why would he be home at four thirty? Doesn't that guy have commitment to his work? Isn't he a career person? ... I heard all of this so I thought anybody with a nine to four job is a real loser and that they weren't committed to their careers and so I kind of grew up with that and I honestly thought that for quite a while, that any guy that's home by four has got to be a career loser.

He then described a turning point which is referred to as "breaking the work cycle." He recalled:

When we were growing up my mom always used to say "when your father gets to this point he won't have to work as hard." Well he's nearly sixty years old and he still works the same hours so there is no end point to that. You can't lie to yourself and say "well as soon as I become a Ph.D. student I won't do that and as soon as I have my this I won't do that". It's not true. If you've got propensity to do that I'm convinced you will continue to do that unless you get a bit of a shake.

Denzil now describes himself as an individual who is committed to his family which means purposefully ensuring he spends the time with them. However he identifies an ongoing inward struggle between acting on these new
beliefs and believing in his own mind that he isn't a career loser because he doesn't spend the majority of his time at work.

Support in the literature for the strong connection between career and male identity is depicted in the following statement:

Society seems to define successful achievement for men in public, economic terms rather than in private, familial terms. A man's principal source of identity and esteem will come from forces outside the family. He will be judged by other adult men more by what he does outside the home and how much money he generates for himself and his family, than by what he does inside his home and how much attention and love he invests in his family (Hawkins & Roberts, 1992, p. 173).

Coltrane (1988) conducted a qualitative study on father involvement in child care among twenty dual-earner couples. Some fathers indicated that reference made to time spent with their children in the work place was perceived by co-workers as portraying a lack of seriousness about their work. They reported receiving indirect messages that "providing for" the family was primary and "being with" family was secondary.

It has been suggested that since the breadwinner role has been an important aspect of the male identity in the 20th century, high salience of work identity may be viewed as behavior associated with commitment to family roles (Hyde, Essex, & Horton, 1993).
Conflicting Roles: The Balancing Act

The fathers who participated in this study referred to some level of conflict experienced between roles associated with family, specifically fathering, and roles associated with career. This conflict was perceived and dealt with in different ways. Marvin commented “There is a bit of conflict. It’s not overwhelming as of quite yet although you know that over time people will say, ‘Your kid just turned eight, did you know that?’” He later concluded: Have I resolved the conflict? No. Am I going to work less tomorrow? No, but I am going to try to start putting more balance to spend more time with the kids? It’s sort of an ongoing goal to try to spend more time with the kids.

Three fathers described what I refer to as “a balancing act” by which they struggled to keep these two areas of their life in balance. Denzil stated “I want to be a full-time parent and I have career aspirations. I have family aspirations”. Similarly, Maurice explained:

Deep down what’s driving me is, like I said, I think it would be being successful at my job and having a good balanced family life so working forty-five hours a week. And I guess I could always work more as long as it doesn’t cut in, but that’s why...when I have to work late I go in at nine, trying to boil it down.

The solution offered by Arnie was to “trade-off” and work four days a week so that his wife could have a day off. He enthusiastically spoke of his
willingness to stay home with the baby or even quit his job entirely to look after his daughter full-time.

Denzil, a new father of a four-month-old child described the ongoing battle he encounters in his effort to attain balance. He notes:

I'm trying to do it. I'm still not very good at it. I'm still, like the effort's there but I still feel guilty when I'm with him, and then I'm guilty when I'm working so either way there's guilt. If I could just eliminate that, my life would be so much easier, so that when I'm working I'm working, when I'm with him I'm with him. Not the two things at the same time because it's impossible.

Other fathers indicated that there just wasn't enough time to fit everything into one day. Marvin stated, "I mean my problem is that I'm sort of pushing for a thirty-six hour day. I mean twenty-four hours just is not enough". Denzil, who was struggling to balance graduate school and family life commented that "it's hard to be a student, and it's hard to be the father that I want to be and the husband that I want to be with only twenty-four hours in the day."

Past research supports the notion of role conflict experienced between career and family. Gilbert (1985) found that dual-career fathers report 'interrole conflict' regarding the desire to support their spouse's career, involvement in family and home care as well as the desire to prioritize their personal goals.

Also, Russell and Radojevic (1992) suggest:
The well-being of fathers, mothers, children, employers, and society would be enhanced if there was a better balance between paid work and family life for women and men, and if more emphasis was placed on the quality of the 'people environment' (p. 122)

**Summary**

While many of these fathers expressed a genuine desire and commitment toward being "good" fathers who are involved in the lives of their children, their roles as "good providers" received first priority when it came to allocation of their time. The result of this seemed to be an ongoing conflict between what they aspired to do in their father roles and their actual paternal behavior. Many described a balancing act whereby they tried to juggle time at work and family time. At times this seemed to result in inadequate feelings associated with not being quite good enough.

Past literature supports many of findings described above. It has been suggested that commitment and salience to father role identity are important factors in determining fathers' behaviors. Previous research has recognized the existence of role conflict regarding family and career and the need for a better balance between these two has been emphasized.

**Spousal Sharing: Father Participation**

The participants in this study described child centred attitudes toward child rearing. These attitudes were shared with their spouses. These fathers
also described their perceptions of their father role, and how they were involved in caring for their children including aspects of child care for which they believed they were responsible. Gender differences between these men and their partners as well maternal gate keeping behaviors were also described.

**Child Centred Thinking**

An aspect of parenting which all fathers shared was child-centred thinking, whereby their children were very much a focus in their family lives. For the fathers of infants, this was likely associated in part with the newness of their father roles. Participants with an older child, or more than one child also described a lifestyle which focused on the children. Activities, vacations, weekends, family time all revolved to a great extent around the children. As Amie noted that “the primary thing is to raise [her] not making sure that the house is spotless at any given time. In our house anyway, that's how we perceive it.”

Coltrane (1988) identifies two major ideological underpinnings to sharing housework and child care which include child-centredness and equity ideals. He found the couples who participated in his study were child-centred in that they placed a high value on their children’s well-being, defined parenting as an important and serious undertaking and organized most of their non-employed hours around their children.
Maurice, one of the "early" fathers (under age 30 at fatherhood) also referred to a concept similar to "trading off" regarding the children which he termed "teamwork." He commented:

[She] and I work pretty well as a team so that we sort of relieve each other. We balance each other out...when [she's] working full-time we relieve each other. We read each other quite well and sort of relieve each other.

While he believes he shares in child care, Maurice admits that "where probably I'm not pulling my fair share of the load is house chores, house cleaning."

Marvin, another "delayed" father, noted:

It's probably not a totally new age split but more, I participate where I can when I have the time...It would probably be a little bit more traditional than we would probably otherwise have it and I say traditional in terms of sixties traditional...I'll go out to barbecue like the man (laugh) and [she] will sit in the kitchen and do the vegetables and so those kind of things are a little bit traditional.

We do have a housekeeper who comes once a week, so as far as the weekly vacuuming and stuff like that we don't have to do that, or else we'd probably end up, probably sharing as much as we can with limited time.
Much of the division of household labour described here seemed to be somewhat stereotypical according to gender, for example, the male would be responsible for the lawns, shovelling the driveway, maintaining the vehicles and other outside work while the female would be responsible for much of the inside work such as cleaning and cooking. As Marvin conveyed:

I'm sort of more responsible for the outside stuff and [she] more for the inside but we split things too. And as far as the kids role, getting them dressed or ready, we'll both do that depending on who's got a free hand at the moment.

Previous exploratory studies conducted by Coltrane (1989) suggest a more egalitarian division of domestic labour is found for delayed couples since they have established routines of sharing household tasks during their years together prior to having children. He suggests "older men are motivated to be involved parents."

Coltrane and Ishii-Kuntz (1992) suggest "early" parents are likely to reveal a more traditional division of household labour, while "delayed" parents are likely to display a more egalitarian sharing of housework. This was based in part upon the idea that men who make the early transition to parenthood are more likely be less financially secure and experience lower levels of "readiness" for parenting than those who make the transition to parenthood later. This would result in "early" fathers tending to assume less responsibility for domestic labour, while "delayed" fathers are more likely be encouraged to share domestic labour.
These findings do not support the data in the present study in that "early" fathers did not reveal a more traditional division of labour compared with "delayed" fathers. Also, timing of fatherhood did not seem to impact upon assuming responsibility for domestic labour.

**Father Role**

The fathers in the present study described their perceptions of the father role in the lives of their children. Arnie referred to it as "more of a role that you grow into", while Maurice commented:

I think it would boil down to simply making sure that our family life is very happy...and I guess sometimes I think about being a father and that's what it's all about; playing with the kids and making sure that everybody's having fun.

Ralph described his ideal father role as that of a friend. "I want him to not see me as a dad but see me as a friend, like when his friends come over, or include me in whatever they're doing type thing, not "Dad, get out of here."

For Marvin, being a father meant "...sort of trying to get a little bit of a balance. Of being a counsellor as well as someone to have fun with, play with and just basically be a little bit of all of those things." He stated, "I think my role is very much to provide an example to them, to teach them or make things available for them to learn, just to be with them so that they can feel appreciated and loved."
These fathers all described their role as providing some aspect of support for their wives, particularly when their children were infants. For example, Amie described his role as providing a support system for his wife when his daughter was an infant. Ralph also described how he supported his wife when she was experiencing difficulty nursing their son. For Denzil, providing stability for his wife was one aspect of his perceived role. He revealed:

I have to be the stable one regardless of the situation. When she went back to work I never indicated that I had any worries about it because I needed to be there, because she was having huge worries about it. So, again, I have to be the strong, broad shouldered one a lot of the time.

Providing relief for one’s spouse was also identified by some of these fathers as part of their father role. Ralph commented:

I get to go to work which is my time away, where she has no time away, so she likes to get together, go for a walk with somebody... If I’m pushing the stroller it’s just like she’s out for a walk, or if I have to run to the store I’ll take him with me, just to get him out of the house.

He also got up with his wife for early morning feedings to keep her company then he would rock the baby back to sleep.
Similarly, Marvin recalled cuddling both of his boys and rocking them to sleep when they woke in the middle of the night because he enjoyed doing this but also as a way to “help out in the roles” so his wife could get some sleep too.

Three fathers described their father role as similar to a mother role. Ralph described it as “Probably the same as what a mother has always been in the past, but I think me and my wife share it”. Denzil also described his role as similar to his wife’s role. He recalled:

[She] and I talked about it all the time, about my role and her role. We talked about it before we even had kids, that I would be doing one thing and I would be at home on Tuesdays, and that I would be a participant, and that I would be called home from work if they got sick as much as she would.

Amy commented:

I guess I actually see myself as an equal caregiver to her in terms of quality, or teaching her, or introducing her to things in her life, or the decisions that we will make on her behalf. For the first little while I see myself as an equal partner in that, in terms of her education and decisions and stuff like that.

Research by Hochschild (1989) and Lamb (1987) reveal that even in situations where it is assumed that domestic work is evenly distributed, fathers spend more time playing with their children and mothers spend time doing housework. This may be the case with the fathers in the present study who
aspire toward egalitarian relationships with their spouses, yet emphasize the aspect of their father role which involves making sure everyone is having fun and playing with the children.

**Father Involvement/Responsibilities**

All fathers in the present study viewed themselves as involved fathers in their children's lives. They described their involvement in all of the physical care aspects of child rearing such as changing diapers, dressing, feeding, bathing, bedtime routines, rocking and cuddling after early morning feedings. Maurice commented:

It's like a bit of a routine that I do. I'm usually the one that will give [him] a bath, I'm always the one that will put him to bed and it's always been like that. I'll give [him] a bath then we'll get out of the bath. Then we put on his pajamas. Then we sit in bed. We read two books and then we sing some songs.

Denzil referred to his father's absence and lack of involvement in the home and with the children because he worked so many long hours. Denzil shared his belief that children learn what they see and he wants his son to see his father participating in all aspects of his care. He explained that "it relates to doing diapers. It relates to making sure his room's clean. It relates to buying him toys. It relates to carrying him and making dinner and feeding him and cleaning, all of that stuff."
Fathers with older children (two years and older) described their involvement in activities with their children such as swimming lessons, gymnastics, and soccer. Marvin commented:

As far as taking them swimming, that kind of thing, most of the lessons they've taken so far we've both actually ended up going...[They] both took this sort of music class at Mount Royal College. That was on Saturdays, and that was primarily me. I usually took them both to their classes. I'd drive back and forth and take them to their respective classes. I was primarily responsible for taking [my older son] to soccer during the spring.

Maurice referred to future involvement with his three year old son. "I've thought about the fact that when [my son] is going to be in the scouts, because he will be, I'm likely going to be involved, somehow. When [he's] going to play hockey or soccer I'm likely to be involved, somehow."

Russell (1983) reviewed past studies of father involvement including time spent with children as well as frequency and content of physical caregiving tasks and play. The major findings reported were: 1) fathers can be competent caregivers; 2) fathers spend a great deal less time in daily caregiving and are not as likely to provide physical caregiving as are mothers, regardless of wife's employment status and 3) fathers are more likely to spend time playing with their children than caregiving.
According to Russell and Radojevic (1992) a limited perspective on fathers' participation in family life exists due to a narrow definition of the term "involvement" which emphasizes physical caregiving. They broadened this definition to include involvement in decision making, responsibility and task performance. They also expanded the domains of parenting to include, for example, involvement in the context of paid work, politics and sport in the socialization process, emotional support, and behavioral and psychological commitment to parenting.

Results from several longitudinal studies investigating father involvement suggest several factors that precede involvement including reports of cohesive, expressive and non-conflictual experiences within the family of origin (Cowan & Cowan, 1987); participation in domestic labour, satisfaction with decision-making as a couple, child-centred parenting attitudes (Belsky & Volling, 1987); child-centred communication in the marriage, father working fewer hours, and high levels of commitment to children (Dickie, 1987). A recent longitudinal study conducted in Australia (Atchison, Russell, & Pedersen, 1990) revealed a strong relationship between psychological commitment to the baby prior to birth and involvement in the care of, decisions about and reported sensitivity to the baby.

Most participants in the present study perceived themselves as actively involved in caring for their child(ren) to some degree. Some of these men also indicated a desire to assume responsibility for their child(ren)'s care. For example Amie explained, "I like to be an active participant in the raising of [my
daughter]. I don’t think it should be all [my wife’s] responsibility. I want that responsibility.”

**Gender Differences**

The participants in the present study referred to differences in their interactions with their children compared with their spouses. Some of these men referred to stereotypical gender behavior as part of the explanation for these differences. Most fathers identified play as a primary form of interaction with their children. Amie recalled:

> It’s developed after a couple of times. We developed our own routine of doing things, maybe a little different than the regular day, and our play was perhaps a little different as well...and it’s just gone from there. We do different things often than mom will do, play wise...we’ll probably rough house a little bit more. I’ll swing her around a little bit more.

Denzil explained:

> I still play with him rougher than [she] does. I still toss him around and the way I stimulate him is about as much as you can play fight with a four month old. But I’m louder. I’m more playful. I bounce him around.

Ralph also described differences in his interactions with his son compared with his spouse. He revealed:
When she spends time with him she talks to him and sings to him and what I do is more like playing...she spends all day with him so she treats him like another little person in the house, whereas me, when I come home he's like a little toy. Time to play.

Other examples of stereotypical behavior were described. As Denzil noted, "We try and share but I do things that are stereotypically male I guess. I go to Toys R Us every second Friday and buy something and I come home at six-thirty as a bit of the hero with the gift." Denzil also described differences between his spouse's standards and his standards when it comes to caring for their son. He explained his point of view on this topic in the following comment:

If he wants to slobber all over his shirt, well that's what babies do, so I let him slobber all over his shirt. So Tuesday night his shirt is just covered and she sees that as a sign of neglect. If she were to allow that (I'm not saying she sees that as a sign that I'm neglecting him)... where I just see you are taking care of him. He's having fun. Let him slobber.

Russell and Radojevic (1992) point out that conceptualizations of processes involved in parenting may differ for mothers and fathers. Fathers may have different goals associated with interactions with their children.

**Gatekeeping**

In the present study Denzil differentiated between his wife's standards and his standards. "Well, it goes through everything in our house. For me to
make a bed I just throw the duvet and plunk the pillows down and [she] makes sure it's crisp and tight, so it transfers to [our son]." He commented:

I do help prepare the bottles. I know how to prepare them but for [her] own thing she has to pour the water. Pour it and stir it and make sure everything's the way it should be because [his name] might mess it up and he wouldn't take as much care...I'm not a detail person so when it says you should have exact proportions; she would put twelve point eight ounces in the can and I say, "well, twelve/thirteen, if it hits the basic line, just chuck it in", and that wouldn't be acceptable to her.

Marvin explained how his wife assumed responsibility for taking the children to the doctor because she wanted to know more specific details about the visits. He explained:

I've taken [him] to the doctor a couple of times but generally [she] wants to go because I don't tend to take as good a notes from the doctor. She always wants to know what the doctor said and I say "Well she says he's fine", but that's not good enough. She wants to have a little bit more detail, so it's sort of fallen into her camp. So if she can't make it then I'll take them to the doctor but [she] has sort of taken over that responsibility.

In reference to who stays home from work with the children when they are sick, Marvin stated:
If one of the kids was really sick and [she] could get away with it, she would rather stay at home. She would want to stay at home. If she couldn't, then clearly it would fall on me to stay at home.

Marvin described how he perceived the role of mother as becoming gender ingrained and a source of identity and satisfaction for his spouse. They met in law school and were both at the same stage in their professional careers when their first child was born. Both were both working full-time and experiencing the added pressures and responsibilities associated with being up for partnership with a law firm. They decided that this situation was not fair to the baby and he required more time than they were able to provide for him. His spouse decided to compromise her career and work part-time in order to spend more time with their son. This father recalled:

You know when I made the offer to quit my job at the time that [our second child] was born. [She] didn't take me up on that offer. She said that she wouldn't have anything to do with it...she did not want to take on the role of being a full-time lawyer in a very active law firm and leave the child-rearing to me or her not being involved in it. Being a mother is very important to her, so I think that's sort of the perspective as far as primary responsibility is. She's moved into that role, not because she's been forced into that role. It's because that's what she wants to do. That's the role she wants to be in.
Hawkins and Roberts (1992) emphasize that "deeply ingrained concepts of gender roles behavior" which are difficult to overcome. They suggest that "wives may resist husbands' efforts to become more involved because the domestic sphere remains wives' primary source of identity, self-esteem and satisfaction" (p. 173). Dual-earner wives may feel threatened when their husbands demonstrate competence in domestic work, and may therefore resist their "help." Husbands' involvement may also be discouraged by standards set by wives regarding how and when domestic tasks are to be carried out. Therefore, tasks may be assigned, however responsibility for how they are performed may not be relinquished (Hawkins and Roberts, 1992). This type of behavior represents what is termed "maternal gatekeeping" whereby spouses actively manage their husbands' participation. "Help" is given, but on her terms, which is not likely to motivate participation by these fathers (Hawkins & Roberts, 1992).

**Summary**

While aspirations toward role sharing behavior with one's spouse was described as an ideal by the fathers who participated in this study, the reality was that they often found their family structures becoming more "traditional" in nature, particularly when they entered parenthood.

The role of father was strongly associated with playing and having fun with the children as well as providing support and relief for one's spouse. This perception of the father role suggests these men view themselves more as
assistants to their wives. While they described quite a high level of involvement in their child(ren)'s lives they all identified their spouse as primarily responsible for the care of their child(ren).

**Who Does What: “Detail Stuff”**

While the previous theme described how the fathers in the present study viewed themselves as involved and responsible for the care of their child(ren), this theme highlights the specific aspects of assuming responsibility for child care such as decision making, planning and organizing home life.

It has been suggested that responsibility is the most important aspect of domestic labour and child care, and it is here that the strain and time commitment associated with the parental role exists. Some researchers point out that the cognitive state of feeling responsible for orchestrating family life and conducting behind the scenes work including decision making, planning and organizing is a critical aspect of assuming responsibility for domestic work and child care (Leslie et al., 1991; Mederer, 1993).

The participants in the present study also described stereotypical behaviors within their own relationships, as well as how they viewed gender roles as changing.

**Decision Making**

All fathers perceived themselves as sharing in decision making, particularly regarding significant decisions such as those involving education.
Some fathers also described participation in smaller, everyday decisions. Amie explained:

We often actually will talk on the phone even during the day and decide together on what to do on a particular aspect. Should we take [our daughter] to the doctor or should we do this or should we do that? We both play off each other, just to feed off the other and get an opposing opinion perhaps? We actually share that quite well.

Ralph described a decision reached by himself and his spouse regarding his infant son. He recalled:

She wanted to put him on pablum a little earlier than the doctor said and I didn’t want to. I’m sure that he could have because I was on pablum and she was on pablum, but the doctor said “It’s best to wait longer. Their system isn’t quite developed yet”. So we just discussed it and I said “if you find that he is fussy I’m willing to get up, even on work nights so that you’re not up all night”.

**Planning and Organizing**

All but one father identified their spouse as the one who is in charge of the “detail stuff.” This included knowing when the children needed new clothes or shoes, what clothing or size shoes they take. Most of these men perceived their spouses as possessing superior planning and organizing skills.
Differences in involvement and responsibility with the children were attributed to this specific quality associated with details. Denzil commented:

When it comes down to the precise things, she knows what laundry detergent to buy. When the diaper pail needs emptying, she always knows that, and when we’re out of wipes she knows that. I couldn’t tell you. If you were to ask her right now how many packages of wipes you have behind the wipe box she could tell you. I haven’t got a clue...yes, she does a lot more of the detail stuff. She’s the great organizer. She knows how much the formula is and where to get it in Safeway and how much to buy and how much he eats in a day and all that stuff. If you asked me I wouldn’t know the answer to those questions.

Similarly Marvin explained:

I’m not a detail person. I’m not a planner or an organizer...and I don’t think it’s as much a gender thing as she’s a very detailed, organized person and I never have been. She always has been. I mean she likes it. That’s her make-up.

Ralph also described his wife as the one who attends to details in his relationship. He stated, “She seems to be more into the fine detail things. She wears the pants.”

All participants in this study identified their spouses as assuming primary responsibility for the children. Although they all perceived themselves as
involved and responsible fathers, they did not assume the role of primary caregiver. As Marvin indicated, "It's those little things...it's all her." This was in reference to the "detail stuff" associated with the daily planning and organizing involved from day to day.

Braverman (1991) states:

Feminists have long argued that men "helping" with the housework represents a patronizing arrangement whereby the "real" responsibility for the tasks still lies with the woman. She is the one who continues to think about and plan action around these matters as her primary responsibility (p. 26).

Braverman suggests that taking domestic work seriously requires that one sees what needs to be done, thinks about it, plans how to resolve problems connected with it and then takes the time required out of the work day to ensure it is completed.

**Changing Gender Roles**

All fathers in the present study described some behaviors which were not traditionally associated with the male gender role. For example, Maurice identified himself as the parent who is responsible for planning, organizing and taking care of the "detail stuff."

Three men discussed their views on how socialized gender roles are changing and becoming less gender specific, at least from their perspectives. For example, Denzil commented:
Nature does have its way I think, but I don’t think all of those skills you learn just because you’re a woman or that you know it because you’re a woman and you’re supposed to be stupid about it because you’re a man?...I think they both have to learn...I think roles are changing for men and, generated by the energy of the women’s movement.

Marvin explained:

I tend to see mothers taking more of a nurturing role at the younger ages...it just seems to happen that way, and I think that fathers could probably do a good job, maybe. But I think that if you’ve got one person doing it you don’t necessarily need both parties doing the same thing. I think that as a father, perhaps you have to have a little bit of that. You have to have a little bit of the nurturing side of the mother. The father has to have a little bit of that too and also has to basically blend those in a way that balances with the mother so that the parenting is sort of dual role. One parent doesn’t have certain things. You have to build it up with the other and vice versa.

Arnie also commented:

You see in a lot of marriages where one parent (and actually I’ve seen now where it can be either parent, it doesn’t necessarily have to be the woman anymore) is the primary caregiver of the children
but where a lot of people have, or one person is focused on their career and the other person is the primary caregiver, childreerer.

**Summary**

The men in the present study described their participation in major family decisions, but many of the small, everyday decisions were often the responsibility of their spouses. Specifically management of the household including planning and organizing behaviors were performed by their wives. This is an important point relevant to the research question posed in this study. While these men described the ways in which they are involved fathers, only one participant referred to household management behavior associated with the responsibility aspect of parenting.

Stereotypical male behaviors and interactions with their child(ren) were described by these fathers, however several of these fathers also discussed their views about socialized gender roles and how they saw these as changing in a direction which places less of an emphasis on differences between men and women, and more of an emphasis on similarities.

**Conquering Child Care: Acquiring Confidence**

Acquiring confidence in fathering skills involved previous exposure to children; initial experiences associated with becoming a new father; time spent alone with the child; and skills which were perceived as unique to these fathers.
This theme seemed to represent a key process in assuming responsibility for child care for the men in this study.

**Previous Exposure to Children**

Three fathers who participated in this study described minimal past experience with infants and small children. Arnie had been exposed to teenagers and related that he felt fairly confident dealing with children of that age but "had never had much to do with babies." On the other hand two fathers revealed a great deal of past exposure to babies and young children. Ralph recalled a time before he was married when his spouse lived with her aunt and uncle. This couple had three young children whom Ralph babysat often. "We used to babysit for them all the time and stay over on the weekend. They would go away for the weekend so it was like they were our kids...we used to love it."

Also, Marvin explained that he had three younger brothers and he was babysitting them from an early age. He recalled:

I did my share of babysitting as a teenager so dealing with babies wasn't something that bothered me or worried me...my youngest brother is ten years younger than I am...When you're nine or ten dealing with a newborn it's not like being an adult but you just get exposed to holding babies and stuff.
"In The Beginning"

This was a specific phrase referred to quite often by participants as they reflected upon confidence in their fathering abilities and how this evolved over time. Feelings were often used to describe perceptions of confidence in parenting abilities and seemed to be key in this beginning stage of parenthood.

A difference in perceived level of confidence was evident between those fathers with previous exposure to babies and those without. For example, Amie, who lacked exposure, recalled:

Well at the beginning, as long as [she] was there I was fully confident because if he really went nuts then the food was there. But when she would go away to whatever and I would be asked to bottle feed him I wasn’t confident at all. I didn’t have that.

Another inexperienced father noted:

In the beginning it was absolutely terrifying the first time [she] went out. I’m sure she went to one of her moms groups or something like that. I was in an absolute panic...I didn’t know what the heck I was doing.

On the other hand those who had been exposed to infants in the past described an initial degree of confidence in their fathering skills. In fact, Marvin maintained that he felt a little bit more comfortable with his newborn son at first than his wife did. He stated that “it didn’t intimidate me at all, and so holding the baby for the first day was easy. I didn’t find him to be, dealing with this strange
thing. I felt very comfortable.” He further commented, “I didn’t have a difficulty with having a newborn and I guess I just sort of fell into it. There was never this moment of panic or extreme fear.”

Ralph recalled the first time he was left alone with his son in the following words:

The first time was, he had gotten his shot that morning and [she] had planned to go out with some of the girls from work. I knew this beforehand so I figured he’s going to be really cranky...actually it turned out he was perfect. He had a little cranky period but...I knew what I was doing already.

**Solo Time**

In the present study Denzil explained how he felt confident caring for his infant as long as his wife was there. His level of confidence grew as he began to spend more and more time alone with his son. He explained:

Monday night she’s not there. All day Tuesday she’s not here and Wednesday night she’s not there, so [he] and I do our own thing. Now I’m totally confident. I’m not nervous about Tuesdays. I know I can take care of him. He takes the bottle and so there isn’t anything that I don’t know that’s required to make sure that his day goes well.

Amie, who recalled his hesitance regarding solo time, gradually learned to cope with caring for an infant. He described the process whereby spending
more and more time alone with his daughter increased his confidence in his fathering abilities. He recalled:

[She] pushed me into it. I mean I did not want to do it but she took her time in the beginning and went out and did her own thing... and it was trial by error. I figured it out pretty quick. It's either that or you had a screaming baby on your hands. Then the next time it was easier and the next time after that and it got to the point where it really became comfortable.

Over time all fathers expressed a high level of confidence in their parenting skills. The two fathers (Arnie and Marvin) who had more than one child described high confidence levels initially with their second children given the knowledge and experience gained with their firstborns.

The above statements fit with past literature on this topic which examines father participation in child care. When paternal caretaking occurs with mothers present in the home, fathers tend to see their participation as 'helping' mothers rather than sharing in parental responsibilities" (Hawkins & Roberts, 1992, p. 174). However when fathers are alone with a child they are faced with the sole responsibility of carrying out child care tasks. Hawkins and Roberts (1992) point out, “It is precisely this kind of care that some scholars believe is critical to significant change in fathers' attitudes towards participative fathering" (p. 174).

Similar to the fathers in the present study, Coltrane (1988) found that many fathers in his study described a process by which the actual performance
of caretaking duties provided them with the self-confidence and skills to feel they knew what they were doing. Those fathers described their time alone with the baby as especially helpful in building their sense of competence as a shared primary caretaker. Moreover, it is suggested that sole responsibility for childcare provides fathers with the opportunity to develop their emotional capacities (Coltrane, 1988; Cowan, 1978).

"Official Wrapper": Father's Unique Skills

One component of acquiring confidence for some fathers in this study was the realization that they possessed certain unique abilities in caring for their children. Ralph proudly stated, "I'm kind of like the comfort guy when he'd get real cranky. I'd spend the time with him because I have the patience to walk him". Denzil recalled, "I was the 'official wrapper'. She could never do it as tightly so she would bring the baby with the blanket and say 'wrap him'.'"

Two fathers referred to special routines they shared with their children to the exclusion of their wives. These were described fondly as special times and memory making rituals. Marvin referred to stories he tells his sons based upon a fictional character he created named Zeke and how telling these stories as bedtime has become a special time he shares with them. He explained:

Probably the best sort of ongoing bonding is when I tell my bedtime stories. Those are the ones they always ask for so those are the thing that just the three of us know about. It's a great experience. Most often they want to hear a [Zeke] story so that's something
that [she] can’t pick up and read. She doesn’t know anything about [Zeke].

Similarly, Maurice commented:
I’m always the one that will put him to bed. It’s always been like that. I really enjoy that time with [him] because it’s usually just him and I in his room, reading the books or singing or talking or whatever. It’s really neat and it’s something that I really enjoy. I wouldn’t want to give it up.

Ralph described how special he felt when he was able to provide comfort to his infant son. “Her parents are here and he starts fussing and they have him. I can take him and soothe him like within a minute. It just makes me feel so good that he knows his dad and I can comfort him.”

Summary

In the beginning, most of these fathers lacked confidence in their parenting abilities regarding their infants. However after receiving opportunities to spend time alone with their child they gradually gained confidence in their own fathering skills. Over time they discovered their own unique skills in relating to their child and eventually developed their own special father/child routines. It seems that when these men were placed in a position of caring for their child(ren) alone and realized they could handle the job, they assumed responsibility for child care.
Daddy in Training: Preparation for Parenthood

In Western society women are prepared from an early age to become future mothers and are therefore socialized into this role from the time they are little girls. They are given dolls with which to practice their maternal skills, and when they reach a responsible age they further refine these skills when they are employed as babysitters. This socialization process teaches us to believe that qualities such as nurturing, caring for others and meeting the emotional needs of others are all inherently female and valued as such. These are all characteristics associated with mothering. On the other hand qualities such as autonomy, independence and success in the workplace are identified as masculine, and as such, men are expected to aspire toward these. The subthemes described in this section include preparation for childbirth, advice seeking and networking.

Childbirth Preparation

All fathers who participated in this study attended childbirth classes prior to the birth of their first child. Some found these to be more beneficial than did others. For example, Denzil commented, "I went to the prenatal classes because [my wife] knew all about that stuff because of her background and I didn't know any of it. Prenatal classes helped big time." Amie stated that "the classes, they gave us a little knowledge. They gave us some preparation. I
much that those classes do to totally prepare you, for me anyway, for the emotional feelings that came out of the birth experience."

It seems that while women receive some preparation for their parenting role, men often receive little preparation for fatherhood apart from information acquired through child birth classes. McBride (1990) points out that men are not adequately prepared for fatherhood including such areas as normal child development, developmentally appropriate parenting skills and sensitivity to the needs of their children. He states, “Fathers often have little exposure to parental role models, few social opportunities to prepare for fatherhood, limited institutional supports for the parental role, and a lack of father-child interactions that are obligatory” (McBride, 1990, p. 250). He further notes that a lack of social and institutional support for the paternal role results in a lack of education and opportunity for developing parenting skills. He asserts, “This lack of preparation and parenting support limits the options open to fathers as they determine the amount and type of involvement they will have with their children” (p. 250).

**Advice seeking**

All fathers referred to books as an important source of information regarding parenting and child development. One father in particular found books to be reassuring as they confirmed that his child’s behavior was “normal” for her stage of development. Several fathers and their spouses also sought advice from family and friends who had children. One couple requested advice
from their own parents, however they eventually turned to books as a source of information when this advice was not forthcoming.

On the other hand, advice from family was sometimes provided although not requested. Often this was not viewed as helpful as it conflicted with other sources of information. Ralph recalled:

You get tons of input from family...and it was tough. My mom and my grandma feel like they're helping and they're always throwing out information. Things have changed since they were bringing us up.

**Networking**

Most men in this study tended not to prepare themselves for parenting by talking to friends who were fathers about their experiences, although they did watch them interacting with their children. Some of the participants described the childbirth classes as a helpful arena for talking to other men about childbirth preparation. Arnie recalled:

The fathers, we kind of joked around, but when you hear somebody else say that their wife had woke up twenty-two times the night before and you know everybody is going through very similar sorts of things, it's nice to acknowledge that it's normal. It's the way it works...I think what we enjoyed more out of those classes was the camaraderie of meeting other couples who were in the same state as we were.
Ralph and his spouse continued to meet with people from their prenatal group after their babies were born. He recalls, "It was nice to meet with these people and find that they had similar problems... we thought there was something wrong, but it's no problem". He found it reassuring that everyone was "feeling the same way and dealing with the same things."

Most fathers interviewed described expanding their circle of friends to incorporate more people with children. Maurice explained, "Our circle of friends has really broadened because we have babies and now we have friends with babies."

**Summary**

Childbirth classes provided these men with an opportunity to learn about babies and what is involved in caring for them. In our culture males often lack exposure to young children and do not typically gain the types of educational and training experiences that women receive. These fathers gained much of their knowledge and reassurance about child rearing from books and from observing and talking to other couples with young children who were encountering similar experiences.

**Changing Gears: Adjusting to Parenthood**

Many adjustments and lifestyle changes associated with the transition to parenthood were described by the men in this study including changes in relationships. For some participants the expectations of fatherhood were not in
keeping with the reality they experienced after becoming fathers and in some cases readiness for fatherhood impacted upon the adjustment to this new role. Adjusting to parenthood seemed to contribute toward acquiring confidence in fathering skills and appears to play a role in assuming paternal responsibility for child care for these men.

**Lifestyle Adjustments**

Many adjustments in lifestyle involved in the transition to parenthood were addressed. As Arnie noted, "It is a big adjustment. It's all an adjustment. Marriage is a big adjustment. Children are an adjustment."

One adjustment referred to by most fathers was a loss of free time. "I mean the big change of course is that you don't end up with free time any more, it doesn't happen, right?" Ralph explained, "I can't just come home from work and sit down and watch television. It's come home and entertain. Less time watching television and more time playing with him."

In an effort to make time available for himself, Denzil described how he began to schedule and plan his time. He explained:

When you're just a couple you're both really busy so you can, and I did what I wanted to do basically. But now, I'm doing what I want but it's a lot more effort and a lot more planning than it ever was. I'm not used to living my life schedule wise...every minute of my day is scheduled."
Other changes in lifestyle were also mentioned. For example Marvin noted that he and his wife don't go out for dinner as often now that they have children. Maurice pointed out that "our family's young and we have different priorities now. Not being in the party mode all the time anymore is one of these."

Similarly, Marvin commented:

Part of it is probably a little bit of having kids and part of it is aging too, because you just don't do a lot of the fun things. Going to the bar and drinking all night and all that kind of stuff, it just doesn't happen anymore.

**Relationship Changes**

Most fathers referred to the many, often unexpected changes that took place during the transition from being a childless couple to being first time parents. Some changes in marital relationships were discussed, for example Denzil commented:

When she and I talk it's always about doing bottles or doing laundry or what's the best for him. It's not what's the best for us too, so that's another one...She had her birthday a week and a half ago and that's the first time that we had three hours of uninterrupted contact other than sleeping. That's unbelievable!

Arnie stated "I think one of the hardest difficulties is not so much with being a father but that aspect of that; when it takes away from your relationship with your wife, which was potentially the starting point anyway, right?"
Maurice pointed out that he makes a point of doing his work and spending time with his children especially at dinner-time and bedtime. He then returns to the office at night in order to finish his work and finds there is little time left to spend alone with his wife. He noted that "if I work, go in to work at nine o'clock, then I don't see [her] right? and we can't spend some quality time together.”

Most fathers referred to changes in relationships with friends, particularly those friends who did not have children. Denzil revealed:

Having friends that don’t have kids is tough because they still have the attitude “well kids won’t affect our life that much”. So it’s a lot more difficult to stay in contact with friends that don’t have kids because they don’t quite understand the time commitment.

Maurice, who became a father at a young age compared with his friends explained:

The problem we got in our relationships was with friends that didn’t have kids or weren’t around kids. So we’re having some friends down from Edmonton to visit...they had no idea what it was like for their friends to have a family...and a lot of our friends didn’t understand at all and that would frustrate them, I think, and I guess us too. I mean it’s like “look, what do you expect us to do?” We can’t just leave. We can’t have a babysitter all the time...I guess the entire dynamics changed now that we’re a family.
Some fathers also mentioned how their circle of friends broadened to include people who had children. Maurice noted “Our circle of friends has really broadened because we have babies and now we have friends with babies and most people that have babies are older than we are.”

In an attempt to manage limited time one father commented that “what generally got cut out was time with our friends. We didn’t spend as much time going out, entertaining and those kind of things which we would have otherwise liked to have done.”

**Expectations Versus Reality**

For some participants in this study the expectations regarding parenthood prior to the birth of their first child were similar to the reality they experienced after they assumed their new parenting role. For others, the reality of fatherhood was not quite in keeping with prior expectations. As Ralph stated:

I knew that it was going to change my life, but I never knew to what extent. I thought it was going to be not as much work, more play time, and I didn’t realize how long it was going to take for him to develop. Like you have to dedicate all your time.

As mentioned above, the time commitment involved in parenting young children was the most pronounced reality which did not meet prior expectations. The time commitment was often underestimated and posed quite a surprise to some fathers.
The "younger" fathers (under age 30 at fatherhood) differed from the "older" fathers in that they felt they were ready for parenthood because it was the next logical step after getting married and finding a job. For example, Ralph recalled "We'd been putting it off, waiting ... I was done school and had the job in my field and [my spouse] was working at the time."

Also, Maurice described a lack of readiness and planning for fatherhood in the following statement:

We were not using any birth control for three years. We weren't trying to get pregnant. We weren't obviously avoiding it...we figured it might happen but we weren't preparing ourselves...no we didn't think about that at all. It was "we're pregnant, I guess it's a good thing", because we were married and we both had decent jobs.

Past research has examined the timing of fatherhood and how this relates to this life transition. Cooney, Pedersen, Indelicato, and Palkovitz (1993) suggest that one factor in men's lives which may impact upon both role enactment and feelings about parenting is the timing of fatherhood. They point out that pressure associated with the traditional breadwinner role along with societal pressure to be more involved in parenting may create conflict for men. It is therefore suggested that delaying parenthood until one's thirties may represent a method for balancing these conflicting roles. When career goals are met, men have more time and energy to devote to both work and parenting roles.
Heath (1991) argued that interpersonal relationships become more "caring, other-centered, and empathic" with increased maturity. In light of this, Cooney et al. (1993) suggest that "late" fathers (age 30 and older at fatherhood) are more mature and have access to more emotional resources than other younger fathers. Moreover, they maintain that those fathers who have experienced success in their careers are likely to feel an associated sense of self-efficacy in carrying out the traditional breadwinner role. "Demonstrated success in masculine role assignments may permit freedom to explore role diversification, including greater empathy and nurturant behavior" (p. 214).

Cooney et al. (1993) examined both behavioral and affective components of parenting and found that "late" fathers revealed greater behavioral involvement with their children than "on-time" fathers (age 24-29 at fatherhood). This difference was accounted for by the higher education level of the "late" fathers. It was suggested that fathers who are more educated may recognize the value of extensive involvement with their children. They may also aspire toward the involved father image associated with more of an egalitarian relationship with their spouses (Cooney et al., 1993).

With regard to the affective components of parenting, "late" fathers were described as more inclined to display involved/positive affect as opposed to uninvolved/negative affect. "By delaying parenthood, men may be able to invest more readily in the role when it occurs, and to generally feel good about
their involvement. Positive parenting experiences are related to enhanced personal well-being and self-esteem” (Cooney et al., 1993, p. 213).

The above findings suggest that those men who are highly educated and delay fatherhood until their thirties have more time available for both work and parenting since their career goals have already been met; recognize the value of extensive involvement with their children; and are more inclined to feel good about their level of involvement. However, this was not the case in the present study where the most educated participant who was a “late” father actually reported spending less time with his children than he would have preferred. Although he seemed to recognize the value of extensive involvement with his two children, it appeared his career goals had not yet been met and he continued to spend more time at work than at home with his sons.

**Summary**

Many adjustments were encountered by these fathers as they made the transition to fatherhood. Changes were noted in relationships with their spouses as well as with friends, particularly childless friends. Loss of freedom associated with a lack of time was a significant adjustment for most of these men. In many ways their expectations regarding fatherhood differed from the realities they experienced upon becoming fathers.
Daddy Dearest: Father/Child Relationship

Aspects of the father/child relationship described by the fathers in this study included the impact of fatherhood and the many personal, positive experiences associated with this; bonding which took place with their child(ren) and strengthened their relationship; a recognition of the various phases of childhood and changes in paternal involvement associated with these; and future plans they held for their child(ren).

Impact of Fatherhood

All participants described their experience of fatherhood to date as very positive overall. Most of them described an initial excitement which was emotionally overwhelming. As Denzil described:

Well I think the first two months I was really high, and none of the realities of my life really set in...it was also a numb feeling too, like just so excited, so into it and so happy that nothing else really came in.

Ralph recalled, "I can remember just being tingly all over, like I thought I would cry... that tingly feeling, like I couldn't believe what had happened it just happened so fast."

The impact of the birth experience itself was particularly powerful for Amie. He was adopted at birth and described the deep connection he automatically felt toward his newborn daughter who was "genetically the same."
He described how this experience changed his perspective on life in the following words:

It changes you and I think it really does. It changes all aspects of everything and how you look at life and just everything. I felt my whole world change right before me, watching life come into the world... pretty incredible. I'm not a terrifically religious person but I can sure see how somebody could become at that point in their life.

For these men the impact of fatherhood was very powerful and involved many positive emotions. For one father this experience was extremely significant and actually changed his perceptions of his own life.

**Bonding**

The term bond is defined as a force that unites or binds together. For the participants in this study, a variety of shared events, activities and moments were all described as bonding experiences.

Father-child bonding was viewed by some fathers as a process which takes place over time while others saw it as an automatic attachment, for example, Ralph referred to his wife having a C-section delivery which became an opportunity for him to bond immediately with his newborn son, even before his wife was able to bond with the baby. He recalled:

I got to bond with him because [she] had a C-section, so when he was first born I was the one who got to be over there and hold him
and take him over. Then when she was in the hospital for four
days and was on morphine...she was sick most of the time so I did
most of the holding and cuddling...so I think we’ve bonded well. He
knows his dad.

On the other hand Arnie described bonding as “a real slow process...a
real gradual thing...of course you start right away with feeding her or changing
diapers and stuff like that. It’s virtually immediate. But it takes a while I guess
before you really have a bond.” Similarly, Marvin described an evolving bond
between himself and his two sons. He recalled:

When they were really young, some of those experiences of having
cuddled and holding and having them going to sleep are notable,
but there’s not probably one specific event that you say “Hey, I’m
bonded”. I think it’s a collection of events that you’ve done.

For many of these fathers bonding involved special routines with their
children which were unique and therefore different from “time spent with mom.”
As one father noted, “[H]e and I, do all sorts of stimulation stuff. We walk
together, he sits in his chair, we read. We do everything under the sun and I
don’t feel like cuddling all the time.” For another father it was special to have his
daughter display the same type of affection toward him as she did toward her
mother. “I feel we have a great relationship. She’ll come over and she’ll be just
as affectionate as she is with her mom, which I really like. I think that’s nice.”
Most fathers recalled specific moments or events which they identified as special bonding experiences with their child(ren) as they got older (2-4 years).

Maurice referred to doing "guy-type things" with his older son. He recalled:

We went on a bike ride as a family...and [he] and I went back out. We went to that little hill gopher watching and while we were doing that it sort of struck me at one point that this is sort of neat, just him and I. And the same sort of feeling occurred to me when I went to the Stampede last weekend. Sunday morning just [he] and I went down and I took him on some rides.

Marvin referred to special moments spent with both of his boys in the mountains sharing a simple activity. He commented:

All three [of us] have gone on hikes in the mountains. We've gone with friends and [my wife] stays and talks and we just go down and throw rocks in the water and stuff like that, so that's always very nice.

Amie described special moments shared with his daughter in the garden as he taught her to appreciate some of his interests. He stated:

Something I've really enjoyed doing with her this year is going into the garden and picking peas with her. She loves doing it. She goes out and helps daddy pick lettuce and peas and beans. Sometimes we go around and look at all the flowers... I'm into gardens and flowers, so I'll go out and show her the sunflower and
the bee that's flying around inside of it and then we'll go to the apple tree and she'll look at the little apples growing on there. She remembers and she gets real excited, so I enjoy teaching those things to her.

Another bonding experience highlighted by two fathers with older children (ages 3-4) involved bedtime routines. Marvin noted "You know probably the best sort of ongoing bonding is when I tell my bedtime stories. We'll all go up together and I'll tell them 'This is a fictional story about a fictional character.'" Maurice also referred to telling stories and singing songs as a bonding time for himself and his older child.

For some of these fathers bonding seemed to take place instantly, while for others it was described as a gradual process which took place over time. Bonding was described in different ways as well. For some of these men it involved closeness and displays of affection. Special moments shared between father and child as well as special routines were also perceived as bonding experiences.

**Childhood Phases**

Three fathers referred to an early phase when their children were nursing infants. Two of these fathers were presently at that phase and described difficulties encountered. Denzil described how he perceived his wife nursing their son as impacting upon parent/child bonding. He stated:
This is another theory of mine. I think breastfeeding has a huge effect on what kind of—the balance of bonding that can take place because when you have to be there every two hours then that dictates how much contact you’re going to have with them.

Ralph also noted “I could have [my son] for a couple of hours but then she always has to come back and feed him. She finds that hard and I find that hard.”

Maurice commented on how nursing may play a role in his involvement at mealtime in feeding his two children. His oldest child experienced many difficulties nursing and it was described as a huge ordeal when the baby woke for feedings, particularly during the night. Maurice was very involved, helping his wife prepare to feed by sterilizing special equipment needed for the process and getting her something to drink. However, the second child nursed very well and he was not involved at all the second time around. He explained “Well [my older son] feeds himself now. [My wife] usually feeds [our younger daughter], probably because while she was nursing I couldn’t help out and that sort of continued on perhaps, I don’t know.”

During some phases (particularly newborn through the first few months) the fathers with older children perceived themselves as less involved than during other later phases (toddler to age 4). It seemed that as the child(ren) got older, a closer father/child relationship was formed. As Marvin recalled:
I probably spend an equal amount of time with both boys. There was probably a small, short phase where I probably spent more time with [my older son], just because of the time. [My wife] would be nursing, stuff like that, and myself and [my older son] might do things.

Maurice described differences in communicating with his three year old and ten month old. He commented:

I like to be able to say to [my three year old] “What’s wrong?” and he tells me, or “don’t do this” and he won’t do it. Or if he does do it I can try and explain to him. But with [my ten month old] you can’t really communicate with them. They can’t communicate with you, other than through crying and I’m not very good at dealing with that.

The fathers with older children (ages 2-4) reflected upon past “phases” and perceived themselves as more involved as time goes by and they enter later phases. Marvin commented that “as the kids get older I enjoy them more. It’s sure nice to hold and cuddle the babies when they were young, but there’s a limited role that I took”. Amie pointed out that “they do get easier too. I mean I find it much easier now, when she’s upset and won’t sleep, I can go lie down next to her and rub her back or something like that.”

Maurice and Marvin both had two children. They discussed the differences they experienced upon the arrival of a second child. Both noted
more involvement with the first baby in the infant phase as compared with the second baby at this same phase. Once again, as children get older and move from the infant phase to the toddler phase, the father’s involvement seems to increase. Both Maurice and Marvin described how they participated more with their older child when the younger one was an infant. However, this level of involvement evened out and became equal as the second child reached the “toddler phase” (over one year).

Overall paternal involvement increased for Maurice whose spouse also worked full-time. On the other hand, Marvin described how his involvement actually decreased shortly after the birth of their second child. This was attributed to what was described as a mutual decision that he would focus on his career and she would focus on the children. His wife took a part-time job and they hired a nanny and a cleaning person to help out with child care and some of the domestic labour.

A study conducted by Belsky and Cenic (1996) which examines the determinants of fathering during the second and third years of a child’s life provides some support for changes in father involvement associated with childhood phases. These researchers note the rapid developmental changes which take place during toddlerhood and suggest developmental changes also occur for parents at this time. Moreover, fathers will be more involved in parenting during this time period, compared with the infancy period. According
to this study, the development of parenting or changes in parenting techniques may be more apparent in fathers than in mothers.

**Future Plans**

Not only did the participants in the present study refer to passing “phases” in their child(ren)’s development, but they all spoke with eager anticipation of future plans with their children as they become even older. They looked forward to teaching and sharing activities which they enjoy with their children. Arnie commented, “I look forward to as she gets older, hiking in the back country and that sort of thing. [My wife’s] not really into that sort of thing so I’d love to be able to teach my kids.” Similarly, Ralph confided, “I always used to have this little dream where he’d come over and he’d be about five with all his little buddies ‘Dad can you come play hockey?’...and when he’s a little older and we can start playing and invite all his buddies over to play hockey in the front yard or play basketball.”

**Chapter Summary**

The impact of fatherhood was very powerful for the men who participated in this study. They reflected upon the birth of their child(ren) as emotionally overwhelming and described much enthusiasm and excitement about becoming fathers.

A bonding process was described whereby these men came to establish special routines with their child(ren) and encountered many special father/child
experiences. Many of these fathers expressed a sense of personal enjoyment in participating in special routines or rituals with their child(ren).

The father/child relationship seemed to change over time, and during certain phases in their child(ren)'s lives, these men found themselves to be more or less involved. During the infant phase, father involvement did not seem to be as high as during the toddler phase when the child(ren) started to become more independent and began to develop language skills. These results seem to shed some light on how fathers come to assume responsibility for the care of their children. A strong bond with their child(ren) likely reinforces identity and commitment to the father role. Also, these fathers identify a connection between childhood phases and their paternal involvement. It seems that fathers are not as involved with their infant children unless they are placed in a position where they forced to assume some responsibility for child care. However, as the child(ren) become older these men seem more likely to increase their involvement with their children. It is not clear whether this also includes an increase in responsibility as well.

The themes and sub-themes described above provide some insight into how these men came to assume responsibility for their children and what this meant to them. First of all, the construction of a father identity as someone who is emotionally connected and involved with his child(ren), and how highly this particular identity is prioritized when compared with the father identity associated
inducing or burdensome in any way. In fact, they seemed to regard this as a personality trait or quality which their spouse possessed and they did not.

**Model of Assuming Responsibility for Childcare**

The findings from this study which have been described in this chapter are presented in the form of a conceptual framework which suggests relationships between the emergent concepts and categories (see Figure 1). This framework offers an initial understanding of the process whereby men come to assume responsibility for the care of their child(ren) and is tentative, based upon limited findings from the sample obtained for this study. Further research on this topic would hopefully build upon and strengthen the following proposed model.
Figure 1: Model of Assuming Responsibility for Childcare

- Father Identity
- Father/Child Relationship

- Preparation for Fatherhood
- Acquiring Confidence
- Adjustments to Fatherhood

- Societal Influences

- Prioritizing Roles
  - Father/Breadwinner

- Spousal Sharing & Father Participation

- Who Does What: Detail Stuff
**Description of the Model**

Prioritizing roles is identified as the central theme around which all other themes revolve. How strongly a father identifies with the role of breadwinner and how this competes with his identity as a father seems to affect his participation in child rearing. This in turn determines how he views his responsibility for child care and the behaviors associated with this. Perceptions of roles are constantly changing and are affected by societal influences and significant others. It appears that while society stresses the need for fathers to increase involvement with their children, an emphasis continues to be placed upon the masculine identity associated with success in the work place. This typically involves more time at work and away from family which results in less time available to participate in domestic work and child care, and less responsibility for household management including planning and organizing family life.

Preparation for fatherhood as well as adjustments made over time appear to affect a man’s confidence in his fathering abilities and skills. These influence his degree of participation in child care activities as well as how strongly he identifies with his father identity. However, this father identity competes with the good provider identity and influences participation, depending on which identity is prioritized at a given time.

Construction of a father identity is affected by societal influences regarding what a good father looks like. This "ideal image" impacts upon the
father and breadwinner roles which often conflict with each other. It seems that while fathers strive to attain a balance between the two, they often become prioritized. This is also affected by societal influences.

Finally, the father identity which is constructed, as well as a father’s interactions with his child(ren) impact upon the father/child relationship. The themes described above represent factors which both affect and are affected by his relationship.
CHAPTER 5

Discussion of Findings

This final chapter includes my reflections on some of the major themes and sub-themes described in the previous chapter. Limitations of the present study are also outlined as well as suggested directions for future research. Finally, counselling implications are addressed including recent literature on this topic which suggests interventions for therapists dealing with couples who present issues associated with marital gender inequities. These ideas are then related to findings in the present study.

Reflections on Themes

Prioritizing Roles

This theme represents the core category, around which all other themes seem to revolve. The fathers who participated in this study described some form of an inner struggle and conflicting loyalties between their roles as breadwinners and their roles as fathers to their child(ren). For some of these men, a discrepancy was noted between their beliefs about their father role and their behaviors associated with these beliefs. All participants emphasized a commitment to their children, and to being involved fathers. However they often found they weren't able to spend the quantity of time they desired with their families. Most fathers reluctantly identified the breadwinner role as taking priority over fathering commitments. An indication of the powerful influence
associated with the gender role socialization process was revealed by this emphasis placed on the provider role regardless of family income status (dual income/single income). It seems that most of these men perceived this as their socially prescribed role in life. However an emphasis was placed upon striving to spend time with their families which resulted in a "balancing act" whereby time became a scarce and sacred commodity. It seems that the more strongly these fathers identified with their role as an involved father, which they prioritized over their breadwinner role, the more time they made available to their children, and the more likely they seemed to be to take on some responsibility for their care.

Daly (1996) examined the meaning of time for fathers and found that while the men who participated in his study expressed an awareness that they should spend time with their children, they identified a lack of time available for family in their daily schedules. Similar to the fathers in the present study they described inner feelings of conflict associated with their experience of time, specifically guilt associated with a perceived lack of time spent with their children. In most cases, the structural demands associated with work resulted in a perceived lack of control over successfully balancing work and family time. Daly (1996) comments, "The values embedded in this discourse suggest that work structures continue to dominate the way that men organize their lives resulting in the relegation of family time to a secondary or residual commitment." (p. 474).
It appears that if men continue to identify with the breadwinner role as their primary contribution to the family, they are likely to experience difficulty taking on responsibility for their parenting role. It has been suggested that men need to receive support in their attempts to rebel against societal values which place emphasis upon the male provider role (Daly, 1996).

**Constructing a Father Identity**

Constructing a father identity was related to how the men in this study developed the priorities associated with their father roles. Most fathers referred to an "ideal image" of the type of father which they aspired towards. This was often strongly related to a deliberate attempt to be unlike their own fathers in many ways. Specifically, they perceived a lack of involvement and emotional connection with their fathers which they wanted to avoid in their relationships with their own children. Their desire to be involved in the lives of their children reflects a response toward the cultural expectation that they are supposed to be available fathers. There was a sense that these men felt they "should" spend more time with their children, and guilt was expressed when they perceived they were not living up to their "ideal image" of being a good father. There was also a sense from some participants that what they were doing was not good enough and they had to try harder.

Daly (1996) comments:
Whereas the previous generation of fathers was perceived to be inattentive to matters of spending time with the children, this generation expresses a strong, family based temporal conscience that keeps them vigilant in their fathering commitment. The value of spending time with the children has not been inherited from their own fathers but, rather, has been embraced in response to a new set of cultural conditions (p. 473)

**Spousal sharing: Father Participation in Domestic Work**

Haas (1982) studied egalitarian couples (those who engaged in a deliberate attempt to institute complete sex-role equality within their marriages) in an attempt to discover the determinants of role-sharing behavior. Haas (1982) differentiates between a dual-career lifestyle and role sharing. The former is defined as the equal sharing by husband and wife of each of the traditionally segregated family roles including:

1. The breadwinner role. Both spouses are equally responsible for earning family income.
2. The domestic role. Both spouses are equally responsible for performing housekeeping chores.
3. The handyman role. Both spouses are equally responsible for performing traditionally masculine tasks such as yard work household repairs.
4. The kinship role. Both spouses are equally responsible for meeting kinship obligations such as buying gifts and writing letters.

5. The child care role. Both spouses are equally responsible for routine childcare tasks and for rearing and disciplining children.

6. The major/minor decision maker role. Both spouses have generally equal influence on the major decisions traditionally dominated by males and the minor decisions traditionally delegated to females.

Haas (1982) points out that specialization within any of these roles would be considered role sharing provided that gender is not the basis for this occurring and "the overall responsibility for the duties of each role is evenly shared" (p. 749).

While none of the participants in the present study claimed to be truly egalitarian according to the criteria outlined above, they did describe an attempt to share the domestic division of labour and childcare with their spouses. Gender role stereotypes were evident in that these men typically assumed the masculine roles of breadwinner and handyman while their spouses assumed primary responsibility for childcare. Housework was perceived as equally shared by most participants.

Prioritizing roles impacted upon the division of domestic labour between the participants in this study and their spouses. Prioritizing their role as a good provider involved spending time at work and making sacrifices associated with
time away from the family. This resulted in less time spent at home and therefore time available to participate in domestic work and child care. However, all fathers described intentions and aspirations toward an egalitarian type of role sharing with their spouses. The criteria for how much contribution was made toward domestic work and how evenly this was shared between couples seemed to be time available away from work. These fathers contributed where they could when they could regarding aspects of household chores and child care. For some of these men, domestic chores were shared with their partners. Fathers with more of a flexible work schedule were able to make more time available to their families and therefore were able to contribute more to domestic work.

Rasmussen, Hawkins and Schwab (1996) differentiate between the concepts of equity and equality in negotiating participation in domestic work and child care. On the one hand the term equality implies that household tasks are divided equally, in a quantitative manner. On the other hand, equity implies that while household tasks may appear to be divided unequally to an outsider, both spouses may be satisfied with the arrangement.

**Gender Differences**

The notion of “doing gender” suggests that gender is a routine, methodical, and recurring activity (West and Zimmerman, 1987). Coltrane (1989) suggests the routine practice of sharing child care can socialize parents
to construct an image of the father as a competent caregiver. According to his view, domestic labour provides an opportunity for expressing, confirming and even transforming the meaning of gender.

While the participants in this study viewed themselves as competent caregivers to their child(ren) it seems that a complex set of interactions between spouses continued to return both males and females to their socially prescribed gender roles. It may be that at a conscious level both men and women wish to share domestic labour and childcare however at an unconscious level they continue to preserve the status quo which assigns gender specific roles.

Zvonkovic, Greaves, Schmiege and Hall (1996) suggest that gender is constructed as married couples make decisions regarding work and family. According to the gender perspective people perceive their behavior and that of others as gender appropriate or inappropriate via their interactions with others. This perspective stems from symbolic interaction theory which views participants creating meaning from their own behaviors and the behaviors of others. Zvonkovic et al (1996) maintain that:

Gender is socially constructed and embedded in social contexts and processes through a system of boundaries that help to define what is appropriate for each gender, and through self-concepts, beliefs and expectations for behavior...Seen in this light, the ways that couples make work and family decisions and the outcomes of
those decisions have implications for how gender and marriages are constructed for individual couples and for the larger society. (p. 92)

In a qualitative analysis examining the marital construction of gender through work and family decisions, Zvonkovic et al (1996) found that among participants with preschool children, few couples even entertained the idea that the husband could assume responsibility for child care. This was attributed to the construction of gender in marriage. It was concluded that the outcome of decisions concerning the care of preschool children and of wives’ reducing opportunities for employment outside the home contributes to the construction of gender in marriage.

Similarly, Perkins and DeMeis (1996) refer to “doing gender” as they examine gender differences in household activity and sense of “domestic obligation” of young college-educated adults across familial stages. In an attempt to minimize traditional gender differences, participants chosen were graduates of a liberal arts institution with a strong feminist tradition and a significant gender component in its curriculum. Results indicate that the division of work and responsibility in the second shift appears to be related to gender and family life. Both single men and women performed equally in domestic activities which challenges the notion that gender differences in domestic labour reflect culturally learned behavior. Significant differences appeared only at
marriage and parenthood stages. It is suggested these differences may therefore reflect "doing gender". Perkins and DeMeis (1996) found parenthood seems to present typically different options and constraints for each gender. They point out, "As fathers, the young men clearly remain in the workforce full-time; taking on the role of full-time househusband is a rare choice or option". It is noted, however, that while most fathers reduce their contributions toward activities associated with the traditional female role, a few fathers who participated in their study reported quite high involvement in "second shift loads" which were actually comparable to those of many of the mothers which suggests the occasional occurrence of a more egalitarian type of marital relationship. Nevertheless, it was found that "the modal pattern of only a modest time commitment to the home remained the standard for men in each familial stage from singlehood to parenthood" (Perkins and DeMeis, 1996, p. 89). It is concluded that the results of this research do not support the idea that the second shift performed primarily by women disappears as young adults become parents. Perkins & DeMeis (1996) state:

In this sample of contemporary young adults who have been socialized in a context where the rhetoric is one of gender equality, feminist concern, and preparation for professional work roles for women as well as men, "doing gender" seems to appear in
relationships anyway when children are involved in the households. (p. 91)

The men in the present study seemed to aspire toward an egalitarian type of relationship where they shared child care with their spouses. They reported high levels of involvement in “second shift loads” similar to the father in the study by Perkins and DeMeis (1996). However, another similarity here involves the aspect of time commitment to the home.

**Gatekeeping**

The phenomenon of gatekeeping can be viewed as a form of “doing gender”. It has been suggested that performing domestic work can be emotionally significant to women. Even women who work full-time are sometimes reluctant to relinquish control over this traditionally female realm (Rasmussen, Hawkins and Schwab, 1996; Hochschild, 1989; Cowan & Cowan, 1987). Some researchers have suggested that gatekeeping may represent a means of protecting women's sense of self, and therefore male participation and competence in this area may threaten their sense of importance (Rasmussen et al, 1996).

Daly (1996) points out that women can be reluctant to relinquish their power as the primary caregiver to the children. One implication associated with this notion is the idea that men are expected to be “good mothers” instead of
good fathers in that they are expected to assume both the standards and expectations of female parenting.

In the present study, participants described gatekeeping behavior exhibited by their spouses regarding child care. Some reported incidents suggest that responsibility for child care and assuming primary responsibility for the children as perceived by these fathers, is perhaps associated with being a good mother. How strongly their spouses identified with this role seemed to influence the amount of control over child care that their husbands were permitted to assume. It may be that fathers who become "too involved" with their children somehow pose a threat to their spouses identity with the mothering role. This could represent a barrier to increased father involvement beyond a certain level. In the same way that many men strongly identify with the "good provider role" associated with being masculine, it may be that many women strongly identify with the "good mother" role associated with being feminine.

**Summary**

The findings in the present study support past research which suggests that while men may be increasing their level of involvement in domestic labour and child care, they continue to avoid taking responsibility for the primary care of their children. Specifically, tasks associated with the orchestration and daily management of family life remain within the domain of feminine work.

The research findings presented in this paper best support identity
theory regarding the process whereby fathers come to assume responsibility for their children and what this means to them. In many ways fatherhood can be viewed as an "emerging identity" which is continually changing. Commitment to a parental identity, salience associated with the father status and role, and the influence of significant others all impacted upon how these fathers prioritized their father identity and enacted the father role associated with this. Recognizing fathers' involvement with their child(ren) and commitment to different identities as both socially influenced as well as individualistic, assists in understanding this important aspect of father identity and the behavior associated with it.

Limitations and Future Research

Limitations associated with this study include a small sample size and limited demographic composition of sampling. Five participants were interviewed, and all of the fathers were from similar socio-economic backgrounds. The men who volunteered to participate in this study all viewed themselves as involved fathers in the lives of the children. However, potential participants who do not consider themselves to be involved fathers would not be as likely to volunteer to participate in this study.

The generalizability of findings when applying grounded theory methodology is not a primary focus. Rather, this method of research serves to uncover theoretical relationships, test theories and lead the way for further
investigation. The present study represents a single piece of the puzzle and one step toward a deeper understanding of how fathers come to assume responsibility for the care of their children. The preliminary theoretical model which evolved from this research is now subject to further testing and refinement.

Future research of this topic which could confirm and expand the proposed theoretical model would involve further sampling of fathers from various socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. The latter would be particularly insightful in providing comparisons of different socialization processes associated with various cultures. It would also be useful to pursue further qualitative inquiry into men who do not particularly view themselves as involved fathers in the care of their children. Future qualitative research using interviews with mothers and children would also contribute to this area of study.

**Counselling Implications**

Kogan (1996) examines culture and power in family therapy. He suggests a perspective on family therapy based on praxis which is "human activity and conduct informed by social critique and thus having a transformative potential on the individual and on society" (p. 25). A feminist praxis describes behaving in a way which recognizes power imbalances based on gender and how theory may inform, for example teaching, counselling, and raising children. A clinical praxis places an emphasis on how these inequities impact upon our daily lives and
relationships and contribute to the formation of presenting problems (Kogan, 1996). Therapy is thereby placed within larger social, political and economic contexts. "Where family therapy pioneers located the individual in the family context, feminist and critical theories locate the individual, the family, the therapist, and the field in the larger cultural context" (Kogan, 1996, p. 26 cited in Hare-Mustin, 1994)

Daly (1996) suggests three important issues for therapists to address when working with men who experience contradictions in their experience of family time between traditional expectations regarding their breadwinner role and present expectations regarding their parenting role. These include support for fathers at the individual level, political advocacy for changes in work culture, and changes at the family systems level.

Kogan (1996) notes that while cultural variables such as gender have a significant effect on our attitudes and behavior they tend to be trivialized or ignored. He refers to research which points out the apparent gender inequities associated with the institution of marriage in our culture which negatively impacts upon females. However, during counselling sessions therapists often ignore this inequity.

Kogan points out that social norms become "truths" as we interact in ways which reinforce and support these norms. He suggests an awareness of this
process and the impact it has upon the construction of family life forms the basis of a critical inquiry. Kogan (1996) states:

The most fundamental form of resistance is simply acknowledging the larger context. Relating client accounts and beliefs in therapy to social prescriptions “unmasks” power-relations in the client context based on gender...These social restraints or power arrangements are so pervasive as to seem invisible and form a shared sense of what is “natural”. Bringing the invisible to light undermines its “naturalness” and weakens the grip of social prescriptions and restraints. (p. 31)

Rabin, Tsai and Kohlenberg (1996) addressed gender patterns in behavioral marital therapy by targeting sex-role issues with a Functional Analytic Approach. They point out that the movement toward incorporating gender issues into therapy has been slow. While some marital therapists may directly discuss value based issues such as equality, power and sex-role conditioning others may hesitate or avoid these topics due to the absence of methods to deal with these issues. Rabin et al (1996) note that “Ironically, gender may be both the most salient and least directly addressed variable related to distress in marriage” (p. 2). A new form of behavior therapy called Functional Analytic Psychotherapy (FAP) is proposed which focuses on moment-by-moment interactions during the therapy session and highlights gender-based problems.
The clinical application of FAP theory includes a description of clinically relevant client behavior and the guidelines for therapeutic technique, for example, one clinically relevant behavior referred to is unequal sharing of household chores and parenting demands. It is noted that in the home men often fail to carry their fair share of domestic chores and child care activities. In therapy men often fail to assume responsibility for planning and organizing aspects such as arranging appointments, keeping track of homework assignments, arranging for alternate child care during the sessions etc. It is suggested gender be viewed as an interaction between spouses which results from each individual's socialization history. This interactional approach focuses on repeated behavior patterns which often apply to therapist-client interaction also. In this way the therapeutic relationship becomes a vehicle for change as it thereby becomes a training ground for gradual change in spousal interactions (Rabin et al, 1996).

Rabin et al (1996) conclude:

We are now at a crossroads with regard to gender and marital therapy. Changing sex-role norms and increased participation in the work place by women will increasingly make issues of power and gender more central to more couples' relationships. No doubt marital therapists will be searching for ways to address gender that can be effective in linking social change to personal change. (p. 22)
Kushnir, Malkinson and Kasan (1996) proposed a program designed to balance job and family demands by reducing work/home conflicts in employed couples. They note that an increased number of dual-income families is associated with difficulty balancing the demands of both work and family for spouses. Kushnir et al (1996) point out that past studies addressing men's health issues have focused on stress associated with the work role while downplaying the family role. More and more men are reporting stress related to balancing work and family life. Dual-income men aspiring toward an egalitarian lifestyle may experience high levels of stress due to structural inflexibility at work and a lack of social support in a role that contradicts societal norms (Kushnir et al, 1996).

Kushnir et al (1996) comment on the lack of existing interventions for reducing the work/home conflict for men and women. It is noted that family and marital therapy rarely directly addresses the implications of conflict experienced by dual-income spouses. Likewise, the literature on stress does not suggest interventions to deal with this issue. While societal values and organizational procedures are identified as longer-term targets for change, Kushnir et al (1996) point out the need for short-term changes in the form of interventions at the family level to address this issue.

A marital enhancement intervention is described which is currently being developed as a preventative approach for stress associated with work/home
conflicts. This program combines marital enrichment and training principles with stress management techniques in an attempt to reinforce shared coping resources. Four interpersonal factors which underly conflict and are targets for intervention include unrealistic expectations based on irrational beliefs, social undermining, shared decision control and social support (Kushnir et al, 1996).

In conclusion, Kushnir et al (1996) refer to an "implicit social contract" (OECD, 1991) which assigns mothers the responsibility of most family responsibilities regardless of their income status. They state:

Cultural changes may eventually alter this imbalance, but such changes evolve slowly and may not apply evenly to all segments of society. Western cultures may, one day, achieve a realization and translate into practical terms, that family roles are equally important to all employees with family responsibilities, regardless of gender. This would, it is hoped, result in an equitable sharing of family care between partners (p. 157)

Rasmussen, Hawkins and Schwab (1996) address issues for therapists in increasing husbands' involvement in domestic labour. It is noted that the division of domestic labour including child care is a core conflict experienced by couples experiencing the transition to parenthood. Moreover Ramussen et al refer to work by Carter and McGoldrick (1989) when they state "...it is impossible to reach successful outcomes with these couples without dealing with core
issues of gender role functioning. Current research suggests that this area may be critically important for marital satisfaction and stability (Rasmussen et al, 1996). However, while family science literature addresses inequalities in the domestic division of labour, this issue is lacking in the family therapy literature, particularly regarding suggested interventions (Rasmussen et al, 1996).

Rasmussen et al (1996) refer to a gender identity associated with housework which reveals the personal meanings regarding gender and gender roles which both spouses hold for a variety of life issues. They point out that some men are uncomfortable with the idea of performing domestic tasks involved in housework and childcare. It is suggested that this attitude is associated with underlying beliefs about gender roles which threatens their perception of masculinity (Rasmussen et al, 1996).

Rasmussen et al (1996) assert that certain therapeutic techniques should be used with male clients as they are more applicable to the male experience. For example, our culture defines the expression of emotions such as crying as a feminine trait. Since men are socialized to limit their display of emotions it is suggested that they may fear these emotions to some extent. Rasmussen et al (1996) suggest two approaches which access men's emotional experiences. The family of origin approach is derived from Bowen theory (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). This approach is deemed to be “particularly helpful in accessing private emotional attitudes and beliefs pertaining to gender and gender roles which
have been transmitted and internalized generation upon generation, often without conscious awareness" (Rasmussen et al, 1996, p 212).

Similarly, Daly (1996) emphasizes the importance of discourse when counselling men. He suggests that therapists speak to fathers in "the language of time" which he found to be strongly associated with how men talk about struggles encountered regarding family relationships. He suggests that "Talking to men about families in terms of time may be a way of meeting them in their comfort zone and in a language that is relevant and important to them" (p. 474).

Rasmussen et al (1996) also identify the emotional significance associated with domestic labour for some women. This can result in gatekeeping behavior where women resist or manage their spouse’s participation in the home. When gatekeeping behavior arises in therapy Rasmussen et al (1996) advocate exploring potential emotional meanings associated with control of the domestic area for women.

Daly (1996) also refers to gatekeeping activity associated with the apparently slow rate of change regarding men’s participation in family work. He points out the role therapists can play in supporting a negotiation between spouses as they attempt to "reshape the temporal jurisdictions within their families". This involves women addressing feelings of displacement or guilt about not being the primary caregiver. For men this means supporting them in
their paternal roles as involved fathers rather than "substitute mothers". (Daly, 1996).

A second approach to therapy addressing men's participation in domestic work is the Structured Initial Interview (SII) (Hiebert, Gillespie, & Stahmann, 1993). The clinician graphs the course of the spousal relationship from the initial meeting to the present, tracing the evolution of household participation patterns. This provides a broad developmental overview and allows clients to see how the initial division of labour was negotiated and how it progressed or deteriorated over time (Rasmussen et al, 1996).

One aspect of domestic labour which is often ignored is "managerial responsibility" associated with the planning and organizing of tasks. Past research has indicated that men do not often assume managerial responsibility for domestic tasks and that most couples do not identify a distinction between planning and organizing and the actual performance of a task. Therefore, Rasmussen et al (1996) suggest that the clinician explicitly delineate managerial responsibility during a session, along with the negotiation of task performance.

In addressing the issue of standards, Rasmussen et al (1996) point out that tasks which one spouse may consider trivial may be extremely important to the other, particularly regarding child care tasks. They have found that while these standards may appear trivial, associated disagreements may become very important in therapy if they are associated with emotionally significant issues.
Rasmussen et al (1996) have also found that these are often connected to family of origin experiences.

Rasmussen et al (1996) emphasize a focus on the rewards associated with increased participation in domestic labour rather than adhering to a deficit model of change which emphasizes what men are doing wrong. It is suggested that therapists refer to empirical and anecdotal evidence of marital satisfaction and stability experienced by men as they increase involvement in caring for and nurturing their families. Performing domestic labour including childcare can be reframed as a valuable opportunity for husbands and fathers to connect at a more intimate level with both their spouses and their children (Rasmussen et al, 1996).

Similarly Daly (1996) points out that fathers are committed to spending more time with their children. He suggests therapists and family life educators must recognize and provide support for the progress that has been made by men as they continue to move in this direction.

The results of the present study emphasize the idea that support is needed for men as they rebel against societal values which emphasize the provider role. These findings also highlight the important role counsellors play in acknowledging the larger context, linking social change to personal change, and addressing the issue of gender inequities associated with marriage in our
culture. This is particularly important given the results of recent research which emphasize this as a critically important area for marital satisfaction and stability.

Several important issues addressed and suggestions made in the literature would be relevant and helpful for the fathers who participated in the present study. Specifically, the Functional Analytic Approach addresses issues of equality and sex role conditioning and places an emphasis upon men taking responsibility for planning and organizing behavior in the home by assigning them managerial responsibility. This would seem to be a particularly useful approach for the fathers in the present study as it focuses on breaking old patterns of behavior and provides men with a training ground for gradual change in spousal interactions.

Recent research also refers to personal meanings regarding gender and gender roles which are held by both men and women and how perceptions of masculinity can be threatened by underlying beliefs regarding gender roles. Certain techniques which are more applicable to the male experience are suggested which may be relevant to the fathers in the present study. The Family of Origin Approach would be particularly useful for these men given the significance of these early life experiences for many of them and the impact these have had on their parenting. As well, a Structured Initial Interview would be helpful in providing a developmental overview which maps out how the initial division of labour progressed throughout marriage to parenthood. This
technique could be particularly powerful in highlighting how the allocation of responsibility for childcare evolved:

Another useful approach would involve speaking in the language of time with the men in this study. This concept appears to be relevant and important to them given the frequent reference made to a lack of time to spend with family throughout the interviews. It would be helpful for these fathers and their spouses to address the issue of gatekeeping and to explore potential emotional meanings associated with domestic work.

In conclusion, Rasmussen et al (1996) state:

If indeed the personal is political, then the trivial may certainly be of great importance within extremely close relationships. Given the amount of research indicating the importance of fathers’ participation in the home, we owe it to client couples to take these issues seriously and consider them a critical component of the therapeutic process. (p. 222)

**Conclusion**

It is hoped that the findings from the present study have contributed toward a better understanding of the process whereby men come to assume responsibility for their children and what this means to them. Listening to the participants tell their stories about their experiences of fatherhood and then attempting to understand their perceptions of their father role regarding
responsibility, has provided me with more insight into what fathering means to these men.

I have come to realize that fatherhood is a very complex identity which seems to involve many interacting variables, including the powerful influence of society and gender role prescriptions. Awareness of this at both a personal and societal level will hopefully result in gradual changes regarding fathers assuming responsibility for their children. The men who contributed to this study described a deep commitment to their fathering role and expressed a genuine desire to rebel against many aspects of traditionally gendered behavior and to become involved, nurturing fathers to their child(ren). Their stories which reveal such enthusiastic attitudes about fathering offer hope that movement is taking place in the direction of positive change regarding gender roles and behavior associated with child care.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

Advertisement

ATTN: FATHERS OF PRESCHOOLERS

I am looking for volunteers to participate in a study which looks at the experience of fatherhood. It is hoped that a better understanding of how father's perceive their role regarding involvement and responsibility for the care of their young child(ren) will be gained by exploring these issues from a male perspective.

Potential benefits associated with participation in this study include gaining new insights into your role as a father, as well as possible positive benefits to marriage and family life. Risks include the possibility of guilty feelings regarding aspects of your fathering role.

If you are interested in participating in this study or would like more information please contact Helen at 220-3174.
APPENDIX B

Letter of Initial Contact

Dear (Participant's name):

I am a student in the Master of Science Program in the Department of Educational Psychology at The University of Calgary conducting research under the supervision of Dr. V. Lalande, regarding the experience of fatherhood. The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the father's role regarding responsibility for childrearing from his individual perspective. It is hoped that this research will contribute to a better understanding of how men perceive their participation in the care of their child(ren).

If you choose to participate, two audiotaped interviews and research notes will be used to provide a detailed description of your experience of fathering. The total time requirement will be approximately two to four hours. These tapes will then be transcribed by the researcher, and the information will be kept in strict confidence.

Any questions or concerns that you may have regarding your involvement will be answered to ensure an accurate understanding of the procedures. Your have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty, and the researcher also has the right to terminate your involvement at any time.

Your name will be changed for the research records which ensures confidentiality of your identity. However, should any form of child abuse be revealed during an interview, I would be legally required to report this to the appropriate authorities.

You will have the opportunity to read my interpretive accounts of your interviews and you to ensure that I have accurately interpreted the meaning of what was said. The interview tapes will be erased and transcripts shredded upon completion of the study. You will receive a copy of the completed research.

Potential benefits associated with participation in this study include acquiring new insights or perspectives regarding your role in caring for your children, as well as benefits to your marriage and family life. A potential risk
includes the possibility of experiencing guilty feelings at which time arrangements for the provision of counselling will be made if necessary.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 220-3174, my supervisor, Dr. Vivian Lalande at 220-5893, Chair, Faculty of Education Joint Research Ethics Committee at 220-5626, or the Office of the Vice-President (Research) at 220-3381. Two copies of the consent form are provided. Please return one signed copy to me and retain the other copy for your records.

I will be contacting you by telephone next week to inquire about your willingness to participate in this research project. Thank you.

Helen Daymond
Masters in Counselling Student,
University of Calgary, Alberta.
APPENDIX C

Consent Form

RESEARCH PROJECT:

"The Experience of Fathering: Men's Perspectives on Their Parenting Role"

I hereby agree to participate in the research investigation conducted by Helen L. Daymond, Master of Science student in the Educational Psychology Program at the University of Calgary, under the supervision of Dr. V. Lalande, concerning the experience of fathering. It is hoped that this research will contribute toward a better understanding of how men perceive their fathering role, specifically regarding responsibility for the care of their child(ren).

I understand that audiotaped interviews and written notes will be used to develop a detailed description of my fathering experiences. I understand that I may be interviewed twice and that the total time requirement will be approximately two to four hours. I also understand the potential risks involved in my participation in this study such as experiencing guilty feelings, at which time arrangements for the provision of counselling will be made if necessary.

I further understand that if any child abuse is mentioned it will be reported.

I understand that any questions that I might have regarding the research procedures will be answered by the researcher to ensure an accurate understanding of my involvement in this study. I also understand my right to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty, as well as the researcher's right to terminate my participation at any time.

I understand that confidentiality of my identity will be ensured and I will choose a pseudonym that will be used in transcripts and written records. I will also have the opportunity to clarify or delete any information recorded in the transcripts. The interview tapes will be erased and transcripts shredded upon completion of the study.
I understand that if I have any questions I can contact the researcher at 220-3174, my supervisor at 220-5893, Chair, Faculty of Education Joint Research Ethics Committee at 220-5626, or the Office of the Vice-President (Research) at 220-3381.

I have received a copy of this consent form.

Date ____________

Participant's signature ________________________

Researcher's signature ________________________
APPENDIX D
SAMPLE OF TRANSCRIPT

[negative experience] D I nearly killed him once putting vitamins in by dropper so I don’t do that anymore.

H You nearly killed him? How did that happen?

[negative experience] D I just got it in his lungs and so he had a real awful day and I was really choking on it and it was really scary. But I got lazy again and instead of dropping it in slowly, he was looking at me and I just fired it in at the same time he decided to whale with a big scream and so he sucked it into his lungs.

H That must have been very scary for you. Were you by yourself when that happened?

[spouse as expert] D No, the whole family was around and we were in Canmore and I wanted to take him to the hospital right away but [my wife] was fine with it. So I don’t do that anymore, but when he was first born we took shifts, two hour shifts in the night and I was there cleaning the umbilical cord.

H All of these things you have been talking about the bottle the umbilical cord, how did you learn them?

[preparation] D Well I would say all at prenatal classes. That’s why I actually went to the prenatal classes because [my wife] knows all about that stuff because of her background an
I didn't know any of it so prenatal classes helped big time. Things I knew better like wrapping him in a blanket. I had that down pat so I was the official wrapper you know, and she could never do it as tightly so he would bring me the blanket and say wrap him. I'm the one that pulled the umbilical cord off. I learned it all from prenatal class. Bottle wise, he wouldn't take it from me, he would take it from her. She said he likes rocking and he doesn't like jammed in his mouth, so I learned it from her basically.

H When you think back to when [your son] was a newborn compared with now, do you see yourself as gaining confidence in your abilities as a father?

D Well, at the beginning, as long as [my wife] was there I was fully confident because if he really went nuts then the food was there, but when she would go away to whatever and I was asked to bottle feed him I wasn't confident at all. I didn't have that. But now I'm totally confident. I'm not nervous about Tuesdays. I know I can take care of him. He takes the bottle and so there isn't anything that I don't know that's required to make sure that his day goes well.
APPENDIX E

SAMPLE OF SUBSTANTIVE CODES

Acquiring Confidence in Fathering

Denzil

nearly killed him once putting vitamins in by dropper, don't do that anymore, wasn't confident at all, didn't have that, learned it from her basically, as long as she was there, fully confident, she would go away not confident at all, do our own thing, totally confident now, know I can take care of him, nothing I don't know that's required to make sure his day goes well, not nervous about Tuesdays

Amie

real nervous, never had much to do with babies, first time she went out, absolutely terrifying, in an absolute panic, didn't know what the heck I was going to do, taking care of her on week nights, some time on the weekend, by trial and error, figured it out pretty quick, either that or screaming baby on your hands, next time it was easier, got to the point where it really became comfortable, she pushed me into it, I did not want to do it, the responsibility I found a little scary at first, she cried for a while, it worked out fine, we both survived

Ralph

left alone, I figured he's gonna be really cranky, turned out he was perfect, kinda scared, I was thinking is he gonna do something here?, kinda panicked, knew what I was doing already, used to hold him fairly timid, feel a lot more mature than, more confident

Maurice

feel somebody should be coming soon and picking this child up, don't feel like I'm in control, if something had gone really wrong, wouldn't have been very confident in my ability to deal with it, not comfortable as a parent, did a stupid thing, confidence definitely, handling injuries, jealousy between the two, don't have a problem with that at all, very confident in my fathering skills
Marvin

I was able to be with him, anxiety, walking around worrying, some concerns, I did have those fears, I sort of felt a little bit more comfortable with him at first than [she] did, don't remember anything of particular significance, wasn't something that stressed me out, familiar, didn't intimidate me at all, holding the baby for the first day was easy, not dealing with this strange thing, I felt very comfortable.
### APPENDIX F

**DISTRIBUTION OF THEORETICAL CODES**

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