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heart and head: explanation of the meaning of fatherhood

DR JEFFREY GAGE, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR RAY KIRK AND
PROFESSOR ANDREW HORNBLow
HEALTH SCIENCES CENTRE CANTERBURY UNIVERSITY

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Families Commission
Public Trust Building
Level 6, 117-125 Lambton Quay
PO Box 2839
Wellington 6140

Telephone: 04 917 7040
Email: enquiries@nzfamilies.org.nz
www.nzfamilies.org.nz

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The transition to fatherhood is a significant developmental milestone for men. Although interest in fatherhood research has increased, theoretical understanding of fatherhood as a complex phenomenon is not well explained. In this study, a theoretical explanation of the meaning and construction of fatherhood is presented, providing insights into men's perceptions of their roles and practice of fathering. Twenty-two fathers were recruited from the Christchurch Early Start Programme to participate in individual interviews. Grounded theory method and a process of constant comparison of data were used to describe and explain the developing theory.

'Building meaningful relationships' emerged as the primary social process of fatherhood. Men's overall goal

was to develop meaningful relationships with their children, equal to, or better than they had experienced with their own fathers. To achieve this goal participants described a process of learning about fatherhood from an early age, 'switching on' to fatherhood at the birth of their children and activation of their 'hearts' and 'heads' during their transformation from becoming to being a father. Findings are discussed in the context of the generative potential of fathers to contribute to the health and wellbeing of their families. Social service organisations are encouraged to reflect on their practices of supporting families in need and the extent to which fathers are included as part of the parenting team. The theoretical explanation of the process of fathering provides a framework from which to develop appropriate and acceptable ways to encourage positive contributions of fathers to their families in the future.

1. INTRODUCTION

Fatherhood is increasingly being recognised in a growing body of national and international research that primarily describes the roles and functions of fathers. This study focused on New Zealand men in the context of their everyday lives. Participants described their

experiences of being fathered, personal journeys to fatherhood and their perceptions of what it meant to be a 'good dad'. The goal of this study was to increase knowledge, beyond descriptions of roles and functions, to develop a theoretical explanation of the meaning and practice of fatherhood.

2. RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

In the mid-1990s the potential for fathers to influence the health of their families was made visible by then Commissioner for Children, Laurie O'Reilly, who described fathering as "One of the most vital social issues facing New Zealand" (Stirling, 1997, p. 20). O'Reilly was disturbed by a widespread trend of absentee fathers, and emerging statistics including the prediction that by 2010, 70 percent of Māori infants under 12 months of age would be living in fatherless homes.

Increased interest in fathering resulted in articles being published in prominent New Zealand media on topics such as 'Fathers Love' (Biddulph 1997), 'Missing Dad: Absent fathers and mixed up sons' (Ansley, Stirling & Cohen, 1997) and 'Being There: How distant dads ruin kids' (Stirling 1997). Steve Biddulph, Australian psychologist and author of the bestselling book *Manhood*, toured New Zealand reinforcing concerns for children in homes where fathers were emotionally or physically distant. Biddulph emphasised the unique attributes of fathers and encouraged men to challenge traditional stereotypes that could undermine their active participation in parenting.

Laurie O'Reilly also promoted positive fathering practice, specifically urging men to be caring, nurturing and supportive of their families. He championed Fathers Who Care: Partners in Parenting, a multi-component research initiative with the goal of "creating the best possible environment for the upbringing of New Zealand children through identifying ways of enhancing the role of fathers and supporting those fathers who would like to participate more actively in the parenting of their children" (Julian, 1998, p. 1).

In 1998, as part of this initiative, Ian Pool, Professor of Demography at the University of Waikato, addressed the Fathering the Future Forum in Christchurch, stressing the urgent need for further in-depth research on fathering and family health, stating that "If we do not, we have failed to make an investment in our most tangible security – the children, the human resources of the future" (Pool, 1998, p. 8). Significant momentum was generated toward highlighting the importance of fathering in the 1990s; however in-depth research to increase the knowledge base in New Zealand did not eventuate to the extent advocated by Pool. Research about fathering, however, has remained a priority (Families Commission, 2006).

According to a recent report on New Zealand family statistics 'good evidence' is required to develop programmes and services to mitigate intergenerational health risks within families. This evidence is also required for social service agencies to have confidence in how to intervene and promote better outcomes (Statistics New Zealand, 2007). More than a decade after the pioneering initiatives of Laurie O'Reilly and others, there is still a need to better understand the preparation, transition and subsequent practice of fathering and how 'good' fathering can positively influence the lives of children and families. This information is necessary to promote parenting skills of individual fathers and to better inform professional practice of those who support and encourage family health promotion.

Participants in this research were enrolled with their families in the Christchurch Early Start Programme through which family support workers deliver a regular home-based early intervention programme for 'at-risk' families, offering direct support in parenting, childrearing and life skills. Although evaluation of the Early Start Programme has shown the service to be effective in key areas of child health (Early Start Project, 2005) there was interest from within the programme to better understand fathering to enhance programme benefits to all family members. Consistent with the purpose of grounded theory methodology, which is to provide a theoretical explanation of a phenomenon to complement practice, the specific aim of this research was:

- > To describe and explain men's perceptions of fathering in the context of family/whānau for the purpose of improving service delivery to families enrolled in the Christchurch Early Start Programme in the future.

Fatherhood as a research topic has not received the same attention as motherhood (Fägerskiöld, 2008, Lee & Owens, 2002; Rosich-Medina & Shetty, 2007) and in research on 'parenting' fatherhood has been largely ignored (Gage, Everett, & Bullock, 2006). The Families Commission acknowledges that "Parents and caregivers need to know how to care for and nurture their children and they will sometimes need support to do it" (Families Commission, 2006/07, p. 16). This research was designed to build on the success of the Early Start Programme by targeting a less developed area of service delivery: understanding the complexity of fathering as a prerequisite to greater inclusion of fathers in family support interventions.

3. BACKGROUND

As mentioned previously, the topic of fathering was particularly popular in the 1990s in New Zealand, resulting in a series of high-profile events in this country. Internationally, fathering also became the subject of increased academic interest and many studies were added to the body of literature during this period. Published research appeared to decrease in the late 1990s though has become more popular again in recent years. For these reasons research from the last two decades is considered informative and will be included in this background section.

3.1 A matter of perspective

Two predominate paradigms underpin fathering research and scholarship according to Hawkins and Dollahite (1997). Firstly, a deficit approach assumes that fathers underperform, neglect their responsibilities and are generally incapable leading to an overemphasis on their inadequacies. This approach reinforces the idea that fatherhood is under threat and is focused on men's emotional incompetence and the lack of involvement and physical presence within the family, at the same time devaluing men's personal experiences and their potential to make positive change.

McCann (2005) agreed that contemporary views about men as fathers are generally negative. In New Zealand, discourses have focused on men's aggression, power, relationship failure and emotional in-articulation. Similarly, Lee and Owens (2002) described how current understanding of provider and nurturing responsibilities often assumes fathers to be less capable of childcare than mothers. The term 'gender asymmetry' was used to describe the difference in parental role expectations between men and women. According to Lee and Owens, research about fatherhood is less well documented than that of motherhood and further exploration of men's multiple roles is required. McCann advocates a need to understand more broadly the issues associated with men's internal motivation to change and to recognise the diverse ways in which men express fatherhood.

As an alternative to the deficit approach a 'generative paradigm' is proposed (Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997). Generativity refers to a drive toward productivity, creativity and promoting the development of others. Generative fathering emphasises and values the

'work' of fathering and the positive contribution of fathering to future generations. 'Fatherwork' is a term used to describe domains of fathering which include stewardship, relationship, commitment and care. Further, Hawkins and Dollahite advocate a conceptual ethic of generative fathering referring to the obligation fathers have to care for the next generation. The potential outcomes for men are fathers who are honourable, productive, mature and capable of developing and maintaining meaningful relationships.

An example where both generativity and asymmetry were addressed in a research trajectory focused on fathers, is described in a book titled *The 7 Secrets of Effective Fathers* (Canfield, 1992). Ten thousand men in the United States participated in research aimed at identifying 'effectiveness' in fathering practice from a generative perspective. Canfield states: "Even though there is a very real and distressing plague of fatherlessness in our country, most men I come in contact with through the National Center are capable and well meaning" (p. 5). Canfield's research highlighted key aspects of fathering which included commitment, knowing your child, consistency, protecting and providing, loving their mother, active listening and spiritual equipping. Key messages to men are that fathering is important, it is learnt and offers great rewards.

Although the phenomenon of fathering has long been recognised, a deficit approach has often founded research, scholarship and understanding. A generative approach offers an alternative paradigm for researchers and writers to explore the strengths of fathers to promote meaningful relationships and effective fathering in future generations.

3.2 Fathers' role change over time

Lewis and Salt (1986) described the development of fathers' roles in the context of three research paradigms characterising the study of fathers over a period of 50 years.

The 'traditional paradigm' included the period of the 1940s and 1950s. During this time fathers were generally aloof and distant from their children. Mothers were central to their children's development supported by the father though he maintained minimal direct relationship. In his historical account of the Pākehā male in New Zealand, Jock Phillips (1996) described fathers as 'pampered guests' in their homes and boys

were taught 'father craft' in school which included learning how to change tap washers and fix broken windows. The ideal family man was often portrayed as a down to earth provider, rough, yet loyal. According to Henderson and Brouse (1991) this traditional role of a father as provider mutually excluded him from also being a nurturer, carer and involved parent.

The 'modern paradigm' described the decade of the 1960s, signalling a concern for the children in homes where fathers were absent. In particular, there was a growing awareness of the effect of fathers on their children, particularly in relation to academic achievement, the prevention of delinquency and development of sex-role identities.

The 1970s and 1980s were described as the 'androgynous paradigm'. During this phase emphasis was placed on the equal importance of both the father's and mother's effect upon children's development. The roles of fathers began to broaden as they were increasingly recognised as caregivers and more active participants in family life.

The androgynous paradigm extended into the 1990s according to Edgar and Glezer (1992). They argued that women entering the workforce in greater numbers, by default forced fathers into more active participation in childcare. As a result, expectations of fathers increased and the stereotypical 'macho' image became less attractive. Therefore, the contemporary father in the 1990s required new skills to fulfil new expectations. He no longer needed to be the sole provider but was expected to spend time with his family, demonstrate nurturing behaviours and to become involved in a variety of family tasks (Belsky, 1993; Greif, 1995; Rustia & Abbott, 1993).

3.3 The contribution of fathers to families

As fatherhood became more 'fashionable' (Biddulph, 1997) new attempts were made to clarify men's unique contributions to parenting. According to Heath (1994) infants could be equally attached to their father and their mother, and fathers had much to offer through a different perspective (McBride & Darragh, 1995). Fathering increasingly became recognised as a complement to mothering though essentially and intrinsically different. One unique aspect of fathering was identified in their energetic and physical play, while mothers assumed a greater role in infant care

and verbal stimulation (De Luccie, 1996; Heath, 1994; Julian, 1998).

Internationally, researchers have also reported a departure from traditional models of fathering. For example, Nugent (1991) studied working class Irish fathers' caretaking behaviours, concluding that young fathers were actively involved in childcare, potentially influencing their children's cognitive growth at the age of one year. Similarly, Ishii-Kuntz (1994) found that children were more likely to benefit emotionally and mentally with increased interaction from their fathers. McBride and Darragh (1995) also suggested that fathers could enhance children's cognitive development, shape gender role identification, encourage positive psychosocial adjustments and facilitate educational achievement.

The age at which a man became a father has also been investigated. In a study involving more than 700 adolescents it was determined that both boys and girls were closer to their mother than their father, but that closeness to the father was a stronger predictor of delinquent behaviour, especially among males (Johnson, 1987). Heath (1994) sampled 'off time' American fathers, defined as those who had fathered their first child after their 35th birthday. These men were found to spend more time with their children, have higher expectations for behaviour and to be more nurturing than their 'on time' counterparts. These men were described as more mature, financial and flexible, with a higher degree of freedom and time resources.

Marsiglio, Amato, Day, and Lamb (2000) found that most research about fathering involvement in the 1990s focused on issues of financial support, engagement with children and the absence or presence of the father in the home. Overall, the results of positive father involvement were found to be generally beneficial to children.

3.4 The transition to fathering

Becoming a father is a major life transition (Jordan, 2007) effecting change which may be pervasive and profound (Palkovitz, Copes, & Woolfolk, 2001). Although men and women adjust to parenthood at the same time they do not do so in the same way (Watson, Wetzel, Bader & Yves, 1995). Understanding men's unique experiences is essential for anyone working with childbearing families to enhance father-friendly practice according to Jordan (2007).

The transition to fatherhood can be difficult for some men who describe pregnancy as a time of being in-between statuses which may lead to feelings of vulnerability and marginalisation (Draper, 2003). In some circumstances fathers perceived pregnancy as a woman's experience and felt ignored by healthcare providers (O'Leary & Thorwick, 2006) while others described themselves as outsiders or bystanders (Deave & Johnson, 2008).

Henderson and Brouse (1991) reported that a man's transition to fatherhood was influenced mainly by factors outside of their control. These included inconsistent information, the hospital experience, previous experience with infants and availability of social support. Entwistle and Doering (1988) also noted that a caesarean delivery is beyond a father's control and may challenge his perceived competence as a father.

Ferketich and Mercer (1995) identified three styles of male partner involvement during pregnancy. The 'observer' style was adopted by fathers who considered their partner's pregnancy to be unimportant. Other men were more 'expressive' and involved in the pregnancy. These men determined to be active partners and appeared to do more conscious preparation. The third style adopted was an 'instrumental' approach where men focused on tasks to be completed prior to the birth. Similarly, in a book titled *When Men are Pregnant* (Shapiro, 1987) found that expectant fathers tended to practise their parenting role by caring for their wives and by physically preparing their homes for a baby.

Often the reality of becoming a father is not realised until later in their partner's pregnancy. This often coincides with proof that the pregnancy exists; for example, seeing a scan and feeling foetal movements (Finnbogadóttir, Svalenius & Persson, 2003; Rosich-Medina & Shetty, 2007). Despite potential difficulties, for many men, the reality of becoming a father creates a heightened sense of awareness and responsibility (Holland, 1994). In a New Zealand study first-time fathers described how the reality of fatherhood increased as the pregnancy progressed. Deliberate strategies were initiated to prepare for fatherhood, including practical, emotional and financial preparation. In addition, men indicated a willingness to change health behaviour, such as wearing a seatbelt in response to impending fatherhood (Gage & Kirk, 2002).

In summary, research and other literature suggests that fatherhood is a complex phenomenon which is not well understood. Marks and Lovestone (1995) suggested that fatherhood is too often defined in terms of motherhood and may involve its own 'unique capacities'. Research to date has described a variety of experiences and roles of men as they transition to fatherhood. There is, however, a lack of understanding about what fatherhood means to men and what effect this meaning has on fathering practice. The goal of this study, therefore, was to increase knowledge beyond descriptions of roles and functions, to develop a theoretical explanation of the meaning and practice of fatherhood.

4. METHOD

Grounded theory was chosen as the most appropriate method to achieve the goal of this research because the purpose of grounded theory is to construct a theoretical explanation of the meanings, actions and interactions of participants (Millikin & Schreiber, 2001). This was first described in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* as a method of discovering theory from data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The role of the researcher in this process is to logically and consistently represent data, so that they make sense, and are understandable to the people working in the substantive area of interest.

Eaves (2001) described the following assumptions of grounded theory:

- > inquiry is structured by discovery of social and social-psychological processes
- > data collection and analysis phases of research proceed simultaneously
- > theoretical sampling refines, elaborates and exhausts conceptual categories.

Through the application of the grounded theory method a primary social process is identified and explained through systematic data collection and analysis. In conventional methodology, sampling usually precedes data analysis, however in grounded theory, sampling cannot be determined in advance of data collection. Known as theoretical sampling, data gathered guide the next steps of sampling through the identification of gaps in the developing theory. This approach is designed to illuminate the categories and properties of a theory as they arise. As a result, data are continually being refined through a process of constant comparison. Strauss and Corbin (1998) described the purpose of constant comparison as a means to establish which incidents, context, intervening conditions and consequences are relevant in explaining how social experience is created and given meaning. Theoretical saturation occurs when variation in incidents is no longer evident, therefore adding nothing more to the developing theory than is already known.

In this study, theoretical sampling and constant comparative analysis were consistent with a four-stage process described by Dey (1999). The first involved coding to identify categories and their properties. Secondly, these categories and properties were

integrated and relationships between categories were identified. Higher levels of abstraction were defined and, finally, major themes were identified and the theory was articulated. Although these stages appear to be successive, the elements of each occurred simultaneously during data collection, coding and analysis.

4.1 Ethics

Ethical approval for this research was granted by the Upper South Island Health and Disability Ethics Committee and the Christchurch Polytechnic Academic Research Committee prior to commencement.

4.2 Sampling and recruitment

The sample consisted of men aged 18 years or older who were enrolled with their families in the Christchurch Early Start Programme and who identified as fulfilling the role of father to their children. The Early Start Programme is an early intervention home visiting service to families caring for children under the age of five. Referrals to the service are made primarily by hospital staff and midwives, the New Zealand Plunket Society and by families themselves. Families are generally recognised to be in need of support and meet two or more 'challenging circumstance' criteria that may include economic disadvantage, lack of formal education, limited support, resources and parenting skills. Family support workers visit regularly in response to individual needs of families to establish a strong foundation for the healthy development of children.

Family support workers identified potential participants and provided them with introductory information (Appendix 1). These men were given the opportunity to find out further details by completing a written consent form to be contacted by the primary researcher. When this was received telephone contact was made and men were invited to participate in a one-to-one audio-taped interview at a place and time convenient to them. Prior to the interview, participants provided informed, written consent and completed a demographic survey which included information about their age, marital status, ethnicity and employment status (Appendix 2). Three participants declined to be audio-taped. In these instances, permission was given for the researcher to take notes during the interview.

4.3 Demographics

Twenty-two men participated in the study. The majority (18) described their ethnicity as European. The average age was 32 with a range of 19-50 years. Eight were married for an average of five years and 11 had been living together with their partners for an average of four years. Three men described themselves as sole parents.

Participants were fathers of 52 children in total; 40 biological children and 12 non-biological children. Fifteen men were employed for an average of 35 hours per week in a variety of professional and non-professional jobs, four were full-time fathers at home, one was on an invalid's benefit and two had been unemployed for more than one year.

5. DATA COLLECTION

The length of time for recorded interviews ranged from 15 to 50 minutes; the average time of interviews was 33 minutes. Initial interview questions were semi-structured and open-ended to facilitate discussion. For example: Can you tell me about your relationship with your own father? Tell me about your experience of becoming a father? What does fathering mean to you? and What

does a good father do? Prompts were used to explore information in greater detail and constant comparative analysis guided questioning in subsequent interviews. As part of the interview process participants were also asked for consent to receive a follow-up phone call to discuss statements from their interview as a means to clarify researcher interpretations and increase accuracy of data. Participants received an honorarium \$30 Warehouse gift voucher as a gesture of appreciation for their time.

6. ANALYSIS

Data were transcribed verbatim and analysed line by line. Incidents and events were grouped according to similar properties and dimensions through a systematic process of thematic coding. Constant comparison of, and between, data was applied simultaneously throughout the research process. As mentioned,

participants were given the opportunity to clarify emerging concepts and their meaning with the primary researcher during an arranged follow-up phone call or at other times as initiated by participants. Data saturation was complete when no new information was forthcoming and the emergent theory and theoretical interpretations were reinforced by participants.

7. FINDINGS

‘Building meaningful relationships’ was the primary social process expressed by fathers. Men who experienced an abusive or distant relationship with their own fathers desired a relationship with their children better than they experienced, while others, who had enjoyed a close relationship throughout childhood, determined to re-create these same father-child relationships within their families.

The complexities of building positive relationships were described by participants through in-depth descriptions of core categories including:

- > learning about fatherhood
- > ‘switching on’ to fatherhood
- > becoming and being a father
- > the “heart’ and ‘head’ of fathering.

These categories, and the interrelationships between them, will be used to illustrate the findings and the theoretical explanation of the process of fathering in the context of family. Identifying information has been removed to protect anonymity of participants.

7.1 Learning about fatherhood

7.1.1 Prior knowledge and experiences

When participants were asked to describe their relationships with their own fathers many described poor and abusive backgrounds. Tears welled up in the eyes of some men as they described traumatic childhood memories. The following is a description of one man’s experience:

I remember my childhood, it was pretty good at times and pretty rough at the other times. Well I’ve just tried to do away with the hand smacks or the punching or the garden hoses or the broomstick or the hearth brush or the hearth shovel or number eight boot. He would hit me with numerous bloody weapons, you know? No steel or that sort of thing but basically anything that’s got a bit of flex in it.

Some men were more cautious in their descriptions; several indicating they did not want to elaborate on details of their childhood. For others, their fathers were not abusive but had little time to spend with them often due to long hours of work:

Sometimes I’d get home from school and I’d have tea and stuff and so on and he’d walk in later and I’d be asleep so we didn’t have time to talk and stuff, play a ball game or something.

These men regretted not being able to develop a better relationship with their fathers whom they described as emotionally or physically distant. They spoke of their intention to develop a better relationship with their own children and not to repeat the behaviours of their fathers:

I wanted to be a bit more involved than what my dad was. Because I did wish that my dad was a bit more involved, of course he was busy with work so I want to try and be a bit more involved in everything.

In contrast, those who recalled a positive relationship with their fathers did so fondly and enthusiastically, remembering specific events from their childhoods when their fathers were fully present and involved:

He used to take us for walks and stuff, mostly a lot of walks to do with nature and things like that and take us down to the beach and stuff like that. Played games like tag and stuff like that and hide and go seek. Things like that, so it was pretty cool.

Me and dad used to spend time watching TV, like car racing and all that. Watch movies. We used to go fishing and go out golfing and go karting.

Interestingly, men’s childhood memories were vivid from an early age. When participants were asked how old they were when specific instances took place, the majority indicated they were aged between four and eight. Men who experienced positive relationships with their fathers sought to emulate these traits and behaviours in their own fathering practice:

If I can be as good a dad as he was I’ll be doing pretty well I think.

Although most participants described their biological fathers as their primary role models, other people also contributed significantly to their childhoods. These additional models included grandfathers, male school teachers, a prison officer and in the following example, foster parents:

I’d always been round sort of sleazebag men and drunkards and things like that. Been shipped off to this family, to foster care, and here’s this lady who

cooks and cleans and gives you a kiss and a cuddle at night and here's this guy who's a man's man, he works at the freezing works ... rides motorbikes and has got a boat, and that was good for me.

7.1.2 What does a good father do?

To develop further understanding about the relationship between men's prior knowledge and experiences and their own fathering practice they were asked the question "What does a good father do?" This was a difficult question for many men to answer, particularly if they had no significant positive model of fathering in their lives. The following interaction was typical for many men in this situation:

Interviewer: What does a good father do?

Participant: I don't know how to say it in words.

Interviewer: What does it mean then to be a good dad? What does a good dad look like?

Participant: Um, don't really know what to say.

The effect of negative childhood relationships and poor models of fatherhood, particularly on younger fathers in this study, affected their knowledge of how to be a good father. These participants were unable to describe what a good father should do; they could only describe what a good father should not do, therefore defining fatherhood by what it should not be:

I was treated like shit when I was younger so I know how to treat my son ... not like I was treated.

The following narrative most succinctly represented the views of many men who lacked knowledge about good fathering and explained in greater detail why it was difficult for some to answer this question:

I didn't have positive male figures in my childhood so I don't really know the answer to that. I guess I didn't really have enough of a relationship with my father to get a good list of things to do but I've got a long list of don'ts and so that's always easy. Don't drink before noon. You don't have to be right all the damn time. You don't have to be a control freak; the kids don't have to do what they're doing your way. You know if I'm sitting with [daughter] reading a book to her, I'll get two words into it and she'll grab the page and flip it over. That's fine. You don't have to go back and read the last page. That's the kind of thing that was sort of hard for me to break programming from.

In contrast, men who had positive relationships with their own fathers and/or other role models were able to describe from these experiences what a good father should do, without hesitation. Some of these things included spending quality time with their children, helping with feeding, bathing and bedtime routines, hugging them, being a role model and keeping them safe.

Regardless of the quality of relationship with their own fathers, men who had been fathering for a longer period of time indicated that 'experience' enabled them to become a better father. This occurred over time and was described as a process of 'trial and error' or 'on the job training'. Participants described a growing maturity in their knowledge and skills which positively affected their fathering behaviours.

One father of five explained how he learnt what to do by watching his children over many years. He observed them playing, found out what they enjoyed doing and got involved. His advice to inexperienced fathers who were unsure how to connect with their children was:

Go and buy a swimming pool, dig a hole in the back yard, buy some toys. And sit outside and watch the child. You'll see what it likes to do, and then join in. That is basically what I do. I sit back and then join in.

7.2 'Switching on' to fatherhood

As men continued to explain what it meant to become a father they began to use the metaphor of a switch. The first participant to describe the switch to fatherhood was one of the older fathers in the study who described that his daughter was like a grandchild:

I mean she can be a right little so and so but, it's just, I don't know, just a knack you switch into. And there's something that switches on. I don't know what it is. Up until then you look at kids and you're just not interested. There's something that switches on and you don't worry about the mess, you don't worry about the dirty nappies, it's a whole different way of thinking.

Independently, other men also began to describe beginning fathering like a switch:

Sort of turned a switch on in my head. It woke me up. A big wake up call. Bit of a reality check.

It's like the next step of your life just sort of jumping into place. Yeah, very much like a switch exactly.

Switching on to fatherhood was characterised by the majority of men as something sudden that occurred at the moment of birth. Holding the baby signified a change from becoming a father to being a father. However, despite frequent descriptions about a sudden switch into fathering, it was evident that this had not been the experience for all men. In the grounded theory method these instances are referred to as negative cases. Negative cases are dissimilar incidents or unusual circumstances that do not fit with what has previously been found. Rather than being discarded, negative case data contribute to the validity of the emerging perspective. Although being present at the birth had been the moment at which most men perceived the switch of fathering to be activated, the following participant explained why this was not his experience:

It's, yeah, it sort of changes you. Definitely changes you. Probably didn't do so such immediately for me and the reason was because I wasn't present when she was born. I wasn't allowed to be.

It was two months after the birth when he was able to hold his daughter for the first time. When he did, the switch to fathering was activated:

It's the sort of thing that before it happens, you sort of, I don't know if I can do this sort of thing. It's a bit nerve wracking. But as soon as you've got that child in your arms that's it. Flick the switch and you're away.

Another participant also had difficulty in his transition to fatherhood. He described a troubled childhood characterised by poor parenting by his mother and father which caused him to doubt whether he could ever be a good parent himself. The birth of his child did not allay his fears or suddenly activate confidence in his abilities:

I have to admit, everyone said that it doesn't matter how scared you are, doesn't matter what your trepidations are, the moment you hold that baby in your arms it will all become clear, and it didn't. And that was a huge, huge disappointment you know. I wanted that magic moment that everyone talks about where you suddenly feel like 'yes' this is right. Well it never happened and it did take ages for that to kind of grow out of the shadows.

However, he continued to describe what happened over time:

Interviewer: But it did happen?

Participant: It did. Eventually, yeah.

Interviewer: So you describe, that after about six months or so...

Participant: Oh it came on like a dimmer switch.

7.3 Becoming and being a father

Participants were prompted to explain the switch to fatherhood in greater detail. They first described how being a father became a reality at the birth of their children:

Mother Nature gave me the biggest boot up the arse I've ever had. And I tell you, it was one hell of a one.

The birth also signified the beginning of a new relationship and a change in their lives:

I felt like I'd given up my old life for a new life.

Instant bonding. Right then and there with all those nurses and they were doing their professional stuff and I had this feeling, get your hands off him. He's mine. Instant bonding.

Men began to consider what it meant to be a father and to care for a baby. They recognised they were now in a new relationship with another person who was dependent upon them and they verbalised a new sense of purpose and responsibility:

It changed my perspective on how I looked at life. It made my life a lot more meaningful. A lot more meaningful. Um, it meant I had something to wake up for. It just, yeah, made me feel a lot more like I had a lot more in my life.

Yeah, a switch from being young and irresponsible to being the same age but feeling a lot more mature and responsible than say the day before he was born, you know, it was just after he was born it gave me a lot, put a lot more meaning in my life and stuff.

In addition, many participants thought being a father was "the most important job in the world" and they described a deep sense of commitment to their

children. This was demonstrated in a variety of ways depending on their individual circumstances. One young man suddenly became a full-time father as a result of a Family Group Conference. He had to explain to his employer why he needed to quit his job to become a full-time father:

I explained the situation to him; stay home with my boy or lose him. And he, a father himself, completely understood where I was coming from and said, leave it to me, I'll put your apprenticeship on hold. And he done all that for me.

A sole-parenting father described how much he enjoyed looking after his pre-school-aged daughter despite the financial implications:

When you're earning at least a hundred dollars less a week through staying at home you know you've got to cut your spending. I decided until this one's future is secured I'm not going back to work. I often tell people it's the best job in the world.

Also, in response to becoming a father, some participants acknowledged significant personal behaviour change, particularly related to alcohol and drug use. These men described how being a father motivated them to act more responsibly:

I was right into drugs and alcohol since I can remember. Well I don't need that. I have to think about them now. If the kids weren't around I'd still be the same I'd say. I'd probably be back in jail to be honest.

Basically when I first met [partner] we started to drink a lot, drink every weekend; go out to a mate's house or town to drink. But ever since he came along I've stopped drinking, yeah.

Because he's part of my life now so I don't really want to drink around him. So I just quit drinking.

Another participant explained that he was in the process of starting a new gang when he found out his partner was pregnant. He was very excited about becoming a father for the first time so he told his friends: "I don't want to do that anymore, I'm going to be a father." Similarly, a participant with a previous criminal conviction for burglary stated that being a father now meant being a role model to his daughter. While acknowledging his past, he was now an honest person and he wished to teach his daughter the value of honesty as she grew older.

7.4 The 'heart' and 'head' of fatherhood

As previously mentioned, men described a time at, or after the birth of their children, when they perceived a switch to turn on and activate fatherhood. They were prompted to explain in greater detail what happened prior to this switch being activated (becoming a father) and after the switch was activated (being a father). Prior to the birth of their children men described attitudes of their heart toward becoming a father, and after birth, the practical application of fathering based primarily on knowledge of how to parent a child. These two discourses were categorised as the 'heart' and 'head' of fatherhood.

7.4.1 The 'heart' of fatherhood

Early in the interview process participants were encouraged to articulate their perceptions of fatherhood. The majority of men thought deeply about this question and had difficulty expressing an answer. However, in independent interviews several men pointed to their chests and expressed that fatherhood came from "in here". In these, and subsequent interviews various participants added to the developing view that fathering came from the heart.

One immigrant participant said that although the cultural expression of fathering may be different, there was an 'essence' of fathering that could be found in the heart of men. Others referred to this as the 'core' of fathering.

Participants were prompted to further describe the meaning of these terms. In doing so, their explanations were interrelated with previously mentioned categories, including becoming and being a father and switching on to fatherhood. Men explained an 'essence' of fathering like a desire of the heart which was present even prior to becoming a father:

You see your own siblings have children and things like that and you think, when is it going to happen to me? I'd love to be a dad. It's in there. It's definitely in the heart.

Further explanation of the 'heart' of fatherhood by participants indicated this to be innate, natural and instinctual, activated by the 'switch' into fatherhood at the birth of their children. The heart was described as the origin of fathers' joy and love for their children.

Switching on to fatherhood initiated a heartfelt awareness of new responsibilities, commitment, willingness to make sacrifices, to protect their children and provide for their families. The strength of new emotions was surprising to some:

What emotions surprised me? Protectiveness. Protectiveness over him really. Just in the times when you're admiring him and it's a pretty amazing sort of feeling.

I guess to a certain extent there is a protective nature that's come out of me like I don't want my family to be harmed or hurt, I'll go to the ends of the earth to protect them. That's something that I haven't experienced before.

Others described both their intentions to protect their families and situations when they had done so:

If anyone hurt my kids there isn't a place on earth they could hide. It runs that deep and I feel more strongly about that than anything in my life.

A couple of weeks ago we had the neighbours come over, they're gang associates, and about five of them came to the door. I'm not scared of them. I went running to the door and they said, 'We're coming to smash your house'. I said, 'You're not coming into my house, you'll have to kill me before you come in here – before you get them'.

The desire to provide for the needs of their families was equally strong. Financial provision was viewed by most men as an important responsibility of being a father, though some, as previously mentioned, were prepared, or required to sacrifice financial stability to be full-time at home with their children. One participant, who was unemployed, described his frustration at being unable to provide financially:

Definitely I absolutely hate the fact that I'm unemployed at the moment. I feel really shit about it. Whenever I take [daughter] to a mall or whatever she'll point at things that make her excited and I'll want to buy them for her but I just don't have the means.

However, in addition to the desire to financially provide for the family, participants also recognised other ways that they could provide:

The way I see [being] a father keeping my family healthy, is providing an environment that is healthy.

If a father is out boozing, is out getting drugged up and is unable to provide a clean, healthy, dry, warm, house I think that's a very big issue. Providing an environment which is the best that you can for the health and wellbeing of your child. I think that's the ultimate thing that I, as a father, want to provide.

7.4.2 The 'head' of fatherhood

Complementary to men's explanations of the heart as an expression of emotions and intentions for their children, they also described the day-to-day practicalities of being a father. Men talked about learning through 'trial and error' and how caring for a baby was like an apprenticeship. This category was coded as the 'head' of fatherhood because participants described learning to be a father as "The thinking side of things" and "Learning intellectually about being a father".

New skills were required from the time of birth or when they became physically involved with their baby's care; coinciding with the activation of the 'switch' to fathering. Although there was variety among participants about their levels of day-to-day care, changing nappies, feeding, bathing, clothing and playing with their young children were new skills they had to learn:

Well I wasn't used to changing a baby but now I'm used to it. All the feeding and changing him and giving him some play time and all that.

Sole-parenting fathers or full-time fathers in the role of primary caregivers described extended roles and establishment of daily routines:

Yeah, I had to think it through when I first started looking after him. I had to think it through a lot more. I was sort of thinking when I was giving him breakfast, I was already thinking, right now, what am I going to do with him after breakfast, what does he want to do, when's he going to be tired?

Younger fathers who lacked positive fathering role models and had no previous experience with young children struggled to articulate what a good father should do. In addition they lacked knowledge to participate in the 'thinking' (head) aspects of day-to-day care of their children. These fathers were doubly disadvantaged despite a strong 'heart' commitment to love and care for their children. An exception to this were men who described a broken relationship with

their own fathers, from which they learnt how not to be a father, yet had also experienced being around other young children or younger siblings, nieces or nephews, for whom they cared in the role of a father. For example, one participant explained how caring for his baby felt familiar, despite lacking a positive relationship with his father, because he was often left on his own as a teenager to look after younger siblings while his dad was at the pub.

Having life experience also contributed to understanding how to care for a baby or young child. Hence, older men described how their age and experiences of life were an advantage as well as practising being a father for a longer period of time. They described this as a time of trial and error which enabled them to identify what aspects of childcare worked and what didn't and to learn from their mistakes:

The life experience probably, I know a few more of the pitfalls and sort of steer the child away from them a little bit more.

Probably, you know, a bit more benefit of having been around a bit longer than a younger dad.

Although these men recognised fathering to be a continual process of learning, they described fathering in terms of an apprenticeship. Practising fatherhood enabled them to be better prepared, regardless of their positive or negative childhood influences:

Like as I say, I'm 40 something so I've got life experience as well. So that could benefit this one. I've just mellowed with age.

It's not life experience, it's experiencing life. They're teaching you while you're teaching them. You've got to use what's in the past to fix the future.

7.4.3 Learning together

Participants who were married or living together frequently described how they worked together with

their partners to make decisions and share parenting tasks. Men described how they learnt the intellectual aspect of fathering (head) from their partners:

She knows what bubba needs and she just sort of says you got to do this or you got to do that, and then it's up to me to figure out my own way of doing that. She's sort of helping me. She's guiding me in what children need.

Some men described how their partners had learnt how to look after babies or young children from their previous experiences. They may have had mothers who taught them or prior experience in the workplace:

I learned from watching. Before we had [baby] she was doing relieving in pre-schools.

Another participant explained that his partner had spent time in a residential facility where she was taught how to care for her baby. She was now passing on her experience to him:

Seeing her in action is incredible. She's looking after him. That sort of makes me do a similar thing.

7.4.4 The primary social process

The primary social process in the grounded theory method is representative of the theory as a whole. 'Building meaningful relationships' represented the overall goal of being a father; to build relationships with their children, equal to, or better than they had experienced. Participants described this as a process of fathering through their explanations of the core categories: learning about fatherhood, switching on to fatherhood, becoming and being a father and the 'heart' and 'head' of fatherhood:

I think for me the most important years are from about the age of five onwards. That's when you want to be cultivating a really good relationship with your son or daughter. That's what I never had with my father, those 10 years between the age of five and 15.

8. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Men described fatherhood as both an innate and learnt process. This was explained by interrelationships between core categories including learning about and switching on to fatherhood, becoming and being a father and the 'heart' and 'head' of fatherhood.

Preparation for fatherhood began in their early childhood. Their primary models for learning about fathering were their own fathers. These relationships were described positively by some and negatively by others; however, men's experiences of being fathered had a significant impact on their future knowledge and understanding of what they should or should not do to be good fathers. Those who could identify what a good father should do were advantaged, particularly in their early parenting.

The metaphor of 'switching on' to fatherhood explained the sudden transition from becoming, to being a father. This caused men to reflect upon their prior experiences and prompted a significant change in their perspectives of meaning and purpose in their lives. In some instances, dramatic changes also occurred in attitudes and behaviours.

Regardless of their personal father relationships all participants described a 'heart' response toward fathering as innate and characterised by emotions, sacrifice, commitment, responsibility and a desire to provide for and protect their families. The 'heart' of fatherhood was further described as latent until men became fathers, at which time the heart responses of fatherhood became activated (switched on).

A 'head' response also switched on at the birth of their children. This category explained the intellectual part of being a father, characterised by learning new skills to enable participation in the day-to-day care of their babies and young children. Skill levels varied between fathers dependent on their exposure to positive or negative models of fathering and/or additional male models. Older men believed that practical experience and maturity provided an advantage for understanding how to be a father, though some less-experienced and younger fathers also perceived themselves to be better prepared for fatherhood if they had prior experience caring for other children, including younger siblings, nieces and nephews. Men also acknowledged learning skills for fathering from their partners with whom they worked together in making decisions about day-to-day care.

9. DISCUSSION

Marsiglio et al (2000) reviewed trends in scholarship about fatherhood during and beyond the 1990s. They highlighted a variety of approaches to fatherhood research including historical analyses of traditional father roles, conceptual analysis of domains of fatherhood and a focus on the ways in which fathers contribute to children's cognitive and social development. How fathers perceive and construct their identities is a relatively new direction in fatherhood research. A strength of the current study is a contribution to the theoretical body of knowledge which provides insights into men's perceptions of fatherhood and a framework for practical intervention and further research.

Findings in this study are consistent with a generative model of fatherhood advocated by Hawkins and Dollahite (1997). According to this perspective fatherhood presents unique opportunities for men to participate in the care of their children and by doing so help them to realise their full potential. 'Fatherwork' recognises that good fathering is the result of hard work by men who care about building relationships with their families for future generations.

Although participants in this study were interviewed individually, the final theory is representative of a collective reality. Findings will be discussed under the topics of learning to be a father, becoming and being a father and building relationships.

9.1 Learning to be a father

Canfield (1992) observed that men learn to father by following models. In the current study participants described three models of fatherhood: biological fathers, other men who participants observed to be acting in the role of a father and their partners from whom they learnt fathering skills.

Findings suggest that primary and secondary models influence men's understanding of how a father acts and relates in his role. This influence is apparent for many men from an early age and is interpreted through observation. Becoming a father prompted deep reflection on their prior learning and experiences of being fathered. Other researchers have also found that one's own father as a primary role model is most likely to influence male identity and the attitudes and beliefs

of new fathers (Belsky, 1984; Gage & Kirk, 2002; Rustia & Abbott, 1993) and White (1994) described how men's definitions of fatherhood were influenced by their past experiences which then became a reference point for their own parenting.

Canfield (1992) cautioned that the primary father model has the potential to influence either positively or negatively. This is consistent with findings in the current study. Some described their fathers as loving and nurturing, prompted by vivid childhood memories of spending quality time with them and doing fun things. In contrast, many others described their primary models as physically or emotionally distant, violent or abusive. Regardless of their primary model, the impact on participants was profound and memorable and from an early age. At the point at which men became fathers, significant differences in understanding what it meant to be a good father were evident between those who experienced positive fathering models and those who had not.

Condon (2006) identified that men are much less likely to emulate their own fathers if they lack a good father model and may therefore lack a foundation on which to style their own parenting. Men who had experienced positive father models described their intentions to replicate or improve what they already knew. In contrast, men with poor father models were denied the same opportunity to build on prior experience, which for them, did not exist.

In addition to their own fathers participants described the importance of learning about fathering from relationships with alternative male role models. Levinson (1978) described men acting in these roles as mentors. According to Levinson, a mentor is not a parent but is representative of both a parent and a peer. The mentor is responsible for teaching and guiding another person toward future goals. They tend to be older and can therefore lead by experience. In the context of this study, men described other male models they looked up to at various stages of their lives. Although these men were not biological fathers they displayed characteristics that helped participants to see alternative ways of relating, especially to those who had experienced negative relationships with their own fathers. In this respect, positive male role models were beneficial to men's understanding of what it meant to be a man and a father.

Men identified a third way of learning how to be a father; learning from their partners. This was theoretically explained by the category of the 'head' of fathering referring specifically to learning the skills to become involved in the practical tasks of caring for a baby or young child. In circumstances when fathers wanted to be involved in the daily care of their children but were unsure what to do, a partner with that knowledge could teach them. Although tasks such as feeding, clothing, bathing and playing with a baby could be undertaken by either parent, these were considered acts of mothering if completed by the mother and equally, acts of fathering if completed by the father. In this study, men viewed their involvement with day-to-day care positively in contrast to an alternative view in which fathers' practical involvement with infant care is downplayed and regarded as simply following the lead of the mother who is in charge and naturally knows what to do (Lee & Owens, 2002).

With respect to learning about fatherhood, Hawkins and Dollahite (1997) described contextual agency from a generative fathering perspective. Contextual agency is the assumption that men will make choices within their personal context to be the kind of fathers their children need. Despite the nature of their primary and secondary models they had for learning about fatherhood, fathers in this study exercised their contextual agency when they determined to father equally as well, or better than their own fathers.

9.2 Becoming and being a father

As part of the theoretical explanation of fatherhood, men explained a 'heart' response or core of fatherhood complementary to a 'head' response which was described as the thinking aspects of learning new fathering skills. Although the heart response was described as latent, both were activated (switched on) at, or soon after, the birth of their children. Men described what they considered to be issues of the heart that specifically applied to fatherhood including emotions such as joy and love, awareness of new responsibilities, commitment, willingness to make sacrifices and to protect and provide for their families.

McCann (2005) explained that fatherhood is a core expression of masculinity and the innate tenderness of fathers should be celebrated. One father in this study suggested the heart of a father, regardless of ethnicity,

was the same, referring to the intention of all good fathers to love their children and make sacrifices for them. He explained that the outward expression of the heart of fathers might look different due to culturally defined behaviours but the intention of the heart was the same. It was beyond the scope of this research to explore this concept in detail but further research on fatherhood is required, particularly about diversity of fatherhood across different ethnic and religious subcultures in New Zealand (McCann, 2005).

During the transition from becoming to being a father, men described a sudden and powerful change in their lives prompted by a 'switch' turning on. The metaphor of a switch turning on was used to describe the sudden activation of both the head and the heart of fatherhood. In some cases this resulted in significant positive behaviour changes to drug and alcohol use. Fatherhood has frequently been described a time of change for new fathers (Barclay & Lupton, 1999; Jordan, 2007; McVeigh, 2005; Nystrom & Ohrling, 2004). Although changes are often related to increased stresses of becoming a father (Pollock, Amankwaa, & Amankwaa, 2005) the period of the transition to fatherhood is increasingly being recognised as an opportune time to promote men's health particularly in areas of reducing smoking and alcohol intake; recognising men's increased awareness of new responsibilities (Everett, Bullock, Longo, Gage & Madsen, 2007). In a grounded theory study by Palkovitz et al (2001) men described their transition to fathering as a 'jolt' and becoming involved as a father like a 'gentle evoker' of latent personality traits; surprisingly similar to how men in the current study explained the sudden switching on of the heart and head of fatherhood.

A deficit perspective assumes that a man simply adapts to his new roles and focuses on these instead of initiating internal change whereas a generative approach to becoming and being a father emphasises the developmental potential of fathers and their transformation at this significant time in their lives (Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997). Consistent with the generative approach it was clear in the current study that men became involved in a transformational process to varying degrees, marked by the potential of new capabilities, including strong emotional responses, as well as behaviour change and involvement in the daily care of their children.

9.3 Building relationships

In the current study men described and explained a theoretical process of learning about fathering and becoming and being a father. However, their primary purpose in fathering was to build meaningful relationships with their children. Men desired these relationships to be as good or better with their children, than they themselves had experienced with their own fathers.

Hawkins and Dollahite (1997) describe two specific categories relating to fathers' development of meaningful relationships with their children. The first is 'developmental work' through which fathers maintain supportive conditions for children's health and development, recognising and adapting to their constantly changing needs.

The second is 'relationship work' that describes men's devoted efforts to facilitate attachments with their children.

Building healthy relationships was both a short- and long-term goal of fathers in this study. In the short term they were devoted to being involved with the immediate and day-to-day needs of their babies and young children. They enjoyed watching them grow through developmental milestones and felt proud when they were doing well. Men hoped their early involvement would build a foundation for long-term positive relationships. The theoretical explanation of fatherhood presented in this study is, therefore, intergenerational. The desired outcome of the process of becoming and being a father was to positively influence the next generation.

10. IMPLICATIONS

To a certain extent the implications from this study will be determined by social service providers who see opportunities for integrating aspects of this theory into practice. Nevertheless, findings suggest a number of ideas for consideration in the context of fathers being actively present in the homes and lives of their children and families. Social service providers should:

- > identify and respond to the potential for men's personal transformation and health behaviour change as a result of the transition to fatherhood
- > recognise the importance, and facilitate where possible, fathers' presence and involvement at the birth of their children and in early parenting
- > promote activities to facilitate fathers' practical and emotional interaction with their children
- > promote positive ways for fathers to build family memories
- > investigate the potential for developing a tool for

fathers to self-assess their baseline knowledge and fathering strengths from a generative perspective

- > identify specific and individual fathering goals as part of family intervention plans
- > include men's wives/partners in fathering initiatives
- > encourage biological and non-biological fathers in their efforts to be positive role models to their children
- > include fathers in decision-making and family interventions whenever appropriate
- > encourage opportunities for men to learn about fatherhood from each other.

According to McVeigh (2005) health professionals are well positioned to encourage men to become more involved in childcare. Findings of the current study also emphasise the necessity to support both partners in their parenting. Particular attention should be focused on the inclusion of fathers at every opportunity, despite potential barriers to their involvement such as work commitments outside the home.

11. LIMITATIONS

Grounded theory method was used in this study specifically for the purpose of developing a theoretical explanation of the phenomenon of fatherhood. It is therefore acknowledged that the end product of using such a method is a developmental theory; a theory in progress, rather than a complete product in itself (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Findings represent the collective understanding of participants in the broader context of their involvement in the

Christchurch Early Start Programme. Findings are not intended to be generalised to all fathers, recognising the many and varied circumstances in which fathering takes place. Findings do, however, provide social service providers with a framework for reflection on their current practice and the extent to which fathers are, and can be, further involved with their children and families. The grounded theory also offers the potential for the development and testing of hypotheses in future research and service provision.

12. CONCLUSION

Research and scholarship about fathering has, to a great extent, been underpinned by deficit perspectives; focusing on men's inadequacies as parents and ignoring their potential. The findings in this study support an alternative and emergent view which is generative and developmental. Although variation in the intentions and abilities of fathers will inevitably occur, many men have the desire and ability to make significant positive contributions to their families through fathering. The degree to which these fathers have the opportunity to do so will be affected by the knowledge and attitudes of service providers who offer support and early intervention to families in need. This

new direction in research challenges individual practitioners to reflect on the assumptions and influences shaping their personal paradigm of fatherhood and how this affects their practice. Similarly, organisations working to support and encourage families should identify their collective paradigm of fatherhood and consider how fathers could best be included in service provision to further enhance the health and development outcomes of their children. The theoretical representation in this study and a generative perspective of fatherhood could be used to develop creative, innovative and appropriate ways to encourage positive contributions of fathers to their families in the future.

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APPENDIX 1:

Information sheet

A Theoretical Explanation of the Meaning and Construction of Fatherhood

My name is Jeffrey Gage and I am the primary researcher for this project.

I invite you to participate in a research study titled “A Theoretical Explanation of the Meaning and Construction of Fatherhood”.

The purpose of the project is to find out the views about fathering for men enrolled with the Early Start Programme. This will enable the staff at the Early Start Programme to work more effectively with you and your family.

It will involve one audio-taped interview for up to one-and-a-half hours during which we will discuss your views about fathering. You may like to have a family member or friend with you at the interview. You may stop the tape recorder at any time. The tape will be transcribed (typed on paper) by a professional typist. All information will be stored in a locked file cabinet and made available only to the primary researchers for analysis. The study will be finished when the results are published and information used for the study will be kept for five years after which it will be destroyed.

You will also be asked to take part in one 15-minute follow-up telephone call to clarify comments or ideas discussed in the interview.

The results of this project may be published. You will receive a summary of the results. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality information that you provide will not be used to identify you personally in any published information. You can withdraw at any time or decline to answer any questions until completion of the project.

Involvement in the project could result in sharing of personal information; however, this will be your choice to do so and support will be made available to you through your family support worker at your request.

I will be pleased to answer any questions you have about participation in the project.

Primary Researcher: Jeffrey Gage
Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology
Phone: 940-8279 wk or 021-049-6072

Co-researchers: Dr Ray Kirk & Professor Andrew Hornblow, University of Canterbury

General Manager Early Start Programme:
Hildegard Grant
Early Start Programme
Phone: 365-9087

This project has been approved by the Christchurch Polytechnic Academic Research Committee and the Upper South Island Regional Health and Disability Ethics Committee.

APPENDIX 2:

Demographic survey

A Theoretical Explanation of the Meaning and Construction of Fatherhood

Date ___ / ___ / ___

Study ID # _____

Age: ___

1) Are you married?

Yes: How long have you been married? ___ Yrs ___ Mths

No: How long have you lived together with your partner? ___ Yrs ___ Mths

Or: Are you single? ___ separated? ___

2) How many biological children do you have? ___

3) How many non-biological children do you have? ___

4) How do you describe your ethnicity?

NZ European

Māori

Samoan

Cook Island Māori

Tongan

Niuean

Indian

Other such as Dutch, Japanese, Tokelauan. Please state

5) Are you currently employed?

Yes

What is your job? _____

How many hours per week are you employed? _____

No

a) Out of work for more than a year _____

b) Out of work for less than a year _____

c) Full-time at home

d) Student

e) Unable to work

f) Other _____

Blue Skies Research

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- 2/06 *Two Parents, Two Households: New Zealand data collections, language and complex parenting*, Calister & Birks, March 2006.
- 3/06 *Grandfathers – Their Changing Family Roles and Contributions*, Wilton & Davey, March 2006.
- 4/06 *Neighbourhood Environments that Support Families*, Witten, Penney, Faalau, & Jensen, May 2006.
- 5/06 *New Communication Technologies and Family Life*, Weatherall & Ramsay, May 2006.
- 6/06 *Families and Heavy Drinking: Impacts on children's wellbeing*, Systematic Review, Girling, Huakau, Casswell, & Conway, June 2005.
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Families Commission

PO Box 2839

Wellington 6140

Telephone: 04 917 7040

Email: enquiries@nzfamilies.org.nz

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➤ Giving New Zealand families a voice *Te reo o te whānau*

Wellington office

Public Trust Building, Level 6
117–125 Lambton Quay
PO Box 2839, Wellington 6140
Phone 04 917 7040
Fax 04 917 7059

Auckland office

Level 5, AMI House
63 Albert Street, Auckland 1010
Phone 09 985 4106

Email

enquiries@nzfamilies.org.nz

Commission website

www.nzfamilies.org.nz

The Couch website

www.thecouch.org.nz