

**CRITICAL FACTORS INFLUENCING PATERNAL INVOLVEMENT:  
FATHERS' EXPERIENCES OF NEGOTIATING ROLE RESPONSIBILITIES**

by

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### **Abstract**

This qualitative study uses the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) to explore incidents fathers report to be helpful or hindering to their parental engagement. CIT was chosen as the primary methodology so as to allow fathers themselves to be the voice behind what they deem important factors in fostering the father/child relationship. Eight fathers were interviewed for this study. All together 206 incidents were pulled from the interviews. Of the 206, 132 incidents were identified by participants as helpful (HE) in promoting efficacy in their role as fathers. Forty seven incidents were identified as hindering (HI) and another 27 as wish list (WL) items. These 206 incidents were further broken into 10 helping, six hindering, and four wish list categories. Participants also provided a list of 29 recommendations for paternal engagement. All HE, HI, and WL incidents were assigned to one of the following categories, some of which were dichotomized by HE/HI poles: (a) positive and negative role models, (b) Mother/Father relationship (d) Father's Religion/Spirituality (e) Responsibility (f) Attachment (g) Personal Decision (h) Characteristics of Children (I) Reflective parenting (j) Societal Influence (k) Father's Characteristics, and (l) Extended Family Influence. Research findings indicate that fathers identify major themes of responsibility, engagement, and father/mother dyad as important factors in determining their involvement with their child. However, in as much as these were noted as important factors within the father/child relationship, fathers consistently reported them to be the platform from which one should understand the larger context of paternal involvement. The study further highlights the interconnectivity of these and other identified categories and sheds light on the challenges that are inherent to dads as they navigate the myriad roles they find themselves in.

## Table of Contents

<b>LIST OF TABLES .....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES .....</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>Dedication .....</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Rationale .....</b>	<b>3</b>
Research Question .....	5
<b>Key Concepts .....</b>	<b>5</b>
Paternal Involvement. ....	5
Responsibility. ....	6
Attachment. ....	6
<b>Chapter 2: Literature Review.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Father, Fatherhood, and Fathering .....</b>	<b>8</b>
Influences of Fatherhood on Fathering. ....	9
Primacy of Motherhood Approach.....	13
Fathering Roles. ....	16
<b>Attachment Theory, Ecological Theory, and Father Involvement.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Narrative and Fathering.....</b>	<b>23</b>
Contemporary Roles of Fatherhood. ....	25
<b>Focus and Rationale for This Study .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Chapter 3: Method.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Methods of Inquiry .....</b>	<b>28</b>
The Critical Incident Technique.....	28
Critical Incident Technique and Paternal Involvement. ....	29
Rationale for Enhanced Critical Incident Approach. ....	29
<b>Recruitment Strategy.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Participants.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Materials and Procedure .....</b>	<b>33</b>
Paternal Involvement Semi-structured Interview Protocol (PISIP). ....	33
Contextual Component. ....	33
Critical Incident Component. ....	34
Recommendation. ....	34
<b>Procedure .....</b>	<b>35</b>
Data Analysis. ....	36
Reliability.....	37
Validity. ....	39
<b>Ethical Considerations.....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Chapter 4: Results .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Summary of Categories .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Helping Categories.....</b>	<b>45</b>

Positive and Negative Role Models (PNRM) .....	46
Mother/Father Relationship (MFR) .....	48
Responsibility .....	50
Attachment .....	51
Father's Religion/Spirituality (FRS) .....	53
Characteristic of Children (CoC) .....	55
Personal Decision (PD) .....	56
Reflective Parenting (RP) .....	58
Extended Family Influence (EFI) .....	59
Societal Influence (SI) .....	59
<b>Hindering Categories .....</b>	<b>61</b>
Responsibility (R-hin) .....	61
Father Characteristics (FC-hin) .....	63
Mother/Father Relationship (MFR-hin) .....	65
Characteristics of Children (CoC-hin) .....	66
Attachment (A-hin) .....	68
Fathers Religion/Spirituality (FRS-hin) .....	69
<b>Wish List Items .....</b>	<b>70</b>
Responsibility .....	71
Father Characteristic (FC-wl) .....	72
Extended Family Influence (EFI-wl) .....	74
Father Religion/Spirituality (FRS-wl) .....	74
<b>Recommendations .....</b>	<b>75</b>
Attachment (A-r) .....	77
Father Characteristics (FC-r) .....	78
Additional Recommendations .....	80
<b>Summary of Recommendations .....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Summary of Results .....</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>Chapter 5 Discussion .....</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>Summary of Research Problem .....</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>Key Findings .....</b>	<b>84</b>
Responsibility and Commitment .....	85
Attachment .....	89
Mother-Father Dyadic Differences (HE/HIN) .....	92
Fatherhood Harmony / Ecological System .....	94
Positive and Negative Role Models (PNRM) .....	95
Extended Family Influence .....	96
Societal Influence .....	97
Ecology and Harmony .....	98
<b>Strengths and Limitations .....</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>Clinical and Social Programming Implications .....</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Theoretical implications .....</b>	<b>103</b>
<b>Future Research .....</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>Conclusions .....</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>Appendix A .....</b>	<b>114</b>

Participant Recruitment Poster .....	114
Appendix B .....	115
Participant Consent Form.....	115
Appendix C .....	117
Counseling Contact Information .....	117
Appendix D .....	118
CIT Interview Guide: Paternal Involvement Semi-structured Interview Protocol .....	118
Appendix E:.....	122
Demographic Components .....	123
Appendix F .....	124
Table for Tracking the Emergence of New Categories.....	124
Appendix G.....	125
Telephone Recruiting Script (follow-up to letter) .....	125
Appendix H.....	126
Confidentiality for Transcriptionist .....	126
Appendix I .....	127
Debriefing Phone Call Script .....	127
Appendix J .....	128
Recruitment E-mail.....	128
Appendix K.....	129
Participants info letter .....	129

**LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1. Participants' Characteristic.....	33
Table 2. Categories, Operational markers for categories, and subcategories.....	43
Table 3. Helping Categories.....	45
Table 4. Hindering Categories .....	61
Table 5. Wish List Categories .....	70
Table 6. Recommendations .....	76

**LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1. An Ecological Model of Fathering .....	95
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## Dedication

Dedicated to my mother-in-law.

Sherry Yolanda Kingma

July 1954 – December 2009.

A Woman of Noble Character.

*She speaks with wisdom,  
and faithful instruction is on her tongue.  
She watches over the affairs of her household  
and does not eat the bread of idleness.  
Her children arise and call her blessed;  
her husband also, and he praises her:  
“Many women do noble things,  
but you surpass them all.”  
Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting;  
but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.  
Honor her for all that her hands have done,  
and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.*

Proverbs 31: 26-31 (NIV)

## Chapter 1: Introduction

The fatherhood movement is one that has gained considerable momentum over the last two decades. At the heart of the movement is concern for the impact of missing fathers on children and society. The opposing side of the spectrum however focuses on the presence of fathers and the outcome of their involvement on the developing child. For many researchers the latter of these two positions invites a need for enhanced understanding of the nuances of paternal involvement. While many researchers have customarily used quantitative measures to expand on the knowledge of the father/child relationship, few have used the stories of fathers themselves to speak to their personal experience of involvement. This *experience-rich* process underscores the need to have a greater body of literature that provides a forum for fathers to share their experience of involvement and the factors at work in shaping their level of engagement with their child.

From this standpoint, it is clear that the poignancy of a father's expressed story is key to revealing the essence of paternal involvement. Further, within these stories one encounters an inherent truth of interconnectivity and multiplicity of life roles that often forms the tapestry of paternal involvement. It is this inherent position that has promoted the evolution of paternal involvement literature to include focus on a dad's myriad life roles and the mediating effects of these roles on the father/child relationship. The following excerpt provides a prime example of a father's account of his relationship with his children and multiple roles which he navigates daily.

Joy. I have so much it. I have so much and I draw it out of so many things. I see it in so many places. Some see the mundane: get home from work, help with the little ones, cleanup, get ready to go somewhere and on and on it goes. I thank

God for a way to support my family. After a long day's work, I am thankful for how much I love my job and the challenges of running a business. I am thankful for a wife who has a hot dinner waiting for me. I am thankful for the privilege of entering my home, my castle, and having our eldest son run to me with perfect trust that I will fling him up into the air, catch him, hold him and tell him I love him. Fetch something from the freezer for my wife or send her on her way with some friends to get out of the house for a change. It gives me pleasure just to change a diaper and know that I can do that to make a difference, clean a runny nose or wash dirty hands. Help my Father with something he is working on. It is not just another thing I need to do to get through the day, but an opportunity -a joy- to love and spend time shouting my joy for the people so dear to me. (E. Pauls, personal communication, July 12, 2012)

Horn (1999) notes, the problem of fatherlessness in America is unparalleled and carries grave consequences for children and civil society. From this platform he suggests three major themes for consideration when thinking through the importance of fatherhood: (a) responsibility and commitment being the hallmark of masculinity, (b) important differences between fathers and mothers, and (c) father-child bond being essential for child development (p. 8). Similarly, Lamb, Pleck, Charnov and Levine (1987) propose three major areas for consideration when assessing fatherhood and fathering practice: (a) availability to child, (b) responsibility to care for and protect the child, and (c) interaction, direct parent-child contact (i.e. caretaking and other shared activities) (p.125).

Within the assumptions of Horn (1999) and Lamb et al. (1987) are several questions, some of which include: Are these adequate definitions of paternal involvement? How should paternal involvement be measured, what are the factors that influence involvement? For these reasons some researchers (Mackey, 2001; Pleck, 2007) have focused their efforts on studying the father-child attachment. Others (Hanson & Bozett, 1986; LaRossa, Jaret, Gadgil, & Wynn, 2000) have examined the changing nature of fatherhood, while Phares (1993) and Coley (2001) have assessed the impact of missing fathers on children and society; yet others (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; LaRossa, 2004) examined gender difference and its impact on parenting

Closer scrutiny of the literature on fatherhood reveals an emphasis on the benefits and detriments of father-presence and father-absence respectively. Though there is an increased interest in paternal involvement, the literature provides little insight into why some fathers become more involved than others. Given this limitation, the present study provides an analysis of the factors influencing fathering practices and offers reasons for and barriers to paternal involvement. Further, it adds to a body of literature that is keen on shedding light on the implications of fathering practices on childhood development and in general, the influence of paternal involvement practices on society.

### **Rationale**

This study is important for a number of reasons. First, there is a need for a body of literature that will bridge the gap between fatherhood and fathering practices. More specifically, how do fathers view the culture of fatherhood and what significant events do fathers identify as being important for shaping their roles as fathers. Conversely, what factors limit their ability to be involved in their child's life?

Second, literature on father-involvement is often filtered through the lens of work versus family commitments. While these constructs possess face validity, more contemporary researchers have raised questions regarding the completeness of these variables in assessing paternal involvement. For example, Goodsell, Barrus, Meldrum, and Vargo (2010) purport that traditional views on fathering are somewhat limiting because they do not take into consideration other important socio-cultural factors (i.e. fathers as leaders, and good neighbors) that are not represented by simply assessing the tension between family and work roles.

The third and most important reason for conducting this study is to allow fathers to be the authority behind their own experiences that have influenced their level and quality of interaction with their child(ren). What are the lived experiences within the culture of fatherhood? And what can we learn from asking fathers to directly share about the processes that have informed their views on and practices of fathering? This relational approach to studying the father-child bond is one that will provide insight into processes that are significantly under explored within mainstream literature. For this reason it is important to apply a qualitative approach to this study which is best suited for uncovering the processes at work behind the complex matrices of relationships within which the father-child interaction is embedded. Additionally, it is expected that this approach will generate multiple relevant categories that will provide a solid foundation for developing further research aimed at understanding the role of fathers and the process that shape their degree of involvement with their child.

A review of the literature on fatherhood reveals a primarily quantitative approach to understanding the fatherhood culture and practices resulting from expectations within

the culture. Additionally, most of what is known about paternal involvement was gleaned from studying the culture of fatherhood with minimal emphasis on asking fathers about important factors that have shaped their perception of fathering. Due to the limited number of qualitative research studies on fatherhood and given the relevance of contextual factors (i.e. societal, familial, historical, and contemporary influences), it is important to examine how the interplay of these factors help or hinder paternal engagement. For this reason The Enhanced Critical Incident technique (ECIT) was chosen for this research study. It is expected that a qualitative assessment of the subject will yield much needed information on processes that work to promote or stunt father-child involvement.

**Research Question.** A major tenet of this research is the idea that fathers possess discrete knowledge and experience of events that affect their parental engagement. This research therefore explores fathers' experiences of these events through self-reflection and self-reports. Given this position this research seeks to answer the question: what do fathers report as incidents/events that affect paternal engagement; additionally how do these incidents help or hinder paternal involvement?

### **Key Concepts**

**Paternal Involvement.** For the purposes of his research study paternal involvement refers to a father's capacity to engage/interact with his children. Further, father-child interaction is influenced by myriad roles within which fathers navigate daily. For this reason, several terms are used within this text to capture the essence of paternal involvement and how it is affected by role connectivity. The terms include: "degree of involvement", "shaping paternal involvement", "promoting or stunting involvement",

“helping or hindering involvement”. These terms further highlight the importance of paternal involvement while underscoring the notion that father involvement is a core aspect of a father’s capacity to effectively parent his child(ren).

**Responsibility.** The notion of responsibility is a one that is nuanced throughout this manuscript. As such it is important to distinguish between *responsibility* as it is used within the respective positions of Horn (1999), Lamb et al. (1987), and that of the fathers’ voices within the study. For Michael Lamb, the term responsible fathering connotes a father caring for his child. It is fulfilling roles such as changing diapers, giving allowances, taking the child to the doctor, or in general meeting the needs of that child.

Horn’s (1999) notion of responsibility is rooted in the concept that children need the love, support, and nurturance of a father who is legally and morally responsible. This notion of responsibility carries a sense of commitment to the role of fathering with fathers being held accountable to parental duties (i.e. caring of the needs of children, being present/available, financial responsibility, etc.) through their own internal moral processes and that of the legal system.

Responsibility, as it is used within this study to represent participants’ voices is rooted in the notion of “an intrinsic pull towards duty”. For these fathers, responsibility does not only mean caring for the immediate needs of their child (i.e. playing with or emotionally supporting their child) however it also means engaging in other duties (i.e. taking a parenting course, providing financially for family, or spiritually leading their family).

**Attachment.** The word *attachment* is used throughout this study to highlight participants’ expressed connection with their child(ren). Attachment is also used in



sections of this manuscript to reflect the tenets of John Bowlby's (1969) Attachment theory. Though there are correlates between both positions one should not be mistaken for the other. As such, readers should bear in mind that the word attachment primarily referenced in the Results and Discussion sections of this manuscript is used to denote the father-child affiliative bonds and is not necessarily a reflection of the underpinnings of attachment theory.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

Research on fatherhood has evolved with research foci shifting from fathers being “forgotten contributors of child development” (Lamb, 1975) to positive paternal involvement and its impact on child development and adjustments (Day, Lewis, O’Brien, & Lamb, 2005). Researchers like LaRossa (1997) have postulated that there are significant events that have caused a shift in fathering practices. He attributed this shift to industrialization, feminism, and economic/cultural factors. Within this changing framework there is, however, a constant in that fathers’ perceptions of their roles have steadily evolved with time. These hypotheses highlight the point that critical incidents, whether societal or within one’s immediate family, have catalyzed how fathers perceive their functioning within the family and society. The assumptions of Horn (1999) and Lamb et al. (1987) offer a backdrop for this review, which provides an analysis of the evolution of fatherhood and offers a rationale for a critical incident qualitative approach in assessing fathers’ perceptions (norms, values, and beliefs) of moments that have helped or hindered their parental behavior (fathering).

### **Father, Fatherhood, and Fathering**

Rohner and Veniziano (2001) state that fatherhood, which is culturally constructed, affects behaviors of individuals who share assumptions and beliefs about the culture. Understanding the nuances of the culture therefore requires an appreciation for the processes (i.e. concepts of masculinity and femininity) that have defined and shaped the culture.

Day et al. (2005) suggest that at the most basic level the term father implies a biological connection that is rooted in relationship. Within this definition is the notion

that a father's way of relating to his child is essentially a product of his relational matrix. Building on the theme of relationship, Easterbrooks, Barrett, Brady, and Davis (2007) reflect a similar idea in their work, *Complexities in Research on Fathering*, in which they argue that there is difficulty in understanding the determinants of fathering styles. They suggest a proper understanding of the fatherhood culture and its practices should include an individual's personality, family of origin, relationship to the child's mother, family structures, child factors, and socio-cultural influences. Thus, for Easterbrooks et al. fathering is a product of multiple relationships and contexts, and it is essential for researchers to understand the dynamics that come to bear on the individual's perception of fatherhood.

Day et al. (2005) explain that researchers incorrectly use the terms fatherhood and fathering interchangeably. As expressed earlier, fatherhood is culturally constructed and therefore refers to a set of legal, cultural, and social norms that are used to govern acceptable behaviors for fathers. Fathering, on the other hand, is more concerned with specific behaviors that are observed within the father-child interaction. These include spending time with the child, or simply performing activities to promote healthy parent-child relationship. Fatherhood by definition is therefore aspects of fathering (i.e. spending time with child, performing, conducting legal duties) that reflect socio-cultural and community values which stipulate the types of behaviors that are acceptable from responsible fathers who are keen on being part of their child's life (Day et al., 2005).

**Influences of Fatherhood on Fathering.** A review of the literature that chronicles the fatherhood movement at the start of the twentieth century reveals that there have indeed been significant changes in cultural expectations of fathers within North

American society (LaRossa, 1997). This transition is characterized by a fluctuation between instrumental (i.e. fathers as breadwinners, or disciplinarian) and expressive roles (i.e. fathers as caregivers). In as much as there is evidence to support these changes, one must also understand the force behind these differences. Unfortunately, in attempting to gain a deeper understanding of the subject matter, the line between fatherhood culture and practices are often blurred.

For this reason, LaRossa (1997) states that it is important to make the distinction between culture and conduct, because it invites an appreciation of the relationship between thought and deed. He argues that researchers sometimes assume incorrectly that there is harmony between culture (fatherhood) and conduct (fathering practices). This misconception unfortunately flaunts the idea that change in culture is undoubtedly reflected in cultural practices. LaRossa, however, proposes that it is important to understand that one may change without affecting the other, as was the case during the Great Depression of the 1930's. During this period it was noted there was a significant shift within the fatherhood culture where fathers were encouraged to spend more time with their children. Evidence from a variety of sources however point to a decline in father-child relation during this period. LaRossa attributes this to societal factors within the depression period that placed external demands on men. LaRossa therefore cautions about the importance of understanding the interplay of socio-cultural realities in our attempt to explain family relations.

Other major events (i.e. women's liberation, industrialization period) have led to a questioning of traditional parental roles (Hanson & Bozett, 1986). Furthermore, these social revolutionary movements have profoundly impacted and redefined ways of

functioning within the American society. Atkinson and Blackwelder (1993) explain that one of the most significant changes within the twenty first century was perhaps women entering the paid labor force. This cultural shift carried with it a number of implications, with the two most obvious being women spending less time mothering, and the expectation for fathers to become more involved with nurturing roles (Atkinson & Blackwelder, 1993).

During the early 20th century, fathers were considered primary breadwinners for their families. Hanson and Bozett (1986) state that, during this period, fathers were seen as patriarchs, their authority went unquestioned, and they were deferred to as the principal disciplinarian within the family. As the *instrumental* parent, men had a responsibility to teach their children about the outside world, albeit from a position of firmness and authority. Women on the other hand, functioned in *expressive* roles. As nurturers, their primary responsibility was to care for and be affectionate towards their children. In addition to fulfilling stereotypical roles within families, fathers received cues from media regarding their functioning within family and society.

LaRossa, Jaret, Gadgil, and Wynn (2000) conducted a content analysis of Father's and Mother's day comic strips and found that there were shifts in cultural expectations between mid to late 1900's. The authors explain that changes did not occur in a linear pattern; rather they concluded that mother/father role expectations oscillated between decades. The authors explain that portrayal of fathering roles shifted from incompetent to competent between early and late 20<sup>th</sup> century decades and that fathers were also seen as functioning in expressive roles in early and late 20th centuries.

LaRossa (2004), who also examined the idea of gender non-specific parenting in his review of articles published between 1946 and 1960, observed that diversity of opinion was the order of the day. He explains the rules for fathers were more a product of authors' opinion and not necessarily a reflection of societal stance. Within the articles, LaRossa found that there was considerable confusion with regards to what was expected of fathers. Some authors suggested that fathers should become involved in nurturing while others expressed that fathers should not feel pressured to participate in expressive roles, such as working in the nursery. Still others purported that men who were trying to share parental duties with their partners were in fact losing sight of their true roles in the world. LaRossa concluded that the expectation of fathers as portrayed by popular media in the late fifties were on average more traditional than that of the early fifties. He however cautioned that cultural impressions are often contingent on media source and on the agent through which it was transmitted.

Atkinson and Blackwelder (1993) examined interest in fatherhood and fathering roles by assessing popular magazines articles published between the periods 1900 and 1989. Similar to other researchers (Hanson & Bozett, 1986; LaRossa, 2004), the authors report that there was a noticeable shift in father-child relations and further suggested behavioral reasons as the main justification for change in the culture of fatherhood. They report that there was relatively no significant difference in men's child-care behavior in recent decades, early to late 1900's. In contrast however, there were significant differences observed in women's behavior during the same period. Other researchers (Hanson & Bozet, 1986; LaRossa, 1997) also supported this claim by pointing to the fact that women were now working away from homes and were therefore

less available for spending time with children. They further propose that the changes in women's behaviors were the primary predictor of the change in the culture of fatherhood.

These aforementioned analyses underscore the idea that there are critical incidents (i.e. societal expectations on families, or interaction between father-mother dyad) that impact men's view of fathering. A closer look at the latter reveals that fathering is often mediated by men's interaction with their wives. For this reason, some researchers (Rohner & Veniziano, 2001) have argued that research that seeks to illuminate the culture of fatherhood, must also examine the motherhood culture and its implications for fathering.

**Primacy of Motherhood Approach.** Rohner and Veniziano (2001) point out that children's relationships with their parents are one of the key predictors of psychosocial functioning and development. However, the overwhelming bulk of research has focused attention on mothers' behavior ignoring important contributions of fathers' roles in child development. Undoubtedly there are aspects of parental duties that are gender specific (i.e. breastfeeding); nevertheless, both parents play important roles in channeling love and acceptance to their children.

Rohner and Veniziano explain that before the nineteen thirties, much of what was known about child rearing came from magazines and medical and religious books, which exhorted women to behave in particular manners. Furthermore, some authors laid the entire task of child rearing, including the well-being of children on the shoulders of mothers. Rohner and Veniaziano underscore this idea in quoting Elizabeth Hall, eighteenth century writer of *Mother's Assistant* magazine:

Yes mothers, in a certain sense, the destiny of a redeemed world is put into your hands; it is for you to say, whether your children shall be respectable and happy here and prepared for a glorious immortality, or whether they shall dishonor you and perhaps bring you grey hairs in sorrow to the grave, and sink down themselves at last to eternal despair! (Hall, 1849, p. 27)

This legacy of *Mothering*, passed on to future generations, is ultimately reflected in the practice of empirical research. As Rohner (1998) explains, prior to the nineteen sixties and seventies many behavioral scientists thought that men were unimportant to healthy child development and would therefore focus child developmental research on mother-child relationship. Rohner and Veneziano (2001) however identified the limitations of the mother-first approach and have suggested transforming research design from a mother-only approach to the triadic mother-father-child design.

Other contemporary researchers have recognized these limitations and have conducted studies aimed at unveiling the significance of father-child interactions. For example, Lewis and Lamb (2003), who assessed fathers' influence on children's development, examined differences seen in father-child and mother-child relationships and found that parenting styles of fathers closely resembled that of mothers. They caution, however, that they had observed two important distinctions: first, mothers tended to be more sensitive towards their children, and second, cultural variations were seen in parenting styles of father and mothers. They also state that the dominant trend was that men were more inclined to engage in physical play with children even after they had professed adopting egalitarian parenting roles. Further, Dempsey and Hewitt's (2012) editorial review on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Fathering suggests that though fathers are taking on more



responsibility for children's day-to-day care, primary care is often relegated to mothers with fathers playing more of a supportive role.

Fischer and Anderson (2012) also contributed to the debate by studying gender-typed characteristics and gender role attitudes of employed vs. stay at home fathers. The researchers found that men who were influenced by their female partner to stay at home reported increase enjoyment in being a stay-at-home dad. The researchers further suggest that father who stayed at home also reported less traditional gender role attitudes.

Additionally the just over half of employed fathers saw themselves as primary caregivers in contrast to all of the stay-at-home fathers who reported themselves to be the primary caregiver to their children. The researchers also suggested that though mother often serve as gate keeper to paternal involvement, increase father involvement often fuels positive attitude in mothers which sometimes result in fathers spending more time with the child.

Biblarz and Stacey (2010) have contributed to the mother-father-child approach by examining more closely the effects of gender styles in parenting. In this particular study, the researchers assessed differences in mother-father families, same sex families, single father, and single mother families. The authors point out that with the exception of lactation, their research did not identify any abilities that were exclusive to a particular gender. Similar to Lewis and Lamb (2003), the researchers note that, on average, differences in parenting styles favored women over men in that female parents demonstrated greater awareness, were warmer, and were more communicative to their children; there was no significant effect for gender type on psychological adjustments and social success of children.

**Fathering Roles.** Mackey (2001) presents three views that dominated the field of psychology prior to the 1980's, all of which had undertones of father-child connection being simply a product of extrinsic factors. First, primatologist Harlow (1971) argued that a male's interaction with an infant is a direct consequence of being with an adult female, and that males do not display nurturing behaviors towards their young. Psychoanalyst Bowlby (1969) contributed to the father-child debate by advocating primacy in the mother-child bond. And third, anthropologist Mead (1949) argued that fatherhood was socially constructed: a concept that bears the assumption that father involvement is a consequence of motherhood and therefore men must learn how to provide for others within their social paradigm.

In an attempt to combat these traditional academic views on fathering, Mackey (2001) took a closer look at the mother-father-child relationship, and argues for an independent and distinctive man-to-child affiliative bond. In this particular study, Mackey collected data from 55,000 adult-child dyads in over 80 communities around the world. Using naturalistic observation, Mackey surveyed adult-child interactions in one of three groups: men-child only, women-child only, and man-woman-child group. From the data Mackey concluded that both men and women showed higher levels of attention to younger children. Additionally, the study shows that men and women spent equal amounts of time interacting with children when they were together. Interaction patterns of men and women towards children were also similar when either men or women were alone with children. It was, however, observed that men's levels of interaction with children decreased when women entered the scene.

Some aforementioned studies (Lewis & Lamb, 2003; Mackey, 2001; Rohner & Veniziano, 2001) underscore the notion that, similar to mothers, fathers do play significant roles in their child's development. Further, fathers' involvement with children is often mediated by external (i.e. societal) and internal (innate desires) factors. For this reason Mackey (2001) writes "there is an independent man-to child affiliative bond. Hence, analyses of fathering behaviors might benefit from constructing social models on fathering predicated on a biocultural infrastructure" (p. 63).

### **Attachment Theory, Ecological Theory, and Father Involvement**

Researchers are more aware that involvement of fathers may influence child development in a variety of ways; conversely, children who behave positively towards their dads may elicit greater involvement from their father (Pleck, 2007). With this perspective in mind, Pleck scrutinizes the father-child relational process through the lens of four theoretical frameworks: Attachment theory, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory, Social Capital theory, and Essential Father theory. Pleck reflects that secure attachment is significantly linked to a child having a secure internal representation of self from which he/she can explore their surroundings. The result of which is positive development of cognitive, social, and emotional skills. Pleck further proposes that both mothers and father exhibit similar behaviors that predict secure attachment in infants.

John Bowlby's attachment work in 1951 brought attention to the possible adverse effects that occur when infants are separated for extended time periods from their mothers. Bowlby's theory, though essential for shaping our understanding of adult-child attachment and its relation to positive/negative socio-cognitive outcomes, promoted the primacy of mother-child bonds that strengthened arguments for traditional parent roles.

As noted earlier, today, research on child-parent attachment has expanded to include father-child relations, primarily because researchers have recognized the importance of paternal influence on childhood development.

With the aid of 73 families with 20-month-old children, Easterbrooks and Goldberg (1985) examined attachment styles of children, most of whom had mothers employed outside of the home. To assess insecure/secure infant attachment, researchers observed mother-child or father-child dyads in a laboratory setting in which the dyads were asked to problem solve and complete questionnaires regarding maternal employment, childrearing attitudes, and time spent alone or as a couple with their child. Easterbrooks and Goldberg report that most parents testified that maternal employment had a positive effect on the relationship between the father and child, with only two percent of husbands of employed wives reporting negative or mixed responses. The researchers further explain that there were no significant differences noted in quality of attachment between toddler-mother, or toddler-father bonds resulting from maternal employment.

Researchers such as Easterbrooks and Goldberg (1985) underscore principles of Bowlby's attachment theory, highlighting the idea that toddler-parent attachment is important for healthy child development. The researchers suggest that, in general, mother-child secure attachment was greater than that of father-child attachment; however, father-toddler bond was also significant for child development. In as much as these studies provide a rationale for a greater understanding of parent-child attachment, Pleck argues that Bowlby's theoretical position is essentially limited in its ability to shed

light on reasons why “paternal [or maternal] involvement might lead to positive involvement outcomes in children, adolescent and adults” (Pleck, 2007, p. 198).

According to Pleck the limitations of Bowlby’s attachment theory is seen in two primary positions , first the theory focuses on a child’s earlier years though making predictions about functioning in later years, the result of which is a limited basis for viewing the efficacy of paternal [or maternal] influences on older children. The second limitation is that the theory has been heavily criticized by researcher such as Vaughan and Bost (1999) who highlights its limited predictive capacity in demonstrating why paternal involvement may lead to a more positive outcome in children and youth (Pleck, 2007).

Bronfenbrenner’s (1979, 1993/1994) theory advocates an ecological view of human development from the perspective that various levels of systemic interaction affect child development (Pleck, 2007). Bronfenbrenner’s (1979, 1993/1994) model is rooted in a multi-level system, which include microsystems, meosystems, macrosystems, exosystems, and chronosystems.

Closer scrutiny of Brofenbrenner’s ecological levels reveals a complex web of reciprocal relationships within which child-development takes place. Portrayed as system within a system, at the heart of the ecological model is the *microsystem*, which facilitates direct child interaction with parents, peers, and others. As Bronfenbrenner explains, *proximal process* (regular ongoing interpersonal interaction) operate within this immediate environment to promote and sustain child development. The *meosystem* is a sub-system of the microsystem and refers to the connections that take place between two or more of the settings within the microsystem. This includes relationships between

family and school and/or workplace.

Bronfenbrenner (1993/1994) uses the term *Exosystem* to refer to the interactions between systems that indirectly influence the process of child development. For example a father's workplace may inadvertently place demands on him, which may in turn trigger challenges (i.e. dad being unavailable for family time) within the home environment.

*Macrosystem*, on the other hand, refers to cultural norms and expectation that are imposed on aforementioned systems (micro, meo, and exosystems). As Bronfenbrenner explains, the macrosystem can be thought of as a societal blueprint for a particular culture or subcultural group, which entails beliefs, norms, lifestyles, hazards, and customs around adequate functioning. *Chronosystems* reflect the final level of the ecological system and characterizes changes or consistency within the individual's environment over time. This includes changes in employment or socioeconomic status over the life course of the family structure.

While there are obvious repercussions for child development based on (direct or indirect) interactions with varying levels, Brofenbrenner's notions of *proximal process* is strongly reflected in the child's mesosystem (parents' marital functioning) and its interactions with macrosystems (i.e. work environment). As Pleck (2007) points out, fathers are part of a child's macrosystem and therefore frequent father-child interaction (good proximal process) will promote better development in the child. Furthermore, fathers' personalities differ from mothers in ways that are possibly important for child development.

One study (Crouter, Perry-Jenkins, Huston, & McHale, 1987) highlights the reciprocal effects of father-child interaction and micro-system (parental/marital)

functioning that affect fathering roles. Crouter et al., who examined 20 dual-earner and single earner families, reported that certain factors may influence the father-child relations. First, the authors note that there was a slight correlation between perceived father skills and father-child caring relations. This significance was noted in single earner families and not for dual earner families. The researchers hypothesize that this difference was perhaps due to the fact that fathers in dual earner families were required to spend more time with the child while mothers were away at work.

Crouter et al., (1987) report that, in general, there was a negative association between caring for the child and the fathers' work hours. They further suggests that there were striking differences between dual-earner and single-earner families in their report of marital interactions, with fathers of dual earner families reporting greater marital tension. Dual earner fathers also reported being significantly more involved with childcare. In contrast, however, the researcher found that there was no difference between dual and single earner family groups with regards to leisure involvement with the child.

The researchers surmise that this was perhaps due to the fact that fathers in dual family earners received pressure from their wives to be more involved with child-care, which may produce tension within the family unit. The authors offer a second explanation for negative marital interaction due to child care involvement, suggesting that the observed significance was perhaps because husbands are at times dissatisfied because they are more responsible for child care while their wives are at work. Crouter et al. however caution that variability within the data also suggest two other ideas that should be considered in interpreting the study: first, marital negativity is not necessarily a consequence of dual earner lifestyles, and second, husbands who are part of dual earner

relationships are most negatively affected when there are additional demands for increased involvement in child care.

Pleck (2007) finalizes his argument on the benefits of father involvement to children by suggesting an integrative approach (*Ecological-Parental Capital model*) that combines major themes from each of the aforementioned theoretical models. Drawing heavily on Social Capital and Ecological theories, Pleck explains that fathers' influence on children development should be considered using the parental capital principle – Fathers (and mothers) contribute two types of capital – financial and socialization, to facilitate child development.

Pleck (2007) explains that financial capital refers to the family's ability to provide necessary resources (i.e. food, shelter, education) to their children. In considering the father's role in providing financially, Pleck surmises that, on average, fathers earn more than mothers and may therefore be better able to financially support children than their female counterpart.

Second, fathers may provide their children with a significantly different social community than mothers, through work and family relationships. Pleck further points out that there is on-going debate regarding the extent to which fathers and mothers represent similar or different social communities to their children. However, there is evidence to suggest that parental capital (social and material) plays an important role in promoting healthy child-development. He further argues, however, that these concepts are perhaps best looked at through an ecological lens to determine systematic variations within the family's ecological framework, and to understand the extent at which particular interactions within the system promote or hinder child development.



As researchers studying parental influences on children become more concerned with father involvement and its consequences, some contemporary researchers are more keen on examining involvement between various fathering sub groups. For example, Fletcher & Anderson (2012) assessed parental involvement between stay-at-home dads and employed fathers and compared their level of involvement to that of mothers. The researchers found that 84% of employed fathers compared to 74% of stay-at-home dads reported sharing equally in the responsibility of childcare when both themselves and their spouse were at home. In general, stay at home fathers reported less traditional gender roles; however when researchers compared the gender traits (male vs female characteristics) they found that both stay-at-home dads and employed fathers reported similar levels of feminine and masculine qualities.

### **Narrative and Fathering**

Goodsell et al. (2010) note that understanding fatherhood and its practices is more challenging than traditional family scholars propose. As they explain, traditional models often portray father-child interaction as a product of family/work obligations. They caution however that this is not a full representation of ordinary people's perceptions and understanding of fatherhood. Furthermore, "ordinary people often understand fatherhood as involving many life domains, and to be a father as grappling with multiple, shifting, overlapping, and interrelating contexts" (p. 3). From this standpoint, the authors use the metaphor of "fatherhood harmony" (p.11), initially described by Hill (2001), to capture the interplay of "multiple social contexts" and "multiple paternal activities" (Goodsell et al., 2010, p. 4), which they argue should be considered when assessing the contemporary fatherhood experience.

In addition to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model, the authors propose two other areas for understanding the culture of fatherhood: life course framework (Elder 1994), which states that meaning roles and decision changing with time and Blumer's (1969) symbolic interactionism, referred to as a construction of meaning from experiences.

Goodsell et al. (2010) analyzed transcripts of 42 expectant fathers, who reported what it meant for them to be a good father. The researchers identify three main themes from the transcripts, which they list as

- polyphony - acknowledgement of multiple, and simultaneous contexts in which men act as fathers. These include seeing one's father as a good leader, church member, good neighbor, worker, etc.;
- Movement, which describes the changing nature of a father's commitment, and involvement with time. These changes sometimes occur based on the demand being placed on fathers by work, family, and other social roles; and
- Subjectivity, which refers to acquired expectations that shape our understanding of fatherhood (pp. 12 -18).

As Goodsell et al. explain, our perception and understanding of fatherhood are ultimately shaped by what we learn to expect of fathers. The researchers further argue for an understanding of fatherhood that examines the interrelated contexts of a man's whole life. They explain fathering is not a separate process occurring independently of other activities that fathers engage in. Rather, the process itself is dynamic and is often affected by multiple systems within a father's life.

The researchers further illustrate the interconnectivity of multiple systems on fathering using the following example:

Children may benefit from having their fathers assist with homework assigned at school, but the father's ability to do that, the meaning that assistance has, and the effect on the child, the man, and the father-child relationship may all be influenced by other contextual factors such as neighborhood, religion, leisure activities, and so forth. (Goodsell et al., 2010, p. 19)

Thus, the researchers explain that both research and practice should examine the interrelatedness of multiple contexts and their effects on promoting or hindering performance in any particular role (i.e. fathering).

**Contemporary Roles of Fatherhood.** Current literature on fathering demonstrates increased curiosity regarding the father-child interaction and its implication for child development. However, researchers who wish to engage the topic must first recognize the challenges that are inherent to developing studies that will accurately reflect the complexities of the topic. As LaRossa (1997) aptly suggests, researchers should keep in mind the various facets that inform the culture and practices of fatherhood, and they should understand the complexities that are within these connections.

Citing Fine (1999), contributor to the *Globe and Mail: Family Matters Edition*, Wall and Arnold (2007) propose that today's culture touts the idea of modern fathers who are committed to being lovingly involved in their children's lives. The authors however state that their study is part of a growing body of research that raises questions regarding the accuracy of such a statement. As they explain, similar to cultures of the past, today's fatherhood culture positions mothers as primary caregivers and fathers as secondary parental figures who juggle their parental duties around their work responsibilities.

Change in this area would therefore be a consequence of complex interactions occurring between individual behavior, culture, and societal understandings.

In their editorial work on *Fatherhood in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Demsey and Hewitt (2012) outline the changing culture of fatherhood while positing the idea that multiple researchers have outlined gender differences (between fathers and mothers) as an important axiom for understanding possibilities and limitation for men as they engage in child care. The researchers further suggest that ideals and expectations of fathers are far more complex than is suggested in popular media and social networking sites. Further, it should be understood that fatherhood has been significantly stretched beyond the traditional nuclear family to include blended families, adoptive families, gay fathers, post divorces and separation. The effects of which has implications not only for paternal involvement but also for government policies and social programming.

For this reason, the present overview has provided consideration of important historical and current perspectives that have helped shaped our view on the culture of fatherhood. It has also outlined the distinction between culture and practice for the purposes of adequately exploring critical incidents in the culture of fatherhood that shape fathering roles. Of consequence is the importance of socio-cultural and familial factors that may inadvertently shape the way fathers perceive their roles and subsequent functions within the father-child relationship.

### **Focus and Rationale for This Study**

Interest in fathering practices and its impact on child-development have increased with time, and studies have delineated the process of evolution for the culture from as early as pre-nineteenth century. Today, there are certainly complex contextual factors to

be considered in assessing how fathers perceive their roles within their families.

Ultimately, the literature raises questions regarding essential features of fathers' ecology that promote or hinder paternal engagement. More specifically, given multiple contextual roles of fathers, are there factors that promote or inhibit their involvement with their children? – From this position it is paramount to have fathers be the voice behind their experience of functioning in multiple related roles by identifying critical incidents that have helped or hindered their ability to father well.

This study is therefore designed to provide a detailed description of factors that help or hinder paternal involvement. Due to the lack of research in this area and given the importance of contextual factors (i.e. societal, familial, and historical), it is essential to explore how the interplay of such factors affect men's views of fathering.

Additionally, most of what is known about fathering practices is gleaned from studying the culture of fatherhood with little or no emphasis on asking fathers what they consider important occurrences that have shaped their perception of fathering. This study therefore draws on the exploratory qualities of the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT) in provoking fathers' memories of their paternal experiences while providing them with the opportunity to share anecdotal evidence of important incidences that have influenced their degree of involvement.

### Chapter 3: Method

#### Methods of Inquiry

**The Critical Incident Technique.** In its original design, the Critical Incident Technique (CIT), developed by Flanagan (1954), is a set of procedures used to collect direct observation of human behavior in organizational psychology. The CIT has since been expanded to other areas including counseling psychology, where the method has been used to explore qualities, attributes, and factual occurrences. In addition to the exploratory qualities of CIT, the technique possesses several strengths, two of which include freedom for participants to recall their own experiences using their own language, and the removal of researcher idiosyncrasies in determining what is important to respondents. The CIT research method has since been adapted by Butterfield, Amundson, Borgen, and Maglio (2009). This adapted version is referred to as the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT) and includes nine credibility checks designed to increase rigor and credibility to the method especially for its use within counseling psychology. Additionally, Butterfield et al. (2009) note that researchers who use ECIT have found that it has been helpful in providing insight into psychological processes that yield clinical tools for counselors to use.

As a qualitative research method, ECIT has a unique set of rules that govern its application and practice. Citing Creswell (1998), Butterfield et al. (2009) highlight a number of key areas that are important to CIT research application: (a) CIT has its origin in organizational and industrial psychology, (b) Research focus is on critical events/incidents that help or hinder effective performance in the activity being examined, (c) Researchers primarily use group or individual interviews to collect data, (d) Once data is collected analysis is then carried out to determine specific or general categories that

emerge from the data in reference to the activity being studied, (6) Categories are operationally defined and are self-descriptive (pp. 266-267).

**Critical Incident Technique and Paternal Involvement.** From a practical and theoretical standpoint, the researcher is aware of the interactive process that is inherent to the father-child dyad and believes that a process of inquiry that closely mirrors this natural structure will best serve the research participants. A contextual realistic understanding of father involvement emphasizes the patterns of interaction in fathers and their children that reflect the ecology of human development, the experiential depth of fathering, and the effectiveness of attachment bonds between father and child. (McGrath & Johnson, 2003). ECIT's exploratory qualities render it an appropriate tool for gaining insight into the relatively under examined area of fathering and the factors that help or hinder their involvement with their offspring.

At the heart of the ECIT method is an interactive process that emphasizes the individual's experiences through self-report of concrete examples. More specifically, fathers will be the voice behind a broader understanding of events that help or hinder father-child connections. Having dads speak to critical incidents (i.e., socio-cultural, familial, biological events) that promote or detract from their ability to father effectively will hopefully increase our understanding of the processes that shape the practices of fathering.

**Rationale for Enhanced Critical Incident Approach.** This study uses the adapted Enhanced Critical Incident technique (ECIT); (Butterfield et al. 2009), to gain insight into factors fathers consider to be helping or obstructing their ability to father their child(ren).

The ECIT methodology is particularly appropriate for a number of reasons: First the method is exploratory, thus allowing fathers to be the voice behind a broader understanding of events or experiences that help or hinder father-child connections. Having fathers speak to critical incidents (i.e. socio-cultural, familial, biological events) that have helped or hindered their ability to father effectively, will hopefully increase our understanding of the processes that shape the practices of fathering.

Second, when applied to counselling psychology, the ECIT expands the notion of critical incidents to include factual happening, qualities, and/or personal experiences of a particular area being explored. Given that involved fathers are believed to have discrete knowledge and experience of the events that help or hinder their engagement with their child(ren), this research explores participants' experience of these events through participants self-reflection and self-report.

Third, the ECIT interview allows the researcher to gain a keen understanding of the processes *involved* fathers describe as effective in shaping their involvement. From the data a composite sketch will emerge of processes that promote or detract from paternal involvement.

Finally, ECIT was chosen because it offers a practical qualitative step-by-step approach to collecting and analyzing data about paternal engagement. Furthermore, ECIT provides rich contextualized information that is reflected by fathers' experiences.

### **Recruitment Strategy**

Eight fathers participated in this study. These fathers were invited to participate in the research study primarily through acquaintances of family and friends. A single individual was recruited through the Stepping Up Young Fathers Program (SUYFP) – a



nonprofit organization supporting young fathers in building better relationships with their children. With the aid of the program administrator, the researcher had met with program participants at one of SUYFP weekly meetings and had extended an invitation to participate in the research study. Additional information (See Appendices J & K) about the study was forwarded via email to prospective participants. Several individuals expressed interest in participating in the study, however only one individual was recruited through this medium. The remaining seven participants were recruited with the help of acquaintances and friends who were provided information about the research and who were able to access dads that were not known to the researcher.

All participants were initially contacted either in person or verbally by a third party individual, who provided them with a copy of participant recruitment poster (See Appendix A). Interested individuals were asked to contact the researcher directly via email or telephone. These individuals were then emailed (see Appendix J), and a letter (Appendix K) detailing study requirements was then forwarded to each person. Following this initial email contact, participants were contacted via phone to discuss study requirements (see Appendix G) and an interview meeting was arranged. Subsequent to the initial phone contact and prior to the interview, participants were emailed the Paternal Involvement Semi-structured Interview Protocol (PISIP) (Appendix D) along with the Demographic questions (Appendix E) for review.

### **Participants**

The following is a detailed description of selection criteria for research participants:

- Fathers: For the purposes of this study, a father is defined as a male parent (partnered or single) who demonstrates a sense of responsibility (financially or emotionally) towards his biological child. The male parent is also characterized by availability and father-child interactivity (i.e. being available to interact with the child at least 1.5 hrs/wk).
- Age of Children: To be eligible for this study, participants were to have at least one child between 0 and 5 years old. Participants with more than one child were eligible for participation, however, at least one child must be between 0-5 years old.
- Participant's age: Participants were to be 18 years or older to participate in the study.
- Biographical information: Participants were asked to provide information on average household income, education level, country of birth, occupation type marital status, and family constellation. It is important to note that biographical information was solicited for the purposes of gaining an understanding of family structure and socio-economic functioning and was not used as part of the inclusion criteria for this study.

Eight fathers participated in this study. Participants were between the ages of 24 and 39. All eight fathers were partnered and were either living with their spouse as married couples or in a common law relationship. Participants were all Canadian-Caucasian. Table 1 provides a detailed summary of the participant group.

**Table 1***Participants' Characteristics*

<b>Part</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Marital status</b>	<b>No. of Children (age)</b>	<b>Gender of Children</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Occupation</b>
1	24	Common Law	1 (10 mths)	M	Caucasian	Construction
2	36	Married	2 (3.5 & 2yrs)	M & F	Caucasian	Construction
3	29	Married	1 (15mths)	M	Caucasian	Construction
4	37	Married	3 (2, 5, & 8 yrs)	F,F,F	Caucasian	Professor
5	39	Married	4 (12, 9, 7, 5 yrs)	F,F,M,F	Caucasian	Teacher
6	38	Married	2 (1.5 & 4.5 yrs)	M, M	Caucasian	Medical Education
7	26	Married	2 (2.5 yrs & 9 mths)	F,F	Caucasian	Sales
8	31	Married	3 (4,3,1yrs)	M,M,F	Caucasian	Business Owner

**Materials and Procedure**

**Paternal Involvement Semi-structured Interview Protocol (PISIP).** The Paternal Involvement Semi-structured Interview Protocol (PISIP) (see appendix D) was used as the primary tool for eliciting self-report description of events that encouraged or stunted fathering practices for group participants. The PISIP was developed using the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique that is proposed by Butterfield et al. (2009). The following is an example of questions included on the PISIP:

**Contextual Component.** At the start of each interview participants were asked to respond to a set of contextual questions which were used to elicit background information for the CIT interview (Butterfield et al., 2009). Additionally, contextual questions serve as a primer for participants, encouraging them to start thinking about their role as fathers. Examples of these questions are: (a) what has your experience of fathering been like? (b) Tell me about your relationship with your father.

**Critical Incident Component.** The Critical Incident Component provided the body of the interview. The Critical Incident Component consisted of the following questions

- **Helping:** What has helped you in doing well as a father?
  - **Probes:** What is the incident/factor? How did it impact you? e.g., having (or not having) a relationship with your own dad is a factor. How is it helping/not helping? Can you give me a specific example from your own relations with your dad that has stuck with you? How did that help you to transition into fatherhood?
- **Hindering:** Are there things that have made it more difficult for you to do well?
  - **Alternate question:** What kinds of things have happened that made it harder for you to do well?
- **Wish List:** Are there things that would have helped you to be more involved
  - **Alternate question:** I wonder what else might be helpful to you that you haven't had access to?

**Recommendation.** To close the interview, participants were asked to provide a list of recommendations to fathers. This section consisted of the following question: Based on your experience as a father, do you have any recommendation for fathers who are struggling with making the commitment to be involved or stay involved in their child's life? Participants were also asked to elaborate on the importance of the recommended item.

**Procedure**

Each interview lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. At the start of each interview, participants were provided with a consent form (appendix B) outlining the limits of confidentiality. Participants were asked to read and sign the consent form and to present any questions they may have in relation to the study. Participants were also provided with a list of counseling and crisis intervention contact information (appendix C) for reference if they found that speaking about their relationship evoked unsettling emotions.

Following the completion of the confidentiality form and explanation of the available counseling services (if needed), participants were then asked to complete the demographical forms. A condensed genogram was used to pictorially represent the participant's immediate family. The genogram included participants, participant's age, marital status, partner, partner's age, number of children, and ages of children.

Participants were then given an opportunity to respond to the contextual questions within the interview and subsequently the Critical Incidents that have helped or hindered their perspective and/or their ability to father effectively. Following these sets of questions, participants were then asked to think about and comment on things they wished they had in their roles as fathers. In particular, they were asked to comment on things that would have been helpful in promoting efficacy in their ability to effectively fulfill their duties as fathers. This third dimension – Wish List Items, is one of the enhancements to Flanagan's (1954) CIT method (Butterfield et al., 2009) and is now an integral part of the ECIT research method. To close the interview, participants were asked to provide a list of recommendations to prospective or practicing fathers. Each

participant was given a \$20 gift card to either Tim Horton's or Starbucks at the end of their interview.

Each interview was audio taped to ensure accuracy of the data. The audio from each interview was recorded using a digital audio-only recording device, which was then transferred to the researcher's personal computer for safekeeping. The computer audio files were protected by a password to ensure confidentiality and safekeeping. In addition to audio taping interviews, the research also used the PISIP interview guide for ordering and manually recording interviews.

**Data Analysis.** All interviews were transcribed and identifying information removed (i.e. names of participants and family members). A transcriber was hired to transcribe the bulk of the interviews; however, the primary researcher transcribed two of the eight interviews. The transcriber was required to sign a confidentiality agreement form (See appendix H).

CIT uses the process of exhaustiveness or redundancy in data analysis to ensure that no new critical incidents (CI) or wish list (WL) items are arising from the interview (Butterfield et al., 2009). This process of redundancy is a crucial step within CIT because it allows the researcher to determine when a sufficient number of participants have been interviewed. Typical with CIT, sample size is determined by redundancy of incidents arising from the interview process and not by the number of participants engaged in the study (Flanagan, 1954).

Coding and analysis of the data took the form of the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT) format that is proposed by Butterfield et al. (2009). This process is based on three main ideas that Butterfield et al. highlight in their article:

- Determining the frame of reference: For this particular study it is hoped that the study will create a better understanding of the processes that shape men's interaction with their children. This enhanced understanding will lead to better opportunities for men to partner with social programs in promoting paternal involvement, and the creation of therapeutic interventions that will take into consideration the interconnected domains of paternal involvement, from bio-familial to socio-cultural factors.
- Identify and formulate categories.
- Specificity or generality in reporting data.

After transcription was completed, the researcher coded each interview using the *Atlas Ti* qualitative coding software. During this process, Helping (HE) and Hindering (HI) Critical Incidents, along with Wish List (WL) Items and Recommendations were extracted from each transcript. Following the extraction, incidents were then cross-referenced and placed into one of eleven formed categories. Incidents were identified as important if participants were able to provide details of how the expressed incident was helpful or hindering in their capacity to father effectively.

**Reliability.** In the interpretations stages the researcher assessed the data using nine credibility checks proposed by Butterfield et al. (2005, 2009) to ensure accuracy of interpretation and reduce researcher bias of category formation. These credibility checks were particularly useful to this research because they offer robustness to the researchers' interpretation of individuals reported perceptions of their experiences.

The process of forming categories in ECIT is reliant on researcher judgment; therefore it was crucial to employ validity and reliability tests to help strengthen the

accuracy of the categories. As mentioned earlier, Butterfield et al. (2005, 2009) use nine credibility checks to ensure the reliability and validity in forming ECIT categories. This study uses these credibility checks to validate the ECIT approach to the study of fathering practices.

First, interviews were audio-taped to ensure the accuracy of the transcript. Butterfield et al. (2009) refer to this as descriptive validity.

Second, interview validity refers to adhering to CIT's established protocol to increase robustness. For this study, the researcher followed the interview guide to ensure that questions were not prompting participants' answers. The researcher also provided a copy of the first interview to Dr. Janelle Kwee, the researcher supervisor, to listen to and reflect feedback on the interview validity process.

Third, after coding and analysis was completed, the researcher then asked two independent individuals to identify and extract CIs and WL from 25% of the overall interviews for comparison. This inter-rater reliability process was conducted to ensure the CI's and WL's were correctly identified and that incidents were not determined by researcher bias. The independent extraction criterion was successfully met given the fact that there was a high correlation among extracted incidents.

The fourth check refers to exhaustiveness in incidents. All eleven categories were formed from the coding and analysis of the first five interviews. The remaining 3 interviews were later coded and analyzed for adherence to previously formed categories and emergence of new categories; however, it was noted that no new categories emerged from these transcripts. As the CIT protocol dictates, redundancy was achieved and no other interviews were conducted.



For the fifth check the researcher provided an independent judge with the previously formed categories along with subcategories and operational definition for each of the eleven categories. Additionally, 25% of the CI and WL items were randomly chosen and given to the independent judge to be matched with these identified CI/WL categories. A match rate of 84 % was achieved and therefore it was determined that the match rate criteria, as suggested by Butterfield et al. (2005), was achieved.

**Validity.** Refers to the accuracy of categories in capturing the essence of what was communicated by participants. Four of the nine credibility checks relate specifically to this process of validity. Assessing participant's rate is one way to ensure internal validity. This sixth check speaks specifically to the strength of a category when assessing study results. A high number of participants reporting on a specific category indicates that most participants believe that a particular CI was important in determining how they experienced the incident in question. Butterfield et al. (2009) advise that reporting participation rates of formed categories improves the credibility of categories and enhances category strength. Therefore, following the ECIT methodology, CI and WL were calculated within their assigned categories and only those categories that reflected a participant rate of 25% or greater were reported in this study.

For the seventh credibility check, the researcher cross-checked the identified CL and WL to ensure that participants' stories are accurately captured and appropriately reflected in the study. To gain participants endorsement of categories, the researcher emailed copies of the identified CI and WL to each participant for review. This was later followed-up with a brief phone interview to discuss the incidents and their assigned categories. Within this process, participants were given the opportunity to provide

feedback on the identified incident and the categories in which they were assigned. The crosschecking process also allowed for reassignment of incidents to another category if participants felt the matched category did not accurately reflect their experience.

The final two validity checks are gaining the opinion of experts in the field and checking for theoretical agreement between the researchers work and the scholarly literature. Butterfield et al. (2009) explains that once categories have been finalized it is important to submit the study to an expert in the field for a review of category formations. Of importance are three questions that the researcher should seek answers for: (a) does the expert find the categories useful? (a) is he/she surprised by any of the categories? (c). based on experience does he/she think there is anything missing? As a final validity check the researcher will look at underlying assumptions that were made about the topic, and from this position, conduct a review of scholarly literature to determine if assumptions are supported. For this process the categories, sub categories, and category definitions were sent to Dr. Marvin McDonald and Dr. Kristen Wright for expert review. Both individuals agreed that the categories were useful in that they accurately reflected the literature and that nothing appeared missing.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical consideration was given to several areas within his study. First, it was necessary to inform participants of their right to withdraw from the research. As such, each participant was provided with a consent form (Appendix B), which was discussed in detail prior to the start of each interview. The terms of confidentiality were also discussed with each participant to promote understanding of research expectation.

To ensure confidentiality, each interview was transcribed and identifying information (i.e. names or places) removed. Each participant, along with his family members was assigned a pseudonym for the purpose of reporting data. Each transcript was further assigned a numeric code for researcher reference. The transcripts were then stored on the researcher's secure password protected computer. Audio recordings are stored on the researcher's personal computer and assigned a password for additional protection.

Finally, given the nature of the research it was anticipated that the study would pose little or no risk to participants. However, given the personal nature of topics and the possibility for participants to become triggered by discussing the topic area, participants were informed beforehand of available community counseling services they could access free of charge or for a nominal fee. Additionally, the researcher made himself available to participants for counselling if necessary.

## Chapter 4: Results

All together 206 incidents were pulled from eight interviews. Of the 206, 132 incidents were identified by participants as being helpful in promoting efficacy in their roles as fathers. Forty-seven incidents were identified as being hindering and another 27 were identified as wish list items. These 206 incidents were further broken down into 10 helping, six hindering, and four wish list categories. Though not seen as part of the ECIT methodology, participants were also asked to provide recommendations on what they believe would be helpful to other fathers. This list of recommendations is discussed further in this chapter.

As noted earlier, categories were formed from incidents participants identify as being important in shaping their experience on fathering. A closer look at these incidents revealed a dichotomous split that is inherent in some of these categories. For example, the helping category of *Responsibility*, with a 100% participant rate, implies the idea that fathers have a keen sense of duty in their practice of providing for and being present with their child. In contrast; however, *Responsibility* is also reflected in a polar opposite manner as a hindering factor, with all eight participants providing examples of the challenges of balancing their respective roles. For example, the critical incidents of *work duties/financial responsibility* appear as both helping and hindering incidents. This is particularly true for fathers who describe the pride that comes from knowing that they are financially able to support their families; they also cite the challenges in being fully present (physically and mentally) while at home due to work duties/expectations. One participant explained it this way:

I mean this is what you talk about with every job there's positives, positives and negatives. Obviously there's some great positives but the main negative about my job is the hours. I work a lot and even when I'm home my cell phone is always ringing. In fact I'll be very surprised if I don't get a call while we're doing this. Um, I already had one text message while we were here so... Um so, um, I guess mental, mental energy what, what you're putting in. I wish that um that when I was home I could put 100% of that on, on to my family and my kids. But that's not really possible, like it's a good way of summing it up. Without going off into too many tangents (laughs).

Additionally, some of these categories are also reflected under the Wish List section with participants again highlighting *Responsibility* as a major area of focus in thinking about what could have been helpful in enhancing their paternal duties.

### Summary of Categories

The following table provides a description of the eleven categories, their subcategories and the HE, HI or WL section in which they appear

**Table 2**

*Categories, Operational Definitions, and Subcategories*

Category Name	Operational Markers of Category	Sub-Categories	Appears in HE, HI, or WI?
<b>Positive and Negative Role Models</b>	Motivation to be a better father than negative role models and/or to emulate positive role models.	1. Family of Origin 2. Society in General 3. Peers (including formal men's groups) 4. Older generation examples	HE
<b>Mother/Father Relationship</b>	Anything arising from the partner/co-parenting relationship that influences fathering	1. Encouragement 2. Support 3. Accountability 4. References to Gender Roles	HE,HI

<b>Father's Religion/Spirituality</b>	Influence of father's religion, spirituality, and/or faith community on fathering	5. Quality of Partner Relationship 1. Personal piety, spiritual disciplines, relationship with God 2. Church community and social influence 3. Teachings, beliefs, value systems from faith	HE,HI,WL
<b>Responsibility</b>	Father's sense about what their role is "supposed" to be as fathers	1. Financial provision to family 2. Discipline 3. Roles strength (including references to gender roles) 4. Work-life balance	HE,HI,WL
<b>Attachment</b>	Evidence of existing attachment bonds with children and commitment to create the possibility for attachment to build	1. Time/ dedicated involvement 2. Felt love, appreciation, connection, intentional nurture of children 3. Emotional attunement	HE, HI
<b>Personal Decision</b>	Sense of voluntary commitment and acceptance of role as father, both deciding to be a father and deciding (inner consent) in the moment to enter role fully	1. Anticipatory (planning/deciding) 2. Entering fully into role intentionally	HE
<b>Characteristics of Children</b>	Influences on parenting from child characteristics and dynamic between father and child characteristics	1. Developmental stage/age 2. Gender 3. Personality/temperament 4. Interests	HE,HI
<b>Reflective Parenting</b>	Anything that reflects the value of fathering as derived from self-distancing from the role		HE
<b>Societal Influence</b>	Influences from levels of Bronfrenbrenner's Ecological Theory	1. Government policy and support 2. Media	HE

		3. Community supports	
		4. Stereotypes of fathering?	
		5. Assumed notions of gender roles	
<b>Father Characteristics</b>	Personal characteristics of the father relating to personality/temperament	1. Traits (temperament and personality) 2. States (fatigue, etc.)	HI,WL
<b>Extended Family Influence</b>	Influence of extended family on fathering	1. Grandparent generation 2. Quality of extended family relationship (in-law support or conflict) 3. Financial	HE,WL

### Helping Categories

The following section provides a detailed summary of helping categories along with excerpts of incidents participants reported as positively influencing their involvement with their child(ren). Ten helping categories were coded from the 206 incidents. Each of these 10 helping categories were operationally defined and further broken down into subcategories. The table below details the helping categories, number of incidents/percentage total, participant rate/percentage total, and provides an example for each of these. The categories were ordered on the basis of frequency of reported incidents and do not necessarily convey importance of incidents.

**Table 3**

#### *Helping Categories*

Helping Category	# of participants	% total	# of Incidents	% total
Positive and Negative Role Models (PNRM)	8	100	22	17
Mother/Father Relationship (MFR)	8	100	19	14

Responsibility	8	100	15	11
Attachment	8	100	32	24
Father Religion/ Spirituality (FRS)	5	63	7	5
Characteristic of Children (CoC)	5	63	8	6
Personal Decision (PD)	5	63	9	7
Reflective Parenting (RP)	4	50	7	5
Extended Family Influence (EFI)	4	50	6	5
Societal Influence (SI)	4	50	7	5

**Positive and Negative Role Models (PNRM).** PNRM was initially classified as two separate categories - Positive Role Models and Negative Role Models. However, both were collapsed into a single category after review by one of the experts in the field of fathering. The category is defined as the *motivation to be a better father than negative role models and/or to emulate positive role models*. PNRM was further broken into four sub categories to include: (a) family of origin, (b) society in general; (c) peers (including formal men's group, and (d) older generation examples. The PNRM category had a 100% participant rate. All eight participants spoke of the influence their parents (in particular their dad) had in shaping their views of fatherhood. This influence was generally reported as being either positive or negative. For example, Curtis reported that his father strongly modeled the role of parent through active engagement he explains:

Curtis: He was, ya know, he was very involved so he was, ya know, he was there and um I observed him, ya know, doing all the things like cooking and cleaning, helping me with homework, playing with me, ya know, doing all that sort of stuff so...



David, another participant, explains how his fathering practices were influenced by his peers and by being part of a dads peer group where the focus is on developing themselves as fathers:

David: this goes back to the whole friendship thing but uh, well we have kind of an accountability sort of just a men's group at church we have breakfast every couple of Saturdays and there's a couple of younger fathers there and a few older ones and there is a few guys that have grandkids and it's just, you can just, say whatever you want and... you know...and same thing if they think you are out of line or you're wrong they kinda say hey you know... I don't know if that is quite right David or whatever...

So... Yeah... that's a huge help too though, just aaah... good solid guys around you that you can talk to and if you have...I don't know... even the stupidest question right... it's like... I don't' know... you can ask it right and nobody... nobody cares, cause most of the time they have been through it too right... so...

Some of these participants also spoke of the benefits of being in such a group in that they felt they could share openly about their challenges; which helped normalize the father-child relationship and increase their overall functioning in their role as fathers.

In contrast, another participant explained how his parenting was influenced by patterns of *reverse modeling*. He explained that as a child he encountered several individuals who demonstrated a negative parenting style. In particular, he spoke of some of his parents' practices and his desire to do the reverse of (or improve on) these examples in parenting his own child:

John: Um, I think growing up uh, ya know I had a lot of, the way I refer to it is reverse role models, you look at somebody like that's not what I'm gonna do, you know what I mean, um and I have a lot of poor examples and I mean, I had my phase where I was doing exactly the same thing that I'd learned from my mom and my dad who wasn't there that much...

...But I think what helped me the most is realizing right from wrong and ya know what my Mom did as a parent which could have been different, and when I look at that and I reflect on all the things that happened when I was a kid and growing up and um ya know just to put it loosely, like broken promises, and um the way my Mom used to drink, it just, it's like No!, that's not who I want to be, ya know, and I just kind of don't do those things, in a sense, you know what I mean?

**Mother/Father Relationship (MFR).** The MFR category was defined as *anything arising from the partner/co-parenting relationship that influences fathering*. The subcategories are: (a) encouragement, (b) support, (c) accountability, (d) references to gender roles, and (e) quality of partner relationship. Similar to the PNRM there was a 100% match rate for this category with each participant reporting a moderating effect of partner's actions on their role as a dad. Some participants reported a sense of pride and satisfaction in the paternal duties arising from encouragement and support by their spouse:

David: she'll encourage me uh, tell me that ya know, hey I really appreciated that you did that or... she tells me stuff like Um, when Jaxon ... like if I go and take him for hockey, she'll, she'll say ya know when you took him for hockey you

should have seen the gleam in his eye or whatever, how excited he was and um... She'll tell me about how excited the kids were or ya know that they, they really missed me today or she'll phone me in the middle of the day and say hey ya know the kids want to talk to you and they miss you and stuff like that so uh, yeah, everything she does is supporting me as a father I think ya know and hopefully everything I do is supporting her mom I know it's...

Researcher: How do you feel when she does that?

David: I feel really good, it goes without saying I guess right it's that's a... Yeah, she, she actually really pumps me up a lot and that's probably why I put "9" on that, cause we were talking about it last night too and she says oh yeah, you are like way up there...

Others spoke of specific gender roles and the freedom to perform paternal duties given the fact that their partner has taken care of the household duties:

Donovan: ...I wanted to work as hard as I possibly could, I couldn't care less about cooking, my Mom cooked for me. I didn't even know, first time I did the laundry myself I was 23 like that, and again it could go back to the whole like you know people could think what a terrible thing I'm some big chauvinist pig but like the kitchen, laundry, house, that's the woman's job and if you actually, in a loving way separate the two. Like I'll provide the money Barbara, don't worry about the money, I got the money over here, you just be the mom and you do all the wonderful woman things. You do that, I'll do this, and we're both specialized and we'll be just fine...because I can focus so good on my part of what I do to be a

Dad...and then by her being able to focus, we can both do what we're best at so that we're not struggling to keep the house together.

Several participants reported that they were “forced” to care for their children because their partner was working away from home; for example one participant explained:

Fred: The other things that has been helpful is, and it's giving away a little bit now but she often works Saturdays and Sundays and spring break and summer when I am off she tends to take more shifts for financial reasons so there is a number of weeks in a row where I've been the primary caregiver and so as far as cooking and cleaning and making meals and sitting down and eating with them and... and even earlier on in our marriage when she worked night shifts you know putting the kids to bed, um so I think that was another part of our lives that helped me connect to the kids, pretty quickly.

**Responsibility.** Responsibility was defined as a *father's sense about what their role is supposed to be as fathers*. There were four sub-categories within this category, these are: (a) financial provision to family, (b) discipline, (c) roles strength, including references to gender roles; (d) work-life balance. The *Responsibility* category also had a 100% participant rate with participants highlighting several areas for which they felt a sense of responsibility. For example one participant spoke of the role of discipline in parenting:

Mark: Um, I mean respect and authority I think that's, not that I have to rule with an iron fist but they need to know what's right and wrong what's acceptable what's allowable in the house right... knowing that no means no...

Several participants echoed the sentiment that providing for the family was their responsibility:

Donovan: provider's huge, that's um, uh, that's a big part of it, is even if I I feel as the guy as the dad even if things are bad or whatever it is, it's my role and of course um, if we we're having a hard time if she had to help I mean that would be great, but at the end of the day if, if we aren't, if we don't have enough, that's my problem, it's not hers, that's my job.

Mark: I feel that way, I don't know if it truly is...yeah, like I say it's kind of a pride thing too... right, like I mean, I don't know how you feel about that but if yeah... the way I grew up my dad went out and worked and my mom was at home and the reason for that was not because there was uh..., ya know, she's the weaker sex or anything like that. It was just because you needed mom at home or at least one of us at home... I very much believe in that and I can see the difference in my kids when my wife's not at home and she's working because we if were stressing out about the money you can see the stress in the kids too and uh yeah. So it weighs on me that I don't want to have her going to work too...

**Attachment.** The attachment category appeared as one of the more significant categories, with all eight participants providing several examples of ways in which they foster attachment with their children. 32 incidents emerged in this category, reflecting 24% of the overall number of helping incidents. Attachment was shown to be the largest of all HE, HI, or WL categories combined.

The Attachment category was defined as *Evidence of existing attachment bonds with children and commitment to create the possibility for attachment to build*

Attachment was broken into 3 sub categories: (a) time/dedicated involvement, (b) felt love, appreciation, connection, intentional nurture of children; and (c) emotional attunement. The following are examples of participants 'reported incidents:

Fred: Just, Just laughing! We're, we're goofy. I have always been that way aaaah. We... we put on the music and dance in the living room you know we have a dance party and somebody does the flash light and and... we dance around um. I'm often um chasing them and tickling them and... still... hide somewhere and jump out like just little goofy stuff.

Researcher: Playing with them

Fred: It is. Yeah it's, its play and....I think you are cultivating the fact that that joy and spontaneity and humour are coping mechanism... so you're modeling in many ways how you cope with life. How you see life, what you value.

Stephen: Um, being actively involved in the upbringing of them, it means simple things like with young kids changing diapers playing with them generally being actively engaged with them when I'm home. Meaning that wouldn't include things like putting them in front of the T.V and sitting next to them, that's not what I call involved parenting. So just being there is not necessarily being involved...it's teaching, helping them learning new things and taking care of needs like food, um, bathing, cleanliness in general, also discipline... that's something that's all part of being involved. It's just that kind of holistic approach to parenting not just relying on certain sources; not saying ok that part I don't do... um I think that's always strange when especially if I hear a dad saying "Oh I don't do that part of it" then that says to me that he's not completely involved then.

Donovan : I can walk into the house um.... you have to have, you know they say women's intuition I... I mean there's guys and women's intuition, I just think guys don't pay enough attention to it... but sensing um, sensing your gut sensing... your gut senses what your kid needs to hear, he's had a bad day... your gut senses on what that kid needs to hear, what he needs to eat, um, even.... it's like almost like... you're putting your hands on your kids just trying to feel your kid, something's wrong. You know, should we take him to the doctor, is the kid Ok, he's just having a crying day he's teething all those sort of thing but it, your gut sense of when you're around your kids, that's, that's huge.

**Father's Religion/Spirituality (FRS).** With a 63% participant rate, the FRS category had seven HE incidents, and is reflective of responses gathered from five participants. The FRS category was defined as *influence of father's religion, spirituality, and/or faith community on fathering*. The sub-classification of the FRS category are: (a) personal piety, spiritual discipline, relationship with God; (b) church community and social influence; and (c) teachings, beliefs, value systems from faith. It should be noted here that five of the eight participants interviewed identified themselves as practicing Christians and therefore religion/spirituality in this context is limited to teachings within the Christian tradition. Further, three of these five participants were from the same church. As information on spirituality was not required for the study, three participants did not express whether they had a religious affiliation.

In general, these five participants who expressed a religious affiliation explained how their faith/Christian belief has shaped their perception on fathering and how their

religious practice/teachings have increased their capacity to father effectively. One participant explained:

David: As a parent I'm trying to ask God for help and for direction so I'm kind of more in tuned with the way he wants me to raise my kids um, and, and a biblical way of raising my kids... and how I can show my love for them and in God's kind of way too, so that's been a big help for me.

Interviewer: What is it about that that you find helpful?

David: ... it's just being able to... you're reading about it and you're praying about it... another thing would be you're, you're kind of getting stuff from the Bible and everything is kind of written out in pretty much plain English for you right, um, and then also the fellowship too and just, ya know you have the fellowship of believers... I can't really specify one like... if it's a big passage or something but it's just it's just the knowing that God's there and and I can go to him with it right and He's never gonna be short of an answer. I'm always gonna receive guidance too.

Another participant explained:

Brian: Well I mean, (clears his throat) God himself obviously is uh, the narrative of, of the Christian tradition teaches a lot about parenting just inherently what does it mean, why do we call God the Father. There's a story there and that story tells us a little bit about what it means to be a father but I mean the trick with a lot of Christian scriptures is that it's a highly cultural contextual object and, ya know, uh... "spare the rod and spoil the child" uh is uh, was appropriate to ancient Christian society. I am not going to cane my children um, ya know for



disobediences. So you have to be, you have to be really careful of the way you deal with that tradition right...

... yeah I mean my Faith is a big part of my parenting but uh it's hard to really describe exact... ya know, specific things it's sort of like it infuses all aspects of my life. It is the principles that I think are really important as a parent and what I want to see in my kids is very much scripturally founded... So when I look at my kids and I say ya know I hope when they grow up that they are loving that they are kind that they're encouraging that they're forgiving that they're um... that they value justice that their, ya know, self-controlled and ya know. Uh, just the fruits of the spirit right, I'm getting that from the biblical scriptural tradition um, um and so yeah that's an influence, sure that's a positive influence. Yeah!

**Characteristic of Children (CoC).** The CoC category yielded a 63% participant rate, with five participants reporting that their children's attitude and/or behaviors along with other developmental qualities were significant factors in determining their capacity to bond with their child. The CoC was defined as *Influences on parenting from child characteristics and dynamic between father and child characteristics* and the subcategories are: (a) developmental stage/age, (b) gender, (c) personality/temperament, and (d) interests.

As seen in the examples below, some fathers reported that they were able to bond more effectively with their child if they were at a developmental age that allowed for greater father-child interaction. For example, this dad cited his children's disposition to be a factor in determining his level of interaction.

Stephen: We're really lucky we have two really happy kids I mean they smile and laugh constantly that's just how they are. I can see that my older one is more like my wife in terms of like the highs and lows and things like that. My younger one is definitely more balanced, a little more chill...

Interviewer: How does that affect how you relate to them in terms of parenting?

Stephen: Um, I I have a really, really great relationship with my older one it's kind of like... where as my younger one we're... I'm still starting to develop a relationship with her because um... she's nine-months and I try to like kind of, explain this to Carla, I said like as a dad you start to develop more of a relationship the more your kids can do...because like with a mom you have that instant relationship that instant bond but with a dad that needs to be developed. And so since I've just had more time with Nadine we have a really close relationship. She always like screams like "hello daddy" when I come in the door and runs and give me a hug and things like that...

**Personal Decision (PD).** The PD category was one of the more illuminating categories formed. Fathers who provided examples of incidents to support this category indicated a sense of being *ready* to undertake the challenges of fatherhood.

Fred: Ok, Um it's been extremely rewarding and very challenging at the same time. um I mean we, we made a very active decision to have kids it wasn't... it wasn't by accident by any means um so we had discussed it for a long time um even before we got married and we made the decision that um that we wanted to have kids and we actually... and kinda from that point it, it wasn't... didn't really

become tangible actually until like, my first um Nicole was actually there and so I'd say when she actually arrived then it really sink in...

Consistently, these participants spoke of approaching parenthood with consideration and planning which seemingly allowed them to fully and responsibly enter their roles as dads.

The PD category was defined as *sense of voluntary commitment and acceptance of role as father, both by deciding to be a father and deciding (inner consent) in the moment to enter role fully. PD has two Subcategories: (a) anticipatory (planning/deciding) and (b) entering fully into role intentionally.* The PD category had a participant's rate of 63% and yielded a total of nine HE incidents.

In addition to planning for the role of fatherhood, one participant spoke of a sense of purpose:

David: It's ya know it's really mostly positive, I mean I, I love it, it's, they are the reason I get up in the morning and they're the reason, well not the only reason, but uh, ya know they're, there when I have a rough day at work I know I can go home and, and they're gonna be there smiling at me and they don't care if I if I made a mistake at work or whatever right, so it's just, it's unbelievable, ya know it's pretty cool so...

Another participant articulated that undertaking the role of fatherhood was unplanned; however he made significant life changes after accepting this responsibility:

John: It just, ya know just kind of popped in there, it wasn't planned it just happened, um and then once the decision was made ya know it was like Wow! I'm gonna be a dad and I just, things kinda started to change in my mind and I

stopped going to parties and it just kinda changed my life around ready to be a dad, um, when he was born it was the most amazing thing ever, ya know, it was pretty awesome, and since then ya know, I've been pretty much the same, I mean it's, it's been rocky, but it's definitely the best thing I've ever done in my life, it feels like the greatest achievement ya know...

**Reflective Parenting (RP).** The RP category was identified by participants as being important for their ongoing efficacy in roles as fathers. Four fathers responded to this category with the general theme being intentionality in stepping back from their duties as fathers to further evaluate areas for improvement. RP was defined as *anything that reflects the value of fathering as derived from self-distancing from the role*. The category had a 50% participant rate. Curtis provides a salient example of this category:

Curtis: Yeah, let's say um, in some ways I I self-monitor my level of engagement, right, so uh (pause) I guess I'd just say that, ya know, I I try to keep aware of how much I'm actually engaging ya know, like so for example, I always give my kids their bath at night and sometimes, ya know, with the older one cause he just sort of plays in the bath all by himself playing with the toys and what not so sometimes I actually sit there and talk with him and engage like genuinely engage but then there's some other times when I'm, ya know, shaving my head or doing some sort of thing beside him and uh so sometimes I think well ok well am I actually, am i present with him?... ya know like uh, in almost in a counsellor client way right, ya know... Yeah you're in the room but you're not present.... So just sort of monitoring that and being aware of, of the fact that you can kind of uh you can spend time with somebody but you're not actually, like actually

engaging them ya know... so. Not to say that I need to be engaged with them all the time like that can be exhausting for anybody but just monitoring that and being aware of it....

**Extended Family Influence (EFI).** Incidents in this category were related to the contribution of extended family members and the impact of their support on participants' roles as fathers. EFI has three sub categories, these include: (a) grandparent generation, (b) quality of extended family relationship i.e. in-law support or conflict, (c) financial. Some participants described support as advice from their parents on parenting.

Stephen: Yeah, parenting tips [from participant's mother] I mean not so much with the relationship thing, but more for lack of a better word the physical thing. It's like actually like what you're putting into your kid and how they react to things like Ok, hey she just fell off the couch or something do we need to be worried about that or things like that. And also developmental things like should, should she be doing this yet? or is this pretty early that she's doing this um I mean those are kind of more, more minor things but it's just good to have that that knowledge base because you just know that she knows all that stuff.

Others recounted tangible supports (i.e. financial or time). The EF category had a 50% participant rate.

**Societal Influence (SI).** The final HE category defined as *Influences from levels of Bronfrenbenner's Ecological Theory*, reflects the impact of societal sway on fathering practices. This category has a 50% participant rate, with four fathers providing seven critical HE incidents. The identified incidents were broken in subcategories to include:

(a) government policy and support, (b) media, (c) community supports, and (d) stereotypes of fathering.

Some participants spoke of the impact of being part of a network of fathers that has positively shaped their involvement with their child

John: ...it's about the Dad's group and the stepping up and how that all formed, Um, he's [group mentor] kind of been a positive factor, like I've, I've always like if something comes up when we had our meetings regularly any way's I'd bring it up and I'd talk to him [group mentor] and I'd, we'd have a sound board and ya know things are pretty rough with Amanda and myself so I'll bounce things off of him and he's always been just a really great ear and he's always ya know if he hears something he'll say oh, you know he'll just kind of say the right thing and point me in the right direction um you know and through him seeing all the other fathers and all the other young guys that are going through the same thing I am or worse um... you know it's, it's like a network and it it's helped me be stronger, um getting together with those guys.

As Brian explains, media has also been effective in shaping or reinforcing his image of fatherhood:

Brian: ...to a far lesser extent but things that you see in mass media too ya know, when you watch movies and you watch TV shows um and you see what a parent can do or is expected to do I mean that teaches you something. I think more often it's just sort of a reinforcement, ya know or a contrast where you kind of go ooh, that's not what I want to do but uh in terms of positives yeah sometimes you see things in a show and you go oh that's really that's kind of cool I should do that.

### Hindering Categories

The following section provides a detailed overview of the six hindering categories that emerged from the data . As noted earlier (see Table 2) each of the 6 hindering categories were operationally defined and further broken down into subcategories. The table below details the hindering categories, number of incidents/percentage total, participant rate/percentage total, and provides an example for each of these. Similar to table 3, the categories are ordered on the basis of frequency of reported incidents and do not necessarily convey importance of incidents.

**Table 4**

#### *Hindering Categories*

Hindering Category	# of participants	% total	# of Incidents	% total
Responsibility (R-hin)	8	100	15	32
Father Characteristics (FC-hin)	7	88	19	40
Characteristics of Children (CoC-hin)	4	50	6	13
Mother/Father Relationships (MFR- hin)	3	38	3	6
Attachment (A-hin)	2	25	2	4
Father Religion/Spirituality (FRS-hin)	2	25	2	4

**Responsibility (R-hin).** Responsibility was earlier defined as a *Father's sense about what their role is "supposed" to be as fathers*. Similar to the HE category, the HI category of Responsibility yielded a participant rate of 100%, with all eight participants reporting challenges in finding a work/life balance. The category generated 15 incidents making it the second largest of the HI categories. All eight participants reported work vs.

home life tension and financial responsibility to be a primary factor hindering their level of parental involvement. Fred explains it this way:

Fred: Certainly taking my work home with me is a part. That is not just physical, you know its mental, right, and so... my personality is such that I am currently teaching 84 students, and not all of them have perfect things going on in their lives and so... you know, there is, there are students struggling with divorce with their parents, you know, with all sorts of difficult things and occasionally a student will, will pick me to talk to at lunch or whatever and I carry that..... that's, this idea of, of divided attention right so...., I've had it before where I am spending time with the kids but I am not really spending time with my kids because mentally I'm not focused because I am thinking about.... and sometimes its worries, you know the, the worries of life, so I am I'm sort of making Lego with Leonel but I am really going how the heck are we gonna pay the mortgage? You know... we were good and then the roof started to leak and now there is four grand that we weren't counting on, how are we gonna do it? So the nagging concerns of life can get into your head and now even when you are spending time you are not actually really spending time. You are going through the motions... right...

Other participants reported that challenges in meeting the demands of various life roles (i.e. dad as church worker, dad as husband, dad as provider (primary bread winner) and/or dad as home maker). The following examples provide a snapshot of experiences as reported by participants:



David: Because it stresses you out a bit um... with, with the way things they are and just esp.. I don't know if it's just in this region or whatever, it just seems like there's a... you get weighted down by all the bills and stuff like that too right but um... yeah I don't know, it can just uh pull you both ways cause you're, you're really trying to provide for your family like I would like them to have more than I had when I was growing up...

Curtis: ...just having other things to do like on weekends sometimes, ya know, one of my sons well both... will be like come play or something like that and I'll say, I will in a second, let me just ya know, um clean the dishes or whatever like there's just chores, work to be done yup, and uh without having someone else to do it you have to do it yourself. So that would be yeah, yeah like um, housework, like I guess that's probably housework... daily, daily chores.

Brian: I'm realizing that when I look at the impediments to parenting I tend to focus a heck of a lot more on my individual uh... I look at myself. Uh so for example probably the biggest thing that I always worry about as a parent is that I am so focused on um, uh, my career and my entertainment, that I don't spend enough time with my kids. I think those are probably the two, two big things...

**Father Characteristics (FC-hin).** With a participant rate of 88%, FC-hin yielded the category with the largest number of reported incidents, with seven participants reporting 19 incidents. Father Characteristics was defined as *personal characteristics of the father relating to personality/temperament* and was further broken into two subcategories: (a) Traits - temperament and personality and (b) states - fatigue, etc.

The FC category included incidents such as “not taking enough time for guy time”, “lack of self-discipline” fatigue, and being “not in the mood” for kids.

John provides an example of needing to take time away from his son as he sometimes have difficulty controlling his temper

John: I've mentioned the temper before, how I've adopted my dad's sort of temper and how I didn't want to pass that on, um, that's where... like when the interactions go on between me and Amanda and I flare up and I don't want to be around Silas that temper hinders me for sure, right because, I mean it, I knowing like, I know that I'm...I'm being short and I'm being frustrated and I know that if Silas is not in a good mood that it's gonna make me more upset and I will avoid that situation which means I'm taking time away from him, I mean. ya know.

Mark also provides an example of being fatigued which leads to him taking time away from being with his son:

Mark: I mean sometimes it's just you're just tired if I am gonna be honest, to be honest like just you deal with him for a little while I'm just gonna, ya know relax and get my mind off it Um...

...it's kind of just to get a break. For example on Sunday, I had to go replace the faucet, she [his wife] was off, we both had the day off, which was nice we just, I had to replace the faucet downstairs in the basement suite, not that I said before I'm ok I'm just tired, but it just kind of felt nice just to kind of get away for a bit and do something else and... but it sounds bad than to spend time with Luke (laughs), but ya know what I mean, ...it felt good to just to kind of get away from

the house and just kind of do something , some kind of mindless work of just kind of installing a faucet and just, get away for... it took me two hours.

**Mother/Father Relationship (MFR-hin).** The MFR-hin category had a 38% rate of response among participants when compared to its MFR-he counterpart (100% response rate). For the MFR-hin only 3 respondents rated their relationship with their partner as having a negative impact on their relationship with their children. Further, all 3 participants cited marital/co-parental tension to be the main culprit, thus implying that parental conflict takes away from time that could be spent with children. Participant 1 provides a salient example of this:

John: Um, and I mean the reason why I'm so adamant about trying to make things work, is if we're together then we're together with our son all the time and he has a full time family, if we split up it makes things way more complicated and, it'll directly result, ya know, affect my relationship with my son, Um... for example a couple weeks ago Amanda and I broke up...

...we broke up and I was like angry, ya know I took off every day and I'd take Silas with me 90% of the time and if I didn't take Silas with me I was a bad father Um she threatened me with custody..., when I'm there I do a lot, when I'm not there I only do what I'm supposed to. Ya know if she needs formula I'll go pick up formula and drop it off and if she needs ya know... and weekends were mine so I'd pick Silas up Friday night and drop him off Sunday night. It wasn't enough for me ya know so having that lack, like during the week I'd I wouldn't sleep ya know like I want to tuck my kid in and say goodnight and I want to wake

up and cook him breakfast like I do every morning and I just was, like, feeling empty ya know...

**Characteristics of Children (CoC-hin).** Several participants reported their children characteristics (i.e. developmental age/personalities) to be a factor in determining their level of involvement as fathers. CoC emerged as a category for both the HE and HIN categories. However, participant rate for the CoC-hin was 50%, in contrast to the 63% response rate noted for CoC-he. Further, within the CoC-hin participants' responses varied significantly with the child's developmental age being the number one reported factor determining level of paternal involvement within this category. Brian explains:

Brian: I I've been thinking a lot about this the last couple of days. I, I'm not a really little a kid person, uh, I I I mean and, and that, every time I think of it I think that's awful. Uh, I love my kids, there's no question about that and I think that kids do the cutest things and I love that and I love the stage that we're at uh and I know that when they get older there's all these things that are gonna happen that ya know I'll think back and think uh I wish they were ya know 2 or 3 again or whatever. .. Some people they spend time around little kids and they get energized by them, I get drained by them.

...I love the cute things my two year old does but she is soooooo exhausting (whispers exhaustedly), She is soooooo tiring (emphasis)....

Aaaaahhh... I am looking forward to my kids being teenagers, which I think is the reverse of a lot of parents laughs... But aaaah there so many times where I watch and its happened more and more over the last couple of years where I think I

should be playing with my kids right now I should get in there and you know do the silly voices and play along with their games for whatever reason it just, it doesn't appeal to me, it doesn't work for me...

Another father reported:

Mark: um...maybe in the beginning not as much cause that's when mom, her duties kind of... mom as far as feeding and she was off work right for mat leave and so she is off work, and kind of natural... so she is more the primary caregiver, I mean I was around as much as I could be, as far as helping out with diapers and you know I'd, I'd give her, I'd give her a night off on the weekend, right, just so that she could relax. So I still feel like I was... and she says so too that she is.. that I have been a pretty good, pretty good help along the way... As he gets older and as he's becoming more of a little person running around and building that, you know, a little connection right

Interviewer: About what age did it change you think?

Mark: Um... I guess just when they're out of the baby phase and there into more, little bit more interaction, right? ...When they are looking at you and smiling whatever... what does that make them? 4 or 5 months is? And then there is... obviously I love them when they are babies.

Interviewer: Oh yeah

Mark: but they are little milk to poop converters (laughs)

Interviewer: (Laughs) yeah

Mark: sometimes they honestly just feels like more of a chore than... laughs  
...right?

Other respondents spoke of CoC hindering incidents including personality and gender differences, the latter of which is noted within father/daughter relationships.

Others indicated the child's temperament to be a factor.

**Attachment (A-hin).** Within the hindering category *attachment* also emerged as a theme for study participants. In contrast to the helping category of attachment, it is important to note that attachment here refers to incidents fathers report as stunting their capacity to develop their desired attachment with their child. The category yielded a response rate of 25%. Incidents within this category included lack of connecting with child and not taking the time to appreciate their child:

Fred: Human nature plays a part, we don't appreciate what we have, you know, till it's gone, I didn't appreciate toddlers and cool that was until I am at the stage now where I am not gonna have a toddler anymore right.. I don't appreciate the fact right now that my kids are home all the time, until they start going: I'm going to my friend's house, I'm going to my friend house. I'm going there to eat, can I go on vacation with them, you know, I really don't want to go on family vacations anymore cause its lame right... um and so to some extent you also, you also steal from yourself in that what happens is you, you go through the motions you let the minuteness of life push you down and then you look back and go we just did a whole year and for a large trunk of the time, I went through the motions and I didn't take time to smell the roses, I didn't, I didn't enjoy right, um my oldest shall never be 7 again, she'll never be 6 again, she'll never be 5 again, she'll never be 4 again.

**Father's Religion/Spirituality (FRS-hin).** FRS also emerged earlier as a category under the helping categories. For FRS-hin category, the participants' rate is lower than that of its FRS-he counterpart with only two participants (25% response rate) reporting their religion/spirituality as hindering. In fact, a closer look at the incidents that emerged within this category reveals that one participant saw himself as not being devoted enough to his spiritual practices, which, in turn, does negatively affect his fathering practices.

Mark: I had mentioned before my own, my own faith I know could be stronger um, as far as you know personal devotions and setting time aside to read the Bible um things like that I know I can improve on. How they've hindered... just by, ya know, just being that spiritual example um... We do our devotions around the table um and we definitely incorporating that into Luke's life as much as possible... um I'm just saying I know like my own personal faith could be could be a little bit stronger.

Interviewer: How would that help you if it was stronger, that's one way of looking at it.

Mark: I guess to be more confident in in in my faith as far as, um knowing my knowledge of the bible I guess is an example um cause I can see him having questions ya know... become more knowledgeable about the Bible I think would help ya know just transferring that information to him right with anything that, that comes up ya know in later years.

In contrast, the other participant within this category expresses what seems to be an involvement in his church which in turn leads to him not finding enough time to be present at home with his children...

Brian: Church council and visits and ya know council meetings and stuff like that and often a lot of that stuff happens after the kids have gone to bed and it's no big deal but, but you, you add it all together and it's, it's pressure on time right and uh so that leaves less time and uh that's the postmodern existence right is just so many things... so many things.

Finally, two of the 47 critical hindering incidents did not meet participatory requirements. Therefore, as is customary within CIT methodology, these incidents were omitted from the study.

### **Wish List Items**

This section provides detail of the Wish List incidents that emerged from the data. The table below provides an overview of these four Wish List categories, number of incidents/percentage of total incidents, number of participant/ percentage of total, and examples of each identified wish list item.

**Table 5**

*Wish List Categories showing participant rate, number of incidents and percentage total for each.*

Wish List Category	# of participants	% Total	# of Incidents	% Total
Responsibility (R-wl)	7	88	12	44
Father Characteristics (FC-wl)	5	63	7	26
Extended Family Influence (EFI-wl).	3	38	3	11



Father Religion/Spirituality (FRS-wl)	2	25	2	7
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**Responsibility.** Similar to the HE and HIN categories, responsibility emerged as the largest of all seven Wish List categories. R-WL had an 88% participant response rate with a total of 12 incidents forming this category. A closer look at the items within the R-WL category shows that these fathers had a keen sense of duty to their children and families in general. What is most noticeable is the interplay between the various life roles (i.e. father/husband/teacher/provider etc.) and the fathers' articulated desire to bring harmony to the various roles for which they felt a sense of responsibility.

Respondents to this category cited a number of areas they believe would have been helpful in enhancing efficacy in their roles as fathers. These included financial stability, more time, and more money. Several fathers also commented on the difficulty in achieving appropriate work/life balance, as they found work to be a significant time stealer. One father explained:

Stephen: Obviously less hours of work would allow me to help out more at home um, I think everybody always wishes for more money (laughs) so but that's a very very minor thing. Um,

Interviewer: how would less hours at work help?

Stephen: well it would allow me to be home more, to help out more with household things to help with the cleaning cooking, those day to day things that um fall on my wife all the time because I'm at work so much.

Interviewer: What about more money?

Stephen: More money would like, it's a very trivial thing, like if we had more money we could hire a cleaning lady to do all the cleaning instead of my wife having to do it. Or we could, um, um, even buy a bigger house to have more space for the kids that things don't become cluttered and chaotic um as fast or things along those lines um or.

Another participant explained:

Fred: If we are gonna use a word like “wish” then I would go, yeah well certainly.

You know... I wish um that when I left work. I didn't bring my work with me...

Interviewer: You would just leave work at work?

Fred: right... but it isn't a reality of my profession, and if... it's a calling anyway, and you know... I am doing what I know I need to do, um and so... you know I if... I wish we that you know we weren't so always focused so much on money then we could certainly focus more on some other... dancing in the living room that we do not as often as we should...

**Father Characteristic (FC-wl).** FC-wl was the second largest category within the Wish List categories. FC-wl had a participant rate of 63% with seven critical incidents. As indicated by its operational definition, responses under this category were reflective of a father's desire to enhance personal characteristics and/or traits in light of their perceived paternal functioning. For some participants this meant simply having enough energy to play with their kids and for others it meant being diligent in accessing resources pertaining to paternal involvement or simply becoming more focused and organized in their various day-to-day roles. Donovan explains:

Donovan: I think a wishlist for me would be whenever I notice something like, something needs to be done for me this shift, because I am so, such a focus orientated person, like I know there is things around the house that need to be fixed, all these little things in life you now things that the kids need. You know I need to hang pictures or whatever, those things are of the kids so that I look at them and create closer bonds (chuckles) but for me to come in the house and like to have all these focuses in life. Like at work, or making sure to wrestle with the kids, but learning how to focus very hard on some of the needs of the house and needs of um the things that are important to do, that the kids need cause those things often kinda get pushed to the side.

The FC-wl seemingly builds on the FC-hin items in that fathers who reported certain traits as hindering generally highlighted the opposite of these traits as characteristics they would like to see in themselves or wished they possessed. For example, under the FC-hin category John reported his temper to be problematic as it sometimes hinders his relationship with his child. In contrast, however, when asked about something he wished he had, he reported:

John: I could use a little more patience um, you know I've mentioned my temper um, sometimes I can be pretty impatient, I mean there are times when I'm rock solid and nothing can bring me down and I just (exhales) relax and I stay level all the way um... Patience is huge, m.. can't have enough of it, if I could be patient 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and never fluctuate then I would be happier, it's probably impossible but...

... and sometimes I just need to step away and I don't want to feel like I need to step away from my little man ya know like I want to be strong enough that I can stay patient through anything and ya know just stand there

**Extended Family Influence (EFI-wl).** EFI was also suggested as a WL category by some participants. With a 38% participant rate, three of eight respondents indicated a desire to have additional family support, citing several areas where support could be helpful. One participant indicated a desire to have a conversation with his father around parenting

David: I guess for starters it would be... maybe if my dad had a talk to me about that kind of stuff, more beforehand, but see and that's, that's kind of one side of it but on the other hand it also kind of helped me see how I didn't want to be to my son.

Another participant remarked that spending more time with extended family would help in alleviating the stress of balancing multiple roles while increasing marital happiness

Stephen: that's an easy one if we had more outside help... because that would take more stress off my wife which would in turn take more stress off me. Most of my stress gets channelled through my wife (laughs) so I mean it's, I've always said like when she's happy, I feel happy I don't know why that's just kind of the dynamic of our relationship...

**Father Religion/Spirituality (FRS-wl).** The two individuals (25% participant rate) who placed religion/spirituality on their *Wish List* articulated a desire to grow in their faith. Brian explains:

Brian: I wish I was a more spiritually mature person that, um, would more clearly overflow into my kid's life...I do wish for that. I wish there was a deeper emotional intensity to my relationship with God that my kids could see more clearly.

Donovan on being asked about his wish list articulated:

Donovan: Increasing my relationship with God, growing that as much as I can,

Interviewer: How would that help you to be a better dad?

Donovan: um, exact... kind of basically the same question of a... like you were saying things that have helped you be involved and by being a, a Godly man you know being able to be a good dad, just loving them like... I mean God pours out his love on you, um, and just the way that, uh the more, the closer I become with God, the more I can love my kids. That's it really!

Finally, 32 incidents were identified under the Wish List theme. Five of the 32 incidents did not meet study criteria and were therefore omitted from the table. In all, four categories were formed from 27 incidents. Though these five omitted incidents were not reported in the Results section, they were considered and discussed during the Discussion section in Chapter 5.

## **Recommendations**

In addition to the aforementioned HE, HI, and WL categories, participants were also asked to provide a list of recommendations to potential and practicing fathers. For some of these dads, this was an opportunity to impart a practiced value that has shaped their interaction with their own child. In all, 29 recommendations were received from seven fathers. Each recommendation was further assigned to an existing HE, HIN, or WL category; however, as this not a customary ECIT practice, the list of

recommendations were not categorized according to participant rate. Recommendations were ordered (in the table below) to show frequency of items suggested by participants.

**Table 6**

*Recommendation Categories showing number of recommendations, number of times recommended, and examples of each.*

Recommendation Category	Total # of Recommendations	Examples	# of times Recommended
Attachment	14	Be actively engaged with your kids	5
		Spend quality time with your kids	4
		Talk with your kids	4
Father Characteristics (FC-r)	9	Show love to your family	1
		You will mess up, ask for forgiveness from kids	1
		Have realistic expectations of self	1
		Patience	1
		Fathers be a kid yourselves	1
		Care about what you are doing	1
		Be aware of what you are modeling to you kids	1
		Allow your kids to be kids	1
		Let kids lead	1
		Have realistic expectations of kids	1
		Develop a mentorship relationship with another dad	1
		Take a fathering course	1
Social Influence	3	Have realistic expectation of what fatherhood is	1

Responsibility (R-r)	1	Discipline your kids	1
Mother/Father Relationship (MFR-r)	1	Work closely with your wife	1

As seen in the table above, five categories were coded from the list of recommendations, with the *Attachment* and *Father Characteristics* ' categories emerging as the largest of the categories.

**Attachment (A-r).** The A-r category appeared largest with 14 of 28 recommendations fitting neatly into this category. Further, within A-r both “spending time with kids” and “active engagement” were repeatedly recommended by several participants, which is suggestive of the idea that study participants see this as one of the more important aspects to paternal involvement. As one participant explained:

Fred: Yeah... absolutely... you have to spend time with your kids to build relationship right and we talked about that, if you don't spend time, then relationship deteriorates, you have to make time. uh m we make time within our lives for what's valuable to us and so I might tell everybody that I love my kids and, and... but I am golfing all the time, my actions indicate that i love golf... right... and not my kids.

This participant also explained that in addition to time with kids, fathers should be careful to be actively engaged as well. As he explained active engagement is more than just being present in the room; rather, engagement should be interactive and should be repeated often:

Fred: I guess, being self-aware of whether you're engaging with your kids and I guess going back to that presence thing that, ya know, there's a difference

between sitting watching T.V. in the same room and actually engaging with your kids, big difference. Yeah! I think that would be one of the prime ones actually cause I don't... I wonder if a lot of people are actually really all that aware of it or they, they don't really practice it, ya know? Well I'm home with my kids but I'm not really, ya know...

Another participant explained:

Brian: because our society is really, really busy, we're really good at distractions and research has shown over and over again that we are actually much less proficient at multi-tasking than we think we are, and relationships are built um, less through any specific action than just repeated interaction. Ya know it could be playing golf, it could be watching T.V. it could be, ya know, there's any number of different things but um if you don't spend that time together um there's all kinds of myriads of possible cost of interactions that aren't gonna happen..

**Father Characteristics (FC-r).** The second major category (FC-r) yielded 9 recommendations, with emphasis on a father's stance towards his child. It was noted that no specific recommendation was repeated within this category; rather, there was a diverse span of incidents including suggestions regarding a father's stance towards his child, attitude towards self, and in general, approach towards parenting. The following examples provide an overview of some of the recommendations within this category.

David: And ya know what too is, is being a kid yourself, that's huge because you're just... Yeah, get down on your hands and knees and be a horse for a while, ya know what I mean right, running around and wrestle with them or jump in a puddle with them or whatever right, because that's... and when you're playing



with them too, again that's another..., they see how you're reacting to situations and obviously if you're reacting in a in a good way they're gonna learn from that...

Stephen: Um, I guess, care, care a little bit more because I think um and think about what uh, what you're actually doing and stuff like that because I think um, I think a lot of dad's actually just don't think about what they're doing um they just kind of go through the motions and they treat it as tasks. I mean I'm guilty of this sometimes too, of just thinking about the tasks of um of parenting instead of, as I talked about the holistic approach about the big picture because if you get too wrapped up in those individual tasks it takes a lot of the joy out of it to, you forget the great thing about being a dad Um because parenting again as I've, I've said this a number of times to a number of people I've met, I mean it's the hardest thing that you'll ever do in your life but it's the most worthwhile and if you lose that big picture um then you lose that worthwhile part you just go on the hard part and so I think probably taking a step back and thinking about things will help you greatly.

Fred: the media is awful... you know, in the media, teachers, dads, almost every male character in the media is one of two things their either brilliant and inspirational or completely useless right... so you've got the you know, the teacher on stand by me who inspires an entire class and you've got Homer Simpson (chuckles) right... there is no average dads on television

...there isn't and so you're, you're either you know Ray Romano in everybody loves Raymond and you're an idiot and completely insensitive all of the time or you're a Bill Cosby and you are the greatest dad that ever walked the

earth who always has the right answer and story for everything, and the reality is you are gonna be both every day! and so...

Interviewer: some days you will hit it out of the park and, and on other days you will just...

Fred: Absolutely....absolutely yeah... if I was meeting a new, you know, husband or dad who said you know, you know, what is it that you would like to know? I would say those things, and I would say yep. Have realistic expectations of yourself. you know, A) you are gonna mess up but B) its hard work, all the time and you have to remind yourself to be consistent, you have to remind yourself to, to you know, to put your kids first, you have to remind yourself to do all of these things, right.

**Additional Recommendations.** The remaining 3 categories had a combined total of 5 recommendations with 3 of these recorded under the Societal Influence (SI-r) category and the remaining 2 respectively assigned to the Mother/Father Relationship (MF-r) and Responsibility R-r) categories. The SI-r category had a variety of suggestions including gaining mentorship on fathering, becoming a student on fathering, and having realistic expectations of fatherhood.

Donavan provided the recommendations for the final 2 categories, suggesting that “working closely with your wife” and “disciplining your kids” (MF-r and R-r respectively) are important process in the role of paternal involvement.

### **Summary of Recommendations**

At the heart of the list of recommendations is the notion that fathering is a dynamic process requiring ongoing appraisals, reflection, and refinement. Further, it is

apparent that fathers within this study place significant value on spending time with their child as a means of enhancing healthy relationship, and in general, overall healthy child development. Perhaps more important, however, is the quality of time spent together. As suggested by several participants, fathers should actively engage their child as this is paramount for shaping the father-child relationship.

In addition to building healthy attachment, participants also suggested the importance of fathers attending to their internal processes. Here participants suggest the notion of cultivating a right attitude to towards parenting, which includes caring about your role as a father, affording your child the permission to be themselves, and allowing yourselves humility to ask forgiveness when you do mess up. These recommendations are seemingly formulated on a wealth of experience and they offer a platform from which fathers can appropriately and effectively enter into and manage their level of involvement with their child.

### **Summary of Results**

This research uses the ECIT approach to elicit participants' perspectives of factors they found helpful or hindering to their roles as fathers. Additionally, participants were asked to share their beliefs about what would have been helpful in promoting involvement with their child. A total of 11 categories were formed from 206 incidents – 10 helping, six hindering, and four wish list. Several categories were repeated throughout all three HE, HI, and WL areas. In fact, throughout the study, there was a strong relationship between categories, with several emerging with a helping/hindering pole. It was also noted that WL categories were generally related to hindering categories in that

participants' *wishes* often reflected a desire for something they believe would have helped them overcome deficits highlighted as a hindering item.

Categories with this helping/hindering tension are Responsibility, Characteristics of Children, Mother/Father Relationship, Attachment, and Father Religion/Spirituality. Father Characteristics was the only category to not carry a HE counterpart. Only one of the four Wish List Categories (Extended Family Influence) was repeated under the Hindering Categories. The remaining three categories (Responsibility, Extended Family Influence, and Father Religion/Spirituality) were all repeated under the HE categories. Helping categories not reflected on either HIN or WL categories are Positive and Negative Role Models, Personal Decision, Reflective Parenting, and Societal Influence.

From the self-report of participants it is noted that there are myriad experiences that promote or detract from paternal involvement; these include fathers fulfilling the role of a son, friend, husband, employee, consumer, Christian, being influenced by role models, etc. One might argue that in addition to these roles there is an inherent disposition to fathering, as reflected under the PD and RP categories. This innate *dad* quality perhaps helps to buffer the complexities of fathering; however all eight fathers repeatedly spoke of the pressure to successfully navigating multiple life roles and the weight of these roles on promoting or stunting their level of parental involvement.

## **Chapter 5 Discussion**

This particular study has three major tenets that guided the research: First, the desire to allow fathers to be the voices behind deeper understanding of experiences they perceive as important in promoting or stunting their ability to interact with their children. Second, this study contributes to a new wave of literature that will increase our understanding of factors that promote father-child engagement, thereby positively impacting the discipline of psychology with implications for theory and practice. Third, to expand the notion of responsible fathering to include areas outside of the work-home tension, which is often put forward in traditional views as challenges to paternal involvement.

### **Summary of Research Problem**

The findings from this research underscore the notion that fathers do identify the themes of availability, responsibility, and gender differences between fathers and mothers as important factors in determining their involvement with their child. However, in as much as they form the backdrop for paternal involvement, these themes are simply the platform from which one should understand the larger context of paternal involvement. This study highlights the interconnectivity of these themes and sheds light on the challenges that are inherent to dads as they navigate the myriad roles in which they find themselves.

As discussed in chapter 2, Pleck (2007) uses Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model to highlight the interconnectivity of domains that affect the father-child relationship. Of significance are moderating effects of various systems on the father-child connection. Goodsell et al. (2010) suggest that traditional researchers are quick to point to the conflict

between work and family roles per se in explaining fathers' availability to their children. They argue, however, that ordinary people have a different understanding of fathering and that fathering is more a product of wrestling with multiple interrelated contexts that remain in a state of flux.

Similar to Pleck (2007) and Goodsell et al. (2010), the findings from this research underscore the notion that fathers are constantly attempting to harmonize multiple interconnected and fluctuating life roles. While some fathers struggle with achieving harmony, others seem adept at bringing greater accord to these roles. Undoubtedly, the interplay between work and home appears as one of the more salient themes in this study. However, fathers also report challenges in harmonizing roles such as father-husband, father-friend, and father-Christian, among several others. Thus, for fathers in this study, it is this interplay of role connectivity that helps to promote or stunt their paternal practices.

### **Key Findings**

The findings from this research underscore Horn's (1999) and Lamb et al.'s (1987) earlier concepts of masculinity and paternal involvement. In addition, this research further expands on these notions providing an argument for factors that promote or hinder paternal involvement. Several categories emerged as essential for promoting father-child relations. These categories are reflected within the following key areas: (a) Responsibility and Commitment, (b) Attachment, and (c) Mother-Father Dyadic principles. These findings also highlight the interconnectivity of domains which were earlier argued by Goodsell et al. (2010) and Doherty, Kouneski, and Erickson (1998).

**Responsibility and Commitment.** Fitting with the literature (Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson, 1998; Goodsell et al., 2010; Horn, 1999; Lamb et al., 1987), *Responsibility* was one of the major themes noted within all three (HE, HIN, and WL) categories. Under the helping category, several fathers expressed a sense of commitment to varying roles (i.e. husband, church attendee, professional, father, disciplinarian) and the sense of responsibility towards fulfilling the duties of these roles. For these participants, effective fathering means not only completing direct father-child duties (i.e. playing with the child or emotionally availability) but responsible fathering also means providing financially for their family, accessing parental resources in order to strengthen parental strategies, and for others, being part of a paternal group where they are able to receive mentorship and guidance from other fathers.

Traditional notions of responsibility include fathers operating within instrumental roles, which saw dads being playing the role of disciplinarian within the home. Researchers such as LaRossa (1997), however, postulate a cultural shift with fathers moving more towards care giving roles within the family. In as much as fathers within this study report a greater sense of emotional connection with their children, seemingly there is the sense of *instrumental* duty, which was also articulated by some participants. Several fathers reported feeling responsible to provide discipline and guidance to their children. Further, some of these fathers indicated that their partner did play a role in guiding children; however, in general, the onus was on them to ensure that children were being adequately prepared for future life challenges.

Perhaps most revealing is the notion that some fathers reported that their sense of responsibility was shaped and modeled by their own interaction with their father [and

sometimes mother]. In contrast, however, some participants indicated a *reverse role modeling* that was instrumental in shaping their involvement with their kids. For example, one participant indicated that he felt his father's disciplinary measures to be too harsh and therefore decided not to emulate these practices with his own kids. A similar concept was found by Habib (2012) who explained that fathers who perceive their parental relationship to be inadequate or unsatisfactory were driven towards a closer relationship with their child(ren). This idea of reverse role-modeling further highlights the point that fathers are constantly interacting with their environment and are selectively choosing processes to be adapted in enhancing their relationship with their child.

Under the *Hindering* Categories it was noted that fathers generally reported a tension between fulfilling parental duties versus work or other extracurricular responsibilities. This idea is also well supported in literature (Reddick et al., 2012) in that fathers often feel torn as they are wearing several hats. For fathers within this study the greatest challenge in harmonizing these roles was expressed as a struggle to be fully present physically and emotionally when engaging the role of dad.

A closer look at the HE categories reveals several links between the fathers' sense of responsibility and commitment and other formed categories. For instance, some fathers reported that prior to becoming a dad they [and their partner] had discussed, planned for, and decided on taking on the role of fathering. For these fathers, the commitment and responsibility of fathering was a *Personal Decision* that enhanced their level of involvement. This point is further illustrated by Habib (2012) who references the works of Aitchison, Russell, and Pedersen (1990), Cowan and Cowan (1987), Dickie (1987), and Russell et al. (1999); she explains paternal involvement is determined to be



positively influenced by a fathers psychological investment in his role as father and in his commitment to his child.

This sense of responsibility and commitment was further met with acceptance of the role of fatherhood, which led to dads being intentional about caring for their child. Fathers who indicated this sense of responsibility and commitment also articulated the notion of *self-distancing* from their roles as dad to monitor their level of involvement with their children. Additionally, the practice of reflective parenting also fuelled a sense of pride in their role as fathers. A similar concept was reported by Hayes and Jones (2010) who found men were motivated to achieve higher levels responsibility and maturity upon becoming fathers.

Brotherson, Dollahite, and Hawkins (2005) purport that many fathers seek to connect with their children through spiritual practices. They further explain that spiritual activity is important for many men in shaping their perspectives on fathering, which is seen in their efforts to provide their children with direction and meaning through spiritual beliefs, rituals, communities, and practices. Several fathers within this studied articulated feeling that it was their responsibility to spiritually lead their families. For many, distilling Christian beliefs and ensuring religious practices were important in morally shaping and preparing their children for the future.

In as much as these fathers felt responsible for spiritually leading their families, some fathers reported that their religious devotions and practices were at time hindrances in that they would become over-involved in their church duties at the expense of spending time with their families. Other fathers reported feeling ill-equipped to appropriately lead their children due to a lack of spiritual maturity and further expressed a

desire to become more grounded in their faith. For the fathers who spoke of their spirituality, spiritual aptitude was essential in that it provided them with a moral platform from which they would lead their family. For some it provided a compass for their relationship with their children and family in general; while for others it is a point of connection with their child.

The findings from this research suggest that a father's sense of responsibility is certainly not limited to work-life balance. These findings underscore similar ideas put forward by Goodsell et al. (2010) and Doherty, Kouneski, and Erickson (1998). Undoubtedly, fathers feel the pressures of harmonizing multiple roles; reflecting the reciprocity of relationships between person (father/child) in family, work, neighborhood, society, and in a larger context, life (Bronfenbrenner, 1993/1994). Putting forward a similar position, Doherty et al. (1998) explain that fathering is a multilateral process including fathers, children, mothers, extended family, community, and institutions. From this perspective, it is clear that fathers face daily the challenge of adequately meeting the demands of these roles. As such, paternal involvement level is influenced by beliefs, attitudes, motivation, and behaviors.

Finally, the Wish List categories that relate to responsibility speak to myriad desires of fathers. Perhaps most salient is inherent tension that is encountered as fathers grapple with the dynamics of multiple life roles. It is also evident that fathers are indeed wanting to cultivate this sense of responsibility and commitment, whether through appropriate role modeling, improved finances, spiritual influences, or through finding time to reflect on their roles as fathers. Perhaps Brian puts it best:

Interviewer: you're talking about having quite a few extracurricular activities that you're engaged in. What if you never had those - Would that change do you think?

Brian: Uh, if I dropped church and I dropped social life, I don't have much of one but uh if I dropped everything other than just work and family uh. Ya I'm sure I would spend more time with my girls. But we would become more insular as people as a family and I don't think that's healthy either so um... ya no I'm I'm no I think it's more just a question of balance and it's just hard.

**Attachment.** Lamb (1975) purports that researchers who sought to understand the effects of parents on child development often ignored paternal influences. Further, researchers such as Rohner (2001), Pleck (2007), and Lamb (1975, 1997) have argued that father-child interaction is essential for child development. Similarly, the findings of this study underscore the notion that fathers do consider their interaction with their child as essential for their growth and development. For several study participants, father-child attachment took on varied forms, some of which included time with the child, sharing common interest and experiences, felt love, attunement, nurturing, and emotionally supporting children. Several fathers articulated a felt desire to engage with their child, which seemingly formed a prerequisite for actual engagement.

As seen earlier, the Attachment-HE category had a one hundred percent participant rate with each father providing multiple examples of ways they facilitate attachment with their child. Most salient is the sense of *time* allowed for father-child interaction (i.e. shared activities including play, reading together, dancing, etc.), which was underscored by all eight participants. Participants suggested that time be further

classified as availability to child and quality of interaction between themselves and their child. Both of these positions are consistent with research done by Pleck (2007) and Hayes and Jones (2010).

If quality time is seen as a determinant for healthy father-child interaction, then the inherent family/work/life roles tension that was earlier highlighted might serve as a hindrance to fathers spending quality time with their children. In fact, under the responsibility category several fathers highlighted difficulty in finding time as a challenge to their engagement. However, though several fathers listed time as hindering, the findings from this research suggest these fathers are finding ways to overcome this deficit to foster healthy father-child connection. Habib (2012) reported a similar finding in her work on *Paternal Involvement and Identity* where she suggested that work role and time at work did not significantly affect a father's involvement.

Evidenced by the Attachment-HIN category, only 2 fathers reported attachment difficulties. Further, the two fathers who reported attachment difficulties cited "lack of connection" and "failure to appreciate" as primary factors that stunt attachment advancement. Closer scrutiny suggests that though fathers perceive difficulty in harmonizing demands of various life roles (i.e. appropriating time to various roles), seemingly they are finding ways to reconcile these factors to bring attention to areas they believe are most important to their engagement (i.e. spending quality time with child so as to build healthy attachment with their child).

Brotherson, Dollahite, and Hawkins (2005) suggest that fathers have the innate capacity to connect with their children and that this capacity is present at birth as fathers respond to their children's need for food, safety, and protection. It is within this context

that the father-child bond is cultivated and developed as fathers seek to meet the needs of their offspring. Several areas of this study point to this concept. For some participants this desire to foster father-child bond is cultivated through their practice of self-distancing. *Reflective parenting* is therefore understood as fathers devoting time to periodically consider their level of parental involvements thereby gaining a sense of how well they are doing as a father and whether there are areas to be improved upon.

It was interesting to note that fathers who felt a strong attachment towards their child(ren) often reported an increased sense of awareness towards the needs of these children. Some fathers further reported that their child's behavior and emotions would often improve or deteriorate depending on whether the child had spent quality time with his or her dad. These findings do fit with Brown, Mangelsdorf, and Neff (2012), who studied father involvement, paternal sensitivity and attachment security in children three years of age and younger, and found paternal sensitivity to be key in promoting high quality father-child relationship.

Evidently, the most salient theme within the attachment category was fathers' availability for interacting with their children. As noted earlier, availability was, at times, mediated by other responsibilities and time constraints; however, fathers seemed able to appropriate time necessary for bonding with their child. Bonding often took the form of one-on-one active play, father-child special moments, and/or providing the time for kids to talk about their day. Similar to Brotherson et al. (2005), the pattern within the data suggests most participants favor contact that fostered physical interaction, sharing of mutual interest, and personal conversation. Additionally, several fathers spoke to traits that are inherent in their disposition towards their children or conversely, their child's

disposition towards them (i.e. love for kids traits, dad's temper and/or child's developmental age), which made it easier or hindered their capacity to connect with their child.

**Mother-Father Dyadic Differences (HE/HIN).** The moderating effects of mothers on paternal-involvement also emerged as an important theme for this research. This concept was also shared by researchers Easterbrooks, Barrett, Brady, and Davis (2007) who highlighted the importance of maternal influence on paternal involvement. Further, it was noted that though participants reported themselves to be actively engaged with their children, primary care was often relegated to mothers with fathers playing more of a supportive role. This concept fits with Dempsey and Hewitt's (2012) notion that fathers often played the role of "helper" when compared to mothers who were deemed primary caregiver within the parental team.

A closer look at the aforementioned HE/HIN categories reveals that fathers do perceive their relationship with their partner to be significant in shaping their level of involvement with their child, with all eight participants reporting that their partner contributed positively to their involvement with their child. Several participants reported that their partner in general was encouraging and that this encouragement created a sense of pride as they engaged their role as fathers. Similar to Easterbrook et al. (2007) and Corwyn and Bradley (1999), data from this study suggests that father involvement is particularly linked to the quality of the mother-father relationship. This was particularly evident when viewing the MFR-hin category, as participants who reported on this category cited marital tension as the main reason for not engaging with their child.

Fitting with the literature (Corwyn & Braley, 1999; Lamb, 1975), some fathers reported gender specific roles, which saw both themselves and their partner operating within traditional instrumental vs. expressive roles. One father explains the impact of gender specific roles on his family:

she cooks for us, no she does I mean, she does her strengths and I mean you know..., she lets me be the man, she respects me that way and by her respecting me as the man I feel like I can be the man and I can actually win, that's a big one.

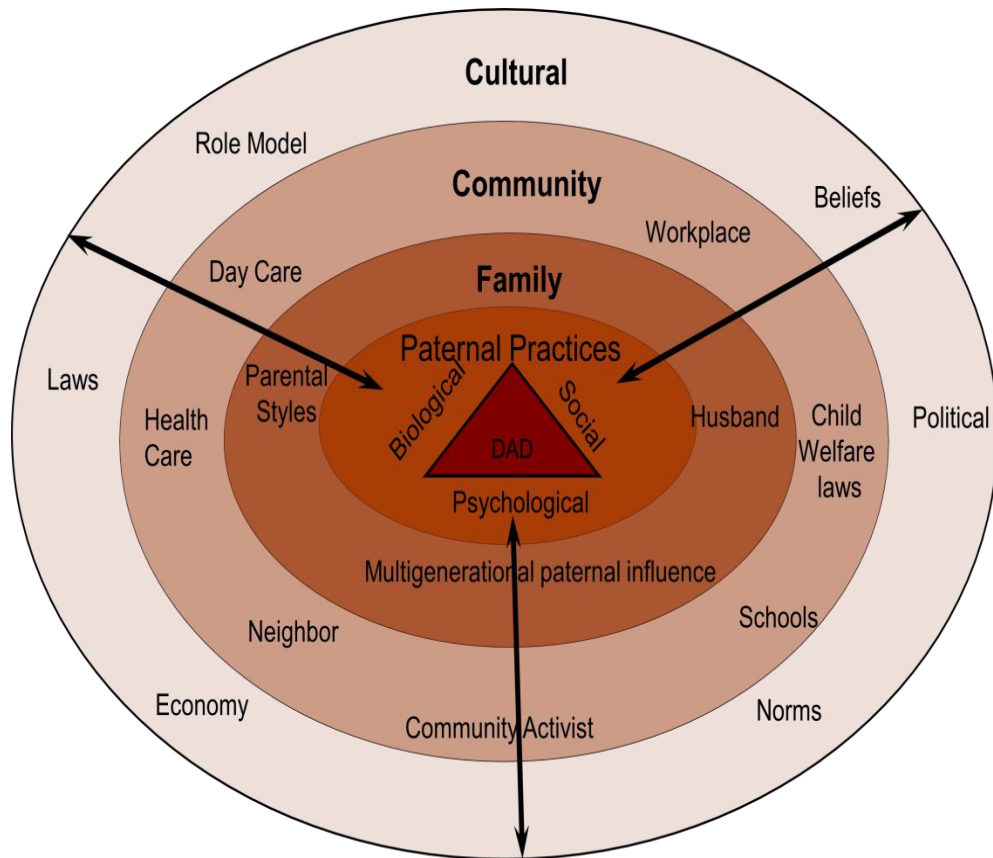
In general fathers did not report mothers themselves to be barriers to paternal involvement; rather the findings suggest that marital tension played a significant role in mediating levels of paternal involvement. Of importance is the idea that fathers who were in conflict with their partner felt the need to remove themselves from the home environment and essentially from interacting with their children.

Participants in this study reported that their partner's support and encouragement were effective in promoting or stunting their level involvement with their child. Within the context of marriage it is apparent that a dad is significantly affected by the relationship he shares with his partner, which in turn impacts the relationship he has with his child. Grych (2001) explains that a father's investment in his parenting role is, at times, mediated by the degree to which his need is being met in the marital relationship. Fathers like to be encouraged and recognized for their efforts. With this in mind one might argue that mothers wanting to see greater involvement from their spouse may find it effective to positively reinforce their [a father's] actions of involvement. The reverse is also true, Grych explains; fathers become less involved with their children if they are not satisfied with their marriage.

**Fatherhood Harmony / Ecological System.** Pleck (2007) and Goodsell et al. (2010) purport the idea of fatherhood harmony in enhancing our understanding of paternal involvement and the multiple roles fathers navigate daily. Findings from this research underscore the notion of fatherhood harmony positing this to be a better understating of paternal involvement in contrast to earlier models (Lamb, 1975) that examined the tension between fathers work and family life alone.

This notion of role interconnectivity and its impact on paternal involvement is further reflected within a father's ecology. As Goodsell et al. (2010) suggest, in thinking of paternal involvement the notion of harmony invites an appreciation of numerous social contexts in addition to various paternal activities within which fathering is embedded. As such, in addition to the aforementioned themes of responsibility and commitment, attachment, and mother/father relationship, the following section highlight three other areas to be considered from this study as influences on paternal involvement: Positive and Negative Role Models, Societal Influence and Extended family Influence.





*Figure 1.* The Ecology of Fathering Model, above, draws on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model as a tool for conceptualizing the practice of fathering. Fathering needs to be revisioned not as a separate entity but in the context of a man's entire life, where it is a product of multiple reciprocal relationships, and the effects of these relationships on hindering or promoting fathering practices. The model incorporates biopsychosocial factors, such as physical ability, self-perception, and social support, which can influence the type and level of a father's involvement.

**Positive and Negative Role Models (PNRM).** As seen in Chapter 4 fathers reported both positive and negative role modeling to be effective in influencing their type and level of interaction with their child. Participants spoke of positive role models as individuals that displayed parenting skills they themselves wanted to emulate. On the

other hand, negative role models were helpful in that they provided examples for what fathers did not want to imitate or replicate in their own fathering practices. Role models were noted to be from several areas within the father's immediate (i.e. family members) and extended communities (i.e. church group and community organizations).

All eight fathers reported that their own parents (more specifically, their father) had a profound impact on their perspective on parenting. Additionally, fathers reported that they were heavily influenced by their male peers and, at times, by other fathers who were part of a mentoring group to which they themselves were committed. Fathers who indicated being part of these groups reported them to be highly effective in promoting healthy paternal practices. In general, participants reported being positively impacted by other men's displays of parenting. For some, their level of involvement was shaped by the desire to emulate the encountered practices. And for others, their paternal engagement was influenced by perceived deficiency in other fathers' involvement, a sentiment echoed by Habib (2012).

**Extended Family Influence.** Some participants reported the influence of extended family members on their involvement with their child. For some participants, this influence came also through modeling behavior; however, for others this was through financial and/or emotional support that enhanced the father's capacity for engagement in areas they felt lacking with their children.

Extended family influence was identified under the HIN category, however, EFI-hin did not meet participant requirement and was therefore omitted as a HIN category. It was interesting to note that the participant who reported EFI to be hindering cited conflict with his extended family as a significant obstruction to his involvement with his child.

Further, this was manifested in two main ways: first, energy and time spent dealing with conflict which takes away from time to be spent with children and second, the impact of the conflict on his marital relationship.

More fathers reported the positive impact of EFI on their relationship with their child. As indicated earlier, conflict with extended family members can negatively impact paternal involvement. Perhaps most significant is the emotional energy and time fathers need to invest in dealing with conflict within the extended family and at times resulting marital conflict – both of which may negatively impact the father child relationship in terms of quality time and emotional attunement.

**Societal Influence.** Some participants highlighted societal influence (i.e. media and fatherhood networks) as being important in shaping their perspective on fathering. However, upon scrutiny, the data revealed that fathers who reported being influenced by media also reported being highly critical of the media portrayal of fathers. One participant indicated that it was quite difficult to compare himself to fathers portrayed within the media, as images of father did not adequately represent him. He explains: “the media is awful... you know, in the media, teachers, dads, almost every male character in the media is one of two things their either brilliant and inspirational or completely useless.”

Fine (1999) suggests that contemporary research and popular media often purport the idea that fatherhood closely mirrors fathering practices. However, the research findings were more aligned with LaRossa (1997) caution in being careful not to assume that culture accurately reflects practice. Additionally, fathers’ reported being more influenced by social programs with which they felt connected. These included

fatherhood community programs, accountability groups, and/or church groups. In general, reports from several participants suggest the concept of societal influence was more a portrayal of peer, school, and church influences rather than those of popular media

**Ecology and Harmony.** From an ecological perspective it is noted that participants encounter role models in multiple domains, including their own parents, friends, neighbors, church group, and society in general. Several participants reported their own father [and in some cases, mother] to be the most influential in promoting their engagement. Perhaps most important in the father-child relationship is the idea of Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1993/1994) *proximal process* which suggest that parent child interaction occurring regularly over time will be effective. For some, the examples gleaned from their own dad were positive and long lasting in that they provided concrete examples of the importance of paternal involvement, which also translated into ongoing replication of these practices.

Several fathers reported the importance of being part of a community fathering group and/or having friends that help to maintain accountability in their roles as fathers. Within these contexts, fathering also takes on dimensions of influences dads perceive to be important. In focusing the concept of harmony, Goodsell (2010) explains that movement occurs at times when prompted by external forces or from internal family cues. From this standpoint it is noted that some fathers will intentionally seek (internal prompt) the assistance of others (external pull) in (*re*)aligning their level and quality of engagement. As Goodsell explains, at the heart of this dance is the subjective value of what fathers perceive to be effective in shaping their involvement with their child. As

researchers, it is therefore important for us to gain a keen sense of the push and pull dynamic which is inherent within fathers' lived experiences.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

One of the fundamental principles of the CIT approach is the fact that sample size is primarily relegated to number of critical incidents that emerge from the interviews and not the number of participants in the study. Given the relatively small sample size within this study (eight participants) and given Flanagan's (1954) cautions regarding the generalizability of CIT research, the results of this study is not meant to be taken as a widespread representation of all fathers' experiences. Yet, as Flanagan suggests, there is inherent value in qualitative research in that it provides a depth of understanding that is not customarily seen in quantitative literature.

Further, given the fact that network sampling was used to recruit study participants, there are concerns regarding the appropriate representation of the wider Canadian population. Five of eight participants identified themselves as practicing Christians. As well, no ethnic minority group was represented in the research sample, again making it difficult to generalize the findings of the research.

Another limitation is seen in the method of inquiry. ECIT is based on self-report from study participants. Given this context, it is possible that participants may inaccurately report occurrences or may have some difficulty recalling events, which may have led to incomplete representation of critical incidents. The use of Butterfield et al.'s (2005; 2009) credibility checks were used to address these challenges and increase robustness of the study design. Conversely, the strength of this method is that fathers

were their own voice behind factors they consider to be important in determining their level and quality of engagement with their child.

Another limitation of this study is that participants were not required to state whether they were engaged in full-time (F/T) or part-time (P/T) employment. While some participants referenced the impact of F/Tvs. P/T work on their level of engagement; the effects of employment type on paternal functioning was not explored. Further, the demographic data suggests that research participants vary in terms of work/career status and level of education (i.e. university professors, vs. tradesman and/or PhD. graduate vs. high school graduate). As such, it would be interesting to ascertain whether fathers' express their parental roles differently based on these aforementioned categories.

One final limitation is the scarcity of qualitative literature on the study of fatherhood and fathering practices. Being a relatively new research area, there were limitations with regards to finding experts that qualitatively spoke to the categories that emerge from the data. Conversely, this research is necessary in that it addresses the qualitative gap in the literature on paternal involvement. There is much quantitative research on fatherhood, however, it has been noted repeatedly that research that qualitatively speak to paternal involvement is certainly needed. The CIT design offers a phenomenological encounter of fathers' experiences, thus adding to the growing qualitative literature that seeks to capture first-hand the experiences fathers describe as important in helping or hindering their interaction with their children.

### **Clinical and Social Programming Implications**

While this investigation did not explicitly address counselling practice, it offers some considerations that may be applicable to the practice of counselling psychology and

community programming alike. Some of these include: (a) the importance for clinicians to engage fathers when working with families, (b) providing psychoeducation to fathers regarding level and importance of their involvement, (c) developing therapeutic/community practices that will promote fathers positively modeling paternal involvement, and (d) The need for counselors to envision paternal involvement as a complex network of relationships that has significant implications for fathering practices (Goodsell et al., 2010).

Poponoe (1997) states that involved fathers are offer positive benefits to their children that no other person is likely to bring. Building on this sentiment Rosenberg and Wilcox (2006) suggest professionals working with fathers would do best to understand the importance of engaging fathers especially when working with emotionally charged cases. The authors further note that the most effective case plans will often involve fathers.

The research also has implication for attachment work within the clinical setting, as attachment influences on children's development were primarily informed by the mother-child dyad. The findings from this research suggest that fathers consider their level of attachment to their child to be integral in their overall development. Further, some fathers reported that spending time with and being attuned to their child was important for reducing a child's behavioral issues. Perhaps most salient to clinical work is the type of attachment influences that fathers provide to their children. For several participants, attachment captures a wide spectrum of activities including but not limited to, playing with their child, being attuned to their child's emotional needs, changing

diapers, and providing nurturance to the child. All of these activities fit with Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1993/1994) concept of good proximal process.

As Pleck (2007) suggests, attachment work has evolved to emphasize responsiveness and sensitivity, good proximal process is important in enhancing the child's development. Clinicians working with families would therefore do well to involve fathers in their practice; further it is necessary for clinicians to highlight and encourage fathers to do more than provide financially or discipline their child. In addition, fathers could be encouraged to attune themselves thereby responding with greater sensitivity to their child's needs. It is also important to explain to fathers that being *fully* present is important as children are perceptive to being accommodated rather than being truly appreciated.

Several fathers throughout this study expressed the importance of role models in shaping their on their own involvement with their children. Some of these fathers articulated an organic and unstructured pattern of engaging role models. Others explained the benefits of being part of group where fathering was not only modeled but was also intentionally cultivated. This concept underscores the importance of developing social programming that will foster the reciprocity of fathers both modeling and learning engagement from each other.

In general, greater understanding about fatherhood will allow clinicians and psychologists in practice to better facilitate the challenging task of balancing and prioritizing competing roles, including "breadwinner" or "nurturer," when seeking to establish one's identity as a father. As well, psychologists and clinicians who serve in administrative and consulting roles for community agencies will increase their



understanding of the complex dynamics influencing fathers and healthy family functioning, thereby leading to reforming and (*re*)programming organizational strategies targeting paternal involvement.

From this perspective, it is hoped that counselors will seek to understand the matrices of relationships fathers navigate and will employ therapeutic interventions aimed at bringing harmony to areas within the father's network

### **Theoretical implications**

This research has myriad implications for practice. First, given the limited number of qualitative studies on paternal involvement, this study adds to a body of literature laying a foundation for the importance in reshaping our approach to the study of paternal involvement. The study provides a detailed analysis of critical incidents that promote or hinder fathering practices, while creating a better understanding of the processes that shape men's views of fathering.

This study further compliments the harmony work of Goodsell et al. (2010) in providing a rationale for viewing paternal involvement as a product of multiple interconnected and intersecting roles. This study promotes the idea that fathers perceive their various life roles to be intricately linked and that their connection with their child is often mediated by their ability to responsibly and appropriately respond to the demands of various roles.

The study also contributes to a body of literature providing expressions for fathers within various social contexts. As fathers are the voice behind this research, this study further enhances the understanding of the needs of fathers within our communities. From this platform we can further design and implement community resource programs that

will lend themselves to areas that fathers report to be the most important to promoting their involvement.

### **Future Research**

The stories offered by fathers through ECIT provide a first-person lens to understanding the interrelated contexts that promote or hinder paternal involvement. Further, fathers within this research suggest an enhanced understanding of the concepts of responsibility, important gender differences, and father-child bond, which are earlier concepts noted by both Horn (1999) and Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, and Levine (1985) in their delineation of fatherhood and father involvement. Responsibility as participants convey it, is simply not relegated to availability, commitment, or to providing financially for their child. Rather, responsibility carries with it the sense that fathers feel the need to satisfy the demands of multiple roles. Even within the area of father-child bonding, fathers are constantly grappling with determining the extent to which they should be involved, or the area on which they should focus their attention.

Responsibility may therefore be considered as a meta-category to be assessed thoroughly in determining a father's level of involvement, commitment and availability to their child. Future research might therefore seek to explore this notion of fathers' responsibility and the factors that help to determine the level and foci of involvement. More specifically, what are the determinants of responsibility and from where do fathers gain this sense?

Future research may also consider whether similar traits of paternal involvement are seen in a more diverse ethnic sample. In particular how do big "C" and little "c" culture affect paternal involvement? More specifically, are fathers' levels of

involvement/responsibility mediated primarily by their cultural context, or are they more or less similar trends across cultures. A variation of this question was explored by Mackey (2001). Further, how do ethnicity, sexual orientation, spiritual orientation, and/or father's perception of responsibility affect the father-child relationship. As noted earlier, work/career status and level of employment also emerged as another area of limitation. Future research could therefore focus on differences/similarities across work status/level of education and assess the impact of these on traditional vs. non-traditional paternal views and functioning.

Research could also focus on inherent father-child factors (i.e. gender differences, child's developmental age, or fathers characteristics) that seem to play a role in determining fathers' level of involvement. Research exploring why some fathers are affected by these areas and why others are not may shed light on some of the underlying causes affecting a father's level of involvement.

Finally, several fathers provided recommendations they deem important for improving paternal involvement. Future research may choose to explore these areas, more specifically, the areas of Responsibility and Attachment that formed the largest recommended categories. It was interesting to note that though Responsibility emerged as a major category within the helping and hindering incidents, very few fathers recommended fathers focus on the responsibility of providing financially in fostering paternal involvement. On the other hand, the number one recommendation was for fathers to focus on building attachment through quality time, felt love, and communication. This recommendation raises the question: if participants identify areas of Responsibility (providing financially, work life balance, discipline) as key to paternal

involvement, why would they not convey similar recommendations to other fathers?

Future research may seek to explore these areas of attachment and responsibility to determine fathers' perception of the importance of these areas in fostering paternal involvement.

## **Conclusions**

The present study was designed to afford fathers the opportunity to speak to factors that move them towards or away from involvement. The research draws heavily on the notion of responsibility and fathers' attempts to navigate effectively multiple overlapping roles in which they find themselves. Further, from this position, it is noted that a father's sense of accessibility and engagement is often mediated by the demands of multiple roles for which a father may feel a sense of responsibility. Of importance were the spheres of influences that impacted, and at times, determined levels and intensity for paternal involvement. For some fathers these were identified as peer networks while for others the type of interaction with their spouse mediated their involvement. With regards to influence, it was noted that all participants spoke of their own parents (in particular their father's) examples in shaping their capacity for involvement. Some participants reported being excited to follow the examples that were modeled by their own parents. Others, on the other hand, felt it necessary to alter their parent's examples or to do the reverse of their parents' strategies.

Fathers further reported the desire for involvement to be a consequence of both external and internal factors. Some fathers described an intrinsic urge towards wanting to be a better father. Conversely, others spoke of extrinsic influences including child's characteristics and maternal influences (i.e. marital tension or partner encouragement

support). In general, it appears that fathers deemed their roles to be important in effectively influencing their child's development.

The view of fathering put forward draws on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model as a tool for conceptualizing the paternal involvement; it also incorporates Goodsell et al.'s (2010) position of father harmony. Fathering needs to be *revised* not as a separate entity but in the context of a man's entire life, where it is a product of multiple reciprocal relationships and the effects of these relationships on hindering or promoting fathering practices. This research also expanded on Horn's (1999) and Lamb's et al. (1985) concepts of masculinity and paternal involvement

Finally, this study highlights the notion that fathering incorporates biopsychosocial factors such as physical ability, self-perception, and social support, which can influence the type and level of a father's involvement. The CIT research methodology provides a rich understanding of the specific and interrelated factors in a man's life that positively and/or negatively influence paternal involvement, thereby promoting healthy fathering practices in theory and practice through the discipline of counselling psychology.

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## Participant Recruitment Poster

## A black silhouette of a man crouching down and pointing his right index finger towards a grey silhouette of a young child standing next to him. The man's left hand is resting on the child's back. The background is white.

I'm conducting a research project (anonymity assured) that focuses on your experiences of being a Dad. Involvement would include an initial phone call, a face-to-face interview (approx. 1 hr), and a follow-up phone conversation.

Each participant will receive a \$20 Gift card to either Tim Horton's or Starbucks.

[illegible]

## Appendix B

Page 1 of 2      Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Participant Consent Form

*Title of Study:* Self-Reports of Factors that Help and Hinder Paternal Involvement: A Critical Incident Approach to Fathering

*Principle Investigator:*

Marvin Bravo, Graduate student of Counselling Psychology at TWU  
(604) 897-3571      [marvo\\_bravo@yahoo.ca](mailto:marvo_bravo@yahoo.ca)

*Faculty Supervisor:*

Janelle Kwee, Professor in Counselling Psychology at TWU  
(604) 513-2121 ext. 3870      [Janelle.Kwee@twu.ca](mailto:Janelle.Kwee@twu.ca)

The purpose of this research project is to learn about the factors that promote and hinder effective fathering.

You have conducted a 15-minute initial phone call where you were asked various questions to ensure you meet criteria for this study. You also have had the opportunity to pre-read the interview questions and decide whether or not you would like to be contacted to arrange an interview. The interview should take approximately 90 minutes and will focus on the significant factors that helped and hindered your involvement with your child. Finally, you will receive a follow-up telephone call (no more than 30 minutes) to answer any additional questions or concerns, and to inform you that you can receive the results of the study if you are interested.

The interview will be taped and transcribed, and non-identifying data will be reported in the final research project. All identifying data will be kept strictly confidential and all your information will be coded so that your name is not associated with your responses. Identifying information will not appear in any part of any draft of this research project, and will be securely kept only on the researcher's personal computer for the duration of the study so that you can be contacted. Exceptions to maintaining confidentiality are: 1) threat to harm yourself or others, 2) information of child abuse, and 3) if information is court ordered. Identifying information will be destroyed at the completion of this study. All non-identifying data will be kept for follow-up review or further research as needed.

Upon completion of the study the researcher will retain copies of anonymized transcript indefinitely for purposes of accountability and future analysis. Audio files will be deleted 5 years after the study has been completed.

You are under no obligation to answer any question/participate in any aspect of this study that you consider invasive. The potential benefits for you participating in this research project are (a) a chance to share your story in a supportive, safe environment; (b) an opportunity to assist others who may be struggling with similar issues; (c) an invitation to share what would have been helpful in fathering and to make recommendations; (d) a space to process what would have been helpful in your role as a father.

Page 2 of 2    Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The potential risks are minimal: Some people who participate in this type of research find that they experience some emotional discomfort resulting from recalling unpleasant or sensitive events. Perhaps you may be troubled by bringing up past issues and/or talking about an unpleasant event. If your participation in this study has raised uncomfortable feelings, you can be referred to Fraser River Counseling, which is provided at no cost.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason without penalty. If you decide to withdraw, information from the initial phone call, as well as any recorded portions of the interview will continue to be utilized for the study. As a thank you for your participation the interview portion of the research project, you will receive a \$20 gift card to either Tim Horton's or Star Bucks.

If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in the study, you can contact Marvin Bravo at (604) 897-3571 or Prof. Janelle Kwee at (604) 513-2121 ext. 3870.

If you have any questions about your treatment or rights as a research participant, you may contact Ms. Sue Funk in the Office of Research, Trinity Western University at [sue.funk@twu.ca](mailto:sue.funk@twu.ca) or 604-513-2142.

Your signature below indicates that:

You have had your questions about the study answered to your satisfaction and have received a copy of this consent form for your own records

You consent to participate in this study, and your responses may be kept in anonymous form for further analysis after this study is completed.

You have read and understood the description of this study and willingly consent to participate in this study.

*Participant's Signature*

---

*Date*

---

I have fully explained the procedure for the study to the above participant

*Researcher's signature*

---

*Date*

---

**Appendix C****Counseling Contact Information**

RESOURCE	CONTACT PHONE NUMBER	COST
Vancouver Crisis Hot-Line	(604) 872-3311	Free and available 24/7
Fraser River Counseling Centre	(604) 513-2113	\$10 or free
Ann Davis Transition Society	604-792-2760	Free
Telecare	604-852-9099	Free Hotline

## Appendix D

### CIT Interview Guide: Paternal Involvement Semi-structured Interview Protocol

Participant #: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Interview Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 1. Contextual Component

Preamble: As you know, I am investigating the ways in which your idea of fathering was shaped by your experiences and/or environment. The purpose of this interview is to collect information about how you father your child and the things which have influenced your ability to father. (whether negatively or positively)

- a) As a way of getting started tell me a little bit about your experience as a dad
  
- b) You volunteered to participate in this study because you identified yourself as a father who is involved in your child's life. What does "being involved" mean to you?
  
- c) On a scale of 0 – 10, where 0 is no involvement, 5 is OK, and 10 is being very involved, where would you place yourself?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Doing Poorly					OK					Doing Well



## 2. Critical Incident Component (Helpful and Hindering Incidents)

Transition to Critical Incident questions: You rated yourself as a 5-6 (or whatever the participant rated himself in question 1b above).

a. What has helped you to be involved with your child's life?

**Probes:**

- I. What was the incident/factor?
- II. How did it impact you?
- III. How is it helping?"
- IV. Can you give me a specific example where it helped?
- V. What was the outcome?

Helpful Factor & What it Means to Participant (What do you mean by ..?)	Importance (How did it help? Tell me what it was about .. that you find so helpful.)	Example (What led up to it? Incident. Outcome of incident.)

- b. Are there things that have made it more difficult for you to be involved  
(Alternate question: What sort of things have happened that have made it harder for you to be involved?)

c.

**Probes:**

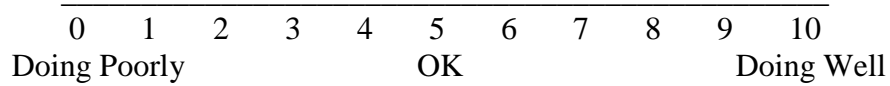
- i. What was the incident/factor?
- ii. How did it impact you?
- iii. How is it helping?"
- iv. Can you give me a specific example where it helped?
- v. What was the outcome?

Hindering Factor & What it Means to Participant (What do you mean by ..?)	Importance (How did it hinder? Tell me what it was about .. that you find so unhelpful.)	Example (What led up to it? Incident. Outcome of incident.)

- d. Summarize what has been discussed up to this point with the participant as a transition to the next question: We've talked about what's helped you to stay involved (name them), and some things that have made it more difficult for you to do well (name them). Are there other things that would have helped you to be involved? (Alternate question: I wonder what else might be helpful to you that you haven't had access to?)

Wish List Item & What it Means to Participant (What do you mean by ..?)	Importance (How would it help? Tell me what it is about .. that you would find so helpful.)	Example (In what circumstances might this be helpful?)

- e. Now that you've had a chance to reflect back on what's helped and hindered, where would you place yourself on the same scale we discussed earlier? The scale is from 0 – 10, where 0 is no involvement, 5 is OK, and 10 is being very involved.



- f. What's made the difference?
- g. Have you always had this kind of involvement in your child's life?
- (Circle one)    Yes                      No
- h. If not, when did this change for you?
- i. What happened that caused you to become more involved?

**Appendix E:****Demographic Components**

- i. Age
- ii. Country of birth
  - If not Canada, (a) length of time in Canada; and (b) 1<sup>st</sup> language
- iii. Education level
- iv. Occupation
- v. Industry in which the person works
- vi. Income Level (household)
- vii. Genogram re. immediate relationships (offspring and history of partnerships)
  - Marital status
  - Does you have a partner that helps with parenting
  - Family status/parental status (i.e. custody and guardianship)
  - No of Children (birth and death of deceased children)
  - Ages and gender of child.
  - Relationship to mother of child

**Interview End Time:** \_\_\_\_\_**Length of interview:** \_\_\_\_\_**Interviewer's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F

**Table for Tracking the Emergence of New Categories**

<b>Date of CI/WL Extraction</b>	<b>Participant #</b>	<b>Date Categorized</b>	<b>New Categories Emerged?</b>
March 3, 2012	1	August 25	HE – 12, HIN –8, WL – 4
August 23, 2012	2	August 25	
August 24, 2012	3	August 25	
August 27, 2012	4	August 28	HE – 2, HIN –1, WL –3
August 27, 2012	5	August 28	
September 1 2012		Combination and reorganization of categories	HE – 11, HIN –6, WL –5
August 28, 2012	6	September 1	No new categories emerged
August 29, 2012	7	September 2	No new categories emerged
August 30, 2012	8	September 2	No new categories emerged
September 11		Combination and reorganization of categories after discussion with expert	Total Categories HE – 10 HIN – 6 WL – 5

Note: HE = Helpful Critical Incidents, HI = Hindering Critical Incidents; WL = WL Items

## Appendix G

### Telephone Recruiting Script (follow-up to letter)

Hello, my name is Marvin Bravo. I am a student of Counseling Psychology, and the principal researcher of this study. I am conducting research on father involvement. This project is unique in that it explores your stories of what helps and what hinders your ability to father effectively. The purpose is to gain a greater understanding of factors that contribute to or detract from a father's ability to be involved in the lives of their child(ren)

If you choose to participate in this study, you will receive a \$20 Gift card to either Tom Horton's or Starbucks. Other than this phone call, and a follow-up phone call, the time commitment will be approximately 90 minutes for an interview where you will help me understand your experience as it pertains to the research question. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason without penalty.

There are certain criteria you have to meet in order to be eligible for this research: (I will go over this now (See participation criteria below). If you are eligible, and would like to participate, we will set up a time for the interview. The interview will be audio taped and transcribed. Your anonymity is assured and all identifying information will remain confidential unless required by law. Before the interview, I will ask you to read and sign a consent form. The consent form covers such things as the nature of the project, confidentiality, risks and benefits, etc. At the end of the interview, there will be a short debriefing during which you can ask me questions you have or voice any concerns. I will contact you by telephone as a follow-up within 6 months' time in case I need to verify any of your information and for additional debriefing as necessary. If you are interested in the results of the research once it is finished, just let me know and I will send them to you.

Do you have questions at this time? If you want to participate, let's set a date for the interview now. As preparation for the interview, I will ask you to think of significant helpful and unhelpful events that have/are helping you to be a good dad. I will also e-mail you the interview questions so you know what to expect for our time together (Appendix C).

Thank you for your time. I'll leave you my contact information again in case you need it. Cell #: (604) 897-3571, email: marvo\_bravo@yahoo.ca

**Note:** Research Criteria: Research participant must be a father with at least 1 biological child between 0-5years. Participant can be a single or partnered father.

## Appendix H

### Confidentiality for Transcriptionist

#### Confidentiality Agreement

#### Transcription Services

I, \_\_\_\_\_, transcriptionist, agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to any and all audiotapes and documentation received from Marvin Bravo related to his thesis on Self-Reports of Factors that Help and Hinder Paternal Involvement.

Furthermore, I agree:

- a. To hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed during the transcription of video-taped interviews, or in any associated documents;
- b. To not make copies of any videotapes or audiotapes or computerized files of the transcribed interview texts, unless specifically requested to do so by Marvin Bravo;
- c. To store all study related audiotapes and materials in a safe, secure location as long as they are in my possession;
- d. To return all videotapes and audiotapes and study related documents to Marvin Bravo in a complete and timely manner.
- e. To delete all electronic files containing study-related documents from my computer hard drive and any backup devices.

I am aware that I can be held legally liable for any breach of this confidentiality agreement, and for any harm incurred by individuals if I disclose identifiable information contained in the videotapes or audiotapes and/or files to which I will have access.

Transcriber's name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Transcriber's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



## **Appendix I**

### **Debriefing Phone Call Script**

Hello, this is Marvin Bravo. I am calling to thank you again for participating in the fathering research interview. How have you been since your participation in the research? Has there been any impact on your well-being after our interview? If so, I'd like to remind you again of the resources available to you (list from Appendix F).

I am also wondering if you have had any additional thoughts about fathering, and about incidents that have helped or hindered your ability to father. Are there any additional thoughts around things you wish you might have had or known about fathering?

Finally, I'd like to inform you of the categories that I've created from what you have reported in your interview. I want to check with you to ensure that your experiences are accurately represented by the categories I have created. Please feel free to correct, add or make suggestions for removal of any items that should not be part of the categories. Can I go over these categories now? (Then continue with the categories that emerged from his/her interview).

Thank you again for your participation. I will e-mail you with the final thesis project if you are interested in reading it after I have completed the study. I appreciate your willingness to participate, and hope that this process has been helpful for you.

## Appendix J

### Recruitment E-mail

You are receiving this email as a follow-up to the research presentation on fathering practices, which you recently attended.  
Please see the attached description.

Do you have specific memories/experiences that have shaped how you care for your child? If you do and would like to participate in this fathering research, please contact Marvin @ 604-897-3671. Participants in this research will receive a \$20 gift card to Tim Horton's or Starbucks. Please see Dave if you are interested in being part of this project, or contact Marvin at (604) 897-3571 or [marvo\\_bravo@yahoo.ca](mailto:marvo_bravo@yahoo.ca) for more info

Contact me via email at [marvo\\_bravo@yahoo.ca](mailto:marvo_bravo@yahoo.ca) or phone at (604) 897-3571 if you are interested in participating.

## Appendix K

### Participants info letter

Hello, my name is Marvin Bravo. I am a student of Counseling Psychology, and the principal researcher of this study. I am conducting research on father involvement. This project is unique in that it explores your stories of what helps and what hinders your ability to father effectively. The purpose is to gain a greater understanding of factors that contribute to or detract from a father's ability to be involved in the lives of their child(ren)

You are receiving this letter because you have indicated an interest in participating in this study. And have also met the necessary criteria for study participants (see, Participation Criteria Below). Please note that your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason without penalty.

Your total time commitment will be approximately 90 minutes for an interview where you will help me understand your experience as it pertains to the research question. The interview will be audio taped and transcribed. Your anonymity is assured and all identifying information will remain confidential unless required by law. Before the interview, I will ask you to read and sign a consent form. The consent form covers such things as the nature of the project, confidentiality, risks and benefits, etc. At the end of the interview, there will be a short debriefing during which you can ask me questions or concerns you may have.

After your initial 90min interview, I will contact you by telephone as a follow-up within 6 months' time. The purpose of this phone call is to verify any your information (if needed) and for additional debriefing as necessary. If you are interested in the results of the research once it is finished, Please let me know and I will send them to you. As a thank you for participating in the study, you will receive a \$20 Gift card to either Time Horton's or Starbucks.

If you have questions prior to setting up an interview time please contact me via telephone or email at the address below.

Finally, as preparation for the interview, I will ask you to think of significant helpful and unhelpful events that have helped you to be (or are stopping you from being) a good dad. I will also e-mail you the interview questions so you know what to expect for our time together (Appendix C).

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely

Marvin Bravo

Cell #: (604) 897-3571, marvo\_bravo@yahoo.ca

**Note:** Research Criteria: Research participant must be a biological father to at least 1 child between 0-5years. Participant can be a single or partnered father.