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Exploring the Experience of Fatherhood for Men Over 40 Years of Age

Jan Henderson
Edith Cowan University

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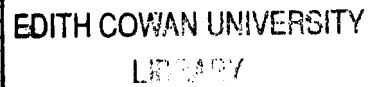
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For Men Over 40 Years of Age

Jan Henderson

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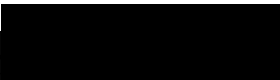
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Abstract

Fathering literature from the past 30 years was explored to firstly, gain an understanding of how fathering roles have changed over this time, and secondly, to explore predictors of fathering involvement. The major changes in fathering appear to originate in gender ideology, resulting from a growing rejection of male gender role constraints concerning how men relate to their children. Further issues explored include post-war societal change; personality; work roles; relationship quality, and gatekeeping, where the child's mother is believed influence her partners fathering involvement to suit her own needs. Comparisons with past research revealed that recent studies are more likely to explore quality of fathering than father time per se, and that fathering research prior to the 1990's may no longer be valid for a growing proportion of men who seek a more emotionally productive relationship with their children. A trend for more engaged (nurturing and emotionally close) and less traditional (gender polarised) fathering is apparent.

Author: Jan Henderson
Supervisor: Dr. Elizabeth Kaczmarek
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Introduction

The word 'father' conjures up images and feelings unique to each

individual. For some it may mean an authoritarian individual (controlling and

punitive), who is distant and remote in emotional closeness, and who has little

to do with the practical and nurturing side of parenting. For others it may

mean an involving, caring person who is intricately bound by the emotional

closeness and joy of being a loved parent to his children. However for most

people the reality falls somewhere in-between.

This review will explore some of the many factors believed to influence

fathering style including gender role ideology (behaviour based on personal

gender expectations) (Bonney, Kelley, Levant, 1999; McHale & Huston,

1988); personality (Anju, Belsky & Crnic, 1996; Levy-Shiff & Israelashvili,

1988); work role (Kroska, 1997); and partner's parenting style (Allen &

Hawkins, 1999). These issues operate against a background of constantly

changing societal expectations concerning parenting roles, as in the past 30

years. During this period, researchers have been re-examining the construct

of fatherhood with respect to men and women's role in society.

As with all societal transitions, there is a rich diversity of experience

that makes it difficult to generalise about today's fathers. For example,

fathers can be conflicted by the restraints of the 'provider' role requiring them

to be absent from the family to earn money, whilst mourning the lost

opportunities at home (Henwood & Procter, 2003). In addition, some

mothers desire a more egalitarian division of housework and childcare (Smit,

2002), yet others actively discourage their partner from adopting a more

'hands on' role with the new infant (Allen & Hawkins, 1999). The growing number of single parent families presents yet another dimension to the fathering role; for some fathers, reduced contact with their children may bring changes to father involvement that have repercussions on the father/child relationship (Silverstein & Auerbach, 1999). These are all additional reasons why predicting father involvement can present difficulties.

The aim of writing this review is to explore the literature on the psychological implications of the changing role of fathers over the past 30 years; some of the factors that predict father involvement, and demonstrate how pre 1990's research on fathering involvement may not be wholly relevant to today's fathers. Underpinning this exploration will be the role of gender ideology and changing social climate, with it's inherent implications of paternal and maternal belief systems that can impact on the ability of fathers to be fully engaged with their young (under 6 years of age) children.

Paternal engagement will be referred to as meaning the father actively involved in caring, playing, teaching and entertaining (Anju et al., 1996), with responsive and sensitive caregiving (Bretherton, 1992). This includes involvement and interest in the child's development and daily activities (Kochanska, Clark & Goldman, 1997). Paternal involvement refers to the *type* and *extent* of care by the father.

The review will begin with a brief look at the changing social climate that has influenced a shift in parenting roles, followed by the nature of past research; implications of gender ideology on fathering and related issues; personality; work role; relationship quality and gatekeeping. These issues

will be explored to demonstrate that parenting involves a complex interplay of many factors that contribute towards understanding the reasons for the different ways fathers are involved with their young children.

Changing Social Climate

Perhaps the major change in fathering today compared to around 40 or 50 years ago is the diversity of roles that fathers adopt in caring for their children. Women exiting the labour force in large numbers in the post-war era resulted in the 'baby-boom' generation (those born between 1946 and 1963). This was a time where the traditional father was the norm. The traditional father was 'head of the family', and his primary function was income earner. The stereotypical father of this time was generally an authoritarian figure to be obeyed and sometimes feared by his children (La Rossa, 1997). However, such generalisations probably do no more justice to the reality of fathering 50 years ago than descriptions referring to fathers more recently. For example Edgar and Glezer (1992) refer to fathers being 'pushed' to participate more in childcare, with 'confusion' about their role. This implies reluctance on the part of fathers today to break out of a comfortable role personified by the words 'breadwinner', 'patriarch', and 'head of the family'. However there is a growing body of research (Henwood & Procter, 2003) to suggest that many fathers are choosing to pursue a more egalitarian role in childcare, and to a lesser extent in household duties (Coltrane, 2000).

The adult 'baby-boomers' are those who have grown-up in a period of rapid societal change with respect to family life. Factors that have been

implicated with this change include equal opportunity rights; the availability

of contraception; government support for sole parents and adjustments to

divorce. Against this background of cultural shift has been a well-documented

attitude change regarding the role of a father within the family (Marsiglio,

Amato, Day & Lamb, 2000; Daniels & Weingarten, 1982; Marsiglio, Rohner,

& Veneziano, 2001). Much of this research originally centered on *how*

fathers spend their time within the family and how much it has changed over

time, if at all (Coverman & Sheley, 1986).

The Nature of Past Research

In an early study by Coverman and Sheley (1986), men's participation

in housework and childcare (type of involvement unspecified) from 1965-

1975 was examined. This was a time when women, including mothers, were

joining the ranks of the labour force in rapidly increasing numbers. Although

the study found no significant change over this time, the results may have

been influenced by the inclusion of families with a broad age range of

children. According to Lamb (1977) and Nugent (1991), quality of father

involvement is more predictive when fathers relate to their young children.

This is believed to be because the demands of parenting a young child require

a greater application of parenting skills such as tolerance, consistency and

awareness of a child's needs (Marsiglio, 1991). In addition, due to the

tendency for gender roles to polarise upon the birth of a child and become

more traditional (Yeung, Sandberg, Davis-Kean & Hofferth, 2001), observing

fathers during the earliest years provides perhaps the greatest opportunity to

detect changing trends of father involvement.

The nature of research in the 1980s that involves father participation in family life typically appears to be concerned with more quantitative aspects of father involvement. Researchers generally appeared to be concerned with *amount* of time fathers spent in the child's company (Casper & O'Connell, 1998; Grossman, Golding & Pollack, 1988) and what *predicts* this time (Feldman, Nash & Aschenbrenner, 1983; Palkovitz, 1985). In contrast, later research (e.g., Eggebeen & Knoester, 2001), using qualitative methodology, tends to focus on finding out how fathers *felt* about their role or the *quality* of their interactions with their children. Through this methodology, constructs of father love and fathering identity have been elaborated or explored (Eggbeen & Knoester, 2001; Henwood & Procter, 2003).

Use of the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) (Bem, 1974) and laboratory observations of fathers typifies the quantitative approach to fathering research 20 years ago. In a study conducted by Feldman et al.(1983) involving 30 couples expecting their first child, an attempt was made to identify factors that lead to father involvement. An additional aim was to explore men's behaviour before and after the birth of their first child. Measures for assessing father involvement included brief laboratory based observations of father-child interactions; self-report answers by both parents to questions related to relationship quality; reactions to impending parenthood, and gender perceptions using the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) (Bem, 1974). Findings from the Feldman et al. study revealed that aspects such as relationship quality, psychological preparation for parenthood, and maternal response were more predictive of engaged fathering than perceived gender roles.

Although these findings are of interest and value, laboratory based observations may not be typical of everyday familial interaction. In addition, the sample size of 30 families limits generalisability of the findings. Finally, the use of the BSRI to assess gender perceptions is now being challenged (Holt & Ellis, 1998; Levant, 1996; Marsiglio et al., 2001) on the grounds that some of the measures obtained for the instrument concerning gender roles may be invalid. This is believed to be due to the growing ability and willingness of men to reject some of the constraints of the masculine gender role (Holt & Ellis, 1998). In the past, researchers (Defrain, 1979; Palkovitz, 1984; Russell, 1978) using the BSRI have referred to men as having androgynous or feminine characteristics if they show greater involvement with their children than more 'detached' fathers. For this reason it has been suggested that future validation of the BSRI may be warranted (Holt & Ellis, 1998).

Implications of Gender Ideology on Fathering

Although parenting roles may be slowly diversifying, there is a persisting expectation for parenting roles to follow a course determined by societal norms (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). These norms include commonly held beliefs concerning gender role expectations, which then become internalised and influence the individual's gender ideology (Bussey & Bandura, 1999).

The extent to which gender ideology is responsible for sex differences in parenting is still debated, with biological theories (Amato, 1998; Belsky, 1984; Buss, 1995) and social cognitive theories Bandura (1986) the most

influential. However, the influence of gender ideology on fathering style is believed to have a similar impact as on other forms of behaviour (Bulanda, 2004; Bussey & Bandura, 1999; Palm, 1993).

While much fathering research has been eager to document increased father-time per se within a family (Coverman & Sheley, 1986), or effect on children of absence of the father (Amato, 1994), recent research has begun to investigate specific issues that arise from engaged fathering, such as effects on familial relationships (Morman & Floyd, 2002), and gender role strain (Silverstein, Auerbach & Levant, 2002).

Gender role strain.

Gender role strain is described as anxiety, distress and sometimes depression resulting from blurring of gender boundaries (O'Neil, Good & Holmes, 1995). This has been an increasingly pertinent topic for researchers in the parenting domain, since gender role boundaries have experienced considerable erosion over the past 30 years (Levant, 1996). Possibly the greatest conflict experienced by fathers today results from the perceived discrepancy between their ideal self and their real self (Silverstein et al., 2002). Some fathers may experience negative emotional states resulting from feelings of inadequacy when communicating with their children, or by having their involvement limited by occupational demands or child custody arrangements (Silverstein et al., 2002).

Effects on familial relationships.

Traditional fathering has been associated with long term negative effects on psychological functioning for sons (Millen & Roll, 1997), resulting

in emotional disconnection and feelings of dissonance relating to the relationship with their own father (Kindlon & Thompson, 1999). This may occur upon commencement of fatherhood, a time that can present opportunities for men to reflect on how they were fathered, and the sort of father they wish to be for their child. Fathers' feelings were explored in research by Henwood and Procter (2003) and Silverstein et al. (2002). In their qualitative study, Silverstein et al. interviewed a cross-section of 400 fathers from a wide range of cultural backgrounds. A major theme that emerged from the interviews was the impact of the fathers' own upbringing on the quality of their current fathering involvement. Many of the fathers attempted to cope with the resulting dissonance by generating a new model of fathering, one that involved accepting and embracing their commitment to be engaged fathers. This was achieved by deciding to reject the traditional model of fathering they had received themselves. Their decision appeared to be based on the desire to pave the way for more productive communication and sharing of feelings with their child in later life, by having a relationship that was characterized by active and engaged involvement.

Authors Kindlon and Thompson (1999) also conducted research on the consequences of traditional fathering on current fathering, by exploring the father-son relationship. The sons in their study were adult men discussing their relationship with their own father (therefore familiar with an era of more constrained gender ideology). Echoing the findings of the Silverstein et al. (2002) study, it was found that many of the men experienced feelings of frustration at the communication difficulties inherent in the present

relationship with their father. For example, it was common for the men to report that their father was the person to whom they would be least likely to confide feelings.

Research by Henwood and Procter (2003) also explored difficulty in communication between family members. This British study involved 30 fathers aged between 18-35, and found that the fathers interviewed not only recognised the limitations of traditional fathering in terms of communication difficulties, but decided to embrace the concept of a 'new fatherhood'. This was achieved quite successfully by the fathers attempting to validate that part of themselves they viewed as desiring emotional intimacy and connection with others. They also put a high value on adopting a form of nurturing, engaged fathering. Although the small sample of fathers in the Henwood and Procter study precludes generalisation, the findings do appear indicative of a growing trend amongst today's fathers towards rejecting a more traditional fathering role.

One of the reasons for men's reluctance to discuss feelings is believed to be the male tendency towards a more autonomous self-concept than that of females (Joseph, Markus & Tafarodi, 1992). The self-concept of men raised in a more traditional environment is likely to involve dispositional attributes of individuality and autonomy over a more relational ('feminine') disposition (Joseph, et al., 1992). It is assumed that the tendency to relate to others in a less verbal way than females arises from traditional family processes such as parental modeling of gender specific behaviour (Bussey & Bandura, 1999).

Gender Socialisation by Parents

In order to understand the impact of gender role development on fathering involvement, it is important to be aware of the way in which gender socialisation permeates human development from birth. Research has shown (Egeland & Farber, 1984; Tenenbaum & Leaper, 2002) how the majority of parents (who have been observed) relate to their infants from birth in terms of gender. Mothers tend to respond quicker and with more tolerance to a female than male infant, and to soothe and engage her in more frequent verbal interaction (Egeland & Farber, 1984). Fathers are shown to engage in more boisterous games with a son (Lindsey, Mize & Pettit, 1997), and perceive boys to be less sensitive than girls (Harris, 2000). In addition, it has been shown that infants as young as seven months are able to discriminate gender categories (Courage & Howe, 2002; Haith & Benson, 1998; Leinbach, 1990), and that parents' behaviour can influence their children's gender related cognitions (Huttenen, 1992; Tenenbaum & Leaper, 2002).

Research on the entrenched nature of gender socialisation demonstrates the difficulties facing fathers who wish to adopt a more egalitarian relationship with their partner, and parent their children in ways that are less stereotypically dichotomous; especially if their own upbringing has been more traditional. To do so not only involves embracing forms of behaviour once labeled as feminine (Palkcovitz, 1985) such as high levels of affection and warmth (Bem, 1975), but can also involve rejecting the model of parenting presented by their own father.

Although gender ideology appears to be a significant factor in shaping father involvement, parenting involves a complex interplay of many issues that contribute to the way fathers relate to their children. In addition to gender ideology, another of these is believed to be personality.

The Influence of Personality

Although it may be assumed that personality plays a central role in parenting style due to its large influence on other forms of behaviour (Mischel & Shoda, 1998), there is scant in-depth research available on this topic. In addition there is none conducted solely on characteristics of the father's personality and how it relates to fathering style. Belsky (1984) was one of the first to examine the role of personality in relation to parenting, and how certain characteristics may be predictive of the quality of parent-child relationships. However, personality was one of a set of four factors used to assess this relationship in Belsky's research, in addition to quality of social support network, marital relationship and child characteristics. Belsky found that neuroticism (worrying and insecurity) was negatively related to parenting quality, and, using the BSRI (1974), instrumentality (a 'masculine' trait) was positively related to parenting quality.

Instrumentality in the Belsky (1984) study was measured by classic gender typed male traits on a Likert scale (forceful, acts as a leader, etc.), that, in light of the changing role of father involvement over the past 20 years, may no longer hold relevance for today's fathers. Other researchers (Levy-Shiff, 1994; Levy-Shiff & Israelashvili, 1998) have found that the 'feminine' trait of

affiliation (willingness to communicate) is predictive of increased father involvement in child-care, and higher parental relationship satisfaction.

An increasing number of studies have tended to explore personality traits in a broad sense (Karney & Bradbury, 1995; Kurdek, 1998; Volling & Belsky, 1991). Specifically, it has been found that an optimistic outlook leads to better adjustment to the stresses of parenthood (Pancer, Pratt, Hunsberger & Gallant, 2000), and that fathers high on measures of both autonomy and affiliation also tend to support these qualities in their children and spend more time with them (Grossman et al., 1988). Furthermore, research using the NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI, McCrae & Costa, 1987) has produced fairly consistent findings relating to the ability to predict fathering style, suggesting that to a certain degree, not only does personality influence parenting style, but that parenting style differs with parents' gender (Clark, Kochanska & Ready, 2000).

The NEO-FFI measure of personality, known as the Big Five (neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness), has been used in a study by Anju et al. (1996). Participants included 69 parents and their 15 month old firstborn sons. In addition to self-report measures of marital quality, hassles, mood and infant temperament, the study incorporated two, one-hour home observations conducted over a period of 7 months. Extraversion, neuroticism and agreeableness were among the measures used to identify four types of fathers: disengaged, disciplinarian, caretakers, and playmate/teachers.

The personality type that emerged as predictive of father involvement in the Anju et al. (1996) study was neuroticism, supporting Belsky's (1984) findings. Fathers who scored low on this construct were types classified as disengaged and disciplinarian. This punitive style has been associated with conscientiousness in relation to authoritarian parenting (Baumrind, 1971), where the focus is on controlling rather than guiding the behaviour of children. However, the complex issues relating to authoritarianism appear to disallow the neat categorisation of this construct to one personality trait (Peterson, Smirles & Wentworth, 1997).

Although the Anju et al. (1996) study is worthy for its examination of father's personality in relation to parenting, and the identification of categories of fathering style, the categories themselves appear to suggest there may be something missing. In light of recent research discussed previously that identifies a more nurturing and engaged style of fathering emergent over the past 20 years (e.g., Henwood & Procter, 2003; Silverstein et al., 2002; Yeung et al., 2001), there appears to be room for an additional category of fathering style. This could be one that denotes nurturance and engagement, without classing terms such as affiliation, as feminine.

Work Role

The literature on fathers and the influence of their working role on family life is another of the dominant themes regarding men and parenting. Perhaps this is because men's work role tends to be integrated with their identity (Erikson, 1980; Levinson, 1978), and that despite the shift of fathers

towards a more engaged fathering role (Henwood & Procter, 2003), they still have to spend the majority of their time out of the home.

Although it is becoming more common for fathers to take paternity leave and to be enthusiastically involved in the fathering role when their children are infants (Peterson & Gerson, 1992; Nugent, 1991), the pressure of the 'breadwinner' role can be a source of frustration and relationship conflict (Coltrane, 1996). This may be especially so for the increasing number of fathers who wish to take a more involved and engaged parenting role with their children and who regard breadwinning as secondary to their fathering role (Cohen, 1987; Henwood & Procter, 2003; Marsiglio et al., 2001). These fathers may find the pressures of work disallow sufficient time to be the type of father they wish to be.

The role of the centrality of occupation to a father's identity can be said to be one of the primary areas of attitude change for fathers, according to research over the past 10 years (Kroska, 1997; NICHD, 2000). This may indicate that fathering is becoming as important, or simply more central, to the identity of an increasing number of fathers than their work role, in much the same way as mothers' has traditionally been (Egeland & Farber, 1984).

Whereas it was common over 20 years ago for literature to report that fathers with less prestigious occupations were more involved fathers (e.g., Levy-Shiff & Israelishvili, 1988; Volling & Belsky, 1985), more recent research has found the opposite (Anju et al., 1996; Henwood & Procter, 2003; Peterson et al., 1997). This provides an additional indication of the changing role of father involvement over the past few decades. It appears that

egalitarian fathers of the 'new fatherhood' tend to be those who are less traditional in parenting style (authoritative as opposed to authoritarian) (Smit, 2002) and generally work in jobs with higher job satisfaction (Grossman et al., 1988).

Occupation appears to be moderately related to socio-economic status, and thus, the extent to which fathering style is traditional (Anju et al., 1996). Authoritarian fathers are typically believed to be more 'traditional' in their beliefs (Peterson et al., 1997). This finding is supported by Anju et al. (1996), who found that more controlling and punitive fathers had less prestigious occupations and were less educated than the fathers classified as caretakers or playmate/teachers. These findings are also in line with subsequent research by Aldous, Mulligan and Bjaranson (1998), who found that less traditional attitudes about child-care were related to more involved fathers. To demonstrate the complexity of this topic, a conflicting study by Hood (1993) suggested how prestigious occupations result in less father involvement. The cause may be longer working hours for high status workers; thus altering family processes.

There has been some cross-cultural data to suggest that although non-Western fathers in general spend less time with their children than Western fathers, they are more inclined to be playful and engaged fathers when they do (Levy-Shiff & Israelashvili, 1988). In addition, the amount of time Indian fathers work does not appear to be related to the quality of the time they spend with their children when they are home (Larson, Dworkin & Verma, 2004), unlike Western fathers (NICHD, 2000; Smit, 2002).

A study conducted by Larson et al. (2004) explored the work and family life of 15 middle class men in India. Measures included self-report answers to questions concerning daily activities. These were provided to 100 families. Subsequent interviews based on the results obtained from the questionnaire were conducted with 15 of those families after an interval of 18 months. The results suggest that although work may be regarded as the most important role in life for Indian fathers (somewhat reminiscent of earlier fathers in Western society), home life is regarded as a sanctuary, a place of regeneration from the pressures of work, representing relaxation and leisure. In this 'environmental cocoon', the fathers had warm and engaged interactions with their children of all ages, even when time was limited.

The findings from Larson et al. (2004) appear to contrast with Western fathers whose fathering involvement tends to be reduced as work hours increase (Brayfield, 1995; Coley & Morris, 2002). However, within Indian society the gender roles are clearly delineated, and fathers do not generally have the expectation of involvement in home care duties or practical care of infants (Larson et al., 2004). The clear boundary between work and home life may therefore result in reduced conflict over marital and parenting roles, with few expectations on fathers other than to provide family income and be sociable with family members.

Parental Relationship Quality

There is much support for the view that parenting and partnering roles are linked (Smart, 2002), although again these links are complex and depend on numerous factors that make prediction difficult. One of the factors likely

to influence level of parental conflict is the amount of disparity between emotional states as the couple embarks on parenthood (Delmore-Ko, Pancer, Hunsberger & Pratt, 2000), and the extent to which the couple are traditional in their gender roles (Greenstein, 1996; O'Brien & Peyton, 2002).

For couples who have clear expectations of their own and their partner's role after the baby's birth, the transition is likely to be smoother and relationship quality is less likely to decline (Levy-Shiff, 1994). A longitudinal study was conducted by Levy-Shiff with 102 first-time expectant couples from pregnancy to the ninth month postpartum. It was found that when father involvement was high, relationship quality increased. This may be expected with the first-born, since the challenges widely acknowledged to exist in the transition to parenthood (Delmore-Ko et al., 2000; Kluwer, Heesink & Van de Vliert, 1997), may be easier to meet if the burden of infant care is shared.

In the Levy-Shiff (1994) study, relationship quality was found to decline if the mother adopted a less traditional perspective, valuing outside work more highly than full-time infant care. The authors argued that the decline in relationship quality may have resulted from the mother's feelings of dissatisfaction involving role-conflict that generalised to the relationship with her partner. Support for this finding comes from O'Brien and Peyton (2002), who found that when one parent holds more traditional views than the other on childcare, there can be a significant decline in parental relationship satisfaction from one month to three years after the birth of a child. Given that parenting an infant, especially the firstborn, can be a stressful and emotional time for parents, an increase in relationship dissatisfaction may

reasonably be expected to reduce parenting effectiveness as the couple struggle to resolve conflict between them.

The Role of Gatekeeping

Although some men report learning how to parent their children from their partner (Henwood & Procter, 2003), it has been widely acknowledged that some mothers act as gatekeepers to their partner's involvement in childcare (Allen & Hawkins, 1999; Coltrane, 1996; Haas, 1988). Gatekeeping operates on a conscious or unconscious level by means of the mother regulating, by means of encouragement, dissuasion or negotiation, the extent and type of involvement her partner has with their child (Glass, 1998). The motive is thought to be the mother's desire to fulfill her needs of self-worth and control (Grossman et al., 1988), or reluctance to give up authority over care of the child (Haas, 1980).

Research by Beitel and Parke (1998) found that partners of mothers who felt it was their primary responsibility to attend to the needs of their infant were less likely to exhibit engaged fathering. However when these fathers were left alone with the infant, the level of nurturing they displayed was comparable to the mothers'. This finding not only suggests that fathers may defer engaged fathering in their partner's presence, but supports the view of Kroska (1997), who suggests that some situations simply lend themselves to the individual acting out of their gender ideological identity.

The gatekeeping role has been associated with more traditional mothers (those happy to care for their infants at home full-time) who are also more mature and autonomous (Grossman et al., 1988; Haas, 1988). According to

Grossman et al., gatekeeping is primarily believed to occur with mothers who are mature, confident and self-assured in their parenting capabilities. As with all predictors of fathering involvement, the gatekeeping role is subject to many variables that make it difficult to generalise.

Summary

The aim of this review was to explore predictors of fathering involvement against a backdrop of societal change and gender ideology over the past 30 years. A particular emphasis of the review was how the meaning of fatherhood appears to be changing for an increasing number of fathers who choose to reject the traditional style of parenting they experienced themselves. This decision appears to be based on a desire to increase the likelihood of having a closer relationship with their children in later life than they had with their own father, through adopting a more nurturing and engaged relationship with their children.

The review began by exploring how the changing social climate over the past 30 years has influenced a gradual re-direction of research towards qualitative aspects of fathering (Eggebeen & Knoester, 2001; Henwood & Procter, 2003) rather than quantitative (Casper & O'Connell, 1998; Coverman & Sheley, 1986; Grossman et al., 1988). This was followed by the influence of gender ideology on how men father; the role of personality; work role; relationship quality, and the role of gatekeeping.

It appears that predicting fathering involvement is difficult due to numerous factors that interact to influence behaviour. However, the major finding of this review is that one of the most salient factors in fathering

quality appears to be the extent to which a father is traditional in his outlook to parenting. The type of fathers who strive for closer and more engaged relationships with their children tend to be those who recognise the limitations traditional fathering imposes on their familial relationships. This is often realised through difficulties in communication and lack of emotional closeness with their own fathers.

Limitations

Although cultural issues were raised as an important factor in this review, it was a fairly narrow sample given the diversity of world cultures, and therefore impacts on an ability to arrive at a clear understanding of cultural implications on types of fathering involvement. This review also omitted to explore how fathers relate to sons and daughters differently, beyond acknowledging that they do (Anju et al., 1996). Finally, although single fathers may have similar aspirations of fatherhood to partnered fathers, the lack of research on this issue precluded the author's ability to compare fathering style between these groups, although it may be reasonable to hypothesise that the *desire* to father in a particular way will not vary significantly with altered family structure, even though in practice it may.

Future Research and Conclusions

There is much scope for future research. Single fathers; fathers who become parents very early or late in life, (i.e., teenagers or mid-life); those who are beginning a second family, and differences in fathering style with the addition of subsequent children are presently under-explored topics. Further research on the influence of personality on parenting style could be used for

screening fathers high on constructs believed to indicate depressive or neurotic tendencies, in order to prevent parenting problems before they arise.

Recent literature on fathering appears to suggest a growing propensity for fathers to embrace their fathering role with an enthusiasm and commitment previously unreported. This 'new fatherhood' appears to be typified by a willingness and ability of today's fathers to shed the constraints of restrictive gender ideology that have tended to restrict engaged father involvement in the past. These fathers are not afraid to show warmth and love to their children, or to admit that fathering is at least, if not more, important than their work role. However, it remains to be seen whether the intentions of fathers to adopt a less traditional fathering style can be maintained over time, as their child progresses through various developmental stages. A majority of the literature discussed in this review explores the experiences of new fathers or fathers with young children. The demands of parenting older children, or the conflict and hassles present in daily life may test these intentions, especially in the realm of discipline. Longitudinal research addressing these questions may provide insightful answers.

Up-to-date research on how men father is important, not only to be able to provide psychological assistance if the need arises, but to inform schools, courts, employers and policy makers of the increasing importance of the fathering role to men's well-being.

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Running head: NEW FATHERHOOD AT MIDLIFE

Exploring the Experience of First-Time Fatherhood for Men after 40 Years

of Age

Jan Henderson

Abstract

The age at which men choose to embark on fatherhood is steadily increasing (ABS, 2004). In 1971 the mean age was 25 years; in 1995 it was 30 years; at present it is 32.5 years. In order to keep pace with the implications of a growing number of men beginning fatherhood at midlife, it is important to understand how men experience 'late' fatherhood (40+). The present qualitative study involved eight first-time fathers aged 43-56 years. A framework of midlife development was utilised to gain insight into this growing phenomenon. Results revealed age-related benefits for participants including psychological maturity, a willingness to re-prioritise work and family time, and generative tendencies. Future directions were discussed, including the need for longitudinal research to examine outcomes for children of having older fathers, and consistency of fathering styles over time.

Author: Jan Henderson
Supervisor: Dr Elizabeth Kaczmarek
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Introduction

The mean age for first-time fatherhood is steadily increasing (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004). In 1971 it was 25 years; in 1995 it was 30 years, and at that time suggestions were made that studies use the age of 35 years as the criterion for delayed or 'late' fatherhood (Heath, 1995). Only six years later the mean age for fatherhood had reached 32.5 years. This progressive advance suggests an inevitable outcome: a growing proportion of men will become fathers at what is generally regarded as midlife (Lachman, 2001), that period of life variously defined as ranging from 30 to 70 years of age (Lachman, 2001).

Literature concerning fathering has increased over the past 20 years. However much of this has centred on the transition to fatherhood (Strauss & Goldberg, 1999), and the growing realisation of the importance of a father's role on children's overall development (Kroska, 1997).

Recent research (Morman & Floyd, 2002) documents an increase in affective and communicative fathering, a deviation from personal experience for many men who grew up with 'traditional' fathers and experienced varying degrees of emotional estrangement as a result (Aldous, Mulligan & Bjarnson, 1998; Eggbeen & Knoester, 2001; Morman & Floyd, 2002). The traditional fathers' role was primarily one of 'breadwinner', and there were few expectations to indulge in nurturing behaviours (LaRossa, 1997; Millen & Roll, 1997). Nurturing behaviour is characterised by affective and engaged involvement (Grossman et al.,1988). Non-traditional fathers are those more likely to be willing to re-prioritise the importance of family and work in

favour of family time (Bonney, Kelly & Levant, 1999; Elder & Pavalko, 1993).

Despite increasing interest in the fathering role, scant research has been conducted on late fatherhood (35+ years); that is, men having their first child beyond the normative age for this life transition (ABS, 2004). The implications of late fathering have the potential for consequences that have yet to be explored, including the impact on child development and child/parent relationships, particularly in adulthood, and the social implications of delaying retirement for a growing proportion of the population (Herzog, Kahn, Morgan, Jackson, & Antonucci, 1989).

A few studies have dealt with delayed fathering directly (Cooney, Pedersen, Indelicato & Palkovitz, 1993; Neville, 1992; Roosa, 1988; Swift, 1992). However the majority of fathering research relates to topics such as paternal involvement (Grossman, Golding & Pollack, 1988), fathering identity integration (Daniels & Weingarten, 1982: Stryker, 1968) and role changes in the family (Smit, 2002).

The present study attempts to address the relatively uncharted territory of late fatherhood through eliciting current first-hand experiences of men who became fathers at the midlife stage. Apart from furthering the understanding of how men experience this life transition, it may provide an informed conceptual basis for extensive quantitative research on late fathering that has been seriously neglected in this age of increasingly late parenthood (ABS, 2004).

Fathering After 30 Years of Age

Fathering research by Cooney et al. (1993) compared 'on time' fathers (20 to 29 years) to 'late' fathers (those over 30 in 1993). It was found that 'late' fathers had a greater degree of involvement with their offspring, exhibited greater positive affect, and were less physically punitive than 'on time' fathers. 'Late' fathers were also less career driven and more content with family life (Gini, 1998).

A study by Swift (1991) examined the reasons for men delaying fatherhood. This qualitative study with seven participants between the ages of 38 to 45 years of age, found that reasons for delaying fatherhood essentially centred on self-conflict issues relating to identity and 'readiness' on many levels, including financial and emotional.

Research by Neville (1992) compared younger and older fathers' style of parenting with 60 participants in a quantitative study. It was found that older fathers (30+ years) utilised their greater understanding of child development in their interactions with their children; were less traditional, and more affective. Taken together, these findings suggest how developmental changes around the midlife period may predispose men to find satisfaction in new fatherhood at the midlife stage.

The Midlife Period

Early studies on midlife such as the Kansas City Study of Adult Life (Neugarten, 1968), were important for indicating the possibility that midlife could be a time of peak functioning and psychosocial development. Although wider interest in studying the midlife period has been relatively recent

(Lachman, 2001; Lachman, 2004), conceptual considerations of the midlife period have been well documented, especially by the stage theorists (Jung, 1971; Erikson, 1963; Levinson, Klein & Darrow 1978).

Topics relevant to the midlife period include the relationship between generativity and first-time fathering at midlife (Erikson, 1963; McAdams & de St Aubin, 1992); how psychological perspective during the middle years of life can influence fathering style (Aldwin & Levenson, 2001; Baltes & Baltes, 1990; Lachman & Firth, 2004; Smith & Baltes, 1990), and the influence of personality on fathering involvement (Srivastava, Gosling & Potter, 2003).

Social Clock

Appropriate times for transitionary life events such as becoming a parent and retirement, tend to be governed by societal norms (Moen, 1996; Neugarten, Moore & Lowe, 1965). Internalised norms, or the 'social clock' as they have been referred to (Neugarten & Hagestad, 1976; Helson, Mitchell & Moane, 1984) imply that to experience a significant life event out of synchrony with the normative age range may cause anxiety and stress through being 'different' from one's peers (Elder, 1975; Hogan, 1978). However the findings from studies on 'late' fatherhood (Cooney et al., 1993; Neville, 1992; Swift, 1991) suggest that non-normative life transitions do not necessarily entail psychological disharmony. This questions the perspective that late fathering is associated with stress. Developmental changes implicated in resiliency to negative feelings include temperament changes (Carstensen, 1995); insight and wisdom development (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000); security from career stability (Engle & Breaux, 1998; Heckhausen &

Brim, 1997); increased self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986; Hamarat, Thompson,

Steele, Matheny, & Simons, 2002), and identity resolution and a sense of

generativity (Erikson, 1964; Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997).

Generativity

Generativity is typically experienced in the middle years of life (40-60

years), and refers to a period of growth and psychosocial development with a

desire to develop and expand the self (Erikson, 1964; McAdams, 1988;

Wiggins & Broughton, 1985). In addition it can be a time for resolution of

differences, especially with family (McAdams, 1993), and a renewed sense of

importance of family life (American Association of Retired Persons (AARP),

2002; Daly, 1996; Elder, 1995).

Erikson (1964) suggests that parenting is one of the key domains for

achieving a sense of generativity. When new fatherhood coincides with

midlife therefore, it indicates that men may be primed to find fulfillment in

this life changing experience, and that they may be emotionally and

psychologically well-equipped for the challenges of fatherhood (Griswold,

1997; Gutman, 1987). New fathers at midlife may also embrace the sense of

regeneration that parenting can bring (Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997).

Goals and Behaviour

Midlife can herald the beginning of a period of life characterised by

gains and losses (Baltes, Staudinger & Lindenberger, 1999). It can also be a

time of re-evaluation of goals and future possibilities (Markus & Nurius,

1986). Although midlife may mean the onset of health problems (Miller &

Lachman, 2000); an increase in preoccupation with physical issues (Cross &

Markus, 1991), and caring for elderly parents (Myer & Cavanaugh, 1995), it

has also been associated with gains, such as successful adaptation to change

(Denney & Pearce, 1989; Heckhausen, 2001); more effective emotional

regulation (Magai & Halpern, 2001), and personal growth and wisdom

(Aldwin & Levinson, 2001).   Midlife has also been associated with a

reprioritisation of activities and social relationships (Brandstadter & Renner,

1990; Carstensen, Isaacowitz & Charles, 1999; Lang, 2001) and with greater

social support structures from a wide social network (Neville, 1992).

Personality

Personality differences impact on a wide variety of complex human

behaviours including parenting (Srivastava et al., 2003). Current perspectives

are arguing that life experiences in adulthood can exert subtle changes in

personality, or at the very least exaggerate existing traits (Caspi & Moffitt,

1993; Srivastava et al., 2003). Specifically, conscientiousness, agreeableness,

and neuroticism, as defined by Costa and McCrae's (1992) five-factor model

of personality traits, have been known to alter through adulthood. Of these,

agreeableness appears to correspond to having children (Srivastava et al.,

2003). The literature thus indicates that personality changes around midlife

may contribute to the rich interplay of factors that suggest how becoming a

father at midlife may predispose men to find satisfaction through the

challenge of new parenthood

The Present Study

The issue of men having their first child at midlife is clearly one that

needs further exploration. This is demonstrated by the increasing age at

which men as well as women are becoming parents (ABS, 2004), and the relatively neglected implications of fathering at midlife. The implications include the development of children growing up with mature fathers; generations of children growing up with less visible or absent grandparents; families caring for elderly parents at the same time as young children, and the social implications of extended retirement.

Recent changes in the fathering role in general have also been poorly documented in relation to fathering in later life. These changes include the trend away from traditional fathering towards more engaged and affectionate father/child relationships (Henwood & Procter, 2003; Marsiglio, Amato, Day & Lamb, 2000; Palm, 1993) and the increasingly diverse roles that today's fathers play in family life (Aldous et al., 1998).

Finally, in order to provide adequate mental health provision for families it is important to have up-to-date literature on such a potentially significant cohort of individuals. Therefore the research question was: "What is the experience of fathering like for men having their first child after the age of 40 years?"

Method

Research Design

Since the topic was exploratory, an approach based on grounded theory was used to guide the design. Grounded theory methods consist of systematic inductive guidelines for collecting and analysing data using theoretical frameworks that explain the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Consequently, the lived experiences and multiple realities of a group of people were explored

from their own perspective, as the focus was on the way participants made sense of their experience (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

A semi-structured interview format was formulated using questions designed to elicit a rich description of the participants' experience. However, since the aim of qualitative research is divergence and variety (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor & Tindall, 1994), the questions were not designed to be employed in a deliberate format; rather they were tailored to the unique position of the participant, with care not to bias the question with the researcher's perspective (Banister et al., 1994).

Interviewing allows perspectives to be heard that cannot necessarily be forseen by the researcher (Mischler, 1986). In addition, interviews allow a collaborative approach between researcher and informant, treating what participants say as meaningful and informative (Reason & Rowan, 1981), leading to negotiated, contextually based results (Mishler, 1986).

Upon completion of the interviews, the transcribed data from the tape-recorded interviews were analysed through thematic context analysis, by identifying issues and themes. A process of systematic data reduction, display and interpretation as outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994) was followed. Similarities were noted and comparisons were drawn between participants' stories, from which the meaning of their experience was derived and then interpreted, guided by relevant theory. Reliability and validity were given careful consideration throughout the process, including triangulation and member checking (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This allows the use of

different vantage points, and enables the possibility of richer and more valid interpretations (Banister et al., 1984).

Participants

Fathers included in this study were 8 first time fathers who had their first child when they were over the age of 40. Seven participants were White, one was Anglo-Indian. All were between 42 and 56 years of age (M = 48, SD = 3.2), and lived in the metropolitan area of Perth. Five were in professional occupations, one was retired, and two were in service occupations. All were living with the baby's mother except one. This participant was included because he and the child's mother had been separated shortly after the child's birth, therefore he would not be experiencing the sense of loss that is a pervasive problem for non-custodial fathers (Arendell, 1995). This father also had significant decision making input into his child's upbringing, and cared for him for a large portion of the day for 6 days a week. The age of participants' children ranged from 13 months to 5 years old. Four participants had two children, (both under 6years old) and four had one child. Three fathers had been married previously, with no children resulting from the marriage.

Data Collection

A series of questions was formulated for the semi-structured interview format (see Appendix A). The question format was broad and general to avoid bias on behalf of the researcher. A pilot interview was conducted with an associate of the researcher who was of similar age to the participants. This was done to address suitability of question range (Breakwell, 1995).

Although the interviews were guided by the question format, the structure of the interview was deliberately flexible to encourage participants to relate their own stories. Questions included:

"Can you tell me about your experience of fatherhood?"

"How important was it for you to have children?"

"How would you like your child to see you?"

"How has fatherhood matched up to your expectations?"

The interview schedule was reviewed by two members of the School of Psychology to assess face validity and suitability of the questions.

Prior to the interview, each potential participant was given an information sheet (see Appendix B) and consent form (see Appendix C). A tape-recorder was used to record the interview.

Procedure

Following approval from the ethics committee to conduct the research, a letter was sent to a local newspaper (see Appendix D), requesting participants. This resulted in four participants contacting the researcher. These were sent the information sheet with the invitation to contact the researcher if they were still interested. The same advertisement was used in a government departmental e-mail system, which produced a further four. All potential participants were sent the information sheet. This sheet also contained the criteria for selection.

During the resulting telephone conversation from interested participants, the researcher answered questions relating to the project. An interview time and place was arranged at the convenience of the participants.

Six of the interviews were conducted in participants' own homes; two in their place of work. Prior to the interview each participant was asked to sign the consent form and given an opportunity to ask further questions about the process and the project.

During the interviews, which took approximately 45 minutes, steps were taken by the researcher to address the epistemological assumption in minimising distance between researcher and informant (Guba & Lincoln, 1988). The researcher was of similar age to the younger participants, and during the course of each interview each participant would invariably enquire as to whether the researcher had children. Because the answer was affirmative, the researcher was of the opinion that the rapport was enhanced and the interview process was enriched. It was also decided not to sit with the questions 'in hand' or take notes during the interview, thus attempting to address the power dynamic by conducting research 'with' rather than 'on' the participants (Banister et al., 1995).

The first question was generally: "Could you tell me about your experience of being a father?" Although there were core areas to be explored, each interview had a unique organic flow determined by the responses received. In this way, the interviews were largely driven by the participants themselves. At the conclusion of the interview the participant was thanked, and given the opportunity to ask questions about the process or the project. Following each interview, the researcher recorded reflections and impressions in a journal to aid in analysis. The whole data collection period took four weeks.

Analysis

In qualitative research, analysis begins as data are collected (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim. Prior to analysis, each recording and transcript was studied repeatedly to gain familiarity with participant responses. The transcripts were then analysed using thematic analysis techniques as outlined by Miles and Huberman (1984). A triple column data display was used for each transcribed interview. The middle column was the interview transcribed verbatim; the left hand column was for recording of impressions, personal bias and general thoughts on topics discussed; the right hand column was to record themes and sub-themes identified from reading through the text. Although the process is somewhat eclectic (Tesch, 1990), it is guided by an established model (Miles & Huberman, 1984), with the aim of allowing the meaning of the experiences contained in the interviews to arise inductively from the data.

A question ordered matrix was employed to aid in data reduction (Miles & Huberman, 1994) (for example see Appendix E). This method allows the researcher to view the collective response of each participant to a particular question, and aids in comparisons and theme identification across participants.

The data were subjected to a process of systematic data reduction and interpretation by means of categorisation of themes and coding, or 'segmenting' the information (Tesch, 1990). Significant phrases were underlined in the data, and themes that emerged from segments of transcript were recorded in the right hand column of each transcript. Codes were

formed to represent categories of emerging themes, and the research journal was consulted to aid in interpretation of meaning.

In order to reduce the data the next process involved clustering similar categories under codes and identifying the most significant themes by their frequency. To minimise researcher bias, triangulation was employed (Banister et al., 1995). A colleague of the researcher was asked to interpret the codes and themes to corroborate the interpretations and aid validity. A series of integrative paragraphs was finally written for each theme, in order to clarify the overall results and maximise coherence.

To address the question of internal validity, a method of member checking as outlined by Miles and Huberman (1984) was employed to ensure authenticity of interpretation. A sample of participants was contacted for respondent validation of the researchers' interpretation.

Ethical considerations were strictly adhered to at all points of the process, including careful elimination of all identifying names and places in the data. In addition, pseudonyms replaced participant names; the tape recorded interviews were erased after transcription, and all data was securely locked in the researcher's office.

Findings and Interpretations

The aim of this study was to explore the meaning of first-time fatherhood for eight men who had their first child after the age of 40 years. Inductive data analysis revealed positive experiences on many levels, particularly those that concerned family issues and the participants' 'readiness' to have a child. Five major themes, each incorporating two sub-

themes, were generated from the data. These were: Influence of Past Experience (sub-themes: lifestyle, partner); Priorities (sub-themes: family, work); Reflective Insights (sub-themes: parents, consequences); Changes (sub-themes: identity, emotionality), and Future Concerns (sub-themes: physical, retirement).

Influence of Past Experience

  Lifestyle.

  The literature suggests (Aldwin & Levenson, 2001) that previous experience can be responsible for developing adaptive coping abilities in midlife. In addition, past experiences shape perception and meaning of the present, placing it within a context unique to the individual (Elder, 1995). Since the participants each had from 22 to 38 years of adulthood prior to paternity, one of the issues of interest was how they experienced a changed lifestyle after fatherhood.

  A common theme was the appreciation of having travelled and enjoyed an active social life prior to fatherhood: "*I was travelling like every year, and sometimes that party might go on for 12 months…*" (Wayne). Also: "*I did a fair bit of travelling, and played a lot of sports…*" (Tim). From Howard: "*…I've done that, I've travelled all over the world, and now I'm doing the family thing.*" Participants expressed satisfaction in reflecting on the years prior to fatherhood in which careers and social networks had been well established. There was, accordingly, an absence of negativity relating to their status as 'non-normative' fathers, given the current mean age of 32 years for first-time fatherhood (ABS, 2004).

The majority of participants had incorporated 'father' as part of their possible selves for the future (Markus & Nurius, 1986): "...*well I thought I would have (children) sometime, but it was never a burning issue...there was no pressure on me...*" (Dave). However, fatherhood was often postponed: "...*I've always wanted to be a Dad...but left it a bit late...we sort of wanted to get our house together really and spent a lot of money going round the place...*" (Tim).

The participants expressed little sense of regret for past times; rather, there was a sense of contentment about their present life: "*I never missed out on any of my travels...or doing whatever I wanted to do, and by the time I got married and had kids that was well and truly out of my system...*" (Ben).

The smooth transition to parenthood for the current participants may be due to a number of factors associated with men's passage through the life course. These include a decrease in genderised behaviour extremes with the passing of years (Hyuck, 1990; Neville, 1992), and less satisfaction with high living and risky behaviour (Lang, 2000; Umberson, 1987). This suggests men at midlife may be positive towards a life change that puts more emphasis on family than work and social networks.

Although the participants' social life had changed with an emphasis on family outings rather than 'boy's nights', friends were still important, especially as a source of social support: "...*we've got friends (wife's) age, (36) and they've got their kids so we still sort of interact...we're friends with young people here too, and they've got young children...*" (Dave). Men having their first child at midlife have the advantage of a wide social network

of support from peers (Neville, 1992). However, age did not seem to be a barrier to interactions with younger families with children: "*...I'm 50 and um, we still get on fine, you know?...*" (Dave). This extended to friends with older or no children: "*...they haven't really dropped off because of me not wanting to join in activities that they join...*" (Dave).

For the majority of the current participants, the loss of social outings with single friends was replaced by the gains found in new relationships and the sharing of parenthood experiences (Baltes et al., 1999). This included practical care of a young child: "*...I usually bath them, feed them, you know, that sort of thing...I mean you just got to share it...*". (Ben). Additionally "*...we both share responsibility of our daughter*". The participants' high level of involvement with childcare is suggestive of a high level of satisfaction and identity with the fathering role, since satisfaction precedes involvement (Grossman et al., 1988), and involvement results from strong identification with a role (Stryker, 1968).

Partner.

For some participants, delaying fatherhood was not a matter of desire but of circumstance: "*I've always wanted to be a Dad...but my ex-wife wasn't keen on the idea...it was all a bit of a façade, it wasn't really happening...*" (Tim). Similarly from Josh: "*I haven't had a partner that it felt right with, you know, the right thing to do...*". Although finding the right partner was generally the catalyst for having a child, for previously married participants who had wanted children, the search for a new partner sometimes included certain specifications:

"...I basically wrote down what I wanted in a woman, and um that was to have someone who was very happy to be at home! ...which was a bit hard to do as an older caucasian...I couldn't find either a lady who was young enough to do it, or a lady who understood that parenting was a full-time job..." (Howard).

For the majority of participants, having at least one parent at home to look after the child was a high priority *"...I was also very adamant about* (partner) *not working. I just think all mothers should be at home, I really do..."* (Tom). Except for Josh, who expressed ambivalence on the subject, there was a comprehensive distaste of outside childcare: *"...we kind of wrote that into our agreement...that immediate family gets first dobs on him before he goes into childcare..."* (Simon). The emotions surrounding child-care and parental roles has both traditional and non-traditional elements. Although the desire for the child's mother to stay at home with the child may be viewed as traditional in an historical sense (LaRossa, 1997), there is also a strong non-traditional element of desiring close involvement and emotional connection with their child: *"...hopefully...I can talk about any subject with them, and be considered not only as a father, but as a friend..."* (Howard). The participants recognised the diversity of the paternal role, and considered themselves nurturers as well as 'breadwinners'.

The literature (Henwood & Procter, 2003; Kroska, 1997) suggests an increase in the salience of the fathering role to men's identity over the past 10 years. In addition, 'late' fathers have been found to be more involved than 'early' timing fathers (Cooney et al., 1993), helped by the tendency towards reduced role demands for mature workers (Cooney et al., 1993).

The inclination towards traditional beliefs (mothers staying at home) surrounding child-care may be partly accounted for by a specific perspective on child-development among the participants: "...*the foundation of a child's life is created in the first 5 years...*" (Howard). Additionally, placing children into care with people relatively unknown does not synchronise with the participants' emotions surrounding their "*late, special child...*" (Tom). This interpretation is supported by Neville (1992) in his comparison of 'on-time' and 'late' fathers. He found that the 'late' first-time fathers had a higher awareness of child developmental needs that influenced father-child interactions.

Priorities

   Family.

For some individuals, midlife can be a time of decline in family contact, with children leaving home or divorce (Elder & Pavalko, 1993). However for the participants of the current study, having a child at midlife appeared to bring not only a valued increase in family contact, but for some participants, a new dimension to their relationship with family of origin:

> "*...it brought out the affection in my parents as well, so they are a bit more demonstrative ...expressing their emotion and their physical reaction to her (child), and I guess it overflows to the people around...*"

Many of the fathers were aware of a change in family of origin dynamics that resulted from having a child: "*...the eldest brother well he's not married, so he's really um, thrilled with the kids...spends as much time with them as possible...*" (Ben). From Josh: "*...having children has made me*

see my parents in a new light...". Simon also relates: "*...I probably got closer to him* (father) *through* (child)...".

Having their first child in the middle years of adulthood seemed to have coincided with a readiness to settle to a quieter, family oriented life for the current participants: "*...as long as my family is there, I'm happy...the things I used to do as a single man, those things started changing...*" (Dave). The participants clearly found a deep sense of satisfaction in the family contact, perhaps facilitated by the tendency at midlife to experience an increase in the sense of value in family life (AARP, 2001; Lang, 2001), and a willingness to reprioritise activities and social relationships (Brandstadter & Renner, 1990; Carstensen et al., 1999).

Work.

For many adults, sense of identity is derived from their occupation (Gini, 1998), particularly men (Erikson, 1980). However, data from the current study suggests that for the majority of the participants, occupation is no longer the central aspect of their identity. Many would rather not be working at all, now they are fathers: "*...I've always wanted a family, it's the most important thing, and if this job is going to kill me, I'll walk away...*" (Howard). Similarly from Tom: "*...I'd rather not be working. I'd love to swap roles...*".

For a few participants, the occupational prestige bestowed by age and experience allowed them the flexibility to reduce work time: "*... I definitely sort of like to leave work on time...then me and my young bloke can go down to the park...*" (Ben). Tim stated: "*...I guess I've got to be where I am, so it*

affords certain privileges...". There was an element of resentment from Tom about his perception of the extent of time others expected him to put in 'on the job': "*... my attitude, well sod it. I don't shirk on the job, I do everything I can, but at the end of the day, I go home. To a son. And he is my highest priority...".*

Work clearly took second priority to family for the current participants: "*...come 4 o'clock these days and I'm gone, whereas before I used to make myself work back a bit...".* (Tim). Josh relates: "*... having been on this world a bit longer, my priorities have a bit more perspective, like family time and that...".* This attitude is suggestive of Hawkins and Dollahite's (1997) theory of generative fathering, in which 'father as nurturer' assumes greater importance to the salience of the fathering role than 'father as breadwinner'.

For some participants, spending the earlier part of life working and establishing a career meant not only financial stability: "*...I was financially secure when I had the kids...we don't have to worry too much about money...the wife can afford not to work...*" (Ben), but often the luxury of being able to spend more time with their child than if they had been younger: "*...I couldn't have devoted so much time to a family because I wasn't financially stable...*" (Josh). These findings are consistent with the literature that suggests by midlife, men's preoccupation with establishing a career gives way to the desire to invest in family time (Daly, 1996; Engle & Breaux, 1998). Temperament changes may also be responsible (Carstensen, 1995; Srivastava et al., 2003). Personality theorists such as Srivastava et al. suggest that life experiences in adulthood can exert subtle changes in personality,

exaggerating some, such as agreeableness, and showing a decline in others, such as neuroticism:

> "…*I'm a better Dad today…than I would have been*
> *20 years ago. I'm much more patient, more giving, not*
> *locked into certain concepts like I was when I was 20*
> *or 30, I'm much more flexible…*"
>
> (Howard)

Additionally from Simon: "…*I don't lose my temper like I used to – maybe it's got nothing to do with testosterone, maybe it's about becoming older and wiser!…*". These findings support those of Srivastava et al., (2003) who found that agreeableness corresponded with parenting. Even for Wayne, who worked nearly seven days a week, the priority was interaction with his daughter, as much as relaxation, upon arrival home from a long day at work: "…*so you can go 'I'm pretty tired'…and I'll just want to sit down and put Wiggles on and sit with (child)..,or other times we'll go into the back garden and kick a ball around…*" .

The data provides support for the theory of Griswold (1997), who suggests that although providing money for the family has traditionally been the primary socially prescribed role of fathers, (Engle & Breaux, 1998), it is believed to be slowly changing. The 'new culture of fatherhood' (Morman & Floyd, 2002) places more emphasis on the nurturant, engaged, and loving father role, and suggests that the roles of 'provider' and 'nurturer' are not mutually exclusive

Reflective Insights

  Parents.

Having a child at a relatively late age (ABS, 2004), has let many of the participants in the current study reflect on their own upbringing and how they were fathered, through the insight of maturity and years of life experience (Aldwin & Levenson, 2001) before the birth of their first child: "*...you wander through life...I picked up a lot of that on the way...*" (Simon). Not all this has been positive:

> "*...my childhood was less than perfect...I've had a few words with my mother as well...I haven't finished talking about it, I've just had to back off from it, cos I just thought this is... I can pursue things a little bit too much...*".
>
> (Wayne).

Wayne's desire to confront his parents about his childhood experience is consistent with the literature (Daly, 1996; Lang, 2001) that suggests people have a desire to improve relationships with family and friends during the midlife years. Possibly the emotional maturity of midlife (Magai & Halpern, 2001), coupled with the knowledge that parents are nearing the end of their life, and time for resolution of 'old wounds' is finite, enables difficult topics to be broached. The literature concerning 'life stories' (McAdams, 1993) suggests that as adults reach and traverse the middle of their life, they develop a more pronounced awareness of the 'endings' of their stories. Additionally, the intervening years of adulthood may enable the individual to have the time to work through feelings concerning their own father (McAdams, 1993).

Since the participants were over 40 years old, and three were past the age of 50 years, it is likely the parenting they received was more traditional

(i.e., authoritarian) than is popular today (LaRossa, 1997). Simon confirms:
"...*I mean when he* (father) *used to get home from work, there'd be a list of kids to beat...I was usually up the front...*". Also from Howard: *"...my father was a Victorian male who never kissed or cuddled us...I didn't love him because of that...*". Many of the participants did not have a good role model of fathering and had to draw on siblings, friends and self-education in learning to father: "...*I would spend years away, and then come back, and see how she and (her husband) were with them, that made a big impact on me...*". (Wayne).

Midlife can be a time for introspection and reflection on past experiences (Neugarten, 1968). For the majority of participants this included reflecting on the type of involvement they wanted with their child, perhaps prompted by the consequences of their own upbringing.

Consequences.

The participants' own upbringing appeared to impact on the type of father they aspired to be. Many participants appeared to be influenced by their experience, even if this meant learning how they did not want to father:

> "...*I certainly have come to understand the lessons he (father) gave me were just as good as good lessons were. Because I learned what not to do. That the reactions were at the other end. So I learned what not to be from my father."*
>
> (Howard)

Howard, demonstrating the reflection and insight common to people at midlife (Carstensen, 1995), recognised the difficulty in adopting an alternative style of fathering to the one modelled by his own father: "...*I probably have to work at it a little harder rather than being a natural, easy-*

going Dad." Howard's comment reflected a common theme in the data. This involved recognising the personal consequences of a traditional fathering style:

> "*...most people of my generation never got our father's approval...and I think I struggled with it right up 'til... when my life fell apart, and I recognised at that point I had to take some sort of control, and deal with it...*"
>
> (Tom)

The participants demonstrated a determination that their own children would have a different childhood experience: "*...my father was quite a disciplinarian, whereas I'd be happy to go through life never hitting him (child).*" (Simon). Even Ben, who experienced a financially strained but happy childhood, felt the emotional consequences of authoritarian fathering in terms of communication: "*...I think that's one thing lacking in our family...I don't have the ability to talk to my parents.*"

The participants were unanimous in their desire that good communication with their child would be a primary goal for their developing relationship. For example: "*...the one thing I want, is I want them to be able to communicate with me. About anything and everything...*" (Ben).; "*...so hopefully that will make them open communicators with me...*" (Howard). Finally from Josh: "*...I would also promote very, sort of, open communication...*". There are elements of redemption in these communiques (McAdams, 1993). The turning of bad events into good ones is suggestive of Erikson's (1963) theory of generativity. The fathers in the current study appeared to be ready and willing to invest time and emotional effort into a

kind of reworking of their own 'life story' through their child (McAdams, 1993), in order to maximise the possibility of a happy ending.

Changes

   Identity.

According to research (Stryker, 1968) the more a father identifies with his role as father, the more involvement he will have with his children. This, in turn, affects his level of commitment. The participants were all involved fathers who took an intense interest in their child's well being and development. This suggests a strong saliency with the fathering role (Stryker, 1968). However, the impact of fatherhood on identity was not always immediate: "...*I think in about the third week...that whole paternal thing finally kicked in. As in wow*! ...*it really impacted on you that you're now a Dad...you have a new role*" (Tom). For Josh after 12 months: "...*I still find the title* (Dad) *quite strange...* ". Josh acknowledged the difficulty of integrating the role of father into his identity: "...*for 40 years with no children...all of a sudden you've got that hat on.*" These findings contrast with research by Daniels and Weingarten (1982), who found that fatherhood "clicked" early in the child's life for 'late' fathers (over 30). This indicates the possibility that a further 10 years of life experience prior to fatherhood may exert a significant effect.

   Emotionality.

Fatherhood was passionately embraced by all participants, accompanied by some introspection: "...*I've certainly become a lot more emotional since* (child) *was born.*" (Tom). For Simon, the birth of his child

enabled him to feel love for the first time in his life: "*I don't think I've ever loved anyone, in my whole life. Um, so there's a big change…I guess I am more emotional because I now love someone.*" This was clearly a powerful change for Simon, who admitted that he was "*quite cold, emotionally…*". Although this was a unique response among the participants, it touched on the common theme of a previously undiscovered aspect of self. Research suggests (Palm, 1992) that as men become attached to their child and empathise with their feelings, they may allow themselves to feel emotions at a new level of intensity. The literature also suggests (Gutman, 1987) that men become more nurturing and sensitive with increasing age, and that midlife in particular can be a time of reflection and introspection (Neugarten, 1968).

When asked about the major impact of fathering, the most frequent response was a realisation of the extent to which life now revolved around the needs of the infant: "*…I think that* (commitment) *takes you back a little bit, I don't think you can ever prepare fully for that…in reality, you let them rule your life…*" (Ben). The participants clearly relished their involvement and there appeared to be little resentment: "*…*(partner) *and I have to be a little bit careful that our relationship dosen't fray a bit, with the focus…*". (Howard). However, Howard drew on his life experience aided by the coping resources and self-efficacy believed to increase at midlife (Bandura, 1986; Hamarat et al., 2002) to deal with the situation. The literature suggests such ability may contain the elements of wisdom (Smith & Baltes, 1990):

> "*…there are a lot of parallels between running a business and running a good family home. The basics are very similar. As long as you blend in the morality into it…sometimes you have to say "Hey, this doesn't work very well" and have to make*

decisions…" (Howard)

Although wisdom is not necessarily conferred with age (Smith & Baltes, 1990), midlife has been identified as a time of life likely to be contain the elements of this construct (Staudinger et al., 1968).

Future Concerns

Physical.

Midlife can herald the onset of health problems (Miller & Lachman, 2000), and bring a preoccupation with trying to look younger (Lachman, 2004). In Baltes & Baltes' (1990) theory of gains and losses with the aging process, health and physical appearance can reasonably be associated with the losses incurred in growing older, and do tend to be listed by adults as part of their most feared selves when considering the future (Cross & Markus, 1991). When asked how they saw the future, many of the current participants cited fitness and looks as concerns:

> *"…I've got a bad back, so um, you know, I go out and*
> *play with my young bloke and have a kick, and I'm almost*
> *a cripple, how am I going to be when he's 13 or 14?"*
> (Ben).

Howard took a problem-focussed approach to future health: "*…I'm going to have to make sure I'm healthy…I enjoy exercise, so physically I'll look after that, I target myself for, to be a healthy 80 year old…*". Looking old to their grown child in the future was also a concern for the current participants: "*…as far as being an older parent, my biggest issue is going to be that at a certain age he's going to have a Grandad looking Dad*" (Tom). Ben's comment was: "*I'm going to be looking old…*". For Dave, perceiving that he looked younger than his age was a definite advantage:

> *"...a lot of people at work, in their mid-thirties, so forth, think I'm in my mid-thirties because fortunately enough I look a bit younger than what I really am..."*

Ben was concerned about coping with a teenager as he grew older:

> *"...The only thing that bothers me about having kids later in life is that it concerns me that I'm going to be sort of in my sixties, and they're going to be teenagers, I mean that is a concern to me. So I'm going to be sixty, my daughter's going to be about sixteen, her friends will probably have parents a bit younger than me...how am I going to cope um, having a teenage daughter at 60* (laughs nervously*) um, I'll probably be fairly set in my ways then...having a teenage kid is going to be difficult..."*

Although the deficit of feeling and looking old was a concern for the participants, it was by far outweighed in terms of importance compared with the gains brought by fatherhood. Most participants retained a sense of perspective on the subject of aging, demonstrating the emotional maturity common at midlife (Hamarat et al., 2002). From Ben: "*...by the time I get to 60 and* (child) *is 17, there'll be so many older parents...so we won't be that unusual!*"

Finances and retirement.

Retirement is a life transition that often occurs at midlife (Kim & Moen, 2001). Retirement was an issue for the participants when asked how they viewed the future. Even though many were financially secure, they still felt the compunction to work longer than if they had no children:

> *"...I'll probably continue to work until I'm 60, whereas if the kids were off my hands by then I would have been be able to retire, so there's going to be the fact I'm going to have to work longer, when that can be quite difficult in this job. Because it's not really an old person's job."*
>
> <div align="right">(Ben)</div>

Despite these concerns, Ben clearly appreciated the financial security he had achieved through years of dedicated work: "*...I've got my house paid off, things like that...my youngest brother has a little baby and mortgage, we don't have to worry about that...*".

As with visible signs of aging, the topic of delaying retirement was not a source of negativity; rather, it was met with a sense of resignation that extending working life was one of the few disadvantages of being a 'late' first-time father "*...I have thought about how much I might be working in the future when the kids are older, but mostly just take it as I go...*" (Wayne).

For those participants who did not enjoy their occupation however, there was more of a pull towards finding a solution to the dual needs of earning money, and family time: "*...I've even said to (partner) well, look, if we can decide to live off what we're on which is 7 days pay, then fine! I'll take up relief work...*" (Tom). Apart from Tom and Howard, the participants appeared satisfied with the flexibility afforded by their current work role, therefore the prospect of delaying retirement is unlikely to cause dissonance (Herzog et al., 1989). In addition, it is likely that retirement for the current participants will mean a continuation of meaningful generative activities concerning their children, therefore avoiding a sense devaluation common at this life stage (Moen, 1996).

For all participants, cash availability was desirable but not the highest priority: "*...clearly recognising this* (friend's) *minimalistic house and thinking..it ain't going to happen!*". Howard relates: "*...it's not a huge pressure* ('house rich, cash poor'), *I have fun cooking for my family for $5 a*

night!" By viewing their role in terms of 'father as nurturer' rather than 'father as breadwinner' (Daly, 1996) indicates that this group of fathers may be responding to the recent shift in the social construction of fatherhood (i.e., father as nurturer) (Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997).

Conclusions

The aim of the present study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of men who had their first child after the age of 40 years. Utilising the framework of midlife development (Aldwin & Levenson, 2001; Erikson, 1969; Nuegarten, 1968), it was found that the experience of first-time fathering was extremely positive for this group of men. Much of this satisfaction appeared to result from a high degree of congruence in the transition to fatherhood (Daniels & Weingarten, 1983), and a psychological 'readiness' to reprioritise time in favour of family involvement and activities. The majority of participants experienced changes in work, social networks and family-of-origin connections. Fathering also provided the catalyst for greater depths of emotionality and willingness to commit to others.

The most important finding of this study is that for this group of participants, the timing of fatherhood appeared to facilitate the high level of satisfaction they derived from the experience (Neugarten, 1968). Many of the feelings expressed by participants were compatible with findings on midlife development (Lachman, 2001; Erikson, 1964; Neugarten, 1968) and previous studies on 'late' fathering (Cooney et al; 1993; Neville, 1992; Swift, 1991). Specifically, these feelings related to a desire to adopt an engaged fathering style characterised by high affective qualities (Henwood & Procter, 2003;

Daniels & Weingarten, 1982; Palm, 1993) and low traditionality (Peterson et al., 1997); a well-defined sense of commitment to family life (AARP, 2003; Lachman, 2004), and the opportunity to bring closure to past issues relating to close others (McAdams, 1993).

The current participants' high level of affective involvement with their child is consistent with research on older first-time fathers (Cooney et al., 1993; Daniels & Weingarten, 1982; Neville, 1992). Accordingly, it is reasonable to hypothesise that changes in fathering roles over the past 20-30 years towards a more engaged fathering style (LaRossa, 1997), may be related to the gradually increasing age for paternity (ABS, 2004). This tendency has previously been solely attributed to more egalitarian gender role division within the family resulting from societal changes, including the changing nature of male and female work practices (Edgar & Glezer, 1992).

In addition, the high level of adjustment to paternity for the current participants is strongly suggestive of a generative component (Erikson, 1964; McAdams & de St Aubin, 1992), possibly facilitated by an increase in the personality trait of agreeableness associated with parenting (Costa & McCrae, 1993). First-time fathering at midlife appears to be a positive experience on many levels. By midlife men are more likely to have achieved career and financial stability (Umberson, 1987); to have gained a sense of mastery in the parenting domain through a well-developed sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986); to have achieved a state of psychological maturity (Aldwin & Levenson, 2001), and to find satisfaction in being needed by others (Wiggins & Broughten, 1985). Finally, new fathers at midlife have reached closure of

a childless period of life in which personal enterprise has given way to a genuine desire to settle down.

Limitations and Implications

Although qualitative research is useful for topics that are exploratory in order to avoid inaccurate conceptual assumptions, it does limit the generalisability of the sample to the larger population. In addition, there may be sampling bias in the current study due to the non-random sampling method of recruiting participants via advertised requests. It may be that only participants who found the experience positive were inclined to respond. Due to the absence of negative narrative in the present study this must be considered. However the possibility that first-time fathering at midlife is generally a positive experience cannot be ruled out.

There are many implications involved in children being born to older fathers which need to be addressed, given the increasingly common phenomenon of men delaying fatherhood (ABS, 2004). These include developmental outcomes for children; the impact on family life of not so visible or perhaps absent grandparents; aging fathers coping with teenagers; young adults embarking on parenthood whilst supporting elderly parents, and the social implications of extended retirement.

Future Research

The present study provides a conceptual framework to guide a more detailed exploration of first-time fathering at midlife. This could utilise a blend of qualitative and quantitative methodology in order to allow generalisation. In addition, longitudinal study would allow exploration of

consistency of fathering styles over time. It would also be useful to make comparisons between children growing up with fathers in young adulthood or midlife and beyond, addressing developmental abilities across social and psychological spheres.

In conclusion, the findings illustrate the richness of experience and profound changes involved in becoming a father after the age of 40 years for the current participants. The findings are important not only for extending knowledge on this potentially significant cohort of individuals, but also to inform those who work with families in therapeutic settings, in order to facilitate understanding of the needs, emotions and priorities of men who become fathers after the age of 40 years.

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Appendix A

Interview Schedule (example of questions)

I'd like to start simply by asking you to tell me about your experience of fatherhood.
- Has it made you feel differently about anything?
- How did you decide to have a child at this time of your life?
- Tell me about life before and after fatherhood?

Is being a father what you thought it would be?
- Is it easier or more difficult?
- Has anything taken you by surprise?

Has having a child made you think about yourself in a different way?

What sort of parent do you think you are?
- How do think your family see you?
- How do you think work colleagues see you?
- How do you think of yourself?

How does your work fit in with family life? (hours, commitments, priorities)
- How do you feel about work now you have a child?

What sort of involvement do you have with your child?
- Practically/Emotionally

As your child grows, what sort of father do you want to be for your child?
- How would you like your child to see you?
- How else (apart from practical things), do you see yourself as being involved with your child's development?

Can you tell me about your relationships with other people since you've had a child?
- How much contact have you had with old friends?
- Have you made new friends?

How has your family reacted to your new status as 'father'?
- How much do you see your family?

How do you see the future?
- As your child grows
- When your child is a teenager
- In terms of work

Appendix B
Information Sheet

Dear Potential Participant

My name is Jan Henderson and I am currently studying psychology at Edith Cowan University. As part of my course requirement for Honours, I am required to undertake a research project in an area where there is a need to expand the existing body of psychological literature. This project has been approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences.

I have decided to explore the topic of fatherhood; specifically, how it relates to being a first-time father after the age of 40. The main aim is to find out what your experience of fatherhood is like, it's meaning for you, and whether it makes you think or feel differently about yourself.

To be included in this study you need to have had your first child after the age of 40 and that child must not be older than six.

I will conduct a face-to-face, tape-recorded interview that will last for approximately 45 minutes. The format will be more like a conversation about your experience of fatherhood than a question and answer session. I am interested in everything you have to say about this topic, and be assured there are no right or wrong answers.

Any information given will be held in strict confidence, and all identifying information will be omitted from the finished work. You are free to withdraw from the interview at any time, or to refuse to answer any question without giving a reason. After the interview has been transcribed, the tape will be erased. Participants will be encouraged to view the finished project at the end of the year.

If you would like to consider participating in this study, please email me at:
janh@student.ecu.edu.au
or call me on 0421 077878, and I contact you to arrange an interview time.

If you have any questions about this project, or wish to discuss any aspect of this study, please contact me on the above numbers. You can also contact my supervisor Dr Elizabeth Kaczmarek on 6304 5193. Alternatively, if you wish to contact someone not connected with the study, please contact Professor Alison Garton on 6304 5110.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Jan Henderson

Please retain this information sheet for your own record

Appendix C
Consent Form

Please read the following statements, and sign below if you agree to participate

- I have read and understood information sheet

- I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project

- I understand that the interview will be tape-recorded, and that the recording will be erased after transcription of the interview

- I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and that I am free to withdraw from the process at any stage without offence being taken

- I understand that I can refuse to answer any question and do not have to give a reason

- I understand that any identifying information will be erased from the finished work, that I have the right to view the finished project, and that the study may be published

Participant's Signature_____   **Date** _____

Participant's First Name _____

Contact Number _____

Researcher's Signature _____ **Date** _____

Appendix D
Request for Participants/Press Release

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Jan Henderson. I am a student of psychology at Edith Cowan University in Joondalup, currently undertaking an Honours research project on the parenting experience of fathers who have their first child after the age of 40.

I am currently seeking participants for the study, and would be grateful if your newspaper would advertise the following appeal for volunteers:

Volunteers Wanted!
Are You a New Father? Are You 40+?

Hi! My name is Jan Henderson. I am seeking volunteers to take part in my Psychology Honours project at Edith Cowan University. This is concerned with the parenting experiences of fathers who had their first child after the age of 40 years. The process will involve an informal interview lasting about 45 minutes, held in strict confidence. For an information sheet about the project, please contact Jan on: 0421 077 878.

Thank you: your participation in this project would be greatly appreciated

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I would like this appeal to appear in next week's edition.

Yours faithfully,

Jan Henderson

- *note:* the bold typeface component of the advertisement was used for the inter-departmental e-mail request for participants.

Appendix E

Question Ordered Matrix (*Example only*)

Questions > Participant name	How has your family reacted to your new status as 'father'?	Is being a father what you thought it would be?	Can you tell me about your relationships with other people since becoming a father?	How do you see the future?
'Ben'	My parents are in their seventies now so they are very happy…it's brought the family closer together	I felt ready and comfortable…I knew it would change the lifestyle…but I'm comfortable with the lifestyle I've got!	My friends all have families…we get together and do family things	I wonder how they are going to relate to me when they are 16?
'Tom'	My original family…there was a lot of love but it didn't really express itself	…you read about selflessness…having a child, you become that way	Becoming a father has changed my relationships with everybody…	At a certain age, he's going to have a Grandad looking Dad…
'Wayne'	Well my childhood was less than perfect…I had words with my Dad, and with my Mother too…	I took to it pretty easily…I surprised myself!	A guy at work for instance, he'd be 25 and a new father, and he'd be asking me questions!	I have thought about how much I'd be working in the future, but I'll just take it as I go…
'Dave'	They have a few grandchildren already so there was no pressure on me, but they love it of course…	Pretty much so, I always thought I would have children, but it was never a burning issue…	The only socialising we do now is with OUR friends. Not myself, my buddies..as long as my family is there, I'm happy	I'll definitely have to work longer, and I won't be able to retire, like I could have…
'Howard'	My Mother was going to come to live with us, but (*condition of ill health*) and children don't mix	I'd read that you don't want to leave parenthood too late because you become inflexible. That's wrong – you are MORE flexible!	We associate with people of moral values, so hopefully our children will make the right choices when choices confront them	I target myself to be a healthy 80 year old…I'd like to see my grandchildren!

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Journal of Family Psychology

Manuscript Preparation. Authors should prepare manuscripts according to the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (5th ed.). All manuscripts must include an abstract containing a maximum of 960 characters and spaces (which is approximately 120 words) typed on a separate sheet of paper. Typing instructions (all copy must be double-spaced) and instructions on preparing tables, figures, references, metrics, and abstracts appear in the Publication Manual. All manuscripts are subject to editing for bias-free language (see chap. 2 of the Publication Manual). Original colour figures can be printed in colour provided the author agrees to pay half of the associated production costs.

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